



*An Open and Affirming Congregation
of the United Church of Christ*



Order of Worship for

February 22, 2026

10:30 am

Welcome to Worship at Center Church!
We are delighted that you are with us today.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT - ASH SUNDAY
AGAIN & AGAIN, GOD MEETS US
FEBRUARY 22, 2026 – ORDER OF WORSHIP
Cover Art: "Invited In," by Lauren Wright Pittman

**Please rise in body or spirit.*

GATHERING MUSIC Amazing Grace

David Reynolds, Piano

arr. D. Reynolds

WELCOME & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT*†

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: God meets us in the night—

**All: Before the sun rises,
 Before the wound heals,
 Before there are answers,
 Before there is closure.**

One: God meets us in the light—

**All: Where joy is effervescent,
 Where laughter is contagious,
 Where flowers bloom from cracks in the sidewalk,
 And where people gather around the table.**

One: God meets us at the threshold—

**All: At the edge of the water,
 At the beginning of the wilderness,
 At the start of something new,
 On the edge of faith.**

One: And if God meets us in all those places,
 Then surely God meets us in between—

All: Staying with us through the wilderness.

One: We are not alone. God is all around.

All: Let us worship the God of the here and now.

*OPENING SONG

10,000 Reasons

M. Redman

Center Church Worship Band

CHORUS

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before, O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name*

Vs. 2

*You're rich in love and You're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness, I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find
TO CHORUS*

Vs. 1

*The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass and
 whatever lies before me
Let me be singing when the evening comes
TO CHORUS*

Vs. 3.

*And on that day when my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still, my soul will sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years and then forevermore
TO CHORUS*

PASSING OF THE PEACE

A TIME FOR CHILDREN

Rev. Andrea Phillips

*Praise God, praise God, all you little children,
God is love, God is love;
Praise God, praise God, all you little children,
God is love, God is love.*

C. Bonner

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 9: 8-17

Mark 1: 9-15

SERMON

Again and Again, God Meets Us

Rev. Liza Arulampalam

INVITATION TO REFLECTION

"From dust you came, and to dust you shall return."

MUSICAL MEDITATION

The Goodness of God

Bethel Music/ J. Johnson

Center Church Worship Band

*Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now
I give You everything*

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: God who meets us where we are—
There is nowhere we can go that you are not.

**All: You were with Jesus at his baptism.
You were with him in the wilderness,
And even in between, you were there,
Saying aloud, "This is my beloved."**

One: We know that you are with us too—
In the good, the bad, and everything in between—
But so often we act like we are alone.

**All: Instead of coming to you with our hurt,
We hold it in or cast it onto others.
Instead of coming to you with our joy,
We credit ourselves and offer you nothing.**

One: How can we long for a deeper relationship with you
While living like you are nowhere to be found?

**All: Forgive our self-centered ways.
Remind us that in every breath, in every step, you are there.**

One: You are the God who meets us where we are.

**All: Before and behind, above and below, within and
around. Amen.**

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

One: Family of faith, if you hear nothing else today, hear this:
God is here. God sees you.
God knows you. God meets you at the edge of every new beginning,
And God calls you beloved.

**All: We are washed by the water.
We are called beloved.
Thanks be to God for a love like that.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

We invite you to come forward and receive ashes - a reminder that we are claimed by God and for God. If you are unable to come forward but desire to receive ashes, raise your hand and Pastor Liza will come to you.

POEM (next page) Invited
by the Rev. Sara Are

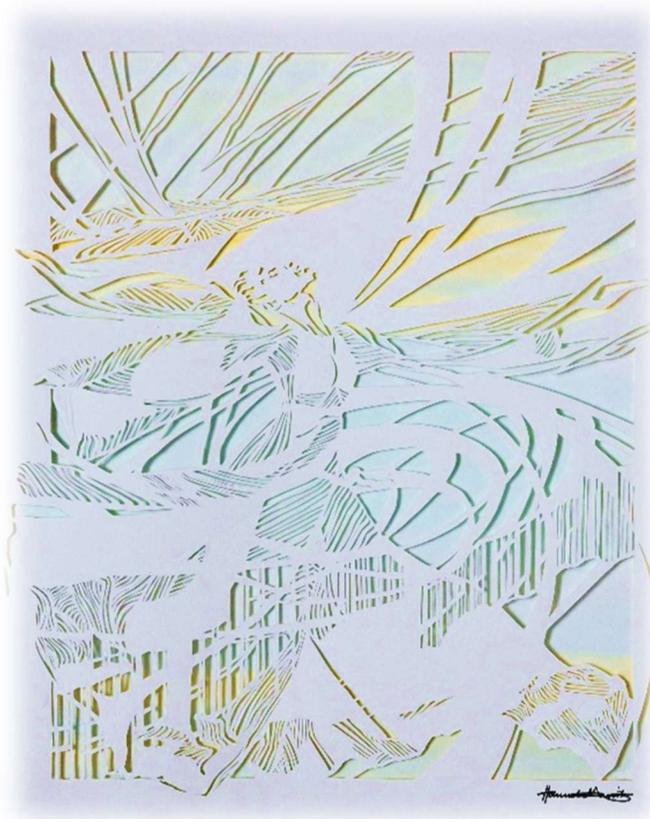
CALL TO OFFERING & REFLECTION

OFFERTORY Beautiful Things
Center Church Worship Band

M. Gungor

*You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of the dust*

*You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of us*



Dawn (paper lace on watercolor), 2019, Hannah Garrity

Invited

I like to imagine that each year,
God invites me to a party.
God drops me a note that says,
“No gifts, casual dress. Come just as you are.”

I like to imagine that I am brave enough to go.
I like to imagine that I decide that I am worth it.
This was no pity invite,
There is no obligatory postage.
God wants me there.

So I get myself together,
Smudged glasses, sensitive ego, wrinkled shirt, and all.
I ring the doorbell a few minutes late on account of
the fact that
I lost my keys twice trying to get out the door,
And I almost turn back to hid in my car,
Afraid that I might embarrass myself over
appetizers or small talk.
But then God answers the door,
And God says, “You’re here!”
And I smile, because I am.

And with every step past that threshold,
I know that God is cheering me on.
It’s the pride of a parent watching their child take
Their first step.
If I freeze, God is not disappointed.
If I fall, God is not mad.
But if I trust the invitation,
If I move closer,
I know, God Celebrates.

Friends, you’ve got mail.
It’s an invitation to dust off your shoes,
To go deeper,
To trust that you’re worth it,
To lose your keys and find your faith,
And then to find them both, along with your worth.
You are invited.
We are invited.
Again and again and again.
This invitation is for you.

*Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One;
give thanks, because he's given
Jesus Christ, His Son.*

*And now let the weak say 'I am strong',
let the poor say 'I am rich',
because of what the Lord has done for us.*

Give thanks....

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**We believe in a God who is everywhere and right here,
Bigger than the sky and in the smallest details,
All at once and in every moment.
We believe that God meets us where we are—
In heartbreak and high hopes,
Around crowded tables and in quiet homes,
In joy and in suffering,
In loneliness and in connection,
In sanctuaries and in living rooms,
In marches and in waiting rooms.
We believe that nothing we do or leave undone
Can distance us from God's love.
God is forever drawing us close and pulling us in.
Again and again, God meets us where we are
And invites us into wholeness.
Thanks be to God for a love like that.**

CLOSING SONG

Take My Life and Let it Be

C. Tomlin

Vs. 1

*Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord, to thee
Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise
Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love
Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee*

Vs. 2

*Take my voice and let me sing always, only for my king
Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee
Take my silver and my gold not a might would I withhold
Take my intellect and use every power as you choose (To Chorus)*

Chorus

*Here am I, all of me
Take my life, it's all for thee*

Vs. 3

*Take my will and make it Thine it shall be no longer mine
Take my heart it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne
Take my love, my Lord I pour at your feet its treasure store
Take myself and I will be ever, only all for thee
Take myself and I will be ever, only all for thee (To Chorus)*

*Here am I, all of me
Take my life, It's all for thee
Here am I, all of me
Take my life, It's all for thee*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BENEDICTION

*As you leave this space,
May your mouth speak of God's goodness.
May your arms hold those in need.
May your feet walk toward justice.
May your heart trust its worth.
May your soul dance in God's grace.
And may this be your rhythm—
Again and again and again,
Until God's promised day.
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself,
Go with courage, go with heart, go in peace.
Amen.*

SENDING FORTH *Take My Life and Let it Be (reprise)*

*Thank you to everyone who participated in worship and a special thank you
to the Center Church Worship Band – Dan Theriault, Logan Singerman,
David Reynolds & Arunan Arulampalam – for their gift of music this morning.*

Go forth in Peace, beloved of God.