



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



Order of Worship for
March 15, 2026 10:30 am

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

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT - AGAIN & AGAIN, GOD LOVES FIRST

MARCH 15, 2026 – ORDER OF WORSHIP

Cover Art: "Light Wave," by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

**Please rise in body or spirit.*

CHIMES

GATHERING MUSIC Welcome

M. Miller

Dan Theriault, soloist

WELCOME & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT*†

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Before we were born,

All: Before we took our first breath,

One: Before the week started,

All: Before the year started,

One: Before we said, "I love you,"

All: Before we said, "I'm sorry,"

One: Before we figured out who we really are,

All: Before we figured out who we want to be,

One: Before it all—

All: God loved us.

One: Unconditionally and freely,

All: Fully and honestly—

One: God loved us.

All: Again and again, this is where our story begins.

One: Let us worship God!

*OPENING HYMN NCH 43 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

BEECHER

PASSING OF THE PEACE

A TIME FOR CHILDREN

Rev. Liza Arulampalam

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

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God of the here and now—
We have heard the words,
 “For God so loved the world
 That he gave his only son,”
Time and time again.
We have read them on billboards,
Heard them in worship,
And seen them on signs.
And yet we know,
There is a difference between
Hearing those words in passing
And truly, deeply listening.
We long to listen, God.
We long to hear your truth.
We long to know your love.
Open our hearts and minds.
We are listening.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE John 3: 14-21
 Ephesians 2: 1-10

SERMON Again and Again, God Loves First

Rev. Liza Arulampalam

MUSICAL RESPONSE What Wondrous Love
 Catherine Thompson Maclean, flute

Wm. Walker

*What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
That Christ should come in bliss to bear the heavy cross for my soul.*

CALL TO CONFESSION

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**God of love,
We forget the beginning of the story—
That we were made from love, to be love, to give love.
Instead of rooting our narrative in the goodness refrain of creation,
We skip ahead and find our worth at the fall,
With Cain and Abel, lost in the wilderness.
We forget that first there was you, and you are love.
We forget that out of that love you created us.
We forget that from the very first day, you loved first.
We forget, because a love like that doesn't make sense to us.
Forgive our low self-esteem.
Forgive our resistance to love ourselves.
Forgive our hesitation to trust that even we could be made good.
And forgive our tendency to pass that doubt on—from generation to generation.
Write a new beginning for us that roots our confidence in your unrelenting love.
With hope we pray, again and again. Amen.**

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

One: Family of faith, no matter what we do, where we go, or what we tell ourselves—
God is love, and God is loving us.

All: Again and again, we are claimed, held, forgiven, and cared for.
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself—thanks be to God. Amen!

CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY Minuetto 1 & 2 for Flute
Catherine Thompson Maclean, flute

J. S. Bach

*DOXOLOGY

OLD HUNDRETH

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below,
Praise God above, you heavenly host,
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**We believe God is love—
Unconditional, constant love.
We believe this love exists for all,
Choosing each and every one of us,
Day after day,
Again and again and again.
We believe that God’s love is like a river.
Rivers cannot help but flow toward the sea;
God’s love cannot help but move toward us.
We are swimming in it.
We believe that God loved first.
We believe that God breathed life into dust.
We believe that God said, “This is good,”
And because we believe that God loved first,
We strive to build lives that reflect God’s love.
May we begin again here. Amen.**

*CLOSING HYMN NCH 198 Lift High the Cross

CRUCIFER

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.*

POSTLUDE "Allegro" from Divertimento No. 4 for Flute

W. A. Mozart

Thank you to everyone who participated in worship today! Go forth in Peace, beloved of God.