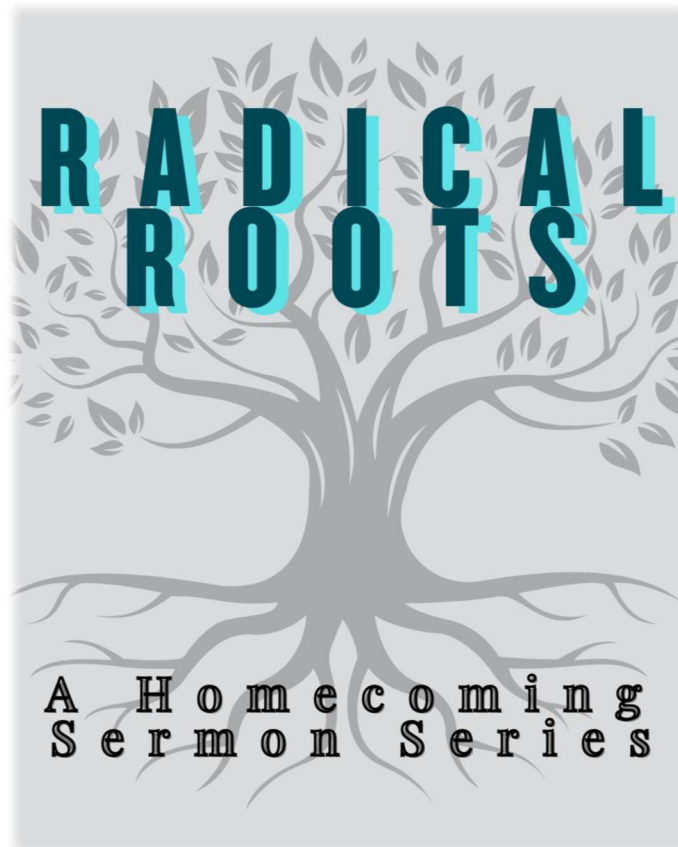




*An Open and Affirming Congregation
of the United Church of Christ*



Order of Worship for
September 27, 2026 10:30 am

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

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
RADICAL ROOTS: THOMAS HOPKINS GALLAUDET
FREEDOM TRAIL SUNDAY

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026 – ORDER OF WORSHIP

**Please rise in body or spirit.*

CHIMES

ORGAN PRELUDE Largo

A. Vivaldi

WELCOME & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT *†

CALL TO WORSHIP

Based on Isaiah 56:1-7 and Luke 5:17-26

Leader: God calls us to act justly and live rightly, for salvation is drawing near.

People: We come seeking righteousness, ready to be made whole.

Leader: This house is a house of prayer for all peoples — no one is turned away.

People: We gather with the stranger, the outsider, and the seeker; all are welcome here.

Leader: Friends carried a paralyzed man to Jesus, refusing to let obstacles stop them.

People: We bring one another before God, trusting in the power of faith and community.

Leader: Seeing their faith, Jesus offered forgiveness and healing, and the man rose and walked.

People: We come expecting grace — ready to be forgiven, ready to be healed, ready to rise.

Leader: Let us worship the God who welcomes the outsider and restores the broken.

**All: We praise you, O God, for your justice, your mercy, and your healing love.
Amen.**

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

God of justice and mercy, your salvation is drawing near, and your house is open to all people. Like friends who carried a broken man through the crowd, we bring ourselves and one another before you now, trusting in your power to forgive and to heal. Open our hearts as that roof was opened, that your grace might reach the places in us that need it most. In the name of Jesus, who welcomes and restores us all.

Amen.

*OPENING HYMN NCH 23 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

IN BABILONE

*PASSING OF PEACE

"The Peace of Christ be with you."

A TIME FOR CHILDREN

Ms. Ebony McMillan

The Congregation Sings, as the children are dismissed to Sunday School:

***Halle, Halle, Hallelujah,
Halle, Halle, Hallelujah,
Halle, Halle, Hallelujah,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah!***

Traditional Caribbean Melody

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy God,
before we hear your Word, open us to receive it.
Speak now through scripture and silence,
that what is read and what is heard
might bring us closer to your truth
and to one another.
By your Spirit,
illumine our minds,
soften our hearts,
and stir us to faithful living.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 56: 1-7 (NRSVUE)

Thus says the Lord:

Maintain justice, and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come
and my deliverance be revealed.

² Happy is the mortal who does this,
the one who holds it fast,
who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it,
and refrains from doing any evil.

³ Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say,
“The Lord will surely separate me from his people,”
and do not let the eunuch say,
“I am just a dry tree.”

⁴ For thus says the Lord:
To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me
and hold fast my covenant,

⁵ I will give, in my house and within my walls,
a monument and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that shall not be cut off.

⁶ And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,
to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the Sabbath and do not profane it
and hold fast my covenant—

⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar,
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.

Luke 5: 17-26 (NRSVUE)

¹⁷ One day while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem were sitting nearby, and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. ¹⁸ Just then some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a stretcher. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, ¹⁹ but, finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. ²⁰ When he saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.” ²¹ Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, “Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ²² When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, “Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’? ²⁴ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the one who was paralyzed—“I say to you, stand up and take your stretcher and go to your home.” ²⁵ Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. ²⁶ Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen incredible things today.”

SERMON

Accessible to All

Rev. Dr. Eric J. Hearst

Revisiting the Rev. Thomas Hopins Gallaudet’s Sermon on the Opening of the Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons; delivered April 20, 1817, at the Historic Center Church Meetinghouse

MUSICAL RESPONSE I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

African American Spiritual

Stewart Battle, soloist

*I want Jesus to walk with me.
I want Jesus to walk with me.
All along my pilgrim journey,
I want Jesus to walk with me.*

*In my trials, walk with me.
In my trials, walk with me.
When the shades of life are falling,
I want Jesus to walk with me.*

*In my sorrows, walk with me.
In my sorrows, walk with me.
When my heart within is aching,
I want Jesus to walk with me.*

*In my troubles, walk with me.
In my troubles, walk with me.
When my life becomes a burden,
I want Jesus to walk with me.*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

(based on Isaiah 56:1–7 and Luke 5:17–26)

Let us pray.

God of justice, your salvation is close at hand. We lift up a world still waiting for righteousness — the nations torn by conflict, the communities divided by fear of the stranger.

God who welcomes the outsider, your house is a house of prayer for all peoples. We pray for all who have been excluded or cast aside, and ask that you make us a church with open doors.

God who sees the faith of friends, we remember those who carried a broken man to you and would not be turned away. We pray for all who carry others today — caregivers, friends, and family bearing burdens not their own — and ask for the courage to carry one another too.

God who forgives and heals, we bring before you our own need for grace: the guilt we carry, the wounds we hide, the parts of us still waiting to rise and walk. Heal us, body and soul.

And God of wonder, fill us with the same amazement that filled the crowd that day, that our lives might give you glory.

Hear these prayers, spoken and unspoken, as we pray together the prayer Jesus taught us:

LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.
Amen.**

CALL TO OFFERING

Friends, all that we have comes from God's abundant grace.
As we have received freely, let us give freely —
our gifts, our time, our very selves —
in gratitude for God's goodness to us.
Let us offer them now with joyful and generous hearts.

OFFERTORY The Blessing K. & C. Carnes, S. Furtick, and C. Brown
 Tim Levesque and Elizabeth Stassen, soloists
 Center Church Choir

*The Lord bless you and keep you,
make His face shine upon you, be
gracious to you.
The Lord turn His face toward you
and give you peace.*

*May His favor be upon you, and a
thousand generations,
and your family,
and your children, and their children.*

*May His presence go before you, and
behind you, and beside you,
all around you, and within you;*

*He is with you, in the morning, in the
evening, in your coming,
in your going, in your weeping,
and rejoicing, He is for you.*

Amen

*DOXOLOGY

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God the source of all our gifts,
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts,
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!***

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**Gracious God,
we dedicate these gifts to you,
and with them, ourselves.
Use what we offer
for the healing of the world,
the building up of your church,
and the coming of your kingdom.
May our giving reflect your grace,
and may our lives, as well as our offerings,
be signs of your love at work in the world.
Amen.**

***CLOSING HYMN NCH 506 What a Friend We Have in Jesus**

ERIE

BENEDICTION

Leader: Go now in peace,
People: to love and serve God with joy.
Leader: Go now in faith,
People: trusting in God's presence with us always.
Leader: Go now in hope,
People: carrying light into the world.
Leader: And may the grace of Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.
All: Amen.

CHORAL BENEDICTION

ORGAN POSTLUDE Rondeau

J. J. Mouret

Thank you to everyone who participated in worship this morning. Go in Peace!

*A Special Thank you to our ASL interpreters this morning, and to our visitors from the
CT Freedom Trail and from the American School for the Deaf.
We are honored to celebrate Freedom Trail Sunday with them.*

*For more information about the Connecticut Freedom Trail, please visit ctfreedomtrail.org.
For more information about the American School for the Deaf, please visit asd-1817.org.*

