



CENTRAL
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PREPARATION

January 26, 2025

Third Sunday After Epiphany

WORDS FOR REFLECTION

“Not until we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God’s holiness and sovereignty, acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours.”

—J.I. PACKER

COLLECT OF THE DAY

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities; and in all our dangers and necessities, stretch forth your right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS

FIRST READING: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

PSALM: Psalm 19

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

GOSPEL: Luke 4:14-21

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRELUDE

Instrumental Prelude

Marta Bagratuni

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Traditional Welsh · Walter C. Smith

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes.
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above,
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life Thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all.
Thy wisdom so boundless, Thy mercy so free,
Eternal Thy goodness for naught changeth Thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render; O help us to see
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

Psalm 90

LEADER So teach us to number our days

PEOPLE That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

LEADER Return, O LORD! How long?

PEOPLE Have pity on your servants!

LEADER Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast
love,

PEOPLE That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

LEADER Let the favor of the LORD our God be upon us,

PEOPLE And establish the work of our hands upon us.

HYMN

The Power of the Cross

Keith Getty · Stuart Townend · Arr. Dan Galbraith

Oh, to see the dawn of the darkest day,
Christ on the road to Calvary.
Tried by sinful men, torn and beaten, then
Nailed to a cross of wood.

*This, the pow'r of the cross.
Christ became sin for us.
Took the blame, bore the wrath,
We stand forgiven at the cross.*

Oh, to see the pain written on Your face,
Bearing the awesome weight of sin.
Ev'ry bitter thought, ev'ry evil deed,
Crowning Your bloodstained brow. *Chorus*

Now the daylight flees, now the ground beneath
Quakes as its Maker bows His head.
Curtain torn in two, dead are raised to life,
“Finished!” the vict'ry cry. *Chorus*

Oh, to see my name written in Your wounds,
For through Your suffering, I am free.
Death is crushed to death, life is mine to live,
Won through Your selfless love.

*This, the pow'r of the cross.
Son of God slain for us.
What a love, what a cost,
We stand forgiven at the cross.*

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Heavenly Father, we call to you and name you as eternal, ever-present, and boundless in love. Yet there are times when we fail to recognize you in the dailyness of our lives. Sometimes shame clenches tightly around our hearts, and we hide our true feelings. Sometimes fear makes us small, and we miss the chance to speak from our strength. Sometimes doubt invades our hopefulness, and we degrade our own wisdom. Loving God, in the daily round from sunrise to sunset, remind us again of your holy presence hovering near us and in us. Free us from shame and self-doubt. Help us to see you in the moment-by-moment possibilities to live honestly, to act courageously, and to speak from the wisdom you impart; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

1 Corinthians 1:9, 16

No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

LEADER Hear and receive the good news of the gospel:
 in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

ALL **Thanks be to God!**

PASSING OF THE PEACE

LEADER The peace of the Lord be with you always.

ALL **And also with you.**

HYMN

Goodness of God

CeCe Winans · Ben Fielding · Brian Johnson · Edward Martin Cash · Jason Ingram · Jenn Johnson

I love You, Lord,
For Your mercy never fails me.
All my days, I've been held in Your hands.
From the moment that I wake up
Until I lay my head,
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God.

*'Cause all my life You have been faithful,
And all my life You have been so, so good.
With every breath that I am able,
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God.*

I love Your voice.
You have led me through the fire.
In darkest night, You are close like no other.
I've known You as a Father.
I've known You as a Friend.
And I have lived in the goodness of God. *Chorus*

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 surrender now.
I give You everything.
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me. *Chorus*

PROFESSION OF FAITH

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, dead, and buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven,

And is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
The holy catholic Church,
The communion of saints,
The forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body,
And the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYER WITH CHILDREN

All preschool and elementary age children are invited to the front of the church and will be dismissed to Children's Church with their teachers where they will read, sing, learn, and play in an environment suited to their language and style. Alternatively, children are always welcome to remain in the sanctuary to worship alongside the adults for the duration of the service.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

We regularly pray for needs in our congregation, our neighborhood and city, and the world. Please submit prayer requests to centralchurchnyc.org/prayerrequest.

OFFERING

If you are our guest today, please feel no obligation to give. For members and regular attenders of Central, give generously as you are able. We give because all we have has been graciously given to us by God. Our offerings express our joyful dependence upon God and our commitment to join God in his work of renewal.

*You can give online by texting **centralchurchnyc** to **833-737-6262** or visiting centralchurchnyc.org/give.*

OFFERTORY

Solo Violin Sonata No. 3 III. Tema con variazione

Giuseppe Tartini

Doori Na, violin

THE DOXOLOGY

Old Hundredth LM

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Ecclesiastes 2:12-17

The passage can be found on page 554 of the pew Bible.

¹²So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. ¹³Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. ¹⁴The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. ¹⁵Then I said in my heart, “What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?” And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. ¹⁶For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! ¹⁷So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

SERMON

Ecclesiastes: The Enigma of Life Under the Sun | **The Question of Wisdom**

Rev. Jason Harris

THE THANKSGIVING

LEADER Lift up your hearts.

PEOPLE **We lift them up to the Lord.**

LEADER Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

PEOPLE **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

LEADER It is indeed right, our duty and joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, Lord, holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God.

PRAYER OF HUMBLE ACCESS

We do not presume to come to this, your Table, O Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but solely in your great mercy. We are not worthy to gather up the crumbs under your Table, but you are the same Lord who always delights in showing mercy. Grant us, therefore gracious Lord, that we who now receive these gifts of bread and wine, according to our Savior's Word, may share in the body and blood of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, that we may dwell in him forever and he in us. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Prayer for Those Searching for Truth

Lord Jesus Christ, you claim to be the way, the truth, and the life. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open to me the reality of who you are. Give me an understanding of you that is coherent, convincing, and that leads to the life that you promise. Amen.

Prayer of Belief

Lord Jesus Christ, I acknowledge that you are so holy and I am so sinful that you had to die for me. Yet you are so merciful and I am so loved that you were willing to die for me. I confess that I have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed by what I have done and by what I have failed to do. I thank you for paying my debt, bearing my punishment on the cross, and offering forgiveness and new life. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you as Savior and Lord. Amen.

Prayer of Commitment

Lord Jesus, I know that if I do not love you with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength, I shall love something else with all my heart and mind and soul and strength. Grant that by loving you first I may be liberated from all lesser loves and loyalties and have you as my first love, my chief good, and my final joy. Amen.

*Communion is served with wine and gluten-free bread.
Individually wrapped wafers and grape juice are available at
each station.*

COMMUNION HYMN

What a Beautiful Name

Ben Fielding · Brooke Ligertwood

You were the Word at the beginning,
One with God the Lord Most High.
Your hidden glory in creation
Now revealed in You our Christ.

What a beautiful Name it is,
What a beautiful Name it is, the Name of Jesus Christ my King.
What a beautiful Name it is; nothing compares to this.
What a beautiful Name it is, the Name of Jesus.

You didn't want Heaven without us,
So Jesus, You brought Heaven down.
My sin was great, Your love was greater;
What could separate us now?

What a wonderful Name it is,
What a wonderful Name it is, the Name of Jesus Christ my King.
What a wonderful Name it is; nothing compares to this.
What a wonderful Name it is, the Name of Jesus.

Death could not hold You; the veil tore before You.
You silenced the boast of sin and grave.
The heavens are roaring the praise of Your glory,
For You are raised to life again.

You have no rival; You have no equal.
Now and forever, God You reign.
Yours is the Kingdom, Yours is the glory;
Yours is the Name above all names.

What a powerful Name it is,
What a powerful Name it is, the Name of Jesus Christ my King.
What a powerful Name it is; nothing can stand against.
What a powerful Name it is, the Name of Jesus.

THE 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.

BENEDICTION

We begin our worship with God's gracious invitation, and we conclude with God's blessing, his good Word. It is appropriate to look up and open our palms as we receive the Benediction to symbolize how Jesus Christ lifts our heads and to demonstrate our eagerness to receive God's blessing.

DISMISSAL

LEADER Let us go forth to serve the world as those who
 love our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

ALL **Thanks be to God!**

POSTLUDE

Members of our prayer team will be available immediately following the service at the front of the sanctuary to pray confidentially for you about any need or concern you might have. We encourage you to avail yourself of this opportunity to receive prayer. ☺

NOMINATING COMMITTEE UPDATE

Central's Nominating Committee, chaired this year by Scott Stephenson, enthusiastically encourages members of the congregation to offer recommendations for the positions of elder, deacon, and trustee to serve the church. Given the essential work of the officers, all individuals recommended to the committee should demonstrate an unabashed commitment to Jesus Christ and to the ministry of Central, as evidenced by active involvement in the life of the church as well as personally appropriate levels of financial support; to reformed theology as expressed in the Scriptures, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Catechisms of the Church; to the Presbyterian form of government and the polity of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church; along with proven leadership ability in areas necessary for a church officer and a willingness to serve.

Please note that, in accordance with our by-laws, all potential candidates must undergo a course of instruction and be approved by the Session before being nominated and presented to the congregation. We invite you to contact Scott Stephenson (scottgerardstephenson@gmail.com) or Jason Harris (seniorpastor@centralchurchnyc.org) if you have any questions, if you would like to recommend an individual, or if you personally would like to participate in a course of instruction covering topics such as: church government, the sacraments, the faith of the church, the worship of the church, the discipline of the church, the history of the church, and an understanding of the various offices of the church. We highly value and deeply appreciate your active involvement in this important process.