



CENTRAL  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

ORDER OF WORSHIP

## PREPARATION

**February 23, 2025**

**Seventh Sunday After Epiphany**

## WORDS FOR REFLECTION

“Protest against evil, on the assumption that it is evil, shows that we know there could and should be something better. We only know what is evil because we know what is good. And because we know the difference, we long for there to be something better than what we see around us. But will there ever be? Will there ever be anything better than this world with all its infuriating absurdities?”

—CHRISTOPHER J. H. WRIGHT

## COLLECT OF THE DAY

Almighty God, creator of all things and giver of every good and perfect gift, hear with favor the prayers of your people, that we who are justly punished for our offenses may mercifully be delivered by your goodness, for the glory of your name; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## THE COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS

FIRST READING: Genesis 45:3-11, 15

PSALM: Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

GOSPEL: Luke 6:27-38

# ORDER OF WORSHIP

## PRELUDE

### Instrumental Prelude

*Marta Bagratuni*

### Wonderful, Merciful Savior

Dawn Rogers · Eric Wyse

Wonderful, merciful Savior,  
Precious Redeemer, and Friend,  
Who would have thought that a Lamb  
Could rescue the souls of men?  
Oh, You rescue the souls of men.

Counselor, Comforter, Keeper,  
Spirit we long to embrace,  
You offer hope when our hearts have  
Hopelessly lost the way.  
Oh, we hopelessly lost the way.

*You are the One that we praise,  
You are the One we adore,  
You give the healing and grace,  
Our hearts always hunger for.  
Oh, our hearts always hunger for.*

Almighty, infinite Father,  
Faithfully loving Your own.  
Here in our weakness You find us  
Falling before Your throne.  
Oh, we're falling before Your throne.    *Chorus*

# WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## CALL TO WORSHIP

### Psalm 34

LEADER I will bless the LORD at all times;

**PEOPLE His praise shall continually be in my mouth.**

LEADER Oh, magnify the LORD with me,

**PEOPLE And let us exalt his name together!**

LEADER I sought the LORD, and he answered me

**PEOPLE And delivered me from all my fears.**

LEADER Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!

**PEOPLE Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him!**

# HYMN

## Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Robert Robinson · Traditional American Music

Come Thou Fount of every blessing,  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace.  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet,  
Sung by flaming tongues above.  
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it,  
Mount of Thy unchanging love.

Here I raise my Ebenezer,  
Hither by Thy help I've come.  
And I hope by Thy good pleasure,  
Safely to arrive at home.  
Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God.  
He to rescue me from danger,  
Interposed His precious blood.

O, to grace how great a debtor,  
Daily I'm constrained to be.  
Let that grace now, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love.  
Here's my heart, O, take and seal it,  
Seal it for Thy courts above.

## **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**

Gracious God, we confess that we have longed too much for the comforts of this world. We have loved the gifts more than the giver. In your mercy, help us to see that all the things we pine for are shadows, but you are substance; that they are quicksands, but you are mountain; that they are shifting, but you are anchor. We plead your forgiveness on the merits of Jesus Christ. Accept his worthiness for our unworthiness, his sinlessness for our transgressions, his fullness for our emptiness, his glory for our shame, his righteousness for our dead works, his death for our life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **SILENT CONFESSION**

# WORDS OF ASSURANCE

## 1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.

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

## Psalm 34 (Taste and See)

Shane & Shane

I sought the Lord, and He answered me  
And delivered me from every fear.  
Those who look on Him are radiant.  
They'll never be ashamed.  
They'll never be ashamed.

This poor man cried, and the Lord heard me  
And saved me from my enemies  
The Son of God surrounds His saints.  
He will deliver them.  
He will deliver them.

*Magnify the Lord with me.  
Come exalt His name together.  
Glorify the Lord with me.  
Come exalt His name forever.*

O Taste and see that the Lord is good.  
Oh bless us here who hides in Him.  
Oh fear the Lord, oh all you saints.  
He'll give you everything.  
He'll give you everything. *Chorus*

Let us bless the Lord every day and night.  
Never ending praise, may our incense rise. *Chorus*

O Taste and see that the Lord is good.  
He'll give you everything.  
He'll give you everything.

# 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 - 11:30 AM SERVICE

*We regularly pray for needs in our congregation, our neighborhood and city, and the world. Please submit prayer requests to [centralchurchnyc.org/prayerrequest](http://centralchurchnyc.org/prayerrequest).*

# RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS - 10 AM SERVICE

Katherine Hardy, Will Hardy, Elizabeth West

## Membership Vows

- 1 Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in God's sight and without hope for your salvation except through his sovereign mercy?
- 2 Do you believe in the Lord Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
- 3 Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?
- 4 Do you promise to serve Christ and His church by supporting this congregation in its worship of God and its ministry to others to the best of your ability?
- 5 Do you promise to accept the spiritual guidance of the church, to walk in a spirit of Christian love with this congregation, and to seek those things that make for unity, purity and peace?

## Congregational Vow

Will you, the members of this congregation and witnesses of these vows, acting on behalf of yourself and as representatives of the whole body of Christ, do everything within your power to encourage Katherine, Will, and Elizabeth to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

## 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](https://centralchurchnyc.org/give)**.*

## OFFERTORY

### If the Lord Builds the House

Andrew Holt · Ethan Hulse · Hope Darst · Jonathan Lindley Smith

I've built up my own name,  
But the walls couldn't stand.  
I've trusted my own strength,  
But it was sinking sand.  
So I put my ruins  
Into Your hands  
And watch You restore them  
Like only You can.

*'Cause if the Lord builds the house,  
Nobody can tear it down.  
If the Lord builds the house,  
Nobody can tear it down.  
When it's built on His name,  
There's nothing gonna shake this ground.  
If the Lord builds the house,  
Nobody can tear it down.*

The bricks may be weathered  
Through storm and through fire,  
But what God holds together,  
It stands firm every time.  
'Cause my life is anchored  
On this solid truth,  
That whatever God's building,  
No, it can't be moved.    *Chorus*

As for me and my house,  
We're gonna serve You Lord.  
So here's the keys, come on in.  
Everything we have is Yours.

Oh, here's the keys.  
Won't You come on in.  
Everything we have is Yours.    *Chorus*

## 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 9:1-16

The passage can be found on pages 557-558 of the pew Bible.

<sup>1</sup>But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him. <sup>2</sup>It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. <sup>3</sup>This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. <sup>4</sup>But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. <sup>5</sup>For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. <sup>6</sup>Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.

<sup>7</sup>Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

<sup>8</sup>Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

<sup>9</sup>Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.

<sup>10</sup>Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for

there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

<sup>11</sup>Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. <sup>12</sup>For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

<sup>13</sup>I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. <sup>14</sup>There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it. <sup>15</sup>But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man. <sup>16</sup>But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard.

## SERMON

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

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

## Forever

Kari Jobe

The moon and stars, they wept.  
The morning sun was dead.  
The Savior of the world was fallen.  
His body on the cross,  
His blood poured out for us,  
The weight of every curse upon Him.

One final breath He gave,  
As Heaven looked away.  
The Son of God was laid in darkness.  
A battle in the grave,  
The war on death was waged,  
The power of hell forever broken.

The ground began to shake.  
The stone was rolled away.  
His perfect love could not be overcome.  
Now death, where is your sting?  
Our resurrected King  
Has rendered you defeated.

*Forever He is glorified.*  
*Forever He is lifted high.*  
*Forever He is risen.*  
*He is alive!*  
*He is alive!*

We sing hallelujah!  
We sing hallelujah!  
We sing hallelujah!  
The Lamb has overcome!

## 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. ☺*