



CENTRAL
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PREPARATION

January 18, 2026
Second Sunday After Epiphany

WORDS FOR REFLECTION

“Let’s face it, the Christian church has not always been comfortable with human physical and emotional desires. It has often spoken about them as though they were necessary evils to get men and women to make vows of commitment and to produce children - as though such desires were like some young plant that could easily produce sweet-tasting but poisonous fruit, and so were best stamped on, rather than carefully trained up the right trellis to be enabled to flower at the right time and in the right place. [The Song of Songs] with its sudden burst of longing, shows us that God is positive about desire; indeed, it is God-given in the first place!”

—JULIAN HARDYMAN

COLLECT OF THE DAY

Almighty and everlasting God, who governs all things in heaven and earth: mercifully hear the supplications of your people, and grant us your peace all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE COMMON LECTORY READINGS

FIRST READING: Isaiah 49:1-7

PSALM: Psalm 40:1-11

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

GOSPEL: John 1:29-42

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRELUDE

Instrumental Prelude

Marta Bagratuni

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Charles Wesley · Rowland Hugh Prichard

Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of Heav'n, to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation, enter ev'ry trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit into ev'ry troubled breast!
Let us all in thee inherit, let us find the promised rest:
Take away the love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return and never, nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be:
Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory, 'til in Heav'n we take our place,
'Til we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

Isaiah 52

LEADER How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,

PEOPLE **Who publishes peace, who brings good news of
happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”**

LEADER The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their
voice;
together they sing for joy;

PEOPLE **For eye to eye they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.**

LEADER Break forth together into singing,
you waste places of Jerusalem,

PEOPLE **For the LORD has comforted his people;
he has redeemed Jerusalem.**

LEADER The LORD has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations,

PEOPLE **And all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.**

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

Most merciful Father, we acknowledge that we have sinned against you. Forgive us the sins of our tongues - for deception and untruthfulness in our dealings with others. Forgive us the sins of our eyes - for impurity in our glances and imagination. Forgive us the sins of our bodies - for hurting and wronging others by our actions. Forgive us the sins of our hearts - for hard-heartedness toward you and others. Give us grace to be holy, kind, gentle, pure, to live for you and not for ourselves, to be transformed into your likeness, to live wholly for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

1 Corinthians 6:11

You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our 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

Perfectly Loved

Andrew Ripp · Ethan Hulse · Rachel Lampa

Who said that you weren't beautiful
And that you didn't belong in your own skin?
Who said that you were all alone
And that you're never gonna find love again?

So many little words, so many little lies
That have followed you all of your life.
Looking for the truth, look into your eyes
And you'll see it's been there the whole time.

*Ooh, even when you were running,
Even when you were hiding,
Never been a moment that you were not perfectly loved.
When you barely believed it,
When your eyes couldn't see it,
Every single moment, you've always been perfectly loved.
Ooh, perfectly loved,
You've always been perfectly loved.*

In the hands of the infinite,
As the wounds of the world became his,
See the kindness Heaven has for you
And how he's always been drawing you in.

So many open doors, so many miracles
That have followed you all of your life.
Looking for the truth, look into your eyes,
And you'll see it's been there the whole time. *Chorus*

You're not a problem.
You're not a mistake.
Don't need fixing or solving
In the arms of his grace.

You're perfectly human,
Made from the dust.
You've got a heart, broken and scarred,
Yet perfectly loved. *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

Song of Songs 2:7-17

The passage can be found on pages 560-561 of the pew Bible.

⁷I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
 by the gazelles or the does of the field,
that you not stir up or awaken love
 until it pleases.

⁸The voice of my beloved!
 Behold, he comes,
leaping over the mountains,
 bounding over the hills.

⁹My beloved is like a gazelle
 or a young stag.
Behold, there he stands

behind our wall,
gazing through the windows,
looking through the lattice.

¹⁰My beloved speaks and says to me:
"Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
and come away,
¹¹for behold, the winter is past;
the rain is over and gone.

¹²The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.

¹³The fig tree ripens its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
and come away.

¹⁴O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the crannies of the cliff,
let me see your face,
let me hear your voice,
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.

¹⁵Catch the foxes for us,
the little foxes
that spoil the vineyards,
for our vineyards are in blossom."

¹⁶My beloved is mine, and I am his;
he grazes among the lilies.

¹⁷Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee,
turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle
or a young stag on cleft mountains.

SERMON

The Song of Songs | A Theology of Desire
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 near each station. Your communion server can point you to them if desired.

COMMUNION HYMN

Graves Into Gardens

Christopher Joel Brown · Steven Furtick · Brandon Lake · Tiffany Hammeraul

I searched the world,
But it couldn't fill me.
Man's empty praise
And treasures that fade
Are never enough.

Then you came along
And put me back together.
And every desire
Is now satisfied
Here in your love.

*Oh, there's nothing better than you.
There's nothing better than you.
Lord, there's nothing,
Nothing is better than you.*

I'm not afraid
To show you my weakness.
My failures and flaws,
Lord, you've seen 'em all,
And you still call me friend.

'Cause the God of the mountain
Is the God of the valley.
There's not a place
Your mercy and grace
Won't find me again. *Chorus*

You turn mourning to dancing.
You give beauty for ashes.
You turn shame into glory.
You're the only one who can.

You turn graves into gardens.
You turn bones into armies.
You turn seas into highways.
You're the only one who can.
You're the only one who can. *Chorus*

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. ~

REQUEST FOR CARE

If you have a financial or practical care need for which you'd like to request assistance from Central, our deacons are readily available to discuss that with you. Please email care@centralchurchnyc.org and detail your situation so one of our deacons can contact you directly.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE UPDATE

Central's Nominating Committee, chaired this year by John Moon, 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 John Moon (moonjohnj@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.