



CENTRAL  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

ORDER OF WORSHIP

# PREPARATION

**February 8, 2026**

**Fifth Sunday After Epiphany**

## WORDS FOR REFLECTION

“By Eros I mean of course that state which we call ‘being in love;’ or if you prefer, that kind of love which lovers are ‘in.’”

—C. S. LEWIS

## COLLECT OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, keep your household the Church continually in your true religion; that those who lean only on the hope of your heavenly grace may always be defended by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## THE COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS

FIRST READING: Isaiah 58:1-9a (9b-12)

PSALM: Psalm 112:1-9 (10)

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16)

GOSPEL: Matthew 5:13-20

# ORDER OF WORSHIP

## PRELUDE

### Instrumental Prelude

*Caroline Cassio*

### Jesus, Lover of My Soul

Charles Wesley · Greg Thompson

Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high.  
Hide me, O my Savior, hide, 'til life's storm is past.  
Safe into the haven guide; receive my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none; I helpless, hang on thee.  
Leave, oh leave me not alone; still support and comfort me.  
All my trust on thee is stayed; all help from thee I bring;  
Cover my defenseless head in the shadow of thy wing.

Thou, O Christ, are all I want, more than all in thee I find;  
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint; heal the sick, and lead the blind.  
Just and holy is thy Name; I am all unrighteousness;  
False and full of sin I am; thou art full of truth and grace.

Plenteous grace with thee is found, grace to cover all my sin;  
Let the healing streams abound; make and keep me pure within.  
Thou of life the fountain art; let me take of thee.  
Spring thou up within my heart for all eternity.

# WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## CALL TO WORSHIP

### Isaiah 54

LEADER        Fear not, for you will not be ashamed;

PEOPLE        **Be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced;**

LEADER        For your Maker is your husband,

PEOPLE        **The LORD of hosts is his name;**

LEADER        And the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,

PEOPLE        **The God of the whole earth he is called.**

LEADER        For the mountains may depart

PEOPLE        **And the hills be removed,**

LEADER        But my steadfast love shall not depart from you,

PEOPLE        **And my covenant of peace shall not be removed.**

# HYMN

## O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

George Matheson · Christopher Miner

O Love that will not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

O Light that foll'west all my way,  
I yield my flick'ring torch to thee;  
My heart restores its borrowed ray,  
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day  
May brighter, fairer be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to thee;  
I trace the rainbow through the rain,  
And feel the promise is not vain,  
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from thee;  
I lay in dust, life's glory dead,  
And from the ground, there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be.

## **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**

Eternal God, whose covenant with us is never broken, we confess that we fail to fulfill your will. Though you have bound yourself to us, we will not bind ourselves to you. In Jesus Christ you serve us freely, but we refuse your love and withhold ourselves from others. We do not love you fully or love one another as you command. In your mercy, forgive and cleanse us. Lead us once again to your table and unite us to Christ, who is the bread of life and the vine from which we grow in grace. Amen.

## **SILENT CONFESSION**

# WORDS OF ASSURANCE

## 1 John 4:10

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

**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

## Living Hope

Phil Wickham

How great the chasm that lay between us,  
How high the mountain I could not climb.  
In desperation, I turned to Heaven,  
And spoke your name into the night.  
Then through the darkness, your lovingkindness  
Tore through the shadows of my soul.  
The work is finished, the end is written:  
Jesus Christ, my Living Hope.

Who could imagine so great a mercy?  
What heart could fathom such boundless grace?  
The God of Ages stepped down from glory  
To wear my sin and bear my shame.  
The cross has spoken, I am forgiven;  
The King of Kings calls me his own.  
Beautiful Savior, I'm yours forever,  
Jesus Christ, my Living Hope.

*Hallelujah! Praise the One who set me free!*  
*Hallelujah! Death has lost its grip on me!*  
*You have broken every chain;*  
*There's salvation in your name:*  
*Jesus Christ, my Living Hope.*

Then came the morning that sealed the promise:  
Your buried body began to breathe.  
Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion  
Declared, "The grave has no claim on me!"



Then came the morning that sealed the promise:  
Your buried body began to breathe.  
Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion  
Declared, “The grave has no claim on me!”  
Jesus, yours is the victory. *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.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Virginia Phelps Portwood - 10 a.m. service

Daughter of Henry and Carolyn Portwood

Jane Delia Greenberg - 11:30 a.m. service

Daughter of Chris and Virginia Greenberg

### Baptismal Vows

- 1 Do you acknowledge your child's need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?
- 2 Do you claim God's covenant promises on her behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for Virginia's/Jane's salvation, as you do for your own?
- 3 Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavor to set before her a godly example, that you will pray with and for her, that you will teach her the truths of the Christian faith, and that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring Virginia/Jane up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

### Congregational Vow

Do you as a congregation undertake the responsibility of assisting Henry and Carolyn / Chris and Virginia in the Christian nurture of their child?

## 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 - 5 P.M. 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).*

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

# OFFERTORY

## **Set Me As a Seal** - 10 and 11:30 a.m. services

René Clausen

Set me as a seal upon your heart,  
As a seal upon your arm.  
For love is strong as death.

Many waters cannot quench love,  
Neither can the floods drown it.

## **Set Me As a Seal** - 5 p.m. service

Matt Maher

*Set me as a seal on your heart.  
Set me as a seal on your soul.  
As strong as death is love,  
Unyielding as the grave.  
Nothing will quench its flame.  
Nothing will quench its flame.*

Kiss me, my love,  
That your name be on my lips.  
You intoxicate my being  
With the fragrance of your presence.

How beautiful you are, my darling.  
Show me your face, let me hear your voice.  
Sweet as the dew in the early morn',  
Like a lily among the thorns. *Chorus*

I looked for you, the one my heart loves.  
I looked for you but did not find you.  
Searched through the night  
Until I rested in your sight.  
Now I will never let you go.

'Cause you have stolen my heart,  
My sister, my bride.  
You've stolen my heart  
With one glance of your eyes.  
Your lips so sweet, adorned with honey.  
My hands, they drip with myrrh. *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 8:6-7

The passage can be found on page 564 of the pew Bible.

<sup>6</sup>Set me as a seal upon your heart,  
as a seal upon your arm,  
for love is strong as death,  
jealousy is fierce as the grave.

Its flashes are flashes of fire,  
the very flame of the Lord.

<sup>7</sup>Many waters cannot quench love,  
neither can floods drown it.

If a man offered for love  
all the wealth of his house,  
he would be utterly despised.

# SERMON

## *The Song of Songs* | A Theology of Love

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

## King of Love

Jonathan Lindley · Adam Palmer · Stephanie Kulla

The King of Love my Shepherd is,  
Whose goodness faileth never.  
I nothing lack if I am his  
And he is mine forever.  
And he is mine forever!

Where streams of living water flow  
My ransomed soul he leadeth,  
And where the verdant pastures grow  
With food celestial feedeth.

*Never failing ruler of my heart,  
Everlasting lover of my soul,  
On the mountain high or in the valley low,  
The King of Love my Shepherd is!  
The King of Love my Shepherd is!*

Lost and foolish oft I strayed,  
But yet in love he sought me  
And on his shoulder gently laid  
And home rejoicing brought me.

In death's dark veil I fear no ill  
With thee, dear Lord, beside me.  
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,  
Thy cross before to guide me.    *Chorus*

Oh, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!

And so through all the length of days  
Thy goodness faileth never.  
Good Shepherd, may I sing your praise  
Within your house forever.  
Within your house forever!

## 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](mailto:care@centralchurchnyc.org) and detail your situation so one of our deacons can contact you directly.*

# FINANCIAL UPDATE

<b>2026 Year-to-Date Giving (as of 1/28/26):</b>	<b>\$570,000</b>
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