



# Central Congregational United Church of Christ

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: **PROPHETIC PEACE**

December 7, 2025

Ministers / All of us

Pastor / **Rev. Gage Church**

Worship Leader / **Melanie Ralston**

Music Director and Accompanist / **Linda Smith**

Guest Vocalist / **Kim Long**

Song Leaders / **Gayle Hassler and Janice Ayers**

## **Music for Gathering**

“What Child Is This”

## **\*Prayer of Justice and Peace**

God of promises,  
your vision for peace stretches our imaginations,  
pushing us beyond platitudes  
and stirring up the fire of justice in our hearts.  
Show us our place and our purpose  
in leveling mountains and raising valleys,  
in straightening roads and clearing pathways.  
We pray as people of anticipation,  
who long for prophetic peace with anxious energy  
as we await the arrival of Christ among us.  
Amen.

## **\*Congregational Hymn**

“The Will to Dream”

*See bulletin attachment.*

*\* indicates to rise in body or spirit.*

***Bold indicates to speak or sing in unison.***

# Greetings & Announcements

## Call to Worship

We gather together in this place:  
**prophets and dreamers, singers and poets,**  
we who dare to imagine a world renewed;  
**we who dare to dream God's dream.**  
We watch with Malachi and John.  
**God's peace will soon appear.**  
The hills and valleys will meet,  
**and all things will be at rest.**  
We long for a world restored, renewed.  
**The fire of God's justice burns in our hearts.**  
Come and worship, all you who dream and wait.  
**We have come to wonder and praise.**

## Advent Candle Lighting

Heidi Hunt and Gage Church

## \*Congregational Hymn

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"  
O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
may ev'ry heart with eagerness swell.  
When will heaven's pow'rs begin to shake?  
We wait; we watch; we stay awake!  
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come in hope with us to dwell.

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
suspicion and hatred expel.  
Come as a babe, with nothing in hand;  
come as a king, with power to command!  
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come in peace with us to dwell.

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## Prayer of Unburdening

God of peace,  
we confess that the ways we maintain “peacefulness”  
are often at the expense of seeking justice  
for our neighbors and our world.  
We turn our eyes away from human suffering  
to maintain false contentment in our own hearts.  
We settle for compromises that harm the vulnerable,  
rather than risk discomfort or loss.  
We ask to be soothed rather than stirred up.  
Make us a holy and risk-taking people.  
Forgive and inspire us.  
Shape us as bold witnesses to your coming Kin-dom.  
Amen.

## Assurance of God’s Love

### Passing the Peace

### The Readings

Matthew 3:1-12

At this time John the Baptizer appeared in the desert of Judea, proclaiming, “Change your hearts and minds, for the reign of heaven is about to break in upon you!”

It was John that the prophet Isaiah described when he said, “A herald’s voice cries in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of our God, make straight the paths of God!’”

John was clothed in a garment of camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist. Grasshoppers and wild honey were his food. At that time, Jerusalem, all Judea and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him. John baptized them in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

When he saw that many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were coming to be baptized, John said to them, “You pack of snakes! Who told you to flee

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from the coming wrath? Give some evidence that you mean to reform! And don't pride yourselves on the claim, 'Sarah and Abraham are our parents.' I tell you, God can raise children for Sarah and Abraham from these very stones!

"Even now the ax is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree that is not fruitful will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I will baptize you in water if you have a change of heart, but the One who will follow me is more powerful than I. I'm not fit even to untie the sandals of the Coming One! That One will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire, whose winnowing-fan will clear the threshing floor. The grain will be gathered into the barn, but the chaff will be burned in unquenchable fire."

### Malachi 3:1-6a

Well, pay attention! I am sending my Messenger to prepare the way for me; the One you seek will suddenly come to the Temple, the Messenger of the Covenant whom you long for will come, says God Omnipotent. But who can endure the day of the coming? Who can stand firm when that One appears? That day will be like a smelter's fire, a launderer's soap.

The One will preside as refiner and purifier, purifying the Children of Levi, refining them like gold and silver — then they will once again make offerings to God in righteousness. Then the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to God as they were in former days, in years long past.

I will appear before you in court, to testify against the sorcerers, adulterers, and perjurers, against those who cheat the hired laborers of their wages, and oppress the widow and the orphan, who rob foreigners of their rights and have no respect for me, says God Omnipotent. No — I, God, do not change...

## Special Music

Kim Long



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## Message

“Peace ≠ Quiet”

Rev. Gage Church

## \*Congregational Hymn

“Let There Be Peace on Earth”

*(twice through)*

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.

With God as our Parent, we are family.

Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.

With ev’ry step I take, let this be my solemn vow:

To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

## Joys and Concerns

*We respond with “Lord, hear our prayer.”*

## Time of Silence

## Prayers of the People

## The Prayer of Jesus

*Please pray any version you wish. Here is one version:*

Our **Creator**, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kin-dom 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 Kin-dom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

## Offering

God is good! All the time!

All the time! God is good!

Let us share the goodness of our God.

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## **\*Doxology**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God for all that love has done;  
Creator, Christ and Spirit, One. Amen.

## **\*Prayer of Dedication**

Holy God, we bring our gifts and offerings to you  
because the voices of the prophets remind us of something bigger,  
something greater than any system this world offers us.  
We believe that when we trust you with our resources,  
the Kin-dom of God comes much closer to reality on earth.  
Help us steward these gifts to create abundant life and love.  
Amen.

## **Communion**

God be with you.  
And also with you.  
Lift up your fears, your hopes, your dreams.  
**We lift them up to God.**  
Let us give thanks to our generous, imaginative God.  
**We joyfully give our thanks and praise.**

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And so, with your people on earth and all the saints who have gone before us,  
we praise your name and join the unending hymn:  
**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**  
**heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**  
**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

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Because of these simple and remarkable acts,  
we offer ourselves to be your hands and feet,  
and we proclaim the mystery of our faith:  
**Christ was crucified.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ is come again.**



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## Prayer of Thanksgiving

Creator of all good things,  
you have fed us with the bread of life and cup of blessing,  
small in their presentation, yet magnificent in our holy imagination.  
May the peace of your table accompany us everywhere. Amen.

## \*Affirmation of Prophetic Peace

We believe in a courageous and prophetic peace —  
a peace founded through sacrificial love  
and a relentless pressing in toward places of pain and wounding.  
We commit to justice as peace, and we embrace repentance  
and humility as foundational steps.  
We believe there is always more to learn and understand —  
that a posture of curiosity and grace leads us  
to the heart of God and one another.  
We trust peace is not just a dream, but a promise.  
With Jesus as the Giver of Peace,  
we claim anew the deep peace within us,  
committing to channel it in all that we say and do. Amen.

## \*Closing Hymn

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;  
yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary; and, gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond’ring love.  
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.

## \*Benediction

## Music for Sending

“Amen”



# SAVE THE DATES

Spirited Adult Discussion @ 9 a.m. every Sunday  
Meditation @ 5 p.m. every Monday (except Dec. 29)

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Quarterly Choir Rehearsal / today after worship

Bake Sale Prep / Dec. 10 @ 1-4 p.m.

Book Club / Dec. 11 @ 4:30 p.m.

Bake Sale Setup / Dec. 12 @ 5 p.m.

Game Night / Dec. 12 @ 6 p.m.

Holiday Bake Sale / Dec. 13 @ 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Tim and Gage's Holiday Open House / Dec. 14 @ 1-5 p.m.

Church Council / Dec. 16 @ 5 p.m.

Quarterly Choir Rehearsal / Dec. 21 after worship

Longest Night Service of Comfort / Dec. 21 @ 5 p.m.

Quarterly Choir Rehearsal / Dec. 24 @ 4 p.m.

Christmas Eve at Old Prairie Town / Dec. 24 @ 5 p.m.



## ADVOCACY FOR ALL Advent Two: Peace

Walter Brueggemann sees lament as essential to faith and justice. He argues that lament is the language of people who refuse to accept the world as it is and dare to voice their pain,

grief, and protest before God. In *The Prophetic Imagination* and other writings, he notes that lament interrupts denial and false optimism, making space for truth-telling about suffering and injustice. By lamenting, communities resist silence and passivity, opening themselves to God's new possibilities. Let's open ourselves to this spiritual, ancient practice of our tradition.

Working for justice is part of living out God's dream. Once we lament (noticing and naming what's unfair, unjust, and broken in our world), we must take loving action to help make things right. Advocating for ourselves and others is central to our faith because God's dream is one of wholeness, healing, and equity for all people. Scripture calls us not only to love God but also to love our neighbor in tangible, restorative ways. When we seek justice, we participate in God's work of making all things new.

### **LAMENT: CLIMATE CHANGE**

God of all creation, we grieve the burning forests, the melting ice, the poisoned air and waters. We lament the creatures driven from their homes, the communities displaced by flood and fire, and the children who inherit our fear for the future. The earth groans, and we do too. Lord, have mercy.

*Silence: Take a moment to reflect and lament  
as you prepare your heart for action.*

### **ACT: PEACEFUL PROTEST**

How much do you know about climate change? Where do you source your information to learn about greenhouse gases, pollution, human impact on ecosystems, etc.? What actions have you taken to reduce your carbon footprint? This week, consider attending a training on peaceful protest or look up a video online that explains and teaches peaceful protest techniques. Research some peaceful demonstrations that have occurred in the past and find out if any are happening around you regarding climate justice or another area you are interested in. While there may not be a protest near you soon, let this learning experience invite you to advocate when the time arises.

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# PROPHETIC PEACE

PEACE IS THE RESULT OF DEEP TRANSFORMATION.

EMPIRE OFFERS PEACE THAT PACIFIES. YET JOHN TEACHES US THAT TRUE PEACE IS NOT FOUND IN HIDING FROM CONFLICT, BUT IN CONFRONTING IT WITH CLARITY, LOVE, AND THE WILL TO CHANGE.

**PEACE WITHOUT JUSTICE  
IS FALSEHOOD.**



*JOHN CALLED OUT THE RELIGIOUS INFRASTRUCTURE, CALLING CERTAIN RELIGIOUS LEADERS A "BROOD OF VIPERS." DO WE HAVE THE COURAGE TO DO THE SAME?*

JOHN CLEARED PATHS AND PREPARED PEOPLE FOR GOD'S KIN(G)DOM.



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FROM OUR KITCHENS  
TO YOUR TABLE

*Holiday*

**BAKE SALE**

9am-3pm  
**DEC 13**



*Fill a box  
for  
\$10 or \$20*

**Central Congregational Church**

5221 SW West Drive, Topeka

**COOKIES • FUDGE • PIES • CAKES**  
**TOFFEE • SCONES • BREADS!**

*Portion of proceeds goes to YWCA Women's Empowerment*

Sugar cookies, Snickerdoodles, Peanut Brittle,  
Snack mix, Pumpkin bread, Banana bread and more  
just in time for your holiday entertaining!

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