

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH “Center Church”



United Church of Christ - ONA
One Church Street
South Hadley, Massachusetts 01075
(413) 532-2262

email: centerchurch@verizon.net

website: www.centerchurchsouthhadley.org

Facebook: Center Church of South Hadley MA

Instagram: @centerchurchsouthhadley

We, the congregation of the First Congregational Church of South Hadley, MA, UCC, also known as Center Church, declare ourselves to be Open and Affirming. Our congregation is welcoming to all, embracing those of differing sexual orientation, transgender/gender identity and expression, marital status, age, mental and physical health and ability, racial and cultural background/identity, and educational/socioeconomic status. We are open to all to share in Christ's bountiful love through life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys. In the spirit of Paul in Galatians, we celebrate the diversity in which God has created us!



**** The two center sections of the sanctuary are equipped with a hearing loop.
Turn on the T-coil in your hearing aid and sit in one of these sections
for better hearing**

January 4, 2026

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:*

*To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.*

Howard Thurman

PRELUDE Two settings of *We Three Kings* R. Graham, G.M. Martin

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE PEACE

CHORAL INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: God is our light and our salvation; whom shall we fear?

People: **God is our shelter and refuge on the days of trouble
and our hope and joy on the days of celebration!**

Leader: Day after day, we seek God's face and the assurance of God's holy love.

People: **O God, do not turn from us or hide Your face from us!
Be our guide and our light instead!**

Leader: One thing we ask of God:

People: **That we may live in God's dwelling place all the days of our life,
and never cease to behold the beauty of God's home.**

Leader: Beloved of God, enter this worship in thanksgiving,
for God is among and within us!

People: **Thanks be to God!**

***HYMN** *We Three Kings of Orient Are* red #143

*At the conclusion of the hymn, the children will leave to go to "The Promised Land " as
the congregation sings the first verse of On River Jordan's Banks I Stand.*

*On River Jordan's banks I stand, and cast a wishful eye,
Upon the fair and happy land where my possessions lie;
I am bound for the promised land, I am bound for the promised land,
Oh, who will come and go with me? I am bound for the promised land.*

JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE PEOPLE

MORNING PRAYERS

Unison Prayer

**Gracious Light-Bearer, Into the shadows of our isolation
You speak words of life and community. Challenger of our lives, You
call us from places we call home to lead us more deeply into the world
You love. With Your gentle, healing touch You redeem the broken
places of our lives and You heal the wounded places of the earth.
Inspire our worship here this day, so that we may receive liberation in
Your word, and be filled to overflowing to share Your reconciling love
throughout the earth. This we pay in Jesus' name, Amen.**

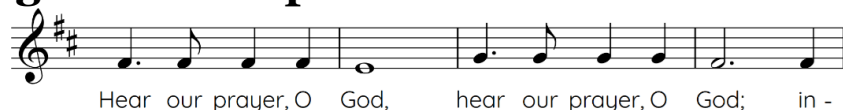
Pastoral Prayer

Silence

Lord's Prayer (debts)

*Our Creator/Father/Mother, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come; your 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 yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen*

Congregational Response



READING FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Genesis 28:10-17

¹⁰ Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. ¹² And he dreamed that there was a stairway^[a] set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you

lie I will give to you and to your offspring, ¹⁴ and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. ¹⁵ Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” ¹⁶ Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!” ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

Matthew 4:12-17

¹² Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³ He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵ “Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,

on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles—

¹⁶ the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of deathlight has dawned.”

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

SERMON

Back to the Future

***HYMN**

In the Bleak Midwinter

black #128

OFFERING

Invitation

Offertory

Benediction

Peter Lutkin

***Doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,

Praise Christ the Word in flesh born low,

Praise Holy Spirit evermore,

One God triune whom we adore. Amen

Prayer of Dedication

COMMUNION

Invitation

Communion Prayer

Words of Institution

Distribution of the Bread and Cup

*It is our tradition to hold each of the elements until all are served
so that we may partake together.*

[Rice cake pieces are offered for those with allergies to gluten.]

Prayer of Thanksgiving (unison)

Bountiful God, we give you thanks that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

***HYMN**

You Are Salt for the Earth, O People black #181

BENEDICTION

BENEDICTION RESPONSE

Threefold Amen

POSTLUDE

Trio on We Three Kings

R.G. te Velde

We invite you to remain quietly and celebrate the conclusion of worship in the postlude.

The Deacons are asking you to refrain from clapping. If moved by the postlude or worship, please shout out "AMEN!" We are implementing this to move away from worship being a performance, to sharing a sentiment of having been filled by worship/music.

**Please stand if you are comfortable.*



*We hope that you find your worship experience meaningful.
If you are new to the community, we invite you to make this your church home.*

*Please stay after worship for refreshments and fellowship
downstairs in the Fellowship Hall.*

In our Service Today

Preacher:	Rev. Randall Hyvonen
Scripture Reader:	Karen Hyvonen
Organist:	Larry D. Schipull
Pianist:	Cynthia J. Morrell
Choir Director	Ben Coakley
Deacon	Karen Anderson



If you are visiting with us today, **WELCOME**. At the close of the service, please take a small welcome gift found in the baskets located at the sanctuary narthex and crossway doors. It is our token of saying "thank you for sharing worship with us, we truly feel blessed and we hope to see you again soon."

PLEASE KEEP THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE IN YOUR PRAYERS

Continual:

Barbara Blank, on Hospice at Reeds Landing
 Joan Duffy
 Martha Guild's mother, June
 Eileen Halkyard
 Tom Hazen
 Eunice Howes
 Leila Mulder, attending boarding school
 Mary Nelsons father, Dave, with cancer
 Fay Paquette
 Nikki Wolf, Linda's granddaughter
 Those struggling with addiction
 Those struggling with cancer



If you have submitted one of these requests for prayer, please let us know when it is time to remove someone's name from the list.

Situational:

Estelle Anderson, following hip surgery
 Cynthia Baker
 Dennis Banks, friend of Karen and Estelle Anderson, with cancer
 Robin Glossner, undergoing chemo
 Gretchen LaBonte and family, on the passing of her uncle Bob Brinkman
 Elisa Morrison's step-mother Sandy, and brother Carl, with heart issues
 Elisa's young friend Elija, addiction recovery
 Katy (Daniels) Bobel's brother-in-law, Gary Nicolls, severely injured in a car accident
 Bob Seems, following surgery
 Kendall Johnson-Smith, Preston Smith's daughter, with cancer
 Vicki Scherer and family on the passing of her grandfather. December 10

This Week at Center Church

Tuesday	Church Council 7pm
Thursday	AA 1:30pm Dance Lessons 6pm
Sunday	Worship 10am

THE MINISTRY AT CENTER CHURCH

Ministers:	All Church Members
Senior Minister:	Rev. Lori J. Souder

Christian Education Program

Children: Vicki Scherer, Coordinator - Emily Mulder, Teacher
Youth Coordinator: Kenneth Mulder
Nursery Caregiver: Annabelle Burke

Music

Organist:	Larry Schipull
Choir Director:	Ben Coakley
Associate in Music:	Cynthia Morrell
Office Administrator:	Cynthia Jubinville
Sexton:	Robert Farman

Center Church Announcements

Reminder: There are pillow cushions and afghans available in bins at the back of the Sanctuary for your comfort and warmth. Please use them!



Please sign up to read Scripture during Sunday worship. There is a sign-up sheet on the table in the Bock Crossway. Also, please consider being a greeter as folks come into the Sanctuary – signup sheet also in the Crossway.



Happy New Year!

If you have not made or renewed your pledge for 2026, now is the time to make your financial gift. In late December, our total pledge amount for 2026 was approximately \$132,000. Thank you for your generous response to fund the ministry of Center Church! Approximately \$15,000 in pledges from Center Church members and friends in 2025 has not yet been committed for 2026. If you have not pledged yet, please do, and consider increasing your contribution from 2025.

If you have never made a pledge and need more information, now is a great time to express your generosity! Please contact the church office for a confidential conversation.

Making a financial gift is easy and can be paid in one lump sum, monthly, or weekly, by check or electronic withdrawal.

Your money funds Center Church's ministry. The work that we do in the church, the community, the region, and the world is made possible by your generous financial contributions.

We are hoping to have a "complete" generosity story to tell at our annual meeting on February 8.

Thank you for your generosity to the ministry of Center Church!



In January and February of 2026, the Outreach Team will collect warm clothing for those who need it, in South Hadley and Granby. We hope to give things like coats, hats, scarves, gloves, sweatshirts, and hoodies, to Granby-To-Go as we did last year. Thanks once again for your generosity!



We Three Kings of Orient Are

John H. Hopkins, Jr., 1820-1891, alt.

KINGS OF ORIENT 8.8.8.6. with Refrain
John H. Hopkins, Jr., 1820-1891

In unison

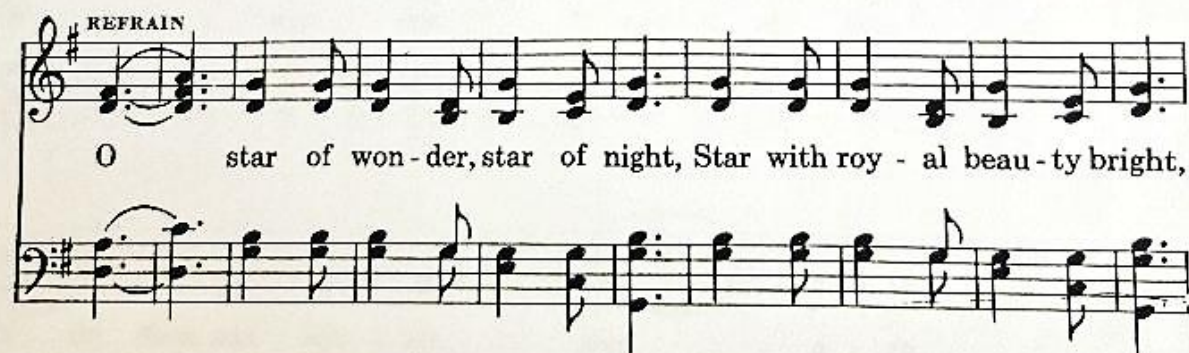


1 We three kings of O-ri-ent are, Bear-ing gifts we trav-erse a - far
2 Born a king on Beth-le-hem's plain, Gold I bring to crown him a - gain;
3 Frank-in-cense to of-fer have I, In - cense owns a de-i - ty nigh;
4 Myrrh is mine; its bit-ter per-fume Breathes a life of gath-er-ing gloom;
5 Glo-rious now be - hold him a - rise, King and God and Sac - ri - fice;

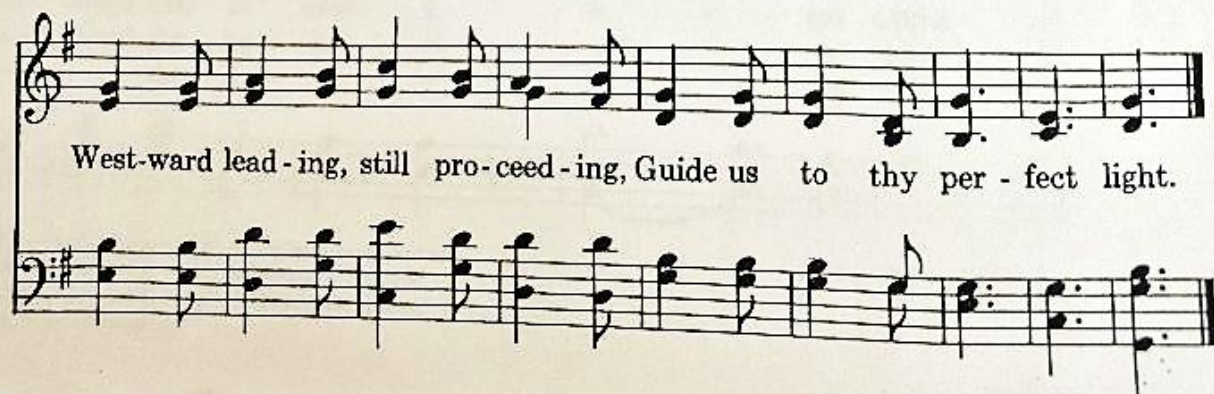


Field and foun-tain, moor and moun-tain, Fol-low-ing yon - der star.
King for - ev - er, ceas - ing nev - er O - ver us all to reign.
Prayer and prais-ing, all men rais - ing, Wor-ship him, God on high.
Sor-rowing, sigh - ing, bleed - ing, dy - ing, Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Sounds through the earth and skies.

REFRAIN



O star of won-der, star of night, Star with roy - al beau - ty bright,



West-ward lead-ing, still pro-ceed-ing, Guide us to thy per - fect light.

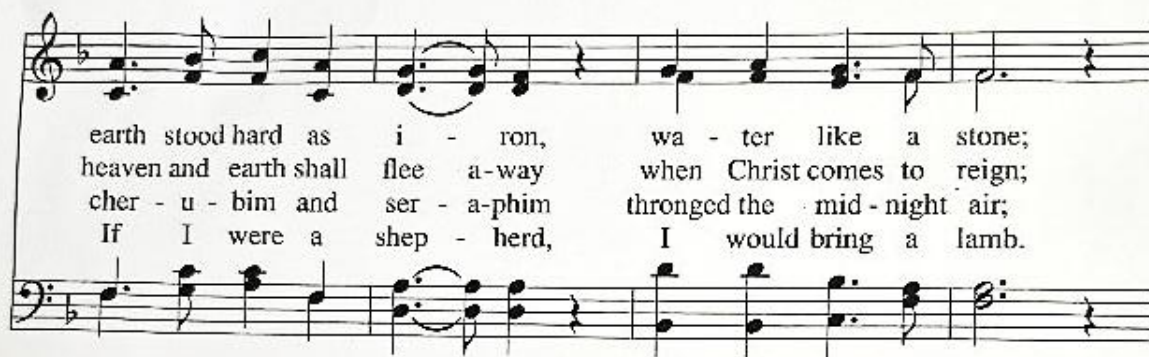
In the Bleak Midwinter

128

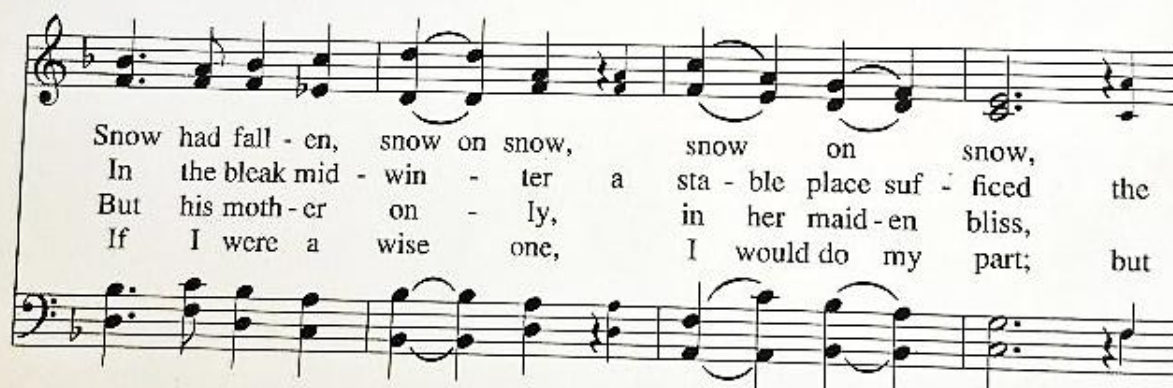
Christina G. Rossetti, 1872; alt.



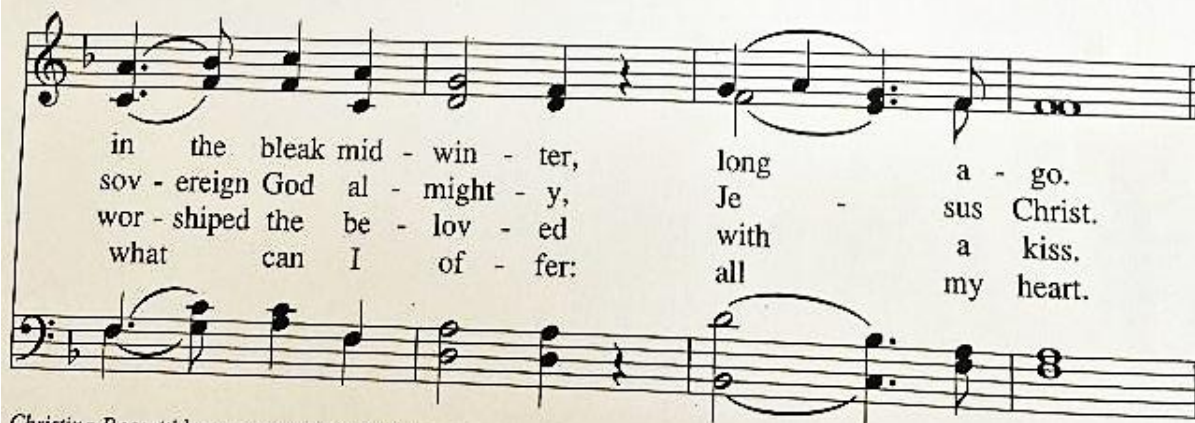
1 In the bleak mid - win - ter, frost - y wind made moan,
 2 Our God tran-scends all heav - en, earth, and its do - main;
 3 An - gels and arch - an - gels may have gath-ered there,
 4 What can I of - fer, poor as I am?



earth stood hard as i - ron, wa - ter like a stone;
 heaven and earth shall flee a-way when Christ comes to reign;
 cher - u - bim and ser - a-phim thronged the mid - night air;
 If I were a shep - herd, I would bring a lamb.



Snow had fall - en, snow on snow, snow on snow,
 In the bleak mid - win - ter a sta - ble place suf - ficed the
 But his moth-er on - ly, in her maid-en bliss,
 If I were a wise one, I would do my part; but



in the bleak mid - win - ter, long a - go.
 sov - ereign God al - might - y, Je - sus Christ.
 wor - shipped the be - lov - ed with a kiss.
 what can I of - fer: all my heart.

Christina Rossetti has portrayed the Christmas story, not in warm Bethlehem, but in the winter of her native England. Rossetti was an accomplished writer of poetry and prose, noted for her deep spirituality.

Tune: CRANHAM Irr.
 Gustav Holst, 1906

You Are Salt for the Earth, O People

181

Matt. 5:13-15

Paraphr. by Marty Haugen, 1986; alt.

Unison

D (allow to ring off)

1 You are salt for the earth, O peo-ple: salt for the reign of God!
 2 You are a light on the hill, O peo-ple: light for the Cit-y of God!
 3 You are a seed of the Word, O peo-ple: bring forth the reign of God!
 4 We are a blessed and a pil-grim peo-ple: bound for the reign of God!

Share the fla-vor of life, O peo-ple: life in the Cit-y of God!
 Shine so ho-ly and bright, O peo-ple: shine for the Cit-y of God!
 Seeds of mer-cy and seeds of jus-tice, grow in the Cit-y of God!
 Love our jour-ney and love our home-land: love is the Cit-y of God!

Refrain

Bring forth the reign of mer-cy, bring forth the reign of peace;

Bring forth the reign of jus-tice, bring forth the Cit-y of God!

During a residency at Holden Village, a retreat center in the state of Washington, Marty Haugen wrote this hymn to be used as a "processing song" for outdoor worship. The lectionary readings focusing on Jesus' teaching about the "reign of God" provided the basis for the text.

Tune: BRING FORTH Irr. with refrain
 Marty Haugen, 1986