

**Central United
Methodist Church
December 8, 2024
Second Sunday of Advent**



**Lectionary readings for the
Second Sunday of Advent
December 8, 2024**

**[Malachi 3:1-4](#), [Philippians 1:3-11](#),
[Luke 1:68-79](#), [Luke 3:1-6](#)**

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Holy One to prepare God's ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to God's people
by the forgiveness of their sins.

—Luke 1.76-77

Go Before.

Sit a moment with the image God at our backs as we, like John the Baptizer, go “before” the Holy One.

Where do you need God's hand at your back, Saints? Sent Ones?

As a music lover I grieve as mortality silences so many great artists. But their songs live on. And even when those tunes are stilled, the creative force behind their music continues to draw breath from new artists. In my eyes, saints are people who bring creativity and focus to the table. Saints make room for others by questioning norms and opinions. Saints love each other, even when, no, especially when someone is hard to love.

Leonard Cohen had this to say about saints (forgive the Male-centric language of the 20th Century):

“What is a saint? A saint is someone who has achieved a remote human possibility. It is impossible to say what that possibility is. I think it has something to do with the energy of love. Contact with this energy results in the exercise of a kind of balance in the chaos of existence. A saint does not dissolve the chaos; if he did the world would have changed long ago. I do not think that a saint dissolves the chaos even for himself, for there is something arrogant and warlike in the notion of a man setting the universe in order. It is a kind of balance that is his glory. He rides the drifts like an escaped ski. His course is a caress of the hill. His track is a drawing of the snow in a moment of its particular arrangement with wind and rock. Something in him loves the world so much that he gives himself to the laws of gravity and chance. Far from flying with the angels, he traces with the fidelity of a seismograph needle the state of the solid bloody landscape. His house is dangerous and finite, but

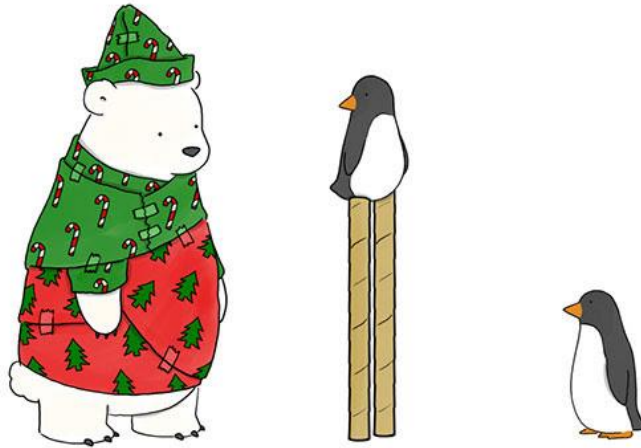
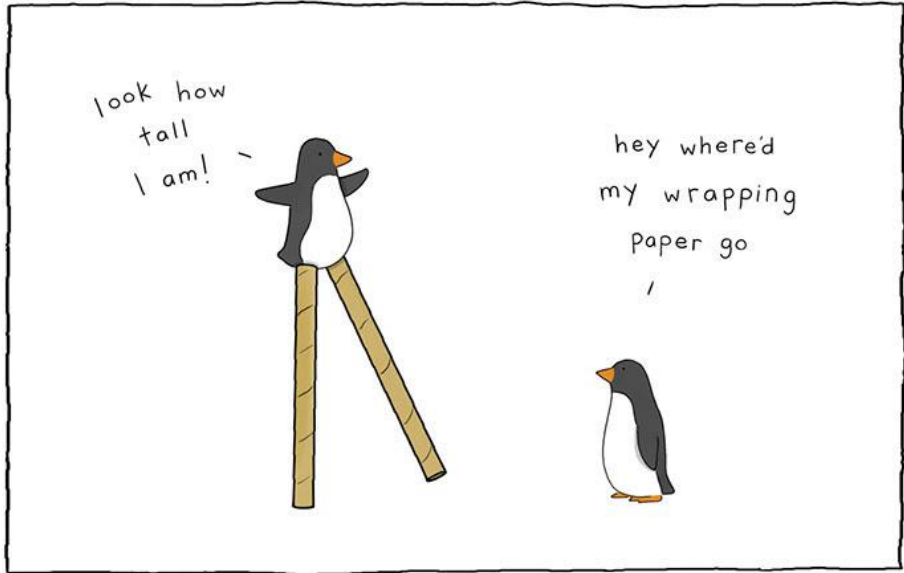
he is at home in the world. He can love the shapes of human beings, the fine and twisted shapes of the heart. It is good to have among us such men, such balancing monsters of love.” -Leonard Cohen Beautiful Losers (1966).

It's a new year. It's Advent. Christians don't start the new year with partying and resolute goal setting, but with waiting. Together, we sing, tell stories, decorate, and hope for God's incarnation in history and in our lives. It's counter-cultural to cultivate hope and expectation instead of instant gratification. It's against the grain to practice listening, stilling the rebuttals and clichés in order to hear more of God's story.

In Cohen's words, you are a "balancing monster of God." Balance silence with speaking and song. Focus in order to seize the opportunities before us; to observe and offer Christ in our midst. Like Cohen's runaway ski, relax into this, glide over this landscape. God's hand is at our backs.

Trust Jesus' Blessings,

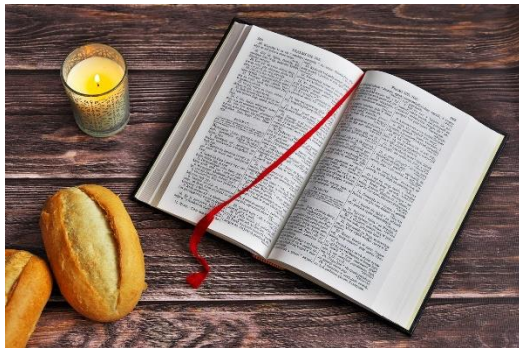
Pastor Biel



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Bible Study



Join us for Bible Study from **9 am to 9:45 am** - Sunday morning via Zoom.

If you would like to be on the Zoom list for the Bible Study Class, please email the church office by clicking on this

link: centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org.

Worship Service

Join us this **December 8, 2024 - Second Sunday of Advent** - in the Sanctuary for our in-person service. We celebrate the **Lord's communion every Sunday and we invite all to partake regardless of membership.**

The worship service is available on Zoom at 10:30 am. Please email or click this link: centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

to request the Zoom Link information.

Donate



We appreciate all the financial support that has been received to support the church and missions. You can now give your financial support to Central in many ways.

CASH and CHECKS– Cash and check donations can be placed in the offering box at our church services. Checks can be mailed to the church.

VENMO – Using the VENMO app, pay by credit card. Enter Central Church's Venmo email: centralchurchgiving@gmail.com.

ONE TIME DONATIONS OR SET UP RECURRING DONATIONS BY CREDIT CARD OR BANK TRANSFER USING THESE OPTIONS:

ONLINE GIVING – go to <https://onrealm.org/skokiecentralumc/give/now> ;

or use the QR Code.

TEXT TO GIVE – Using our secure online giving platform, TEXT to 73256 and send the message GIVECHURCH. A response will appear with a link to our online giving web page.

Altar Flowers



Sunday, December 8, 2024

Altar flowers this Sunday are provided by Mar Haidari.

Fellowship

There will be no fellowship this Sunday.

The following allergies and dietary restrictions within our congregation are known of: **corn, dairy, gluten, meat and onions.**

Looking Ahead

Readers, Flowers and Fellowship Oh My!

We are always looking for Volunteers. Please sign up, TODAY!

Sunday, December 8, 2024

Reader: Gideon Aguilera

Flowers: Mar Haidari

Host Fellowship: **Volunteer needed**

Sunday, December 15, 2024

Reader: **Volunteer needed**

Flowers: Kris Mascari

Host Fellowship: Carol Tacorda & Tina De Ocampo

Sunday, December 22, 2024

Reader: **Volunteer needed**

Flowers: **Volunteer needed**

Host Fellowship: Filipino Community Caroling

Sunday, December 29, 2024

Reader: **Volunteer needed**

Flowers: Doris Bloom

Host Fellowship: **Volunteer needed**

From The Trustees

Thank you to everyone who attended the **Open House on November 30th**. It was a bone chilling day but there was much warmth around the Log Cabin Fireplace.

We gave tours around the church, fellowship hall, and the log cabin. Everyone enjoyed rekindling old friendships.

Pictured: (front) Jas Faber, John Tiffin, Dan & Kathy Ryan
(Back) Pastor Tim, Laura Przby, & Judy Reuter.



The Creche

The Baby Jesus Manger Scene is up for the 2024 Christmas season. Many thanks to: Laura, Charlie, & Lucas Reczek , Elton Moody, Tae Yoon Kim, Karen Buccola, Pastor Tim, and John & Kathy Tiffin. This new crew learned (from the old crew) that the numbered conduit goes with the numbered profile. What a beautiful way to start the 2024 Christmas season.

We had some bonuses while we were outside in this early arctic blast; first some joy in being with our lovers of baby Jesus, second some spontaneous observations of our task at hand, and thirdly, the

Sandhill Cranes were trrrrtring overhead. God blessed us in so many ways within that 1.5 hours of assembling the creche scene.

Thank You!



Mission Outreach Niles Township Gift Card Drive

**Niles Township Gift Card Drive
Makes Holidays Special For All**

Some 1,000 children in Niles Township will be able to have a special holiday this year because of the **Niles Township Food Pantry Foundation's Holiday Gift Card Drive**.

Our goal is for Food Pantry families – no matter what holiday they celebrate – to be able to enjoy this special season. If you're able to give, every donation is sure to make the holidays shine brighter for those in need in our community.

Your generosity means that parents/guardians (who are already registered with the Food Pantry) can give their children the gift of their dreams.
No donation amount is too small.

Niles Township, looking to raise \$75,000, is accepting monetary donations through December 16th, 2024.
Donating has never been easier!

Please consider giving to the **Niles Township Gift Card Drive**. Send in your donation to the church by **Sunday, December 15th, 2024**. Our church will submit one check to the Niles Township Foundation representing our church.

Just take a Gift Card Envelope off the tree and place your donation in the envelope. Be sure to place your name on the envelope!

**** When writing a check to the church, please write on the memo line: Gift Card Drive.**

Mission Tree Is Up!



Santa In The Cabin



**Saturday, December 14,
2024**

We hope you can join us again this year at **Santa in The Cabin.**

We'll have a wide variety of handcrafted and unique items to buy for gifts and for yourself.

Our Cabin Cafe' will be open again so you can sit in the Log Cabin's great room and enjoy lunch by the fireplace.

We will also have a bake sale with cookies, cakes, homemade breads and

more. There is even a free craft for kids of any age to make and take home to hang on their own tree.

And of course, Santa will be up in the Log Cabin's loft visiting with young and old. Please join us for one of the most charming events of the holiday season.

FREE Admission for all. Doors open at 10:00 AM and close at 3:00 PM.

Central Caring Crafters



Thursday, December 19 , 2024

10 AM Ed Bldg. Room 7

The prayer shawl group is back as **Central Caring Crafters!** We are exploring the scope of our group to include quilting, sewing and other crafts that you have a heart for. Bring a bag lunch and stay for lunch together or just come to gather for exchange of patterns and ideas. We hope to see you there!

If you're interested, please email the church office at: centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

Tai-Chi Classes



Weekly on Tuesday

Log Cabin- 9 AM

Interested in learning Tai-Chi? Join our free class in the **Log Cabin, Tuesday mornings, 9:00 to 10:00 a.m.** Classes are taught by certified instructors, Jas and Jo Faber. This slow, meditative exercise is designed to improve energy, relaxation, balance and overall health.

If you're interested, please email the church office at: centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

Tuesday Morning Meditation



Weekly on Tuesday

Log Cabin & Online

10:30 AM

Join us as we gather to practice Lectio divina on the weekly lectionary readings.

Lectio divina is a contemplative practice with its Christian roots in the Benedictine tradition. It combines slow, conscious reading of a biblical or sacred text with contemplation and silent prayer. It is meant to promote communication with God and a deeper knowledge of Christ, in our lives today.

During Lectio Divina we put aside thoughts of studying the text. This is not the time to consider the historical or theological meanings of what we are reading. We read with willingness. The purpose of this practice is to hear, in silence, the word of God, in this moment. What, through this reading, is God saying to me right now? What do I hear that helps me know what it means to walk the Christ path today?

Lectio Divina has traditionally been a communal practice; that is, one shared when in a group but it can be done when alone.

to learn more [click here](#)

Mini Food Pantry

Thank you to everyone who brings food for our Mini Food Pantry. The Pantry needs filling every day. Please bring something on Sunday - even a couple of cans would be gratefully accepted.

Please do not bring any containers - empty jars, etc.

Below is a list of suggested items - because the Mini Food Pantry is outside, it's important to only contribute non-perishable items, such as:



- [Canned goods](#) with ring-pulls
- Hygiene products: toothpaste/toothbrush, deodorant, soap, menstrual products, etc.
- Tuna and crackers
- Spices; salt and pepper
- Cooking oil
- Sugar
- Tea and coffee
- Peanut Butter
- Kids' snacks
- Dish Soap
- Stove-top Stuffing
- Non-perishable foods
- Bottled water

Thank you for your support in helping others less fortunate.

If you have questions or suggestions, please email the church office at centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

Center for Action and Contemplation



Discover contemplative wisdom and practices that are easy to understand and apply to your everyday life.

Contemplation is the practice of being fully present—in heart, mind, and body—to what is in a way that deepens awareness, encourages oneness, and strengthens compassion. A committed daily contemplative practice doesn't have to be long or complex—it simply needs to allow deep listening to open your heart to love.

Discover ways to embody the contemplative life with this collection of practices that help us align actions and values, re-engage with our True Self, and show up in service to the world.

[Click here](#) to learn more.

Spiritual Gifts



Every child of God is filled with [the power of the Holy Spirit](#), specially gifted to play a unique and valued role in the body of Christ.

No one is without gift or purpose.

Spiritual gifts are not our talents or skills. They are the grace of God at work within us, empowering us to match our deep passions with the world's deep need. The gifts are given to individuals, but they are given to build and strengthen community and to meet the needs of those around us.

Begin the journey. Discover your gifts. Talk about your gifts with others. Strive together to understand your gifts and how you can use them to serve God, neighbor, and world. You have been gifted. You have been given a purpose.

[Click here](#) to take Spiritual Gift Assessment.

[Click here](#) to learn more.

3 Ways to Ease Your Grief Journey



Prayer of the Week

Advent Prayer

Lord God, we adore you because you have come to us in the past.
You have spoken to us in the Law of Israel.
You have challenged us in the words of the prophets.
You have shown us in Jesus what you are really like.
Lord God, we adore you because you still come to us now.
You come to us through other people and their love and concern for us.
You come to us through men and women who need our help.
You come to us as we worship you with your people.
Lord God, we adore you because you will come to us at the end.
You will be with us at the hour of death.
You will still reign supreme when all human institutions fail.
You will still be God when our history has run its course.
We welcome you, the God who comes.
Come to us now in the power of Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Caryl Micklem, "Contemporary Prayers for Public Worship"

[Central United Methodist Church](#)

Rev. Timothy Biel Jr., Pastor

8237 Kenton Avenue
Skokie, Illinois 60076

Church Email:
centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

Church Phone:
(847) 673-1311

[Send Us An Email](#)



Central United Methodist Church 8237 Kenton Ave., Skokie, IL 60076