



**Central Reformed Church**  
10 College Avenue NE  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503  
616.456.1773  
[centralreformedchurch.org](http://centralreformedchurch.org)

Connecting all people to God and to one another through scripture, sacrament, song, and service.



**Central Reformed Church**  
**Christmas Eve**  
**December 24, 2023**  
**7:00 p.m.**

## REFLECTION

For those who believe in the transcendence and total otherness of God, it radically diminishes him. For those who do not believe in God, it is the ultimate absurdity. For those who stand somewhere between belief and unbelief, it challenges credulity in a new way. It is not a theory that can be tested rationally because it is beyond reason and it is not a theory, not something theologians have thought their way to. The claim is, instead, that it is something that has happened, and reason itself is somehow tested by it, humankind's whole view of what is possible and real. Year after year the ancient tale of what happened is told—raw, preposterous, holy—and year after year the world in some measure stops to listen.

Frederick Buechner  
"Emmanuel" from *A Room Called Remember*

# Ring In the New Year!



New Year's Eve Worship  
Litany of Letting Go and Holding On  
31 December 2023  
10:00 a.m.

"For My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation"  
Luke 2:22-40  
Pastor Matt Shults

"May each day bring bright beginnings!"

cover art: Nativity—Detail 14 © John August Swanson | Eyekons  
"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" J. S. Bach, arr. Dan R. Edwards -This piece was commissioned by Central Handbell Choir in honor of Robert and Jane Dykstra in 2003  
all song permissions via CCLI license #2931504 and One License #729524A.  
During the candle lighting at the close of service, ushers will have extinguishers available. For those worshipping at home, as your situation allows, please light your candle, and if worshipping with others, kindly share your light with them as the closing carol is sung.



# New Year's Eve Concert



## Featuring the Music of Isabelle Demers at Central Reformed Church

Sunday, December 31, 2023 — 7:30 p.m.

Free Admission

Presenting the works of J.S. Bach, Sigfrid Karg-Elert, Tchaikovsky, and more...

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Isabelle Demers is represented in North America exclusively by Phillip Truckenbrod Concert Artists, LLC | [www.concertartists.com](http://www.concertartists.com)  
This concert is cosponsored by the Grand Rapids Chapter of the American Guild of Organists



ORDER OF WORSHIP | CHRISTMAS EVE | DECEMBER 24, 2023 | 7:00 P.M.

### GATHERING IN LOVE

*The prelude is a call for personal preparation for the worship of God.*

#### Prelude

"A La Ru" | Hispanic folk melody, arr. Garrett Parker  
"Carol of the Bells" | Mykola Leontovych, arr. Cindy Blevins  
"Noel Poitevin" | Jean-François Dandrieu  
"Noel de Saintonge" | Jean-François Dandrieu  
"O Holy Night" | Adolphe Adam, arr. Stephen  
"Away in a Manger" | James R. Murray, arr. Joseph M. Martin  
"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" J. S. Bach, arr. Dan R. Edwards  
"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" | Keith Chapman

#### Call to Worship

One: Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy.  
**Many:** **To us is born this day in the city of David a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord.**  
One: This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger.  
**Many:** **Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace!**  
One: Let us go now to Bethlehem.

#### \*Processional Hymn

"Once in Royal David's City" | 49, v. 1 soloist; interlude;  
congregation standing v. 2, 3, 4

#### \*The Bidding Prayer

#### \*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.**

*\*Please stand in body or in spirit.*

Lighting of the Christ Candle

One: Tonight, on Christmas Eve, we join with families all over the earth to worship the baby born in a manger.

People: For four weeks the candles have been burning as we thought about hope, peace, joy, and love. These are the gifts that Jesus brought to us at Christmastime.

One: Each week another candle glowed, and our wreath shone more brightly. Tonight we light our white candle, the candle which represents Jesus. It is the center of our wreath, just as Jesus is the center of our lives.

People: O God, our hearts sing with joy and praise because of Jesus. At this happy season, we rejoice that Jesus came among us. By his birth and life he has shown us that we are your people and that we are greatly loved. Help us to remember Christmas all year long by giving to others the gifts of life: hope, peace, joy, love, kindness, and understanding. Amen.

Christmas Offering

Offertory “Silent Night” | Franz Gruber, arr. Nick Raspa

\*The Peace

One: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Many: And also with you.

LISTENING IN EXPECTATION

First Lesson Genesis 3:8-15

\*Carol “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice” | 28

Second Lesson Isaiah 9:2-7 (King James Version)

\*Carol “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!” | 31

Third Lesson Micah 5:2-4

Carol “O Little Town of Bethlehem” | 44

Fourth Lesson Luke 1:26-38

Carol “Of the Father’s Love Begotten” | 309, v. 1 soloist; v. 2-3, all; omit “Amen”

Fifth Lesson Luke 2:1-7 (King James Version)

Carol “Away in a Manger” | 25

Sixth Lesson Luke 2:8-20

One: In all of these readings, we have heard the Word of the Lord.

Many: Thanks be to God!



POINSETTIA DEDICATIONS

GIVEN BY

Sue Karsen

Hugh & Candi Meinema

The McWilliams Family

Gary & Faye Myers and Family

Ken & Bonnie Noorman

John & Nancy Norden

The loving family of Art Olsen

Helen E. Phillips

Ellen Riekse

The Shults Family

Tom & Lisa Smith

Jim & Terry Sporte

Tom & Vivian TerMaat & family

Steven Timmer & Paul Bukaweski

Patsy & Paul Troost

Burt & Kathy VanderLaan

Jean Verseput

IN MEMORY OF

Jim Karsen

Our parents

Jim Riekse, Jr.  
Jim & Helena Riekse, Sr.

Harvey & Ella DeGood  
Maynard & Evelyn Myers

Our parents

Our friends & loved ones

Arthur “Swede” Olson

Elizabeth & Richard Phillips  
Barb Phillips-Pekich

Dr. Robert J. Riekse

Our grandparents

Bob Dykstra, Mary Anne Smith,  
Carole Van’tHof  
Roger Winkels

George & Louise Skar  
John & Nell Sporte

Richard TerMaat

John & Kathy Timmer

Paul & Jean Troost  
Elke Walswoorth

Our parents

Ward Verseput

A most sincere thank-you for the generosity of those who contributed to the splendor of our Sanctuary with the purchase of Christmas flowers. **Please** take your plant(s) home following the Christmas Eve Candlelight service.





POINSETTIA DEDICATIONS

GIVEN BY

Dan & Linda Ballast

Willa Brown

Paul Bukaweski & Steve Timmer

Nancy & Ron Hager

Helen E. Phillips

Steve & Monica Pierce & family

Tom & Lisa Smith

Kathy & Stu Stewart

IN HONOR OF

Our sons, Brad & Matt

My grandchildren: Justin, Mark,  
Oscar, Simon, Gabe, Arden & Jan

James Bukaweski

Ava, Roman, Adelaide, Delilah, Colvin  
Jeff, Jared & Bryne

Caleb; Liam & Barbara; Owain & Rhys;  
Ashley, Anna & Lindsey; Ian; Elizabeth  
& her new baby brother Benjamin

Our parents & grandparents: Dave &  
Terry and Arlan & Marcia  
Thomas Smith Jr & Wilma Winkel

Isaac Monroe Watkins

GIVEN BY

Brian, Jennifer, Emma & Owen Andrew

Willa Brown

Paul Bukaweski & Steve Timmer

Carol & Ellen Bylsma

Dave & Karen Custer

Ingrid Gerger

IN MEMORY OF

Peter & Karen Payette

George Brown, Jr.

Ellen Bukaweski

Peter G. Bylsma

Al & Millie Terrell  
John & Dorothy Custer

Ed Gerger



Anthem

“Still, Still, Still” | Melvin Rotermund

*Still, still, still one can hear the falling snow.  
For all is hushed, the world is sleeping, Holy Star its vigil keeping.  
Still, still, still one can hear the falling snow.*

*Sleep, sleep, sleep, 'tis the eve of our Saviour's birth.  
The night is peaceful all around you, close your eyes,  
let sleep surround you sleep, sleep, sleep, 'tis the eve of our Saviour's birth.*

*Dream, dream, dream of the joyous day to come.  
While guardian angels without number watch you as you sweetly slumber.  
Dream, dream, dream of the joyous day to come.*

The Christmas Meditation

Anthem

“The Shepherd’s Carol” | Dan Forrest

*Carols so sweet, angels did sing.*

*As lately we watched o'er our fields through the night.  
A star there was seen of such glorious light.  
All through the night, angels did sing carols so sweet of the birth of a King.  
His throne is a manger, his court is a loft.  
But hosts of bright angels, in strains sweet and soft,  
him they proclaim, our Christ by name,  
and earth, sky, and air straight are filled with his fame.*

*Then, shepherds, be joyful, salute your new King,  
let hills and vales ring to the song that ye sing.  
Blest be the hour, welcome the morn for Christ our dear Savior on earth now is born.*

*All through the night, angels did sing carols so sweet, for the birth of a King.*

RESPONDING IN FAITH

Reflection

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 flocks,  
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 people,  
to make music in the heart.

—Howard Thurman

Silent Meditation

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life’” (John 8:12). The light of our Lord shines through us wherever we go. By lighting candles, we are reminded of the many gifts he gives us, especially the “light of life.”

*We invite you to pass the light from the Christ Candle to the person at the end of each pew, then down the pew. Dip only the unlit candle when lighting from your neighbor’s candle. Please hold burning candles upright. Children may participate with their parents’ permission.*

Carol	“Silent Night”   Franz Xaver Gruber
Choir:	<i>Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht. Alles schläft; einsam wacht; Nur das traute hochheilige Paar. Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar, Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh, Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!</i>
	<i>(the congregation will stand at the interlude)</i>
*All:	<p><b>Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright, Round yon virgin, mother and child! Holy Infant so tender and mild, Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.</b></p> <p><b>Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight, Glories stream from heaven afar, Heavenly hosts sing “Alleluia! Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.”</b></p> <p><b>Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light Radiant beams from Thy holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace. Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.</b></p> <p><b>Silent night, holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light; With the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King; Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.</b></p>
*The Christmas Blessing	
One:	May the song of the angels, the joy of the shepherds, and the peace of the Christ child be with you tonight and always. Merry Christmas!
Many:	<b>Merry Christmas!</b>
*Carol	“O Come All Ye Faithful”   41 (v. 1 and 3)
Postlude	“Grand Chœur Dialogue”   Eugène Gigout

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Crucifer: Helen Phillips  
Principal Organist: Norma de Waal Malefyt  
Director of Music Ministries: Taemin Han  
Flutist: Jodi MacLean  
Violinist: Sara Witmer  
Cellist: Andrew Plaisier  
Celebration Ringers  
Chancel Choir  
Preacher: Pastor Steve Pierce  
Christ Candle: Ron and Nancy Hager  
Readers: Brian Andrew, Patricia Duthler, Matt Shults,  
Lauren TerMaat, John Norden, Larry Gerbens  
Video Tech: Tom Smith  
Sound Tech: Michael Beachy

WELCOME TO CENTRAL REFORMED CHURCH

**Welcoming Our Visitors:** Thank you for joining us this evening to celebrate the birth of our Savior! Our mission is to connect all people to God and to one another through scripture, sacrament, song, and service. We have been in ministry for 183 years and are a part of the Reformed Church in America, a Christian denomination that began in New Amsterdam (now New York City) in 1628. To learn more, please visit our website at: [www.centralreformedchurch.org](http://www.centralreformedchurch.org).

**From Our Senior Minister:** “Our season of watching and waiting has ended. We waited, not because we do not know the story of Jesus’ coming into the world, and not because we do not know that God is already and always here. We patiently waited because to wait is to expect something more, to expect that the Christmas story might enter our hearts and our world in new ways, to bring the change for which we long. May the first stirrings of Christmas joy remind us, with gladness, that God’s great love for us has been revealed in the ultimate gift, the birth of Jesus Christ, who is our Savior and Lord. Merry Christmas!” –Pastor Steve Pierce



**Stewardship:** Your financial gifts help Central fulfill its mission of connecting all people to God and to one another. As your situation allows, please consider a gift to Central. To make a one-time or recurring gift, either via credit card or via your bank account, please visit Central’s online giving platform: [bit.ly/centralgive](https://bit.ly/centralgive), also accessible via QR code.