

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Witness at the Cross



A Thief's Prayer

MARCH 1, 2026

4201 FAIRFAX DRIVE, SUITE 1, ARLINGTON, VA 22203

We Gather

Prelude Prelude from Op. 18, No. 3 by César Franck

Welcome
(Scan the QR code for digital connection card)



*Song "Come Now to Worship the Lord"

***Come now to worship the Lord,
let us bow before Him.
Come now to hear God's word,
to praise Him and adore Him.
all who gather in this place have
come in faith to seek God's grace.
Come now to worship the Lord
and praise His holy name.***

*Call to Worship

Leader: From the crowds and the curious, to the faithful
who stayed,

People: We come to witness the cross.

Leader: From our comfortable distance, to the place where
love was displayed,

People: We come to witness the cross.

Leader: We come with questions and doubts, with hope and
with fear,

People: We come to witness the cross.

Leader: For at the cross, we find God drawing near.

**People: We come to witness the cross and the love that
meets us here.**

All: Let us worship God!

*Please stand in body or spirit.

*Song "O How He Loves You and Me" TFWS #2108

Prayers of the People

Leader: Lord, in your mercy,

People: Hear our prayer.

We Hear

Anthem "Ave Verum Corpus" by W.A. Mozart

Children's Sermon

Prayer of Illumination "Praise the Source of Faith and Learning"
TFWS #2004, v.1

Scripture Luke 23:39-43 (Common English Bible)

39 One of the criminals hanging next to Jesus insulted him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

40 Responding, the other criminal spoke harshly to him, "Don't you fear God, seeing that you've also been sentenced to die? 41 We are rightly condemned, for we are receiving the appropriate sentence for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong. 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

43 Jesus replied, "I assure you that today you will be with me in paradise."

Reader: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

We Respond

Sermon Reflection Questions

1. Does seeing Jesus as a suffering King change the way you imagine God's power?
2. The thief's only credential for paradise was "The man on the middle cross said I could come." How does this simple truth challenge or comfort you in your faith journey?
3. How does focusing on our salvation originating in God's action through Christ instead of our faith or our works influence your daily walk with Jesus?

Prayer Station

- Write something that you need to release into God's grace (e.g. fears, regrets, sins).
- Put your paper into the baptismal waters at the foot of the cross to symbolically release this into God's grace as a reminder that Christ frees us from whatever binds us.

Prayer

Jesus, like the thief, I bring my honest heart. Remember me in your kingdom. Amen.

Psalm 22 adapted by Greg Capaldini

Verse 1 (Ps 22:1-5)

My God, why have you left me

Alone in misery?

By day and night I suffer

From pain and treachery.

O Israel's consolation,

My people blessed your name.

They prayed to you with fervor

And trusted without shame.

Invitation to the Table

Confession

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pardon

Leader to people:

Hear the good news: Christ died for us while we were still sinners; that proves God's love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

People to leader:

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

Leader and people:

Glory to God! Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Pastor: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us from your prophets.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

People: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in

*Please stand in body or spirit.

the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Pastor: Holy are you and blessed is your son, Jesus Christ. Your Spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captive and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and announce that the time had come when you would save your people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always, in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

People: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pastor: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever.

People: Amen!

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. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Distribution Of The Communion Elements

Please come forward as you feel led. You'll be offered a piece of gluten-free bread to dip into the cup of grape juice.

Prayer after Communion

**Eternal God,
we give you thanks for this holy mystery
in which you have given yourself to us.
Grant that we may go into the world**

*Please stand in body or spirit.

**in the strength of your Spirit
to give ourselves for others,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*Giving our gifts to God and passing the peace



To donate online please scan the QR code.

To give cash or check please put your donation in the basket in the front of the sanctuary next to the baptismal font.

Prayer of Dedication

We Go

Announcements

*Song "Jesus, Remember Me" UMH #488

*Benediction

*Sung Benediction "Shalom to You" UMH #666

Postlude Interlude and Variation from Op. 18, No. 3
by César Franck

WORSHIP LEADERS TODAY

Liturgist	Brian Mills
Reader of the Word	Sharon Lovering
Choral Conductor	Greg Capaldini
Pianist	Greg Capaldini
Flutist	Faby Rosado
Communion Server	Pat Barham
Communion Steward	Pat Barham
Preacher	Rev. Sarah Harrison-McQueen

Assistive Listening Available

You can now connect your Bluetooth-enabled hearing aids directly to our sound system using the *ListenWIFI* app on your smartphone. Look for laminated signs at the sanctuary entrances for simple setup instructions. Need help? Just ask a greeter or staff member—we're happy to assist!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Men's Group – Fellowship & Games | This Sunday, 3:00–5:00 PM

All men of Central are invited to gather this Sunday from 3:00–5:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall for our monthly Men's Group. It's a relaxed afternoon of board and card games, laughter, and meaningful fellowship as we build friendships and encourage one another in faith. Come as you are, invite a friend, and feel free to bring a snack to share. Join us for this great opportunity to connect with other men of the church and strengthen one another as we live out our faith in daily life.

*Please stand in body or spirit.

Pi Day Celebration – March 15

Join us on Sunday, March 15, as we celebrate Pi Day (3.14)! During fellowship time after worship in the Fellowship Hall, we'll gather for conversation, community, and—of course—pie. If you'd like, you're welcome to bring a pie to share. Come enjoy fellowship, faith, and a slice of fun together!

Deepen Your Lenten Journey

Lent has begun! If you're looking for ways to enrich your season of prayer and fasting, pick up a Lenten calendar from the table in the lobby or at the sanctuary entrance. It can also be downloaded by scanning this QR.



Easter Worship and Potluck Brunch – April 5

Come rejoice in the hope and joy of Easter at Central UMC on Sunday, April 5, 2026, at 10:30 a.m. Celebrate the Resurrection through uplifting worship, inspiring music, and the good news of Christ's victory over the grave.

Following worship, join us in the fellowship hall for a potluck brunch. Bring a dish to share and enjoy a joyful time of fellowship and celebration. All are welcome!

Special Church Conference – Parsonage Project

Since last fall, the Parsonage Study Committee has been diligently evaluating options to repair or replace our parsonage. On February 22, the Leadership Board voted on their recommendation, allowing us to move to Phase Two of the project.

A special Church Conference will be held in the sanctuary on Sunday, March 22, at 11:45 a.m. The congregation will elect a building committee to serve for Phase Two and approve funds for them to begin their work. All are welcome to attend; however, only members of Central UMC are eligible to vote.

An Invitation to a Virtual Bible Study from Carroll Cobb

Hello everyone. The Rowdy, Motley, Jesus-lovin', and definitely crazy Bible Study crew is currently studying the book of 2 Chronicles. We meet via Zoom on Tuesdays, with 2 sessions: one at 2:00 pm and another at 7:00 pm. It is open to everyone – young and not-so-young, single and married, those who have studied the Bible a lot and those who've never been in a Bible Study at all – all from the comfort of your home.

We are very informal, and all of us are learning as we go, discussing about 1 or 2 chapters each week. We learn, we laugh, we talk, and we laugh some more, and it is meant to be uplifting, encouraging, lighthearted and fun as we try to understand what God is telling us in the pages of His Word.

So, if you are interested or have questions, please contact the church office at office@cumcballston.org. And just know that we would love to have you join us!

Read the Word in Worship

Interested in reading scripture during our service? We'd love to have you join our rotation! If you feel called to share God's word, please see Pastor Sarah or email her at worship@cumcballston.org to sign up or learn more.

*Please stand in body or spirit.