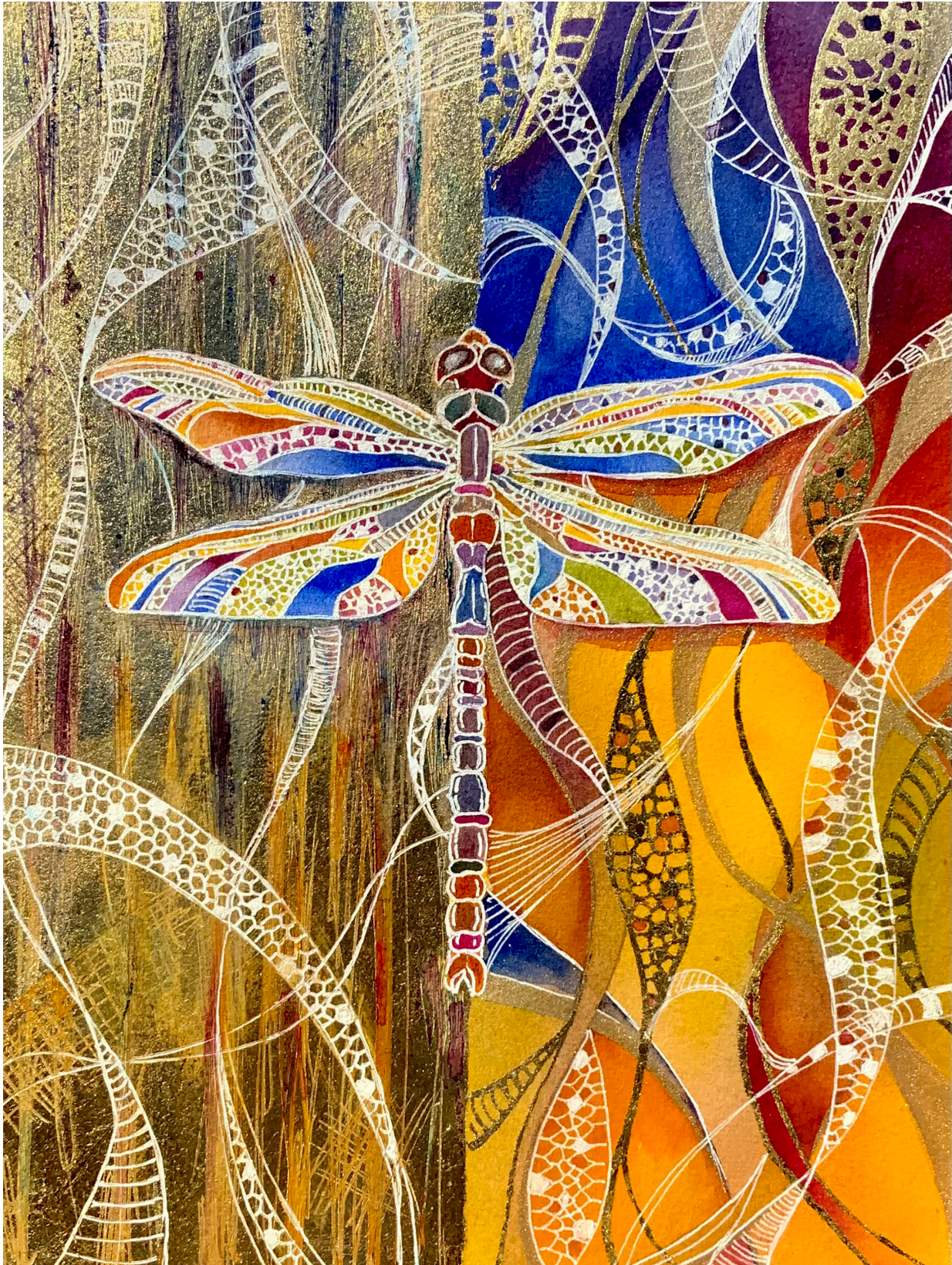

CENTRAL

Fall 2023 /// A New Season



“Dragonfly,” Betti Rosszer. Mixed medium.

Central Leadership

The Session of Central Presbyterian Church

Class of 2023

Bessie Green
Kathy Harben
Khaliah Johnson
Susan Landrum
Amy Mast
Mike Sizemore
Beth Webb-Woods
Charles Yorke

Class of 2024

Janet Abercrombie
Lewis Amos
Julie Boggs
Kelly Bray
Sarah Cook
Mary Sidney Harbert
Tom Holcomb
Ximena Leroux

Class of 2025

Robert Catterall
Philip Covin
Ann Hunter
Hannah Palmer
Anne Sciarrone

The Diaconate of Central Presbyterian Church

Brookwood Hills: Ben Evans, Rob Forbes, Ellen Thompson

Decatur: Ed Carwile, Eleanor Dake, Vanessa Kirk, Isabelle Werber

Down Yonder: LaShawn Green, Emmalee Hackshaw, Linda Lehfeldt

Intown South: Brian Bishop, Ben Sutton

Intown North: Tom Leslie, Debbie Miller

Northern Lights: Betty Carroll, Vicki Collier, Ginger Heidbreder, Zac Hilimire

CENTRAL STAFF

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Central member Betti Rosszer created our beautiful cover art for this publication using mixed medium. We asked her about it. “Dragonflies flutter into my life for only moments, but they stop me in my tracks every time,” she said. “I marvel open mouthed at these beautiful creations of God, their shimmering colors, perfectly constructed translucent wings, and the ease and precision of their flight. They provide a moment of mindfulness and joy. This artwork captures the beautiful moments when I am one with nature.” She also created a sister piece which appears on the back page of this publication. Thank you again to Betti for gifting us with her talents!



A Dragonfly is the perfect symbol as we segue into fall

BY REV. SHANNON J. KERSHNER

I am so grateful that church member Betti Rosszer once again gifted us with her art for the cover of this Fall magazine. The title of this particular work is “Dragonfly.” As she reflected on the symbolism of the Dragonfly, she remarked that these interesting creatures symbolize going past any kind of self-created illusions that limit our growth or ability to change. Dragonflies also symbolize happiness, new beginnings, hope, change, and love. Isn’t that a wonderful metaphor for what is going on with us, Central Presbyterian Church, in these days?

“What are the Spirit-filled flames of our legacy that we want to carry with us into the future? What are the parts of our legacy we are ready to let become ash? What new things are waiting for us to midwife along with the Spirit so they can be born?”

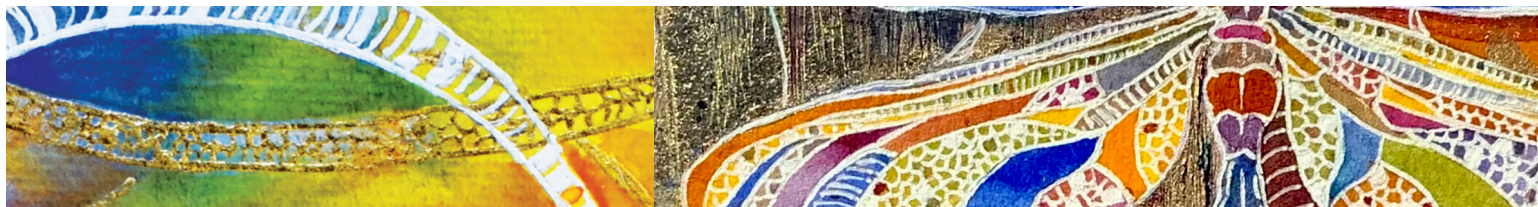
I see reflections of hope, new beginnings, and love every time we gather for worship. The energy the Spirit is creating both in the sanctuary and online is contagious. I sometimes feel like the air is electrified. And my goodness—when you all sing, you take all our feeble words of faith and wrap them in beauty and grace. Worshiping God alongside



you fills up my soul and delights my heart.

I also see reflections of a willingness to change in a variety of our different ministry areas, too. For example, our Family Ministries staff are scheduling in a different way for this year, as an attempt to respond to the distance so many of you drive to get to church. I love experiments like this because if they don’t work, we just “fail forward,” get up, and try something else. Our Engagement Ministry area is reimagining how we can reconnect with each other in a variety of both familiar and new ways. The Outreach and Advocacy Center had its first-ever haircut day this summer that recognized the dignity and loveliness of all our neighbors. I could keep going, but I am sure I have a word count limit.

As we move through this new season of life together, part of what we will discern focuses on these questions: What are the Spirit-filled flames of our legacy that we want to carry with us into the future? What are the parts of our legacy we are ready to let become ash? What new things are waiting for us to midwife along with the Spirit so they can be born? Yes, a Dragonfly is the perfect symbol for us in these days. I am so deeply glad to be amongst you.



BY ROBERT CATTERALL

Fall SUNDAY SCHOOL classes

These classes began on September 10

Grappling with Jesus's Life and Teachings - "Wonders" | A Sojourners Class

The stories of Jesus we find in the Gospels - his interactions with people, his parables, and other teachings, the wonders he performed - can present us with challenges in understanding and interpretation. In this class, we will grapple with these challenging stories with help from the thought-provoking essays of Debie Thomas in her recently-published book, "Into the Mess and Other Jesus Stories: Reflections on the Life of Christ." The first set of stories into which we'll delve relate to Jesus' wonders - water turned to wine, the transfiguration, the raising of Lazarus, and more. Join us for some conversations about Jesus that perhaps will be different from many you've had before.

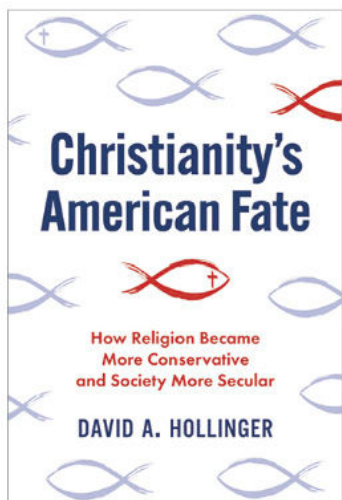
Location: The Brotherhood Room (off of Tull Hall)

Time: 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. on Sundays

Class contacts: Ed Carwile (carwile1230@earthlink.net) and Robert Catterall (rfcatterall@gmail.com)

Christianity's American Fate | An Issues in Theology Class

The Issues in Theology class will begin this fall by reading David A. Hollinger's illuminating book, "Christianity's American Fate: How Religion Became More Conservative and Society More Secular" (Princeton UP, 2022; available online and in bookstores). This is not a book of theology as such, but it neatly describes, in delightful detail, the social context in which American religion, especially American liberal and evangelical Protestantism and its secular counterparts, have developed since World War II, and how we have gotten to where we are today. Join us for a lively discussion of this fascinating work! Everyone is encouraged to do the readings, but all are invited regardless. Brief notes will be circulated in class to help bring everyone into the discussion.



Location: Taylor Conference Room (off of Tull Hall)

Time: 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. on Sundays

Class contact: Rod Hunter (rhunt02@emory.edu)

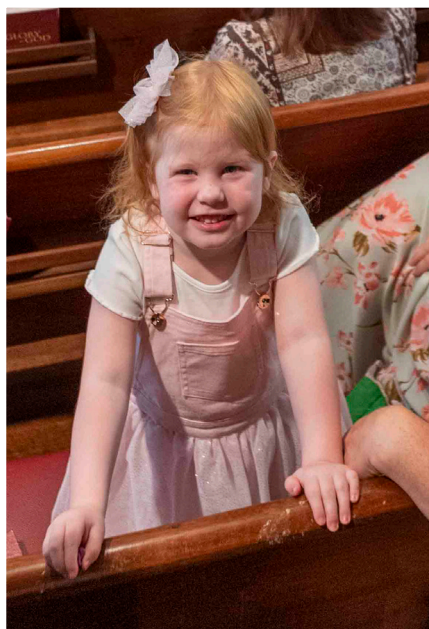


BY SUSAN LANDRUM

As the new school year ramps up, so do the children and youth activities at Central!

We blessed our backpacks, sharpened our pencils, and are now looking forward to so much joy this fall. Here are a few highlights:

- > We welcomed Courtney Anne Henry as our Children & Youth Fellow. Her creativity and leadership will support all aspects of programming for our younger Centralites.
- > Our new Sunday schedule makes room for youth group to happen right after worship on a weekly basis, complete with fellowship over lunch.
- > On October 1, Central's children and youth will lead us in worship, kicking off stewardship season on World Communion Sunday!
- > On October 15, all Centralites are invited to join in on an intergenerational march down Peachtree Street for Pride weekend here in Atlanta, shouting the good news that all are God's beloved!



We will also kick off a confirmation class this fall, complete with a retreat in late October to bring confirmands together with one another and the adults that will support them along the way. Confirmation is the time for our 8th and 9th graders to ask big questions about their faith and what it means to officially become members of Central. This is a sacred and fun experience for all that participate!

Alongside our confirmation class, Central's children and youth will be invited to participate in interfaith field trips to experience worship in different communities.

There are so many ways to participate and support children and youth programming throughout the year. From joining the rotation of Sunday School teachers to providing a meal for the Central youth group, we would love for you to join in on the joy! Reach out to Susan Landrum if you'd like to learn more.



Young Adult Programming at Central

On August 10, we were excited to kick off a new year of young adult programming! This is a group for people in their 20s and 30s to connect with one another and explore their faith in life's many transitions in young adulthood. We began the program year around delicious pizza and shared our joys, hopes, and the things that are heavier in our lives. We brainstormed more ways to get out into Atlanta and experience the fun it has to offer - everything from dinners on Buford Highway to improv theater, and trivia! Our fall will unfold with more opportunities to share meals and our lives with one another.



Activities, Events & Opportunities

Message from

THE MISSION COMMITTEE

The Mission Committee at Central is in full swing this fall. Here are dates and highlights of several fall events planned to engage the congregation in activities of compassion and stewardship that demonstrate our commitment to service as a Matthew 25 Congregation.

BY GARY CORNELL



September



POLLARD AND COVENANT FUND

DISTRIBUTION: In 2023, the Mission Committee collaborated with the Center for Civic Innovation to distribute over \$94,000 in grants to local organizations to improve life for marginalized communities including the Central Outreach and Advocacy Center, Clifton Sanctuary Ministries, GA Justice Project, Emmaus House, and 10 non-profits affiliated with the Center for Civic Innovation committed to addressing the root causes of community violence with local interventions.

SEPTEMBER 10: Pakistani Dinner at North Avenue Presbyterian Church to hear from Friends of the Presbyterian Education Board about their work in Pakistan and meet other missions people from the Atlanta area.

SEPTEMBER 24: Fair Trade Coffee sales in Tull Hall that benefit World Missions.

SEPTEMBER 24: Luncheon after church will be followed by a Tour of South Downtown led by Jennifer Ball, Chief Operating Officer of Central Atlanta Progress. We will also interact with Streets Alive, a downtown event that closes Peachtree Street to automobiles and offers entertainment in Underground Atlanta.

SEPTEMBER 28: Sign-up opens for the Bashor Men's Night Shelter, including dates from November 1 through March 31. The Central volunteer coordinator will organize meals that Central members will provide.

October



OCTOBER 1: World Communion Sunday and collection of the Peace & Global Witness Offering that enables the church to address systems of conflict and injustice here and across the world through collaborative projects of education and Christian witness.

OCTOBER 22: Our House Sunday. On this Sunday, we will celebrate the non-profit organization that provides transformative care for children designed to end the cycle of homelessness for families. Michelle Carter, Chief Impact Officer, will speak to the congregation and lead a tour of the Early Childhood Education program they operate at Central.

OCTOBER 29: Historic Preservation Tour of Central and its buildings sponsored by the Atlanta Preservation Center. The title of the program will be "A View from Capitol Hill Through the Eyes of Central Presbyterian Church." It will explore the evolution of our church in the context of the history of the City of Atlanta.



November, December & Volunteer Opportunities

NOVEMBER 5: Courtyard Ministry Invitation- The Mission Committee will reach out to all the members of Central to experience the Courtyard Ministry first-hand.

DECEMBER 3: Advent Marketplace - Learn about Mission programs and sign-up to be a volunteer.

DECEMBER 17: AMIS Christmas Lunch - AMIS (Atlanta Ministry with International Students) will bring a group of international students to Central to worship with us and then stay for lunch.

DECEMBER SPECIAL OFFERING: The Joy Gift Offering supports leadership development for communities of color, support for Presbyterian colleges, and support for Presbyterian church workers in their time of need.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

❖ **Foot Clinic Coordinator:** Coordinate the recruitment and service of volunteers for the Foot Clinic that cleans the feet of men in the Bashor Night Shelter on Wednesday nights from November to May.

❖ **Bashor Night Shelter volunteers:** Central members, families, and church groups can volunteer to prepare and serve meals for nights designated for Central from November to May.



CHRIS SCIARRONE IS SERVING AS THE COORDINATOR OF THE NIGHT SHELTER. JULIE BOGGS IS SERVING AS COORDINATOR OF THE POLLARD AND COVENANT FUND. SEE GARY CORNELL OR GEORGE BROWN FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO VOLUNTEER IN OTHER AREAS OF SERVICE.

Central's Designated Associate Pastor begins this month Let's take a closer look at REV. KATE CULVER



“Kate’s gift in ministry is no different than Kate’s gift to the world. She brings her whole self to her ministry. There is no Kate-as-Pastor or Kate-as-not-a-Pastor. She is aware of dynamics in groups, of the needs of others, of people’s pain, of people’s joy, [and is] adept at honoring whatever needs are happening around her. Compassion and awareness are her great gifts. People who know Kate, love Kate.”

Rebekah LeMon, Pastor & Head of Staff, Trinity Presbyterian

Describe the ministry setting to which you believe God is calling you:

I feel called to provide a place of welcome where perhaps people haven’t felt welcome before and to facilitate the many ways people can experience God, both through service and prayer. Service is the heart of my ministry as is fostering community. The work of providing a place of ownership (be it a physical or spiritual place filled with safety, pride in one’s community, or a feeling of home) is a cornerstone of my call. I hope to be able to merge the way I serve in the world with the way I lead worship. I would love to be in a context in which there is an openness to different ways of accessing the divine. Every person is unique, so it makes sense to provide diverse spiritual practices that speak to each person’s experience. I believe there is no right or wrong way to pray or serve and being open to new and embracing diversity in all its forms makes us better as a church.

FORMAL EDUCATION

The Candler School of Theology, Emory University

Master of Divinity;
Certificate in Religious Education

The Savannah College of Art and Design

Bachelor of Fine Arts

Further Education and Training

- World Methodist Evangelism Institute Seminar (New Delhi, India): "Following Jesus in a Pluralistic World"
- Columbia Theological Seminary: Presbyterian History and Polity, Reformed Theology, Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Greek
- "Prepare and Enrich" Facilitator
- "Our Whole Lives" Facilitator
- 200-hour Classical Yoga Teacher Training

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta

Associate Pastor for Community Ministries and Social Ventures

Assistant Director of Community Ministries

Intern to the Executive Pastor

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Clinical Pastoral Education Chaplain

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta

Lay Minister

Capitol Photography Partners

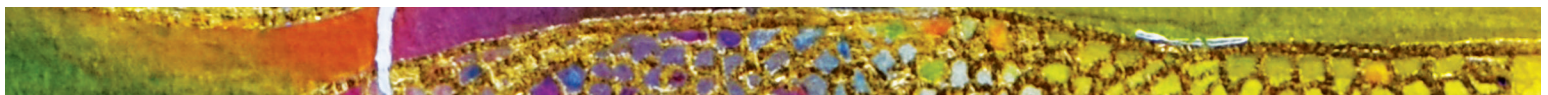
Managing Partner

Steve Hogben Photography Group

Staff Photographer



Kate with her wife, JoAnna. Below, Kate with her four-year-old son, Truman. The family lives in Decatur.





Belonging to God

Sharing our Blessings

As we are coming to the end of summer and into fun fall activities along with stewardship and Advent seasons, the church finances continue to trend in a favorable direction.

Due to receiving an unexpected \$160,000 in non-pledged gifts so far this year, our overall income to date is well into the positive rather than the deficit we budgeted for.

Our pledging members are right on track to complete their 2023 pledges. As of now, we have received 70% of pledges (\$631,210 of \$935,126) while we are only 63% through the year. We are extremely blessed to our faithful givers during both a transitional time for the church and our community.

We have accomplished so much this year with installing our new Senior Pastor/Head of Staff along with calling a new Designated Associate Pastor who will be with us soon. We have a full and complete staff on both sides of the pulpit to lead us strongly into the future. The church has continued its journey of mission support as a Matthew 25 congregation.

Because we have been good stewards of our gifts in years past, we are able to fund needed projects from our endowment income without affecting our overall budget. This year we are using some of those funds to go through a much-needed building assessment to help us utilize our spaces to their fullest and plan for future structural improvements. The Rand Chapel organ is in the process of being repaired through those endowment income funds as well.



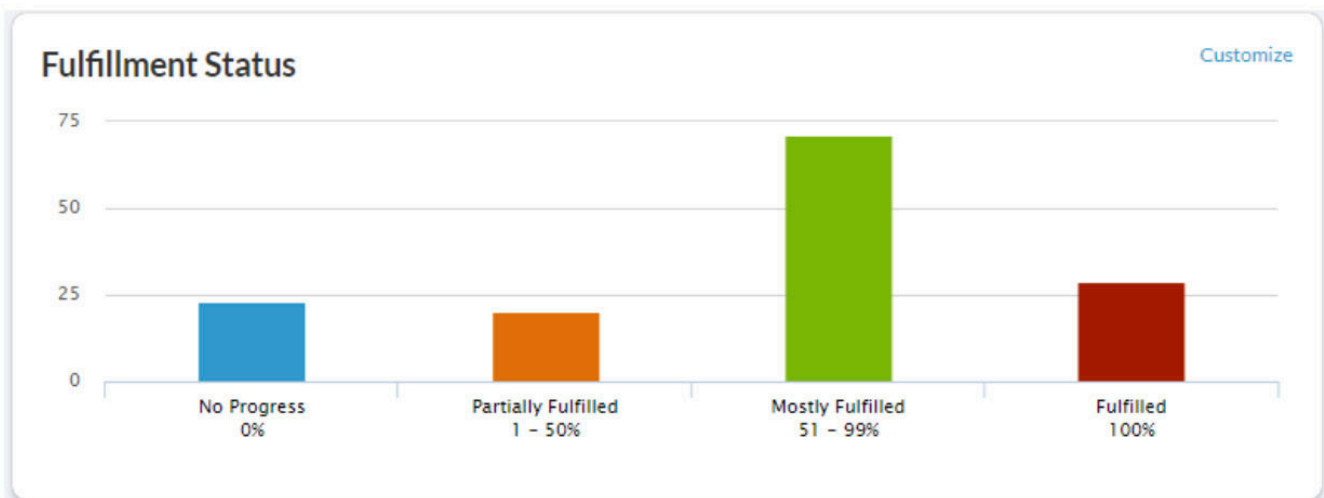


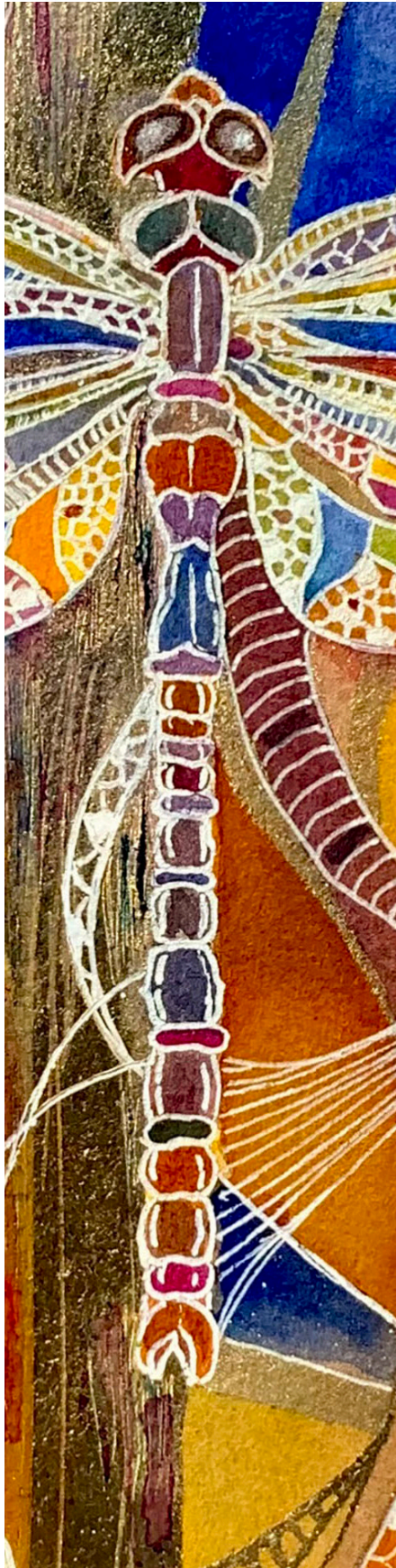
Here is what our numbers look like through the end of July 2023:

Income: Our benevolent contributions from members, visitors, and special gifts total \$1,039,342 which is \$247,842 ahead of our year-to-date budget of \$544,667. For overall income, we are \$268,978 ahead of budget. We increased our facilities use income and our interest income.

Expenses: Our current year to date expenses are \$866,875 which is \$13,577 above the year-to-date budget. Most expense categories were at or under budget. We have experienced some increased facilities costs due to the rise in utility rates and adding additional security coverage.

Net Income: Our net income to date for 2023 is \$172,467. We originally budgeted to be at a loss of \$82,934 at the end of July. Due to the large non-pledge gifts we received in July and some pledges being paid in full already, we are sitting at \$255,401 above budgeted net income. 2023 has truly been a year of faith and blessings.





Julie Yarbrough Photography

BY HANNAH PALMER

I am not very good at tithing.

My Dad tried to teach me. He made me put some cash in an envelope for my offering to the church, ten cents for every dollar. I must have been in elementary school, just old enough to receive an allowance.

Tithing is so simple, even a child can understand the math. What's difficult and even holy is the act of letting go. When I was a kid, tithing was hard because of the things I dreamed of buying—cassette tapes, after school candy bars, designer jeans. As an adult, it's even harder to let go of money because of the sense of security it gives me. Tithing is hard whether we have very little wealth and responsibility or a lot.

It's easy to drop money in the offering plate when I'm flush with cash. I enjoy it! But when I find it impossible to tithe, it causes me to reflect. Why am I holding on so tightly to money? What is ruling my life and my decisions—fear or faith? Just like fasting and prayer, tithing is a spiritual practice that I will never master. I'll keep trying, not just because I believe in contributing to the ministries of the church, but because it's one of many ways Christ taught us to free ourselves.

BY CHRIS SCIARRONE

Until 2013, The Alley was a frequent place of respite for our homeless siblings in downtown Atlanta. Unfortunately around that time, it had also become a place of unsavory activities. So, when Central made the difficult, controversial, and necessary decision to install a security fence, many members wondered how we might continue to demonstrate Christian compassion and welcome in another way. That was the genesis of what has evolved into our Sunday morning fellowship, also known as our Courtyard Ministry or Coffee Ministry.

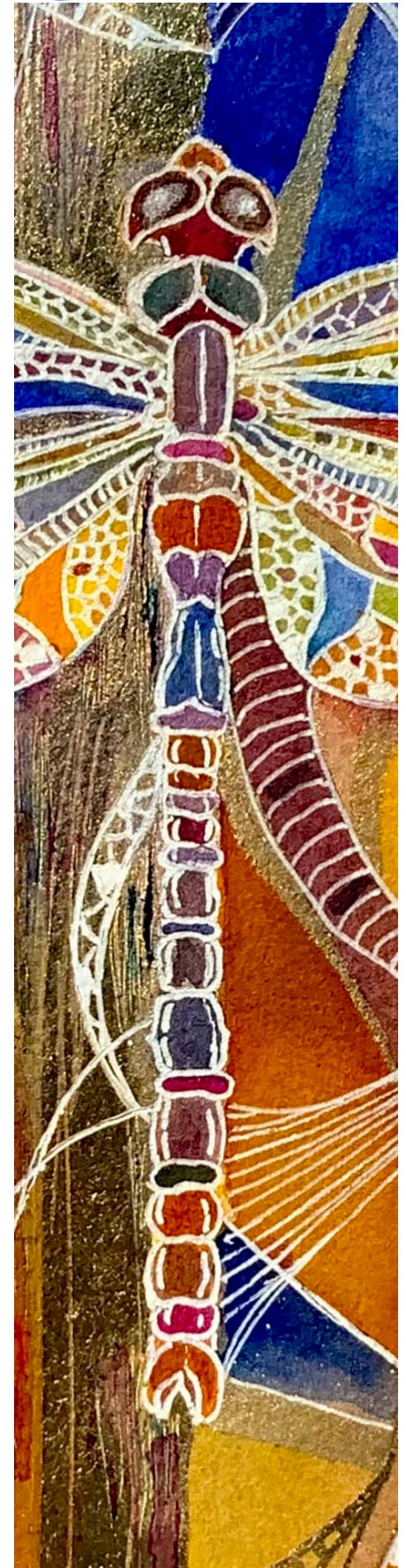
The late Cal Engstrom and his wife Kathleen were instrumental in implementing this new idea that we could try serving breakfast on Sunday mornings to those experiencing homelessness in the immediate environs of Central. So, it kind of just started.



And it was beautiful. Some people figured out how to brew large quantities of coffee, and how long it took. Some contributed cream and sugar. Some baked bread and biscuits and offered cough drops or aspirin. Some people boiled eggs. Some sang Christmas carols, set up tables, cleaned up trash, and brought ponchos on rainy days. Some died.

Most importantly, we endeavored to greet our siblings by name each morning and to know at least a tiny bit about who they are. We shared jokes, talked about sports and families, and jail and drugs. We endured all seasons. We listen to each other, we learn, and we pray together.

As of August 2023, Debbie Miller and Denise DeLaRue are the current coordinators of this effort. But it has thrived over these years because so many committed Centralites and non-Centralites have committed their time, talents, and treasures. Please consider participating. All are welcome.





BY JEN SENGIN

We are so excited that a new season is upon us Central! We have some wonderful services and events planned in the area of music and arts. We hope that you will be able to take advantage of some of these offerings.

You may have noticed some moving boxes on the second and third floors. We have been working to combine and consolidate our enormous choral library into one room on the second floor. With the help of John White and the wonderful team of folks who have worked to clean up some spaces at the church, we now have a beautiful room on the second floor that can house all the music!

This also frees up a space on the third floor so Mason has an office inside of the Music Suite. Since summer of 2021, the Music and Arts committee has been working on cleaning and updating the entire third floor so that it is an inviting space for everyone. If you take a tour of the third floor, you will even see that we are now storing art on the walls in the hallways and in the classrooms. We have a beautiful collection of artwork and now these pieces live in spaces where people can view them on a regular basis.

Work has also begun on the organ in Rand Chapel as there are several opportunities for repair. We started that process months ago and have been waiting on parts in order to complete the work. More to come on this as Mason is looking to host a “Bach’s Lunch” event with a short organ concert and a boxed lunch. Once the organ is fully repaired, we will work to set a date for that event.

We are so excited about Shannon’s Installation Service and the music we have planned for that evening. Dr. Tony McNeill will be joining us for a wonderful collaborative musical worship experience. In addition, we have invited the instrumentalists from the Callie Day concert to join us for that service as well. The service will feature an array of musical styles as well as highlight gospel music – a musical genre whose origins tie so closely to Atlanta!

On October 22, we will once again host the graduate student choir from Georgia State University – Voces Amicis – to give a concert at 2 p.m. following the worship service. There will be a congregational lunch prior to the concert so be on the lookout for information about that as well. This will be a free event with an opportunity to give a love offering to help support the ensemble.

Our GSU music interns, Thomas Chafin, Interim Choir Director, and Elizabeth Daly, have hit the ground running and are already doing a tremendous job. You will get to see them both during worship services. Feel free to introduce yourselves. I know they are both very excited to be at Central and will have a wonderful time here.

Lastly, Mason Copeland will be giving an organ recital at Central this coming spring! Mason has an undergraduate and master’s degree in organ performance, as well as choral conducting, and we are so blessed to hear him play each week in our services. This will be a free event and we will have a love offering to support one of Central’s mission partners. More information to follow as we get closer to this event.

Glory to God, it’s a great time to be at Central!



Voces Amicis
is slated to
perform on
October 22.

Voces Amicis



Dr. Tony McNeill is
scheduled to perform at
Rev. Shannon J.
Kershner's installation
service.



OPENING DOORS

The OAC works with new partners and gains strong results

BY KIMBERLY PARKER

Seasons come and go! Spring, summer, fall, and winter. We all have a favorite season!

Mine is spring: blooming flowers, green grass, and mild temps.

Seasons come and go at Central Outreach and Advocacy Center as well. My bet is that our guests prefer spring and fall when the temperatures are more tolerable.

Seasons can look a little different with the OAC. We are most well-known for our work in assisting guests obtain all the documents needed for state identification. This is usually what brings a person to our door first. Once inside, we offer other services that hopefully lead them to a better life of stability.

Early in 2023, we, along with Central Presbyterian Church, entered a contract with Intown Cares. This partnership allows us to have a housing navigator onsite every day that the OAC is open.

The navigator's goal is to move guests into permanent housing. These are folks who are chronically homeless which means they have been experiencing homelessness for at least one year (most of the time, many years) and have some form of disability (physical, mental, addictive).

This is a new season for the OAC, and I believe for Central as well! This is the first time in our history that we have been able to successfully place people in housing.

At the time I wrote this article, we had placed three people in housing and had three others in the queue. The pictures don't fully tell the story of what it means to these guests who had been sleeping outside for a number of years. As they opened the doors to their very own apartments, a new season began for them!

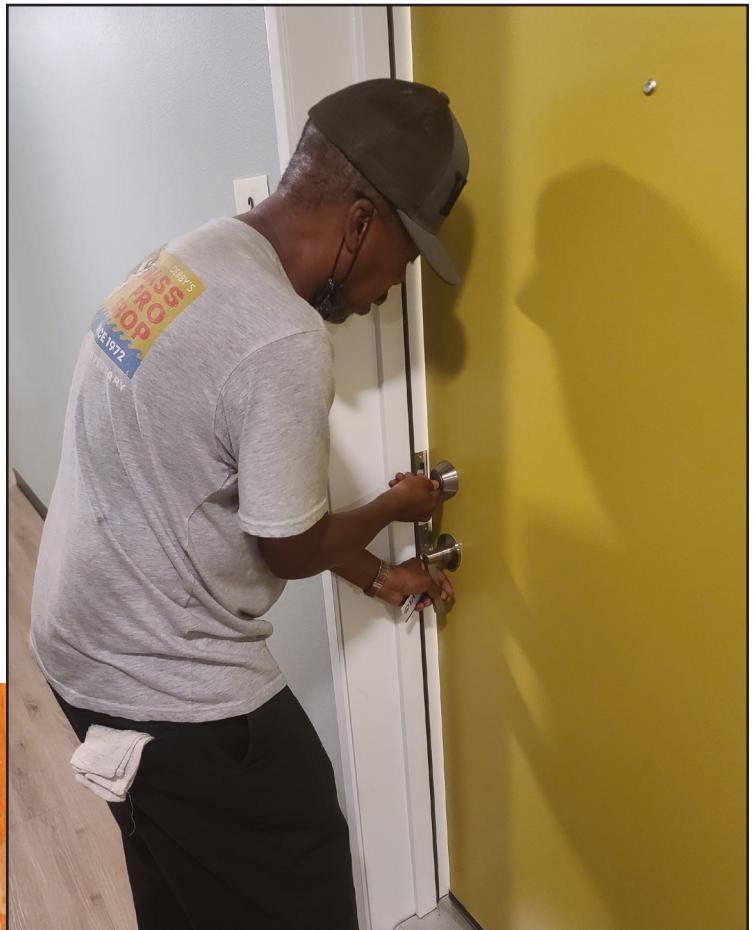
We had a conversation with one guest since his move in. Overall, it's going well, but he was able to express to one of our staff members that it has also been an adjustment. He talked with her about how the bed was so soft. She said, "Well, some mattresses can be softer than others."



As they talked further, I think the real issue was that this man had slept on the concrete for a number of years. Concrete is hard. Even a hard mattress wouldn't compare to that. Our staff member said, "You know, it is your apartment. If you want to make a pallet on the floor and sleep there for a little while, you can do that if that would help you to adjust better." He looked at her and said, "Wow! I never thought about that!"

A new season. A season of having one's own apartment. A season of getting used to being inside instead of outside.

A season of adjusting to a bed that is much softer than the concrete. I am grateful for this partnership between Central OAC, Central Presbyterian Church, and Intown Cares. May it continue to lead to a new season for many of our guests!



of pipes and mics

Central's A/V team has been busy this summer.

When Central began live-streaming in 2021, we installed a streaming system, including four cameras, a dedicated computer, RESI encoder, and a switcher, but we did not have the opportunity to upgrade our microphones for live music from the choir and organ.

This summer, our team installed a set of organ microphones and a set of choir microphones. Now, instead of most of our music being picked up by two microphones at the top of the sanctuary, we have a variety to enhance the singing and organ

playing in the sanctuary.

For the choir, we added a left, center, and right group of large diaphragm condenser microphones. These three microphones are specifically used by our choir and provide a sharper tone and volume boost.

We also added a set of organ microphones which provides a clearer sound of the organ.

"This set of organ microphones also adds a sharper tone for the organ in the livestream, as well as allowing for more proper balancing in the livestream," said Bo Brewer, audio engineer.

Central's A/V team installed the microphones in late July and began using them in the livestream and in-house sound in early August. Central's Director of Communications Mark Wallace Maguire praised the audio team.



“We are enthusiastic about adding a new dimension to our worship experience,” Maguire said. “Bo did an excellent job of diagnosing a problem and finding a way to remedy it. Central’s worship service is very special, gorgeous, and deliberate and we are always working to capture that and reflect it.”

Are you interested in being a part of Central’s A/V team? We’re always looking for volunteers. You do not need experience, just a willing spirit, sense of humor and a good attitude. If you are interested, contact Maguire at mwmaguire@cpcatlanta.org.



