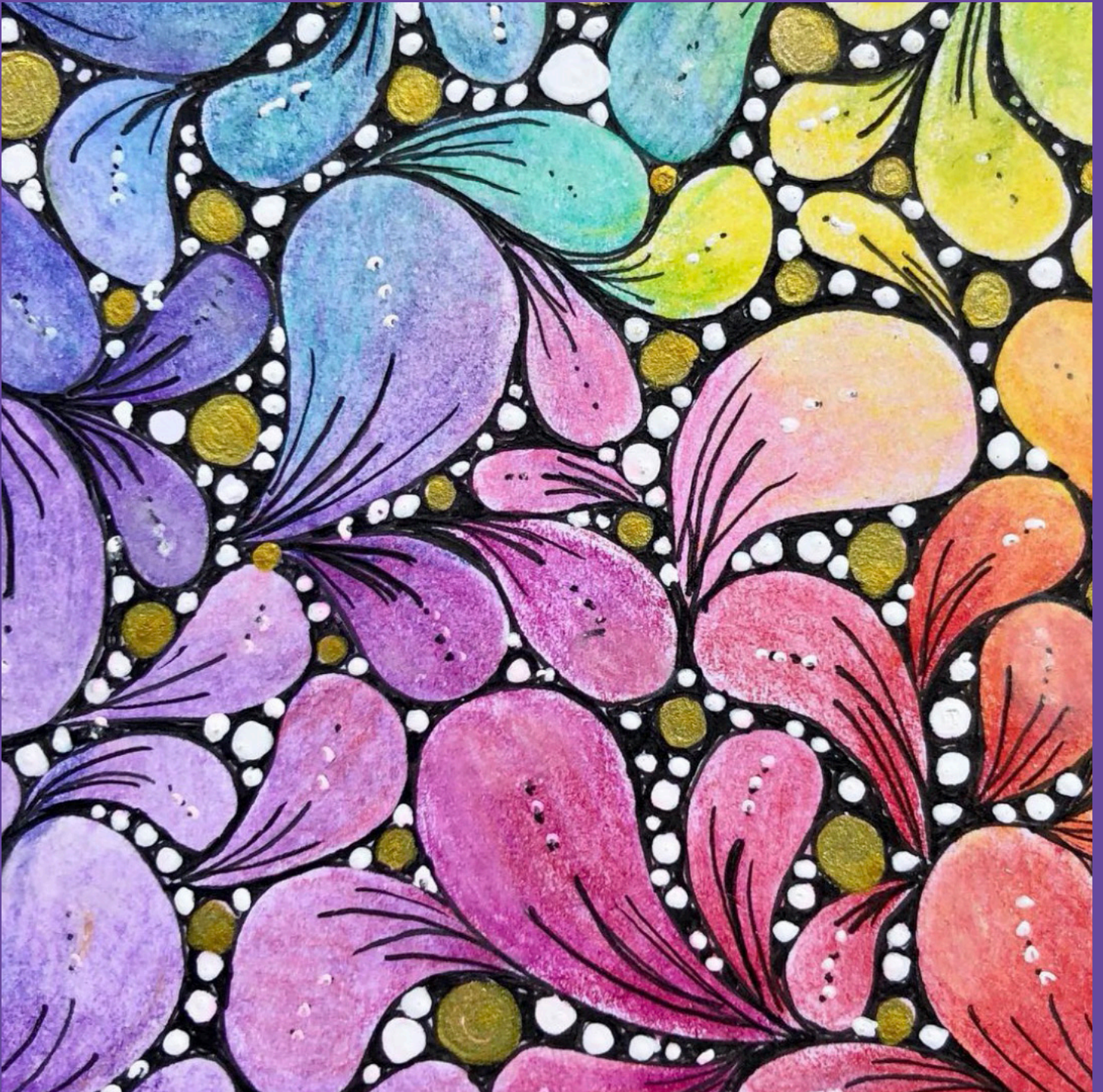


VOLUME 4 ISSUE 6

CENTRAL

Advent issue / 2023 /



God is With Us: Expecting Emmanuel

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 CENTRAL MEMBER BETTI ROSSZER SHARES THE INSPIRATION BEHIND HER ART

4 A LETTER FROM THE REV. SHANNON J. KERSHNER

5 CENTRAL LEADERSHIP & STAFF

6 FROM THE ASSOCIATE PASTOR: WINTER AND WONDER

8 SUSAN LANDRUM ON THE GREATEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

10 ADVENT CELEBRATION & ALTERNATIVE GIFT MARKET PREVIEW

12 REFLECTIONS ON STEWARDSHIP

14 A PREVIEW OF WINTER STUDIES AT CENTRAL

15 LOOKING AHEAD TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAMMING IN 2024

18 OAC'S KIMBERLY PARKER SHARES HER JOURNEY THIS YEAR

20 CENTRAL IN THE CITY RECAPS FALL EVENTS

22 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

24 FUN FACTS WITH CENTRAL

26 LETTER FROM THE CLERK



Interview with our artist

Central is fortunate to have so many creative artists in our congregation who contribute their gifts to our church life.

This year, we are featuring this piece created by [Betti Rosszer](#).

We sat down for a quick chat on to discover more about her creation, “Rainbow Zentangle,” which we feature in this issue.

[Tell us about the process behind this piece?](#)

This piece was created using the Zentangle method, which is a way to create beautiful images using structured patterns called tangles. The patterns are drawn with Micron pens on small pieces of paper called “tiles.” I incorporated gold and white gel pens and color pencils to create a rainbow effect.

[Who are some of your favorite artists?](#)

I follow several abstract artists on Instagram. My good friend Jane Sirinek from Chicago ([@jane_sirinek](#)) does magic with her colorful meditative line art and nature inspired papercuttings. Anica Gabrivec ([@zen.linea](#)) draws complex zentangles and watching her create is so soothing. John Forman from Wales ([@sculpttheworld](#)) creates flowing landscape designs with sticks, rocks, and leaves. Kate Rebecca Leach from the U.K. ([@essoldodesign](#)) makes abstract watercolors with the most tantalizing color schemes.



[How long did this piece take?](#)

This piece took two hours, at a leisurely pace.

[Do you listen to music or have any other practices you observe when you create?](#)

Zentangle is like flow yoga for the brain. It is relaxing and meditative. I often create these pieces when I am listening to a lecture or a seminar. Strangely, they help me focus on the lecture while my hand is creating tangles. At other times, I hang out in a coffee shop and create over a tea and dessert.

[What are you most forward looking to this Advent season?](#)

I look forward to Christmas preparations with my family and for my handmade holiday ornaments to find new homes.

Remembering Christ's vulnerability is key to this Season

BY REV. SHANNON J. KERSHNER

I realize that we are entering the season of Advent, but jump ahead with me for a moment. I love the Christmas hymn “Away in a Manger.” And though I can no longer remember when I first started singing it, I do remember standing in a blue robe, singing the first stanza at a Christmas pageant as a part of a children’s choir. I was playing the role of Mary. My friend was playing the role of the donkey. Due to all my childhood engagement with this Christmas carol, I always feel a sense of peace and Presence when I sing it. It cradles me with its words and its sound. I always loved “Away in a Manger.”

However, that adoration shifted a bit when I gave birth to our first-born child. After that experience, I began to hear this carol differently, with a bit of suspicion. The suspicion came because of the second verse. I had never even paid attention to that second verse until the evening I was trying to rock my crying baby girl to sleep during Advent and began singing

“The cattle are lowing; the poor baby wakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.”

I had to stop singing. No crying he makes? What baby are they talking about? Every baby cries, especially, I imagine, if they are woken up by cows. Why on earth would they imagine Jesus as a baby who did not cry?

My best guess as to why the writer did not want to portray Jesus as a baby who cried was because that made him just so...human. The



baby Jesus cried? That would mean that the baby Jesus also filled his diaper and nursed and did all those human baby things. That is scandalous to even consider—that God would choose to be among us as a crying, regular, fully-human baby.

And yet, we trust that is exactly what God did. From that moment on, I chose to skip over verse two, or, to grin as I sang it. For if we take away Jesus’ crying, we take away the power, the miracle, the gift of incarnation. We deny the immense vulnerable power of Christmas, the season of celebration for which we now prepare. In our preparation, may we avoid what the hymn writer did and refuse to water down the very vulnerability of the One for whom we wait.

Central Leadership

The Session of Central Presbyterian Church

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

Class of 2026

Gary Cornell
Denise de la Rue
LaShawn Green
John Heidbreder
Adam Seeley

The Diaconate of Central Presbyterian Church

Brookwood Hills: Anne Blankinship, Ellen Thompson

Decatur: Ed Carwile, Terrylynn Pons,
Vanessa Kirk, Isabelle Werber

Down Yonder: Martha Kimes,
Emmalee Hackshaw, Ed Galloway

Intown South: Rob Forbes, Ben Sutton

Intown North: Liz Jaffe, Debbie Miller

Northern Lights: Betty Carroll, Eleanor Dake,
Rachel Hull

CENTRAL STAFF

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Elizabeth Daly, Music Intern, edaly@cpcatlanta.org



from the associate pastor

In the tapestry of time,

as we now find ourselves

enveloped in the sacred embrace of Advent and the winter solstice, reflections emerge like ripples on still water. It is a season that beckons us to wonder about the interplay of light and dark, both in the external world and within the depths of our souls.

Advent, with its wreath adorned with candles, invites contemplation on the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. Each flame, a flickering messenger, whispers a promise that resonates with the ancient echo anticipation. In those quiet moments, consider how these themes have manifested in your own life – the fragile yet resilient hope that has carried you through, the profound peace that transcends understanding, the unexpected joy that has danced into your heart, and the enduring love that has embraced you in moments of vulnerability.

BY REV. KATE CULVER

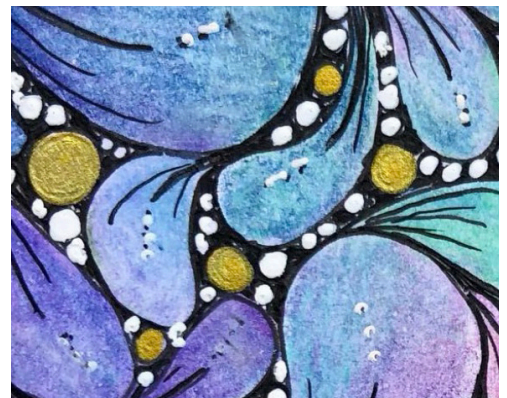
Simultaneously, the solstice speaks a language of celestial alignment. It marks the longest night, a cosmic canvas painted with darkness. Yet, within this darkness lies a silent promise – the inevitability of light’s return. In the moments of deepest darkness, when the night seems unending, have you not witnessed the gradual dawning of new possibilities and renewed hope? As you contemplate these dual narratives of Advent and Solstice, consider the symbolism of light. It is not merely the absence of darkness but a force that shapes and defines our existence. In this season let us reflect on how the light of Christ has illuminated your journey, casting out shadows of doubt and despair.

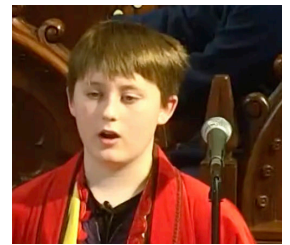
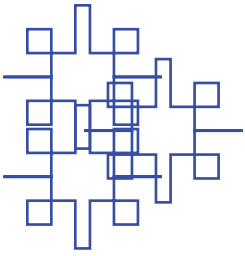
Let us also acknowledge the significance of darkness. In its embrace, we find introspection, transformation, and the gestation of new beginnings. Reflect on the times when you have navigated through the shadows, emerging with a deeper understanding of yourself and the world around you. In this season of reflection, may you find resonance in the delicate balance between light and dark. Embrace the complexities of your journey, recognizing



that both the shadowed valleys and sunlit peaks contribute to the mosaic of your life. As you reflect upon Advent and Solstice, may the flicker of candles and the celestial dance remind you that, even in the ebb and flow of life, the promise of light is unwavering.

There is a profound truth embedded in this seasonal intersection. The flicker of Advent candles and the celestial dance of the solstice invite us to embrace the paradox of our existence. It is within the delicate interplay of light and dark that the full spectrum of our humanity unfolds. The moments of joy gain depth against the backdrop of challenges, and the tapestry of our experiences weaves a narrative uniquely our own. In this reflection, let us hold space for both the shadows and the brilliance, recognizing that, ultimately, it is the convergence of these elements that shape our spiritual journey.





B

BY SUSAN LANDRUM

eing in seminary and working at Central is a rich exchange of meaning. More often than not, what I am getting to do in the sanctuary or the Sunday School classrooms or even waiting for MARTA to take our youth to Raging Burrito for lunch takes on new meaning (waiting on a train affords an opportunity for games and fellowship!). This semester, both our Children and Youth Fellow, Courtney Anne Henry, and I are in a class taught by the one and only Dr. Anna Carter Florence called, “Preaching & Worship Through the Christian Year.”

The class emphasizes our liturgical calendar or why we do what we do when we do it. During the first half of the semester, we focused on the Easter cycle, including Lent. It felt odd to plan an Easter service in the middle of October, stretching our imaginations and spirits in new ways. Each group that facilitated a service noted that the rhythm of our worship year matters. In many ways, we need to celebrate the birth of Jesus to connect



and understand the miracle of resurrection in its fullness. Of course, Dr. Carter Florence does all things with intention, and this points to the very nature of the early church, who spun Christmas off of the original Easter festival. Our Christian ancestors also acknowledged that we need to look back to look forward, we need to talk about birth to talk about death and

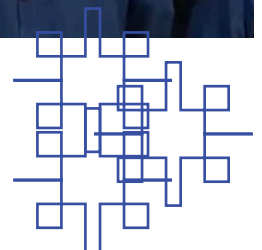
we need to celebrate the fullness of Christ's story and how He broke into the world.

So I bring all of this deep theological conviction to one of my favorite Central traditions, the Christmas Pageant. As I write this, we are in the beginning stages of planning. We have a powerful team of parents leading the way — Emily Hilimire and Vanessa Hunter — and a strong group of families signing up to be a part of this imaginative proclamation of Christ's birth. We'll all get to be a part of the pageant as a congregation on Sunday, December 24 at 11 a.m. Until then, the children and youth of Central will be buzzing with preparation.

Back in Dr. Carter Florence's class, we're knee-deep in our own Christmas cycle services and sitting with the question of what is really the miracle of Christmas? Many of us can get distracted or hung up on the mechanics of a 15-year-old unmarried girl suddenly being told she is bearing the Messiah. We might miss her reaction to this news, a powerful and beautiful song that proclaims a just and righteous God. Many of us can miss the significance of God appearing to the shepherds in the field, the lowly and marginalized workers, telling them to go and seek out Emmanuel. Many of us miss that as those shepherds went to Bethlehem, their sheep followed, too, bringing all of

creation in on this powerful event. Many of us might miss that the Magi come from a far-off place, bearing witness to this miracle for the rest of the world. Many of us might miss that these magi were guided by a star who is animated in Scripture — appearing, leading and stopping in Bethlehem, pointing to the fact that even the cosmos knew the miracle of Jesus' birth.

And yet, we have Central children to remind us year after year of these truths and perspectives. The star has one of the most joyful, exuberant speaking parts! Our angels, shepherds and magi are all there together, united across gospels. We hear the songs about Mary's response to her call, what happened that night in Bethlehem, even what the animals gathered there did. Central's pageant doesn't skip over the hard stuff either — the truth that at this time, empire, fear and violence were in charge. Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus were in danger from the start. Our faith is risky; from its origins, it shook everything up. Our children and youth proclaim this story year after year for all of us. Their Sundays of preparation, much like the season of Advent itself, lead us to the miracle of God breaking into the world as a child to grow up and walk alongside us. Come and see this joyful pageant and remember that this is the good news!





ADVENT Celebration & ALTERNATIVE GIFT MARKET

On Sunday, December 3, Central will begin our Advent season with a special event following worship.

We will feature vendors for our Alternative Gift Market. A listing of many of them is on the next page.

Stations will be set up for Christmas cookie decorating for Central children.

Central classes and outreach programs will be on hand to answer questions and talk about 2024.

Chrismon Trees will be set up to decorate.

Decorating will be underway in the sanctuary.

We look forward to spending this special time together.

Central Outreach and Advocacy Center

Shop their wishlist, volunteer, or donate directly via their website.



Bashor Men's Night Shelter

You may sign up to make and deliver a meal, or you may sign up to become an overnight volunteer. Please contact Rev. Kate Culver with any questions.

Fair Trade Coffee

Purchase wonderfully-roasted coffee and chocolates from our friends overseas.

Sunday Breakfast Ministry

Volunteer or contribute to Central's Sunday Breakfast Ministry, which helps feed our neighbors on Sunday mornings.

We Are Wendo

The Wendo project is a partnership with the women of Kalimani, Kenya. The women weave gorgeous baskets that will be for sale at the event. The profits help women with economic and health opportunities.



Betti Rosszer

Betti has contributed art for the last two issues of our Central magazine. She will be selling her art, with a portion of the profits going to Central's Worship and Arts Committee.





Belonging to God

Sharing our Blessings

As our year ends, members reflect on the meaning of stewardship

BY BESSIE GREEN

As I reflect on the meaning of stewardship, I am reminded of my mother's Saturday evening ritual. Every Saturday evening, my mother would prepare her envelope to be placed in the Church's offering plate on Sunday morning. As I recall, the amount included in the envelope was not a large amount, but it was an amount that was consistent and regular. In my early adult years, I did not always contribute regularly as did my mother. However, as I matured, I realized how much the church helped in developing my faith and in my growth. I have since adopted the practice of pledging and giving to the church regularly to support the mission and programs that help develop a strong community. In my view, giving is an active way of expressing gratitude for the goodness of God.

I once read that "the decision to give money for the work of the church is primarily a faith issue, not a financial one. To be sure, the act of giving does not in itself prove faith. But when one fails to give in proportion to what one has, it does demonstrate a lack of faith. Our lives are a gift from God, and those things which sustain our lives and give them meaning come from God as well. Increasing our commitment to God's work in this world neither diminishes nor impoverishes us. On the contrary, it enables us to return a portion of what we have received, as a grateful response."

Luke 6:38 expresses the act of giving in the spirit of abundance: "Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down and shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; For the measure you give, will be the measure you get back."

More importantly, stewardship reflects how we take care of what has been entrusted to us...our time, our talents, and resources and how we treat other people. Our commitment to stewardship strengthens our church, our community, ourselves and God's Kingdom.

Thus, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things will be added unto you." Matthew 6:33





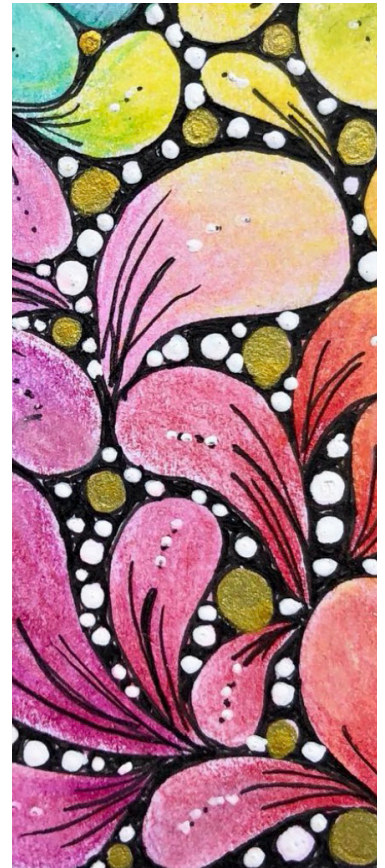
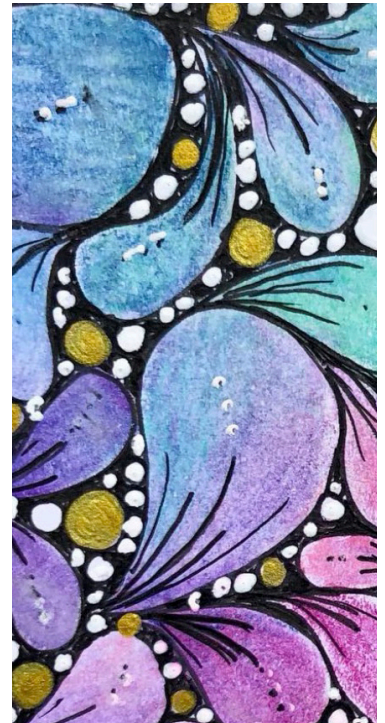
BY BEN AND KATIE SUTTON

We support Central for a lot of reasons, but a big one is that we need help. Being a family is a lot of work, and while the day-to-day of family routines and schedules and communication can be overwhelming, it is joyful and full of love and we are confident that God is with us. And yet — every day our boys learn about a world that is often harsh and live in a city where vast inequality is evident at every stoplight. We want them to understand that God is at work in difficult times and in difficult places. But that is really tough to explain, and sometimes it is tough to believe ourselves. So, we support Central because we need Central’s help in showing God at work beyond the four walls of our house.

It is fair to say that both of us owe a tremendous amount of who we are to the church communities in which we grew up. The love and support we each received from our home churches had a huge impact on our lives. We can see those bonds forming with our boys now, and are grateful for the community of love that will raise them up with the same love and support that we received, reflecting God’s love upon them from another angle.

And, we hope, they’ll learn from your example, understanding that in this difficult world there is power in faith and persistence. That living out your faith means showing up for your neighbors to serve breakfast every week or making sandwiches for the night shelter; it means making joyful noise and celebrating milestones; and it means sharing in each other’s sorrows.

We are grateful for Central’s example to our family, for the community of faith that has long existed here, but also for the evolving and active community that we get to be a part of. We want to continue to see it grow, to have the church be a family for our boys, and to help play an active role in Central sharing God’s love.





Winter Studies

A past we cannot ignore: Anti-black racism in the Presbyterian Church

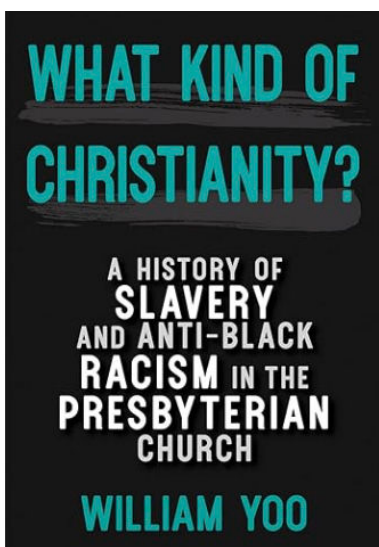
9:45 to 10:45 a.m.
Sundays in January
Sessions will take
place from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m.
on each of the four Sundays in January

The 2024 Central Presbyterian Winter Studies program will take place in the Oglesby Atrium space, where the OAC is located.

The program's four sessions will all be led by Dr. William Yoo, Professor of Church History at Columbia Theological Seminary. Dr. Yoo will base his teaching on his recently published book, *What Kind of Christianity: A History of Slavery and Anti-Black Racism in the Presbyterian Church*. This promises to be a compelling program. Confronting racism in our own denomination's history will not be an easy thing, but we can't turn from a past that we don't know.



Dr. Yoo has previously written about the transnational histories of American Protestant world missions in Korea and Korean-American immigrant religious communities as well as the histories of Presbyterianism and Protestant theological education in the United States. His latest book covers the history and legacy of slavery and anti-Black racism in American Presbyterianism. His current research interests include tracing the histories of racial injustice, settler colonialism, and slavery in the United States and examining Indigenous, Black, and Asian-American theologies of freedom and resistance.





2024

CHILDREN AND YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL





2024 CHILDREN AND YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School for our children and youth in 2024 will focus in Winter/ Spring on the life of Jesus Christ and The Early Church!

JANUARY

January 7: No Sunday School

January 14: Jesus as a Child (Matthew 2:13-23 + Luke 2:21-40)

January 21: Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17)

January 28: Calling the Disciples (Various Texts in Matthew)

FEBRUARY

February 4: Sermon on the Mount/Beatitudes (Matthew 5-7)

February 11: The Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8)

February 18: Loaves and Fishes (Matthew 15:32-39)

February 25: Walking on Water (Matthew 14:22-33)

MARCH

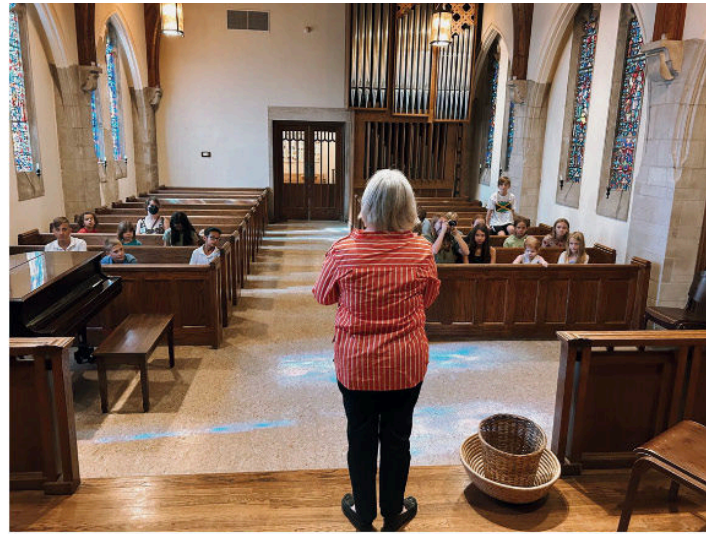
March 3: The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

March 10: Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

March 17: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

March 24: Palm Sunday (Mark 11:1-11)

March 31: No Sunday School



APRIL

April 7: The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24)

April 14: The Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-26)

April 21: Children and Youth Prep for May 12 Service

April 28: Children's Sunday School will look at The Fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) while the Confirmands run through the confirmation service

MAY

May 5: Children and Youth Prep for May 12 Service

May 12: Children and Youth Sunday final preparations.

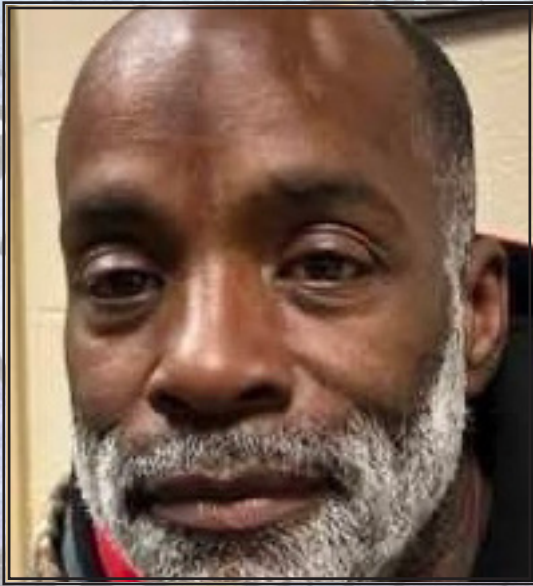
Last day of children and youth Sunday School for Winter/Spring

Sunday School will take a break for the summer season and will resume in the fall. Our fall lessons will center on telling the stories of important Old Testament figures such as Cain and Abel, Noah, Isaac and Rebekah, Ruth and Naomi, Moses, and many more!



EXTRA WORSHIP MATERIALS

In addition to Sunday School, children are encouraged to explore the worship materials available in the narthex during Sunday worship services. There are a variety of books, sensory toys, coloring materials, and bulletins designed specifically for our youngest worshippers.



BY KIMBERLY PARKER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CENTRAL OAC

A couple of months ago, I felt like I was becoming jaded at work.

I didn't find a lot of joy in what I was doing. I was not patient with people. It seemed that every guest who walked through our doors got on my nerves. I didn't want to listen. I didn't care.

This is a scary place to be.

I didn't share this with anyone. I don't even think I shared it with my wife, Ellen, or at least not in a lot of detail. I knew that I needed to do something to change because I didn't feel like a good leader or a pastor or even a kind human being. If I couldn't change, I didn't need to continue doing this type of work.

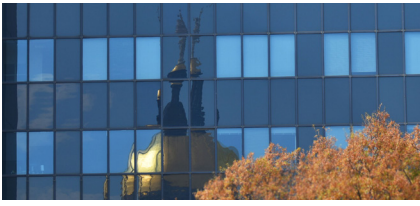
I began reflecting on our values at Central OAC. "We believe in meeting people where they are and treating each person with respect and dignity." I realized that I still believed in these values, but I was not living them out.

I made a decision to try something that really didn't feel like a big deal, but I wanted to see if it would change me; if it would help the jadedness that I felt. I decided to do my best to look into the eyes of every person I encountered at work. Not just a fleeting glance, but a sustained, sincere look into their eyes. I began doing this while we stood on the street, making our list for the day. I did it every day. Sometimes I would have to remind myself to do it if I felt that impatient, critical feeling, welling up inside of me again. But I did it. I looked people in the eyes.

In my privileged life, I know very little of what it feels like to be someone experiencing homelessness. But, I do know what it's like to be someone who is afraid, sad, confused, or angry at times. Looking into another person's eyes helped me to realize that we can relate to one another.

Slowly, I began to see people differently. I began to care again. I began listening in a new way as guests shared what was going on in their lives. This deep looking into the eyes has reminded me of God being with us and I now expect to see Emanuel in the eyes of another person. For that I am grateful, very grateful!



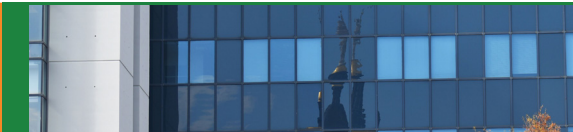


SURGING WITH

SOUTH DOWNTOWN

CENTRAL IN THE CITY

2023



On November 10 Central hosted the inauguration of the south downtown cyclo-trac, the bike and pedestrian lanes added to several streets around Central. We were joined by 20 to 30 cyclists, as well as our City Council Member, Jason Dozier, Central Atlanta Progress (CAP) President A.J. Robinson, and Atlanta DOT Commissioner Solomon Caviness IV for a ride around south downtown on protected lanes. This is the beginning of further extensions that will connect South Downtown to surrounding neighborhoods.



On October 8 about 15 of us, including a representative from the Atlanta Downtown Neighborhood Association, enjoyed a box lunch after worship and then went for a walking tour of South Downtown led by Jennifer Ball, the Chief Operating Officer of Central Atlanta Progress. It was a beautiful, cool autumn day, and we went to see some of the sites of ongoing and future redevelopment activity happening around our church that will reshape downtown Atlanta and add new infrastructure and many new residents to our neighborhood in the years to come.



Jennifer Ball



On the afternoon of Sunday, October 29 Central Presbyterian Church joined the roster of historic buildings in Atlanta for which the Atlanta Preservation Center has enrolled for public tours. A group of about 15 members and non-members enjoyed a fascinating slide show and lecture by our own Martin Lehfeldt and Beth Grashof as we heard about the history of Atlanta from the Civil War until today, as seen through the eyes of Central Presbyterian Church. We showed off our gorgeous Sanctuary (opened in 1885), listened to a brief organ recital, then saw and heard about the origin and architectural significance of Rand Chapel, the Campbell-Eagan building and the Oglesby Building.

CENTRAL

upcoming events



Sunday, December 3

ADVENT MARKETPLACE
& CELEBRATION

Tull Hall following worship

Saturday, December 9

CHRISTMAS TEA

The Deacons are excited to share the return of the Christmas Tea, Saturday, December 9 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the home of Shannon & Greg Kershner. An invitation with details will be sent out soon to our "Silver Belles & Merry Makers" – members of Central ages 70 and older.

Wednesday, December 13

CENTRAL'S NIGHT AT THE NIGHT SHELTER

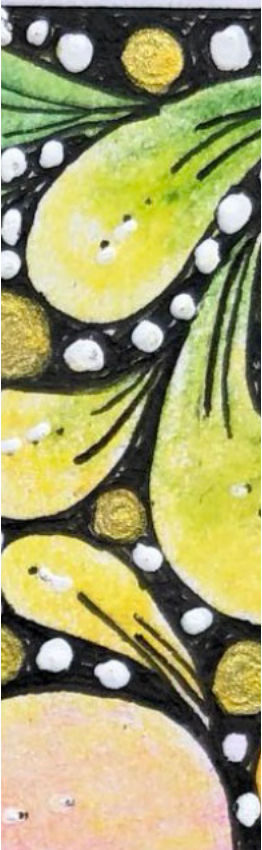
Volunteers are needed to provide sack lunches, serve dinner and volunteer overnight. Please contact Chris Sciarrone at sciarrone.chris@gmail.com with any questions

Friday, December 15

CENTRAL OAC

GUEST HOLIDAY PARTY

10 a.m. to 12 p.m.



CENTRAL

upcoming events



Sunday, December 17
AMIS HOLIDAY PARTY
Tull Hall following worship

Sunday, December 24
CHRISTMAS EVE!

Sunday Breakfast Ministry
in Tull Hall (*please note this
special time*)
8:30 to 9:30 a.m.



Our Children's Pageant will
take place as part of our morning worship at 11 a.m.

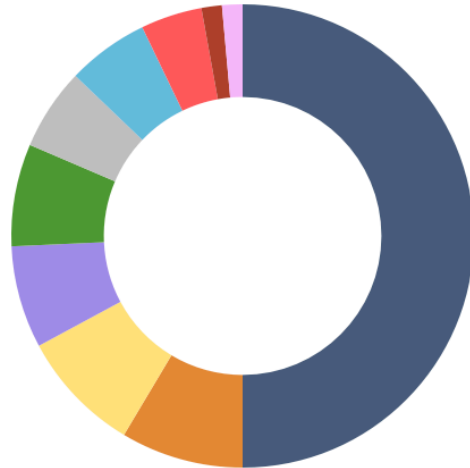
Our Christmas Eve Service will take place that evening at 5 p.m.



Did You Know?

FAST FACTS ABOUT CENTRAL IN 2023

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- Georgia - 50%
- Illinois - 9%
- Texas - 9%
- Indiana - 7%
- Virginia - 7%
- California - 6%
- North Carolina - 6%
- South Carolina - 4%
- Arizona - 1%
- Dhaka Division - 1%

Central's Sunday worship reaches an average of over 300 viewers a week on our livestream across several states and nations! Here are the states our website stream alone reached on October 29. We are also streamed on YouTube and Facebook.

Central hosted 18 events during the Legislative Season. Multiple groups used Tull Hall, the Taylor Conference Room, and our Sanctuary to meet. In addition to a space for these groups to mobilize, some of them used our livestreaming services.

Central hosted concerts this year, including Callie Day, Atlanta African American Music Society, and Voces Amicis.



Central had a robust turnout at the PRIDE Parade in **October**. We were excited to band together and show love for all of God's people as a congregation!

Central welcomed **9 new members this fall**. If you get an opportunity, make sure to welcome our new members! You may contact them via Realm. Welcome to Samuel Ayantor, Althea Brown, Steve Hogben, Dane Jefferson, Kelsey Kubelick, Charlyn Sirmans, Sara Toering, Greg Kershner and Hannah Kershner.



Central served as a hub for **community meetings** throughout the year, for groups including the Atlanta Downtown Neighborhood Association and City of Atlanta.



God
with
US

BY GAYLE KNIGHT,
CLERK OF SESSION

Like many of you, I have a running conversation with God. It includes gratitude, requests, news updates (which I assume God already has, but I share anyway), and general chatter.

On a typical morning, I walk out the front door with my dog and say something profound to God like, “Hi God. Thank you for the cool air and crunchy leaves. It feels amazing out here today.”

When my dog perks up at the baby on our street being pushed in her stroller, I say, “Thank you for baby Z. Help her family get some sleep this week.”

A few blocks into the walk, during which I am telling God that there are more leaves turning yellow than red this season and a flood of acorns underfoot, I remember I have a doctor’s appointment that morning. The memory triggers a request. “Please God, help me be strong during the lab work. I don’t want to forget to breathe, pass out, and make trouble for the staff at the doctor’s office.” (Which, I’m sorry to say, has happened.)

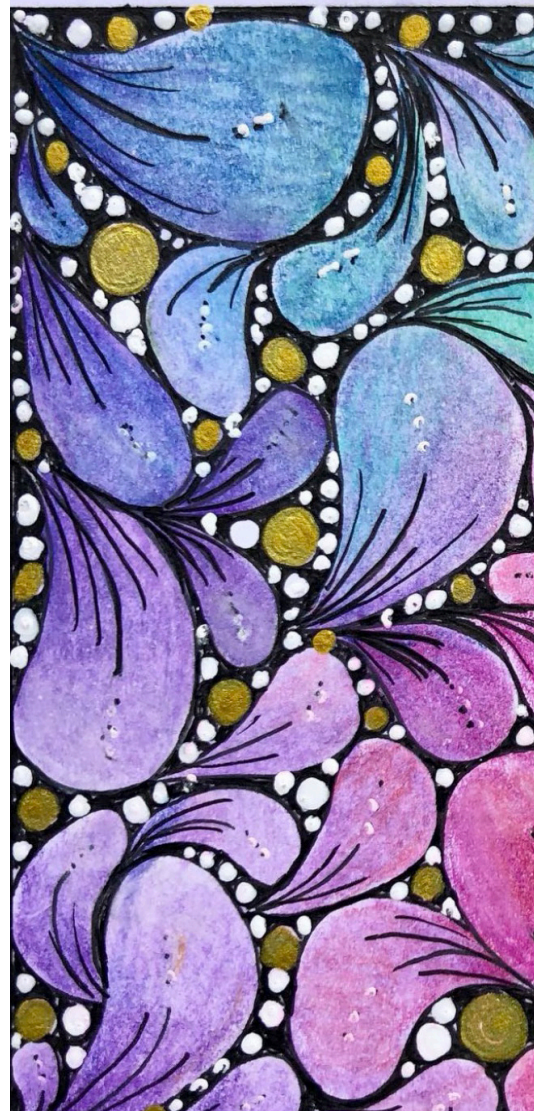
After a successful blood draw, I send up, “Thank you, God. We did it!”

God knows that I love Starbucks’ banana bread. That is my reward after the lab appointment. God also knows that the helpful baristas will ask if you want your bread warmed up and that it is even better that way.

I believe God knows everything about me and everything I am thinking. Even the bad things. I apologize for those thoughts, and I believe God hears and forgives.

Now that texting is a daily way of life, my conversation with God feels somewhat like sending a text message to someone very close. You know that person has received and accepted what you shared even when they don’t respond right away. I try hard to listen for what God is saying to me even though I can’t see those three dancing bubbles that signify a message is coming back.

In this season, we celebrate that God is with us, every moment of every day. Help us pause and reflect on the



amazing gift of God’s friendship. God, in addition to being creator and savior of the whole universe, wants to be part of humanity and have a personal relationship with each of us. What a gift.

Hallelujah!

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7 RSV



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