
VOLUME 5 ISSUE 1

CENTRAL

Lent issue / 2024 /



Light Wave by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity, Sanctified Art

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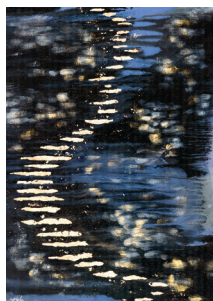
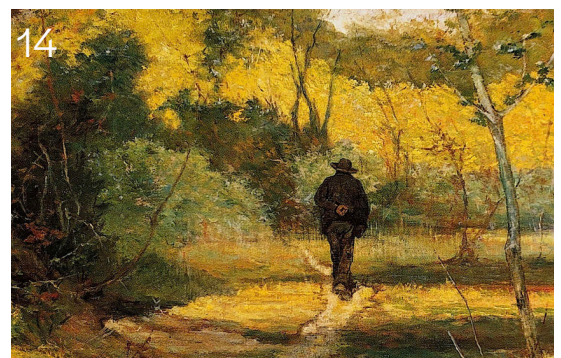
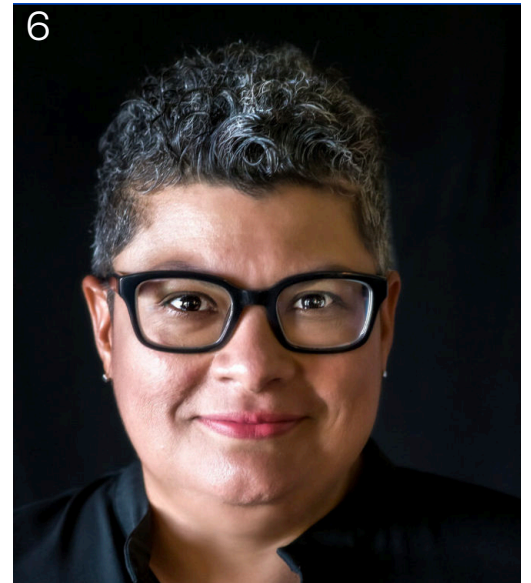
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COVER ART: Our cover art is the painting *Light Wave* by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity with Sanctified Art. This painting captures the meditative nature of the Lenten season, coupled with glimpses of the shimmering light awaiting us come Easter.

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

The Rev. Shannon J. Kershner, Senior Pastor/Head of Staff, skershner@cpcatlanta.org

The Rev. Kate Culver, Designated Associate Pastor, kculver@cpcatlanta.org

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Susan Landrum, Director for Family Ministries, slandrum@cpcatlanta.org

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Josh Smith, Audio Engineer

Patrick Maguire, Video Assistant

Courtney Anne Henry, Children & Youth Fellow, chenry@cpcatlanta.org,

Thomas Chafin, Interim Choir Director, tchafin@cpcatlanta.org

Elizabeth Daly, Music Intern, edaly@cpcatlanta.org

What might we ‘take on’ this season?

BY REV. SHANNON J. KERSHNER

The season of Lent is upon us. Similar to our season of Advent, Lent is intended to be a time of reflection and preparation as we move towards Holy Week and Easter. Historically, people who felt called to be baptized spent these forty days preparing for that moment of new beginning (which took place at an Easter vigil). We have tended to approach Lent as a season of “giving up.” But if we follow in the footsteps of our spiritual ancestors, perhaps we might view Lent as a season of “taking on.”

“ What spiritual disciplines might we take on during this Lenten season that might strengthen our own journey of discipleship? Is there a daily routine of prayer that you might begin? ”

What spiritual disciplines might we take on during this Lenten season that might strengthen our own journey of discipleship? Is there a daily routine of prayer that you might begin? Since we will be following Jesus through the Gospel of Mark during this season, what about reading the Gospel from beginning to end? How about taking a silent walk a few times a week, focusing on the sights and sounds of creation? Or what about serving breakfast before church once a month, volunteering to stay overnight at the



shelter, or helping out with the OAC? The possibilities are endless. How might you pay attention to your spiritual life during these Lenten days?

I am planning on working my way through *Black Liturgies*, by Cole Arthur Riley. It is a beautiful new book of forty-three liturgies meant to respond to folks wondering what it means to be a full human being in these days of rancor and Christian nationalism. I must admit to you that I struggle with adding new spiritual disciplines into my life, but this feels like a good season to try again. Will you join me? What newness might be born in us if we allow the space and time for God to work?

Lenten events

February 14, 2024



ASH WEDNESDAY Central Presbyterian Church

Noon in Rand Chapel  7 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Ashes 'on the go' on Washington Street from 9 a.m. to noon , 2 to 5 p.m.

EASTER EGG HUNT Central's Family Ministries will host an Easter Egg hunt on Saturday, March 23 at 9:30 a.m. at Mary Lillian Walker's home. Visit Realm for more information.



PALM SUNDAY

10:15 a.m.
Procession around
Capitol Hill.

11 a.m.
Worship



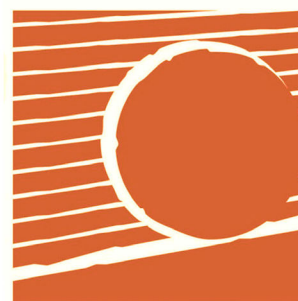
MAUNDY THURSDAY

7 p.m.
This evening will
take place at various
locations in members'
homes.



GOOD FRIDAY

7 p.m.
This service takes
place in the sanctuary
with participants from
Covenant and Morn-
ingside Presbyterian
Churches.

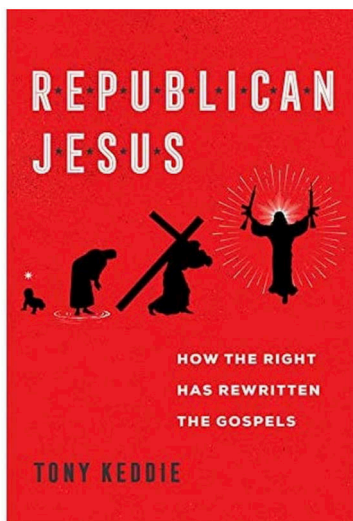


EASTER

11 a.m.
Service in the
sanctuary with
communion.



Learning in LENT



Republican Jesus: How the Right Has Rewritten the Gospels | Issues in Theology Class

Sundays through March 17

9:45 to 10:45 a.m.

Greene Room

The Issues in Theology class will resume its discussion of Tony Keddie's book, *Republican Jesus: How the Right Has Rewritten the Gospels*. Keddie, a professor of Christian History at the University of British Columbia, wrote this book in response to what he feels is a political misuse of Biblical interpretation and history.

Note that while this is a provocative book to read, a summary of salient points from a subject chapter is provided each Sunday morning, so one does not have to read the chapter in order to participate in the class discussion.

For more information, contact Tina Sizemore (tinasizemore@bellsouth.net) or Rod Hunter (rhunt02@emory.edu).

Grappling with Jesus's Teachings | A Sojourners Class

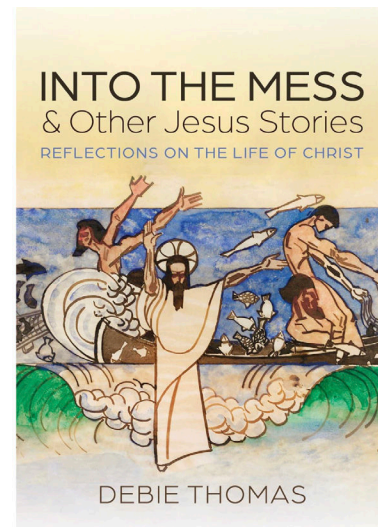
Sundays through March 17

9:45 to 10:45 a.m.

Brotherhood Room

The stories of Jesus' teachings that we find in the Gospels can present 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 "Wonders" section of this book, on miracles of Jesus, provided the source for lively class discussions this past fall. In February and March, we will discuss stories from the "Teachings" section of the book: the beatitudes, the ten bridesmaids, the good Samaritan, and more. Join us for conversations about Jesus' teachings that perhaps will be different from many you've had before.

For more information about this class, contact Ed Carwile (carwile1230@earthlink.net) or Robert Catterall (rfcatterall@gmail.com).



Antiracist Practices for Faithful Leadership

Starting February 20

Tuesdays

7 to 8 p.m.

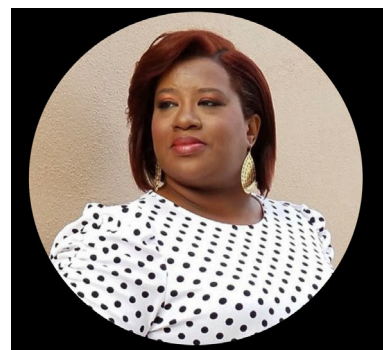
via Zoom (check e-news for the link)

This series will meet for six consecutive Tuesday evenings and will be led by Shani L. McIlwain, a Leadership Trainer, Author and Antiracism Coach (<https://shanimcilwain.info/bio>). Her role as facilitator and the training materials are through NEXT Church (<https://nextchurch.net/about-next/>).

Prior to each session, participants will have viewed a 30 to 45 minute pre-recorded video. The videos feature two teachers sharing their insights for how church members and leaders can embody antiracism.

One of this recorded series' teachers is Jessica Vazquez Torres, who led one of our all church retreats and frequently attended Central when she lived in Atlanta. The goal of the program as explained by NEXT Church is to, "give us the opportunity to learn, explore and practice bringing racial justice to the core of our leadership". The Mission Committee is the program's sponsor. Registration is limited. Sign up is available via Realm.

Contact M.E. Davis at maryelizabeth.pope@gmail.com with any questions.



Shani L. McIlwain



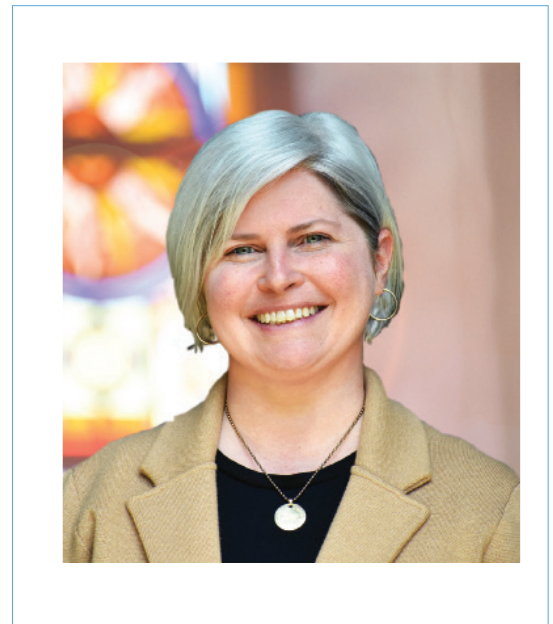
Jessica Vazquez Torres

BY SUSAN LANDRUM

Faith seeking understanding

I remember my good friend Cat* telling me once that she has a complicated relationship with the word “discipline.” I responded that mine was very uncomplicated - I just don’t like it. I always associated the concept with painful rules I didn’t agree with or dictatorial personalities in my life. Of course, being the wise person that she is, Cat shared that the root of the word in Latin is “discere” which means “to learn.” Despite my four years of high school Latin, I had blocked this out and was grateful to be reacquainted with this fact. Cat was right, once I viewed “discipline” with this outlook, it took on a whole new meaning. I think about this exchange and the deepening of discipline every Lent. Sinking into this season is a practice in discipline, learning and connecting to our faith in new ways.

This year, Lent coincides with getting to walk alongside our confirmation class on their own journey in spiritual discipline. Confirmation is the season in a young person’s life where they confirm the baptismal vows their families made for them as children through becoming members of the congregation. We’ve also had the joyful experience of supporting confirmands in being baptized as part of the



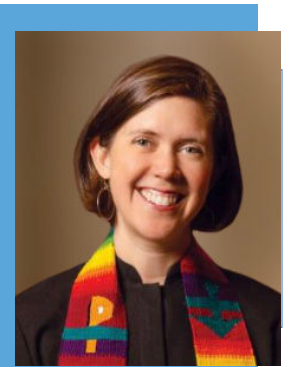
same journey if their faith story didn't include baptism yet. It's my first time getting to support an entire confirmation class and I consider it a profound gift and privilege. Our confirmation class of ten teens are asking the questions that each of us continues to ask as our faith evolves. They are approaching the art of good questions as a discipline. At our opening retreat, we brainstormed a list of these questions to guide our lessons and conversations. Here are just a few: "Where is God? How does God relate to me? How do we know that what's in the Bible is true? What exactly is church?"

In response, we're exploring Scripture, our church's confessions and polity, theology and experiencing worship with different faith communities within the Christian tradition and outside of it. As the season unfolds and the confirmation class continues its journey, you will be invited to witness their own faith formation as they lead parts of our worship service, craft

their faith stories and of course, celebrate the conclusion of this season on April 28th. Anselm of Canterbury's motto was "faith seeking understanding" and I can't think of a better Lenten discipline than this.

I have always valued the way that the Presbyterian denomination and Central in particular has embraced this motto as well in the spiritual formation and Christian education of every congregant across ages. We are all students of this motto, letting the questions lead the way. We are walking together, making meaning of the ultimate mystery of our faith: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

**Rev. Cat Goodrich who served Central as a resident pastor from 2011-2014. She told me it was okay to tell this story and sends her love from Baltimore!*



Our Central confirmation class kicked off their journey together in December with an overnight retreat in the youth suite!



Belonging to God

Sharing our Blessings

As we enter another year,
members reflect on stewardship and
what Central means to them



BY TRACE HAYTHORN



MARTHA HAYTHORN

&

Our family came to Central in 2008, right around the time of the sesquicentennial celebration. We knew of Central and even attended a Covenant Network meeting back in the 1990s. Martha loves Central and sees it as her spiritual home:

Martha: That's right! I am proud to be a deacon, and I love supporting others. My time in youth group was so meaningful, serving at the night shelter, and these days I love serving as a part of the welcoming team. Even though my mom serves at another church as their pastor, Central is really home for me. I think of Kessler and Lydia Catterall as sisters, and it was Central that brought us together. I've always felt Central's commitment to inclusion is important. And I know how people have always made me feel included in the life of the church, not just a person with a disability. I've had some hard times, just like Central. But we keep trusting the Holy Spirit in all we do, guided by our faith together. What about you, Daddy?

Trace: Central has always been about the commitment to possibility for me. I was excited to learn when we first arrived in Atlanta that Lynn Turnage was serving as the Director of Christian Education. I was a member of her very first youth group decades ago! I've felt honored to serve as a part of the Residency Committee and the search committees for both Jen Sengin and Mason Copeland. I've enjoyed the occasional opportunity to lead in worship, and, of course, the adult choir is a source of great joy for me. While our family is divided in our service between two churches, we make an equal financial commitment to both, feeling that our stewardship is about the larger church. Our gift is a simple way of expressing our gratitude for God's grace as it takes shape in and among this diverse and passionate group of people.

Martha: We are happy to have a place where we can sing and pray and love our neighbors, and we're really happy that place is Central. I know that I am the young woman I am because of the love and support of so many people at Central.

Trace: Through all of the changes in recent years, we maintain a deep sense that the Spirit is moving in and through this distinctive community of faith. We trust that God isn't through with us yet and that the deeper we grow together, the richer the city of Atlanta will be because of our service and dedication to justice, inclusion, equity, and hope.

BY JOE AND JANE CONYERS

When we were asked to write a brief article about our understanding of stewardship and why we give to Central Presbyterian Church, Jane thought about how her idea of stewardship had developed over her lifetime. She will tell her story which includes me, Joe.

From infancy I was part of a family that attended worship and Sunday School faithfully. I remember the fun in the Cradle Roll room playing in the sandbox that had a mirror placed in the sand to look like a lake, and the fake birthday cake in the Kindergarten class with real candles to blow out on my birthday. When I graduated from Vacation Bible School at the end of sixth grade, the very next year I was a helper in the Primary class. As a teenager I was pianist for opening exercises, and as a young teen I was asked to write and deliver a devotional for my mother's class. I was confirmed

at twelve years old and almost never missed being in worship.

But with all of this background I have no recollection of stewardship season or teaching or preaching about it at our church in Tampa. Nor did I ever hear my parents discuss it. What I do remember is being handed "Sunday School money" and my father placing a small amount in the offering plate. Occasionally when the beloved pastor visited, (he came often and liked to arrive at lunch time) my father presented a check to him for the church.

My interpretation of this behavior is that there was little understanding of stewardship and that I grew up in the worst of the Depression years (born in 1931) and World War II years. Things were very hard financially for my parents during those years.

A year after I graduated from Agnes Scott, I married Joe and soon learned that he intended for us to give regularly to the church. Of course he



did. He grew up in a minister's home and had been taught well. There we were at Columbia Seminary living on the G.I. bill at \$135 a month and some of that year I worked at Agnes Scott for \$40 a month. During the second and third year we had a baby named David. I stayed at home with him. The G.I. bill went up to \$160, and we paid \$65 of it for an apartment. That is when I learned to stretch a dollar! We gave as we were able during those years, very little and not planned.

When Joe became pastor of the church in Havana, Florida, and was paid \$350 a month we thought we were rich. That is when we began regular tithing. I have to admit that I knew it was a good and right thing to do during our first years. However, it was not until the denomination used the theme of, "His Love, Our Response," that I really woke up as to why we want to see giving as important and joyful.

Around 1980 Joe learned about the Rev. Tom Are's Lifestyle Stewardship program and the Austell Church

session chose to use it that year. It created a wonderful understanding in the congregation and in this pastor's wife that stewardship involves more than money. Our worship, our study, our service, and yes, our giving is what stewardship in our lives means.

We came to Central almost 30 years ago. Joe was almost immediately enlisted to help teach the Brotherhood class and was the preacher on some of the Labor Day Sundays. He has been part of several stewardship committees. One of my joys has been preparing communion, even washing and ironing the communion cloths, taking my turn teaching Rebekah Circle lessons, and, for a time, helping in the COAC office. I have served as an elder, a deacon, and chaired the Rebekah Circle three different terms. Topping it all is being able to support our church budget with regular joyful giving. Yes, we support the budget, but we know that we need to give, worship, study, and serve to express fully our gratitude for God's love and grace.



Central Budget Update

We have reached the time of year for spiritual renewal, preparing our hearts and our minds to reflect on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Good Friday and Easter are an opportunity to receive the overflowing grace God has to offer. Over the past year, life at Central has truly overflowed with Grace and love. Central has returned to a “new normal” with increased activities and events. We have called two new pastors and added new employees to our wonderfully dedicated and talented staff. While we budgeted to end 2023 at a deficit, we were blessed through the generosity of our members along with the conscientious spending of our staff and committee members to end 2023 with a positive net income of \$85,306. This means we beat our budget by over \$200,000!

For 2023, we collected 97% of our total pledges and received over \$250,000 in non-pledge and pledge overpay-

ment gifts. Our 2024 Stewardship campaign has been successful with an increase in the number of members pledging and an increase in overall pledges. Many of our non-pledge givers chose to pledge this year, increasing our pledge total by 22%.

Due to the increase in pledges and increased investment earnings, we were able to put forth a 2024 budget with only a \$10,925 deficit which is over a \$100,000 improvement, even with a full staff.

All committees worked hard to budget their expenses as close to 2023 numbers as possible while we move forward visioning all that Central can accomplish.

Thank you for your generous support, not only monetarily, but in your hearts, enthusiasm, time, and commitment to our Central family. - *Kristie Johns, Central Business Administrator*

REVENUES

- 2023 Total Revenue of \$1,664,103
- \$283,658 higher than 2023 Budget of \$1,380,445
- \$21,234 higher than 2022 Actual Revenue of \$1,642,869
- 2023 member giving of \$1,237,099
- \$225,099 higher than 2023 Budget of \$1,012,000
- \$70,234 lower than 2022 Actual of \$1,307,333

EXPENSES

- 2023 Actual Expenses of \$1,578,796
- \$79,703 higher than 2023 Budget of \$1,499,093 (There were increases in overhead costs such as utilities and personnel costs)
- \$14,988 higher than 2022 Actual of \$1,563,808.

NET OPERATING SURPLUS/ (DEFICIT)

- 2023 Actual Expenses of \$1,578,796
- \$79,703 higher than 2023 Budget of \$1,499,093 (There were increases in overhead costs such as utilities and personnel costs)
- \$14,988 higher than 2022 Actual of \$1,563,808.



A different
kind of
Lenten
practice

BY KIMBERLY PARKER

Painting on opposite page: *The Man in the Woods* by Giovanni Fattori



The Lenten season is that time of the year when we hear a lot about giving something up for forty days. People talk about giving up sweets, alcohol, TV, coffee, social media, screen time, meat, complaining, etc. The list could go on and on.



Other people look at the Lenten season as a time to add something to their daily routine rather than give something up. Some choose to pray, meditate, read Scripture, volunteer, do random acts of kindness, etc. Again, the list could go on and on.

In being completely transparent, I don't seem to do very well at giving something up. Maybe I'm selfish and I don't want to do without something I enjoy. Maybe I simply don't want to put the effort into disciplining myself to take something away. Sometimes I try to add something, but honestly, do I really stick to it? Most of the time, I don't. And then I feel guilty.

I haven't given any thought to this Lenten season. I haven't given any thought as to wheth-

er I will give something up or add something to my daily routine.

What I have given thought to is thinking about Lent in regards to the guests we serve at Central Outreach and Advocacy Center. What would Lent be like for them if we introduced this concept of giving something up? I can't imagine having that conversation with most of our guests. I feel like they have given up so much already. Loss is real for them ... no roof over their heads; no job to go to each day; no family support for the tough times. This isn't true for everyone, but for most, it often is reality. What else would they give up?

What would Lent be like for our guests if we introduced the concept of adding something to their daily routines? Again, I can't imagine having that conversation with most of our guests. I feel like they already have so much on their plates each day simply to survive. They walk most everywhere they go. They run into barriers every day when trying to obtain what they need in order to survive. Why would adding something be enticing to them?

Maybe I am also selling myself short when it comes to our guests. Maybe they really would get into either giving something up or adding something to their lives. I have never thought about Lent in relation to our guests until this year. Maybe the thing I need to try and do this Lenten season is enter into conversations with our guests; talk about spiritual things; find out what gives them faith each day to keep pushing on.

Maybe, just maybe, this needs to be my Lenten practice.

CENTRAL IN THE CITY

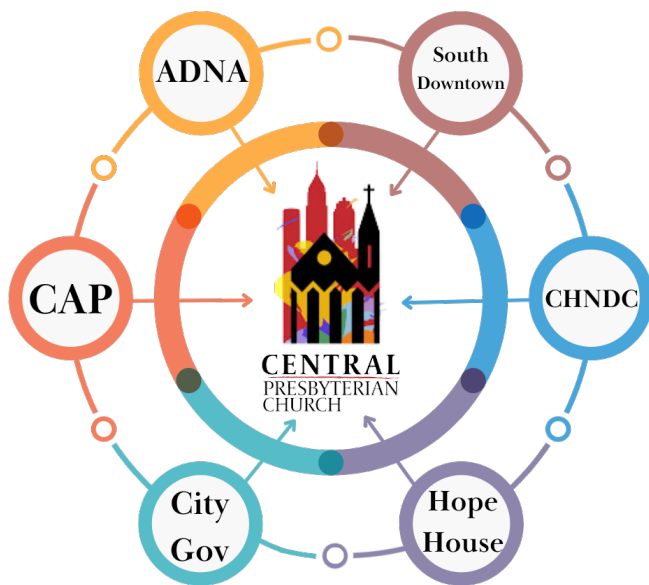
BY JERRY MILLER

Most of us visit our church campus once, maybe twice, a week.

Even though our location in the city's historic heart may be one of the reasons we choose to pass by a half dozen Presbyterian churches on our way here, we maintain a tenuous connection

of Where We Are. Just as our space is sacred, so too is our location. I seldom pass through the hallway on the way to Tull Hall without glancing at the remarkable photograph of our neighborhood in 1904, taken from the top of the Capitol. Our location defines us in ways we have yet to mine.

Central in the City



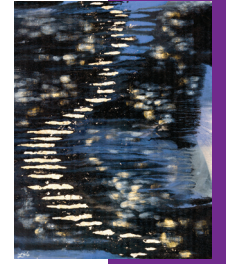
Whether our neighbors are unhoused or unchurched, whether they are penniless or titans of industry, they remain our neighbors, and that remains an immutable condition of our existence as a church community. Whether they see our historic granite walls as impenetrable barricades or as a welcoming refuge that beckons is, however, our choice as a church community. These conditions may not be unique to our church, but they are central to our identity.

Central in the City wanders our neighborhood, knocking on doors of neighborhood associations, homeless providers, business associations, developers, institutions, governments—the whole

rich tapestry that defines our location. It sometimes feels as though we are wandering in the wilderness. Who are you? Why are you here? What do you want? Where have you been?

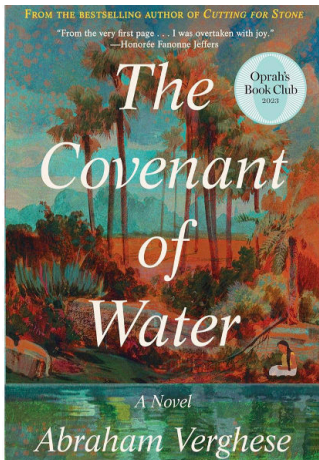
We do God's work here at Central. Our reputation for that work goes well beyond our walls but it sometimes fails to go beyond our doors. However we see our church five, ten or fifteen years from now, we will never cease to be a church in the heart of this city. That future may be as a relic of a nearly forgotten prominent voice or it may be as a neighbor working alongside others in our community to make this a "City on a Hill." As a Matthew 25 church, we will never, God willing, lose our commitment to the "least of these." It's in our DNA. What is new ground for us is to lift our eyes above the barricade and build alliances with those doing equally good work all around us.

Central has multiple events taking place in the next several weeks. Here are a few. Please keep your eye out for the weekly e-news to stay up-to-date on new events and activities.



Bookworms

Central's book club, Bookworms, will meet on February 27 at the home of Debbie and Jerry Miller, 1721 Noble Dr NE, Atlanta 30306. We'll be discussing



The Covenant of Water by Abraham Verghese, led by Vicki Norman. Socializing and refreshments will begin at 7:30 p.m. Plan to be part of our conversation about this story

set in the southern part of Kerala, India, which follows Ammachi's life from being a child bride to becoming a family matriarch, dealing with many challenging and tragic events. The novel also includes extensive details about Indian culture, history, and politics, and Verghese, who is a doctor, describes sickness, surgeries, and recovery in detail. If you have questions, please contact Linda McCord.



Thirsty Thursdays
7 p.m. monthly
Manuel's Tavern

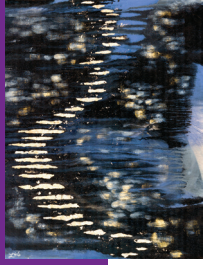
Central members meet monthly at Manuel's Tavern for a time of informal fellowship. While this event was initially for Young Professionals, the event is open to all ages. Guests are welcome and no RSVP is required! Below are the dates through May. Manuel's is located at 602 North Highland Avenue Northeast, Atlanta, GA 30307.

March TBA

April 25

Events & activities FEBRUARY, MARCH &





Congregational Lunch

Following worship on March 3.

Details coming in Realm and in the weekly e-news.

PBG Lobby Day & ACT Housing Day

This year's Georgia General Assembly is a very important session because the state has the largest ever (\$16 Billion) surplus of state funds that should be used to expand access to health-care, mental healthcare, affordable housing, and other critical programs to help vulnerable Georgians. Presbyterians for a Better Georgia (PBG) needs the voices of people of faith like you who:



- Oppose cuts to the state low-income housing tax credit that supports construction and preservation of affordable housing;
- Support passage of the Safe at Home Act (HB 404) that provides essential protections for renters facing sudden eviction; and
- Advocate for increased funding for housing and mental health supports for unsheltered Georgians.

Please come to Central Presbyterian Church (CPC) to walk across the street to the State Capitol and engage the people who represent you:

PBG Lobby Day: March 14 at Central Presbyterian Church

Georgia ACT Housing Day: CPC February 28

To learn more, go to the PBG website P4BG.org or email Al Stacer, PBG Chair at info@p4bg.com



Women's Retreat



This year's retreat takes place at The Calvin Center in Hampton, Georgia and will focus on the Eastern Enneagram and Breathwork and will be facilitated by Sharon Junn and Nayoung Kim of SumTeo.

Nayoung Kim is an Eastern Enneagram teacher with an understanding of energy, a trained spiritual director, and an ordained pastor. She studied spirituality in her master's program and D.Min program. Nayoung hears the heart of souls with a deep listening heart, and guides others to wholeness with her intuitive spirit.

Sharon Junn, formerly a resident pastor at Central, is a trained spiritual director, a graduate of Shalem Institute Spiritual Guidance Program. She is an ordained pastor, a trained clinical chaplain, a teacher, and a cross cultural worker with diverse cultural backgrounds. Sharon creates a safe space, listening with the ear of her heart, allowing others to open to their fullest lives. She leads them in their sacred journeys with her gentle spirit.

You may register via Realm.

In Their Shoes

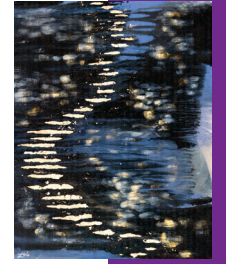
Join us for In Their Shoes on April 21! In Their Shoes is a 10 Mile Challenge which is a four-week fundraising event benefiting Central Outreach and Advocacy Center (COAC). Participants of all ages, stages and skill levels commit to walk a total of 10 miles at their own pace between March 24 and April 21 while reflecting on the distance people experiencing homelessness walk each day. On April 21, we will gather together at Central Presbyterian to walk the last mile together. All proceeds benefit the COAC (<https://centraloac.org/>). To sign up visit the COAC's site or contact COAC Executive Director Kimberly Parker.



**The Atlanta
Preservation Center**

Central Tour with APC on March 17

The Atlanta Preservation Center will feature Central as part of its Phoenix Flies 2024 Tour. Join us beginning at 1:30 p.m. for a history of our church.



FEBRUARY, MARCH & APRIL
Events & activities





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