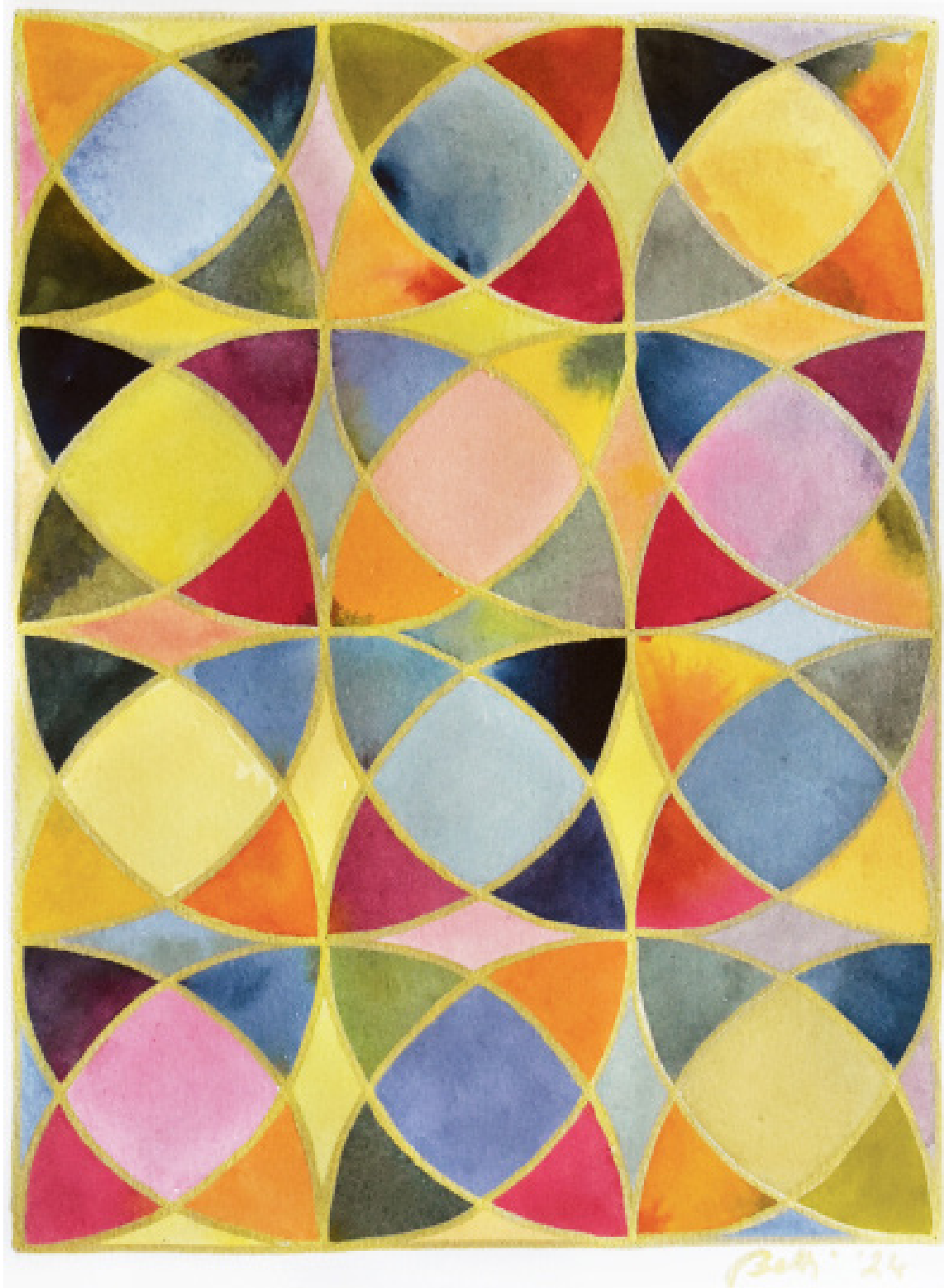


VOLUME 5 ISSUE 3

CENTRAL

Fall Issue / 2024



Fall Quilt by Betti Rosszer

Betti '24



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ABOUT US

LOCATED IN HISTORIC DOWNTOWN ATLANTA, CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN HAS BEEN SERVING THE AREA SINCE 1858. CENTRAL HAS A LONG AND STORIED LEGACY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE, TRADITIONAL WORSHIP AND A SPIRIT OF WELCOMING ALL. WE HOLD A TRADITIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE AT 11 A.M. ON SUNDAY MORNINGS, BUT OUR WORK IS ONGOING THROUGHOUT THE WEEK.

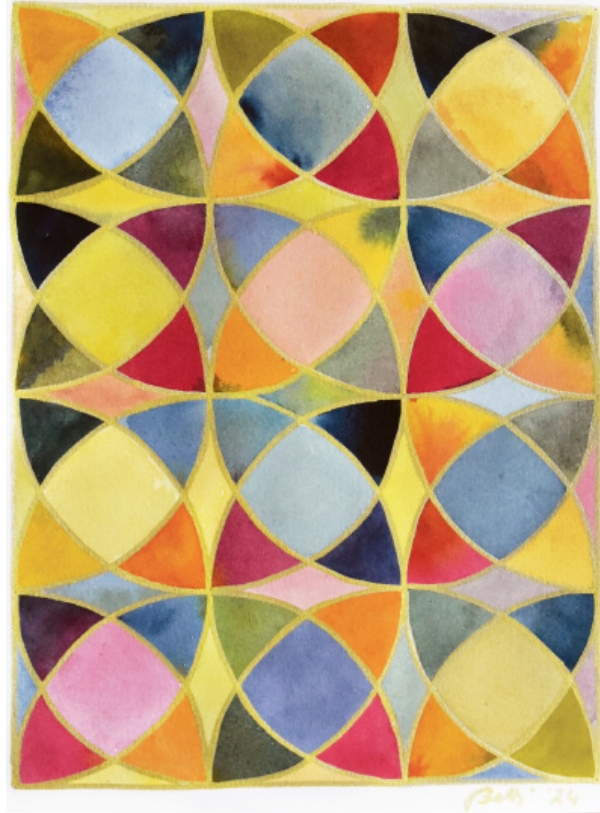
GENERAL QUESTIONS? YOU CAN EMAIL US AT OFFICE@CPCATLANTA.ORG.

YOU CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR LEADERSHIP ON PAGES 4 AND 5.

YOU CAN DISCOVER MORE AT WWW.CPCATLANTA.ORG

WE'RE SOCIAL!

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, AND YOUTUBE FOR UPDATES



ABOUT THE COVER

Central member Betti Rosszer contributed our artwork for this issue of Central magazine. Here is her description of the piece: “This watercolor painting is inspired by artist Lou Davis’ tutorial. The painting resembles a warm fall quilt or a stain glass window. The individual pieces are different colors, shapes, and sizes, and the paint flows from one form into another, creating unique patterns and colors. Separately, the pieces don’t catch the eye, but joined together with a gold thread they create a vibrant piece, just as the individual members of CPC’s congregation are brought together by the Holy Spirit to create a harmonious group that reflects God’s love.”

We are grateful to have Betti share her gifts with us. If you like her work, you can visit her Facebook page. She is also scheduled to sell her art at our Advent Marketplace taking place in December. A portion of her sales will be donated to our Worship and Arts Ministry.



Celebrating and Connecting as we steam into fall

BY REV. SHANNON J. KERSHNER

It is so good to begin my second programmatic year of ministry and mission here at Central Presbyterian Church! As our theme indicates, we are all looking forward to another year of connecting (reconnecting and making new connections too) and celebrating! I really appreciate all the energy, support, and kindness you all continue to shower on me and the rest of the staff as we find our way into this new future together.

Your Session is also looking forward to discerning our next season of ministry together. To that end, they have authorized me to engage a couple of consultants (The Saison Consulting Group) to help all of us figure out how we want to prioritize our energy and resources as we move forward. I fully realize that this congregation has undergone a LOT of self-reflection (and consulting) over the last few years, especially during the times of pastoral transition. So I consider this moment more of a Strategic Prioritization 2.0. In other words, we get to figure out our next steps in a season of health and energy, rather than in a season of transition or stress. I certainly think that is something to celebrate!

Naturally, the process will involve things like surveys, focus groups, one-on-one conversations, etc. But again, you all have done so much work laying the foundation of our next season (even before I arrived), that I fully anticipate this process will be one of connecting and celebrating. It is so exciting to imagine what our future story might be. What does God hope for us? What



does God hope for our ministry with and among our neighbors? What does God hope for our own ministries and congregational community?

It will also require us to figure out what we feel called to let go of. I have yet to be in a congregation who knew how to do that well, nor have I known how to lead that process well. But I trust that this is the time for us, as a church, to figure out both our “No’s” and our “Yes’s” and Saison Consulting has a great deal of experience with this process.

So here we go, Centralites! We are running full steam ahead into this Fall season and I could not be more joyful.

With appreciation,
Shannon

Central Leadership

The Session of

Central Presbyterian Church

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

Class of 2027

Becky Battle
Melanie Bliss
Anita Carwile
Sandy Hoke
Katie Sutton
Sally Wood

The Diaconate of

Central Presbyterian Church

Class of 2025

Betty Carroll
Ellen Thompson
Isabelle Werber
Vanessa Kirk
Debbie Miller

Class of 2026

Anne Blankinship
Ed Galloway
Liz Jaffe
Martha Kimes
Rachel Hull
Terrylynn Pons

Class of 2027

Lucy Baum
Linda Massengill
Larken McCord
Peg Richards
Anne Watkins
David York

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BY REV. KATE CULVER

In my second year of Seminary, I had the opportunity to travel to India and take part in a seminar titled, “Following Jesus in a Pluralistic World.” I jumped at the chance. I am fascinated by world religions, and visiting India not as a tourist but as a student was very exciting.

It was a wonderful trip. We visited the holiest of sites, Varanasi, Sarnath, and the Ganges.

We heard lectures from Christian, Hindu, and Muslim leaders. We stayed at monasteries, seminaries, and a few surprising places. It was a great experience and a true spiritual pilgrimage.

There were different designations or sections of the trip. Each had different curriculums and leaders depending on what class you were receiving credit for. While I was in the World Religions section, most students were traveling with the World Methodist Evangelism Institute.

I did, after all, go to a Methodist seminary, although not the only Presbyterian on board. It was a time in my life when I was asking big questions. What does it mean to be Christian in a global setting? Could I hold to what I know and believe to be right among other Christians from different cultures halfway across the world? I knew there was much to learn and was eager to do so.

I did learn a great deal in India about how universal our faith is. Christianity has a rich history in India. It was introduced by St. Thomas in 52 A.D., far before the Portuguese conquistadors and the Catholic Church. I began to really see Christianity as a radical equalizer.

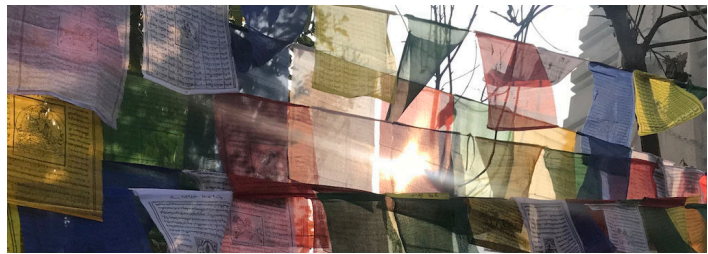
The idea that all are equal in Christ is a beautiful illustration of how Christianity can be used as a mode of social justice. We were abroad for a little over two weeks ending in New Delhi at the World Methodist Evangelism Institute conference. The conference was surprising and illuminating. It became essential to my identity as a person called to ministry. One of the speakers, Rev. Sujeev Dass, a Methodist Minister, gave a lecture that really inspired me. While referring to how to engage people in our faith, Rev. Dass uses the acronym “C.O.W.,” which stands for:

- Connect with people where they are.
- Observe your neighbors and let them observe you.
- Wait on God.

This lecture stuck with me, and the idea of the C.O.W. acronym has been on my mind lately. The model of engagement presented relied on total acceptance and honor of folks wherever they are on their path. Because it doesn't matter where or what journey we are on, there is room for connection, being seen, and trusting the divine. If we are committed to certain views on how people ought to live, love, or even worship, we are losing sight of what is truly important. This way of thinking causes so much division in our church and in the world. Time after time, we unite around our differences instead of our truths.

There is a lot of that going on right now. Look at the division all around us this week alone. We are being pulled in many directions and it is not our place to judge, punish, or mandate according to our own ideals. Our identity as a community of faith here at Central calls us to love.

To love God and one another, we as people of faith are a place of welcome, and



the rest is up to Christ. As we build and grow our community in these troubled times, I pray we can connect with people where they are, observe our neighbors and let them observe us, and wait on God. With all the division in the world right now our community is more important than ever. Thankfully, we can unify around what the Gospel teaches us. Love unites us globally because it is universal.

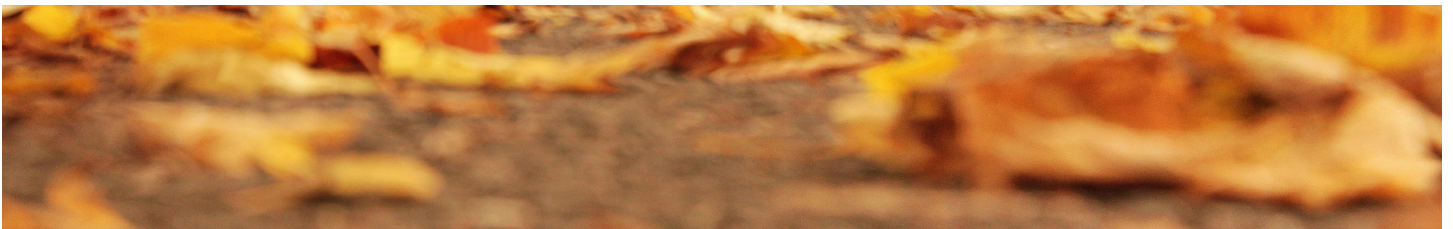
When we can find unity around this truth, we have the freedom to embrace and live in our diversity. Isn't that what it's all about? I walked away from my time in India with some wisdom from the Hindu faith, which incorporates a diverse multi-path worldview of God and creation. At the root of this Hindu wisdom is the letting go of the self to receive God. When we let go of our cultural pressures, realize we are not in control, give ourselves to God, and rest in the knowledge that God's love is not only sufficient but abundant then we can truly be free to love each other.



FALL SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

BY ROBERT CATTERALL

Another fall, and another set of compelling, thought-provoking and enriching adult learning offerings for Centralites.





Issues in Theology

The Greene Room
9:45 to 10:45 a.m.

The Issues in Theology class, beginning on September 8, will be serving up a three-part series developed by class co-convenor Rod Hunter, "Faith, Theology, and Practice for the Impending Environmental Crisis." The negative consequences of human-driven climate change are already being felt, and the situation is expected to worsen in coming years - perhaps dramatically, in the absence of major changes in the way energy is generated and resources are consumed. How are we, as Christians, to respond to this deepening crisis? What theological themes and doctrines will make sense, and how must traditional faith and theology change to meet this dire situation? Following that series, the class will resume discussion of the book, *The Church in an Age of Secular Mysticism: Why Spiritualities without God Fail to Transform Us* (by Andrew Root), that started this past spring (the opening session of this discussion resumption, on September 29, will be a review of previously covered chapters of the book, providing a "catch up" opportunity for people just joining the conversation). The Issues in Theology Class meets in the Greene Room, off of Tull Hall. Class co-convenors are Tina Sizemore (tinasizemore@bellsouth.net) and Rod Hunter (rhunt02@emory.edu).

Sojourners Class

Brotherhood Room
9:45 to 10:45 a.m.

The Sojourners class will return to the brief but powerful essays on Jesus' life and teachings found in Debie Thomas' book, *Into the Mess and Other Jesus Stories: Reflections on the Life of Christ*. Thomas focuses particularly on teachings of Jesus and events in the life of Jesus that present challenges in understanding and interpretation, and she acknowledges these challenges and provides her own refreshingly candid thoughts and associated questions for consideration. The "Wonders" and "Teachings" sections of the book have provided a basis for rich discussion in past class sessions. This fall, the class will turn its attention to Thomas' essays in the category that she calls "Mysteries," covering Jesus' washing of the Disciples' feet, the crucifixion, the empty tomb, and more. Join us for conversations about Jesus' life and teachings that perhaps will be different from many you've had before. The Sojourners Class meets in the Brotherhood Room, off of Tull Hall. The class convenor is Ed Carwile (carwile1230@earthlink.net).

October 20 Combined Class

On October 20, there will be a special combined adult Sunday morning class which will be led by Rev. Nibs Stroupe, former (and longtime) pastor of Oakhurst Presbyterian Church. Nibs' session will be based on his recently published book, *"She Made a Way: Mother and Me in a Deep South World,"* a story of overcoming a cultural mindset suffused with white-supremacy. Central member John Blake, who wrote the forward for Nibs' book, will also participate in this session. Come and learn about positive personal change happening under difficult circumstances. The meeting location at Central for this class session will be announced at a later time.



John Blake



Rev. Nibs Stroupe

You can read more about Nibs on page 27



It is a warm summer night in Atlanta but there is a slight breeze if you pay close attention. The sun is setting and it's that special time of the evening we call "golden hour." The adults sit around tables talking and catching-up about summer travels, adventures and what the first few days of the school year are bringing. At another table, Guy Palmer shares his latest illustrated story with Gabby Szymanski, a prolific artist in her own right. Playing nearby is Aubrey Johnson, Leland and Quin Jefferson, making friends with one another and other families gathered close by. Our bellies are all full of delicious ice cream and we're enjoying connecting with one another on a Wednesday night before the rush of the school year really sets in.

It is a Sunday morning at the Bliss family lake house and sleepy teenagers are starting to emerge from every direction. Charlie Wood, Oscar Ashe and Hannah Hilimire get started on making breakfast for the whole group gathered for the spring confirmation retreat. The sound of showers and hair dryers whir around us while I nurse a cup of coffee and support the kitchen crew. Everyone pitches in to make sure eggs and bacon make their way to the table before we all gather around to sing happy birthday to Hannah. We make our way outside to the patio for a lovely closing worship and a little more time to soak in the gorgeous lake views before heading back to Atlanta.

It is a Saturday night in February and the Central gym is full of children, youth and families gathered to serve dinner to the guests of the Night Shelter. Emmalee Hackshaw and Em McNair pull up with a car full of piping hot fried chicken and mac and cheese. Lewis Amos expertly helps us with the flow of the evening. Emily Hilimire supports the children and youth in a conversation about what it means to be welcoming to our neighbors and we think through ways to start and continue good, fun conversations. The children and youth put together baggies of things to keep hands warm and hearts full for the shelter guests in the winter months. We all leave just two hours later with new friends, connections and joy as our souvenirs.

These are just three moments that I can think of in the past few months to highlight the connections that Central children, youth and their families have shared. As we head into a new year of programming, I look forward to all of the formal and informal opportunities we have to connect and celebrate one another. God is at work in our relationships. The Holy Spirit brings us together time and time again, over ice cream and birthday cake, through service and connections with our neighbor and everything in between. To be at Central is to know genuine connection across all ages and stages and for that, I am wildly grateful.



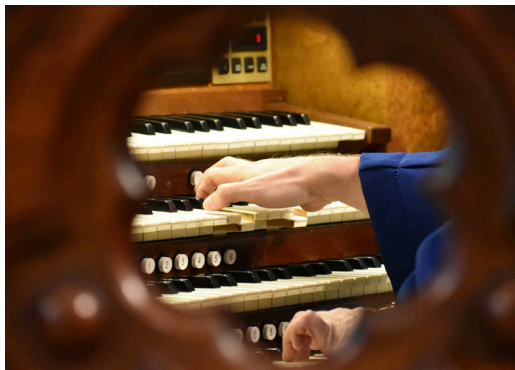
BY SUSAN LANDRUM



BY THOM DIXON

Having been either a student or a teacher for nearly my entire life, the dwindling away of August and arrival of September have always been a mixture of nerves and hopeful anticipation for the year ahead. This year is no different. As I reflect on the slower pace of summer, I sincerely hope you enjoyed the various musical offerings during summer worship. Central is blessed by so many talented musicians – both in house and those who visit with us. Thank you for always welcoming them with hospitality and support. This coming program year, there will be many musical ways to connect and celebrate our church community at Central Presbyterian!

I have an exciting introduction to make! We welcome Kelly Grba as our new music intern for these next two years. Kelly is pursuing her Master's in Music in Choral Conducting at Georgia State and will be leading our Children's Choir ministry, singing with the Chancel Choir, and playing with the bell choir. She comes with a wealth of experience, having previously taught high school choral music in Plainfield, Illinois.



There are many exciting things on the horizon from the music ministry at Central for this upcoming fall. Firstly, I hope you will join me in marking your calendars for Sunday, September 15 at 3:15 p.m. Our very own organist extraordinaire, Mason Copeland, will present an organ recital at The Cathedral of St. Philip in Buckhead. Let's see how large a cheering section of Centralites can be there to support him!

On Saturday, October 5 from 7 to 9 p.m., the Engagement committee is sponsoring an evening of Jazz in the courtyard, featuring the Trent Patten Trio. Trent is a fantastic jazz trumpeter who gigs extensively through Georgia State University and various Atlanta venues. You won't want to miss it!

To commemorate All Saints' Sunday, on November 3 at 2:30 p.m. the choirs from Central, Morningside, and Covenant

Presbyterian churches will present *Eternal Light: An All Saints Worship Service*. This afternoon service of liturgy, poetry, and music will be a beautiful way to remember our loved ones who have gone before us. The centerpiece of the program will be Howard Goodall's "Eternal Light: A Requiem, scored for choir, soloists, organ, piano, and harp." Traditionally, the great Requiems of the past by composers such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Giuseppe Verdi, and Hector Berlioz interpret the sacred text literally, offering prayers

of salvation for the departed. This modern work reflects on the words of the Latin Mass by juxtaposing them with poems in English, and in doing so acknowledges the unbearable loss we face when a loved one passes. At the same time, it addresses our suffering and endurance, a Requiem focusing on the consequences of interrupted lives. This will surely be a beautiful, uplifting afternoon of music.

These are just a few of the opportunities we will have to join together in music-focused friendship this fall. I'm so very thankful for the community of faith at Central and look forward to a celebratory season ahead.

Faithfully,
Thom

November 3, 2024 2:30 p.m. Central Presbyterian Church

Eternal LIGHT

An All Saints' Worship Service

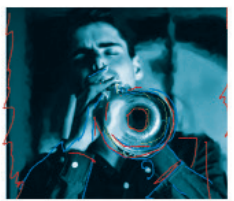
FEATURING THE COMBINED CHOIRS OF CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH & MORNINGSIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



Kelly Grba

Musical events this fall at Central include a Jazz concert, right, and a special All Saints' Worship Service, top. We also welcome Kelly Grba, above, as our new music intern for these next two years.

October 5 7 to 9 p.m.



GROOVE
WITH CENTRAL



BY JERRY MILLER

THE MOSAIC of our Neighborhood

When Interim Pastor David Cozad first conceived of a Task Force which we now call Central in the City, he believed that the long-term health and viability of our congregation in part lay in working to build bridges to the many faceted and constantly changing mosaic which is our downtown neighborhood. The concept of “neighbor” implies connection, and so we continue to explore our connections even as our downtown community evolves. We do this by showing up and trying to understand our neighbors, their concerns and contributions to the neighborhood.

These are some of the elements of that mosaic:

OUR HOUSED NEIGHBORS: Central Atlanta Progress tells us there are 32,000 people living downtown in 14,000 households. We engage this group through the Atlanta Downtown Neighborhood Association (ADNA), attending and even hosting meetings to better understand their concerns and let them know what we are doing.

OUR UNHOUSED NEIGHBORS: From all indications street homelessness downtown has intensified. Understanding and advocating for efforts to alleviate homelessness is a big part of what we are about. We seek to understand the resources and the bewildering array of homeless service providers. We seek to elevate the conversation to alleviate street homelessness and expand the resources available to them.

BUSINESS AND

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY: Downtown Atlanta is driven by business interests and changes to it are effected through the development community. We seek to have communications with this group to encourage openness to supporting all individuals making downtown their home.

GOVERNMENTAL AND

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: Central is landlocked by governmental entities. We seek to advocate through our City and County governments for policies which improve the quality of life of all our neighbors—through City Council and various departments. We also seek to encourage our state government to be a positive force for our neighborhood. Our vision includes looking for ways Georgia State University could leverage its immense talent and resources to be an integral part of the downtown community in ways yet unexplored. Grady Hospital is also integral to many people on the streets of downtown Atlanta. How might their resources be better channeled to improving our neighborhood?

OUR SISTER FAITH COMMUNITIES:

Through Capitol Hill Neighbors, we maintain an ecumenical mission and foster communication among our three congregations, Central, The Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and Trinity Methodist Church. We also attempt to sponsor development projects which improve our neighborhood—Trinity Central Flats being the most recent example.

If these issues are of interest to you, or you would like to become more involved, please contact me at jmiller@fabric-developers.com.



UPCOMING EVENTS



SEPTEMBER 8

Central Fall Kick Off! Join us as our Fall Adult Sunday Schools begin, as well as children and youth choir rehearsal. We will have a congregational lunch following worship. It's also 'Bring a Friend to Church Sunday' so invite a friend to experience a special time with us!



SEPTEMBER 14

Central will have a table to participate in the Mary Ruth Weir Celebration and Annual Awards Ceremony held at Ebenezer Baptist Church by Georgians for Alternatives for the Death Penalty.



**Georgians For Alternatives
to the Death Penalty**



gfadp

SEPTEMBER 29

Young Adult Lunch 12 to 2:30 p.m. *Details coming in the e-weekly!*

October 5 • 7 to 9 p.m.



GROOVE WITH CENTRAL

Join Central friends as we enjoy a cool night of jazz by the Trent Patten Trio in the plaza located between Central and City Hall. Bring a chair, picnic basket, and prepare to enjoy a night under the stars with music and friends



UPCOMING EVENTS



UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER 6

World Communion Day: Working with the Engagement Committee, we will have lunch together in Tull Hall and highlight Central's support of international mission activities and opportunities for service.



OCTOBER 12 & 13



Join Central at our booth at the Atlanta Pride Parade as we show God's love for all people.



NOVEMBER 3



Pledge Sunday 11 a.m Worship:
Make your pledges for the 2025
year.

At 2:30 p.m., the choirs
from Central, Morningside,
and Covenant Presbyterian
churches will present a free
concert, 'Eternal Light: An All
Saints Worship Service.' in
the sanctuary.

November 3, 2024 2:30 p.m. Central Presbyterian Church

Eternal LIGHT

An All Saints' Worship Service

FEATURING THE COMBINED CHOIRS OF CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH & MORNINGSIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



November 5: Election Day! Get out and vote!

November 10: Join us and the Atlanta Preservation So-
ciety for a historical tour of Central from 1:30 to 3 p.m.

Other upcoming events include:

Mid-November: Central will participate in the Presbyterians for a Better GA 2025 Legis-
lative Forum to prepare us to advocate for social justice issues that will be at stake at the
State Capitol during the 2025 Georgia General Assembly.

Watch the e-weekly for updates!

UPCOMING EVENTS



Belonging to God

Sharing our Blessings



As we enter the fall, members reflect on their time at Central and what the church means to them

BY SARA TOERING

Dear Church:

This past July we celebrated the one-year anniversary of Pastor Shannon's tenure leading our congregation, and it also happened to be exactly one year since my family, Dane, Leland and Quinlyn, and I (Sara) first came to worship with all of you in what has become our church home. I've been invited to share some reflections on stewardship—on care. For us, stewardship means the offering of resources - time, talent, and treasure - in service of something precious. And stewardship is contagious when offered in a manner that responds to a loving, liberating and life-giving God. The community here at Central is certainly precious to us and we are discerning — individually and as a family — how we offer what we have to give in the context of this particular community, one week at a time.

I am not entirely sure how our stewardship with and for this community will take shape. But I do know how I hope our stewardship might feel to you, Church, because I know how your stewardship, your care of our family, feels.

It feels like the unbridled joy on Leland and Quin's faces as they danced with so many of you at the all-church retreat last year, and like the start of new friendships with other parents forged while sitting on porch rocking chairs.

It smells like DONUTS, and it looks like activity bags lovingly (re) filled week after week for children during worship. It feels like Sunday school teachers and children's choir directors and accompanists who know and care for our kids, as individuals, and as they build community with all the children of the church.

It feels like Lee Carroll always finding a cookie for Leland, and it feels like the look on Ms. Elizabeth Henry's face (one of our many pewmates) when I gave her school pictures of Leland and Quin for her refrigerator.

It feels like the loving and affirming responses we've received when we said yes to an invitation to serve in a particular way, and when we said no.

It feels like the welcome and patient teaching about hospitality offered by Kevin Hackshaw and the



Central Women when Leland and I came to serve breakfast—and it feels like the kindness and affirmation that so many guests and neighbors that morning offered Leland as he learned to pass out eggs—brown or white upon request.

It feels like Greg Kershner’s simple, reassuring look to me during worship when he saw I was about to run to the front of the church to stop Quin from diving into the baptismal font—a look that said Pastors Shannon, Kate, and Susan

have got this—and this community has you.

It feels like a standing invitation from our parish leader, Ms. Em McNair, to come and pick plums from the trees at her home.

It feels like the love (and patience!) offered by the Central Youth to our (currently) smaller kids — and it looks like piles of Angels in a Christmas pageant — organized with such fun and care by parents like Emily Hilimire and Vanessa Hunter.

Quin says “church feels like all the hugs.”

Leland says “church feels like God loves me.”

Sounds spot on to me and Dane. This community’s care for our family — in so many different ways — is contagious, and it feels like fuel for our family, and fuel for our faith. I hope we can find ways to offer stewardship in this community that feels like that.

Thank you, Church.

Sara, Dane, Leland, and Quin

Linda and Larken McCord on the importance of Stewardship at Central



Writing a stewardship story feels a bit like concocting a creation myth. What narrative best explains something that feels as self-evident as the tides or seasons? There's no need for a boy with wax wings or a snake in a tree to teach us the lesson that God's people should take care of Her church. Like many generational Presbyterians, stewardship is *just what you do*.

But stories make big concepts intelligible. In our family we can look to examples from the recent past who illustrate lifetime stewardship.

Both Carleen Robinson Savage (Linda's mother and Larken's grandmother) and Virginia Parker McCord (Linda's mother-in-law and Larken's grandmother) demonstrated their faith by their participation in all aspects of Central's ministries. When they and their husbands were able to do so, they contributed generously to Central's financial needs. Later, as

widows who economized to afford their senior living residences, they contributed even more, at least as calculated as a portion of their resources.

Both were also tireless volunteers. Jinnie used her home economics training to host Central's daily lunches for legislators, their staffs, and other visitors to our nearby government centers in the 1970s. Carleen applied her prodigious talents as a seamstress to costume multiple productions of the Central Drama Troupe. Later, Jinnie was one of the first volunteers at the health clinic in the space now occupied by the OAC. As a retiree, Carleen spent 16 years as a volunteer assistant in Central's business office, tracking money from pledges and other gifts to prepare the deposit information every Monday. She also created more than 200 stitcheries to honor Central's children when they were baptized.

Stewardship is not the single act of donating part of



our own financial wealth; it is managing God's abundance responsibly. It is a way of living, not a single action. We are charged to share not only our financial resources but our time and talent as well. It is our privilege and our responsibility to give our time to help those who need it; to share our talents with those who want to see or hear or use what we can produce; to offer our financial support to ministries that use

those resources to give action to Christ's commandments. Earthly conditions may prevent abundance from being distributed equally, but we are called to use our portion of God's plenitude in ways that our faith mandates. If a steward is one who manages the resources of another, then stewardship calls us all to administer the funds, abilities, and opportunities that God gives us.



2nd QUARTER FINANCIAL SUMMARY

BY KRISTIE JOHNS

I cannot believe it is fall already! Fall is my absolute favorite time of year with the changing of the leaves, the crispness in the air (which comes a bit later in the south), fall festivals, apple picking, and all the great things God has given us. Fall also brings a busy time in the business office with the start of the stewardship and budget seasons. I am pleased to share that our financial reports halfway through 2024 show stronger income than what we budgeted to date thanks to the wonderful support of our giving community and wise investing by our financial team.

The included graphs detail our 2nd quarter numbers vs. both the budget and 2023 numbers. All our number categories have increased over 2023, including expenses. Staffing is a part of that increase in expenses as we were only operating with one full-time Pastor through the 2nd quarter of 2023 and without a full-time executive administrator. How did we ever survive it? I think everyone will agree that those increased expenses are well worth it.

Even with additional staff and some increased utility costs, we are still trending under budget for expenses in 2024.

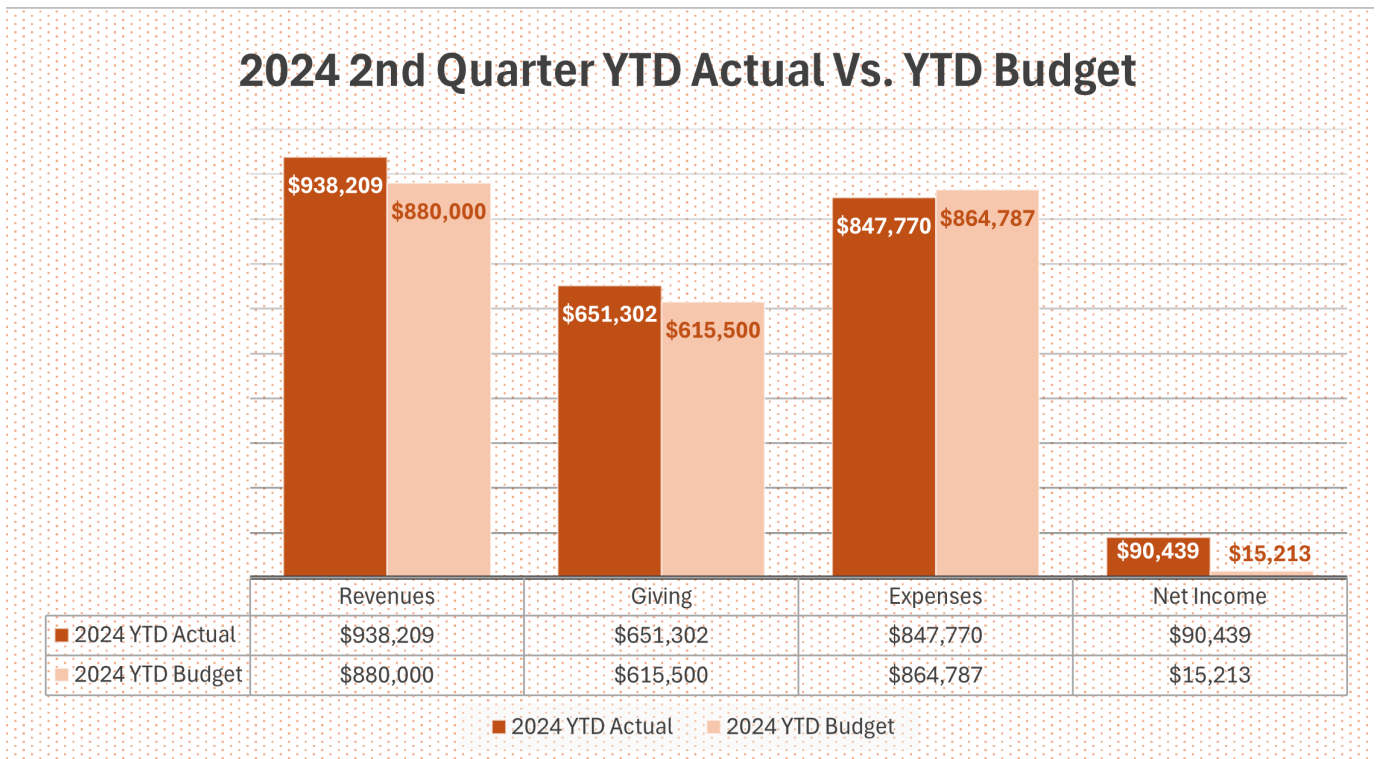
By the time this is published, I will have passed my 2nd anniversary with Central and I continue to be humbled by the love that pours out of this congregation every day. Thank you for all the love and support you have shown me over the past two years.

Warmest blessings,
Kristie

2024 2nd Quarter YTD Actual Vs. 2023 YTD Actual



2024 2nd Quarter YTD Actual Vs. YTD Budget





a different type of connecting

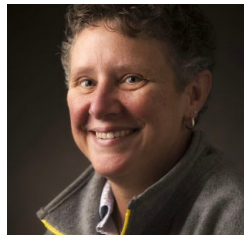
BY KIMBERLY PARKER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CENTRAL OAC

Every day that Central Outreach and Advocacy Center opens its doors, our staff and volunteers are connecting with our guests. Connections are made through state ID vouchers, a food stamp card, a new job, or an apartment to call their own. Connections are made through the receiving of a snack or a piece of mail that a guest has been waiting on. Connections are made through a smile or a hello as we pass through the lobby and make eye contact with a guest.

It is one thing to sit down at a desk, across from a guest and provide the service they need. It is one thing to hand a piece of mail to a guest. A connection is made, but it is centered around a service that is needed or expected. One Friday each month our Central OAC staff is making connections with our guests in a totally different way.

On those Fridays, we do not provide any of our regular services, but we open our doors to offer something

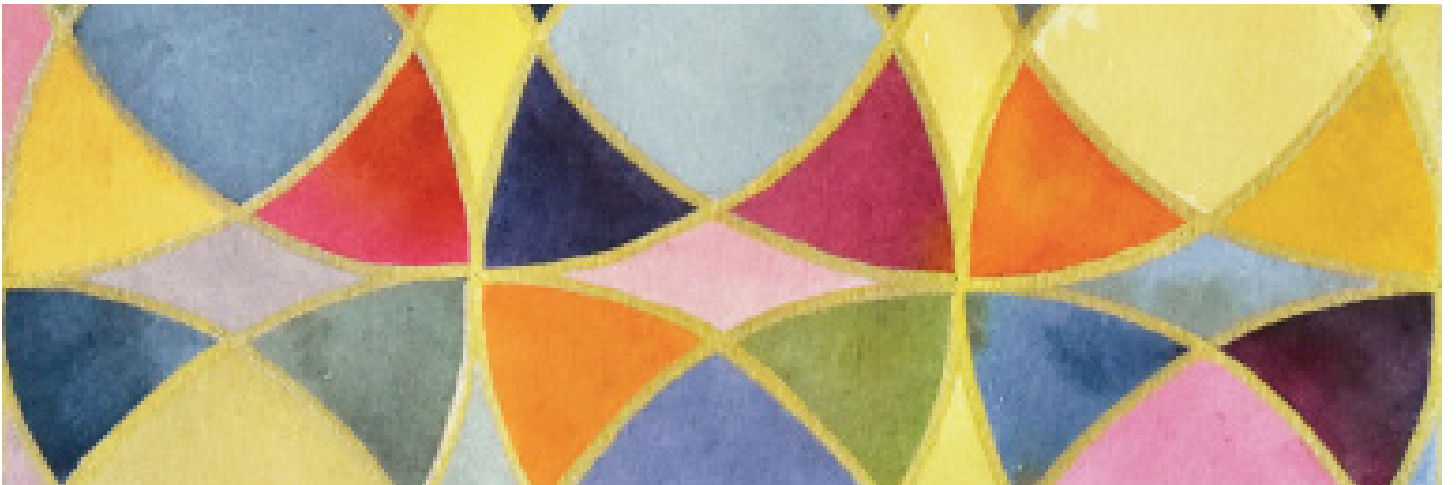
that maybe our guests would not normally get to take part in. This year, we have hosted:



Hot Chocolate and Conversations
Movie Day
Bingo
Barbershop Day
Ice Cream Social
Art and Meditation

It has been amazing to see what happens on these Fridays. The conversations that take place are enriching. The smiles on faces, both our staff and our guests, light up the lobby. The laughter is often infectious.

At the time I wrote this article, the most recent event we held was “Art and Meditation.” I must admit that I was skeptical about this one, especially about the meditation part. However, at the end of the morning, I knew it had been a success.





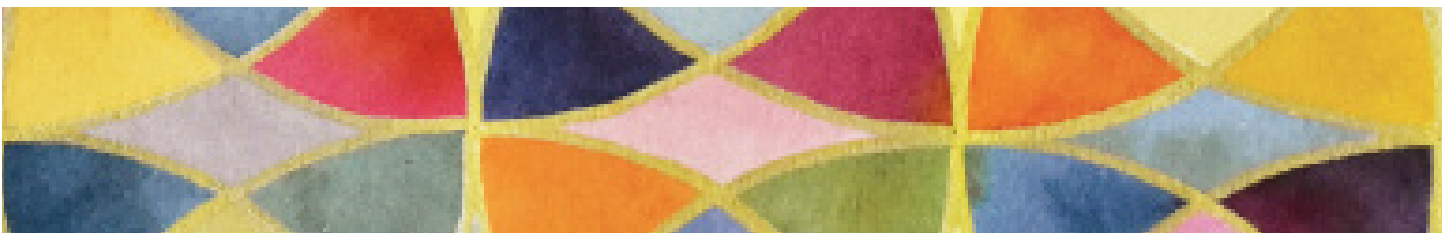
I witnessed these connections being made during the morning:

- A woman we know made her way downstairs and seemed to be on the verge of crying. She said that someone had told her to come talk to Sonja. Sonja spent a few minutes listening to her. After their conversation they headed into the room for meditation. She came back to the lobby when they were finished and began coloring. She stayed the rest of the morning and seemed much more at peace than when she walked in.

- A couple walked in holding hands. We asked them if they would like to join us and they said yes. They sat down at a table where no one else sat. As we were talking to them, the woman said, "I love things like this and I have always wanted to do things like this with my husband. Today we got to; it's like a date."

- About ten minutes before we were going to close, a mother and son walked in. She came looking for services. Our guard had told her we were not open for services, but they came down anyway. The little boy rushed to the table and said he wanted to color. For ten minutes mama and son colored together. As they left he said to me, "Please hang my pictures up!" As they walked out the door, he said to whoever was listening, "That was so fun!"

These types of connections would not have been made during the normal day to day operations. There is too much going on during that time, but when a space is opened for something more creative, a special type of connection takes place. I am grateful for these Friday mornings of connecting in a different way with our guests. ■





Stroupe to host Sunday School, preach

BY M.E. DAVIS

As a Matthew 25 church, Central has committed to dismantling systemic racism in our midst. One of several efforts in the recent past was undertaken by a group of Centralites who took a live, virtual course together in the spring facilitated by NextChurch.

The course, “Antiracist Practices for Faithful Leadership” was designed for people in the church looking to take the next step in their antiracism journey. As the course ended, they decided to keep encouraging each other to practice antiracism in their work at Central and throughout their lives. They meet from time to time to check in and plan actions for Central to consider. This is not a committee or taskforce; the significance of this means all are welcome to contribute to this important work of the church. Indeed, it will not be possible to dismantle structural racism in and around Central without more participation from a wide array of people.

The next gathering is Sunday, September 15, from 12:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m., in the Par-

lor. All Centralites interested in this ministry are encouraged to attend and lend your ideas, expertise, and curiosity.

The group’s first action was to participate in the Breakfast Ministry over the summer. They served the guests, offering them hospitality and fellowship. They then met as a group to discuss their progress for anti-racist initiatives. The next action is a collaboration with the Adult Education Committee to sponsor a special Sunday School class with Rev. Nibs Stroupe on Sunday, October 20. He was the pastor of Oakhurst Presbyterian Church for 34 years for a racially diverse congregation. He will be discussing his own antiracism journey and his new book, “She Made a Way: Mother and Me in a Deep South World.” Stroupe will also be preaching at Central the following Sunday, October 27.

Centralites who are part of Antiracist Practices for Faithful Leadership include Amy Mast, Anita Carwile, Gary Cornell, Janet Abercrombie, Reverend Kate Culver, Kathy Harben, Lee Carroll, Mary Sidney Harbert, M.E. Davis, and Philip Covin. Please consider joining them in this ministry.



BY GARY CORNELL

CENTRAL
MISSION
COMMITTEE
SUMMER
HIGHLIGHTS

The Sunday Breakfast Ministry continues to be one of the most successful outreach ministries of our church. The number of guests is increasing. On several Sundays we served 110 to 140 guests with coffee, boiled eggs, fresh fruit, and pastries. This fall the Mission Committee is reaching out to find other churches and community organizations to share in this ministry with us. To volunteer contact Denise deLaRue, Debbie Miller or Kathy Harben.

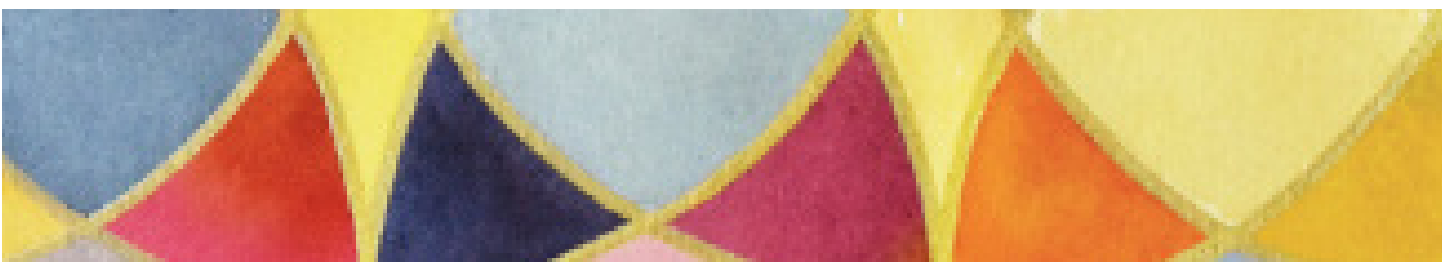
The Poor People's Campaign had a successful stop in Atlanta on their way to a giant rally in Washington, D.C. on Saturday June 29. Rev. Kate Culver accompanied six more Centralites to support the gathering of 90 marchers convening at North Avenue Presbyterian Church to begin their journey by bus. Central also provided financial support and lunches during the event.

In July Central was represented in the Annual Meeting of the Haiti La Gonave Partnership in Atlanta. In spite of the unrest on the Haitian mainland, community life is vibrant on the island of La Gonave. Prices have increased, goods are hard to get. Nonetheless with help from the La Gonave Partnership progress is being made in building schools, providing school lunches and sustaining essential health care.

Bobbie Paul and others participated in an on-line educational series sponsored by Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. The series, called "Pulling Back the Curtain" provided case studies of how prisoners on death row are coping with the labyrinth of legal procedures that keep them there for decades and have resulted in unwarranted executions of innocent people.

Members of Central in the City continue to participate in neighborhood and business organizations in south downtown over the summer and took note of major construction projects around us.

- We went with Shannon to meet with representatives of the GA Building Authority to ask about the demolition of the old Coca-Cola building across MLK and how the new \$300 million state office building might affect our church.
- We attended several briefings on the Summerhill Bus Rapid Transit project that is under construction now and will open with rapid buses along our MLK frontage beginning in 2025.
- We learned that Trinity United Methodist is seeking city, state and federal funds to build a residential tower for affordable senior housing on their property.
- Trinity Central Flats, a 219-unit affordable housing development at 104 Trinity Avenue, is undergoing engineering and architectural design and hopes to break ground in 2025.
- Several of us toured the proposed redevelopment of historic Hotel Row and adjacent properties in south Atlanta. Centralite Jerry Miller convened a meeting of the developers to encourage them to deploy strategies to reduce street homelessness in the downtown area.
- Central members raised a tent and greeted passers-by on Peachtree Street near Five Points as part of the City of Atlanta's Streets Alive events on two Sunday afternoons in June and July.

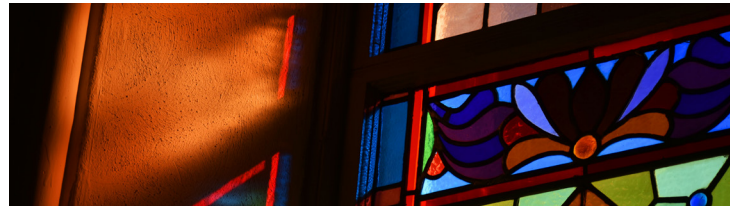


Central gearing up for our busiest time of the year

When I started work at Central nearly a year ago, Linda Massengill was still working here.

After a couple of weeks, I thought – wow – this job is going to be so easy and slow. Little did I know! Then it hit – Legislative Season – and Linda passed the baton. Not only was this time so crazy busy, but I was still learning all the things about Central.

It's still summer, and we're five months away from the start of the legislative session in the last week of January. Despite the time gap, we've already started receiving requests from organizations to book dates at Central. This early start to the scheduling process is a testament to the importance of planning ahead. The 'Ministry of Space,' as it is fondly called here, plays a crucial role in facilitating these meetings. It's a wonderful ministry that allows numerous organizations to showcase their work and contribute to the betterment of



Atlanta. Last year, we hosted 30 different organizations and 48 meetings during the eight weeks of the legislative session. The work of these organizations ranges from education (Homeschool Day at the Capitol) to the environment (Georgia Water Coalition), to health (Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies and Georgia Watch – Community Health Worker Advocacy), justice (Southern Center for Human Rights), and so much more!

And then we have the really fun events – film production took place at Central, including major Hollywood studios using our space to shoot in and for other pre-production work.

Thank you, Central, for your generosity in sharing your space and allowing so many organizations to advocate for the betterment of all Georgians. Your Ministry of Space is invaluable and greatly appreciated. Because of your generosity in sharing your space, Central also benefits. In the last year, we have been able to bring in \$40,000 in revenue to help continue the ministries at Central.



“Where two or
[three] are gathered

together in

My name,

I am there

in the

midst of them.”

-Matthew 18:19-20

It's easy to feel God's presence when in Central's sanctuary, where there are certainly more than two or three gathered. We know, upon walking in, that we are in God's house. But what about creating sanctuary in unexpected places?

When I first joined Central, over a decade ago, I learned of a little group called the X's and Y's. Having moved from a large network of friends in Chicago to very few in Atlanta, I was seeking community, and a place I could belong. I first found that by joining the Chancel Choir and, a few months later, by becoming a member of Central Presbyterian. Then, I finally decided to attend Thirsty Thursday after being invited repeatedly. I wish I'd done so sooner.

Composed of 20-to-40-somethings, the X's and Y's gathered on the fourth Thursday of the month at Manuel's Tavern for Thirsty Thursday. We'd meet, see who showed up, and simply get to know one another and catch up on each other's lives. This group became my second family, in no time. Regardless of what I had going on at work, or whether I had any weekend plans, I knew I had friends to gather with at least once a month. There was no agenda, and no preparation needed: Thirsty Thursday embodies the sentiment of "come as you are."

We talk about a little of everything—from the latest news, to personal stories, to "who's going to which festival," to reminding our pastors they get to park for free behind Manuel's in the reserved Clergy parking space.

Through the years, as we've begun to

BY JANET ABERCROMBIE



age out of the X's and Y's demographic, the group evolved to become more inclusive to our church community. All ages are welcome. At the same table, you'll dine with a pastor, a longtime member, a confirmand, or even someone you've never laid eyes on. But regardless of who's on the other side of the table, Thirsty Thursday provides an organic opportunity for fellowship outside of Central's physical property, allows space to unburden ourselves, and guarantees you'll have a laugh (or many).

We still meet every fourth Thursday of the month.* Join us. There is a place at the table for you.

- watch the Weekly for any schedule changes!



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