

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 4

CENTRAL

ADVENT / 2024



Bethlehem Star by Betti Rosszer



TABLE OF CONTENTS

12



8



- 3 ABOUT THE COVER AND FAQ
- 4 FROM THE PASTOR
- 5 CENTRAL LEADERSHIP AND STAFF
- 6 FROM THE ASSOCIATE PASTOR
- 8 FROM THE DIRECTOR FOR FAMILY MINISTRIES
- 10 ADVENT AND WINTER SUNDAY SCHOOL PREVIEW
- 12 FROM THE DIRECTOR OF MUSIC & WORSHIP
- 14 UPCOMING EVENTS & ACTIVITIES
- 18 A MESSAGE FROM MISSIONS
- 24 THE OAC & GOD'S LIGHT SHINING INTO THE WORLD
- 26 MEMBERS OF CENTRAL SHARE THEIR STORIES ON STEWARDSHIP
- 32 FROM THE CLERK

14



26





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



FROM THE ARTIST

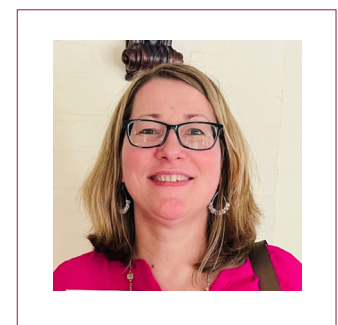
Central member Betti Rosszer provided the artwork for this magazine. We are grateful again for her artistic contributions to our congregation. She describes the inspiration:

‘Bethlehem Star’

Watercolor and acrylic on watercolor paper

“The Bethlehem star is a sign of hope in the darkness, the coming of a new era where God’s love, justice and peace prevail over the evils of the world. May this Star lead us into the light in this coming year.”

-Betti



WE’RE SOCIAL!



from the pastor

The Light still envelops us as we go about our way

BY REV. SHANNON J. KERSHNER

Growing up as a preacher's kid, the seasons of Advent and Christmas weren't always what one could call "relaxing." Inevitably, we would need to hurry to get our house, the church manse, decorated because it was the year to host an all-church Open House. (I secretly loved that because it meant my sister and I would get a table-top Christmas trees for our rooms.) But it would require getting into a Christmas mood rather quickly!

Advent also meant my father would have additional services, gatherings, and church work that would occupy his time. While I still remember my father's presence more than any absence, I do remember the stress of the season. While most folks use Advent as a season of preparation for Christmas, ministers sure better have prepared way before the first Sunday! The same goes for their families.

However, despite the increased energy of the season, one of my most favorite memories occurred on Christmas Eve. And no, it was not about the service, although it was always lovely. And it wasn't about the fact we got to unwrap all our presents on Christmas Eve, although that was fun.

Rather, my favorite memories were the times when my sister and I would stay behind with my father to lock everything up after the service had finished and everyone else had gone home.

Like Central, my home church decorated for Christmas with many, many candles. There were candelabras on the end of each pew, votive candles lit in each window, and the Christmas pillar candle down by the pulpit in the front. So my



sister and I were "in charge" of making sure every single candle was extinguished. We would go to check each window, each candle, each nook and cranny of the quiet, darkened sanctuary. When I close my eyes, I can remember the lovely quiet of a sanctuary that had just been filled with the hustle and bustle of joy. Even as we made sure each candle was blown out, the light from outside still shone through the old stained-glass windows, shining on us as we made our way pew by pew.

I think about those evenings as I prepare each year for the Advent and Christmas seasons. I think about the truth that even when we are busy trying to extinguish all the lights, the Light still envelops us as we go about our way. This year, I will hold on to the Truth even more strongly. The Light will always shine.

Shannon

Central Leadership

The Session of

Central Presbyterian Church

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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

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Isabelle Werber
Vanessa Kirk
Debbie Miller

Class of 2026

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Ed Galloway
Liz Jaffe
Martha Kimes
Rachel Hull
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Class of 2027

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Linda Massengill
Larken McCord
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Mary Lillian Walker
Juliana Winters

DECATUR PARISH

Marcia Hunter
Nancy Wilkes

DOWN YONDER

Em McNair

INTOWN SOUTH
Philip and Amy Covin
Rob Forbes

NORTHERN LIGHTS

Ginger Heidbreder
Rachel Stewart

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Advent

is here,
a season that brings us closer
to the heart of what it means
to wait with hope, especially in
the quiet and darkness of winter.

During Advent, we think about Christ not only as a distant figure from a story, but as a deeply human presence—a light born into the world to meet us right where we are, with all our struggles, questions, and dreams.

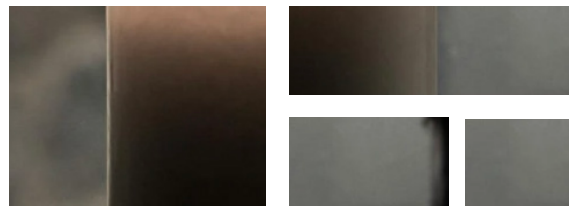
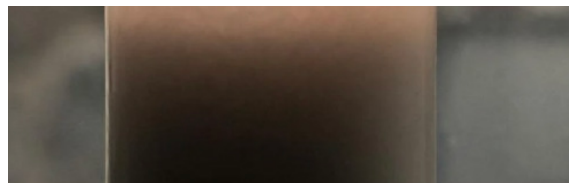
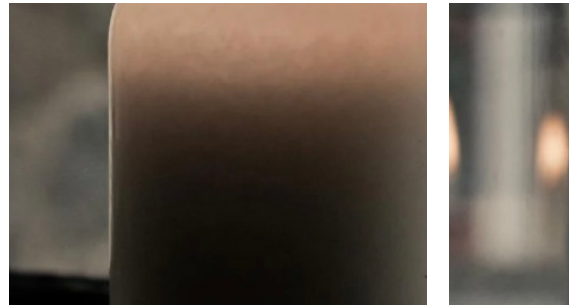
This season invites us to see the light of Christ as both something universal and something very personal, a spark within each of us. Just as Christ's life was a way of showing love in real, tangible ways (healing, welcoming, forgiving) we, too, are invited to embody that light and let it shine through our lives. Christ was someone who met people with kindness and understanding, someone who brought a sense of calm and clarity in times of chaos. And this Advent, we're called to find and live that same light within ourselves.



Every candle we light can remind us of Christ's presence, not just as a distant figure, but as a part of ourselves that's capable of love, compassion, and hope. That small flame is a reminder that we each hold a piece of that same light—the "light of Christ" that can bring warmth to even the coldest, darkest days. Christ's story reminds us that being "enlightened" isn't about being perfect but about allowing that light within to grow and connect with others. It's about being human in the best ways possible: loving, showing up, forgiving, and trying again.

Advent is also a time to look at what might be blocking that light. There are often fears, doubts, and struggles within us that cast shadows on the light we carry. Christ, in all his humanity, knows our suffering and pain, but he also shows us how to move through those experiences to bring greater understanding and love. In that way, the light of Christ shows us that our brokenness doesn't have to keep us in the dark—it can actually lead us to insight and wisdom, a deeper knowing of what really matters.

So, as we light each Advent candle, let's see it as an invitation to become a bit more like Christ, letting our own light shine brighter in our own imperfect, beautiful way. Let the glow of each flame remind us to carry this light for others, especially in times that feel dark and heavy. Christ's presence, both then and now, teaches us that even in the most challenging times, we can choose to be bearers of light, bringing a little more love, warmth, and clarity to the world around us. This Advent, let's lean into that calling, holding our light up for others to see and spreading it where it's needed most.



BY SUSAN LANDRUM



his year, I am doing my clinical pastoral education or CPE for short. I am interning at Emory Midtown Hospital, serving as a spiritual health clinician (aka

chaplain) and learning about this powerful work of presence while also reflecting on how it feels to be in this role. When asked how it's going, I find myself sharing that it's a fascinating role to be in because the task is fairly simple: ask if you can enter a room and once you get in the room, ask how the person is. Now, what happens beyond that is a great unknown.

I've had so many different experiences, some



that last two minutes, others hours. Some people are so excited to see me and others are highly skeptical of my presence. Some people want prayers while other people just want to connect over their favorite basketball team. A thread, however, that ties so many of these interactions together, is the sense of waiting. Hospitals are full of people waiting - for an answer, an update, a cure, a solution, a next step, and so much more. The waiting, for patients and for families, causes so many different feelings.

I have quickly learned that I can't make any assumptions about how people feel when faced with life's hardest moments. Grief, sorrow, hope, and relief all seem to commingle when we're waiting. I've even encountered belly laughs and gigantic smiles when a loved one bursts through the door because joy just made an appearance.

Waiting doesn't mean we aren't living, too. I think about these moments during this season of Advent when we are all waiting on Christ's coming into this world and when we long for his coming again. While we are waiting, we are living.

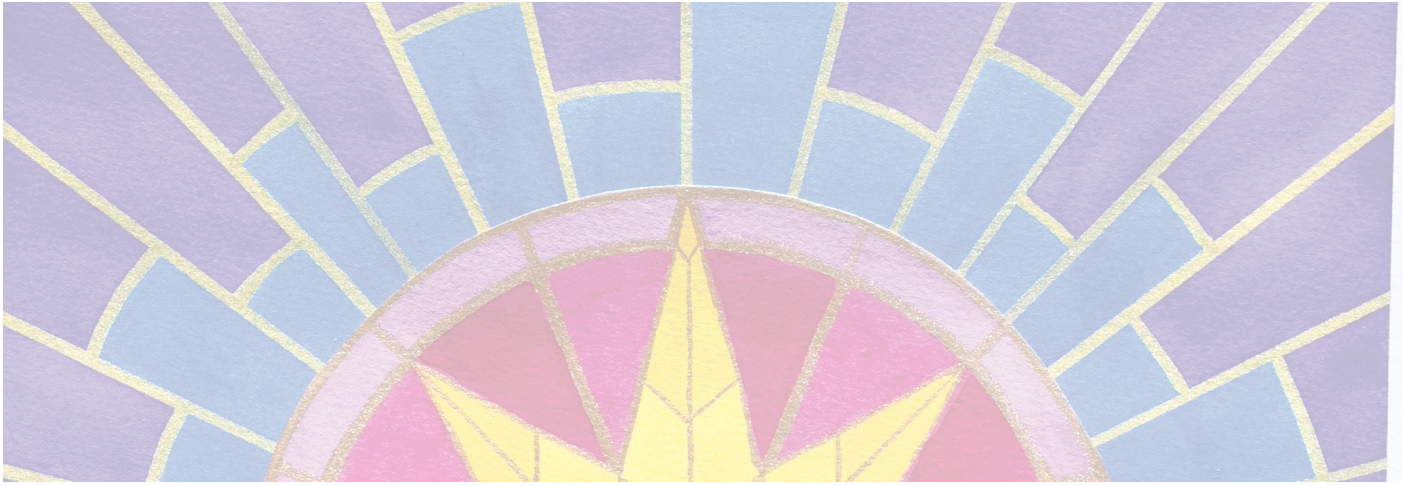


We are rehearsing for Christmas pageants and concerts at school. We are making memories at celebrations and gatherings. We are waiting for families, both born and chosen, to burst through the door and celebrate with us.

We are also holding the grief of a season that has changed because of a gigantic loss or an illness that stops us in our tracks.

While we are waiting, we are living. This living while waiting asks us to remember that Christ's coming is full of expectant hope and

a desire to see and do justice. This living while waiting asks us to remember that Christ's coming means that we seek comfort, mercy and peace for one another. This living while waiting asks us to remember that Christ's coming calls us to love and be loved, to show up and ask one another how we really are. This living while waiting means that Christ will come, bursting through the door of our world, ready to heal and transform us as God's beloved creation.



BY ROBERT CATTERALL

Central has Sunday School classes scheduled for Advent and a dynamic lineup for 2025 Winter Studies

All adult classes take place on Sunday mornings at Central, from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m.



Faith, Theology, and Practice for the Impending Environmental Crisis | The Issues in Theology class

This series, with sessions on November 24, December 8 and December 15 (no class on December 1), will be led by Rod Hunter. The sessions will explore the hypothetical possibility of serious environmental catastrophe - the possibility of the collapse of our civilization, the devastation of our environment, and the ultimate extinction of human life on earth if the planet becomes so overheated as to become uninhabitable. How can we remain persons of faith in such an apocalyptic, worst-case scenario? What practices of faith will be appropriate under such conditions? What can we affirm about God, and the meaning of human life and Christian faith, if such a catastrophe actually unfolds, as some scientists and others are fearing? Is it possible, theologically, that human life and civilization, in God's eyes, are not finally, as we have always assumed, "all about us"? Will God "save" us if we are unable to save ourselves? The class will consider several theological perspectives and possibilities.

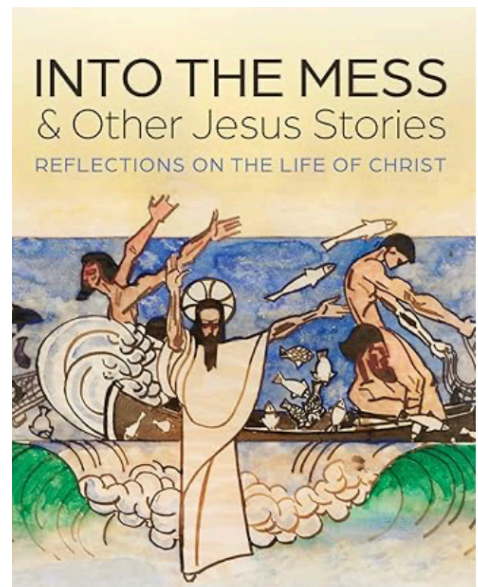
The Issues in Theology Class meets in the Greene Room, off

of Tull Hall. All are welcome, and no advance preparation is required; handouts will be distributed in advance and in class. Class contacts are Rod Hunter (rhunt02@emory.edu) and Tina Sizemore (tinasizemore@bellsouth.net).

Into the Mess & Other Jesus Stories - Reflections on the Life of Christ | A Sojourners class

The Sojourners class will continue discussions based on the thought-provoking essays found in Debie Thomas's book, *Into The Mess*. These brief essays uncover meaning and raise questions that bring new life to familiar stories of Jesus found in the Gospels - often presenting familiar passages in a new light, and challenging us to apply Jesus' teachings in our lives in the modern world. The class is examining essays in the section of the book titled, "Encounters," about Jesus' interactions with a variety of individuals.

The Sojourners class meets in the Brotherhood Room, off of Tull Hall. Class contacts are Ed Carwile (carwile1230@earthlink.net) and Robert Catterall (rfcatterall@gmail.com)



Winter Studies 2025: The Israel-Palestine Conflict

The 2025 Central Winter Studies program will provide an opportunity to learn more about the Israel-Palestine conflict - not only the current and tragic armed conflict, but the ongoing tensions between neighboring peoples and the historical roots of those tensions. The program will provide five sessions, all of which will take place in the Oglesby Atrium space (aka the Central Outreach and Advocacy Center space, on the basement level of the Oglesby Building).

❖ **January 5:** Dr. Brennan Breed, on the faculty at Columbia Theological Seminary, will talk about the Israel-Palestine conflict in a contemporary context.

❖ **January 12:** Dr. Max Miller, formerly on the faculty of the Candler School of Theology at Emory University (now retired), will talk about the ancient roots of conflict between Israelites and other peoples in the Near East.

❖ **January 19:** Rev. Dr. Fahed Abu-Akel, Palestinian by birth and former Moderator of the General Assembly of the PC (USA), will provide his unique perspective on the Israel-Palestine conflict.

❖ **January 26:** Martha Moore-Keish (on the faculty of Columbia Theological Seminary) and Susan Landrum (a member of Central's staff) will discuss a trip they took to Washington D.C. and N.Y.C. in the spring of 2024 to learn more about the Israel-Palestine conflict.

❖ **February 2:** A panel of Centralites who have visited Israel/Palestine in recent years will talk about their experiences and observations while in the Holy Land.



BY THOM DIXON



Dear Central Family,

As we approach the season of Advent, I wanted to give you a special glimpse into our musical selections for the month of December.

The anthems the Central Choir will sing during Advent correspond with the themes of Hope, Peace, and Joy.



On December 1, we will sing Karen Marrolli's Great Creator, a beautiful contemporary anthem based on Isaiah 65:17-25. The lyrics describe God as an artist who shapes and weaves love into the world, and also speaks of the hope we hold on to expectantly for "the wolf to lie with the lamb" and all voices to join together praising God.

On December 8, our anthem is the beautiful English choral piece Pray That Jerusalem by Charles Villiers Stanford. It will feature Mason on a lovely organ part. It is a simple prayer that encourages all God's people to share in peace and prosperity. We do this by loving our neighbor, and seeking God's goodness each day.

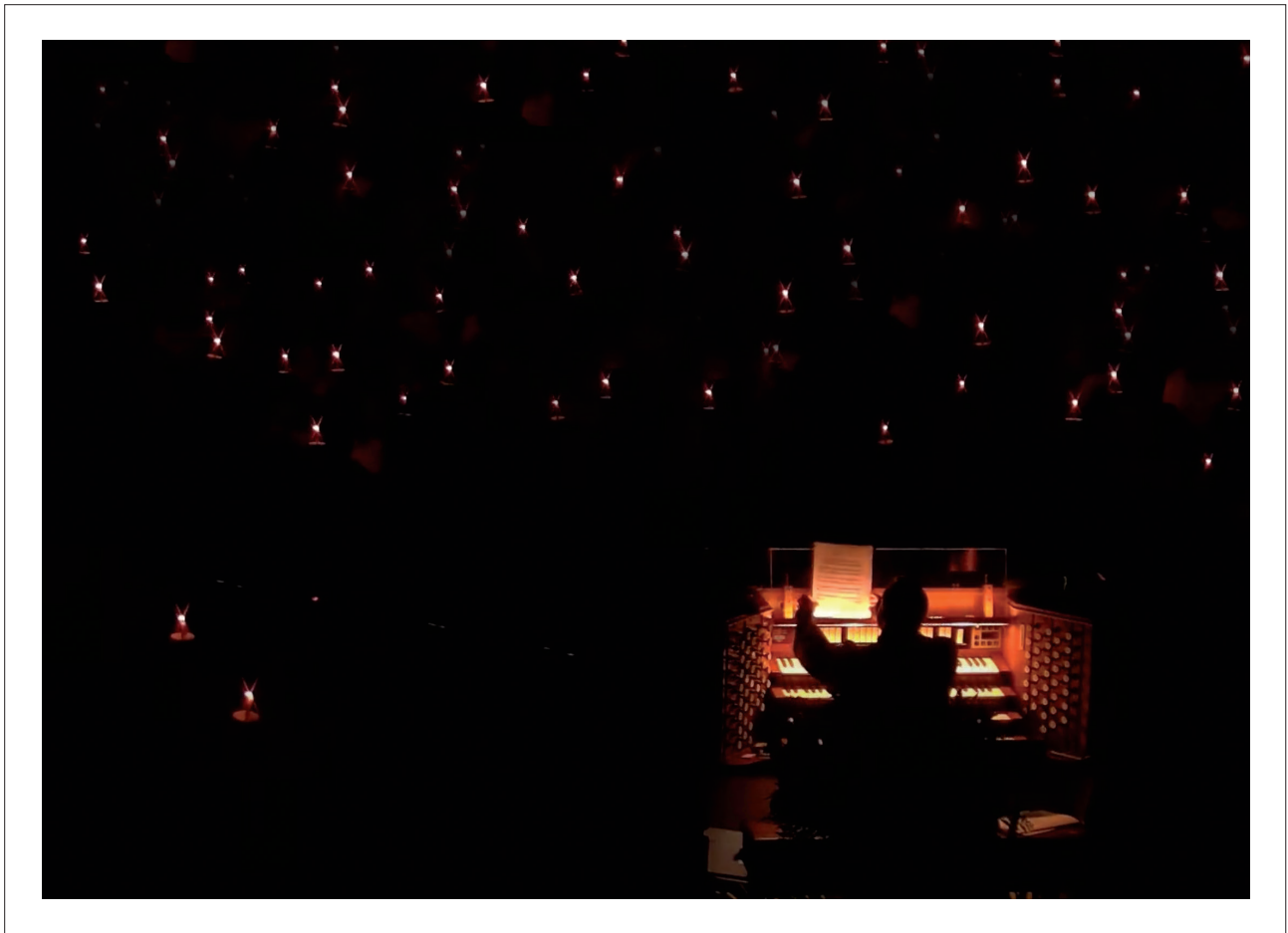
On December 15, we'll sing the joyful Canticule of The Turning arranged by Anne Krentz Organ. The lyrics are based on the Magnificat, a traditional Latin hymn also known as The Song of Mary. This exuberant piece calls for God's justice throughout our world.

And, please mark your calendars now, the fourth Sunday, Love, will feature our children's pageant, which is certainly a day filled with much love!

Our joyful Christmas Eve worship will feature several guest musicians, anthems from the choir, and congregational candles. It will be beautiful!

We're always looking for more voices to join the choir! Consider joining us this month and sharing in Advent's joyful anticipation!

Faithfully,
Thom



UPCOMING EVENTS



DECEMBER
08

**Youth Group
Christmas Party**
Central Youth Suite
4:30 to 6:30 p.m.



Advent Marketplace
Tull Fellowship Hall
Following Worship to 2 p.m.

Please join us for a Congregational Lunch, our annual Advent Marketplace featuring our mission partners, cookie decorating, adorning the sanctuary with Advent decor and more!

DECEMBER
13



**Central OAC Annual Guest
Holiday Party**
Central Courtyard
10 a.m.

Central OAC holds its annual Holiday Party and all are welcome to volunteer! If you would like to provide food for this event, the OAC is welcoming baked goods, protein items, and fruit. It's best if it is a finger food type of item, not an item that requires serving utensils. Please RSVP to Kimberly Parker, kparker@centraloac.org if you want to attend and/or if you can provide a food item.



DECEMBER
14

**Children, Youth & Families
attend Ballethnic
Nutcracker**

(to support Aubrey Johnson)
2 p.m.

Contact Susan Landrum
for more information on this event!

UPCOMING EVENTS



DECEMBER
15

AMIS Luncheon

Tull Fellowship Hall
Following Worship to 2 p.m.

The Central Mission Committee is hosting 'Christmas with AMIS' on Sunday, December 15 from 12 to 2 p.m. in Tull Hall. This event includes a meal, holiday crafts and games, and a tour of the church. For many international students, it will be an introduction to American Christmas traditions, and it's a great opportunity to reminisce about holiday experiences from childhood as students and volunteers decorate cookies, get creative with crafts, and play games together. Let George Brown know if you would like to join us.

UPPCOMING EVENTS



DECEMBER

22

Christmas Pageant

11 a.m.

Join us in worship as we observe this favorite Advent tradition.



◆◆◆◆◆
DECEMBER

24

◆◆◆◆◆

Christmas Eve

5 p.m.

Join us for this special service of lessons, carols, and candlelight.

LOOKING
2025 ahead

JANUARY
05

**Sunday School Winter
Studies Kick Off**

Congregational Lunch
Following Worship

JANUARY
20

**Memorial Drive
Ministries Work Day**

FEBRUARY
02

**Congregational Lunch
& Pollard Funds
Recipients Event**
Following Worship

The mission of the Central Pollard Fund is to provide for and minister to people in need, including but not limited to food, clothing and shelter for needy children, the unemployed and the elderly. The Session acts to approve Pollard funds each year so that at least 50 percent is designated for Central Church ministries and the OAC, with the remainder of the available proceeds designated to local ministries to further Central's commitment to be a Matthew 25 Church.



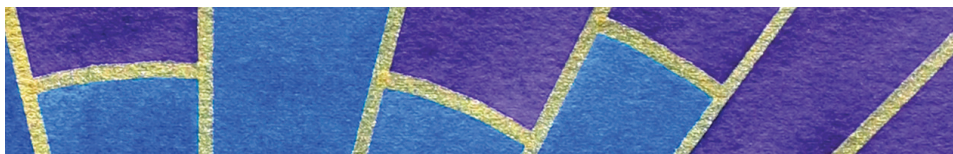
BY GARY CORNELL

Central Presbyterian Church supports a diverse group of mission partners - both local and global - through our annual budget. Several of these partners are profiled in the next few pages.

Their work, along with other organizations, will be featured during the Advent Marketplace

at lunch on Sunday, December 8 (see more information on page 12).

In addition to our funding support, many of these groups are in need of volunteers to engage actively in their work. Join us at the marketplace and learn how you can be involved directly with this important work in 2025.



A MESSAGE FROM MISSIONS

Sunday Breakfast Ministry

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. In 2025, 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.



Bashor Night Shelter

The Bashor Night Shelter is an ecumenical ministry of hospitality to our homeless brothers that has operated since 1980, providing nightly meals and a safe warm place to sleep. This year we opened November 1 in the Central gymnasium in the Campbell-Eagan Building. Once again our refuge for unhoused men will host 65 men overnight each night until the end of March. More than a dozen churches and organizations volunteer to provide the men with a hot meal for dinner and a warm, dry place to sleep. In the morning each guest receives "to go" bags for breakfast and lunch. Central provides the space and our volunteers provide meals on 6 to 8 selected dates each winter. Already the Mission Committee provided 70 sack lunches on November 8 and the Central choir has volunteered to provide sack lunches on January 5. We still need a group or set of individual donors to provide dinners for 70 men on Wednesday, December 11.

Information: Contact Chris Sciarrone at sciarrone.chris@gmail.com or 404-966-0380.

A MESSAGE FROM MISSIONS



“
**MDM FEELS LIKE A
WARM INN, AND WE'VE
COME OUT OF THE
RAIN.**”

-AN ONSITE PARTNER DIRECTOR

Memorial Drive Ministries

On October 6, many heard from MDM Executive Director, David Roth about the historic proportions of the refugee crisis. A decade ago, one in 125 people were displaced — now the ratio has nearly doubled to one in 69 people, almost 1.5 percent of the entire world's population. Their organization provides local support for hundreds of refugees in Clarkston, Ga. David ended his presentation with an appeal for volunteers. Here are some of the opportunities:

1. Amani Women Center is looking for volunteers for their English as a Second Language (ESL) Buddy program. 1-hour 1:1 conversational English practice 1-3 times / week. If interested, please complete the volunteer

application on the Amani Women Center website: <https://amaniwomencenter.org/>

2. Solid Foundation has opportunities for speakers to come share their professions with students and/or also host enrichment field trips to various organizations around the city. If interested, fill out the contact form here: <https://solidfoundationchristianacademy.com/contact-1>

3. There will likely be an upcoming MDM Donation Drive, an MLK Day volunteer work-day, and a CRSA New Americans Celebration all coming on February 13. Visit the Memorial Drive Ministries website at <https://mdmatl.org/>

A MESSAGE FROM MISSIONS



Georgians For Alternatives to the Death Penalty

After a breakfast meeting with speakers held at Central on Oct. 10, Central's bell rang and Rev. Kate Culver participated in a press conference advocating against the death penalty. Central will continue to witness against using capital punishment in Georgia, specifically opposing executions of persons with mental impairment.

A MESSAGE FROM MISSIONS



Presbyterians for a Better Georgia to prepare for Lobby Day

Central is a member of Presbyterians for a Better Georgia (PBG) - an organization in partnership with the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta. PBG focuses on advocacy at the GA State Capitol regarding upcoming legislation related to housing, health care and public education. On November 21 at 7 p.m. you can attend a Legislative Forum by Zoom that will provide citizen education on the salient bills in the 2025 Session of the Georgia General Assembly and prepare us to meet face-to-face with our Legislators during the General Assembly in February. For more information, contact Rev. Kate Culver.

Central to hear from Pollard Funds Recipients on February 2,

The mission of the Central Pollard Fund is to provide for and minister to people in need, including but not limited to food, clothing and shelter for needy children, the unemployed and the elderly. The Session acts to approve Pollard funds each year so that at least 50% is designated for Central Church ministries and the OAC, with the remainder of the available proceeds designated to local ministries to further Central's commitment to be a Matthew 25 Church.

This year the Pollard Funds are being awarded to leaders that were selected to be Fellows by the Center for Civic Innovation. The 2024 Civic Innovation Fellows comprise a group of community leaders in Atlanta fo-

cused on improving safety, education, and democracy in our city. The Civic Innovation Fellowship identifies, invests in, and amplifies the work of existing community leaders, entrepreneurs, and movement builders in Atlanta with brilliant ideas to address social and economic inequality in their own communities.

The Fellowship program is a 6-month cohort-based model that provides technical assistance, capital, and community support to trusted leaders in Atlanta's communities with interventions to address the City's social and economic challenges. These leaders represent some of Atlanta's most inspirational – yet often undervalued and under appreciated – grassroots leaders.

*C*hristmas Eve
with Central

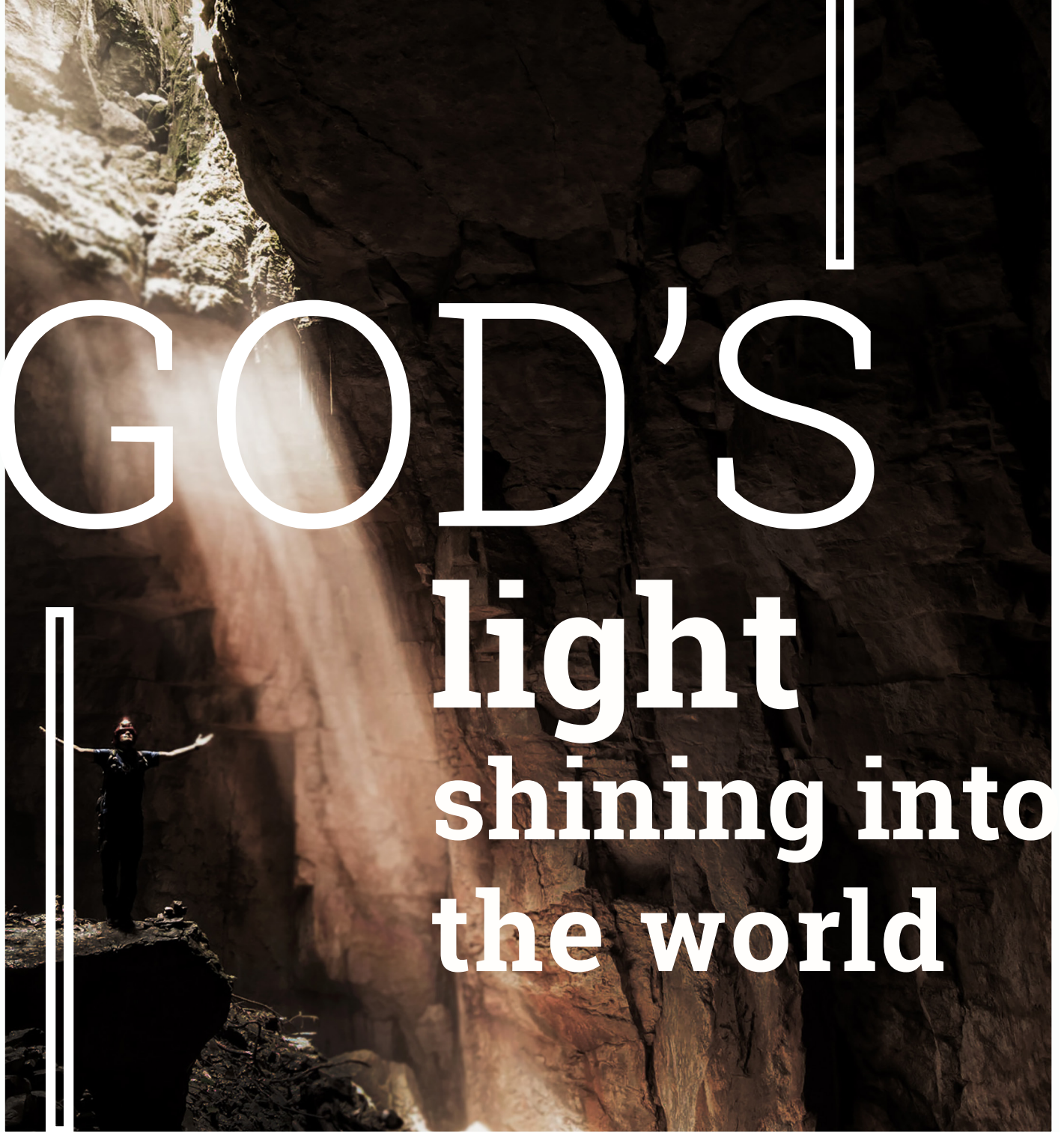
Lessons & Carols

Candlelight Service

5 p.m. December 24

cpcatlanta.org





GOD'S
light
shining into
the world

BY KIMBERLY PARKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CENTRAL OAC

As I contemplated the theme for this publication, I couldn't help but wonder if we are able to shine God's light unto the world at Central Outreach and Advocacy Center. I don't think it happens every day, but I do think there are moments when it does.

One of our regular volunteers was recently sharing about her morning doing intake. She said, "I left the room to go find a t-shirt for my guest. When I walked back into the office, the guest had his hand in my purse." She quickly said, "Sir!" He looked up and she watched the shame come over his face. He reached into his pocket, pulled out her wallet, and slowly handed it to her. He said, "I'm very sorry and I'm very ashamed."

The volunteer replied, "Thank you. I should not have left my purse in here as a temptation. I appreciate you giving my wallet back to me."



God's light shining unto the world through forgiveness.

We've seen an increase in the number of guests who show up with "emotional support animals."

For me it's a dilemma. I believe in the power of support that animals can give us and I believe that when a guest tells me that is what their dog is to them, they are being truthful. The dilemma has been that we have guests who are afraid of dogs. We have people who are allergic and we don't always know how the dog is going to react to other people. I'm trying to find a good solution.

We have this one particular woman who's been to the OAC several times with her emotional support dog. The first day she came I allowed her to take the dog inside as long as she agreed to keep it close to her side. After that time, we had a couple of incidents that made me start rethinking how to

handle these situations. She came again and I told her that she would not be able to bring her dog inside. She started screaming and cussing at me, saying that I had allowed her to take the dog inside the last time. She was right and it was hard for me to tell her no that time. She burst into tears and kept screaming at me. It truly broke my heart.

Another guest came up to me and asked, "If I hold the dog out here, can she go in and receive services? She trusts me with the dog." I told him that would be fine. The woman handed the leash to him, and headed inside, still crying, but no longer screaming and cussing.

God's light shining unto the world through the kindness of another guest.

We have a regular guest who's working with our housing navigator. She struggles with mental illness and addiction. She has good days and bad days. A bad day may include her screaming at the top of her lungs, trying to pull her hair out while yelling at someone on the phone, or banging her head against the wall. She was recently standing in line, waiting to check her mail. She started screaming at the top of her lungs with profanity flying. I stepped out of my office about the same time as another staff member (Sonja) did. We both were checking to see what was going on. Sonja said, "I've got this" and headed outside. She asked the guest to step out of the line and into the courtyard area.

As I watched, I saw Sonja step next to her, put her arm around the guest's shoulders, and begin quietly talking to the guest. The guest quickly calmed down.

God's light shining unto the world through Sonja's calm presence.

I'm grateful for these times when I can witness God's light shining unto the world at Central OAC!



Belonging to God

Sharing our Blessings



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

BY LEE CARROLL

It was August 1983—over 40 years ago. Our family had moved from Charleston, West Virginia to Decatur, Georgia where I was beginning service on the faculty of Columbia Theological Seminary. We had lived in Charleston for 8 years where I was one of the pastors of First Presbyterian Church. Betty had started what would prove to be an outstanding career in early childhood education, culminating in her work with Head Start; and our children, Mary and Scott, were growing up, already 13 and 10. We had loved our days in Charleston, so the transition was challenging. But with Betty's support, we began life anew in Decatur.

One decision we faced during our earlier days in our new home was finding a church. For several months we visited various congregations, seeking a church that had vibrant worship, was committed to community ministry, and offered a place for us to grow. In the end, Central's focus on social justice was a determining factor.

We joined Central that December. And we have never regretted that decision! Our pastors and fellow congregants have welcomed and nurtured us, pointed us to opportunities for service, and helped us grow. They have walked alongside us throughout our journey with Central.



During our years with the congregation, Betty has served on the Session, Diaconate, Board of Central Child Development Center, and nominating committees for two Associate Pastors. She is active in the Rebecca Circle and volunteers with Central Outreach and Advocacy Center (OAC). Over the years, my life has been enriched through service with the Mission Committee, Central in the City (organizing chair), Board of Central OAC (formerly chair and now on Public Policy Advocacy Committee), Pollard Grants Committee, and our Anti-Racism Team.

I am involved with New Hope House (prison ministry), Progressive Hope House (addiction

rehabilitation), the Open Door Community (current board chair), and Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. I also enjoy helping to reorganize and manage Central's Archives/Teaching Library.

So we were asked, "Why do you support Central?" The answer is quite simple for us. We support Central because we believe God is at work in this congregation through our life together with members and neighbors. Why would we not want to be engaged with God's acts of social justice, the faithful company of Jesus' disciples, and the joy of worshiping the loving God who dwells among us?

BY NANCY WILKES

The thing that first brought me to Central was the idea of getting to see one half of a free *Indigo Girls* Concert.

Methodist theologian, Don Saliers, and his daughter, Indigo Girls phenom, Emily Saliers, were promoting their new book, *A Song to Sing, A Life to Live*, and in doing so, they would be singing and preaching at Central.

They performed some of my favorite gospel songs, and Dr. Saliers, in his sermon, managed to make me fall even more in love with Psalm 139. Before I could get away that Sunday, folks like Margaret Montgomery made sure I knew how very happy they were that I was there and how they sure hoped that I'd come back.



That was all well and good, but I was just there for the free concert, remember?

In the following year, that church with all the nice people stayed on my mind. What was the name of that church again? Where was that church? I had no idea. There was a “big building” across the street, I remembered. I emailed Dr. Saliers and asked him. I did. I swear. And

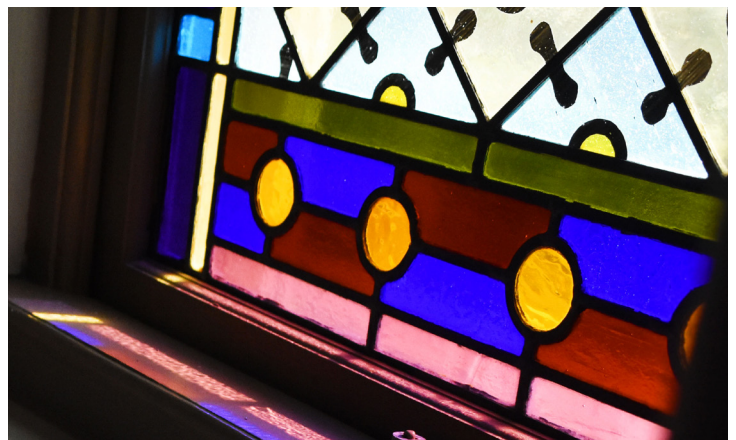
twenty years later, weirdly, I am still not embarrassed for having done so. He responded within minutes and did everything but pick me up and put me down on the front steps of Central.

I look back on all the years since and almost wonder if God wasn't saving up all the trials of my life until I could find my way back to Central. I lost a job, and for the entirety of that period I felt God's presence through the words and deeds of my new Central family. I got breast cancer. I don't remember the chemo or the radiation or the surgery like I remember the cards and the calls and Jo Alice and Jack Halsell delivering homemade pimento cheese and Leslie Pope stopping by just before I went into surgery. I lost an acquaintance to suicide. I was positive I would not survive that.

Members of Central, some of whom I didn't even know by name, showed up at the memorial service, determined that I would not suffer that nightmare alone. I lost my mom. When her wanna-be mega church failed to return my calls so that we could plan a memorial service, Central's resident pastor at the time, Sally Ann, who is maybe - five feet tall and ninety pounds soaking wet, telephoned my mom's pastor and told him in what I am sure was the nicest Christian way, "Hey, don't worry about it. We got this."

And then Central hosted a most beautiful memorial service for my mom. I don't remember feelings of loss that day. I remember how blessed I felt secretly watching Paul Green in Tull Hall, soaking wet with perspiration, apron half-tied, trying to reason with Shirley Landrum and Debbie Miller and Liz Burkhardt over something like whether the finger sandwiches should be refrigerated.

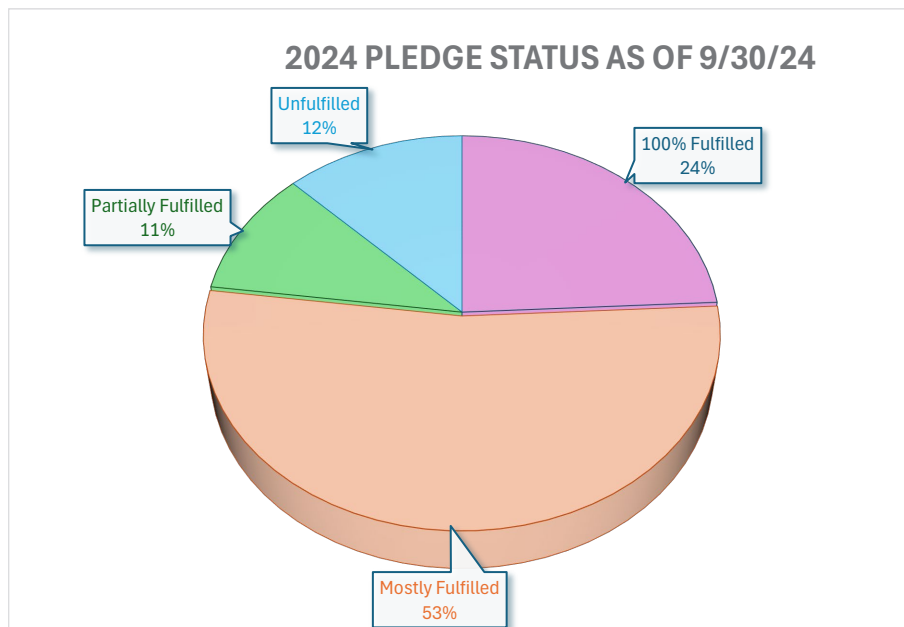
I took my time coming back to Central after the pandemic, and then I prepared to hang my head, feel shame, apologize to everyone for leaving at a time when Central clearly needed all hands on deck. Instead, what I was met with was one Margaret Montgomery-style greeting and embrace after another. "We're so glad you're here, and we so hope you'll come back." I guess it's that for which I'm most thankful.



BY KRISTIE JOHNS



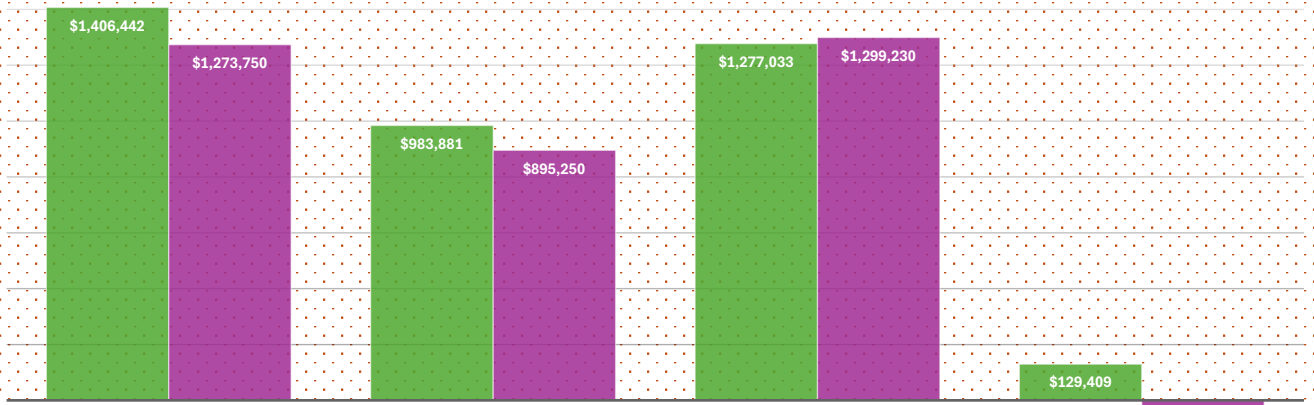
UPDATED FINANCIAL SUMMARY



2025 Pledges Received as of 11/6/24

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Total # of Pledges | 114 |
| Total Amount of Pledges | \$640,527 |

YTD Actual Vs. YTD Budget As Of 9/30/24



| | Revenues | Giving | Expenses | Net Income |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| 2024 YTD Actual | \$1,406,442 | \$983,881 | \$1,277,033 | \$129,409 |
| 2024 YTD Budget | \$1,273,750 | \$895,250 | \$1,299,230 | \$25,480 |

■ 2024 YTD Actual ■ 2024 YTD Budget

2024 YTD Actual Vs. 2023 YTD Actual As of 9/30



from the clerk

BY JANET ABERCROMBE

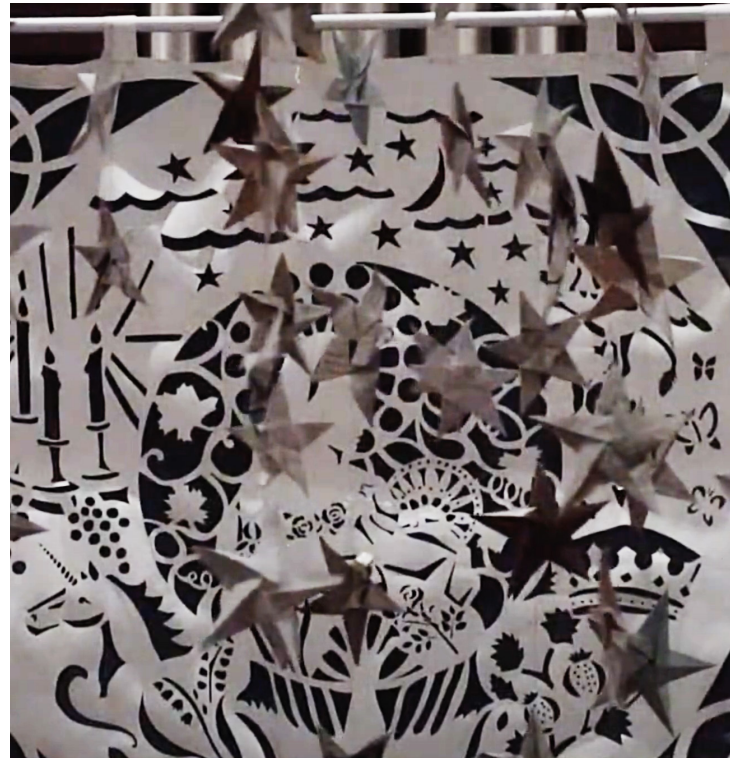
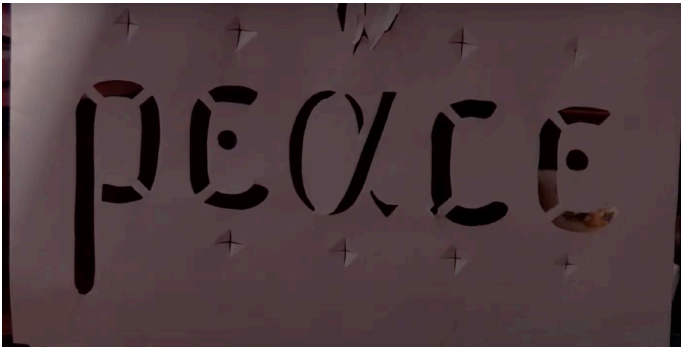
Despite the current state of the country and the world, Central remains a light. It's a place I know I can always go to do exactly what we are tasked to do as followers of Jesus: to be God's hands and feet in the world. Whether it's through serving at the Sunday morning breakfast ministry, volunteering at the Night Shelter, or simply welcoming new faces and voices to our community, Central is an outlet for that energy. As a part of this community, I am able to give light. But I am also able to recharge my own spiritual batteries to keep going.

At our October meeting, Session met with a consulting firm we've engaged, Saison Consulting, to begin the work of implementing who we want to be in the future and looking ahead. The words "visioning process" and "congregational survey" make me reflexively cringe, if I'm being honest--I believe I've lost count of the number of surveys, "pulse checks," and exercises I've done both as a member of Central and previously as a Session member. However, I am encouraged to know that Saison is looking at the work we've already done in determining our identity. They recognize that we are a community who knows who we are and who we want to be, and are partnering with us to make Central's light shine even brighter, as a beacon of hope, as we really get to work.

I wouldn't be fulfilling my duty as Clerk if I didn't remind you that Session meetings are open for anyone to attend. If you're interested in learning more about our work, I encourage you to join one of our meetings, which now take place monthly on Sunday following worship (though we do not meet in July or December).

I hope you are able to find a way to both give and receive light at Central. Talk to your friends serving on various committees. Complete a Time and Talents survey (available online and on paper). Learn how you can be a part of Central's work. I can guarantee we can use your gifts. Although there are less than 20 Session members elected as leaders, we know this work takes all of us.

Blessings,
Janet





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