

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1

CENTRAL

LENT / FEBRUARY TO MAY 2025



'I am the Voice' by Hannah Garrity



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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



ABOUT THE COVER

Our cover art for this issue is provided by Hannah Garrity with our friends from Sanctified Art. It is inspired by John 1:6-8, 19-28 and is watercolor and ink on paper.

Here is Heather's reflection on the piece.

"Who are you? Who are you? What do you say about yourself? I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness..." (John 1:19, 22)

John the Baptist arrived to pave the way for Jesus' work, to make the path straight. He baptized with water. He foretold a baptism of the Holy Spirit. He led people toward the work of the gospel. He inspired people to join the path that Jesus would tread—to remove the underbrush, to mat down the grass. He told of what was to come.

He was all of these things and more. He was the voice crying out in the wilderness.

How would you answer the questions asked?

I am an artist. I am a mother and a wife, a daughter and a sister. I condemn hate and profess love. I am not perfect; I seek to understand. I am inspired by the work of the gospel, the mindset of love. I am disenchanted by the contradictions in the Bible, in my life, and in the world around me. I aspire to humility. I struggle with my faith, yet I struggle on. I am all of these things and more. I am a voice crying out in the wilderness. I am trying to make the path straight.

"Who are you? Who are you? What do you say about yourself?" (John 1:19, 22) How are you a voice

from the pastor

BY REV. SHANNON J. KERSHNER

I am actually surprised that I approved this magazine's Lenten theme to be "The Power to Let Go."

Why am I surprised? I do not let go very well, at all. As a matter of fact, I tend to be one who holds on by my fingertips, if necessary.

For example, I always notice it when I am on vacation. It might be day two of six-day trip and I am already sad that the vacation is coming to an end (when it is not!). It is like I participate in anticipatory grief, which could have the potential to interfere with the time I actually have.

I have always been like this. If you ask my family, my first response to any new idea or adventure that I have not yet considered is "no." As someone who has to plan to be spontaneous, I have to let things marinate in me for a while. I have to let them settle. So my family has learned to not let my initial "no" distract them. They know I will eventually work myself to a "yes."

So why did this theme take hold on me? Perhaps it is because I long to learn how to unclench my fists more than I currently do. I long to practice what I preach. When I have the honor to be with someone who is actively dying, I will often tell them they are in the middle of the most



important spiritual discipline that exists: learning how to die well. And those I have known who died well tend to be those who unclenched their fists from holding on to everything here, so they could have open hands to receive whatever healing and love God was pouring into them through their death. This is one reason why family members or friends giving their loved one permission to die is always important. That permission can help the one dying unclench their fists so they can be ready for what is next. It is the power to let go—to let go of what is, in order to be ready for what will be.

Perhaps this can be a Lenten spiritual practice we all engage this year. Maybe each day, we can hold out our hands and squeeze our fingers into a fist. Then, we can ask ourselves to what are we clinging so tightly? After we do that, we can slowly open our fingers and feel the relief.

Perhaps we can wonder what might be possible if we lived our lives with hands more open than shut. What might God do with that, with us? Can we travel this Lenten journey with unclenched fists? I am going to try my best.

Central Leadership

The Session of Central Presbyterian Church

Class of 2025

Philip Covin
Ann Hunter
Hannah Palmer
Anne Sciarrone

Class of 2026

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

Central Parish Coordinators

BROOKWOOD PARISH

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

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

Thom Dixon, Director of Music & Worship Arts, tdixon@cpcatlanta.org

Mason Copeland, Organist/Music Associate, mcopeland@cpcatlanta.org

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

Kristie Johns, Business Administrator, kjohns@cpcatlanta.org

John White, Facilities Manager, jwhite@cpcatlanta.org

Mark Wallace Maguire, Director of Communications, mwmaguire@cpcatlanta.org

Hala Hess White, Communications Associate, hhwhite@cpcatlanta.org

Melissa Johnson, Executive Assistant & Event Coordinator, mjohnson@cpcatlanta.org

Josh Smith, Audio Engineer

Jamel Morris-Barclay, Audio Assistant

Sarah Anderson, Video Assistant

Kelly Grba, Music Intern, kgrba@cpcatlanta.org

Naomi McQuiller, Children & Youth Intern, nmcquiller@cpcatlanta.org

Thomas Chafin, Music Intern, tchafin@cpcatlanta.org

What **new life** might be waiting just beyond our surrender?

LENT



BY REV. KATE CULVER

There is something powerful this time of year. The earth is stirring below our feet, churning and creaking with new life. The season calls us into the sacred act of surrender as we approach Lent. It is a time of letting go—not just of indulgences or distractions, but of our need for control, our attachments, and even our deepest fears. The Lenten journey is one of transformation. Like a river that carves the landscape by yielding to the flow of water, or the tree that bends in the storm rather than breaking, we find strength not in holding, but in releasing.

The natural world echoes this truth in countless ways. The autumn leaves surrender to the wind, trusting that spring will bring new buds. The seed falls to the ground, breaking apart in the soil so that it might grow into something greater than itself. Even the setting sun, which surrenders to the night, does so knowing that dawn will come again. So too, Lent invites us into a kind of holy relinquishing, a trust that what we release is not lost, but transformed.

As Christians, our rituals deepen surrender. On Ash Wednesday, we are reminded of our own impermanence, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” Prayer opens our hearts, making room for God’s presence in the holy act of letting go. And in Holy

Week, we witness Christ's ultimate surrender: giving Himself up in love, even death. The cross is not just a symbol of suffering, but of a profound release, letting go of power, of certainty, of resistance, so that resurrection can break forth.

Jesus' journey to the cross was not a passive resignation but an active choice to give Himself in love. When He washed His disciples' feet, He surrendered to humility. When He stood before Pilate, silent in the face of accusations, He surrendered to truth. And when He carried His cross, He surrendered to the weight of human suffering, embracing it so that He might transform it.

In our own lives, we surrender when we say "yes" to something beyond ourselves—when we choose to forgive, when we serve those in need, when we take a risk for love or justice. These acts of surrender mirror Christ's own, showing us that letting go is not about retreat, but about stepping fully into the life God calls us to live.

Easter morning dawns with the truth that surrender leads to resurrection. The tomb is empty, not because nothing remains, but because something new has begun. Letting go is not about loss; it is about trust. When we release our grip on what we think we must hold, we open ourselves to the grace of resurrection.

What, then, are we called to release this season? And what new life might be waiting just beyond our surrender?



BY SUSAN LANDRUM

“S

o do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.” These stirring words from

Jesus spoken in Matthew 6:34 seem especially prophetic for this moment. But all I want to say back is “easier said than done!” I am a last-semester seminary student who has learned to always think about tomorrow so that I don't miss a deadline. I am a pastor-in-training who starts thinking ahead to the next Sunday as soon as Monday morning. I am a list-keeper who loves the thrill of striking through what has been accomplished. My worldly, human self is much more oriented towards what's coming than what is now. And yet, Jesus invites us to let go of what's coming because “today's trouble is enough for to-

day.” Jesus frees us to simply be present in what the day has to offer, in all of its complexity. In many ways, though, this doesn't always feel like freedom. I don't want to sit in the discomfort of today when there are so many disturbing headlines, when it feels like I don't know what to do, or what to focus on. If I can look ahead to tomorrow, then maybe, just maybe, I can fix something or find something to look forward to.

In his wisdom, Jesus knows exactly this. He doesn't try to eclipse the fact that the present still does have its troubles. He's not telling us that we'll necessarily find peace in the day itself but rather that we need only worry about today because that is surely enough. After all, Jesus was living in some

pretty difficult times himself, full of the pressures of empiric powers while he was preaching what we know is good news but was a world-changing gospel. I wonder



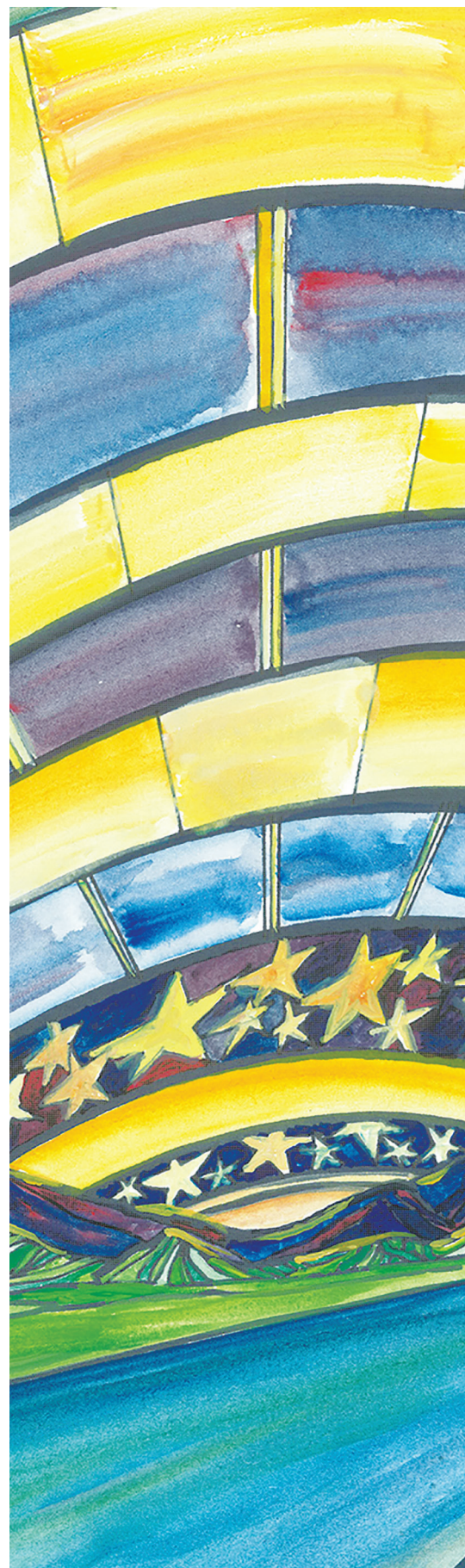
if he said this line as much to himself as those gathered to hear him that day.

This Lenten season, I am considering how I can let go of the worry of tomorrow, knowing that today's complexity and challenges are enough. I am wondering what it looks like to know that where I am today is where I need to be, not rushing past the pain or the joy of any experience. Considering Jesus' words in light of the Lenten journey makes them even more tender. Jesus was walking towards the ultimate mystery of our faith. Jesus was to be betrayed by his friends, arrested by the empire, experiencing anguish beyond measure. We know that the story

“ *It is a peculiar paradox because as a resurrection people, what makes today's trouble tolerable is the promise of a tomorrow that is free from trouble.* ”

is full of troubles. So, to hear our Redeemer remind us that today is where we need to be, to let go of what we anticipate for tomorrow, is powerful.

It is a peculiar paradox because as a resurrection people, what makes today's trouble tolerable is the promise of a tomorrow that is free from trouble. Jesus' wisdom is exactly the wisdom that we need because of the great mystery of our faith: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. The Lenten journey is steeped in possibility because of the tension between the present and the future. In letting go of our human designs on “tomorrow,” we can live into the promise of God's whole and everlasting future. Even when the troubles of today are especially intense, we can sit with them, we can bear them with one another, and we can remind one another of the hope found in our Lord, the risen Christ. Lent takes us through to Easter morning. We will surely get there.





Sunday School classes

Central has a compelling lineup of adult education classes taking place the next several months. Here is a look at our what's next. All adult classes take place on Sunday mornings at Central, from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m.



Issues in Theology:
Shakespeare and Theology

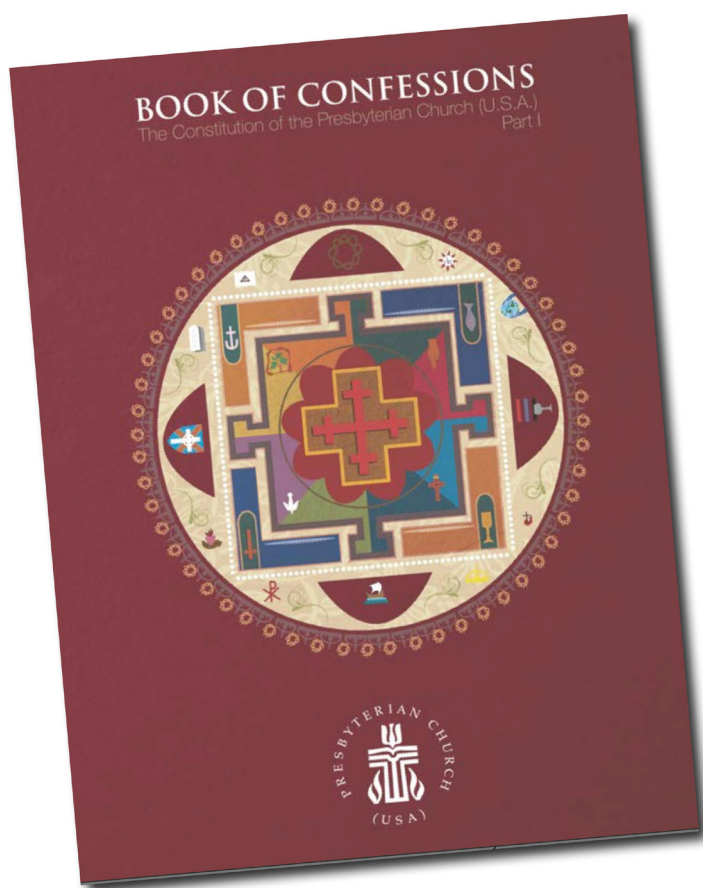
March 23

Greene Room

9:45 to 10:45 a.m.

This class began in February and its final session will be March 23. The Issues in Theology class will offer "Shakespeare and Theology."

The last day of the class is March 23. Discussions will be led by Tina Sizemore and actress Kessler Catterall. Class location: the Greene (off of Tull Hall). Questions? Contact Tina Sizemore (tinasizemore@bellsouth.net).



Book of Confessions - Our Family Photo Album

Sundays, March 2, 9, 16

The Parlor

9:45 to 10:45 a.m.

Do you think the Book of Confessions is boring? Did you know we often contradict ourselves? In this special series, taught by Central's Senior Pastor Shannon Kershner, you will discover the family features that are in each confession, and you will learn why this theological work continues to inform who we are as a church. This series will be taught on March 2, 9 and 16.

Class location: The Parlor (off of Tull Hall).
Questions? Contact Shanon Kershner
(skershner@cpcatlanta.org).

Central Bible Study: The Gospel of John

Begins Sunday, March 23

The Parlor

9:45 to 10:45 a.m.

Central Bible Study, a new adult Sunday morning class, will meet for the first time on March 23. Central Bible Study will be a traditional Bible study class - what some would describe as "close examination of Scripture." The verse-by-verse approach will mean that we'll often cover, in a given class session, just one chapter of the Scripture book of interest. We'll use the NRSV translation of the Bible.



The approach to Scriptural analysis will be critical in nature, and we'll engage in Scriptural interpretation that reflects our Reformed theology. The first book of the Bible that will be explored by the Central Bible Study class will be the Gospel of John.

Class location: The Parlor (off of Tull Hall).
Questions? Contact Susan Landrum at
slandrum@cpcatlanta.org

BY M.E. DAVIS

Lamenting Racism

You are invited to join us for a 6-week pop-up Sunday School class starting during Lent called Lamenting Racism: A Christian Response to Racial Injustice. We say pop-up in that it is a limited time class for a specific topic.

Here is how the course is described: In Lamenting Racism, a team of leading pastors and theologians invite us into the transformative and motivating practice of biblical lament as a powerful way to confront racism. Through their conversations in six thought-provoking videos, they name that God's people of every race are called to consider how we have been shaped and formed by race, and they guide us into experiencing lament as an anti-racism practice.

Encouraging congregations to reclaim the lost art of biblical lament, these pastors and theologians model a powerful way to pour out the fear, shame, grief, and rage of racism as we cry out to God in prayer. In the process, we will be transformed and motivated to reclaim hope and to act for a world shaped by God's inclusive vision of love and blessing.

We will gather during the Sunday School hour to watch a short video for the first 10-15 minutes and then have plenty of time for discussion and reflection.

As a Matthew 25 church, Central has committed to dismantling systemic racism in our midst. With this short series, we have an opportunity as a congregation to name and lament racism and its impact as well as take new steps to live out our commitment to anti-racism.

Contact M.E. Davis at maryelizabeth.pope@gmail.com or 404-630-2678 with any questions.

March 23 to April 6

break for Palm

Sunday and Easter

then April 27

to May 11

The Greene Room



UPCOMING EVENTS



MARCH
05

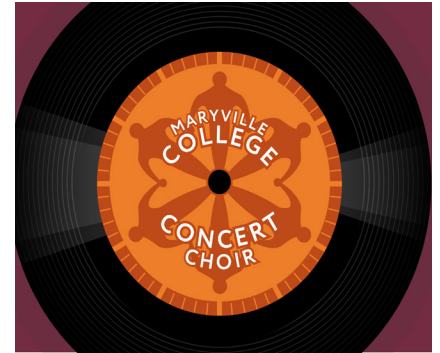


ASH WEDNESDAY

Ashes On The Go
9 a.m. to noon
3 to 5 p.m.
on Washington Street
in front of Rand Chapel

Evening Service
7 p.m. Central Sanctuary

MARCH
09



Children & Youth serve at our breakfast
ministry. Maryville College Concert Choir
will participate in worship



MARCH
15

Sip and Paint at Central!
4 to 6 p.m. in Tull Hall
Register in Realm

UPCOMING EVENTS



MARCH
15

Children & Youth service dinner at
the Bashor Night Shelter along with
members of the Down Yonder Parish

MARCH
30

OAC
IN THEIR SHOES
see more details on page 21

Youth Group

APRIL
06



Congregational
Lunch

Cathy Harmon-Christian
of Georgians for
Alternatives to the Death
Penalty will speak.

APRIL
13

Palm Sunday

Join us in the
Courtyard before
we parade around
the block with our
friends at
Trinity UMC and
The Shrine

UPCOMING EVENTS



2 p.m.

Georgia Tech Chamber Choir Concert

APRIL

13

APRIL

13

Easter Egg Hunt for Children & Youth at
Mary Lillian Walker's home.

Stay tuned for details!

APRIL

18

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

7 p.m.

at Morningside Presbyterian
Church

with Morningside &
Covenant Presbyterian Churches

EASTER SUNDAY



APRIL

20

BREAKFAST
FOR ALL IN
TULL FELLOWSHIP
HALL
BEFORE WORSHIP!

Upcoming Congregational LUNCHES

MAY

04

JUNE

08

OCTOBER

05

NOVEMBER

02

UPCOMING EVENTS





The Power to Let Go

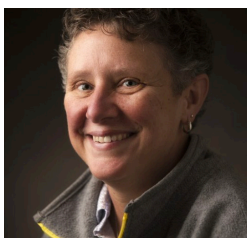
BY KIMBERLY PARKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CENTRAL OAC

We are entering that season in the church when we may hear a lot about giving something up for Lent. We may be asked to think about what is something that has a hold on us that we need to try and give up or let go of for a period of 40 days.

It's something we can choose to do or not do. We aren't forced into anything. I've been thinking about this notion of having "the power to let go" in relation to something I did a few weeks ago.

On Friday, January 24, I received an email from Catherine Vassell, the CEO of Partners for Home, the group that works to coordinate a comprehensive response system to end homelessness in the city of Atlanta. She said that Mayor Andre Dickens had asked if leaders from key partner agencies could meet with him on Saturday, January 25 at the encampment site where Cornelius Taylor died January 16 during a homeless encampment sweep.

The mayor wanted to talk with key partners and walk the street where Cornelius had passed away in a tragic accident. I typically try and hold my Saturdays free so if I'm really honest, I was not overly excited about going. However, I knew and felt like it was important.



I had no idea what to expect.

I'm not an outreach worker. I've never had a desire to be the one to go into the encampment areas, places that people call their "homes," but look nothing like what I would call a "home."

I showed up. I drove around for a little while, not able to quite figure out where we were supposed to meet. I finally spotted someone I knew would be going to the same place. I parked my car and headed off in the direction I saw him walk.

I found myself walking right through the encamp-

ment that I was sure we were there to visit. If I'm really honest, I was a bit nervous. It's a different environment than what I work in each day, although it's some of the same people.

Quite a few people from partner agencies along with others from the police department, public works, churches, etc. had gathered. When the mayor arrived he took a few minutes to talk to the group and then said, "Let's walk through the encampment, talk to the people and see what we can learn."

It was not just a walk through, where we started at one end and walked straight through without stopping. It was a stop-and-go process because the mayor stopped along the way to speak to people who had made this place their home. He would shake their hands, ask their names, and enter into conversation if they were willing. There was the sharing of stories. There were smiles. There was laughter. There were tears.

It was quite a humbling experience. When we got to the bottom of the encampment, a memorial had been set up to honor Cornelius Taylor. It was here that I shed tears. I listened to the group the mayor was talking to. They had known Cornelius well. He was a friend. He was part of their community. They were still visibly shaken up.

As I think about "the power to let go" in relation to this event, I am struck with how so many of our guests experiencing homelessness "let go" of things every day that they have no power over.

They would probably choose not to "let go," but they have no choice. As I walked through the encampment both going and coming, I realized that I was walking through people's neighborhood, belongings, and sacred space. These folks have "let go" of prior homes, neighborhoods, belongings, and sacred space. Their



"letting go" has not always been their choice. Circumstances have led to the letting go.

The group in the encampment had lost someone who was part of their community. They were grieving. They were angry. They were sad. They didn't choose to "let go" of Cornelius; he was taken from them in a pretty tragic way.

The folks living in an encampment, on the street, in a shelter have a story to tell. They want to be heard. They want to be seen, but so often they have "let go" of believing they have anything to share because too often they have been shunned, shut down, and made to believe they are a nobody.

During this Lenten season, we have the choice and the power to "let go" of something if we so choose. But, many have had to "let go" of something because their power has been taken away, no choice of their own. What might we do in this Lenten season to change that for others?

COAC IMPACT

BY THE NUMBERS*



4,355

Individual
guests served



2,617

Forms of
ID obtained



2,463

People provided with
food stamps



50

Job
placements



11

People placed in
permanent housing

IN THEIR SHOES: 10 MILE CHALLENGE

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Join Us

NOW!

- Register as an individual or a team
- Set a fundraising goal!
- Ask friends and family to support your fundraising efforts

Walk & Fundraise

MAR 2 – MAR 30

- Raise money as you walk! Ask friends and family to support you/your team.
- Walk 9 miles at your own pace over the course of 4 weeks

Celebrate

**SUNDAY, MAR 30
AT 12PM**

- Gather to celebrate and walk the last mile together in downtown Atlanta at:
**Central OAC HQ
201 Washington St. 30303**

*Metrics are based off of data collected September 2023-October 2024



Join us and register today at
CentralOAC.org/InTheirShoes



BY THOM DIXON

Warmer weather to usher in special SOUNDS @ CENTRAL

Dear Central Family,

As the days begin to grow a little longer and warmer, I hope that you are reminded of the renewal that God can provide when we are feeling overwhelmed or stuck in our day-to-day difficulties. Approaching Lent, I wanted to let you all know about two upcoming choral music events at Central Presbyterian Church. I pray that these special offerings provide both a solace to some of the difficulties we are facing as a society, as well as an opportunity to reflect, renew and remember things we can be grateful for.

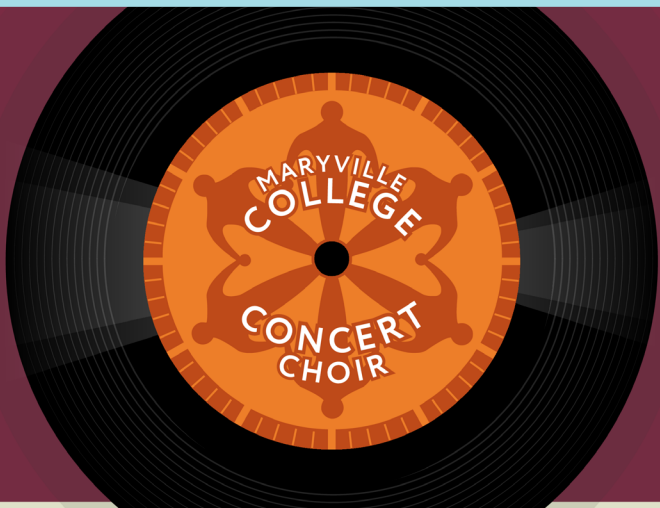


Sunday, March 9th - The Maryville College Choir will join us for the first Sunday in Lent. The choir was founded in 1917. Affiliated with the Presbyterian Church, Maryville College is a nationally recognized institution in Tennessee that blends liberal arts education with professional preparation. The concert choir follows the philosophy of college founder Isaac Anderson: “to do good on the largest possible scale.”

The choir acts as a musical ambassador for the college, performing nationally and internationally. Participation is audition-based, and many members receive music or choral scholarships. The choir has hosted Grammy Award-winning Paul Phoenix of The King’s Singers, Jacqui Horner-Kwiattek of Anonymous 4 and composer Paul John Rudoi as artists-in-residence. They have worked with renowned ensembles such as Cantus, Voces8, Chanticleer and the American Spiritual Ensemble. The choir has also performed at the Tennessee Music Educators Association State Conference and toured internationally, including performances in Scotland with St. Salvator’s Chapel Choir at St. Andrew’s University.



Dr. Erika Tazawa, above, will conduct the Georgia Tech Chamber Choir, opposite page, at Central at 2 p.m. on Palm Sunday. The Maryville College Choir will join us for the first Sunday in Lent. The choir was founded in 1917.



THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

S P R I N G T O U R 2 0 2 5

featuring **Concert Choir • Off Kilter • Lads and Lassies**

<p>Directors Stacey Murphy Wilner Dr. Jenny Anderson</p> <p>Collaborative Pianist Chase Hatmaker</p> <p>Percussionist Amber Nejmé-Hatmaker</p> <p>Choral Assistant Jacob Parauka</p> <p>Artistic Associates Shelley Maddox Jenny Hurst Damien Delyea</p>	<p>Sunday, February 23 at 4:00 pm St. James Episcopal Church Knoxville, TN</p> <p>Wednesday, March 5 at 7:00 pm Fort Hill Presbyterian Church Ash Wednesday Service Clemson, SC</p> <p>Friday, March 7 at 7:00 pm Memorial Presbyterian Church St. Augustine, FL</p> <p>Sunday, March 9 at 5:30 pm Fairfield Glade Community Church Fairfield Glade, TN</p> <p>Sunday, March 30 at 4:00 pm New Providence Presbyterian Church Maryville, TN</p>
	<p>Tuesday, March 4 at 12:30 pm Harold and Jean Lambert Recital Hall Choir Tour Send Off Maryville, TN</p> <p>Thursday, March 6 at 7:00 pm St. Simons Presbyterian Church St. Simons, GA</p> <p>Sunday, March 9 at 11:00 am Central Presbyterian Church Traditional Worship Service Atlanta, GA</p> <p>Friday, March 21 at 7:00 pm Clayton Center for the Arts Maryville, TN</p>

Palm Sunday, April 13

- We will welcome the Georgia Tech Chamber Choir under the direction of Dr. Erika Tazawa which will give a concert at 2 p.m. in the sanctuary. The chamber choir is Georgia Tech's premiere mixed vocal ensemble. Founded in 1998, the choir has established itself as one of the foremost college vocal ensembles in the Southern United States. Singers are selected through audition, and the chamber choir attracts the finest choral musicians on the Tech campus. Its members are principally all-state-level singers who have exten-

sive backgrounds and experience in ensemble singing. The chamber choir performs challenging literature with a special emphasis on Baroque and modern works. The chamber choir was recently featured with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, New Trinity Baroque Orchestra, Atlanta Opera, and Atlanta Baroque Orchestra. The chamber choir also recently won top prize in the inaugural Conference of Music and Architecture at the University of Texas-Austin. The chamber choir was recently featured at the College Music Society National Conference, and served as the chorus in the Atlanta Ballet production of Mozart's "Magic Flute."

Please mark your calendars for both of these special music offerings. Your attendance and appreciation will undoubtedly provide a ministry of hospitality to these guest singers.

Musically yours,
Thom



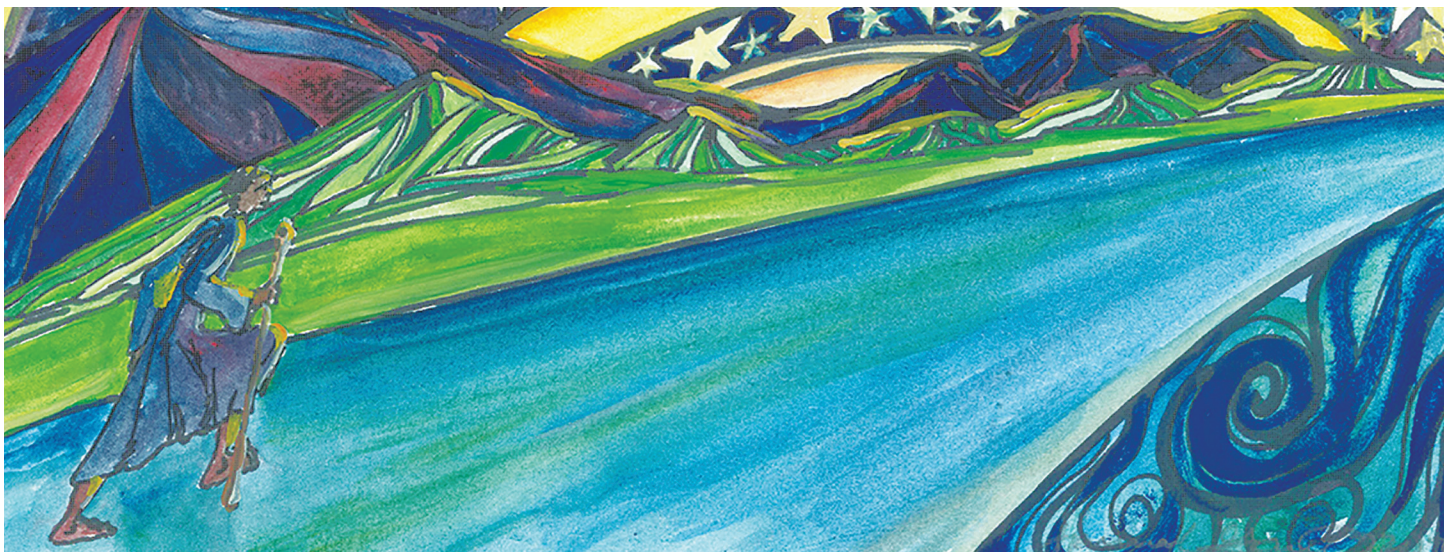
BY GARY CORNELL

Central's Mission Committee

goes outside the building in ministry to the community through a variety of events that will take place during the season of Lent (March 5 to April 17). We invite you to join us!



The CPC Mission Committee participates in legislative advocacy led by Presbyterians for a Better Georgia (PBG) during the Georgia General Assembly. PBG provides educational sessions to identify legislative initiatives that we oppose or support in an effort to improve public health, increase the supply of affordable housing, and serve the needs of the unhoused neighbors around us. The most important date to remember is March 11, when we will gather with Presbyterians for a Better Georgia in Tull Hall to be primed with talking points on the major bills coming up, then process across the street to meet with legislators to ask for their support. Registration has begun so please go to P4BG.org for more information.





The Sunday Morning Breakfast Ministry is a very successful program to provide a warm room, hospitality, and sustenance each Sunday to people experiencing homelessness in our neighborhood. This ministry usually reaches 75 to 100 people and ends in a time of community sharing and prayer. Different church groups and other interested hosts provide this service each Sunday. The Central congregation hosts one Sunday of each month, and during Lent we are responsible for hosting on Sunday, March 9. Please check the Central Weekly newsletter for the link to sign up to bring food and/or serve our guests on March 9. We welcome you to drop in for coffee and fellowship with our neighbors any Sunday.



The Bashor Men's 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 ministry is a joint project of Central and the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. The Mission Committee is seeking Central groups to prepare and serve dinner for 70 men on Wednesday, March 19. For more information or to sign up, please contact Chris Sciarrone at sciarrone.chris@gmail.com or 404-966-0380.



Be ready for first Sunday lunches that will provide insight into ministries of our church that are outside the building. During Lent we will host a presentation by Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty on April 6. Bobbie Paul, a Central Mission Committee member, is chair of the Board of GFADP. This year we are placing special emphasis on passage of HB123 by the Georgia General Assembly. This measure would finally end the practice of executing intellectually disabled persons for capital crimes. The U.S. Supreme Court has already ruled



that this practice is unconstitutional, and Georgia is the only state in the Union to persist in this practice. More informative first Sunday lunches will be scheduled for future months.



During Lent be on the lookout for an announcement about a work day to be scheduled for a small team of volunteers who will do some refurbishing and minor landscaping needed in the courtyard at Hope House. Located just two blocks from Central Church, Hope House provides one-of-a-kind supportive housing for up to 70 homeless men seeking to recover from addictions and/or hearing impairments.



Belonging to God

Sharing our Blessings



As we move toward Lent and Easter, Central members reflect on the meaning of Stewardship in their lives

BY MISSIE GRAWERT

Dear Central Presbyterian Family and Friends,

Years ago, I attended a presbytery officer training session hosted by North Decatur Presbyterian Church.

Each participant was asked to describe (1) three persons or experiences that helped shape his or her life of faith and (2) which truth about God has been most important to you. This seemed difficult to do on the spot, until I thought about my childhood church experiences and how that foundation formed key elements of my faith journey.

I was raised in the small historic town of Wethersfield, Connecticut, by two wonderful parents, a neighborhood of supporting families and friends, and a loving church community. From that little girl giggling in the choir and Christmas pageants to visiting local children's hospitals with my church friends,

one thing has always been central to my core—kindness and acceptance of every person as God teaches us all. I saw that embodied in the congregation of many colors, income levels, and abilities inherent in the minister who I grew up listening to, who performed his final sacrament of marriage at my wedding to Bruce and returned from retirement years later to perform the memorial and burial services for my parents. I will never forget the kindness in his heart as I turned my head and saw him lovingly walking through the historical cemetery together that cold, yet sunny winter morning, with my young daughter who bravely memorialized her loving grandfather in front of the congregation earlier that day.

As Bruce and I relocated many times during our 47 years of marriage, the churches we each grew up in during our formative years, and those church communities we joined during our relocations, formed what we were looking for in our church home and its



neighboring community.

We are all so blessed to be worshiping in the welcoming and loving family of Central Presbyterian Church. Bruce and I felt it when we first worshipped as visitors. We looked at each other and said, “I love this!” That spirit of a warm and welcoming family of friendship is expressed in so many ways, not only on Sundays, but also throughout the week by wonderful members who work diligently and harmoniously, using their gifts, times, and talents to serve the church community and beyond its bricks.

The willingness to serve the church and its surrounding community is evident. Many wonderful members generously contribute countless hours to our outreach projects, missions, programming, finances, Christian education, congregational life, care of our members, worship, sound, music, putting goals into action, equipping our members, and keeping our facilities operational, functional and lights on. While our tasks may not always be


easy, we are reminded by the lyrics of the hymn “Be Thou My Vision” that we have each other, and that God is always walking with us. God is watching over us and stands by our side and promises God’s presence in our everyday life.

May we always be truly grateful and show that gratitude with our giving. No matter where we are in life, we all have something to contribute. Let’s join to do great things for Central Presbyterian Church and our local community, not just by providing financial support each year, but also by confirming that the Lord is our vision and the Lord of our heart. We are called to participate in God’s vision for this community and the world. Let that guide us as we prayerfully consider giving our gifts of time, talent, and financial resources to the church’s established outreach programs, its long and storied legacy of social justice, a spirit of welcoming all, and keeping our eyes and hearts on whatever new things God may be leading us toward.

BY SALLY ASHE WOOD

I grew up at Central and for as long as I can remember, my parents ensured we had a crisp dollar bill to put in the offering plate. My brother and I went through phases of folding them in complex ways before putting them in the offering plate and Robbie even went through a period of marking his with a purple pen. As we got older and had more of our “own” money, it was expected that we would give some back.

Our parents believed in paying what they call “civic rent” whereby in appreciation of what you have you also work to share your time, talents, and resources to make the community better. Central is grounded in helping those around it and the world as a whole so it was a natural place to start giving. We started pledging and giving in what I would come to know as the



“I want to give back to the church because I have been shown by my family and the extended church community that it is the right thing to do because the church gives us so much and the loving people who work there deserve it.” Charlie

stewardship campaign.

Fast forward to my own children now growing up at Central. This past spring our two oldest, Izzy (16) and Charlie (14), stood up and affirmed the vows we took at their baptism with their confirmation vows. Just weeks later, I was ordained to the session and

took my own set of vows. I got an early start thinking about stewardship this year, having answered Shannon’s call to join the committee. I realized it was right around confirmation that my giving to Central had become more formalized into pledging.

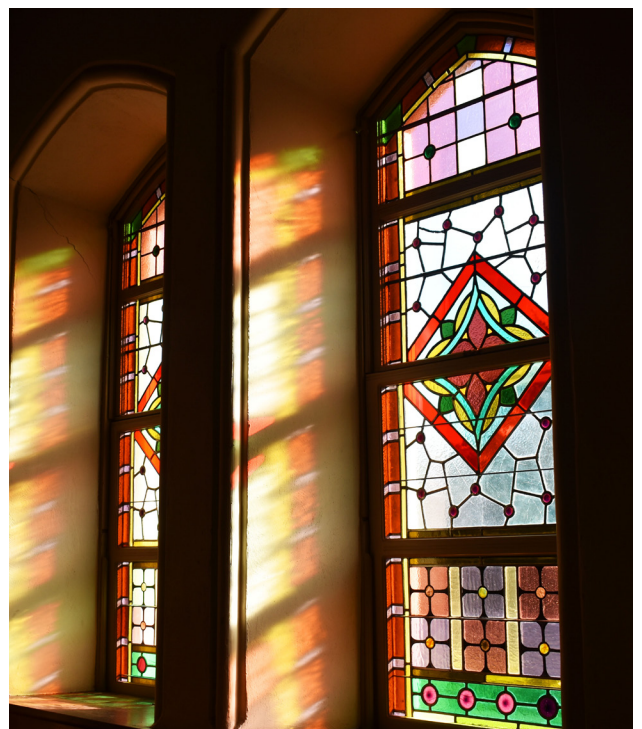
As a family, Scott and I talked with the kids about stewardship. Izzy and Charlie both were quick to commit to pledging part of their allowance. As they had become adults in the eyes of the church, it was important to them to participate. More surprising, but in a positive way, was James, our 9-year-old, stepping up to say he too was ready to pledge to Central.

The conversation made us proud and feeling like we were doing something right. Reflecting on giving, Charlie said, “It is the right thing to do because the church gives us so much, and the loving people who work there deserve it.” For Izzy, “It feels so good to contribute to a cause I believe in and a cause that will help a lot of people.” I am proud of our kids who have stepped up and joined in the family tradition of paying “civic rent” in their way.

With all the chaos in the world now, it feels more important to model for them how they can make a difference. We are proud they have chosen to carry on the tradition of making giving a family affair.

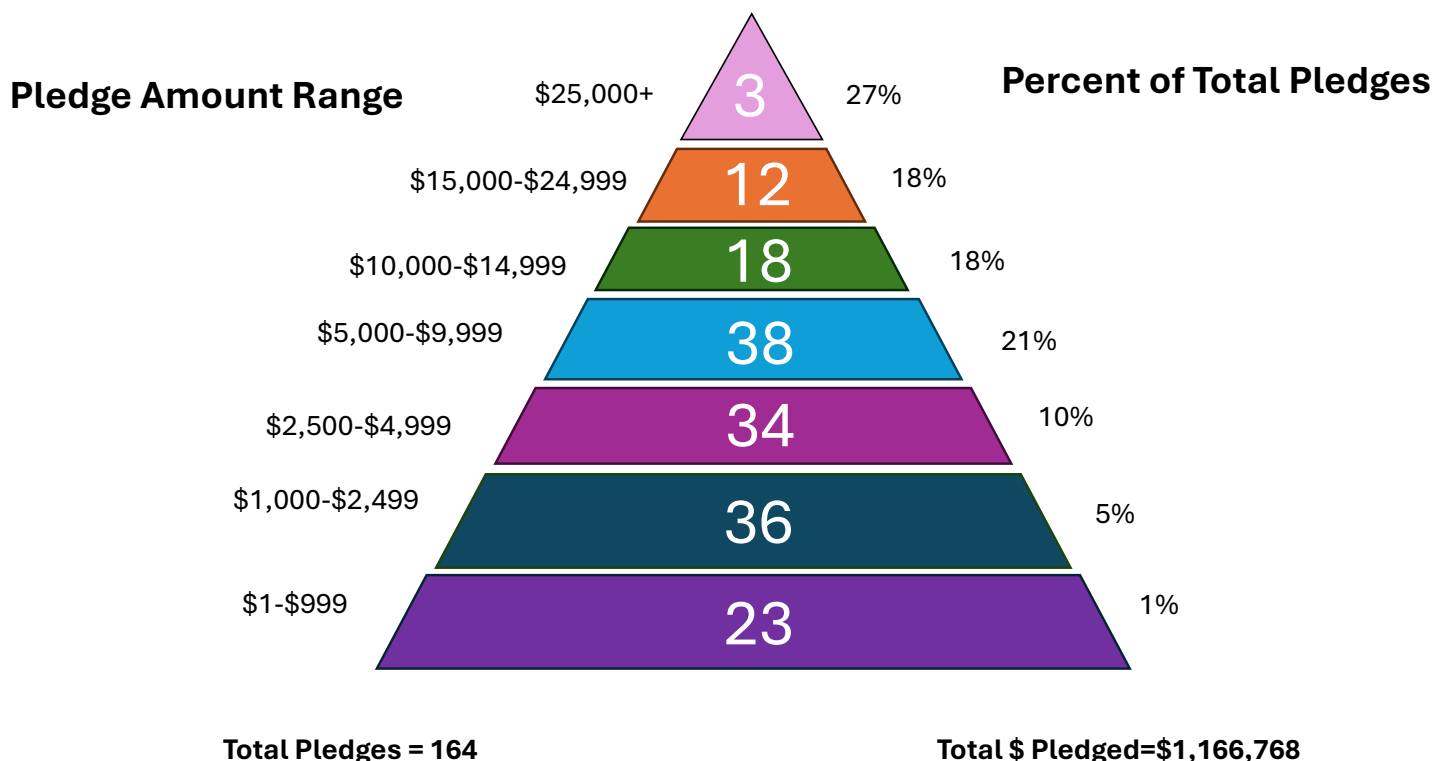


“Because it feels so good to contribute to a cause I believe in and a cause that will help a lot of people. I have a lot of privileges in my life, and so it feels right to give back in the ways that I can.” Izzy





Central Pyramid of Pledges 2025



BY KRISTIE JOHNS

As we step into 2025, we are reminded of the profound spiritual lesson in “The Power to Let Go.” Our financial reports reflect more than just numbers; they tell a story of faith, generosity, and trust in God’s provision. Over the past five years, our church has navigated seasons of abundance and challenge, always leaning on our shared commitment to mission and ministry.

In 2024, our community exceeded expectations, with total revenues reaching \$1,915,479—well above our budgeted goal. Benevolent giving, a testament to the faithful generosity of our congregation, surpassed projections, reinforcing our collective belief in God’s work through us. Even with increased expenses, we ended the year with a strong net revenue of \$185,914, a remarkable shift from our budgeted deficit.

Our 2025 Pyramid of Pledges highlights the breadth of our giving, with commitments from all levels of financial ability, emphasizing that every contribution—whether large or small—is a vital part of our shared ministry. Letting go of financial fear allows us to step forward in faith, trusting that God will continue to sustain and guide us in the year ahead.

As we embrace this theme, may we find strength in surrender, recognizing that true abundance comes not from holding tightly to what we have, but from releasing it in service to God’s greater plan.

Kristie Johns is Central’s Business Administrator. If you have questions about your pledge or giving, you may contact her at kjohns@cpcatlanta.org



**Financial Snapshot
December 31, 2024**

Revenues

2024 Total Revenues of \$1,915,479

\$198,979 *higher* than 2024 Budget of \$1,716,500



\$251,376 *higher* than 2023 Actual Revenues of \$1,664,103



2024 Benevolent Giving of \$1,352,787

\$131,785 *higher* than 2024 Budget of \$1,221,000



\$115,688 *higher* than 2023 Actual of \$1,237,099



Expenses

2024 Actual Expenses of \$1,729,564

\$7,623 *higher* than 2024 Budget of \$1,721,941



\$150,768 *higher* than 2023 Actual of \$1,578,796 (mostly due to not having a full time Senior Pastor the first six months of 2023 and not having associate pastor for two months of 2023).



Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit)

2024 Net Revenue of \$185,914 (Revenue — Expenses)

\$191,355 *higher* than 2024 budgeted loss of (\$5,441).



\$100,608 *higher* than 2023 actual income of \$85,306



For more information, please contact our Business Administrator, Kristie Johns at
kjohns@cpclatlanta.org



CENTRAL
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CHURCH

NEWS & NOTES

2025

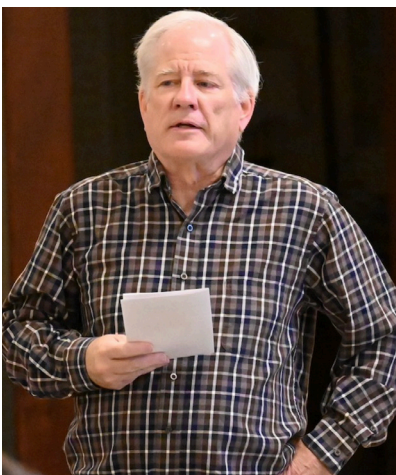
Central has had a busy start to the new year!

Multiple groups are using our campus to gather for meetings, hold rehearsals, and meet before mobilizing and walking across the street to meet with their legislators.

We have had groups using the sanctuary, Tull Hall, Rand Chapel, and other rooms throughout the building. We are grateful to have this opportunity.

Central has also been busy in our community. Here are a few highlights from January and February.

Rev. Shannon J. Kershner welcomed the Atlanta Downtown Neighborhood Association to Central this evening for their monthly meeting. This evening's meeting focuses on the topic of Divergent Services and features a dynamic panel from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Attendees include staff from the mayor's office, City Councilman Jason Dozier, and MARTA officials. Multiple members of Central's congregation are present as we show our love for the city and our dedication to our neighborhood.





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NEWS & NOTES

2025

Recipients of the Pollard and Covenant grants were received at a Congregational Lunch in February. The Pollard and Covenant grants were established to improve life for marginalized communities by creating relationships with local nonprofit organizations through financial contributions and in-person opportunities for service. Here is a list of the 2024 Civic Innovation Fellows:

Matt Scott,
Atlanta Community
Press Collective

Sy Moore, Street Angels

Maisie Thompson, The Aster Project

Monique Nunnally, Teach X

Keith Lewis, I'm A Father F1rst

Darrell Johnson,
Dream Builders of Atlanta

C.J. Jones,
Dream Builders of Atlanta

Dominique Nixon,
Pedal Pushers Cycling Club

Virginia Stanley, Sweet Hearts Inc.

Shakiethia Wheeler,
Southern Women
In Motion Foundation Inc.





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CHURCH

NEWS & NOTES

2025

Central staff took a few minutes in January to pop across Washington Street to the Capitol, where Central youth **Louisa Kirkland** was being honored in the Rotunda for being named a winner for the Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites Art Contest! Louisa's painting will be displayed along with other winners at the Georgia State Capitol during the 2025 legislative session! The 14-year-old enjoys painting in acrylics, and her winning painting depicts some of the state's beautiful cypress trees in a marsh. We're hoping to include this painting in an upcoming issue!



WE'RE SOCIAL!



Get your Central Swag



Visit our online store at [redbubble.com](https://www.redbubble.com) to get a variety of Central swag including T-shirts, tote bags, sweatshirts and more!



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CHURCH

NEWS & NOTES

2025

SAVE THE DATE!

2025 ALL CHURCH RETREAT AT MONTREAT!





201 Washington St. Atlanta, Ga. 30303
www.cpcatlanta.org