

# Jot & Tittle

A PUBLICATION OF CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

DECEMBER 2023 / JANUARY 2024 EDITION

We're entering into a very special time of year! And no, I'm not talking about Christmas – not yet, at least. I'm talking about *Advent*.

The season of Advent is meant to prepare us to celebrate the birth of Christ. Its meaning draws on the Latin word *adventus*, which means "arrival" or "coming." Starting on Sunday, December 3, we

will be getting ready for Christ's arrival with special candles,

Scripture, music, and messages.

The challenge in experiencing a meaningful Advent is that we're making so many preparations this time of year. In the midst of a busy season, how can we stay focused on the One who is at the **center** of it all?

That's exactly our theme this Advent: an invitation to spend time "in the center." "Central" is more than the name and location of our church – it's also the place where we can seek and find the God who loves us.

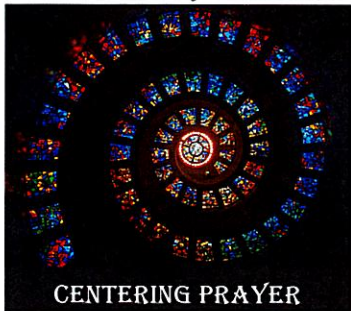
A good step toward the center is through worship on the Sundays of Advent: December 3, 10, 17, and 24. A new way to make space for Christ might be through a practice called "Centering Prayer," something Pastor Patrick and I will be facilitating via email and in-person sessions. There are lots of ways to put Jesus at the center of your Christmas preparations – whatever you choose to do, may it be something that prepares a way for you to celebrate the birth of Christ in a deeper way this Christmas Eve.

Much love,  
Pastor Mary



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CENTERING PRAYER





<b>Sunday, December 3</b>	<b>First Sunday in Advent</b> Sermon: <i>"In the Center: A Cry from the Center"</i> Rev. Dr. Mary Brown	<b>8:45 &amp; 10:55 am</b>
	<b>Advent Potluck- Fellowship Hall</b> (Equal Plates providing main entrée—please bring sides/desserts)	<b>12:00 - 1:30 pm</b>
	<b>Centering Prayer - Parlor</b> *****	<b>12:30 pm</b>
<b>Wednesday, December 6</b>	<b>Centering Prayer - Parlor</b> (Rev. Dr. Mary Brown and Rev. Patrick Neitzey) *****	<b>5:30 pm</b>
<b>Sunday, December 10</b>	<b>Second Sunday in Advent</b> Sermon: <i>"In the Center: Silence"</i> Rev. Dr. Mary Brown Chancel Choir and Orchestra present: <i>Magnificat in D</i> by Franz Schubert with <i>"There Shall a Star"</i> from <i>Christus</i> by Felix Mendelssohn	<b>8:45 &amp; 10:55 am</b>
	<b>Blood Drive - Fellowship Hall</b>	<b>8:00 am - 1:00 pm</b>
	<b>Centering Prayer - Parlor</b> (Rev. Dr. Mary Brown and Rev. Patrick Neitzey)	<b>12:30 pm</b>
	<b>Children and Youth Christmas Party</b> <b>Youth Arena (4th Floor)</b> *****	<b>5:00 pm</b>
<b>Wednesday, December 13</b>	<b>Centering Prayer - Parlor</b> (Rev. Dr. Mary Brown and Rev. Patrick Neitzey) *****	<b>5:30 pm</b>
<b>Saturday, December 16</b>	<b>UWF Holiday Brunch - Fellowship Hall</b> *****	<b>10:00 am - 11:30 am</b>
<b>Sunday, December 17</b>	<b>Third Sunday in Advent</b> Sermon: <i>"In the Center: Turn"</i> Rev. Dr. Mary Brown	<b>8:45 &amp; 10:55 am</b>
	<b>Centering Prayer - Parlor</b> (Rev. Dr. Mary Brown and Rev. Patrick Neitzey) *****	<b>12:30 pm</b>
<b>Tuesday, December 19</b>	<b>High School Upper Class and</b> <b>College Student Christmas Dinner</b> (Restaurant TBD) *****	<b>6:00 pm</b>
<b>Wednesday, December 20</b>	<b>Centering Prayer - Parlor</b> (Rev. Dr. Mary Brown and Rev. Patrick Neitzey)	<b>5:30 pm</b>
	<b>Caroling at East Campus, 315 Old Haw Creek Rd.</b> *****	<b>6:00 - 8:00 pm</b>

(Cont. on pg. 3)



**Thursday, December 21**

**Darkest Night/Blue Christmas  
Prayer Service -Chapel**

**6:00 pm**

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**Sunday, December 24**

**Fourth Sunday in Advent**

**8:45 am**

Sermon: *"In the Center: Ponder"* Rev. Dr. Mary Brown

**Children & Family Christmas Eve Service**

**10:55 am**

Sermon: *"In the Center: Stop and Ponder"* Rev. Dr. Mary Brown

Children's choir presents "Follow That Star!"

Karen Crutchfield, organ/piano

**Prelude - Music featuring the Brass Choir**

**5:00 pm**

**Service of Lessons and Carols**

featuring the Chancel Choir

**5:30 pm**

Sermon: *"In the Center: Stop"* Rev. Dr. Mary Brown

(Nursery available)

**Candlelight Communion**

featuring String Quartet

**8:00 and 11:00 pm**

Sermon: *"In the Center: Stop"* Rev. Dr. Mary Brown

(Nursery available at 8:00 pm Service)

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**Monday, December 25 - Friday, December 29**

**Church Office Closed**

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**Tuesday, January 2**

**Church Office Reopens**

**\*\*\* As a reminder, all 2023 gifts must be received or postmarked by December 31, 2023. \*\*\***



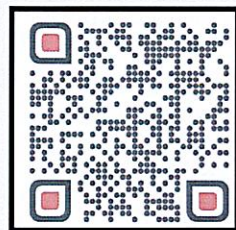
**Join Pastor Mary Brown, her family, Hopkins Chapel members  
and others from CUMC for a Hood Huggers Tour of Asheville on  
Saturday, December 2, 2023 at 10:00 am.**

The Hood Huggers tour is a 1½ hour driving tour in a bus or trolley around parts of Asheville that used to include thriving Black businesses and residential neighborhoods. Those neighborhoods have been moved, eliminated or encroached upon by urban renewal, freeways, hotels, redlining, tourism and downtown development. Our host, DeWayne Barton, (artist, community activist, founder of Hood Huggers Int'l, and Reparations Commission member), will share the history that led to the damage caused to Black communities. He will address the ways the City and County are working now to repair the harm caused then and now to our Black neighbors. The cost is \$45/person. Scholarships are available. Don't let this opportunity pass. Join us for this experience at Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce. For more information contact [CandSC@CentralUMC.org](mailto:CandSC@CentralUMC.org).

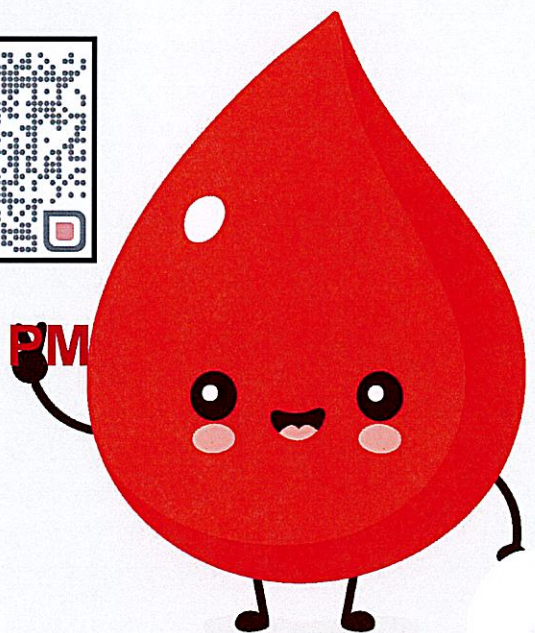
# BloodDrive

## Central United Methodist Church- Asheville

27 Church Street  
Asheville, NC 28801



**12/10/2023 | 08:00 AM–01:00 PM**



Central is hosting a blood drive in the Fellowship Hall on December 10 from 8:00 am—1:00 pm. Everyone 18 & over is eligible to donate, and 16 & 17 year olds may donate with parent/guardian consent. Sign up today using the QR code, or this link:  
<https://bit.ly/donatebloodCUMC>.

Appointments are strongly encouraged as these folks will have priority over ones who walk in. The Blood Connection is giving each donor \$40 worth in gift cards, plus they are donating \$10 per donor to Equal Plates. Sign up early, and tell your friends!

## ADVENT/CHRISTMAS MUSIC AT CENTRAL

This year, the Chancel Choir will be presenting their annual Advent offering, *Magnificat in D* by Franz Schubert with "There Shall a Star" from *Christus* by Felix Mendelssohn on December 10. The work will be accompanied by orchestra and organ and will feature soloists from the choir.

### Christmas Eve

8:45 am – Advent IV worship service

10:55 am – Children and Family Service. A child friendly Christmas Eve service. The Children's Choir will present a short musical, *Follow that Star* during the service

5:00 pm – Prelude to Lessons and Carols played by Central's Brass Choir

5:30 pm – Lessons and Carols sung by the Chancel Choir

8:00 and 11:00 pm – Candlelight Communion with string quartet



## 2023 Loaves and Fishes

Loaves and Fishes is a collaboration between Trinity Episcopal, Central Methodist and First Presbyterian Churches that offers members and community members the opportunity to support local non-profits and ministries, in honor of loved ones or in lieu of traditional holiday gifts.

This year we will honor 11 nonprofits and ministries with donations to support their good work in our Asheville communities!

An in-person event will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church, 60 Church Street on Sunday, December 3, 2023 from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Each agency will be present to share information regarding their work. You can choose to make your "order" at the December 3 event, or visit:

<https://fpcasheville.org/mission-partners/loaves-fishes-2023/>

to view our participating agencies information and make a donation online. The website will be available to receive orders through December 20, 2023.

Questions? [mission@fpcasheville.org](mailto:mission@fpcasheville.org)



## United Women in Faith

**Eve Circle** will hold their December 5 meeting at Ivy Road Café before it goes out of business. The lunch will start at 11:00 am and there will be a short meeting regarding gifts to local non-profits and support of the UWF luncheon on December 16.

The January meeting will be held January 9 (a week later than usual) at Brooks-Howell and will celebrate Nancy Stancil's 101<sup>st</sup> birthday. If Brooks-Howell happens to be in lockdown for health reasons, an alternative meeting site will be announced. For additional information contact [skleduc@prodigy.net](mailto:skleduc@prodigy.net).

**Deborah Circle** meets the second Tuesday of the month in a member's home at 10:00 am. Our next two meetings will be December 12 and January 9, 2024. In December, we will visit with a member who is unable to come to our meetings, and then enjoy a holiday lunch out.

We also plan to attend as a group, the annual United Women in Faith brunch on December 16. Our January 9 meeting will be a time of rejoicing in the blessings of the new year, and determining new opportunities for service to our community in the year to come. All are welcome. Questions can be directed to Susan Snell at: [ssnell123@bellsouth.net](mailto:ssnell123@bellsouth.net).

**Martha Circle** is busy with our plans for this fall and winter, looking forward to the UWF Christmas Brunch, and looking ahead to the new year! We sponsored a child from the Angel Tree Project this year, and will continue planning our service projects for next year in upcoming meetings. Let's not forget our December Dessert and Appetizer Fiesta (with ornament exchange) and January's Soup Supper! And, we've had a bit of crafty fun during our meetings as we learn about different types of prayer, making prayer beads and 'praying in color'!

Our meetings are the second Tuesday of each month, at Central's Library. We gather at 6:30 pm, enjoy a program or guest speaker, and share our joys and concerns with one another. We meet in the evening because many of our members are still working. Martha Circle takes a break during the months of June, July and August.

Our Circle is a group of women aged 30s – 60s and we would welcome any new members (of any age) who are interested in joining us for fellowship as we seek to hear God's word for our lives.

If you're interested in joining us, please contact one of the co-leaders, Laura Steil at: [laura.steil30@gmail.com](mailto:laura.steil30@gmail.com) or Kathy Leftwich at: [kathleencleftwich@gmail.com](mailto:kathleencleftwich@gmail.com) for more information. We hope to see you soon!

**Unnamed Women's Circle**—Our gatherings are times of laughter, sharing joys and areas of struggle, and simply enjoying the company of one another. If you are a young woman in your 20s, 30s and 40s looking for community, we hope you'll join us for a night out! We meet on the second Wednesday of every month at 6:00 pm for food and fellowship.

Our next gathering will be on Wednesday, December 13, at 6:00 pm, at Zambra - we are making a reservation to celebrate Christmas! Please email Ann if you plan to attend. We will also do an ornament exchange!

In January, we will gather on Wednesday the 10th at 6:00 pm, for a drink & app night! There is nursery childcare at the church for those who need it. For more information or to get involved, email Ann Owens at:

[aowens@centralumc.org](mailto:aowens@centralumc.org).



You're invited to our  
*churchwide*  
**ADVENT**  
*potluck*

Sunday  
12 - 1:30 pm

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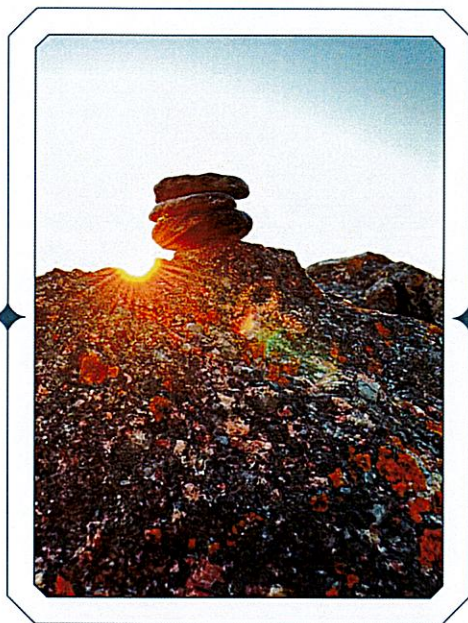
December  
Fellowship Hall

JOIN US!  


Bring a potluck side dish or dessert  
to welcome the Advent season!

This church-wide event is an  
opportunity for our church family to  
get to know one another on a  
deeper level while sharing a meal  
together.

We hope to see you there!

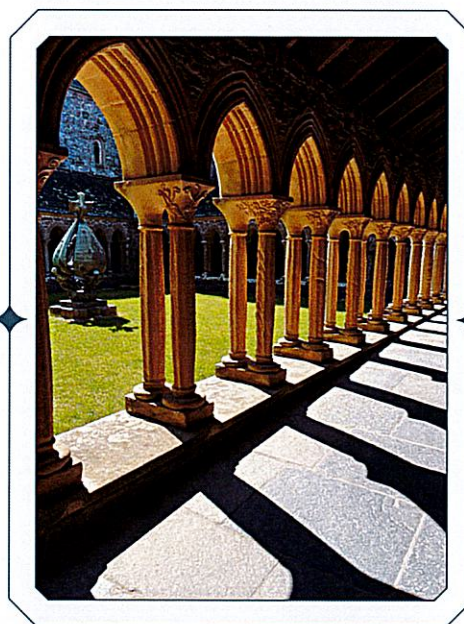


# Iona, Pilgrimage

The island of Iona, Scotland, has long been a place of refuge for pilgrims and wanderers alike. Known as a spiritual “thin place,” Iona welcomes you in with whispers and shouts.

## June 20– 29, 2024

The Missional Wisdom Foundation is sponsoring a pilgrimage to Iona, Scotland. Pilgrims to Iona will worship at Iona Abbey during morning and evening prayer, hike to points of natural and spiritual interest, and find restoration within the embrace of spiritual practice and intention.



[WWW.MISSIONALWISDOM.COM/PILGRIMAGE](http://WWW.MISSIONALWISDOM.COM/PILGRIMAGE)

For more information, please email Andrea Lingle  
[alingle@missionalwisdom.com](mailto:alingle@missionalwisdom.com).

## Congregational Care Council News



### Can we reach the "summit"?

Friends,

***"This journey is a long one  
and with a summit that is really high.  
We couldn't do it without one another  
to encourage, to cheer each other on."***

Shared with us in Pastor Mary's sermon on Grace and Perfection, 9/24/23

Good News! Central has many caring people ready to wrap their arms around you ***"to encourage you and cheer you on!"*** You do not have to handle ***"the journey"*** by yourself. With the holidays upon us, often the excitement can cover up the hard emotions of sadness, regret, disappointment, and despair.

*If you need support, please reach out to Pastor Lisa at:  
[lrettew@centralumc.org](mailto:lrettew@centralumc.org) to determine what might help  
you the most.*

Pastor Mary challenges us further:

***"...go with eyes, hearts, and minds set on the ideal  
of being made perfect in love.  
And when you doubt if you could ever make it there,  
may you have the faith to know that God can."***

As brothers and sisters in Christ, we ALL have the ability to offer care knowing that God is our "cure-giver." Be a part of ***"the ideal of being made perfect in love"*** through participation in a care ministry or by being intentional in connecting those who are in need of care to Pastor Lisa who will find a way to offer support: [lrettew@centralumc.org](mailto:lrettew@centralumc.org), 828-253-3316 ext. 1305

**Showcased at our October Ministry Fair were 8 ministries that embody how we care for, encourage, and cheer on one another. Take a look and see where you might serve.**

**Bereavement Care  
Circle of Prayer  
Prayer Shaw Ministry  
Recovery Care Resources**

**Child and Family Care  
Homebound Care  
Stephen Ministry  
Well-Being Community  
Resources**

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### **We Need You Now!**

#### **"On Call" Volunteer Opportunities of Caring:**

-To provide a meal when needed as part of our "Meal Train" ministry. *Please contact Pastor Ann or Pastor Lisa if you are interested or need more information.*

-To help with set up and clean up for funeral receptions when needed. *Please contact Cindy Oak if you are interested or need more information at: [swoclo@charter.net](mailto:swoclo@charter.net).*



In Memory of: *Dr. Jim and  
Joanna Sloan*

By: *Annie Robinson*

In Memory of: *Betty Snelson*

By: *Bruce Snelson*

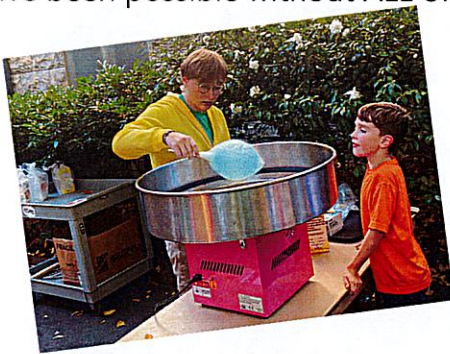
In Memory of: *Scott Gaston*

By: *Madeline Mosley*

## Fall Festival

On Sunday, October 29, we closed down Church St. for an afternoon of fun! The street was filled with games, excitement and LOTS of cotton candy and popcorn! Children and youth (maybe even some adults) took turns jumping in the bounce house and racing on the inflatable obstacle course. Our friends at Equal Plates Project sponsored the chili cookoff this year, bringing 3 house chilis for folks to enjoy, and helping choose a winner from the 13 *delicious* chilis that were submitted! We were excited to welcome back the talented caricature artist, Brian Vasilik, as well as the always-entertaining White Water Bluegrass Band. The costume contests were fun to participate in and watch! At all points of the night, children, youth, and adults of all ages could be seen enjoying the many festivities inside and out.

A special thank you is due to our phenomenal volunteer crew! Thank you to the youth who maintained games, inflatables, and spun cotton candy. Thank you to the youth and adults who made popcorn, grilled hotdogs, served chili, handed out t-shirts, helped decorate AND cleanup! This event would not have been possible without ALL of you!



**More pictures on pg. 10!**

## CALLING · SERVANT · LEADERS

Children's Sunday School is growing, and we are so thankful! To accommodate this growing ministry, we are seeking volunteers who are willing to lead and serve with our children.

Every week from 9:45-10:45 am we gather on the 300 hallway for fellowship and a story from our Godly Play curriculum. We are seeking folks who don't mind being silly and playing games—folks who enjoy spending time with children and are okay with mistakes. Children's Ministry is more than just teaching a Bible lesson, it is engaging in a child's life.

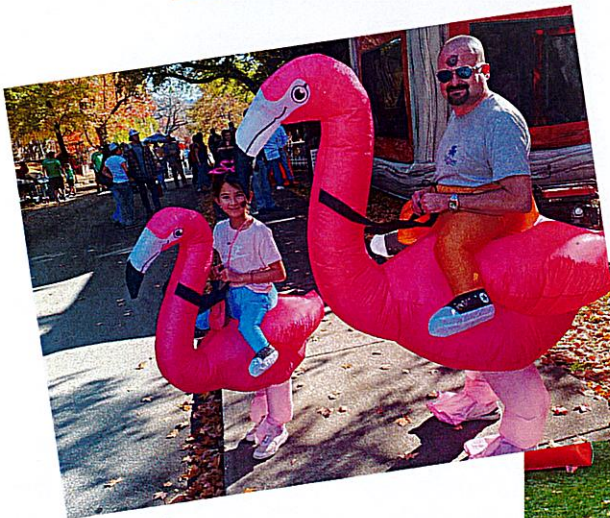
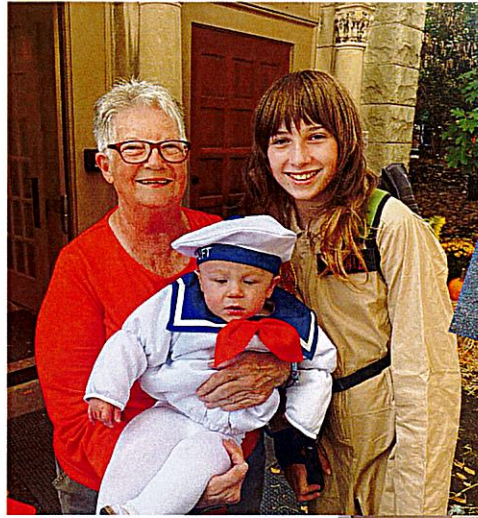
This is a great opportunity for members of our congregation to lean into the vows made at these children's baptisms and walk with them on their faith journey. If you have questions or would like to talk more about volunteering, please email Ann at: [aowens@centralmc.org](mailto:aowens@centralmc.org).



**Join us on Sunday, December 10, from 5:00 – 7:00 pm for food, fellowship, and games! The children and youth will gather for their own white elephant gift exchange. There are also rumors of cookie decorating and carol singing! You'll have to come to find out!**

**We will gather in the Central Youth Arena (4<sup>th</sup> floor) for a fun night celebrating the Christmas season. We hope all our children and youth families join us!**

# More pictures from the Fall Festival!





### **Special Announcement from C4C**

Please join me in celebrating the new lay leadership of our Congregations for Children Ministry, Kim Sink & Elizabeth Devereaux! Kim is freshly joining the group as our new project lead for Dorm Room Sponsors and Elizabeth has been on the team for several years as the project lead for our Reading Buddy Program. The two will work together to insure the continuation of fruitful ministry happening at Emma Elementary School and the surrounding community. Thank you, Elizabeth and Kim for the ways you show up and care for our community!

### **2023 Winter Coat Drive**

The C4C Winter Coat Drive has been a well-loved project of Central UMC for many years. This year, C4C partnered with the Growing in Faith Through Service (GIFTS) Sunday School class in overseeing the Coat Drive. Nineteen elementary students were identified as in need and were provided with warm coats, hats and gloves. Central donors signed up through Sign Up Genius, and all students were "adopted" within the first day. The coats were delivered to EES on Tuesday, October 31, so that the students could have

them before the cold weather arrived later that week. We received a few extra coats, which were donated to Montessori School students. C4C is looking forward to adding the Montessori School students to the Winter Coat Drive next year. It was gratifying to witness once again the generosity of Central's congregation.

Thank you so much for helping keep a child warm this winter!



Pictured above is Carol Rychly of the GIFTS Class, delivering the coats to EES. Each student received their coat, hat, and gloves in a colorful cloth laundry bag.



Susan Robinson - C4C, and Emma Durr & GIFTS Class  
Winter Coat Drive, Project Leads

Central's C4C committee would like to say a huge THANK YOU to everyone who contributed to the 2023 **Angel Tree** Gift Collection. We were able to generously help provide a memorable Christmas for 25 local foster children. Black Mountain Children's Home and their foster families are always extremely grateful to have help providing Christmas gifts for the children placed with them.

The car loads full of gifts collected at Central, every year, are loaded up and delivered to the hard-working Black Mountain team, who are always happy to deliver them on to foster families in time for Christmas. We will be loading up vehicles again, on Monday Dec. 4, to delivery the gifts from this year. Your participation is what makes this happen so successfully every year, and the C4C committee is thankful for all of your help.

— Jill Dudley, C4C Angel Tree Project Lead

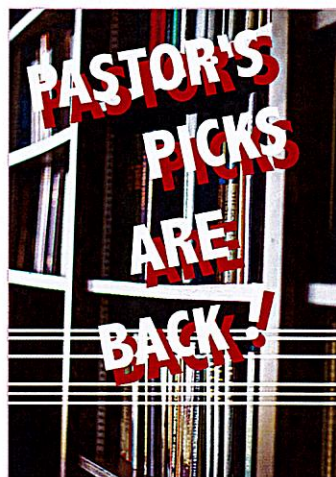
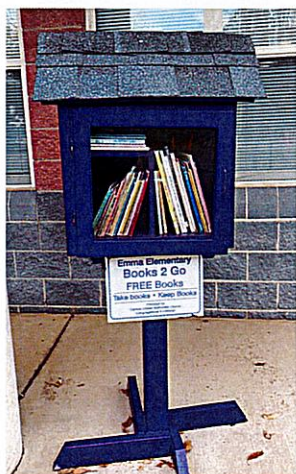


## 4 CONGREGATIONS CHILDREN UPDATES (Cont.)

**Reading Buddies** at Emma Elementary School is off to a great start. The students have been matched with their adult reading buddies, and have started meeting weekly for one on one tutoring in reading. We have eighteen reading buddies this year, many of them for the first time. Thank you to the Central UMC people that have come forward as volunteers! We appreciate your time and effort for these learners at Emma Elementary.

The book barn at Emma Elementary is very busy this year! Many books are being taken home, and we are always happy about that. The Book Barn is located in the front of the school close to the pick-up line at the end of the day which allows many people to look at it as they come and go into the school. Thank you for supporting the book barn with your donated books! We are able to get the books into the students' hands from the book barn as well as a new room inside the school, where students may select a donated book to take home as their own.

—Elizabeth Devereaux, C4C Reading Buddy and Book Barn Project Lead



Our Advent Theme for this season is a Journey to the Center — the Center of our Faith, the Center of our lives in community, the Center of the story that is the basis for our Christian Faith.

We have four book recommendations for this season:

For our Sunday School

Lesson we recommend: *Centering Prayer: Sitting Quietly in God's Presence Can Change Your Life* by Brian D. Russell. This book was used in our preparation of our Advent Centering Prayer Practice. Russell writes out of personal experience and in a way that is both informational and accessible.

Our personal reading is *The Cloud of Unknowing*, specifically Carmen Acevedo Butcher's translation. This text is a classic Christian Mysticism text and is the basis for Centering Prayer practices. This book has many chapters and can be used at any season as a book study, or to spark conversation, or to deepen personal centering practices.

Our Small Group Study recommendation is *Honest Advent*. Celebrated artist-storyteller Scott Erickson gives us 25 days of refreshingly new illustrations and meditations to rekindle the wonder of God-with-Us in this season, and is a great way to see the incarnation of this season in a new light.

Our final study is *Prepare the Way for the Lord: Advent and the Message of John the Baptist*. Rev. Adam Hamilton always provides very easy to teach and read series and his new book looks at an often overlooked, or brushed past part of the Advent Story, John the Baptist.

All of these books are great for personal or group study. If you need any help finding or have questions about these resources, reach out to Pastor Patrick or Pastor Mary.

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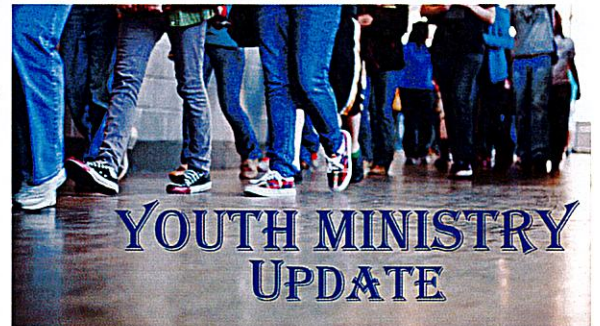


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Be on the lookout for book picks in January. Pastor Mary will be exploring the topic of loneliness and our picks will reflect what we are hearing from the pulpit. One book she is reading in preparation is from the Surgeon General, Vivek H Murthy M.D., *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*. We know this is a big topic and one that we as Christians are uniquely equipped to help with because loving community is what we are commanded to cultivate!

### Fall 2023 with Central Youth

This fall, Central Youth Ministry has been a whirlwind of fun and joy. We started this fall with a Creation-focused Fall Retreat and participated in many meaningful activities. This fall was packed with adventure, service, and worship. We can't wait to tell you all about it!



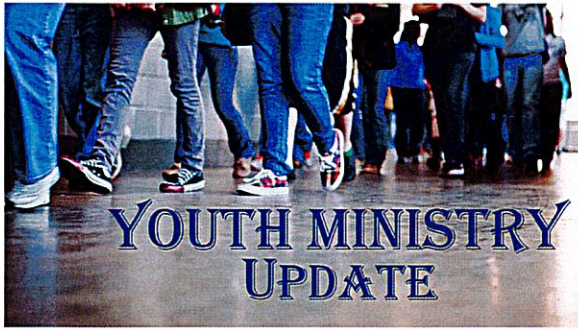
#### Fall Retreat: A Journey into God's Creation

Our Fall Retreat was nothing short of spectacular! We loaded up two vans on a Friday afternoon and climbed higher into the mountains to the Wilderness Trail property, where eleven of our youth set up and slept under the cover of oak trees. We played games at the property and then loaded up to hike Whitetop Mountain, the second highest elevation in Virginia. Overlooking the valley below, we experienced God's love in the form of Communion.

"It was really fun, and we had deep meaningful talks and it made me feel warm and fuzzy inside."

—Evan Carson





## Haywood Street Worship

One of the youth's traditions is to visit and be companions at Haywood Street Congregation. This fall, we worshipped with our sister congregation. Pastor Caroline was extremely proud of the youth's willingness to let down their own boundaries and engage fully in worship. Our youth sang, answered questions, and offered insight alongside our community neighbors.

"I wish our congregation was as interactive as Haywood's worship." -- Ford Daniels

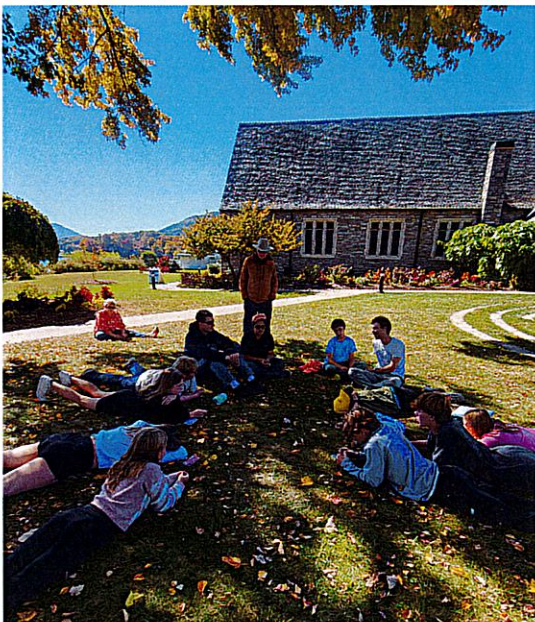


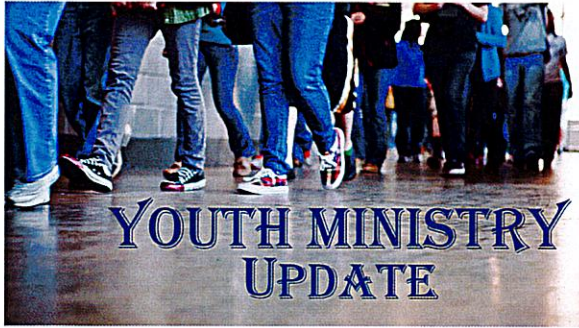
## Lake Junaluska

In late October, the confirmation class and some of the youth went to Lake Junaluska for the afternoon to learn about some Methodist history and engage in prayer practices. They were enthralled to learn that Susanna Wesley, the mother of John and Charles, was a major influence on Methodist spirituality.

"...so being United Methodist means we're connected to everyone in the conference, right?"

-- Reid Weathersbee

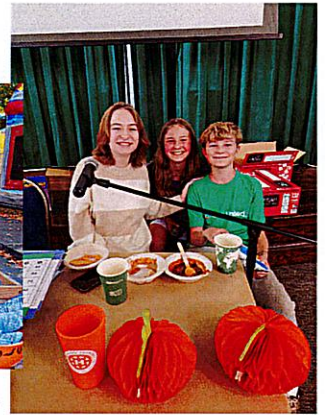




## Fall Festival

In October, hundreds of people filled Church Street looking for community and fun at our Fall Festival. We could not have pulled off such a successful event without our invaluable teen volunteers. They ran the game stations,

made sure the little ones were safe on the bounce houses, and filled the room with jokes at Bingo and the Costume Contest.



"I love the Fall Festival! It's just full of color and everyone is having a great time!"

-- Lily Everette

## Youth Group

In addition to all these big events, the youth were diligent in attending Sunday School, singing in choir, and participating in youth group. We have built a youth group covenant, made posters for the Kairos Prison Ministry, honored All Saints' Day, played games, and one Sunday, we even built a blanket fort!





Ellen Benson Dubberly - Children's Ministries Global  
Ministries Missionary Serving in El Salvador  
End of Year Update (November 21, 2023)  
Advance #3021818edubberly@umcmmission.org

***Each of the images above tells a story of gratitude*** – something for which I give thanks to God. The first image of two girls named Valentina and Sofia is a story of a sweet Sunday School friendship. If you ever get the opportunity to meet either Valentina or Sofia, you will surely not forget them. Each is full of life and excitement for experiencing it to the fullest. This photo was captured one Sunday morning as the two friends played out the story of Philip and the Ethiopian Royal Official found in the eighth chapter of Acts. Philip followed the nudging of the Holy Spirit and found himself in the company of a man seeking to understand God's word in Isaiah. The Ethiopian man listened as Philip explained that the passage he was reading was about Jesus. As his heart had already been prepared by the Holy Spirit, the man asked Philip to baptize him.

I will be completely honest with you and let you know that I struggle almost every Sunday morning to rally after a week of English classes Monday through Friday, 7am until 5pm at School and then Bible Study Fellowship on from 5:45 to 11:00 Saturday mornings. But the eager spiritual hunger of children like these two precious girls gives me the strength to step beyond my comfort and wants to serve Jesus, who multiplies my feeble attempts and makes it into something eternally beautiful – like a living sacrifice...that has nothing to do with who I am or the effort of which I put in....but EVERYTHING to do with who HE is and the ministries that He invites us in which to take part.

***The second photo is also from Sunday School at La Providencia Methodist Church in Ahuachapan, El Salvador.*** Each Sunday morning, children gather and sing praise to God as they give thanks for the many blessings provided by a faithful heavenly father in the completed week. The young girl in the forefront of the photo is eight years old. She began attending Sunday School in this past year and has very recently started attending Sunday afternoon worship services sitting with the Pastor and his wife. Something in her is hungry to know more and the Holy Spirit is nudging her to come and see.

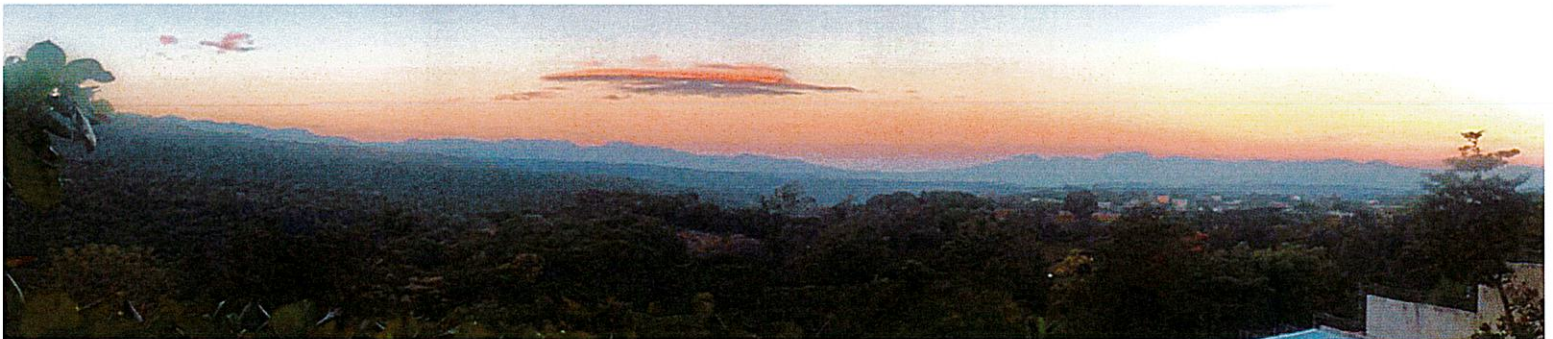
***Also in the second photo is a girl in a yellow shirt*** proudly wearing a crown on her head that she made during the week as a United Methodist Volunteers in Mission team with members from Virginia and Costa Rica led Bible School classes for the children in the community of La Providencia. The little girl, Emily is the youngest of three sisters. She faithfully attends Sunday School each Sunday morning, but rarely allows herself a chance to get too far removed from her sisters. On this Sunday, there was an obvious difference in Emily's confidence as she participated fully in the activities of her age-group. This is a beautiful example of how the missions teams support the ongoing ministries of the local Methodist Churches. I believe her confidence was a direct result of the outpouring of God's love that she received from the members of the missions team.

***The third photo represents faithful prayers of children at La Gloria Methodist Church*** as they celebrate Children's Day in the month of October. Very few children in El Salvador have a care-free childhood and that is one reason that Children's Ministries are so very important to give children a space of respite to forget about some of the problems and home and to learn about a God who is always with them even in the darkest moments.

***As we approach the final month of the year 2023, I give thanks for you and your support of these ministries.*** Because of your faithful support to my GBGM Missionary Support Advance, I can walk daily in my faith, sharing the good news of a radical man who turned religion upside down and proclaimed eternal life as a gift (*not something that must be earned through perfect living*) to all those who come to Him and receive Him as the Son of God and Messiah. I look forward to continued partnership in ministry with you in 2024 and many more testimonies of God's goodness in the lives of young people in El Salvador, Central America.

Your faithful servant,

*Ellyn Dubberly*





## Central's Annual Ministry Fair

The October fair drew a large attendance to visit Central's many and diverse displays. Its purpose was to educate attendees and invite visitors to participate in a ministry wherever one found interest. The Reconciling Ministry Group presented its mission of advocating for the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in the United Methodist Church, to promote Central's mission partnership with the Moheto First United Methodist Church in Kenya, and to raise funds for the Moheto High School Girls Scholarships.



In fortunate timing, the congregation met Kenyan friends being hosted by Central the week of the Ministry Fair. Happy returnees, Rev. Kennedy Mwita, Deaconess Leah Wandera, her husband, Rev. Peter Karanja, and infant Esther, enjoyed browsing numerous displays. The beautifully made Kenyan backpacks and fabrics available for donations to the girls' scholarship project contributed to the display's success.

## Reconciling Ministry Network (RMN) Convocation



International Panelists

A RMN Convocation has not happened since 2019, so when more than three hundred intergenerational and international laity and clergy met at the First United Methodist Church in Charlotte, the collective spirit generated infectious joy, excitement, reunions, the powerful sacred worship, and workshops for LGBTQ+ ministries. The Reconciling Ministry Network is an international grassroots justice-seeking movement among United Methodist congregations, groups, and individuals, to advocate for the inclusion of ALL people in United Methodism. RMN affiliated congregations and members state that commitment publicly and participate in its mission.

Central UMC attendees witnessed the congregation's eruption to rejoice when the United Methodist Church's first elected gay and married Bishops, Karen Oliveto (2019 election) and Cedrick Bridgeforth (2022 election) when they were introduced and addressed the body. The gathered appreciated the participation of four ethnically and gender diverse UMC Bishops in the Convocation. Bishop Ken Carter, on behalf of the Western North Carolina Conference that includes Central, welcomed the Convocation, and spoke with unequivocal support for the full participation of LGBTQ+ people in this denomination. He stated the importance of their role in advancing the UMC in truth-bearing and justice in the life of congregations and public witness.

## RMG's monthly gatherings and news

Year around, RMG meetings are open to visitors and want-to-be members. It happens the first Sunday of each month at 12:15 P.M. Donations for a pot-luck lunch starts the social time, then it turns to activity updates and plan-making. Find us at the Fellowship Hall level. Table service and drinks are provided. First time visitors needn't contribute to the meal, just show up! For inquiries and to receive RMG's monthly e-mailed **Update** news, contact Mary Z. Longknight at: [mzlongstreth@gmail.com](mailto:mzlongstreth@gmail.com).

(Cont. on pg. 20)



(Cont. from pg. 19)

## Supporting RMG in 2024

The Reconciling Ministry Group is currently identifying mission activities to serve the congregation and express Central's witness of "Everyone Without Exception" in the public sphere next year. Suggestions to share are invited! To encourage RMGs forward-going work, financial contributions need to be designated.

For cash, add a note. On a check, use the Memo line. Each must specify to the RMGroup and/or the Moheto Girls Scholarship Fund. These can be placed in the offering plate or checks mailed to Central United Methodist Church, 27 Church Street, Asheville, NC 28801.

At the November 12, 2023, Administrative Board meeting, approval was granted for Central to enroll in the Western North Carolina annual conference program called The Green Church Initiative. GCI was written as a way to encourage churches to practice sustainability and care for God's creation. Different actions are suggested in the areas of church worship, discipleship, stewardship, evangelism and missions. Our church has already been active in following good practices, and we hope to improve even more with this program. Caring for creation means caring for everyone, without exception, especially helping those who are not always able to help themselves. In this we are following Jesus' example of loving all that God has made.



-From Central's Creation Care Committee

## Elephants in Tennessee??

Do you know that there are elephants living in Tennessee? Central UMC member Vicki Leeds will present a program about **The Elephant Sanctuary**, which spans over more than 3,060 acres in Hohenwald, Tennessee. Vicki has been a volunteer at The Sanctuary and will tell of elephant family interactions, their griefs and joys, and their compassion in life spans of 50-70 years. Her presentation will focus on how the elephants are cared for as part of God's creation by compassionate caregivers.

Since 1995, The Sanctuary has provided refuge for 32 elephants who were retired from zoos and circuses. There are currently 11 elephant residents with room for more. Vicki, with the help of her sister Karen, will have prizes for elephant trivia questions answered correctly, as well as homemade elephant cookies! Come and learn about The Elephant Sanctuary on Sunday, January 21, 2024, in the church library, at 12:30 pm.

— Sponsored by Central UMC Creation Care Committee.



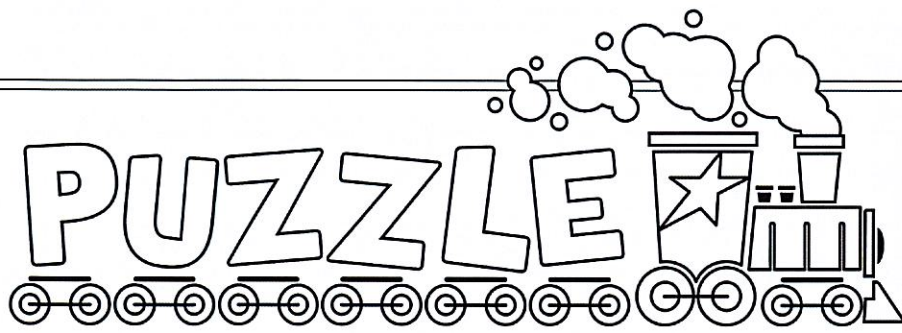
Flora with pumpkin



Billie



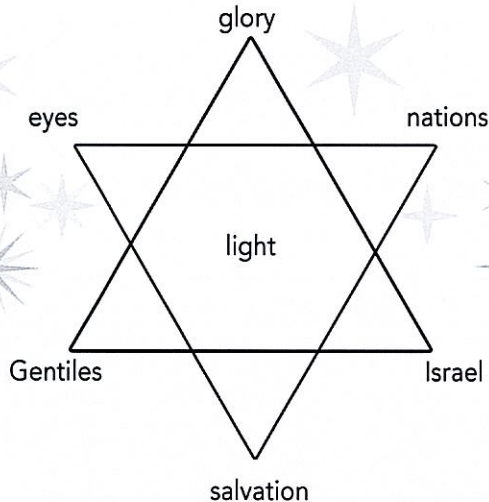
Artie exploring habitat first day



# SIMEON'S SIGHT

When Joseph and Mary brought baby Jesus to the temple, they heard a special prophecy from Simeon.

Directions: Using the star key, write the words in the correct spaces to complete Luke 2:30-32, NIV.



"For my \_\_\_\_\_ have seen your \_\_\_\_\_, which you have prepared  
in the sight of all \_\_\_\_\_: a \_\_\_\_\_ for revelation to the  
\_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_ of your people \_\_\_\_\_."

Luke 2:30-32, NIV

Answers: eyes, salvation, nations, light, Gentiles, glory, Israel

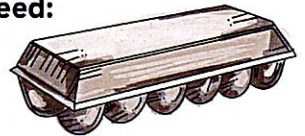
JUST FOR KIDS



Geodes look plain on the outside but contain beautiful crystals. Create these "rocks" to show how God makes us new on the inside.

## What you need:

- Clean cardboard egg carton
- Scissors (and adult help)
- Epsom salt
- Plastic zippered bags (one per color of dye)
- Food coloring
- Glue
- Paintbrush



## What you do:

1. Cut out the tops and bottoms of all the egg compartments so you can make 6 ball shapes.
2. In each bag, put 3 tablespoons of Epsom salt and a drop or two of food coloring. Seal and shake to mix.
3. With the paintbrush, spread glue inside two egg-carton halves. Sprinkle a spoonful of Epsom salt into those halves. Then close and shake.
4. Open your homemade geode and shake out excess salt.
5. Optional: Preserve the crystals with a coat of clear-drying glue.



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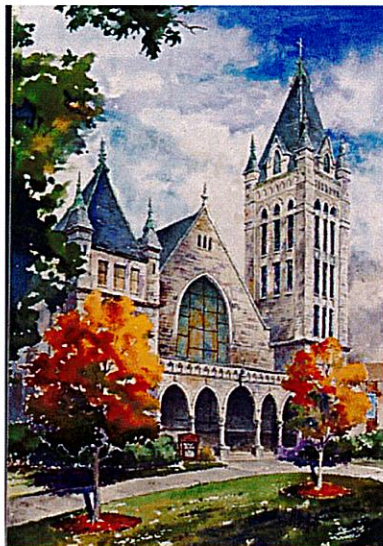
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The church office will be closed  
Monday, December 25—Friday,  
December 29, and Monday,  
January 1 and will reopen  
Tuesday, January 2, 2024.

**Central.**United.