# Central News

Aug 2021 Vol. 29, No. 11


## From Claudia

Albert Camus once wrote, “In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer.” We are certainly looking back on a winter that was different than all the winters that came before it. Sometimes it seems rather unreal. Sometimes we need to check in with one another just to be sure that we haven’t been mistaken in our memories.

As we enter August, summer does seem to be invincible. Even in the midst of all the virus news in the world – of variants, travel openings, closings and relaxing and reinstating of restrictions – there is much uncertainty. And yet even in the midst of all this, summer seems invincible.

Camus went on, “And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there’s something stronger – something better, pushing right back.” The world has pushed against us all. But, we have pushed back.

We have indeed learned to dig deep into wells of resilience and strength that most of us might not have known that we had. We have learned to stand firm in the midst of all that swirls around us. Who knew that we could do that? Many of us never dreamed that was within us. But we did it. We did it together.

Kent Nerburn; an author, sculptor, theologian, and educator; reminds us to “Remember to be gentle with yourself and others. We are all children of chance and none can say why some fields will blossom while others lay brown beneath the August sun. Care for those around you. Look past your differences. Their dreams are no less than yours, their choices no more easily made. And give, give in any way you can, of whatever you possess. To give is to love. To withhold is to wither. Care less for your harvest than for how it is shared and your life will have meaning and your heart will have peace.”

It is so inspiring to watch how many of you are so gentle with one another throughout all that we have been through. There is not only resilience, but also strength in our dreams and our experiences when shared with one another. To give is indeed a sign of love. Tending the harvest that is made richer and deeper because we do so together is an immense blessing.

May our lives continue to have great meaning that is shared with others. And, may our hearts have the peace that comes from living lives that reflect God’s love for all humanity! Ourselves included.

In love and appreciation for each one of you! - Claudia

## AUG EVENTS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Children's Stories with Judy | 9 am |
| | Summer Bible Study | 9 am |
| | Worship | 10 am |
| | Children's Summer Program | 10 am |
| | West Lawn Gathering | 11 am |
| 8 | Children's Stories with Judy | 9 am |
| | Summer Bible Study | 9 am |
| | Worship | 10 am |
| | Children's Summer Program | 10 am |
| 12 | Rebecca's Book Group | 12:30 pm |
| | Food for Thought Book Group | 7 pm |
| 15 | Children's Stories with Judy | 9 am |
| | Summer Bible Study | 9 am |
| | Worship | 10 am |
| | Children's Summer Program | 10 am |
| | Confirmation Orientation | 11:15 am |
| | Church Directory Updates Due | 4 pm |
| 19 | Caring & Sharing Outing | 6 pm |
| 22 | Children's Stories with Judy | 9 am |
| | Summer Bible Study | 9 am |
| | Worship | 10 am |
| | Children's Summer Program | 10 am |
| | Lunch at Gregg's | 11:15 am |
| | Parents' Social | 6 pm |
| 29 | Children's Stories with Judy | 9 am |
| | Summer Bible Study | 9 am |
| | Worship | 10 am |
| | Children's Summer Program | 10 am |

## Mission Moment: Mother-Child Reunification

Amos House needs Central’s help restocking the kitchen and pantry of its Mother-Child Reunification Program house.

A couple of months ago, there was a fire in the kitchen. All of the residents were safe, and the damage was relatively contained, but the entire kitchen, pantry space, and children’s playroom on the floor below were ruined. Amos House has just completed building a beautiful new kitchen facility with appliances and plenty of storage. It is now asking for assistance stocking the kitchen with new housewares.

The Mother-Child Reunification kitchen wish list is on Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/PUKYSYAR5JIZ?ref_=wl_share

The Mother-Child Reunification Program offers family reunification, advocacy, support, and housing to women who have lost custody of their children. The program addresses the many issues that cause instability in families, while providing a healthy, structured environment for mothers and children to begin the process of building a stable future. Amos House supports residents through 24-hour staffing and continual structured activities.

Please consider making a donation!

*Photo: Amos House*

**JOIN US FOR SUNDAY WORSHIP AT 10 AM!**

## Seeking a Church Home?

If you are looking for a church – or know someone who is – we would love to talk with you about it at our Inquirers' Meeting. It's very informal. You'll meet with our senior minister, Rebecca Spencer, and others like you who think Central may be the right church home. No commitment necessary. To join us, fill out a pew card during Sunday Worship or call the Church Office at 401-331-1960, and Rebecca will get in touch.

**Inquirers' Meeting**
Tuesday, October 26, 7 pm

**Faith Exploration**
Wednesday, November 3, 7 pm

**New Member Sunday**
Sunday, November 7, 10:30 am

# The Deacons' Bench

During the pandemic, I got into the habit of watching the brief service of prayer offered from the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., each weekday morning on YouTube.

Often the Episcopal priest would begin with this collect (short prayer) from "The Book of Common Prayer":

> *Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

As I looked out my window at the lightening sky each morning, I thought about what it meant to be brought "in safety to this new day" during a pandemic. It seemed an utterly undeserved and overwhelming blessing that my family, friends, and I had survived another day without being felled by the coronavirus.

But the phrase "fall into sin" is the one that kept sticking in my mind. Does sin show up like an unavoidable puddle in the middle of a narrow sidewalk, deeper than expected? Or do we fall into sin as we would fall exhausted into bed after an especially taxing day? Or do we slip bit by bit into bad habits – not loving our neighbor as ourselves – and suddenly realize that we have somehow gotten very far down a road we do not wish to tread?

Ah, but then the next morning I was brought in safety to a new day, given a new chance to work at the fulfilling of God's purpose. - Gretchen Yealy

**West Lawn Gatherings**
We're not quite ready to reinstate our traditional Coffee Hour, but this summer we hope you'll join us on the West Lawn after Worship for some tasty frozen goodies and good conversation. **Sundays, Aug. 1 and Sep. 5, after Worship**

**Church Directory Update**
It's time to update your contact information for the 2021/22 Church Directory. Please send any changes or corrections to your name, address, email, and home or cell phone numbers to Antonia Greco, church administrator, at antonia@centralchurch.us or 401-648-0780 immediately. **The deadline is Thursday, Aug. 15.**

**Clothing for Camp Street Ministries**
The Clothing Closet at Camp Street Ministries remains closed until further notice. So please do not leave your donations in the box in Chapel Hall. Instead, we suggest taking your used clothing, bed linens, etc. to Savers, which supports Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Rhode Island. (FYI, Camp Street's food pantry remains open.)

**One Egg Haiti Update**
Last Easter, the church school once again led Central's fundraising for One Egg Haiti. The children designed colorful and informative posters and spoke about the organization in church. Ultimately, we contributed $505, which all goes to provide Haitian school children with much needed protein: one egg every day.

# General Synod 33

Every two years, the United Church of Christ (UCC) gathers as a body to elect officers, pass necessary business, and consider resolutions thoughtfully presented by member conferences, churches, and individuals. The 33rd General Synod – "Rooted in Love," which took its Biblical theme from Psalm One, would have been held in Kansas City, had there not been a pandemic. As it was, the 2,755 registered delegates and guests met virtually for eight days from July 11 to 18 – often for six hours per day.

As one of 90 delegates from the Southern New England Conference (the largest delegation at Synod!), I can report that virtual sessions can still hold excitement, although it was impossible not to miss the chance to sample the food and sights of Kansas City or to interact in person with fellow delegates and attendees. A sermon by The Rev. Traci Blackmon, UCC associate general minister for justice and local church ministries, was particularly moving, as were the keynote addresses by The Rev. Adam Russell Taylor of Sojourners and Valarie Kaur – who spoke on "Revolutionary Love."

Seven "Resolutions of Witness" were presented at and passed by the plenary sessions. I was on the committee that reviewed and presented the Resolution to Change the Cash Bail Bond System to Eliminate the Racial and Social Injustices Inherent in the Present Systems. Others included A Resolution to Ban Conversion Therapy and "Who Will Stand for the Trees." And, two engendered a great deal of debate – A Resolution to End 128 Years of War Between the USA and the Hawaiian Kingdom and Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel – passing by narrow margins.

All resolutions, sermons, and keynote speeches can be found on the UCC website (www.ucc.org) under "General Synod 33." If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. And, mark you calendars: The next General Synod is scheduled to take place in Indianapolis in 2023.

- Frances Munro

## In Memoriam

Our prayers and sympathy are with the family and friends of Twyler Boyce … Alvin J. Fischer, Jr., Staci Fischer's father … Ilse Kramer, Central's Poet Laureate … Sara Reichley … and Lorraine Weinmann.
*Requiescat in pace*

# Church School News

This summer, church school has explored – in person! – life in Jesus' time. The children have learned about houses, synagogues, and the Temple – and the work needed to obtain the necessities of life. They started building a Bible-time village, wove a small piece of blanket from yarn, made oil lamps and jars from clay, learned about Hebrew, and made scrolls like those containing Hebrew scripture. They've learned how children lived in Jesus' time, including their games and activities.

In August, as the children continue building the Bible-time village, they will explore the professions of fishermen, shepherds, and others. They'll make prayer shawls, mezuzas, and other religious items – as well as tabulae and papyrus to learn about writing in Jesus' time. We'll also explore foods of the period and even sample some.

During virtual church school, children have heard stories about God. We've discussed God's different attributes and thought of metaphors we might use to describe God now. In August, we'll have stories, such as the Parable of the Good Samaritan, about neighbors. We'll talk about how God wants us to love others, what this means, and how difficult it can be. We'll brainstorm ideas to help us love others, as God wants us to.

Also in August, I'll start preparing for the upcoming church school year, putting together Children's Time messages for Sunday Worship – and organizing, cleaning, and replenishing supplies needed for the year. In addition, our sexton, Joe McNamara, will give the classrooms a fresh coat of paint. But we're missing one critical element: teachers.

Please prayerfully consider becoming one of Central's church school teachers. We are seeking kind and caring individuals of good humor who have the ability to learn and grow – and the desire to positively impact children's lives. This year, church school will be divided into fall, winter, and spring sessions. Teachers can sign up to teach one, two, or all three sessions. If you are interested or would like to learn more, please email me at judy@centralchurch.us.

Peace and blessings, Judy

# In The Gallery

There's a real benefit to being adjacent to the reimagined Chapel Hall – because the Gallery is getting a makeover too. Once completed, it will be one of the premier art exhibition sites in Providence.

The rejuvenated space will feature comforting lines and tones and additional natural lighting. This will enhance the Gallery Committee's ability to attract the region's finest individual artists as well as groups seeking to exhibit their works. In turn, the renovated Gallery will encourage greater contact between Central Congressional Church and the community at large.

However, with construction beginning this summer, it will be some time before Central is able to host live art exhibitions. So the Gallery Committee is working to present digital art exhibitions on the church website. The Virtual Gallery will promote the artist, showcase individual works, and provide a link to his or her website. It will also archive past shows, solicit artists for future exhibitions, and ultimately, bring new viewers to the Central website.

## SAVE THE DATE

September 12 • 10:30 am

**Gathering Sunday**

We can't wait to see you!

# CCC Youth

This August, Central's middle school and high school youth will start revving up, so they can start the year strong.

First up: **Confirmation**. Potential confirmands and their parents are invited to learn about the 2021/22 program: expectations, class structure, topics, the role of deacon mentors, and more. They'll chat, answer any questions, get to know each other better – and may even play a game or two. While most confirmation youth are in the ninth grade, any high schooler who has not been confirmed is welcome. The meeting is Sunday, Aug. 15, at 11:15 am, in the Fireplace Room or on the West Lawn, depending on the weather.

**NEOS and WORD**: Central's youth groups will focus on mission work. During the weeks of Aug. 8 and Aug. 15, they'll spend one day each week doing a mission activity outside of the church. Then, they'll get to work here at Central, helping paint the church school classrooms. Firm dates and times are still to come.

Then, on Sunday, Aug. 22, at 6 pm, Central's Youth Minister Judy Martowska will host **Parents' Social,** a get-together for the parents of middle- and high-school youth. Parents will learn about CCC Youth groups and hear what NEOS and WORD have in store for their children during 2021/22 – while sharing insights, questions, concerns … and good fellowship.

### Summer Bible Study

We will continue our study of Leviticus and Numbers, exploring the journey of God's people from the wilderness and into the Promised Land – with a different topic each week: Disobedience and Forgiveness, Approaching God in Purity, Sanctification and the Holiness of God, Preparations to Leave Sinai and Hit the Road, and On the Plains of Moab. **Sundays, Aug. 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29, 9 am, in the Fireplace Room**

### Rebecca's Book Group

This month, we have a great summer read: "The Agitators" by Dorothy Wickenden. It's a riveting history of abolition and women's rights, told through stories of three friends – Harriet Tubman, Frances Seward, and Martha Coffin Wright – before, during and after the Civil War. **Thursday, Aug. 12, 12:30 pm, via Zoom.** Contact Rebecca for an invitation.

### Food For Thought Book Group

Join us for a lively discussion of "Deacon King Kong," by James McBride. NPR describes it as "a feverish love letter to New York City, people and writing." **Thursday, Aug. 12, 7 pm, via Zoom.** Contact Claudia for an invitation.

### Confirmation Orientation

Potential confirmands and parents are invited to learn about the 2021/22 confirmation program. **Sunday, Aug. 15, 11:15 am, in the Fireplace Room or on the West Lawn**, depending on weather.

### Caring & Sharing Outing

Our ice cream outing to Eskimo King (29 Market St., Swansea) has been rescheduled. But we'll still meet at the picnic tables right outside for good conversation, ice cream (350 flavors!), and more. **Thursday, Aug. 19, 6 pm**

### Parents' Social

Learn what's coming up this year in NEOS and WORD, while enjoying a little adult fellowship. **Sunday, Aug. 22, 6 pm**

### Lunch at Gregg's

This month's lunch outing has been moved to Gregg's Restaurant (1303 N. Main Street) from Blount Clam Shack (too crowded!). We had such a good time at Gregg's in July – in our own private room – we decided to do it again! **Sunday, Aug. 22, after Worship**

# Help for Haiti

The Haiti Task Force has created an emergency donation site to support Central's mission and friends in Haiti impacted by the violence there: https://gofund.me/db948e2f

Recent news reports about the assassination of Haiti President Jovenel Moïse have tried to summarize the political situation in the country: escalating violence in the streets and difficult economic conditions in this poorest of countries.

But the news has not been able to depict the toll these worsening conditions have taken on the people of Haiti. They have not conveyed the trauma for those who are living with gunshots outside their homes, making it unsafe to go to work or for children to go to school. They do not tell the stories of people without enough money to buy food and who, even if they had money, could not safely go outside to find it. They cannot convey the abject terror of having to move through streets ravaged by gangs while attempting to find housing in safer neighborhoods – not only a dangerous venture, but also a very expensive one. YouTube videos show what the Haitian people of are living with on a daily basis: https://youtu.be/-hmYJhpRop0 and https://youtu.be/-eqhvP8NioY.

The Haiti Task Force has worked with schools, orphanages, clinics, and churches throughout Haiti for more than 30 years. The funds raised will be used to provide the most basic human needs – food and safe shelter – for:

- Translators, who have not been able to get to work and are struggling to simply survive and keep their families safe;
- An orphanage in one of Port au Prince's most needy – and now most dangerous – neighborhoods;
- A Community Center in Gressier working to provide food and shelter to members of surrounding communities; and
- Teachers and pastors of churches and schools that can no longer operate safely amid the violence.

# Central Window

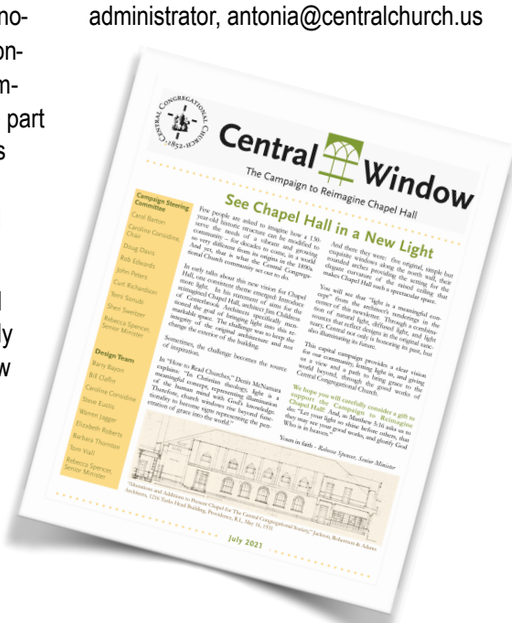
By now, you should have received your copy of "Central Window," Central's newsletter announcing the official launch of the Campaign to Reimagine Chapel Hall. But you also may be asking yourself, "Why another newsletter?"

The answer is simple: the renovation of Chapel Hall is a milestone event in Central's history. In the words of Warren Jagger, Central member and president of the Providence Preservation Society, "Renovating Chapel Hall … is on par with construction of the sanctuary itself in its importance to our church's future. A vital part of preserving old, beautiful buildings is thoughtfully adapting them to modern uses, ensuring their utility, vitality, and survival for generations to come."

"Central Window" – named for Chapel Hall's spectacular arched and now fully restored windows, which will bring new light and purpose into this essential space in our church – will literally provide a window into the upcoming months of Chapel Hall construction.

You'll see how construction, as well as the capital campaign, progress. You'll learn about the many interesting and important stories from Chapel Hall's past, as well as Central's plans for its future. And, you'll hear about community friends and volunteers who have brought their time and talents to this historic achievement.

If you haven't yet seen "Central Window," pick up a copy in the church office or request one from Antonia Greco, church administrator, antonia@centralchurch.us


Central Window

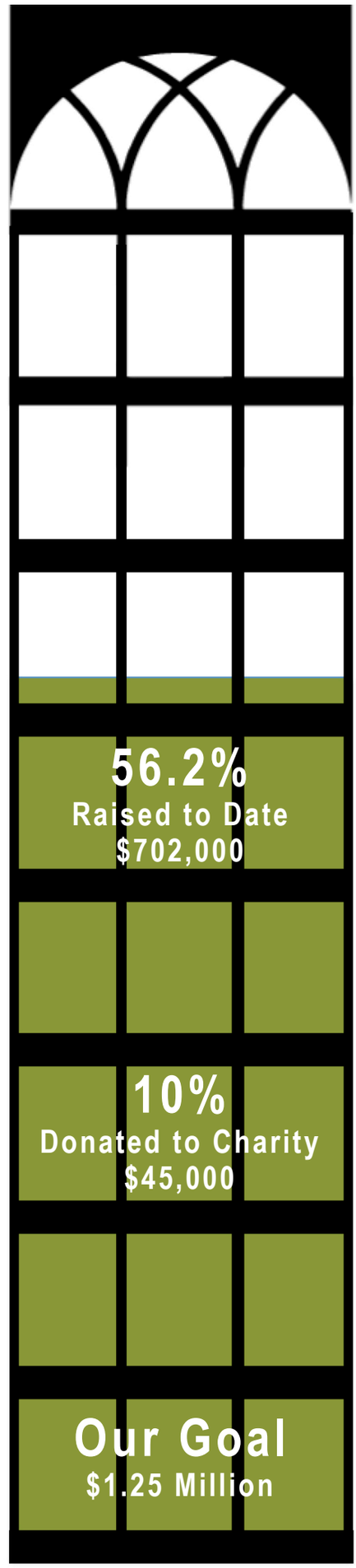
The Campaign to Reimagine Chapel Hall

See Chapel Hall in a New Light

July 2021

## We're More Than Halfway There!

The Campaign to Reimagine Chapel Hall

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