



CENTRAL NEWS

Sep 2021

Vol. 30, No. 1

From Rebecca

Dear Friends, what a summer it has been. My thoughts these past few days keep circling back to the people in Afghanistan, particularly the girls and women whose future is so uncertain. And then to Hong Kong and the brave protestors for freedom there. And our own country so filled with anger and division.

It has been an inspiration to be reading Jon Meacham's new biography of John Lewis. Lewis once commented, "Selma, the bridge, was a test of the belief that love was stronger than hate. And it is. Much stronger. So much stronger." I hold fast to that conviction. In the afterword to the biography, Lewis writes:

We've come too far, we've made too much progress as a people, to stand still or to slip back. When I was growing up there was a song that people would sing in the church:

*I'm so glad trouble don't last always
O my Lord, O my Lord . . .*

You have to believe that. You have to believe it. It's all going to work out.

Lewis is right of course. As a youngster, his job was to take care of the family's chickens, and he says, "somehow it got together, and I literally started preaching to the chickens.... They became members of this sort of invisible church or maybe you want to call it a real church ... the kinship I felt with these other living creatures, the closeness, the compassion, is a feeling I carried with me out into the world from that point on...."

I have never been to Afghanistan or Hong Kong, nor have I been a U.S. Congressman, but Lewis' life and our prayers and advocacy for those who may live near or far from us and who are persecuted make a difference. As I write this, the weather forecasts a hurricane approaching, and my mind shifts to our friends in Haiti who are struggling with both political strife and the unthinkable tragedy of the recent earthquake. I have to believe that "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:37-39)

And now my small flock of chickens is calling. I don't think I will preach to them this morning. I will just give them some food and marvel at their little lives ... another of God's incredible creations ... just like each one of us!

See you in worship soon - Rebecca

Updated Guidelines for Worship

Central's Regathering Task Force has slightly tightened guidelines for in-person worship – noting that experts have predicted that the surge in COVID-19 cases due to the Delta variant will not peak until the end of September or early October.

Masks will be required for all events in the sanctuary. Double-masking or N95 masking is advised. Central will continue to provide masks for those who need them.

Social distancing while masked will continue: six feet inside, three feet outside. Ribbons will block off every other pew in

the East Transept, Wilson Chapel, and outer aisles of the sanctuary for those who prefer greater separation. Center aisles will be ribbon-free.

Worshippers may **sing and pray aloud** while masked.

After-worship **Coffee Hour** will be held on the West Lawn throughout September.

The Task Force appreciates your cooperation in preserving the health, safety, and well-being of all Central worshippers – especially the most vulnerable among us.

SEP EVENTS

1	Gallery Committee	9:30 am
5	Children's Stories with Judy	9 am
	Worship	10 am
	Children's Summer Program	10 am
	West Lawn Gathering	11 am
7	Spiritual Companionship	6 pm
9	Food for Thought Book Group	7 pm
11	Martha Sherman Memorial Service	11 am
12	Church School Registration	9:30 am
	Worship	10:30 am
	Church School	10:30 am
	NEOS	11:30 am
	WORD	11:30 am
	Leadership Development Committee	11:45 am
18	Jack and Twyler Boyce Memorial Service	11 am
19	Worship	10:30 am
	Church School	10:30 am
	Confirmation Class	11:45 am
	Flower Committee	11:45 am
21	Plant & Properties Prudential Committee	5:45 pm 7 pm
26	Worship	10:30 am
	Church School	10:30 am
	WORD	11:30 am
30	Rebecca's Book Group	12:30 pm

The church office will be closed Monday, Sep. 6, for Labor Day.

GATHERING SUNDAY: SEPTEMBER 12 AT 10:30 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

Coffee Hour is Back!

Gathering Sunday, Sep. 12, will mark the return of Central's weekly Coffee Hour. However, we will be gathering outside on the West Lawn while Chapel Hall is under construction. Don't be surprised if, instead of coffee, we end up serving lemonade under a tent. **Sundays after Worship, on the West Lawn**

Canopy Needed

Speaking of tents, we are in need of a pop-up canopy to provide shade and shelter during Coffee Hour out on the West Lawn. If you have a canopy that you can lend or donate, please contact Church Administrator Antonia Greco at antonia@centralchurch.us or 401-331-1960 with the size.

Coffee Hour Assignments

The Social Committee has made committee assignments for providing Coffee Hour refreshments for 2021/22:

- Sep: Social Committee
- Oct: Mission and Action Committee
- Nov: Care of the Interior / Technology
- Dec: Prudential Committee
- Jan: Membership Committee
- Feb: Music Committee
- Mar: Religious Education Committee
- Apr: Calling / Flower Committees
- May: Gallery Committee

Contact Carolyn Kolesar with questions at carolynkolesar2013@gmail.com.

The Deacon's Bench

Thank God for His mercy upon us all. I am always very happy to see everyone coming back to church again. The mercy of God will continue to sustain us all. What a challenging time we all have been through. The mercy of God will keep us standing.

This time really makes me reflect more on life, and I ask myself questions: Where do I stand in the race of life? What good impact have I made? And, what will be my legacy? What will people remember me for? Who have I helped in my own small way when I can?

Legacy is doing small things big. It is about living heritage for the following generation to experience.

I thank Central Congregational Church for giving me this sense of purpose and making this more vivid in my life. I pray that Christ keeps us on the priceless course of touching lives to the glory of God. May God give us more purpose and joy in serving, and more faith in prayers. ~ Temi Sonubi

Chapel Hall Construction Begins

Exciting news: Chapel Hall construction is underway!

After several years of careful planning by the entire Central community – and despite the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns and now even a hurricane (okay, a tropical storm) – our reimagined vision for Chapel Hall is finally becoming a reality!

Asbestos abatement is underway and requires Chapel Hall to be totally sealed off for at least two weeks. Construction of the floor will take another two weeks. The church office will relocate to the Deacons Room during this time. You can access the office through the southwest door of Wilson Chapel. Just walk towards the chapel communion table and go behind the pulpit to find the rear entrance to the Deacons Room. Our new church administrator, Antonia Greco, will be doing her best to keep things running smoothly despite the makeshift operation.

Coming to Central will also be different – especially for those of us who are accustomed to entering from Diman Place. Those doors are closed for the time being. All other Central entrances are usable. The sanctuary, Fireplace Room, Christian education wing, and other key spaces including the two restrooms just off the Fireplace Room (as you head towards the Gallery) are accessible. Signs have been posted to guide you.

Chapel Hall itself is already undergoing big changes. For one thing, the stage is gone! There's just a flat floor from the church office to the back wall of what used to be the stage. And, if you tried to turn on a stage light, you'd find the switch about eight feet above your head!

The Capital Campaign to Reimagine Chapel Hall is moving along equally well. Early contributions have provided a solid base of more than half the campaign goal of \$1.25 million. But, we still have to raise

the other half! Please consider how you can leave your own legacy for "Reimagining Chapel Hall." And, remember, 10 percent of monies raised goes to our mission partners, who do so much to support the surrounding community.

Look for regular updates on Chapel Hall construction as well as the capital campaign in upcoming issues of the "Central Window" newsletter, on the church web-



Chapel Hall stage before construction (above) and a rendering of how it will appear after (below)



site, and in occasional emails, bulletin notices, and other announcements.

The Chapel Hall Design Team and Campaign Steering Committee are grateful for your support and patience as we "Grow Central for Tomorrow."

In Memoriam

Our prayers and sympathy are with the family and friends of Julius (Jake) Kling ... James Barnett Slimmon, Jr., Ann Slimmon Woolsey's father ... and Sandra Thompson, Heather Lynch's mother.
Requiescat in pace

From Claudia

As I write this in the midst of Hurricane/Tropical Storm Henri, I am hearing reports of power outages and watching the rain and the trees twisting in the wind outside my windows. I have flipped over the rocking chairs on my porch. Though they are very heavy, they often can fly in a strong wind and flip themselves. I have beaten the chairs to it. So far, so good.

The days leading up to this storm have been filled with uncertainty about Henri's track. Where will the storm go? Who will it affect? How strong will it be? How high will the storm surge be? How much rain and wind will we get? So much to think about. For we Rhode Islanders, that is compounded by decisions like whether we have enough bread and milk to make it through. Of course, I'm kidding, but we humans like to know what's going to happen, don't we?

Unfortunately, there is little about living that is certain, except death and taxes, as the old adage goes. Even in this age of instantaneous information from all the corners of the world, it is often hard to sift through what is a certainty and what isn't. There are storms of all kinds. And we all have to navigate them. Louisa May Alcott said, "I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship."

We humans navigate constant change. We are embarking on a change of seasons this month. And, while we think that we know what September will be like, there are certainly going to be surprises in store. This September there are uncertainties over and above our usual uncertainties. In the end, we will rake our leaves, enjoy the abundance of the fall produce, and live our lives in ways that may sometimes look the same, but that are (and always have been) changeable.

And, along the way we remember the words of poet Muriel Rukeyser, "The universe is made of stories, not of atoms." Each one of us is a story, and when we connect our stories with others, there is no telling what may happen! May we connect again and again and again ... and may our ships come alongside each other in full sail.

Love and blessings - Claudia

In The Gallery

The first exhibit in Central's new Virtual Gallery will feature Torin Richards Jewelry. (Look under "This Week" on the website.)

Torin's newest collection is filled with joyful symbols inspired, oddly enough, by COVID-19. Two years ago, Torin started painting rainbows as a way to relax and calm the fear. The colors soon reminded her of her vintage glass bead collection, leading her to create abstract rainbow-hued jewelry that are, in Torin's words, "whimsical, wearable, and an expression of how we want to be seen in the world."

Friday Film Fare



Friday Film Fare re-launches in October. And how better than with the Rocketman himself, Elton John? Hardly your standard biopic, **Rocketman** (2019) is a rollicking romp

that uses the legendary performer's own music to create a genuine movie musical, recounting how shy, small-town Reginald Dwight (Taron Egerton) became the rock megastar. And speaking of rollicking, Egerton is nothing short of astonishing as he recreates (that's his voice, not Elton's) some of the best known and loved music of our lives. So, welcome back – and let's have a blast. [121 minutes; color; R] **Friday, Oct. 15, 7:30 pm, in the Fireplace Room**

Musical Notes



The Central Congregational Church Adult Choir will once again make a joyful noise – live and in-person – during worship, beginning Sep. 12, Gathering Sunday. With the recent rise in COVID-19 cases due to the Delta variant, Organist/Choirmaster Patrick Aiken – with guidance from the Regathering Task Force – is taking steps to mitigate further spread of the virus.

For maximum safety and peace of mind, all choir members will be fully vaccinated and show proof of vaccination. They will wear "resonance masks" while rehearsing and performing. These masks – developed by singers for singers to contain droplets while allowing space around the mouth to sing comfortably – were made possible by an anonymous donor.

The choir will rehearse on Sunday mornings from 9 to 10 am in the sanctuary. Thursday evening rehearsals are on hold for the time being. During worship, the choir will sit in Wilson Chapel, since the choir loft does not permit socially distancing. They will perform the anthem – still appropriately masked and distanced – from the chancel. First up on Gathering Sunday: "O, Be Joyful," by John Rutter.

Spiritual Companionship Group

Where is God in your life? Discover how the ancient tradition of spiritual companionship with others will help you listen for God in day-to-day living, encounter your own inner wisdom, and find new possibilities in both your spiritual and secular lives. **Tuesday, Sep. 7, 6 to 7 pm, via Zoom.** Contact Claudia for an invitation.

Food For Thought Book Group

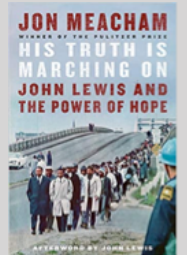
Join us for a lively discussion of "Things Fall Apart," Nigerian author Chinua Achebe's classic about pre-colonial life in southeastern Nigeria and the arrival of Europeans in the late 1800s. **Thursday, Sep. 9, 7 pm, via Zoom.** Contact Claudia for an invitation.



Coming up on Oct 14: "The Yellow House: A Memoir," by Sarah M. Broom

Rebecca's Book Group

We'll kick off the fall by discussing "His Truth Is Marching On: John Lewis and the Power of Hope," a portrait of the civil rights hero and long-time congressman, by Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Jon Meacham. We may meet in person or via Zoom. Contact Rebecca with questions. **Thursday, Sep. 30, 12:30 to 1:30 pm**



Adult Sunday School

Our learning community will reconvene in October. Contact Claudia to join the email list. Details will be announced mid-September. **Sundays, starting Oct. 3, 9 to 10 am, in the Fireplace Room**

Women's Retreat Group

The women of Central are invited to gather in solidarity to pray and check in on the third Monday of the month beginning in October. **Thursday, Oct. 18, 7 pm, via Zoom.** Contact Claudia for an invitation.

Church School News

Gathering Sunday is September 12, and the church school cannot wait to get going. For the first time in more than a year and a half, the children of Central will be returning to the Christian education space on the second floor. There will be some changes, with a few more to come, as we work to make the space an even more welcoming and exciting place for children to learn about our faith and, most importantly to experience the love of God in their relationships with teachers, assistants, and fellow learners.

With Chapel Hall construction underway, children will begin Sunday morning in the church school's second floor – instead of going to worship with their parents. Hopefully, it will not be too long before families can once again be together in the sanctuary and enjoy Children's Time before exiting for church school. This is indeed a day to look forward to.

On September 12, children and their parents, along with teachers and assistants will meet



Time to Register!

at 9:30 am in the Christian education gathering space. After registration and a time of welcome, we will serve refreshments and have time for everyone to chat and catch up with one another.

Let's join together for a year of growth, learning, and new experiences. ~ Judy

NEOS and WORD

NEOS and WORD will be “kicking off” their program year on Gathering Sunday. The two groups will share a time of food, fellowship, and fun. They will then each plan their schedules for the first part of the year. In general, NEOS will meet on the second Sunday of the month; WORD will get together on the second and fourth Sundays. NEOS and WORD will join together for some activities – just as we did for our kick-off event, as well as hold separate meetings and activities.

Many CCC youth are looking forward to meeting in person, rather than through a computer screen, after all this time apart. As NEOS and WORD come back together after the long hiatus – with many new members as well new adult advisors – we encourage all Central teens to come and give NEOS and WORD a try regardless of their past experiences. It's a new day!

NEOS: Sunday, Sep. 12, 11:45 am, in the Fireplace Room

WORD: Sunday, Sep. 12, 11:45 am, in the Fireplace Room; Sunday, Sep. 19, 11:45 am, in the Makepeace Room

Confirmation

Confirmation at Central is participatory, helping teens to discern their personal beliefs and enabling them to grow further in faith. The 2021/22 Confirmation class will officially begin its journey in September. Meeting on the first and third Sundays a month (with a few fifth Sundays thrown in), the youth will reflect on some of the basic areas of our faith, such as God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, forgiveness, and discipleship. They will interact with their fellow confirmands as each shares his or her unique experiences and beliefs. They also will bring their concerns, doubts, and questions, so we all can listen, reflect, discuss, and respond.

Sunday, Sep. 19, 11:45 am, in the church school gathering space

Children's Choir

Plans for the 2021/22 Children's Choir are still to be determined. Organist/Choirmaster Patrick Aiken is assessing the level of interest and parents' comfort level with rehearsal and performance conditions. So stay tuned.

Amos House Says “Thanks”

“Wow – you guys really answered the call!” That's how Jessica Salter, chief philanthropy officer of Amos House, began her thank-you note to Central members and friends who helped restock the kitchen and pantry of its Mother-Child Reunification Program house after a fire ruined the old kitchen.

The new space is approximately three times the size of the old kitchen and much better suited for the many families that call this house home. Now, thanks to generous Central donors – some of whom forwarded Amos House's request to friends and community groups – the new kitchen is almost fully stocked with new tableware, glassware, food storage, baking dishes, pots and pans, small appliances, and utensils.

And, while Amos House is still waiting for some furniture to arrive – like the new kitchen table – and the pantry and children's playroom are still under construction, Salter shared some early pictures of the newly built space.

“The women are so happy to have a beautiful new kitchen in which to prepare food. For so many children, this will be where the early memories of family dinners, homemade birthday cakes, and Saturday morning pancakes are set,” she said. “Thank you, thank you, thank you!”

There are still some items remaining on the Mother-Child Reunification kitchen wish list. If you would like to contribute, log on to https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/PUKYSYAR5JIZ?ref=_wl_share

The Mother-Child Reunification Program offers family reunification, advocacy, sup-

port, 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.



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