

A Good Word From Patrick



Hey folks! At the beginning of the year, our Deacons approved an experiment. We had heard a real desire within the congregation to learn more about the Bible, but many felt that deep, lengthy Bible studies were simply too much of a commitment. So, we decided to host simple, MIDWEEK conversations about the scripture from the previous Sunday's Worship service.

It has been an incredible success. Each week, between 28 and 54 people have participated in rich conversations about the Bible and how its long history still speaks to our lives today. I was especially moved to see several people engaging with others in their first meaningful conversations about faith. These discussions have spanned generations, varying levels of biblical literacy, faith experiences, and belief systems. It has been both an incredible experience and a profound success.

This Advent, we're beginning a new experiment. We've heard similar questions about prayer: What is it? How do you do it? Where should you pray? Are there rules? Are you sure God is listening? Am I supposed to feel something? And so on.

So during Advent, we're going to host prayer gatherings in Wilson Chapel (the west transept of the Sanctuary) on Wednesday evenings from 7 to 8 pm. We'll offer some simple teaching on prayer, spend time in quiet prayer together, and then have an opportunity to share what came up for us during that time.

If you've ever wondered what exactly you're "supposed to be doing" when you pray, please come. You are more than welcome. Bring your questions. Bring your doubts. Bring your struggles, fears, and worries. Bring your joys and celebrations. Bring it all.

Whether you are brand new to prayer, unsure whether it even "works," or a consistent and faithful pray-er, I hope you'll join us in this project of learning and listening together.

I'll see you Sunday ~ *Patrick*

Festival Service of Thanksgiving



Central's Festival Service of Thanksgiving, on Nov. 23, was joyous and music-filled. The spiritual power of our choirs and historic pipe organ were joined by brass and timpani. And senior minister Patrick Faulhaber spoke movingly about "Life in Exile" (Jeremiah 29:1, 4-14). The service concluded with the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" when the congregation stood and faced the choir, as it has every year since the 1976 Bicentennial.



DEC EVENTS

1	Children's Choir Rehearsal	5:30 pm
3	Gallery Committee	9:30 am
	Prayer and Quiet Reflection	7 pm
4	Fourth Thursday Book Group	12:30 pm
	Board of Deacons	5:45 pm
	Choir Rehearsal	7:30 pm
6	Christmas at Central Set-up	8:30 am
	CCC Youth Wreath Making	11 am
7	Stewardship Committee	9:15 am
	Cherub Choir Rehearsal	10 am
	Second Sunday of Advent	10:30 am
	Children's Church	10:30 am
	Christmas at Central	11:30 am
	Christmas Festival of Lights	5 pm
8	Children's Choir Rehearsal	5:30 pm
	Build Healthy Conflict Skills	6 pm
10	Prayer and Quiet Reflection	7 pm
11	Central Men's Group	7:30 am
	Food for Thought Book Group	6 pm
	Choir Rehearsal	7:30 pm
14	Adult Sunday School	9 am
	Cherub Choir Rehearsal	10 am
	Third Sunday of Advent	10:30 am
	Children's Church	10:30 am
	Angell Tree Donations Due	12 noon
	Women Gather	12 noon
15	Children's Choir Rehearsal	5:30 pm
	Mission & Action Committee	6:30 pm
	Technology Committee	7 pm
16	Prudential Committee	7 pm
17	Christmas Cookie Swap	6 pm
	Prayer and Quiet Reflection	7 pm
18	Choir Rehearsal	7:30 pm
19	Friday Film Fare	7:30 pm
20	Carol Service Dress Rehearsal	9 am
	Pageant Dress Rehearsal	11 am
21	Adult Sunday School	9 am
	Cherub Choir Rehearsal	10 am
	Fourth Sunday of Advent /	
	Christmas Pageant	10:30 am
	Children's Church	10:30 am
	Cookies and a Movie	2 pm
	Carol Service / Silver Tea	4 pm
24	Christmas Eve Worship	5 pm
	Candlelight Service	10:45 pm
28	Worship	10:30 am
	Children's Church	10:30 am
	Membership Committee	12 noon
	Better Christian Politics	12:15 pm

The Church Office will be closed December 24 and 25 for Christmas.

JOIN US FOR SUNDAY WORSHIP 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, Patrick Faulhaber, 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 Patrick will get in touch.

Inquirers' Meeting

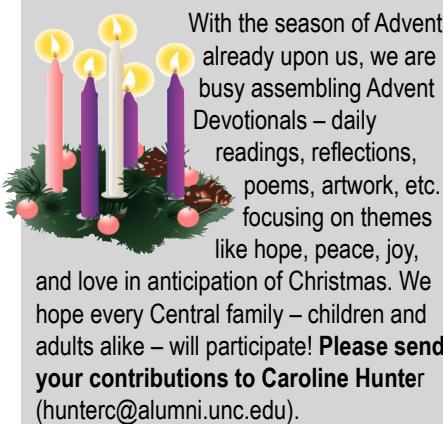
Sunday, February 1, 11:30 am

New Member Sunday

Sunday, February 8, 10:30 am



Advent Devotionals



With the season of Advent already upon us, we are busy assembling Advent Devotionals – daily readings, reflections, poems, artwork, etc. focusing on themes like hope, peace, joy, and love in anticipation of Christmas. We hope every Central family – children and adults alike – will participate! Please send your contributions to Caroline Hunter (hunterc@alumni.unc.edu).

Adult Sunday School

This month, Adult Sunday School will examine "The Pilgrims," our Puritan Separatist ancestors who explored faith and freedom and laid the foundation for separation of church and state. We'll study their beliefs, as well as those of the Wampanoag and other indigenous peoples they encountered. Questions? Ask Claudia. **Sundays, Dec. 14 and 21, 9 am, Fireplace Room.** No class on Dec. 7 and 28

Christmas Eve Worship

This reflective, early-evening service takes you through the wonders of the Jesus' birth – accompanied by joyous Christmas carols. **Wednesday, Dec. 24, 5 pm**

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

This service, with music provided by the Central Congregational Church Choir, is peaceful and contemplative as candlelight grows and glows throughout the sanctuary. **Wednesday, Dec. 24, 10:45 pm**



The Deacon's Bench

The world is full of noise. As I write this, leaf blowers are out in force. A few years ago, dirt bikes roared on too many evenings. And during 2020, I was acutely aware of ambulances heading to Miriam Hospital. I've concluded noise is inescapable for city dwellers like me.

Noise is about content as well as volume. After the 2024 election, I bought a home audio system so I could wake up in the morning to music rather than the invective of radio news. While the volume didn't change, I could at least wait until I was fully awake before confronting the bad things happening in the world.

The opposite of noise is silence, which can also make people uncomfortable. For many years, I taught at a Quaker-affiliated school, where a period of intentional silence was part of the weekly routine. During Quaker-style Friends Meetings, we began in silence, waiting for an inner spark to arise (or not), leading some to share insights or concerns. Many graduates reported missing sitting in silence with their thoughts – and how they valued the chance to become comfortable with silence.

Some churches make silent prayer a part of weekly services. Others encourage people to speak out of the silence, sharing concerns and asking for community support. However, silence is not a big part of worship at Central. (Our service of Tenebrae is an exception.)

At the November Deacons meeting, we discussed instituting occasional "prayer meetings" that would allow congregants to sit in silence and share prayer concerns. That left me thinking about the place of silence in my life – individually and in communion with Central members. I wonder now if learning to be comfortable with silence could help us deal more constructively with the noise around us. Our UCC denomination says God is still speaking. But the lesson of Elijah, heard in our early November lectionary, is that we need to wait for the noise of wind, fire, and earthquake to die down ... and then listen for the still small voice of God in the silence. Maybe we should all be looking for opportunities to listen for that still small voice in our lives? ~ *David Moss*

Mission Works

Central Responds to SNAP Crisis: The week before Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits were about to expire for thousands of Rhode Islanders, Central Congregational Church – through the Mission and Action Committee – allocated \$5,000 to purchase and distribute \$50 Stop & Shop gift cards. Along with those 100 gift cards, Stop & Shop then contributed an additional 20.

On Friday, Oct. 31, we delivered the gift cards to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School, Sophia Academy, and William DaBate Elementary School in Providence – where social workers distributed them to families with the greatest need.



But Central's assistance didn't end there. Through the generosity of individual church members, we raised \$7,150, which enabled us to purchase another 143 gift cards – more than doubling our original gift! These were distributed to Alfred Lima Elementary School, Dorcas International, The Genesis Center, Inspiring Minds, Progresso Latino, Robert L. Bailey IV Elementary School, and Youth Pride Rhode Island – all based in Providence.

Seeing a need and responding is truly what it means to put our faith into action. Thank you for supporting our community!

Budget Time!

Calling all committees! It's time to focus on Central Congregational Church's operating budget for 2026/27. **All requests must be submitted to the Finance Committee by Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026** at the very latest! The Finance Committee will review proposed budgets at a Zoom meeting that evening at 7 pm.



Please take time now to estimate your committee's needs for the next fiscal year – May 1, 2026 to Apr. 30, 2027 – so we can create an accurate and meaningful budget. If you have any questions, please reach out to Donna Chace-Larson at 401-529-4032.

Poetry Corner

Bethlehem in Winter

It's winter, and we led our sheep
safely down the hills above.
Summer was long, dry and hot,
But now we shiver with Wonder.

A host of angels, clothed in white,
soars overhead.
Each is unique.
Each exists to glorify God.

Look! A small, stray angel
lands on the baby's eyelash.
He smiles, and the Earth
smiles with Him.

~ *May Cornelia Grant*

From Claudia

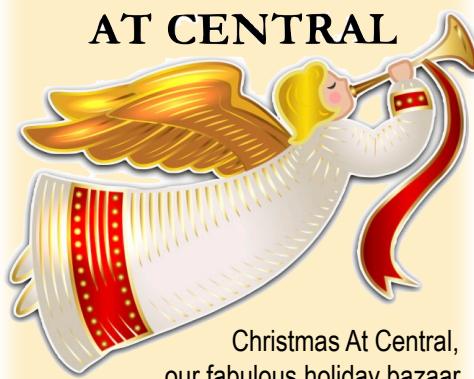
As I contemplate the season of Advent I am, holding a brand new book by Diana Butler Bass in my hand. It's called "A Beautiful Year: 52 Meditations on Faith, Wisdom, and Perseverance." In it, Bass writes about the liturgical year of the Church and its importance: "The Christian year is a cycle of stories and rituals based on the life and teachings of Jesus. It begins in late November or early December with a season called Advent. Unlike the civil calendar with four seasons, it has six: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. The first five seasons happen in quick succession during the first half of the year and relate the story of Jesus; the sixth season occupies the second half of the calendar year and emphasizes what Jesus taught. And so it goes on – year after year – moving from seasons to remember Jesus to the time to learn and practice his teachings."

Seeing the liturgical year in its widest scope of understanding, Jesus' life and teachings help us to understand our own place in a world that is anything but simple. We live in such a world through our faith. The beauty of a liturgical calendar outside the ordinariness of our existence is that it points to what matters outside of that which is worshiped by the world.

Such a calendar reminds us who we are and to whom we belong. Bass writes that our liturgical year eschews wealth, privilege, violence, and achievement. Instead, through its cycles, it tells a strangely compelling story of anticipation, peace and justice, enlightenment, failure and death, rebirth, and living in love. Its foundation is a weekly day of rest – a sabbath. It celebrates a God who was born in a stable to impoverished parents and became a refugee, who dwelt with us and shared our tears and fears and who was executed by a brutal, oppressive empire. That God knows us and loves us and dreams with us of wholeness, friendship and liberation.... The Christian year extols empathy, vulnerability, gratitude, and compassion ... and it is cosmic in its vision." May we enter into its deep mystery like generations before us.

Advent and Christmas blessings to you all - *Claudia*

CHRISTMAS AT CENTRAL



Christmas At Central, our fabulous holiday bazaar, is a week away: **Sunday, Dec. 7, from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm.** We need your help to make it the success we know it can be!

Many items are needed

- Baked goods
- Books
- Gift baskets
- Soups and breads for the Lunch Room
- Gently used attic treasures

Many hands are needed

- Help set up on Saturday, Dec. 6, 8:30 to 11:30 am
- Work during the event: in the Lunch Room, Sweet Shoppe, Grandma's Attic, or Ye Olde Book Cellar
- Help clean up – starting at 1 pm

Many words are needed. Tell your family, friends, and neighbors about our annual one-stop-shopping mecca. Posters and handouts are available in the Church Office. Or, contact Ellen Miller (esmiller@cox.net) for an email version.

Many smiles are needed! Help us welcome all of Rhode Island to our wonderful community of faith!

Carol Service

There isn't a better way to start Christmas week than at Central's inspiring and music-filled **Carol Service**, an East Side tradition and true highlight of the Christmas season.

Come hear the story of the birth of Christ unfold in scripture and song – beginning with the creation in the Garden of Eden and prophecies foretelling Jesus' birth and concluding with the mystery of the Incarnation – using the model made famous at King's College in Cambridge, England.

Carols and anthems both familiar and new – performed by the Central Congregational Church Choir and Children's Choir accompanied by organ, harp, and cello – echo each scripture lesson. The service concludes with a stunning, candlelit tableau as the choirs and congregation sing "Silent Night" – followed by the peaceful "Sleep of the Infant Jesus" postlude by Henri Brüsser – a quiet time to meditate on the great gift we've been given and the love of God made flesh to dwell among us.

After the service, all are invited to stay for refreshments at Central's elegant **Silver Tea**, hosted by the Social Committee, in our festively decorated Chapel Hall. It's a glorious way to share the

season's glad tidings of comfort and great joy!
Please save the date and invite everyone to join us on **Sunday, Dec. 21, at 4 pm!**



The Angel Giving Tree

Help create a Merry Christmas for children in DCYF care. The Angel Tree returned to the coatroom on Nov. 23. If you haven't already, choose a tag or tags from the tree. Each bears a child's name, age, gender, and suggested gift. Select a thoughtful, age-appropriate item. Wrap your gift, write the contents on back of the original tag, and attach it. Please deliver the gifts back to the Angel Tree by **Sunday, Dec. 14, at 12 noon.**



Fourth Thursday Book Group

Postponed due to Thanksgiving, The Fourth Thursday Book Group will meet to discuss "How We Learn to be Brave," by Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde – an inspirational guide to the key junctures in life. Email Ann Scott for a Zoom invitation. **Thursday, Dec. 4, 12:30 pm, via Zoom.**

Build Healthy Conflict Skills

It's no secret we live in a divisive world, fracturing relationships between neighbors, friends, and families. How can each of us do a better job at building trust and creating common-ground conversations? Join us for a skill-building workshop and panel discussion that explores healthy conflict from three perspectives: ministry, clinical practice, and the real-world de-escalation techniques of law enforcement. RSVP to the Church Office (info@centralchurch.us). **Monday, Dec. 8, 6 pm, Chapel Hall**

Food for Thought Book Group

Our Christmas gathering will have a different plot twist as we come together for our annual book swap. Please bring a gently used, gift-wrapped book to swap over dessert.



Thursday, Dec. 11, at 6 pm, in the Fireplace Room. Coming up on Jan. 8: "Rules of Civility," by Amor Towles.

Central Men's Group

Central Men's Group meets early this month due to Christmas holiday activities. Open to all ages, it is a monthly breakfast gathering (usually held on the third Thursday of each month) for fellowship and spirited conversation on topics ranging from current events and ethics to trends and shared experiences. Questions? Contact John Trevor. **Thursday, Dec. 11, 7:30 am, in the Fireplace Room**

Christmas Cookie Swap

Don't miss Central's annual Cookie Swap. It's a short, fun, music-filled evening – plus you get to take home a platter full of delectable treats – like Grandma used to make. Your family and friends will be thrilled! Bring six dozen of your favorite cookies (no bar cookies, please) and a platter or container for transport home! Questions? Contact Claudia. **Wednesday, Dec. 17, 6 pm, in the Fireplace Room**



Rejoice!

Our theme for December is an invitation to REJOICE. At first thought, rejoicing may feel like a tall order. The world is heavy, our calendars are crowded, and our lives hold a mix of joy and strain. When we read scripture, we notice that rejoicing is not merely a response to good circumstances, it is an orientation of the heart. It is the choice to look for God's presence in the midst of everything else and to let that presence shape how we move through the world.

Advent reminds us that joy is not something we manufacture; it is something we receive. God comes to us, not in power or perfection, but in vulnerability, in a child wrapped in cloth and laid in a manger. We rejoice because God draws near. We rejoice because light steps into the darkness. We rejoice because hope is not an idea, but a person.

In our Religious Education ministry this month, we'll create space for joy to take root: through stories that remind us of God's faithfulness, through practices of quiet that ground our spirits, and through acts of service that open us to wonder. Joy does not erase hardship, but it deepens our capacity to see God's goodness within it.

My invitation is simple: notice where joy is already peeking through your days. A child's laughter. A moment of rest. A candle's glow. A word of kindness. Rejoicing begins with paying attention, naming gifts God has placed around us and responding with gratitude.

May this season draw us closer to the One who is our joy. And may our rejoicing become a light that shines hope into our community and beyond. With gratitude and joy ~ *Cristina*

Cookies and a Movie



The holidays are extremely busy for most everyone. But no one more so than parents! With so much going on, adults often crave some child-free "alone time" to deal with Christmas preparations they face every year – shopping, baking, decorating, cleaning, houseguests, and more.

So once again, Central is hosting a **Cookie-Decorating and Christmas-Movie-Watching Party**. Just drop off the kids. Friends are welcome, too. We'll have a merry old time while parents deal with last-minute holiday arrangements! **Sunday, Dec. 21, 2 to 4 pm, Fireplace Room**

Friday Film Fare

In **The Holdovers** (2023), a decidedly unpopular instructor (Paul Giamatti) at a New England prep school is forced to stay on campus during Christmas break 1970 to babysit a handful of students who have nowhere to go for the holidays. Eventually, the handful becomes one troubled young man (Dominic Sessa). Along with the school's cook (Da'Vine Joy Randolph), who is mourning the loss of her son, the three spend two very snowy weeks as a makeshift family through comic misadventures, self-discovery – and joy. Director Alexander Payne has crafted a fine skein of wry humor and warm emotion for any holiday season.

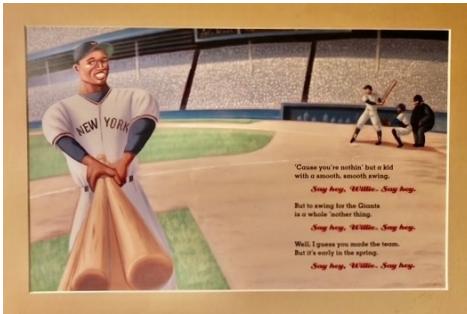
[133 minutes; color; Rated R] **Join Jim Silverthorn on Friday, Dec. 19, 7:30 pm, Fireplace Room.**



In the Gallery

This month, The Gallery at Central presents drawings and illustrations from children's books by Central's own **Peter Mandel**.

While many know Peter as a travel journalist, he has also written ten children's books, including *Jackhammer Sam; Bun, Onion, Burger; Zoo Ah-Choooo; Planes at the Airport; Boats on the River; Say Hey! A Song of Willie Mays; My Ocean Liner; and Red Cat White Cat*. His titles have been featured in USA Today, New York's Museum of Natural History, the Smithsonian, and National Baseball Hall of Fame.



Publishers Weekly called *Jackhammer Sam* "wonderful and overwhelming, rattling and mesmerizing." The Chicago Tribune wrote, "If a new Walt Whitman broke up sidewalks with a jackhammer, this is exactly what his 'Song of Myself' would be." *Zoo Ah-Choooo* was a PBS Reading Rainbow selection.

Peter grew up in New York City where his parents were longtime staff writers at Life Magazine. He earned his bachelor's degree from Middlebury College and his master's from Brown University. He lives in Providence's Fox Point neighborhood with his wife Kathy and rescue cats, Cecil and Maisie. Learn more about Peter's work at www.petermandel.net.

Meet the author at Christmas at Central – Sunday, December 7, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm – where several of Peter's titles will be available for signing.

Children's Church to End at 11:45 am

The only downside of our Education Wing is that it is physically removed from the rest of the church. This has caused issues when Worship has run late. The Religious Education Committee has decided to extend Children's Church to 11:45 am. Volunteers will be able to finish each week's lesson, and parents won't have to rush to pick up their kids. Questions? Contact Cristina.



Cherub Choir

The Cherub Choir – for preschoolers to second graders – will practice each Sunday before Worship, leading up to its performance of the Introit on Sunday, Dec. 21. Questions? See Caroline Hunter. **Sundays, through Dec. 21, 10 am, Education Wing**

Christmas Pageant



We are hoping all Central children and youth will participate in this wonderful holiday tradition. Rehearsals take place during Children's Church, so everyone can participate! If your child or teen would like a speaking role or a specific part, contact Cristina. **Rehearsals are on Sundays through Dec. 14, 10:30 am, in the Education Wing.** Dress rehearsal: Saturday, Dec. 20, 11 am. Performance: Sunday, Dec. 21, during Worship

CCC Youth Wreath Fundraiser

Please support CCC Youth's mission trip fundraiser by helping decorate wreaths. All ages are welcome. (Children should be accompanied by an adult.) We will make bows and hot glue pinecones and more. There will be music, snacks, and nursery care available. Please RSVP to Cristina and help make the magic happen! **Saturday, Dec. 6, from 11 am to 4 pm, in the Makepeace Room**

Christmas Festival of Lights

Bring family and friends to the La Salette Shrine Christmas Festival of Lights – featuring more than one million holiday lights! This year's theme is "Rejoice in Hope! (Romans 12:12, 13:12). As we walk through the brilliant display, we not only will experience holiday beauty and sparkle, but also Christ's hope shining for the world.

Sunday, Dec. 7, 5 pm,

The National Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette (947 Park St., Attleboro)



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