



CENTRAL NEWS

Jan 2026

Vol. 34, No. 5

A Good Word From Patrick



Happy New Year! When I was in college, I had a professor who challenged us to intentionally choose productivity over consumption. His advice came in the early 2000s, when Facebook, YouTube, Netflix, and other social media and streaming services were just launching and cementing the home as a space crafted exclusively for consumption.

Since the Industrial Revolution, homes have increasingly been understood as safe havens from the demands of productivity rather than as places of work themselves. Over time, more and more of daily home life became something we received passively and consumed – rather than something we engaged with and built. Convenience replaced engagement. Ease replaced attention.

Of course, this shift brought some real gifts. I, for one, am grateful that I don't need to render tallow to make my soap or make enough candles to light a room. I am grateful for a gas stove, refrigeration, heating, air conditioning, and reliable electricity. All of these are good and life-giving things. So many of these innovations leave us in incredible privilege that most of human history would have considered miraculous.

But my professor, Dr. Pate, invited us to imagine something more than consumption. He encouraged us to be participants in our home life rather than consumers within it. He challenged us to cultivate creativity, attentiveness, and presence. Dr. Pate was a living example of this: cultivating bees, growing vegetables, turning beautiful wooden candlesticks, and doing most of his own bike and car repair. He insisted on living a meaningfully embodied life beyond his career in the classroom. He had a profound impact on me.

Since COVID, the balance of work and life has slipped in a different way. The technologies that make comfort and flexibility possible have also made us constantly accessible. For many of us, work now lives in our pockets. It is just as present at the dinner table as it is in the office. And when work loosens its grip, consumption is always waiting, one tap away.

Presence requires something different from us. Embodied presence isn't about being more productive at home, nor is it about rejecting comfort or technology. It is about mindfully choosing where we place our attention. It is about living our lives with intention, listening fully, noticing where we are and what is happening around us, and allowing ourselves to be where we are.

As we enter this New Year, I wonder what it might look like to reclaim home (and church) as a place of presence rather than distraction. To set down our devices, our drive for productivity and growth, our need to be distracted. To cook, repair, read, create, rest, and even just sit undistracted together without multitasking. To resist the constant urge to consume or produce and instead to practice being here.

My hope for us this year is simple: I hope we might rediscover the sacred beauty in ordinary moments and the quiet gift of undistracted presence.

Happy New Year, friends! I hope it's a good one. I'll see ya Sunday ~ *Patrick*



Carol Service: December 21, 2025

JAN EVENTS

4	Adult Sunday School	9 am
	Stewardship Committee	9:15 am
7	Epiphany Sunday	10:30 am
	Children's Church	10:30 am
	Religious Education Committee	12 noon
5	Children's Choir Rehearsal	5:30 pm
7	Amos House Volunteers	6:30 am
	Gallery Committee	9:30 am
	Committee Budgets Due	5 pm
	Finance Committee	7 pm
8	Food For Thought Book Group	7 pm
	Choir Rehearsal	7:30 pm
9	Gallery Opening	5 pm
10	Sewing Circle	10 am
	Memorial Service: Ethel Lavelle	11:30 am
11	Adult Sunday School	9 am
	Worship / Baptism	10:30 am
	Children's Church	10:30 am
	Women Gather	12 noon
12	Children's Choir Rehearsal	5:30 pm
14	Amos House Volunteers	6:30 am
	Finance Committee	7 pm
15	Central Men's Group	7:30 am
	Board of Deacons	5:45 pm
	Music Committee	6:30 pm
	Choir Rehearsal	7:30 pm
16	Friday Film Fare	7:30 pm
18	Adult Sunday School	9 am
	Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday	10:30 am
	Children's Church	10:30 am
	Membership Committee	12 noon
	Better Christian Politics	12:15 pm
19	Mission & Action Committee	6:30 pm
	Technology Committee	7 pm
20	Prudential Committee	7 pm
21	Amos House Volunteers	6:30 am
22	Fourth Thursday Book Group	12:30 pm
	Young Adult Gathering	6:30 pm
	Choir Rehearsal	7:30 pm
24	Sewing Circle	12 noon
25	Adult Sunday School	9 am
	Worship	10:30 am
	Children's Church	10:30 am
	Annual Budget Meeting	11:30 am
26	Children's Choir Rehearsal	5:30 pm
28	Amos House Volunteers	6:30 am
29	Choir Rehearsal	7:30 pm

The Church Office will be closed Thursday, Jan. 1, for New Year's and Monday, Jan. 19, for Martin Luther King Jr. Day

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



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 in January, 9 am, Fireplace Room**

Committee Budgets Due

Committee Chairs, don't forget to send your proposed budgets for 2026/27 to Donna Chace-Larson, Finance Committee chair (drsc1@aol.com). For consideration, **all requests must be submitted no later than Wednesday, Jan. 7, 5 pm.**

Your Neighborhood Food Pantry

Every week during Sunday Worship, Central collects non-perishable food items for Your Neighborhood Food Pantry (www.ynfp.org), a local organization that serves Providence neighbors experiencing food insecurity. Please place your donations in the baskets at the front of the church during the second verse of the first hymn. Thank you!

Amos House Breakfast Volunteers

Please join Central's Amos House Breakfast Volunteers as they assemble pre-packaged breakfasts. (Amos House serves 400 every day!) Even if you can only come occasionally, we welcome every extra set of hands. Questions? Contact Tracy Baran. **Wednesdays, 6:30 am, in the Amos House Kitchen** (460 Pine Street, Providence)

The Deacon's Bench

The dark months of winter seemed particularly dim this past month. The shootings at our close neighbor Brown University brought fear, anxiety, and sadness to our community. I found it was difficult to find illumination in the days leading up to Christmas.

But as the days went by, I began to see the Christmas lights again as our community came together. Candles flickered at gatherings of remembrance. We checked in on each other. We prayed together throughout the week, including here at Central.

It reminded me of how God's people refuse to let his light be extinguished. We've seen darkness before, and here at Central, we've been called to action. We've rallied to fill food pantries. We've sponsored refugees. Most recently as SNAP benefits disappeared, we put our mission into action and supported our local students in need.

Simple acts of caring are rooted in Jesus' words to us. These words are reminders of how to live our lives and how to treat our neighbors, our community, those needing food or shelter, those in distant communities, those seeking asylum, and those needing healthcare.

I admit, sometimes my mind wanders upon hearing the following familiar passage from Matthew 25:34, but I think it's worth reading and absorbing, letting it move us to action.

Come you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and we gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it when we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are a member of my family, you did it to me.'

Let Jesus' words help us be the community of light, coming together to shine it upon our neighbors near and far. ~ *Greg Lupica*

Mission Works

Last month, Central's Mission & Action Committee hosted its first **Community Care Conversation** – "Building Healthy Conflict Skills" – drawing 63 people, nearly a quarter from outside of the church.

The event included a skill-building workshop led by executive coach Kara Lund – and a panel discussion with Providence Police detective Matthew Fadale, clinical psychologist Dr. Sherri Nelson, and Central senior minister Patrick Faulhaber – who together explored healthy conflict resolution from law-enforcement, psychological, and religious perspectives.



The next Community Care Conversation – "Unpacking Christian Nationalism: Faith or Politics?" – will be Monday, March 2, at 6 pm as a follow-up to the 2026 Darrell West Lecture, featuring historian / best-selling author Kristin Kobes Du Mez. (*More about the lecture on page 3*).



Annual Budget Meeting

Your presence and input are crucial to the Annual Budget Meeting. The budget determines what we can accomplish as a church during the coming fiscal year and enables us to keep our sanctuary alive with worship, music, fellowship, mission, and outreach. Thanks for your attendance and participation!

**Sunday • January 25
11:30 am • Chapel Hall**

**HAPPY
NEW YEAR
2026**

Poetry Corner

A Psalm

Thank you, God, for another year, for shepherding us through valley and hill, and when we wandered, guiding us home.

Therefore, we celebrate, not with timbrel and harp, nor alone but in a widening circle of Love, building trust, letting go.

Surely Your goodness pursues me still.

~ *Ginny Bradley*

From Claudia

It's hard for me to believe that when you read this, it will be 2026! How can that be? I just put out my creches a few days ago. There is a heaviness this year with all that is happening in our community and beyond. The world seems ever more violent. But the world has always been a place filled with danger. I think about all of this as I unwrap the creches.

All told, there are about 75 of them given to me by different people. Many are small, and they come from all over the world. I love to take each one out, think about the person who gave it to me, and say a prayer for its country of origin. Most were brought back by friends who had traveled there. Each represents a small part of God's creation and people.

This year for the very first time I didn't put all of them out. I chose the creches from Haiti, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Norway, Mexico, Ireland, Kenya, Thailand, Palestine (multiple olive-wood carvings from Bethlehem), and the former East and West Germany. They will remain in place until Epiphany.

Finally, since the Christmas season ends on January 6, I want to share a prayer that I wrote a long time ago for this season.

*Holy God, may our days break around us filled with the light of Your presence
A light that dispels all shadows and makes us whole in You.*

*Holy Child, may we find hope in You knowing You were born to save us.
And, through that hope let us experience Your peace, Your joy, and Your love.*

*Grant us, we pray, Your peace at the breaking of day and Your joy at its close,
joined by Your love as the thread that stitches all the moments of life together.*

*Holy Spirit, guide us and lead us forward that we may live the life
we were born to live now and forevermore. Amen.*

Blessings for 2026 ~ Claudia



Thanks to everyone

who helped make Central's 2025
Carol Service and Silver Tea
such a success. We "packed the house"
for the first time since the
COVID lock-down!



SAVE THE DATE

Sunday • February 1 • 11:30 am

Author Peter Mandel
to speak at Central

Please join us in Chapel Hall

Darrell West Lecture

"Riveting" and "thought-provoking" are just two words that describe Central's Darrell West Lecture Series. Never more than this year when **Kristin Kobes Du Mez** – historian, professor, and best-selling author – will headline our open forum on the intersection between religion and politics.

Du Mez is a professor of history at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Mich., where she holds the William Spoelhof Teacher-Scholar-in-Residence Chair. She is also a Senior Democracy Fellow with the Public Religion Research Institute and a fellow of the Center for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Notre Dame.

Her most recent book is **"Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation."** This New York Times bestseller analyzes how the so-called Christian nationalism of many white evangelicals developed by embracing rugged masculinity, patriarchal family values, fear of Islam, and an aggressive foreign policy agenda, expressed in a quest for political power.

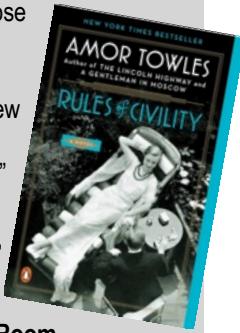
Du Mez also writes a regular Substack column, "exploring connections between religion, gender, and politics and defending our democracy." Her op-ed pieces have appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and Christianity Today.

Join us for the 2026
Darrell West Lecture
Series on **Saturday,**
Feb. 28, 7 pm, in
Chapel Hall. A
reception and book-
signing will precede
the lecture.



Food For Thought Book Group

This month, Claudia's book group will discuss "Rules of Civility," by Amor Towles. This novel tells the story of a young woman during the Jazz Age whose life is on the brink of transformation. With its sparkling depiction of New York's social strata and intricate imagery, "Rules" deals entertainingly with themes of class, identity, and self-discovery.

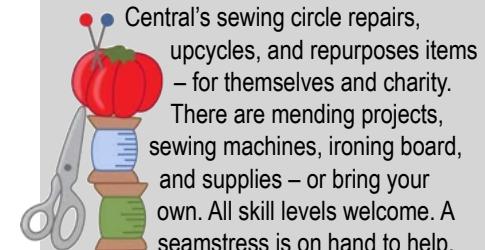


Thursday, Jan. 8,

7 pm, in the Fireplace Room

Coming up on Feb. 12: "Birds in Fall," by Brad Kessler

Sewing Circle



Central's sewing circle repairs, upcycles, and repurposes items – for themselves and charity.

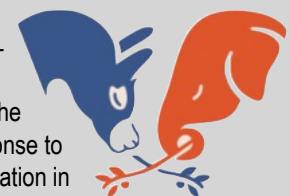
There are mending projects, sewing machines, ironing board, and supplies – or bring your own. All skill levels welcome. A seamstress is on hand to help. Contact Amy Hebb. **Saturday, Jan. 10, 10 am, and Jan. 24, 12 noon, in the Fireplace Room**

Women Gather

This month, Central's women's fellowship will enjoy lunch together and watch a movie: *Miracles* (1986), a comedy starring Tom Conti and Teri Garr. Questions? Ask Claudia. **Sunday, Jan. 11, 12 noon, in the Fireplace Room**

Central Men's Group

Open to all ages, Central Men's Group is a monthly breakfast gathering – 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. If you have questions, contact John Trevor. **Thursday, Jan. 15, 7:30 am, in the Fireplace Room**



Toward Better Christian Politics

Central's popular discussion group not only explores the Christian response to political polarization in America, but also how we can turn Christian views into action. If you have questions, contact Paul Armstrong or Kristin DeKuiper. **Sunday, Jan. 18, 12:15 pm, in the Fireplace Room.**

Fourth Thursday Book Group

This month, the Fourth Thursday Book Group will discuss "Rough Sleepers," by Tracy Kidder. This fascinating read tells the story of Dr. Jim O'Connell, who invented ways to create a community of care for a city's unhoused population – showing how one person can truly make a difference. Email Ann Scott (eannscott56@gmail.com) for a Zoom invitation. **Thursday, Jan. 22, 12:30 pm, via Zoom.**

Coming up on Feb. 26: "What's the Matter with Men," by Richard Reeves

Release

In children's ministry, we spend a lot of time helping young people learn how to hold things: friendships, feelings, questions, and faith. But after the tragic events at Brown University, I'm feeling the pull to release. Releasing is not about letting go because something doesn't matter; it's about loosening our grips because something matters deeply, and learning that we can trust God enough to carry what we cannot.

Many of us are holding fear, grief, anger, and confusion. Our children are, too, even if they don't yet have the words for it. They pick up on our tones, our silences, our nervous glances at the news. As the church, we are called to be a place where these heavy things can be gently released into God's care – not ignored or rushed away.

Releasing can look like giving kids permission to ask hard questions without needing immediate answers. It can mean creating space for prayer that is honest rather than polished, for silence as well as words, for tears as well as hope. It means reminding our children – and ourselves – that feeling scared does not mean we lack faith. It means we teach them that God is big enough to hold our sorrow and close enough to sit with us in it.

For the wider church, releasing may mean laying down the illusion of control – or helping and shifting towards being a witness to the pain. We release the belief that we can always keep everyone safe by our own strength, and instead recommit to being a community of care, vigilance, and love. We release our despair into God's hands and choose, again and again, the work of peacemaking.

We pray for those directly impacted, and we also release our children into God's protection, not by shielding them from reality, but by anchoring them in love. May we be a church that teaches the next generation how to release fear and reach for hope.

As we move into the New Year, this posture of releasing will shape who we are becoming together. We will continue to build spaces where children are known, heard, and held. We will lean into practices of listening, prayer, and presence – trusting that faith is formed not in certainty, but in relationship. With courage and compassion, we step into the year ahead committed to nurturing hope, telling the truth in love, and walking alongside our children as they grow in trust of a God who holds us all. ~ *Cristina*

Friday Film Fare



It is one of the world's oldest and most secretive of meetings – the conclave that elects a new pope in the Roman Catholic Church.

In the political thriller **Conclave** (2024), an aged and much-venerated pontiff has died. Cardinal Thomas Lawrence of the United Kingdom (played by Ralph Fiennes), dean of the College of Cardinals, faces the daunting task of organizing and supervising this crucial event.

As deadlock looms among arch-conservative Cardinal Tedesco (Sergio Castellitto), moderate reformer Cardinal Bellini (Stanley Tucci), and seemingly accommodating but cunning Cardinal Tremblay (John Lithgow), Lawrence uncovers conspiracy, blackmail, and dark secrets that could shatter the holy faith itself. And, over it all hangs the question: Who is worthy?

Who indeed could be worthy? That is what we must ponder in this tense, complex, and brilliant drama named one of the top ten films of 2024 by the National Board of Review and the American Film Institute. [120 minutes; color; rated PG]

Join host Jim Silverthorn on Friday, Jan. 16, 7:30 pm, in the Fireplace Room.

In the Gallery

This month, the Gallery at Central presents **Rosanna Maria Salcedo** – Rituals of Renewal: The Sacred Feminine in Nature and Spirit.

Rosanna is a creative, personal development coach, and educational consultant, who stands at the intersection of art, leadership, and healing. A first-generation Latina of Dominican heritage, her life and work are rooted in resilience. Rosanna has lived through divorce, cancer, and the heartbreak loss of her son – and transformed each experience into a source of strength, wisdom, and beauty.

After three decades as an educator, she now devotes her life to helping women reconnect to their inner wisdom and reclaim their stories. Through her art studio, coaching and retreats, and forthcoming book ("Leading Bravely"), Rosanna invites women to integrate grief, courage, and creativity as sources of power and purpose.

In all of her work, Rosanna creates spaces where women can heal, lead, and live bravely. She believes the parts we hide or grieve are our greatest teachers. The lotus, her signature symbol, represents this truth: rooted in mud, rising toward light.

Meet the artist at the opening reception on Friday, Jan. 9, from 5 to 7 pm.

New App For Parents

If you haven't already seen it, we now have an app that accompanies the new Children's Church curriculum. It helps parents stay engaged with their kids throughout the week. There are devotionals and prompts on the current theme and scripture, as well as age-appropriate activities and articles. The app is free – though you can upgrade for a cost. Questions? Contact Cristina.



Join the Children's Choir!

Rehearsals started in September, but it's not too late to join Central's Children's Choir. We welcome children in grades three through eight. And, we encourage them to bring a friend or two (even if they're not affiliated with Central) since it's more fun to sing with your pals. Children learn to read, understand, and enjoy music while developing discipline, leadership, and a strong commitment to their faith. Questions? Contact Patrick Aiken. Rehearsals are weekly on **Mondays, 5 to 6 pm, in the Choir Room**.

Young Adult Gathering

Young adults ages 18 and up are invited to join a relaxed, open conversation about life and faith. Life is too big to walk alone – let's journey together! We'll connect, share stories, and build community along the way. Bring your questions, bring a friend ... everyone's welcome! The group meets on the fourth Thursday of each month. Questions? Contact Cristina. **Thursday, Jan. 22, 6:30 pm, in the Fireplace Room**



Thanks, Beth!

Our long-term nursery worker Beth Callaway's last day was Sunday, Dec. 28. Beth has been a part of the Central community for her entire life, and we are so grateful for all that she has done for our little ones and their families. Beth's husband, a 9/11 survivor, is currently in hospice, where she continues to care for him. She also has plans to continue her studies in childhood education at Empire State University.

Beth, thanks for your inspiration and assistance. We'll miss you!



Use this QR Code to access all Central links!

Central Congregational Church

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www.centralchurch.us

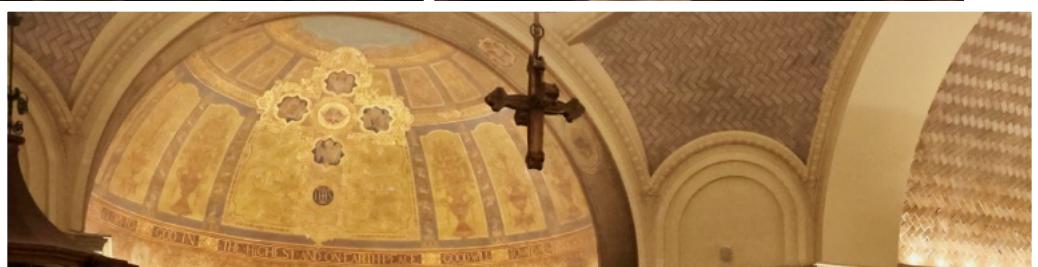


DEC
6, 2025





DEC
21, 2025



Carol Service

