



CENTRAL NEWS

Feb 2026

Vol. 34, No. 6

A Good Word From Patrick



Hey folks! As a pastor in Decatur, I had the privilege of serving as a supervisor and mentor to seminary students stepping into their first official roles in local churches. Each of them challenged me with new ideas and expectations of what the church could be. Each brought a fresh perspective on congregational life. Each inspired me to see the world in new and hopeful ways.

I am deeply grateful for the passion and clear-mindedness that come from what I've learned to think of as "generous" and "faithful ignorance." Over time, I've learned to carry that posture with me into new settings. Healthy congregations need voices from outside themselves – voices that aren't yet shaped by norms or habits or traditions. Without them, it's all too easy to calcify into routine, comfort, and unexamined assumptions.

In our growing congregation, we regularly hear from new voices as people find their places here. I am grateful for the perspectives and questions they bring – often, "How do I put my faith into action through congregational life?" "How do compassion and presence extend beyond the walls of the church and into the life of the community?"

I often hear how refreshing Central Congregational Church feels to people – that we have cultivated habits of welcome and grace that allow folks to belong without turning their brains off or conforming to rigid doctrine. Our covenant, which calls us to mutual aid along the journey, represents a meaningful step away from the kind of dogmatic life that has seeped into too many churches and movements.

Those same questions about faith-in-action don't disappear when the public conversation becomes louder or more polarized. In this season, when divisive and dogmatic voices are elevated to the highest offices, more and more people in our congregation are asking how to engage faithfully in public life. I believe our church has something to say here. More than that, I am increasingly convinced that "the Church" has a role to play.

Later this month, we'll have opportunities to engage these questions together. I hope you'll attend the Darrell West Lecture, where we'll hear from Kristin Kobes Du Mez on Christian Nationalism. I also hope you'll join us for a follow-up conversation the next Monday as we reflect more deeply on the topic together. There are healthy ways to put faith into action, and there are unhealthy ways. Discerning the difference is work best done in community.

in the meantime, there is much unfolding in the life of the church. During Lent, we'll gather for Wednesday night devotional services and weekly conversations with our local mission partners about their work. We'll welcome new members. We'll continue creating opportunities for service, mutual aid, and thoughtful advocacy in our city and state. This, too, is part of how we practice a faith that is living, curious, and accountable to love.

I hope to see you Sunday! And all the other days, too! - Patrick

SPECIAL SERVICE OF MUSIC

MOZART

LITANIAE DE VENERABILI
ALTARIS SACRAMENTO

Sunday
February 22
4:00 pm

Central
Congregational
Church Choir

Patrick Aiken
Organist / Choirmaster

Reception follows in Chapel Hall

FEB EVENTS

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | Adult Sunday School | 9 am |
| | Stewardship Committee | 9:15 am |
| | Worship | 10:30 am |
| | Children's Church | 10:30 am |
| | Gallery Talk: Peter Mandel | 11:30 am |
| | Inquirers' Meeting | 11:30 am |
| | Religious Education Committee | 12 noon |
| 4 | Gallery Committee | 9:30 am |
| | Prayer and Quiet Reflection | 7 pm |
| 5 | Board of Deacons | 5:45 pm |
| 6 | Memorial Service: Nancy Roach | 11 am |
| | Gallery Opening | 5 pm |
| 7 | Sewing Circle | 10 am |
| 8 | Adult Sunday School | 9 am |
| | New Member Sunday | 10:30 am |
| | Children's Church | 10:30 am |
| | New Member Luncheon | 11:30 am |
| | Better Christian Politics | 12:30 pm |
| 10 | Nominating Committee | 5:30 pm |
| 11 | Prayer and Quiet Reflection | 7 pm |
| 12 | Food For Thought Book Group | 7 pm |
| 14 | Art as Sanctuary | 10 am |
| 15 | Adult Sunday School | 9 am |
| | Worship | 10:30 am |
| | Children's Church | 10:30 am |
| | Women Gather | 12 noon |
| | CCC Youth Lunch Out | 12 noon |
| 16 | Mission & Action Committee | 6:30 pm |
| | Technology Committee | 7 pm |
| 17 | Tuesdays with Scripture | 8 am |
| | Prudential Committee | 7 pm |
| 18 | Ash Wednesday Worship | 7 pm |
| 19 | Central Men's Group | 7:30 am |
| | Music Committee | 6:30 pm |
| 20 | Friday Film Fare | 7:30 pm |
| 21 | Art as Sanctuary | 10 am |
| 22 | Adult Sunday School | 9 am |
| | First Sunday of Lent | 10:30 am |
| | Children's Church | 10:30 am |
| | CCC Players | 11:30 am |
| | Membership Committee | 12 noon |
| | Better Christian Politics | 12:15 pm |
| | Special Service of Music | 4 pm |
| 23 | Pre-Darrell West Discussion | 7 pm |
| 24 | Tuesdays with Scripture | 8 am |
| 25 | Lenten Meditations | 6 pm |
| | Lenten Mission Supper | 6:30 pm |
| 26 | Fourth Thursday Book Group | 12:30 pm |
| 28 | Art as Sanctuary | 10 am |
| | Darrell West Reception | 5:30 pm |
| | Darrell West Lecture | 7 pm |

The Church Office will be closed on

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

Prayer and Quiet Reflection

Central will host prayer gatherings through the beginning of Lent. We'll offer some simple teaching on prayer, spend time in quiet prayer together, and then share to share our praises and concerns. If you've ever wondered what exactly you're "supposed to do" when you pray, please come. No experience with group prayer is necessary – just a desire to be present with God and one another. **Wednesdays, Feb. 4 and 11, 7 pm, Wilson Chapel**

New Member Potluck Luncheon

Join us in welcoming new members to the Central family during Worship and then stay after for the New Member reception and potluck luncheon in Chapel Hall. The Membership Committee will provide main dishes, but you can enliven the fare by sharing a side dish, casserole, or salad. Dessert will be courtesy of Scouts BSA: ice cream! Remember to wear your name tag! **Sunday, Feb. 8, 11:30 am, Chapel Hall**



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 February, 9 am, Fireplace Room**

Amos House Breakfast Volunteers

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



The Deacon's Bench

I have been thinking a lot about belonging – the feeling you get when you truly feel safe and empowered to share your voice.

In spring 2024, John and Yessica, theater artists from Colombia, created a Spanish language theater residency for youth at the Knight Memorial Library. I was transfixed when an inexperienced performer stepped forward to sing as part of the culminating event. Her singing and hand motions in a less safe, supportive space would have caused snickering and even laughter. But her audience listened with attention, even waited patiently as she had to restart her performance, rewarding her with cheers. This group of youth had clearly built strong bonds that allowed her to take a risk.

Reaching that moment required conscious community building. In John and Yessica's words, "It takes time for children to feel confident with each other ... and even to understand why we insist so much on forming a circle before starting each game. Because in the circle, we are all equal, we can all see each other, we can all hear each other, and no one is in front or behind me."

I was struck by the idea of a circle creating belonging – and reminded of the round tables that line Chapel Hall. Before the tables, I struggled to feel comfortable during Coffee Hour. It can be challenging to join a standing group already engaged in conversation – or to stand alone, awkwardly balancing your coffee and cookies. The round tables changed everything for me and my mother. Seated at a table, we are eye to eye with others. We meet new people, chat about our lives and the service, or discuss the tasty treats. These small interactions always make my mom exclaim, "Wow, I really feel like part of this church. I just feel so good." - Cheryl Space

Stewardship 2026/27

This month, Central launches its Stewardship campaign: "**Growing and Strengthening Central for a Brighter Tomorrow.**"

As new members join our congregation and longtime members and friends gather each week, our sanctuary has renewed energy. Children's Church, led by Cristina, continues to grow and enrich the lives of our youth. Mission work, through generous pledges, helps uplift the lives of local community members. And Sunday Worship, led by Patrick and Claudia, inspires us to spread the word of God among our neighbors.

Soon, you will receive a pledge card in the mail. Please prayerfully consider how you can support Central financially and submit your pledge by Dedication Sunday. After Worship, join the Stewardship Committee in Chapel Hall for fellowship and food – and rejoice in the generosity of our congregation. Thank you for your commitment to Central! **Dedication Sunday: March 22, 10:30 am**

Mission Works

Centralites Alexandra Arnold, Michael Fournier, Elizabeth Howlett, and Barbara Spencer have joined Hope Circle volunteers, staffing Hope High School's fashion boutique. At this volunteer-run thrift store – open most Thursdays, 10 am to 1 pm – students can find the latest trends, all priced under \$5. They can also earn "dollar coupons" during their lunch hour by answering questions related to their studies. If you're interested in experiencing the joy that comes from engaging with these students and serving this important need, email Michael Fournier.

Lenten Speaker Series

Every Wednesday during Lent, please stay after the Lenten Meditations services for a simple soup-and-bread supper provided by the Mission & Action Committee and a short presentation from a local organization.



- Feb 25 Immigration and Resettlement
- Mar 4 Gun Violence
- Mar 11 Food Insecurity
- Mar 18 Hope Circle (Hope High School)
- Mar 25 Environmental Action

Wednesdays, Feb. 25, March 4, 11, 18, and 25 – 6:30 pm, Fireplace Room

Refugee Restart Kits

Towards Better Christian Politics and the Mission & Action Committee are working with Dorcas International to create Refugee Restart Kits: specific household items that will help refugees start new lives in Rhode Island. Two families will arrive in the next weeks, and more are expected this summer.

The needed items – all new, please – include a variety of home and school supplies. Follow this link for details: <https://tr.ee/eCmaQj>. Or check out the sign-up sheet in Chapel Hall where you can select articles you would like to donate. Monetary contributions are also welcome. More details to come!

In Memoriam

Our prayers and sympathy are with the family and friends of George Delany ... Jane Pretat ... Nancy Roach ... and Kit Rodman. *Requiescat in pace*

From Claudia

I have a friend who reminds those in her circle of influence to always love. Everyone. Even those with whom we disagree. In some cases, especially those with whom we disagree! Even those who are not lovable. Even those who do not love others in the ways they should. Continue to love them anyway. This is not the kind of love proclaimed on the Valentine's Day cards you may receive this month. It is the kind of love that is incredibly different. It is often hard love for us and for those who receive it or don't receive it.

For it is agape love. We may or may not agree with the other person (often we do not), but we have a calling to see their humanity. To hold them and ourselves to higher standards of humanity. Do we get anything in return? Often we do not.

Agape love describes the love of God for humankind. The Gospel of John tells us that God so loved the world that Christ was sent to live among us. Writer / pastor Thom Shuman asks, "How much does God love us? Enough to send the divine heart, hope, and spirit to us, not to condemn us, but to save us. Not by our speaking or doing, but by God's good and precious grace are we saved."

Agape love is unconditional, and it is not easy. It calls us and others to be our best selves. It is sacrificial compassion for others, and it is a choice. It is exemplified in God's love for humanity. It is rooted in choosing caring consideration and compassion for others. It is also incredibly difficult much of the time.

Why should we practice it? Because that is our calling. That is what makes Christianity so amazing. Rather than turning away when people disappoint us, as so many people do, we are called to hang in there with them and to exemplify God's encompassing love for all people. We are called to consciously choose love even when that is the farthest thing from our hearts and minds. To pray for others. To resolve to love and to do so when it is difficult.

Lent begins this month on Ash Wednesday. What better Lenten resolve could we possibly find than to spread agape love to those whom we encounter? In so doing, we will be participating in a profound walk of faith in this contemplative season.

Love and blessings - *Claudia*

Unpacking Christian Nationalism



Historian Kristin Kobes Du Mez – New York Times best-selling author of "Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a

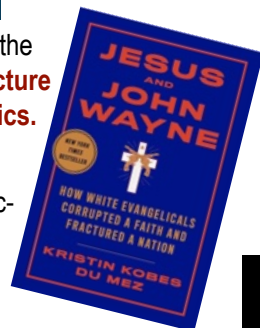
Nation" – will speak at the **2026 Darrell West Lecture on Religion and Politics.**

Dr. Du Mez's speech – addressing the intersection between religion and politics in 21st-century America – will

follow a welcome by series sponsor / moderator Darrell M. West, Brookings Institution senior fellow, former Brown University professor, and Central member. The evening concludes with a question-and-answer forum and book signing. The lecture is free and open to the public. **Saturday, Feb. 28, at 7 pm, in the Sanctuary**

And don't miss:

- The **Reception** – exclusively for Central members – held right before the Lecture and catered by Amos House. The cost is \$10 per person. Please contact the Church Office no later than Monday, Feb. 23, to make your reservation. **Saturday, Feb. 28, 5:30 pm, in the Fireplace Room**
- A **Pre-Lecture Discussion** – covering Dr.



Du Mez's writings on Christian nationalism, corporal punishment, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and Palestine. For the readings, contact Paul Armstrong (armstrong.paul.b@gmail.com). **Monday, Feb. 23, 7 pm, in the Fireplace Room**

- Central's second **Community Care Conversation**, tackling "Christian Nationalism: Faith, Politics or Both?" Kristin DeKuiper, attorney and founder of Central's Toward Better Christian Politics group; Bill Kole, author of "In Guns We Trust"; and Central senior minister Patrick Faulhaber will spearhead the conversation. **Monday, Mar. 2, 6 pm, in Chapel Hall**

Art as Sanctuary

Creativity is a form of renewal. Through art, you can listen to yourself and others, strengthening both personal expression and community connection.

In this group, led by new Central member Robert Ramspott (who holds an MFA from Pratt Institute in New York City), people of all skill levels are invited to slow down, breathe and reconnect with their inner lives by creating art – without judgement or pressure – so creativity can become an act of faith, presence, and shared humanity.

Please reserve your spot with Antonia Greco (antoniam@centralchurch.us). **Saturdays, Feb. 14, 21, and 28, 10 am, Fireplace Room**



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. Questions? Contact Amy Hebb.

Saturday, Feb. 7, 10 am, Fireplace Room

Food For Thought Book Group

This month, Claudia's book group discusses "Birds in Fall," by Brad Kessler. Kessler's knowledge of the natural world, music, and myth enriches every page of this moving novel about solitude, love, losing your way, and finding something like home. Questions? Ask Claudia. **Thursday, Feb. 12, at 7 pm, Fireplace Room**

Coming up March 12: "James: A Novel," by Percival Everett

Women Gather

This month, Central's women's fellowship will discuss the new things they are encountering and considering in their lives. Grab a cup of coffee and join in the conversation! If you have any questions, please contact Claudia. **Sunday, Feb. 15, 12 noon, Fireplace Room**

Tuesdays With Scripture

Our weekly community devotional resumes this month! We'll discuss a short Bible passage. Each session is self-contained. Come to one, or come to all of them! Contact Claudia for a Zoom invitation. She'll also send you the reading and questions to consider ahead of time. **Tuesdays, Feb. 17 and 24, 8 am, via Zoom**



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, Feb. 19, 7:30 am, 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. Questions? Contact Paul Armstrong or Kristin DeKuiper. **Sunday, Feb. 8 and 22, 12:15 pm, Fireplace Room**

Fourth Thursday Book Group

This month, the Fourth Thursday Book Group will discuss "Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male Is Struggling, Why It Matters, and What to Do about It," by Richard V. Reeves. Reeves examines this crisis and offers a positive vision for masculinity in a more equal world. Email Ann Scott (eannscott56@gmail.com) for a Zoom invitation. **Thursday, Feb. 26, 12:30 pm, via Zoom**

REplenish

February is known in the secular world as the month of love. Hearts, flowers, and reminders to say “I love you” seem to be everywhere. As people of faith, this season gives us a chance to slow down and think about love a little differently. God’s love isn’t something we celebrate for a day or prove with grand gestures. It’s steady, generous, and always more than enough. God’s love replenishes what feels worn down and fills what feels empty.

This month, we’re leaning into what it means to replenish love in real, tangible ways – especially as we continue shifting toward deeper community integration. We’re learning that faith isn’t meant to stay contained within our walls. It grows when we show up, build relationships, and allow ourselves to be part of the community God has placed us in.

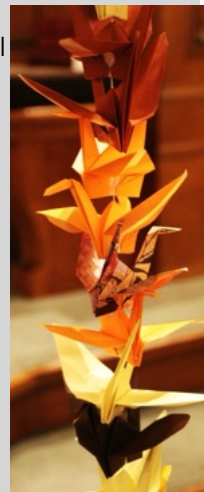
One way this is taking shape is in Children’s Church. This month, a Mission & Action Committee member will share how they live into their role. It’s a chance for children to see that being part of the church means being part of God’s work right now – not someday in the future. Service, compassion, and justice are things we practice together.

We are also working toward a partnership with Hope Street Fashions, Hope High School’s thrift store, holding space for collaboration as we learn how best to support and replenish essential clothing for teens in our community. For many students, access to clean, seasonally appropriate clothing can make a real difference in their daily lives. This is one of the ways we’re listening first, building trust, and responding thoughtfully to real needs. Keep an eye out for more information and ways you can help!

As we keep moving forward together, may we trust that the love we give away doesn’t leave us empty. God meets us in the giving, fills us in the sharing, and keeps inviting us into deeper connection with one another and our neighbors. ~ *Cristina*

1,000 Cranes of Peace

The origami cranes gracing Central’s chancel are an offering of presence, prayer, and peace from Pilgrim Christian Church in Chardon, Ohio. Thirteen years ago, Chardon suffered a school shooting similar to that at Brown University and received this symbol of hope and healing from a church in Wisconsin. With them, we pray for peace and an end to gun violence.



Online Membership Directory

Central has implemented new church management software, which includes an online membership directory. We are excited about the benefits it will bring to each member and the church as a community. **The top priority is to balance functionality and privacy.** Working with the Board of Deacons and Prudential Committee, the Technology Committee has developed a rollout plan that offers access to all Central members. **You will receive a series of emails** explaining how to access the directory, mobile app, and privacy features. **See the February 2026 digital newsletter for details.**

CCC Youth Lunch Out

All Central middle and high schoolers are invited to meet up on the Chapel Hall stage during Coffee Hour before walking over to East Side Pockets for food and fellowship. Check out the menu (www.eastsidepocket.com) to see their diverse Middle Eastern fare – including the best falafel around! **Sunday, Feb. 15, 12 noon, at East Side Pockets** (278 Thayer Street, Providence)

Wondering Together

Be sure to pick up a copy of “10 Questions Every Teen Should Ask (and Answer) about Christianity” by Rebecca McLaughlin. Every week via email, Cristina will share a bit of the book along with some questions or topics teens and parents can discuss at home. It’s a tangible way to process, experience, and notice God in our lives.

Children’s Church Needs You!

Children’s Church is seeking Sunday morning volunteers. Even if you can only work a Sunday or two, it will have a big impact. The steady, caring presence you offer helps create the kind of safe, joyful space Central kids need to grow. And, if you’ve been curious about volunteering, or feeling a gentle nudge but aren’t quite sure where you’d fit, we will be happy to talk it through with you – no commitment required. Just contact Cristina.

Central Congregational Church

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Friday Film Fare



An eight-year-old Amish boy (the remarkable Lukas Haas) is the only witness to a brutal murder. Police detective John Book (Harrison Ford) is assigned to investigate the case and

protect the boy and his mother, who are in Philadelphia on a trip to visit relatives. But the lawman himself becomes the target of insidious forces in his own department and must seek protection in the simple, reverent, non-violent, and – to his eyes – backward community of those he was to protect. **Witness** (1985) is a clever, at times amusing, at times edge-of-seat suspenseful drama of culture contrast and mystery with a sensitive undercurrent of caring and ultimately forbidden love. [112 minutes; color; rated R] **Join host Jim Silverthorn Friday, Feb. 20, at 7:30 pm, Fireplace Room.**

In the Gallery

This month, the Gallery at Central presents “**Hometown Perspectives**,” an exhibition by three Little Compton artists: Claire Bowen, Erica Driver, and Josie Richmond.

“Hometown Perspectives” invites you to explore a deeply rooted, regionally grounded – yet broadly resonant – vision of land, memory, community, and transforma-



“Take-Out Seafood” by Claire Bowen

tion. Across the three artists’ distinctive voices, this exhibition draws on the textures and colors of rural and coastal life: gardens and greenhouses, pastures and salt-air horizon, and the interplay between the nature world and human presence.

Claire Bowen creates layered, mixed-media works that draw on memory, abstraction, and material interplay. Her pieces offer an emotional interpretation of hometown. **Erica Driver** brings vivid immediacy and intimacy through her en plein air work. Using acrylic paint marker on wood panel, she captures a freshness that feels alive and breathing. **Josie Richmond** contributes overlapping landscape perspectives through her printmaking, encaustics, and mixed media works. Maps, contours, and color fields in woven layers articulate an interpretation of her environment.

Meet the artists at the opening reception on Friday, Feb. 6, from 5 to 7 pm.

Gallery Talk

Author Peter Mandel

“From Idea to Edits to Art: How a Kids’ Book is Born”

Last December, The Gallery at Central presented drawings and illustrations from Peter Mandel’s ten children’s books, including *Jackhammer Sam*; *Bun, Onion, Burger*; *Zoo Ab-Cho000*; and *Say Hey! A Song of Willie Mays*. This month, Peter will join us after Worship to discuss how children’s books are brought to life.

Sunday • February 1
11:30 am • Chapel Hall