



CENTRAL NEWS

May 2026

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A Good Word From Patrick



Hey folks. Large language models, which mimic human capacity for thought, creativity, and intelligence through pattern recognition and algorithms, are radically altering our understanding of work, art, the creative process, and general expertise. As I write, I am sitting next to a marketing executive who is on the phone with his partner, reading ChatGPT feedback on code drafted by an employee. The comments are pretty critical.

Whether the coffee shop is an appropriate place to give negative feedback to employees is a separate point. But, there is clearly value in a non-expert supervisor having an outside advisor's opinion on source code if it is causing problems for their company. But I wonder what happens when executives decide it is easier, less expensive, and more efficient to replace their employees with artificial intelligence (AI).

I know this isn't a particularly revolutionary hot take. Countless articles have been written about the vulnerability of many fields of employment to the efficiency of AI workflows. But right now, this is what I worry about. I worry about the loss of an apprentice class of new employees who need to be paid to make mistakes early in their careers under the guidance of mentors, who may now be replaced with easier-to-manage bots. I worry about the increasing use of AI as a replacement for therapy, spiritual guidance, and friendship. I worry about the impact of outsourcing the hardest parts of our internal growth to AI models that sycophantically offer easy answers to hard questions.

I worry about what might happen if we let the momentum of technological progress push us deeper and faster into isolation from our neighbors, our God, and our true selves.

I am not a Luddite. Candidly, I use ChatGPT as an editor, I use it to summarize documents and proposals, and I have used it to evaluate sermons retrospectively. As a tool, these large language models are incredibly helpful. I just hope we don't lose ourselves to the tool. I have no interest in speculating on the developers' intentions for AI. Whether they hope to bring about a utopic vision of an age of leisure or they just hope to make as much money as possible, there is something essential for us to cling to.

In an age of easy answers, isolation, political division, and universal distraction, we must hold fast to the deep work of presence. There is something beautiful and sacred about the experience of some struggle in life that converts intelligence to wisdom. There is something sacred about the awkwardness of new relationships that makes lasting relationships deeply meaningful over time. Even more, deep relationships are formed when you call or text someone for an answer rather than asking an algorithmic program.

These frictions in life aren't problems to be programmed away. They are the gifts that make life meaningful. The slow process is good. The human interaction is worth it. The challenge forms us into resilient, capable, and wise creatures who stand apart as the beloved image-bearers of God. What a gift. I hope to see you Sunday! - Patrick

Scenes from Holy Week 2026



MAY EVENTS

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----------|
| 2 | Art as Sanctuary | 10 am |
| | Sewing Circle | 10 am |
| 3 | Nursery Opens | 9 am |
| | Adult Sunday School | 9 am |
| | Stewardship Committee | 9:15 am |
| | Worship | 10:30 am |
| | Children's Church | 10:30 am |
| | Better Christian Politics | 12 noon |
| | Religious Education Committee | 12 noon |
| 4 | Community Care Conversation | 6 pm |
| 6 | Amos House Volunteers | 6:30 am |
| | Gallery Committee | 9:30 am |
| | MidWeek | 6 pm |
| | Kid's Table at Midweek | 6 pm |
| | Children's Choir Rehearsal | 6:30 pm |
| 7 | Board of Deacons | 5:45 pm |
| | Choir Rehearsal | 7:30 pm |
| 8 | Gallery Opening | 5 pm |
| 9 | Art as Sanctuary | 10 am |
| 10 | Nursery Opens | 9 am |
| | Adult Sunday School | 9 am |
| | Worship | 10:30 am |
| | Children's Church | 10:30 am |
| | Women Gather | 12 noon |
| 11 | Service Week: Better Lives RI | 8:30 am |
| | SW: Sophia Academy | 5 pm |
| 13 | Amos House Volunteers | 6:30 am |
| | SW: Amenity Aid | 10 am |
| | SW: Amenity Aid | 1:30 pm |
| | MidWeek | 6 pm |
| | Kid's Table at Midweek | 6 pm |
| | Children's Choir Rehearsal | 6:30 pm |
| 14 | Food For Thought Book Group | 7 pm |
| | Choir Rehearsal | 7:30 pm |
| 15 | SW: Rochambeau Library | 10 am |
| 16 | SW: Knight Memorial Library | 9 am |
| | SW: YMCA Camp Fuller | 9 am |
| | Art as Sanctuary | 10 am |
| | UCC Board Meeting | 10 am |
| 17 | Nursery Opens | 9 am |
| | Adult Sunday School | 9 am |
| | Worship | 10:30 am |
| | Children's Church | 10:30 am |
| | Inquirers' Meeting | 11:30 am |
| | Spring Bike / Walk Outing | 2 pm |
| 18 | Mission & Action Committee | 6:30 pm |
| | Technology Committee | 7 pm |
| 19 | Plant & Properties Committee | 5:45 pm |
| | Prudential Committee | 7 pm |
| 20 | Amos House Volunteers | 6:30 am |
| | Newsletter Deadline | 3:30 pm |
| | MidWeek | 6 pm |
| | Kid's Table at Midweek | 6 pm |
| | Children's Choir Rehearsal | 6:30 pm |

(continued on page 4)

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, May 17, 11:30 am

New Member Sunday

Sunday, May 31, 10:30 am

Adult Sunday School

Adult Sunday School will continue on "A Celtic Pilgrimage," discussing the works of the late John O'Donohue, Celtic poet, author, former priest and philosopher. Questions? Ask Claudia. **Sundays in May, 9 am, in the Fireplace Room**

Midweek at Central

Our senior minister invites Centralites of all ages – and their friends – to join him Midweek for fellowship, food, and faith-filled conversation! Adults will share a meal at 6 pm (free-will donations accepted) and then dive into the previous Sunday's scripture reading. Kids and youth will eat dinner at their own table and then enjoy crafts and games. **Wednesdays in May, 6 to 7:30 pm, in Chapel Hall**

Pentecost



On Pentecost Sunday, we celebrate the wonder and mystery of God, the teachings of Jesus Christ, and the powerful gifts of the Holy Spirit. Please wear red in celebration of the tongues of fire – and to remind us of God's never-failing love. After Worship, join us on the West Lawn for the releasing of the doves. **Sunday, May 24, 10:30 am**

New Name Tags

If you've requested a new name tag, please pick it up at the Welcome Table in Chapel Hall.

New Member Potluck / Reception

Welcome new members to the Central family during Worship and then stay after for a New Member reception and potluck luncheon. The Membership Committee will provide main dishes, but you can enliven the fare by sharing a side dish, casserole, salad, or dessert. **Sunday, May 31, 11:30 am, in Chapel Hall**



The Deacon's Bench

We have had the bittersweet adventure of investigating colleges for our daughter Emelia. As the old saying goes, give them roots and wings. What a whirlwind of emotions for all with trying to find one perfect university that will envelop the next chapter of her life.

She looked at universities on the east and west coasts, in New England, and beyond. She weighed the options of schools that could combine her interest in environmental studies with her passion for trumpet performance. After identifying 11 universities that met all or most of her requirements, the application process began. Essays and applications. Common app and long form. Submit by this date. Submit by that date. And after many weeks of laughing, crying, and everything in between, she was finally done ... so we thought.

Just when you think the stress is over, the acceptance waiting game begins. Many late nights talking to her, telling her not to lose faith. Letting her know that in times when the situation is too much or you feel like you cannot go on, you lift it up to God. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:18). And thinking back, while it is a simple concept, it is one that is very difficult as a young adult. I do not think that I fully appreciated that I could lift it up to God until I was in my late twenties.

The acceptances started to roll in. Long gone are the days of receiving acceptances by mail. A small envelope was a "no," and a large envelope was a "YES!" Now it is an email with "An update has been made to your application. Please check your portal." As Emelia opened each acceptance email, there was a moment of silence as we held our breath followed by many moments of excitement. Her face was beaming with each one.

We are both excited and sad. Our daughter is following her dreams – what her heart tells her to do. We must let her go and trust that she knows what she is doing. Emelia isn't just going to college; she is starting her life independent of her parents. We have to have faith that everything is going to be okay. And now I need to read Matthew 11:18. - *Bill Iuliano*

Media Literacy



On **Monday, May 4, at 6 pm**, the Mission & Action Committee will host its third **Community Care Conversation: "Media Literacy in the Misinformation Age."**

Today, misinformation is generated and spread rapidly via the internet, artificial intelligence, chatbots, and even biased media outlets. Media literacy – examining evidence, questioning sources, and recognizing manipulative techniques – is essential for navigating news and other content, as well as the biases that make deceptive narratives appealing.

Local freelance journalist Philip Eil – former news editor and staff writer at the Providence Phoenix and contributor to The Atlantic, Boston Magazine, Huffington Post, Men's Health, The Nation, VICE, and other media outlets – will discuss the current state of news media, how we got to this complex and chaotic moment, and what we can do to maintain a healthy information diet. And, senior minister Patrick Faulhaber will lead table discussions about how we grapple with the tension between fact and fiction.

Please RSVP to the Church Office (info@centralchurch.us) – and don't forget to bring your friends!

Mission Works

Central's **Second Annual Week of Service** is almost upon us. Come May 11, Central volunteers will start to descend on Rhode Island non-profits, learning firsthand that any act of service, regardless of size, makes a real difference! Sign up in Chapel Hall!

Monday, May 11

- 8:30 to 10:30 am: Help **Better Lives Rhode Island** sort and organize food pantry items
- 5 to 7 pm: Assist with various projects at **Sophia Academy**

Wednesday, May 13, 10 am to 12 noon OR 1:30 to 3:30 pm: Package personal hygiene products at **Amenity Aid**

Friday, May 15, 10 am to 12 noon: Help prepare materials for summer activities at **Rochambeau Library**

Saturday, May 16

- 9 am to 12 noon: Work on the Garden Project at **Knight Memorial Library**
- 9 am to 3 pm: Work on outdoor projects at **YMCA Camp Fuller**; lunch provided
(Read about the optional sleepover on page 4!)

Mission Partner Spotlight

*Established just six years ago, **Amenity Aid**, based in Warwick, is Rhode Island's only hygiene bank, providing essential personal hygiene products to vulnerable populations via a network of partner non-profit agencies.*

Better Lives Rhode Island has helped our state's unboxed and food insecure populations improve their lives for 50 years. Its food pantry, clothing closet, day center, case management services, and on-the-street outreach engage every day with support, love and care.

From Claudia

Heritage Sunday – the day we remember and celebrate our members of 50 years and more – is just over. But you may not know it's also the anniversary of the 1852 founding of Central's original church on Benefit Street. When that church opened, there were five Congregational churches in the city. Not too long after, there were only three.

One became First Unitarian Church of Providence. The other two – Central and Beneficent – joined the United Church of Christ (UCC) after its gathering of the Congregational, Christian, Evangelical, and Reformed Churches in 1957. Of these four founding UCC member denominations, the Congregational and Christian churches had already merged in 1931; the Evangelical and Reformed churches, in 1934.

It's good to remember the roots from whence we came. I was reminded of this recently when our seven-year-old grandson and I were talking about his and his brother's names. Their first and middle names are from people in the family – one from their mother's side and the other from their father's. Cole was most interested when we talked about who those people were. I told him stories about them. I never used the word "ancestor."

When it came time for supper, Cole offered the blessing. In it, he thanked God for "the ancestors"! I thought about that a bit. So, for Easter I made Babcia Bread, a semi-sweet bread, using my husband's Polish grandmother's recipe. A bread of "the ancestors"!

The future stands on the shoulders of our past in all sorts of ways, ready to boost us into the future – hopefully for good things. Pretty amazing. When we know where we've come from, we can envision where we want to go as we continue to move forward.

Sometimes the past even takes the shape of a beloved sweet bread. By the way, it was a great hit at our Easter dinner – as it had been for all the ancestors who enjoyed it through the centuries! The recipe is now safe in the hands of two little boys who love to bake and who hopefully will share it with their descendants, continuing the tradition and the stories.

May it be so! - Claudia

Poetry Corner

Newness of Life

The azaleas are blooming
As are the forsythia
The hope of Spring
With its pinks and yellows
Grass no longer covered
With the snows of February
The Resurrection of Jesus
Fresh in our memory
With his messages of peace,
Compassion, inclusivity, and forgiveness.
May we live out His Word
As we welcome the newness of life.

- Charrell Maxwell

SEEKING VOLUNTEERS



Central is looking for volunteers to staff its Rhode Island PrideFest booth on **Saturday, June 20**. There are three shifts: 10 am to 12 noon (set up), 12 noon to 2 pm, and 2 to 4 pm (clean up). For more information or to volunteer, contact the Church Office.

SAVE THE DATE

Sunday • June 14 • 11:30 am • West Lawn

Annual Church Picnic

Celebrate summer as a community of faith. Bring picnic sides or sweets. We'll provide hotdogs and hamburgers!

Musical Notes

Save the Date for your Favorite Things!



On June 5, the Central Congregational Church Choir will perform "The Sound of Music" in a concert setting – to support renovation of the Choir Room. You are invited to sing along – and dress up too, if you like!

Please support this fundraiser by purchasing tickets, reserving a special table, buying an ad in the program, or bidding for a song.

Yes, we're actually **auctioning off song dedications!** Yours – which may honor a person, memory, lifelong commitment ... your choice – will be featured in the program. Choose from these numbers:

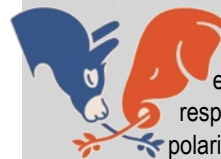
The Sound of Music
[How do You Solve a Problem Like] Maria
My Favorite Things
Do-Re-Mi
Sixteen Going on Seventeen
The Lonely Goatherd
Climb Every Mountain
So Long, Farewell
Edelweiss

Place your bid by emailing Beverly Haviland at choirroom@centralchurch.us. The opening bid for each song dedication is \$250. If you are outbid, the Music Committee will contact you so you can make a counter offer, if you like. **The auction closes on Wednesday, May 20.** The highest bidder takes the song!

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, May 2, 10 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. Questions? Contact Paul Armstrong or Kristin DeKuiper. **Sundays, May 3 and 31, 12 noon, in the Fireplace Room**

Women Gather

Come join Central's women's fellowship group as we share memories of the women who have mentored us throughout our lives. Questions? Ask Claudia. **Sunday, May 10, 12 noon, in the Fireplace Room**

Food For Thought Book Group

This month, Claudia's book group will discuss "How to Read a Book," by Monica Wood – an unsparingly honest and profoundly hopeful novel about forgiveness, letting go of guilt, seizing second chances, and the power of books to change our lives. Questions? Ask Claudia. **Thursday, May 14, 7 pm, 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, May 21, 7:30 am, in the Fireplace Room**

Art as Sanctuary

Art offers a quiet, creative sanctuary for reflection, exploration and renewal. In this group, led by artist Robert Rampott, 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. **Saturdays, 10 am, in the Education Wing**

Fourth Thursday Book Group

This month, the Fourth Thursday Book Group will discuss "Raising Hare: A Memoir," by Chloe Dalton.

This New York Times bestseller details the author's experience rescuing and raising a baby hare during the COVID-19 lockdown – exploring freedom, trust, and finding joy in nature. Email Ann Scott (eannscott56@gmail.com) for a Zoom invitation. **Thursday, May 28, 12:30 pm, via Zoom.**



RESONANCE

May brings a lighter, joyful energy into our Religious Education spaces. One word that feels just right is “resonance.” These are the moments that stay with us and continue to echo after we leave the room.

Last month, the Board of Deacons visited our kids, and they learned more about what happens in “big church” and how deacons care for people in our wider community. The conversation sparked something meaningful. The kids did not just listen. They responded.

Together, they wrote their own invocation and confession prayer, reflecting on what it means to create a space where everyone feels seen, welcomed, and loved. Their words were thoughtful, honest, and full of heart. In case you missed this wonderful prayer on April 12, I wanted to share it with you:

*God, we come to you wanting to feel welcome and belong, and we welcome you.
Help us make this be a place where everyone is included,
where people are kind, where we notice each other and say “hello,”
give compliments, and share hugs, so no one feels invisible.
If you walked into this room right now, we would say “hi.”
We would ask you questions, invite you to our parties to play and laugh with you.
We would wonder about you – what you love and what brings you joy –
and we would tell you we love you.
And we wonder, do you love us too?
As we get ready to listen, help us be calm inside.
Help us feel our breath, our hearts, and your presence with us.
Meet us in quiet moments, in music and prayer, in joy and rest.
Remind us that you are already here, welcoming us, loving us,
and inviting us to be fully ourselves. Amen.*

As we come to May, we are noticing what is resonating. The kindness. The curiosity. The way these kids care for one another. We are also looking forward to summertime events, our mission trip, and staying connected as a community in the months ahead. ~ Cristina

In the Gallery

In May, the Gallery at Central presents **Jocelyn Vache: Meaning through Material.**

Jocelyn weaves sustainable practice, community engagement, and permaculture throughout her artmaking, teaching, and life. Using homegrown and foraged pigment and fiber and homemade soymilk, Jocelyn abstracts and combines literal and figurative imagery drawn from the environment, current events, and personal experiences.

Her work confronts societal double standards, illuminates human blind spots, and glorifies daily acts of nature. Some of her paintings highlight the overwhelming beauty and complexity of nature. Others illustrate concepts disregarding nature. Her sidewalk art tends to serve as direct calls to action.

Jocelyn earned her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from the University of Massachusetts – and holds LEED Green accreditation, a globally recognized symbol of sustainability leadership. Currently, she teaches at a Boston public high school that serves immigrant youth and multilingual learners. She shows her work throughout New England at museums, galleries, and street-painting festivals. Jocelyn is also a regular at Central’s Sewing Circle, repairing, upcycling, and repurposing clothing.



Meet the artist at the Gallery Opening on Friday, May 8, from 5 to 7 pm.

Spring Outing



Join Central members for a picturesque spring outing on the nearby **Ten Mile River Greenway – on Sunday, May 17, from 2 to 4 pm** (no rain date). Bring your family, your friends, or just yourself. Walk the path, or ride your wheels (bicycle, scooter, baby buggy). Dogs are welcome too!

The Ten Mile River Greenway is a three-mile, nearly flat, paved bike / walk path that winds alongside the Ten Mile River in East Providence. The Greenway is one of the few paths in Rhode Island that was not built along a former rail corridor. This means the path follows the natural contour of the land and provides an especially scenic ride or walk along rolling terrain on the banks of the James Turner Reservoir.

The path begins at Kimberly Ann Rock Athletic Fields, behind Wolf School (215 Ferris Avenue, Rumford). There is ample parking. Plus, the Greenway passes through Slater Park, where a restroom is available.

John Harkey will be stationed at the trailhead from 2 until 4 pm, with a bike pump, assorted tools, and snack bars to get you started. Questions? Contact John at 401-654-3168 (text), 401-369-9545 (tel), or johnjarrottharkey@gmail.com.

Overnight Adventure

Central’s Second Annual Week of Service offers the perfect opportunity for youth and families to give back while enjoying an overnight adventure at **YMCA Camp Fuller** (619 Camp Fuller Road, Wakefield).



Saturday, May 16, from 9 am to 3 pm is Camp Fuller’s Back-to-Camp Work Day. We’ll prep and paint, do light grounds-keeping (sweeping, raking, etc.), and help with other outdoor projects. All ages are welcome! Lunch will be provided.

But here’s the ultra-fun part: Families and youth are encouraged to arrive on Friday, May 15 – any time after 3 pm – for a sleep-over! You’ll stay in heated cabins and enjoy camp-style meals (dinner and breakfast) and an evening campfire!

Limited space is available, so email Cristina ASAP, if you are interested. And please note: the overnight and Work Day will take place rain or shine!

Celebrating Central Graduates

Central will honor high school and college seniors in the **Class of 2026** and their achievements during Worship on Sunday, June 7. If you are graduating this spring or have a family member who is graduating, please send the graduate’s name and school to Nick Collins (nicholas@centralchurch.us) by June 1.

MAY EVENTS (continued)

21	Central Men's Group	7:30 am
	Music Committee	6:30 pm
	Choir Rehearsal	7:30 pm
23	Art as Sanctuary	10 am
24	Nursery Opens	9 am
	Adult Sunday School	9 am
	Pentecost Sunday Worship	10:30 am
	Children's Church	10:30 am
	Membership Committee	12 noon
27	Amos House Volunteers	6:30 am
	MidWeek	6 pm
	Kid's Table at Midweek	6 pm
28	Fourth Thursday Book Group	12:30 pm
	Choir Rehearsal	7:30 pm
30	Art as Sanctuary	10 am
31	Nursery Opens	9 am
	Adult Sunday School	9 am
	New Member Sunday	10:30 am
	Children's Church	10:30 am
	New Member Potluck	11:30 am
	Better Christian Politics	12 noon

The Church Office will be closed on Monday, May 25, for Memorial Day.

Central Congregational Church

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