
CENTRAL

advent issue / 2022 /



Room in the inn: Making space for God's Light

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catching up with the artist

Central's **Lucy Baum** once again shared her gifts with Central by creating a painting to use for Advent.

The theme this year is, "Room in the inn: Making space for God's Light."

We took a few moments to catch up with her and talk about the creative process behind this gorgeous painting.

1. Tell us about the process behind this painting?

This painting started as a simple sketch in pencil of an open doorway beckoning the viewer inside. From there, I transferred it onto water color paper using pencil and masking fluid, which resists watercolor pigments. The masking fluid helps to maintain some areas of the painting as a crisp white—like the stars in the sky and some of the lines in the composition. Then thin layers of watercolor are built up to produce a range of tones from pale washes of color all the way to the deep, saturated blue of the night sky.



2. Why did you choose this color palette?

I chose a palette of mainly deep blues and purples, contrasted against a warm, golden yellow. The blues and purples of course echo the liturgical colors of Advent, but they also evoke the clear, cold night sky—the kind of deep, dark night in which two weary travelers might have arrived in Bethlehem to find that all the inns were full. Meanwhile, the warm light spilling out of the open doorway is like a beacon of welcome—come in! There's room for you here! It's my way of imagining how the inn could have looked, and how I hope our hearts and homes can be for friends and strangers alike in this season.

3. Who are some of your favorite artists?

Oh, there are so many artists I admire! But just a few that I'm especially inspired by these days are A.J. Casson's landscapes from the turn of the 20th century, Erin Hanson's bold



and colorful western landscapes, and an artist working in New Zealand named Andrew Tischler. As I'm writing this, I'm realizing they're all landscape painters!

4. How long did this painting take?

I worked on this painting in the evenings over several hour-long sittings. Watercolor is a wonderful medium for working fairly quickly, as each layer dries within minutes!

5. What are you most forward looking to this Advent season?

I am looking forward to taking time to rest and connect with the rhythms and traditions of the season—I love cozy, quiet nights at home with a candle and a good book. I love those things all year round, but something about Advent makes them more precious than ever!



By Rev. John M. Semmes

You know the story. Travelers registering for the census clog the whole town. Mary and Joseph arrive late and settle for a barnyard stall...and with it, a manger into which they place their treasure for the first moments of his life.

But 20 minutes after that, what? Barbara Brown Taylor imagines the hole in the heavens has closed up, and the only music is coming from the bar over at the inn. A cow has stepped on a chicken and the resulting squawk startles the baby and makes him cry. Exhausted, Mary picks him up, tears streaming down her face. Joseph tries to comfort her. She snaps at him; if only she had met a nice boy from Nazareth, she laments, she'd be back in her warm home instead of competing with sheep for a place to get some shuteye. She apologizes to Joseph; he tells her it's okay, that he's frustrated for her. They both hurt all over, there's nothing to eat, and it's cold as hell. Yet God is still there, in the middle of it all.

God comes to us in the middle of our lives, too, however far from home we are, however less than ideal our circumstances. That's where God is born – into any pair of hands we cup for him, any crevice of trust we create for him, any trough we build for him, and there he will stay.

The challenge, though, is to choose to build your trough. The challenge is to trust that God would dare to put flesh on bones and walk in your mess and make preposterous claims about your future and suffer your endless screw-ups and nurse the countless wounds of your foolishness. The challenge is to accept the wildly spectacular promise that you will live forever in the presence of a God who breathed





Above, Rev. Semmes in Central's sanctuary. Opposite page: Portion of the 'Christmas' stained glass pane in Rand Chapel.

life into you and never stops saying: "Fear not! I have called you by name. You are mine." The challenge is to admit that you are not self-sustaining, that there is something bigger than you in this world, and to accept that ours isn't some one-and-done deity who set the earth in motion and then hit the road, never to return. It is to trust that, whenever you peer over the lip of the manger you build, you'll remember you're not alone.

As Frederick Buechner put it, "Once you've come to see Jesus in the manger, you can never be sure where he'll appear again, or to what ludicrous depths he will sink in his wild pursuit of your life." In other

words, once he's a part of you, he can be found as much in your revelry as he can in your solace. He is present in the profundity of your sorrow and in the agony of your pain. He labors with you in factory, bodega and school; he accompanies you through chemo, rehab and crisis. In your boredom and in your chaos, he is equally at home. He laments when you fail but leaps when you succeed. He laughs when you're glad and cries when you grieve. He is the strength you lack and the weakness you desire. He is the forgiveness you need and the grace you don't deserve. He is healer and confidante and friend. He is love – and he never lets you go.

This Advent, build for him a trough, then press on toward home.

And you will know peace.

Merry Christmas.

By Rev. Jasiel Hernandez Garcia

W

What do you love the most about Advent?

Is it creating a beautiful Advent wreath with candles? Is it using your Advent calendar to mark down the days before Christmas? Is it reading your favorite devotional during a cozy winter morning? Is it wrapping gifts and decorating your home? Is it sharing Christmas stories with your family before bed?

Undoubtedly, there are plenty of things to love about Advent - the mystical season of waiting, gatherings, and miracles. What I love the most about Advent is that it is the busiest season for the church. Growing up in a household where our lives revolved around the happenings at the church has implanted in me this deep excitement every time we get to Advent. You see, throughout the season of Advent, the church building fills with laughter, fellowship, and good news for about five consecutive weeks. Doesn't that sound amazing?

Each week during Advent is packed with wonderful mission opportunities, beautiful church concerts, social gatherings, multiple worship planning meetings, end-of-the-year projects that need to be completed, liturgies for all sorts of things, sermons, family commitments... you name it! We clear our schedules and make room for all things related to Christmas. In a way, the birth of Christ becomes the center of our attention. Everything revolves around this much anticipated day.

I really love the fast-paced nature of the season. I love how old friends return to the church. I love how guests and new friends show up unexpectedly



Christmas morning, 2000, at the Garcia house. Jasiel is in the middle, wearing white, surrounded by his cousins and younger brother. Grandfather Juan, as Santa Clause, and aunt Zareth on the far right holding the youngest cousin, David.



to serve those in need despite the cold weather. I love how we all come together, most likely a year later, and pick up where we left off as if nothing had happened. For a brief moment, we become the body of Christ, alive and joyful, ready to share good news with everyone around us. A miracle indeed.

And then December 26 arrives, and the whole world takes a deep breath. We all find rest wherever we may find ourselves - perhaps with full bellies and sore throats after so much food and laughter. We get up to grab a cup of coffee and notice how quiet everything is. The house might be a mess, but it bears witness to the fun everyone had yesterday. We tell ourselves that life is good and take a brief moment to say thanks to God.

All the hard work we did culminates at that holy moment - where joy and melancholy meet. We come to terms with the fact that it is

now time to go back to whatever normal we had before Advent. We say our farewells to family and loved ones. We clean the house and take the decorations down. We return to an emptier church. And life goes on. We begin this process of emptying ourselves of all things related to Christmas and Advent. They don't have a clear purpose anymore - we tell ourselves. And unfortunately, along the way, throughout that process, we also leave the birth of Jesus Christ behind. We leave God behind. All those spaces we had saved for the season are now filled with meetings, doctor's appointments, heavy burdens, financial worries, and audacious dreams.

Friend, do not make that mistake this year. Do not leave God behind after all the wonderful things you will see and experience this Advent season. Make room in your life for the one who always goes with you. God is here, so include God in your plans. Make God the center of your life. Tell God your dreams and worries. Hold on to God's light today and every day from now on.

The GOOD NEWS right in front of me

By Susan Landrum

My favorite Advent tradition is the lighting of candles throughout the season, culminating in the passing of candlelight through the Central sanctuary on Christmas Eve while singing Silent Night. Advent coincides with the winter solstice - the longest night of the year. We spend the season in less and less light, which is a beautiful parallel for the mystery of God breaking into our world in the middle of the night, in the middle of nowhere as a newborn baby, lying in a manger between his parents.

My neighbor at Columbia recently hosted a Bible study on Luke's Christmas story for a school project and we talked about the shepherds and what it must have been like to be them. Y'all know this passage well, "Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone



around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.'" We talked about so many things that afternoon and we kept coming back to the fact that God's messenger came to these ordinary, hard-

working shepherds in the middle of the night.

What we think of as night in Atlanta is very different from a desert nighttime. There are no street lights or houses lit up from the inside. Halogen headlights were far from being invented. Nighttime in the desert is beholden to the stars in the sky and the phase of the moon to give direction and light. These shepherds were also experiencing darkness which is why this angel standing in front of them with this message would be so terrifying. The light



The Palmer Family participates in the lighting of the Advent candles last year.

of the angel was in full relief against a desert night sky. This good news of great joy was brought to the shepherds in the middle of the night, in darkness.

And the shepherds MOVE! They make their way to Bethlehem with “haste.” They want to experience the good news of God. This means they were traveling in that same darkness, using the moon and the stars to guide them to where they needed to go. This was one long night - for Mary and Joseph, and for these shepherds seeking out the joyful news of God. But in the midst of this long night, God does exactly what God promises to do. In the manger, these shepherds find a baby wrapped in cloth. In the manger, these shepherds find the good news.

In my own life, with each Advent, I am learning that much like day and night share the same sky, joy and grief do, too. We don't experience one without the other. To risk joy is to risk grief. Both, like day and night, are necessary to understand the

other. There's always something else at work, too. There is God. Like the angel breaking through to the shepherds in the middle of the night, like the baby Jesus lying in the manger in Bethlehem, there is the love of God, lighting the way. I can't help but think of this quote from the poet Elizabeth Alexander:

“What if the mightiest word is love, love beyond marital, filial, national. Love that casts a widening pool of light. Love with no need to preempt grievance”

In today's sharp sparkle, this winter air, anything can be made, any sentence begun. On the brink, on the brim, on the cusp -- praise song for walking forward in that light.”

In this Advent season, when joy and grief, day and night work together, I will look for God's love, the mightiest of all. The lit candle, the widening pool of light, the good news standing right in front of me.



By Vicki Fey

Advent will take on a different meaning for me this year,

following the announcement of my upcoming retirement. It is hard for me to admit that this will be the last Advent and Christmas of my vocational career, which spans more than 50 years. I love Advent. I love our family tradition, which still happens even though it's just Steve and me, of listening to the King's Singers Christmas CD as we decorate. That is the start of the season for me. I love Advent at Central – the crechés in the windows, the paper lace banners, the giant Advent candles, different family/friend groups lighting those candles each week, singing an Advent waiting song. I love the choral music of the season, the handbell music, the children's Christmas pageant. Oh yes, the organ music too! However, I realize that next year, without all the “busy-ness” I will be able to ponder this year's Advent theme, “Room in the Inn: Making Space for God's Light” more fully.

I don't often take time to just sit and make space for God to speak to me. It is difficult, with the troubles of the world, to allow God's light to shine in my mind and heart and I pray I will be able to allow that to happen in Advents to come. One of my favorite choral anthems is one I learned in the fall of 2009 while we were on sabbatical, living on the campus of Columbia Theological Seminary. In addition to auditing a class or two, while Steve visited a different church each week, I



mostly sang in Central's Chancel Choir and rang in Geneva Bell Choir. I was also fortunate enough to sing with Atlanta Master Chorale's predecessor, Atlanta Sacred Chorale, under the direction of Eric Nelson. Bob Chilcott's "The Shepherd's Carol" (text by Clive Sansom) was on the Christmas program that year and Steve and I liked it so much we took it back to our choir in Bristol. The anthem text takes the voice of the shepherds, speaking to the "Lady," the Virgin Mary, telling her what was happening the night they were notified by the

angels that the Christ Child was born. A portion of the anthem speaks about the light – "There was a star, Lady, shone in the night, larger than Venus it was and bright, so bright." God's light is the Christ Child, and God's star in the sky guided the shepherds and later, the Magi, to the Christ Child. The anthem closes with "And so we have come, Lady, our day's work done, our loves, our hopes, ourselves we give to your son."

May it be so.



By Dr. Jennifer Sengin

I always look toward the Christmas season with such joy and expectation.

I have such fond memories at Christmas time where my family would bake cookies, wrap Christmas presents, and listen to Christmas music. I cherished that time when time stood still and we were all present together. While I miss these times with my family now that we are spread out across the country, it does make the time we spend together all that more special.

One of my favorite things about this season is all of the fantastic music!! I love walking into stores and hearing sleigh



bells on every tune, Christmas music in the background of life, even the endless playing of Mariah Carey's "All I want for Christmas is You."

I am so excited for this year's Christmas season at Central! We have some beautiful music planned for all of the services and are looking forward to sharing it with you all! The repertoire spans from familiar carols through newly composed works that help prepare our hearts and minds for the birth of Jesus.

Central Leadership



The Session of Central Presbyterian Church

Class of 2023

Bessie Green
Kathy Harben
Khaliah Johnson
Susan Landrum
Amy Mast
Mike Sizemore
Beth Webb-Woods
Charles Yorke

Class of 2024
Janet Abercrombie
Lewis Amos
Julie Boggs
Kelly Bray
Sarah Cook
Mary Sidney Harbert
Tom Holcomb
Ximena Leroux

Class of 2025
Robert Catterall

Philip Covin
Ann Hunter
Hannah Palmer
Anne Sciarrone

The Diaconate of Central Presbyterian Church

Brookwood Hills: Ben Evans, Rob Forbes, Ellen Thompson

Decatur: Ed Carwile, Eleanor Dake,
Vanessa Kirk, Isabelle Werber

Down Yonder: LaShawn Green,
Emmalee Hackshaw, Linda Lehfeldt
(Em McNair – parish coordinator)

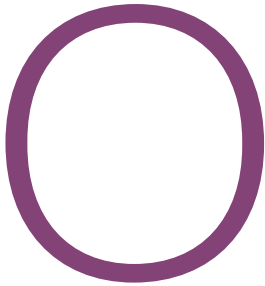
Intown South: Brian Bishop, Ben Sutton (Amy & Philip
Covin
– parish coordinators)

Intown North: Tom Leslie, Debbie Miller

Northern Lights: Betty Carroll, Vicki
Collier, Ginger Heidbreder, Zac Hilimire

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n behalf of the Mission Committee, thank you for your generous support and faithful witness this past year. With your help and leadership:

Central's courtyard ministry provided more than 6,000 boiled eggs; more than 8,000 cups of coffee; and hundreds of baked goods, pairs of socks, gloves, drinks, treats, and smiles.

Central collected close to \$5,000 for all four special offerings, 25 back-to-school kits for the Georgia Justice Project, close to 30 refugee-resettlement home kits for Memorial Drive Ministries, and over \$1000 towards school informs for Trou Jaques School in Haiti.

Central provided \$2,000 to support PC(USA) Mission Coworkers at Frontera de Cristo.


Central distributed more than \$200,000 from endowments and the operating budget to global and local partners.

Central, in collaboration with Trinity and the Shrine, and under the leadership of the Capitol Hill Neighborhood Development, launched the Trinity-Central Flats project that will provide affordable housing in downtown Atlanta.

Central assisted Hope House in redeveloping its courtyard.

Central started a new partnership with "Jesucristo El Salvador Presbyterian Church" in Tapachula, Mexico.

Central participated in various advocacy efforts focused on homelessness, affordable housing, climate change, and voting rights.



2022

mission
SNAPSHOT

small steps,
BIG IMPACT

Giving



CATALOGUE

As you consider your end-of-the-year giving, we encourage you to keep in mind the following mission partners. We have built strong relationships with these organizations, and we are inspired by the ways they have demonstrated resilience throughout the pandemic and great love for our community and the world. We ask that you keep them in your prayers and take the time to learn more about them during our Advent Celebration on December 4 after worship.



Central Outreach and Advocacy Center

Celebrate their 25-year anniversary by donating using this link, or you may shop using their wishlist. There are also plenty of opportunities for you to volunteer during the week.

Bashor Men's Night Shelter

You may sign-up to make and deliver a meal, or you may sign up to become an overnight volunteer. Please contact Rev. Jasiel Hernandez Garcia with any questions.

Trou Jaques School - La Gonave Haiti Partners

Sponsor a lunch by donating \$30 online via Realm or by check.



Memorial Drive Ministries

You may donate towards their Christmas donation drive to benefit refugee families by purchasing one or more of the following items - a reminder that these need to be brand new. And you may drop them off at the church by December 4 after worship during our Advent Celebration.

The list includes 1) Boxed cookware sets with several pans & pots with lids, 2) Kitchen Utensil sets, 3) Silverware sets with place settings for 4-6 people, 4) Mixing Bowl sets that are plastic or metal and have 3-5 bowls, 5) Dishware sets for 4 – 6 people that include a large plate, small plate, bowl, cup, and mug, 6) Baking pan sets (can be metal pans or glass baking dishes).

Presbyterians for a Better Georgia

Contribute towards their advocacy efforts by donating to their page. You may also donate through Central via Realm or check.

Emmaus House Toy Drive

Check this link for a list of the activities that Emmaus House enjoys over the holidays and the gifts that are most encouraged. You may drop off your donation at the church by December 4 after worship during our Advent Celebration.



Christmas Morning Breakfast

Participate with your family in Central's Christmas Breakfast on Sunday morning, December 25. Plan to join us this year in fellowship with our neighbors and guests over a delicious and warm meal. Watch for details and information to sign-up.

By Kimberly Parker

Room In the INN?

“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”

- LUKE 2:7 KJV

Can you imagine showing up at an inn (hotel, motel, cabin, friend's house, etc.) and being told “there is no room for you here?” Or maybe that has happened to you before. I don't think I've ever experienced that, but others may have, due to some unforeseen circumstance.

I can't imagine what Mary and Joseph experienced or felt when they were told there was no room in the inn. I feel like some of the guests we see at Central Outreach and Advocacy Center are often told there is no room for them. It may be when they walk to a shelter and hear the





From left, Amy Kirkland, O.J. Flowers, Kimberly Parker, Chattrelle Gillyard, Sonja Hodges Opposite page: “Marooned,” by Howard Pyle.

words, “We are full.” It may be when they try a different shelter and are told, “We cannot give you a place to sleep until you have a state ID.”

I get the feeling that it isn’t just at shelters that our guests sometimes feel like they are being told, “There is no room for you here.” Sometimes that feeling can be associated with the way in which someone is treated. Our guests are often ignored, walked around, and shunned. People are sometimes scared of them. Some don’t know what to say to someone who is dirty and smelly or someone who appears to be talking to someone who is not standing right there with them.

I know for sure that our guests are often treated poorly when they go into places seeking services. They share that with us. I can imagine that during these times, they feel as if there is no

room for them.

At the OAC, our values are, “We believe in meeting people where they are with patience and humility, and treating each person with respect and dignity.” Our team does our very best to make sure we do this with each person we encounter. It’s not always easy. Our guests sometimes come to our doors, hungry, dirty, angry, tired, and totally beat down. As we attempt to meet them where they are with patience and humility, and treat them with the respect and dignity that everyone deserves, I hope we are saying to them, “There is room at our inn for you.”

I wonder during this Advent season if we could make sure we say to another person in some form or fashion that there is room at our inn for you? I wonder if we are able to do that, what that invitation may feel like to us? Who knows? In doing so, we may truly experience what Christmas is all about!



You've got mail!

BEHIND-THE-SCENES WITH CENTRAL'S DIGITAL ADVENT CALENDAR CREW

Every day throughout Advent, Central members receive a special devotion in their inbox. These devotions are written by members and staff and are often accompanied with art and music. The work that is put into this project on a seasonal basis is a labor of love. Here, we take a peek behind the scenes with three of the creators of this great Central tradition.

It is a labor of love of the Music and Arts Committee to put together the Digital Advent Calendar each year. Born out of necessity during the pandemic, the Digital Advent Calendar is now in its third year. It takes a village to create the calendar. Here's a peek behind the scenes.

The committee begins planning the calendar in September. We have several teams at work on the calendar simultaneously including devotion recruiters, art finders, music selectors, and the technical team. Some devotion writers suggest a piece of music and/or art for use with their devotion. If not, our teams of art finders and music selectors get to work finding appropriate art and music to reflect the devotion for that day. As devotions, art, and music begin to fill the shared Google Drive, the technical team gets to work developing the front-facing "door" page and the Google Site that hosts all the individual day pages. An editor reviews all the devotions for spelling and grammar. Once done, the site is shared with Mark Wallace to share with the rest of you! Thank you to all of you who have shared your talents, whether it be writing, searching for art, locating music, editing the text, or putting the calendar together to create the 2022 CPC Digital Advent Calendar! - *Julie Moore*



This again? Wasn't it just a few days ago that our choir joined Morningside's choir for a spectacular concert of Dan Forrest's Requiem for the Living? It felt amazing to sing alongside others and join our voices with an orchestra in my favorite setting: Central's sanctuary. Could we finally be putting the pandemic behind us?

Not so fast.

There we were, once again, on tiny screens for a virtual choir meeting. You see, three of us, myself included, tested positive for Covid-19 in the days following the concert. Although we'd been very much looking forward to working in person with the amazingly talented Dr. Janet Galván at Wednesday's rehearsal, we got the news that choir practice was canceled, and we would instead have a virtual session.

Once again, this community rose to the occasion. What could've been a real bummer (that's the scientific term for it, isn't it?) became an insightful lesson with Dr. Galván, as we



went through our upcoming repertoire piece by piece and saw ways we might connect with the music in our bodies. I have no doubt we will use what we learned in the upcoming weeks and beyond.

This church knows how to pivot. Our virtual Advent calendar was launched during a "real bummer" (aka the pandemic) but has continued beyond that and become part of our identity, just as much as the crèches that adorn the windows of our sanctuary and the Advent stars that hang from the ceiling. It's a true labor of love, from recruiting 29 writers, to finding appropriate music pieces, to determining what visual art piece best fits with the reflection. But that's who we are. It's what we do. This Advent calendar not only symbolizes the anticipation of Jesus's birth, but the community that makes us who we are.

So, yes. This again. - *Janet Abercrombie*

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Advent 2022 time is here – time for another Advent Calendar and we are all in for a treat. I know this because I had the privilege of advance reading of the reflections. You see, Liz Jaffe and I have been the recruiters of the writers this year.

Like the past two years, our church's Music and Liturgical Arts Committee decided to create an Advent Calendar ourselves rather than buy one. At the beginning of recruiting, Liz and I spent about an hour grouching. Why aren't we just buying an Advent Calendar this year? We are a small church. This is a lot of work. People are busy and may say no this year. Can we really recruit 29 writers from our church members, affiliates and staff? Fast forward - the answer is yes.

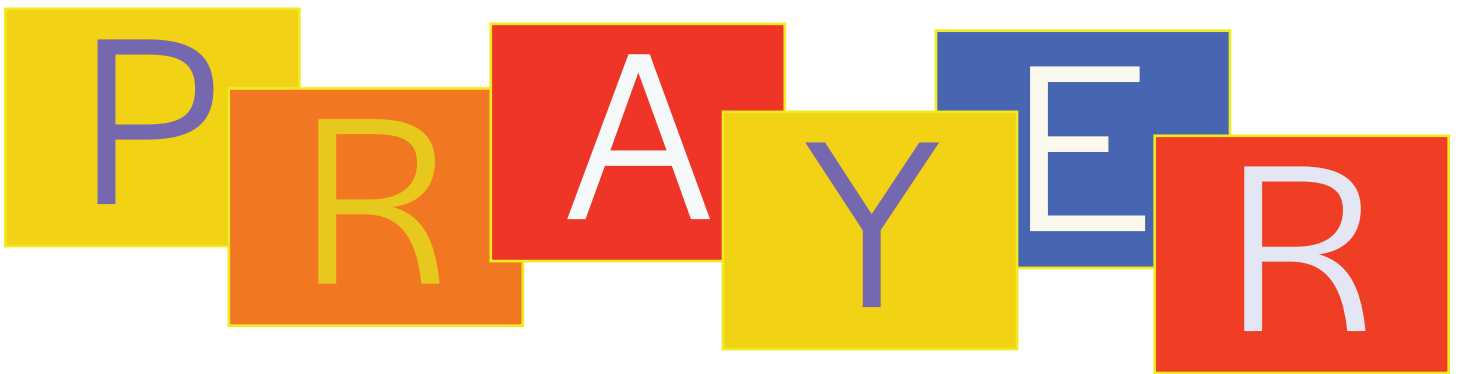
Liz and I learned why creating the Advent Calendar was worth it after shedding more than a few tears reading these reflections. We cried over different ones because that is how it works - different writers speak to our hearts and situations in different ways.

Our talented Advent Calendar writers are the heart and soul of our Advent Calendar. They were willing to take on the challenge of writing for the Advent Calendar even though many were also a bit reluctant.

It is hard work to write a devotion based on a lectionary passage. After reviewing the selection of scriptures for the day assigned to him, Martin Lehfeltd commented "Where, oh where do the lectionary crafters find these passages?" Our writers had to dig in, read, ponder and pray about the scriptures over the days until they discerned how to relate the passages to us in a meaningful way. Advent Calendar 2022 is behind us. It was work but so worth it! - *Marcia Crosland*



of WHAM, a wait list and the importance of



By Samuel Phillips

There are a few things that really get me into the Christmas spirit. The biggest and most notable thing being the hit song “Last Christmas,” by Wham! For most people it is the annoying song that still comes on the radio around the holidays, but when it comes on for me, it gets belted as loud and high as my vocal chords will allow. It gives me a feeling that I can’t always explain. It almost feels like it transports me to a different realm where I don’t stress, the worries of the day are behind me, and I’m extremely focused on the current moment. Yet, when January 1 comes around, the song is gone for a long time. The holiday fever wears off. And we go back to the day to day, waiting for the holiday season to come

again.

This feels like the same cycle with the Advent season as well. We notoriously call it the season of waiting, but if I’m being honest, it feels like I only begin to think about waiting around October and November. I’m not really thinking about it on January 1! Just like “Last Christmas.” I mean, sure, it is a pretty great song, but I’m not thinking about it year-round! It usually comes back into my world sphere in October and November!

Trust me, this is not meant to call anyone out, if anything, I am telling on myself as a future pastor. But let’s be honest, we always have to focus on the next thing! There are other aspects of the Christian year that we



have our sights set on. Not to mention our other classic holidays. But this year in particular, I'm wondering how we can better prepare ourselves for this season. How do I go forward in my ministry and not fall into the easy trap of only thinking about Advent when late fall comes around?

It may sound cliché, but I think the answer is in prayer. See, every prayer is like a mini-Advent. In a personal prayer, we are waiting for the moment in our lives, or in praying for others, where God meets us. Carlo Carretto says, "Personal prayer is the meeting place between the Eternal One and me; the Blessed Sacrament is the visible sign of my covenant with God." In each one of our prayers, God's presence is not some kind of prize for our faithful waiting, God's presence is a choice freely poured out of God's love for us.

When consumed by the Christmas Spirit, we can view prayer like a wish list, when it would be better to think about prayer as a waitlist. A wish list makes me think about the things I want, the things I think I deserve, but a waitlist means we have the criteria met, we just don't know when or how we may receive what we are looking for. So, build a practice of personal prayer this holiday season, but also throughout the year. Let each prayer be a reminder of the Advent season that is sure to come back around each year. Let each prayer be a reminder that we are waiting for God to come. When we really live into this hope and this waiting, we will be that much more rejuvenated, excited, and fulfilled when Advent comes around. Because God did come to us, in the manger.

Advent Schedule

ADVENT CELEBRATION

Sunday, December 4

Tull Hall following worship

THEOLOGY ON TAP: CHRISTMAS EDITION

Tuesday, December 8

7 p.m. at the Marlay House Decatur

CENTRAL OAC

GUEST HOLIDAY PARTY

Friday, December 16

10 a.m. to 12p.m. in the Courtyard

CAROLS IN THE COURTYARD

Sunday, December 18

9:45 a.m. at the Courtyard

Advent Schedule

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Sunday, December 18

During worship

HOLIDAY CELEBRATION WITH AMIS

Sunday, December 18

Tull Hall following worship

CHRISTMAS MORNING CELEBRATION

Sunday, December 25

8:45 a.m. in Tull Hall

CHRISTMAS DAY WORSHIP

Sunday, December 25

Pre-recorded online via livestream

Available throughout the day

NEW YEAR'S DAY WORSHIP

Sunday, December 31

In-person and online

11 a.m. in the sanctuary



In the next few pages, we take a quick glance at a few of events and efforts taking place at Central in 2023.



February 4

Acclaimed singer Callie Day will be coming to Central to sing in the service on Sunday, February 5 with the Central Chancel Choir, Shrine Choir and Morningside Chancel Choir.

At 2 p.m., she will perform a recital in the sanctuary.

More details will be coming in January for this unique event!



Winter Classes Preview

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me” - Housing justice in Atlanta

Sundays from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. in Tull Hall

January 8: What has Central done in the past in support of housing justice? (discussion leaders: a panel of Centralites)

January 15: How did we get here? The history leading up to Atlanta’s current housing justice situation. (discussion leader: Jack Hardin, Chairman and co-founder of Atlanta’s Gateway Center)

January 22: What can be done? Ideas for positively impacting housing justice in Atlanta. (discussion leader: Cathryn Vassell, CEO, Partners for HOME)

January 29: What does the Bible have to say about housing justice? (discussion leader: Dr. Ryan Bonfiglio, Old Testament Professor, Candler School of Theology, Emory University)

February 5: What should Central do going forward in support of housing justice? (discussion leaders: a panel of Centralites)

-Robert Catterall



Central in the City to continue to advocate, partner for a stronger, more just downtown

By Gary Cornell

Central Presbyterian Church has long had a central geographic location in downtown Atlanta. However, the Central in the City sub-committee of Local Mission is working to help our church be an active player in what is happening in south downtown. We aim to serve God by serving our neighbors and speaking with a voice for justice to the leaders of our City and State. As we wrap up another year of work in downtown Atlanta, we want to challenge you to join us next year in several ways:

1: Learning about changes in downtown and the unmet needs and opportunities for service: Through attending numerous meetings in the neighborhood and meeting downtown leaders we have learned that an unprecedented wave of new growth and investment is going on all around us that will transform south downtown. However much of this development is displacing poor people and driving up rents to unsustainable levels. Major real estate projects such as Newport Properties and Centennial Yards are adding thousands of new apartments. Some, but not enough, will be affordable for persons living near the poverty line. The Mayor of Atlanta, Andre Dickens, has committed that his administration will build or preserve 20,000 affordable housing units and has charged the religious community with sponsoring 10% or 2,000 of them. In one day Invest



Atlanta provided over \$300 million in subsidies to further 18 of these projects that are committed to bring over 1,800 new affordable apartments downtown. Looking forward to 2023, we hope that Central may be able to take part in this effort.

2: Partnering with other downtown groups who are improving the quality of life for those living in the City: Last year Central Presbyterian Church joined Central Atlanta Progress and began to meet downtown leaders who are working to protect and improve the quality of life for all of us who are living, working, worshipping and playing in downtown Atlanta.

For over 30 years Central has been a member of the Capitol Hill Neighborhood Development Corporation (CHNDC), formed by Central, Trinity UMC and the Shrine. CHNDC was instrumental in partnering to build Hope House, where 70 beds are provided for people who were formerly experiencing homelessness and coping with addiction, as well as mental and physical disabilities. As we enter 2023, CHNDC will be implementing an ambitious




A rendering of Trinity-Central Flats which would rise from a vacant parcel of land on Trinity Street adjacent to the Trinity Street Garage just four blocks from our church.

plan to construct a 9-story building with 218 apartments of which 183 will be affordable. It will also include 20 units that include supportive housing services for those suffering from addiction and mental health problems. The new Trinity-Central Flats would rise from a vacant parcel of land on Trinity Street adjacent to the Trinity Street Garage just 4 blocks from our church.

3: Advocating for justice in the halls of power: Our location adjacent to the State Capitol, one block from City Hall and 2 blocks from the Fulton County Administration Building affords a unique opportunity to make our voices heard by legislators at that state, county and city levels.

We are reaching out to these elected officials so they will know of our vision for the city and to speak up at key meetings. Recently members of Central in the City attended two Public Hearings of the Georgia Senate Committee on Unsheltered Homelessness to advocate for just and humane treatment for our neighbors experiencing homelessness. In the coming year we will track the Legislative Session along with Presbyterians for a Better Georgia and ask you to advocate for more funding and supportive programs to support the needs of persons experiencing homelessness, to expand housing affordability options and to support tenant rights to fair treatment when confronted with the state's oppressive eviction process.



God's Light

By Gayle Knight

It won't surprise you to learn that I, like many of you, am a list maker. Trying to keep up with family, job, church, volunteer commitments, and all that life throws our way requires daily, monthly, and seasonal lists. Each morning, I happily scratch through the accomplishments of the day before and create a new list. I set alarms on my phone to keep moving through the tasks. When I am working at my kitchen table, I set the oven alarm because it is even louder. All this organizing helps productivity but does nothing to make space for any kind of light, personal or spiritual.

We live in a frenetic and often troubling world. How do we make space for God's light? I have two ways. First, I go outside. I walk around the block or linger at the mailbox. I drive with my windows down and open windows in our house. Something about hearing the sound of birds and feeling the breeze reassures me over and over that I am in God's world and in God's care.

I see God when I'm floating on a pontoon boat in a mountain lake with dear friends, watching eagles soar overhead. I feel God in a tide pool, hunting for anemones and dipping my toes into the cold Pacific.

I hear God when I sit on my screen porch on a cold evening and listen to the call and response of owls hidden in the trees. Nature allows God's light to enter the cracks of life and pry them open. When I go outside, I hear God saying, "Breathe, breathe, breathe - I created all of this, and you, too."



Second, I think about people I love and those I don't even know but admire. God creates some amazing human beings. There are people in the world who care more for others and do more for our environment than I can even imagine. I go to church, spend time with family, and seek out the good news stories about people changing lives. I see God's light every day in human acts of giving and love.

In this darkest time of year, when we yearn for light and celebrate its glow, God's light can

stream through each of us. So breathe, breathe, breathe. We are in God's world and in God's care.

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.”
Philippians 4:8-9



Advent with Central

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STAY CONNECTED!



www.cpcatlanta.org



Room in the inn: Making space for God's Light