

The Messenger

The Newsletter of Central UMC

From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

In my morning devotions today, I sought out these familiar words from Isaiah 40, words that are associated more typically with the season of Advent:

“Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid. . .”

As Lent 2021 comes to a close, those words resonate with me. “(Jerusalem) has served her term.” Isaiah wrote these words originally to people who had lost everything at the hands of a military defeat. Families were torn apart from one another. Livelihoods were lost. Their entire “normal” was upended into something painfully abnormal, and they had to learn a whole new way of life. Hmmm. . . sound familiar?

Hasn't the last year, not just the last 40 days, felt like a prison term? We've been isolated from one another, and the toll of the pandemic has hit each of us in different ways. And yet, as morning follows even the longest night, we are finding comfort and now, blessedly, hope.

Our survey about resuming in-person worship revealed that 75% of Central respondents have received at least one dose of a vaccine. Others are waiting their turn, and only one respondent said they were hesitant or unwilling to receive a vaccine. These numbers are heartening, and they've been a factor in our decision to resume in-person worship on May 2. You'll see an article on page 2 in this newsletter that lays out our plans for our reopening. Please be sure to read the article, so that you can understand all restrictions in advance.

I was also deeply touched by how many of you shared your appreciation for the quality of our online worship. Many people have worked hard to make these services meaningful, and I am grateful for each one. We will be continuing online worship even after we resume in-person worship, moving from pre-recorded worship to livestream. (Yep, all of the bloopers and outtakes will be there live, for you to see!)

For those of you that cannot wait to worship together, and who don't mind a chilly, pre-dawn service, join us at 7 a.m. for our Easter sunrise service. (Precipitation would cause us to cancel.) We'll have a brief resurrection celebration on the lawn outside the Connect patio, a time to remember Mary's dawn journey to the empty tomb. Please wear masks and social distance. Feel free to bring a chair, or you can simply stand. Our full Easter service will be online at 10 a.m. on Easter.

The pandemic has taught us that we can be together even when we're apart. Our Lenten Bible study, *Seven Words*, has been great, with about 40 participants. We didn't have to cancel a single session due to inclement weather, and one of our teachers has been teaching even while visiting family on the west coast. I love the way that we've learned to use technology as a way to keep connected.

Celebrating the resurrection. Resuming in-person worship. Staying connected across the country. These things bring me comfort and hope and joy after such a long, difficult time. What is bringing you comfort these days?

I look forward to seeing you online or at sunrise, for our celebration of Christ's resurrection!

Blessings, Sally

When Will We Resume In Person Worship

We are so excited to come together again for in-person worship on Sunday, May 2 at 10:00 a.m.!

In order to make everyone safe as we enjoy being together again, we will be using the following protocols initially:

- Doors to the sanctuary will open at 9:50 a.m., to minimize the amount of time we're in the same space.
- Masks (for everyone 2 years and older) and social distancing will be required at all times in our building, including throughout the service.
- Seating will be designated by taped-off areas. The balcony will be available also.
- Overflow seating will be available in the Connect, where a large-screen television will carry the entire livestreamed service.
- There will be no congregational singing or responsive readings.
- There will be no nursery or children's programming initially, but those will resume at some point.
- No eating and drinking inside our building.
- We will be sharing in communion as part of our first worship service together! You will receive a single-serving communion set when you enter, and you will be able to remove your masks briefly to receive the elements at that point in the service.
- If you have any symptoms, we ask that you stay home.

Welcome New Member!

We welcome Katie Donaldson to the membership of Central UMC. Katie joins us by transfer of membership from the Nazarene church. She and her husband have a young daughter. Welcome, Katie!

“On each Lord's Day in Lent, while Lenten fasts continue, the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection.” -Unknown

Financial Update

Your faithfulness will enable us to continue to serve our community in the name of Jesus. Thank you for all you are doing.

	February	YTD	BUDGET % YTD (at 17% of year)
INCOME			
Member Support (Pledges and All Offerings)	25,887	45,963	11%
Other Income (Investment Income, Parking, etc.)	5,581	27,509	13%
EXPENSE			
Apportionments (District and Conference)	0	0	0%
All Expenses (Salaries, Utilities, Program Expense, etc.)	37,412	75,752	12%
TOTALS	-5,944	-2,550	

COUPLES CORNER

Editor's note: For many years, this series of articles by Ruth (now deceased) and Clark Achelpohl was a favorite feature of this newsletter. Clark has shared his archive, and these writings continue to have relevance for all couples.

From April 2009, HONEY I'M SORRY. WILL YOU FORGIVE ME?

The season of Lent and Easter turns our thoughts to forgiveness. We have been reading the book *The Five Languages of Forgiveness* together. Forgiveness in relationships is sometimes difficult but necessary to keep the relationship growing and whole. In their book, *The Five Languages of Apology*, Gary Chapman and Jennifer Thomas discuss the importance of moving from making an apology to accepting the apology. Forgiving someone for wrong behavior can be tough, especially if we consider the offense to be major.

All sincere apologies have the same two goals: that the offender be forgiven and the relationship be reconciled. When forgiveness and reconciliation occur, the relationship can continue to grow. Chapman and Thomas remind us that forgiveness is a choice. When you and I receive an apology, we can choose to forgive or not to forgive. Because we are not perfect, we sometimes fail to treat each other with love, dignity, and respect; therefore apologies and forgiveness are essential elements to healthy relationships. Who apologizes first is unimportant, but that each of us apologizes is all-important.

Of course, the ultimate example of forgiveness comes in the form of the Easter Story. Jesus paid the ultimate penalty so that we could know what God's forgiveness is. God's forgiveness means that there is no longer a barrier between us and God. Forgiveness removes the distance and allows us to continue in relationship with God.

In human forgiveness, we choose to lift the penalty and pardon the offender. It means letting go of the offense and welcoming the offender back into our life. Forgiveness is a decision not a feeling. It is the decision to continue growing in relationship by removing the barrier. If you are the offended party, forgiveness means that you will not seek revenge, demand justice, or let the offense stand between the two of you. Forgiveness results in reconciliation. It means that the two of you have put the issue behind you and are now facing the future together.

Forgiveness is an essential step in rebuilding the relationship. Rebuilding trust may take longer and will need some time. Trust is not a decision, it is rather an emotion. Trust is the gut-level confidence that you will do what you say you will do. Trust is that emotional sense that I can relax with my partner and don't have to be suspicious. I can let down my emotional guard. Trust is the normal emotional state in healthy relationships. When trust is broken or betrayed, it does not spring back immediately after an apology. Trust returns in stages. When there is changed behavior over a period of time, you will come to trust again.

Forgiveness cannot remove the consequences of hurtful actions or words and it does not remove all painful emotions. Forgiveness does not remove the memory of the event; we may never forget. However, we can choose to focus on the future rather than allow our minds to dwell on the past.

Forgiveness holds the power to give renewed life to the relationship. The choice not to forgive pronounces the death penalty on the relationship. Without forgiveness, relationships die. With forgiveness, relationships have the potential to become vibrant and enriching for the people involved.

May we all learn how to ask for and to give true forgiveness to keep our relationships growing.

Ruth Achelpohl

How Can I Find Out About Joining Central?

We'd love to have you join our church family! Contact Sally at Sally@connectatcentral.com

Where Can I Find the Central Prayer List?

If you'd like to receive our weekly prayer list, send a request to Cindy Wienstroer at cjkwinkc@gmail.com

Safe and Easy Exercise Tips for Seniors

In these uncertain times, following an exercise routine may be the last thing on your mind. However, staying active is more than just an obligation to tick off your list. It's a way to cope with stress, keep your immune system strong, and boost your mood. Central UMC invites you to read on for easy ways you can safely exercise while also staying connected with your church community.

1. Create an exercise group.
2. Help those in need by offering your services.
3. Stay active and involved with your community.
4. Take frequent breaks, drink plenty of water, and stretch if you feel stiff.

By following social distancing guidelines, you can safely connect with others, enjoy time outdoors, and offer services to those in need without fearing for your health.

- Submitted by Jason Lewis



CENTRAL EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Celebrates Week of the Young Child

During the week of April 12, 2021, the early childhood center will be celebrating Week of the Young Child (WOYC) at Central. Children will be engaging in many different activities including spirit week dress-up activities. We will also begin our annual art show and auction. Auction proceeds help restock the art supply closet used by both the ECC and Central Sunday school classes. This year, the show will be set up in the Connect for family viewing during pick up and drop off. Each classroom will display works of process art that the children have been creating this year. Some classrooms have been working on their pieces for months. Due to the pandemic, we are unable to host a traditional “Family Night” with on-site activities. In lieu of that, teachers and directors are preparing packets of activities that encourage family interactions to be sent home during the Week of the Young Child.



Community Enrollment Begins on April 1, 2021

Enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year & Summer 2021 is well underway for our currently enrolled families and Central church members. We will open enrollment for the Community starting April 1. Directors will be staying after hours to host an in person safe and socially distanced event for new families to drop off enrollment materials. See our website for all forms and other important information. Classes are filling up quickly! We are happy to answer any questions you might have about any of our classes. You might want to schedule a tour with the directors if you have not visited before. Again, in person tours are also available by appointment. You can find our virtual tour posted on our website.

Classes are expected to fill quickly, so enroll early!

The Central Early Childhood Center educates, stimulates and nurtures *creative hands* and *creative minds* in the children and adults who actively learn, play, grow and work together.

Thank you to all the kids who did such a great job with our Palm Sunday parade video!

Children’s and LGBT Ministry Update from Ash

Hey, hey Central! What an exciting time in Kansas City. Vaccinations are happening, spring is...springing? The geese are coming back finally so let's party, as my slightly crazy grandma would say. In the life of our kiddos, on our private Facebook page (Children's Ministry of Central UMC, KCMO...be sure to join the group!), I have been doing a weekly bedtime story where I put on a silly adult onesie, read a book, and then our kiddos interact with the post. It has been SO much fun, and I hope you all are able to join me soon!

In the life of LGBT outreach, I have been meeting with multiple individuals to hear their stories. So far, 6 individuals have agreed to meet one-on-one regularly with me so that we can build a relationship, and so they can know they have at least one person in their corner. Each and every time, the students are AMAZED at the amount of support I have from Central! So, THANK YOU! One student commented, "That, right there. I think that's what Jesus would want." I agreed wholeheartedly. Thank you Central, for your unrelenting support so that our LGBT neighbors can know they are loved, supported, celebrated, and cherished!

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

- Clark Achelpohl, April 01
- Lynnis Jameson, April 01
- Candy Macy, April 01
- Judy Hunt, April 06
- Kane Cook, April 09
- Steven Rand, April 13
- Bert Bates, April 14
- Hallie Dugan, April 14
- Nicholas Hickam, April 16
- Avery Bryon, April 17
- Amanda Mayes, April 18
- Jennifer Cummins, April 19
- Connie Hubbard, April 23
- Brian Berlin, April 24
- Robert Gamer, April 26
- Hannah Taft, April 26
- Benjamin Costanzo, April 27
- Anna Sell , April 28



“One hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove, but the world may differ because I was important in the life of a child.” Forest E. Witcraft

General Conference (2020) Update

Rescheduling General Conference 2020 in the midst of a global pandemic continues to confound and stymie our denomination. The Council of Bishops had called for a one-day virtual General Conference in May, to allow for some much-needed legislation to allow for the ongoing functioning of the church. Among other things, bishops who were to have retired in 2020 are unable to retire until there is a General Conference. Literally. It is not legal according to UM policy for bishops to retire without a General Conference. However, due to the challenges of holding a virtual General Conference across 16 time zones and including people without regular access to electricity and internet, the Bishops have cancelled the May one-day General Conference. Keep praying for our beloved denomination.

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HOLY WEEK WORSHIP

Be sure to note the times and dates for our Holy Week Worship services:

MAUNDY THURSDAY: Thursday, April 1, online beginning at 7 p.m. *This service is a tableau of Christ's last supper. Gary Wesche coordinated this event before he left to serve those who are serving COVID patients in California, working with a dozen of the men in our church. This service will premiere at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 1. We'll be sharing in holy communion, so you can use the communion cups in your Lenten bags if you still have them, or have elements of your own.*

EASTER SUNDAY: Sunday, April 4, online beginning at 10 a.m. *Weather permitting, we will hold a sunrise service at 7:00 a.m. on our front lawn.*

