

central united methodist church

December 2016

From Pastor Karen

To all who await God's visitation,

As I prepare for the Advent and Christmas seasons, I am reminded of the Holy Family who started their life together in exile. They were displaced people who lost everything because of genocide in their home land. Generations of Israelites cried out for a Savior to deliver them from a great darkness. They hoped the Messiah would light their way home.

Every Advent we are invited to get inside these ancient people and hear their cries, their yearning to return home where there is peace and security. Their longing for home reminds us of our own cries for peace, joy, hope, and love, deliverance from a great darkness.

During the Advent season each year, it is important to remember not only the sentimental story of sweet baby Jesus, but the powerful meaning of Christmas: God made flesh to dwell among us. But the world didn't recognize the presence of God.

How do we recognize God's presence in our life? How does 'the word of God made flesh' continue to dwell among us? How do we let Christ dwell in our hearts?

I have come to realize that God often comes to us through the people around us. While we are busy doing many things, finishing up a project before the end of the year, wrapping gift boxes, or standing in line for groceries, we need to ask ourselves: "Lord, when did I shop for you? Did I welcome you at work? When did I take the time to be with you?"

This Advent, I invite you to prepare a dwelling place for Christ in your life. Prepare your heart daily. Each morning pray a simple prayer of "Come Lord Jesus, dwell with me this day." May this Advent be a season filled with waiting and expectation. May it be a time of thoughtful and careful preparation so that this Christmas you will see, feel, and know the Light that shines in the darkness. ~~~Pastor Karen

Faith & Finances Class is Open for Registration

Faith & Finances is a financial education ministry that empowers low-income people with practical money management skills, biblical stewardship principles, and supportive relationships.

Faith & Finances is different from many other financial education programs. It's not about helping participants achieve wealth or material success. Rather, it aims to empower participants to experience restoration in their finances—and in their relationships.

Beginning with a 12-week Faith & Finances class, participants discover how Jesus is reconciling all things—including their money—and how God is using their finances to accomplish God's work in the world. They also learn how to track income and expenses, save money, plan for emergencies, and pay off debt. At the same time, they receive support and encouragement from allies who walk alongside them as they learn.

A vital component of the Faith and Finances class is matching each student with an Ally (i.e., mentor). Ideally, there will be an Ally for each student attending the class. The Ally will commit to the entire 12-week class working one-on-one with the student guiding them in managing their finances. We will offer a training session for the Allies prior to the start of the 12-week class. A job description for the Ally is available on the table in Fellowship Hall

Central United Methodist Church will host this free 12-week class on Tuesdays from 12 to 2:30 (lunch served) beginning January 17, 2017. If you are interested in being a Student or an Ally, please sign up on the bulletin board or talk to Dodie Denman or Leona Rayner.

Recent Prayer Concerns

For America to come together	Joanne McDaniels	Dodie Denman
Toni Robinson	Family of Jim Steed	Mary Shuert
Peg Faulkner	Sgt. Nathan Sparrow	Cheryl Seavolt
Tony Barcroft	Unspokens	Ronald Carpenter
Gloria Driscoll	Pete Sneathen	Julie Klynstra
Thomas Gilliland, Jr.	Jan Jackson	Kim Seese



A community-wide service of thanksgiving was held at the First Congregational Church on November 23. Our chancel choir participated.

Christmas Gifts

In an expression of our appreciation, we will be receiving "Christmas Gifts" from our church family to our pastor and staff. For anyone wishing to make an offering toward these gifts, please turn in your gift (check or cash) by Sunday, December 11, to any of your Staff-Parish Relation representatives (Tony Barcroft, George Carpenter, Angie Landon, Betty Shetterly, Marcia Bytwerk, Sharlene Goodemoot, or Julie Klynstra.) You may also mail or drop off your gift to the Church Office.

Poinsettias on Sale



Orders for memorial poinsettias are being taken until Sunday, December 11. See your bulletin or contact the church office if you are interested. They will be on display in the sanctuary through Christmas Eve.

where Christ is central.

Missions—Community Christmas Baskets

Central Church will host the Lakewood Community Council Christmas Basket Program again this year for low-income families in our community. Boxes of food, meat and dairy certificates, gifts, and hats/socks/mittens for children will be packed and delivered on Saturday, December 10.



Our church has been asked to contribute \$10-\$12 wrapped gifts mostly for boys ages 4-10. Please wrap & tag your gifts with appropriate age range. Your financial gifts, time & prayers are also needed. Gift tags are available on the table in Fellowship Hall.

Donations of gifts, hats, socks (especially socks—in all sizes), and mittens can be left in the Fellowship Hall any time before **December 6**. Financial contributions can be marked "Christmas Baskets" in the Missions section of your offering envelopes or a separate envelope. Kay Barcroft or Alan Goodmoot can answer any questions you may have.

We will be happy to find a job for you at any of these times:

- Tuesday, Dec. 6, 7 to 9 pm - Set-up
- Wednesday, Dec. 7, 9 am to 2:30 pm - Sort food & pack boxes
- Thursday, Dec. 8, 9 am to 2:30 pm - Pack boxes & gift bags
- Saturday, Dec. 10, 9 am to noon - Delivery

The families who receive these gifts are blessed, and those who help with this project feel blessed as well. Your support of this project is very much appreciated!

Celebrations

Birthdays

12/02 Phylis Armstrong
 12/04 Karl Klynstra
 12/04 Randy Freidhoff
 12/05 Jane Shetterly
 12/05 Shane McNeill
 12/10 Cole Zona
 12/10 Case Zona
 12/12 Leah Abbott
 12/22 Patsy Cole
 12/25 Andrea Gentner
 12/25 Heidi Anderson

12/26 Bob Kendregan
 12/28 Mary Dykhouse
 12/30 George Covington
 12/30 Carole Reiser

Anniversaries

Dan & Margie First 12/11/1982
 John & Andrea Gentner 12/13/1969
 Jan & Jane Everett 12/15/1991
 Ron & Eva Atwell 12/16/1982
 Bob & Ginny Kruisenga 12/23/1976
 Ray & Joanne McDaniels 12/24/1950
 Gordon & Ruth Bylsma 12/27/1975

Upcoming Events

RESPIRE / SOUPER THURSDAY DINNERS

Thursdays, December 1,15,22,29 — 4:30 to 6 pm

(No Souper Thursday dinner on December 8)

COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS BASKETS

Tuesday-Saturday, December 6-10

See above for designated times.

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

Monday, December 12 — 12 to 5:45 pm

Fellowship Hall

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Saturday, December 24—7 pm

CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, AND MONDAY, JANUARY 2. We will be lightly staffed over the holidays so please call ahead if you need assistance.

*A huge **THANK YOU** to all those who stayed after church on November 19 to "deck the halls" for the Advent Season! It looks great, and the food and fellowship was wonderful. We'll plan to have a similar "tear-down" event on Sunday, January 1, after coffee hour.*



YOUR PHOTOS ARE WANTED!
If you happen to capture a special moment from one of our events, please email your picture to: kim@centralchurch-lakeo.org.

Season of Giving

This holiday season, we thank everyone who has supported Central Church with their time, talent, and financial contributions and look forward to support from all of our members in the year ahead. If you need a convenient way to make regular offerings or if you plan to make an additional gift before the end of the year, we encourage you to check out our on-line giving option. If you prefer to use offering envelopes, the new 2017 envelopes will be available soon. If you are not currently using envelopes but would like to receive them, please contact the church office as soon as possible.

All contributions for 2016 need to be received in the Church Office no later than Sunday, December 25, in order to be included in your 2016 giving. Monies received after this will be attributed to the 2017 year.

Veterans Day Celebration



We'd like to thank all of our veterans, current and past, who have served this wonderful country of ours.

A special assembly in their honor was recently held at Lakewood High School.