

# The KEY

A Publication of Central Presbyterian Church  
Summit, NJ

**Advent 2025**

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Dear Central Presbyterian Church,

The words hope, peace, joy, and love are the four main themes of the season of Advent. These themes are often represented by four candles lit on the Advent wreath during the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, symbolizing the anticipation of Jesus' birth. Each candle corresponds to a week and theme:



**Hope:** the first candle of Advent represents hope, as Christians anticipate the coming of Jesus.

**Peace:** The second candle is for peace, reflecting the message of peace on Earth that came with Jesus' birth

**Joy:** The third candle symbolizes joy, with the third Sunday of Advent often called Gaudete Sunday, a day of rejoicing.

**Love:** The final candle represents love, culminating in the celebration of God's love for humanity through Jesus.

Advent begins this year on Sunday, November 30, when members of Central Church will light the first candle (hope) in worship. Each week, we will delve into the theme with scripture, sermon, and song.

Advent concludes on Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24, when we light the Christ Candle, the large white candle in the middle of the Advent wreath, which represents the light that the Son brought into the world when he was born a little baby—God in the flesh.

We invite you to worship at Central throughout Advent, Sundays at 10:00 a.m., with WAVE on December 7 & 21 at 5:00 p.m., and on Christmas Eve, December 24—the Family Service with Christmas Pageant at 4:00 p.m., and the Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols at 8:00 p.m. (with a 7:30 p.m. musical prelude). Joy to the world!



## How to Worship with Central

Central is worshipping in-person Sundays at 10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary. WAVE contemporary worship will meet on first and third Sundays at 5:00 p.m.

In addition, watch us live on Summit's **Hometowne TV**, Verizon Fios channel 33, and Comcast channel 36, or live streamed on our YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/@centralpresbyterian/streams> at 10:00 a.m. Sundays September through June.

### Website:

Visit [www.centralpres.org/sermons](http://www.centralpres.org/sermons) for links to our recent worship videos.

## Christmas Eve Worship

4:00 p.m. Family Christmas Eve Service with Christmas Pageant

7:30 p.m. Musical Prelude

8:00 p.m. Candlelight Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols

All three events will be live-streamed on our [YouTube channel](#).

## WAVE Worship

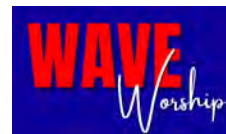
WAVE, Central's contemporary worship service, will meet at 5:00 p.m. on the following Sundays in the auditorium:

December 7

December 21 (Christmas celebration)

January 11

January 25



The Praise Band will supply live music, and a supper will be shared. Childcare is provided during the service.

## Stewardship Pledging for 2026—*Funding Our Faith*

As the 2026 Stewardship pledging campaign winds down, we want to thank all of those who have submitted their pledges. And for those who have not finalized their pledges, we are still welcoming your submittals. The pledge forms are available near most entrances to the Church, in the letter sent to you at the beginning of the pledge period, and on the Central website ([Centralpres.org/](http://Centralpres.org/)

Members/Forms/Stewardship Commitment). Just complete the form, and send/drop off to the Church. You can even call Lisa Magee (Finance Administrator) to tell her your pledge information (in confidence) or email her at [LMagee@centralpres.org](mailto:LMagee@centralpres.org).

The Stewardship team wants to give a special thanks to Seb Mader, Betsy Flaim, Jennifer Gawronski, and Carol

Cowan for sharing their Central Church stories at the *Minute for Stewardship* segments of Worship. You can see their inspiring thoughts on the YouTube links in the Friday Emails.

And just a reminder, with all your activities at the end of a year, to complete any 2025 contributions as part of these activities.

## Central Christmas Party: December 5

The Central Presbyterian Christmas Party will be held on Friday, December 5, from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. for adults 21 and over.

Please bring your own wine or beer to sip on while enjoying a selection of hors d'oeuvres and—new this year!—a carving station. Soft drinks and seltzers will be provided.

Please make checks (\$25.00/person) payable to Central Presbyterian Church and mail to: Cindy Gaylord, 33 Edgehill Avenue, Chatham, NJ 07928 or use this QR code to pay online:



## Sharing Tree Gifts are Due: December 7

Thank you for helping clear the Sharing tree of its gift-request ornaments! Please remember that the wrapped gifts are due back at church on December 7.



## Central Closet

Many thanks to all of you who have filled our Central Closet collection bins with gently used clothes that have found new owners through the El Centro Center in Plainfield! El Centro has, for more than 40 years, helped meet the needs of immigrants and refugees (mainly Spanish - speaking) through food distribution to roughly 500 families a month, legal aid, health clinics, English as a second language classes, and citizenship education.

During the food distribution, “the clothes closet” is usually opened for “free shopping” to men, women and children. They also have social workers as well as a wonderful Director who usually knows someone who needs whatever is donated! Church members Linda Taylor and Lee Anne Lowman deliver your contributions to the Center. Please keep those donations coming !



## Living Nativity

The Living Nativity will take place on Saturday, December 13, 2025 and all are welcome. Please invite your friends and neighbors - it's a wonderful community event. No reservations necessary!

The Nativity "show" will run from 4:30 to 5:30 outside on the Maple Street lawn, with children and a few adults dressed in costumes and LOTS of live animals, to bring to life four Nativity scenes. This has become a much loved Christmas season tradition and is much anticipated by the entire community.



This year we are happy to be bringing back indoor activities as well! The auditorium will be full of cheer with cookies, cocoa and crafts AND our own fabulous Praise Band. The

indoor celebration will happen concurrently with the outdoor Nativity.

**We need lots of children "actors" in costume (we provide the costumes), as well as some adults in costume, plus lots of cookie bakers, cocoa servers and folks to help in the auditorium with crafts.**

There will be a costume fitting (only for the "actors") on Friday, December 12, from 2:30 to 5:00 p.m., but if you're not able to attend, we'll work out an alternate time for the fitting.

If you're able to help in any way with this event, or have your children participate, please use the signup genius link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C044BA8A929A5FF2-60377028-living>

If you have any **Nativity questions**, please contact **Francie Cho** at [yfcho@comcast.net](mailto:yfcho@comcast.net), cell 908 303-6316. Or, if you'd like to **help organize crafts** or bake cookies in advance of the event, please reach out to **Becky Gilbert** at [BeckyL915@yahoo.com](mailto:BeckyL915@yahoo.com).



## Music Ministry

As the Advent season quickly approaches, the music program at Central is already working hard to prepare music for the season - the season that itself is all about preparation. The word "Advent" comes to us from the Latin word "adventus", which means "arrival, appearance", and for this season of Advent, we are going to focus on classical pieces of anticipation and preparedness, from Bach's "Sleepers Awake" to Handel's "Comfort Ye" and "Oh Thou That Teltest". The music for the season will focus on Love, Hope, Joy and Peace, and ultimately prepare our hearts and minds for the birth of Jesus on Christmas (which also has exceptional music planned, with many incredible musicians, the bells, the choir, the praise band...a full consort)! We hope that you can come and find Love, Hope, Joy and Peace in the music of the season.

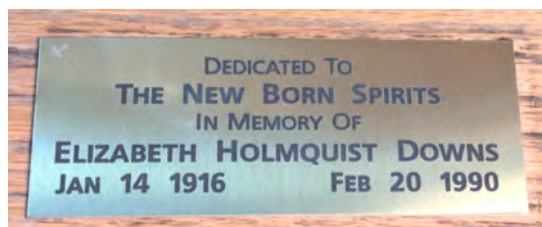


Central hosted a Bluegrass Fest on November 16, featuring The Brooklyn Bluegrass Collective, and the church's musicians—the Motet Choir & section leaders, Charity Wicks, and Adam Gilbert and Brittany Baratz from the Praise Band.

## The KEY to the Past: Elizabeth Holmquist Downs

Throughout Central Church's Sanctuary and its many rooms and hallways, there are plaques affixed to tables, pedestals, walls, pews, and windows, given in a loved one's memory, or to thank someone for a gift to our church. What are the stories behind the names? The church gives scholarship funds to be used for graduating seniors each year. Who are the people who originally donated these funds to be used for this purpose? The stories behind many of these plaques and donations have been lost over the years.

Buried under scratches and dents, there was a plaque on the lectern pedestal that is used to hold the Chancel floral arrangement every Sunday. If you looked closely, you could see the name "Elizabeth Holmquist Downs" and the dates January 14, 1916—February 20, 1990. A new plaque has been installed on the pedestal and it once again proudly sits in the Sanctuary every Sunday.



The Reverend Ray C. Downs and his wife, Elizabeth (Betty) Holmquist Downs, served as Visitation Ministers at Central in the mid 1980s. Ray received his Divinity degree in 1945 from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago and was the Pastor of Northminister Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis. Betty graduated from Radcliffe in 1938. From 1949 through 1981, Ray and Betty lived in Thailand.

Rev. Downs taught University classes in Bangkok, everything from American Civil War History to 16th Century English Poetry.



Ray & Betty Downs

He and Betty founded the Student Christian Center in 1951, where Christian and Buddhist students could share dormitory space and find similar spiritual ground.

Ray and Betty provided outreach ministry in the United States after moving to New Hope, PA, in 1981. They spent happy years at Central, visiting church members in their homes and sharing stories of their Thailand ministry with all our congregation.



THE CENTRAL STAFF

Spring 1983

*Standing, left to right, Ray Downs, Visitation, Ruth Ann Peters, Membership Secretary, Bruce Ingles, Pastor, Janet Edwards, Pastor's Secretary, Devon Brown, Custodian, Joe Grisby, Head Custodian.*  
*Seated, John Kemp, Choir Director, Betsy Tiemeyer, Communications Secretary, Betty Downs, Visitation, Ruth Huneke, Coordinator of Christian Education, Jean Dembaugh, Director of the Nursery School*  
*Floor, Reid Byers, Associate Pastor, Jim Cooper, Business Manager*  
*not pictured: Ann Hildebrand, Financial Assistant, Ricky Rondeau, Sexton, Tom McMasters, Night Watchman*

## Spirituality Corner by Pam Robertson

*Advent invites us to once again be still and wait. To be open and willing to let our hearts be changed and to welcome newness and the light of Christmas that comes through Jesus' birth.*  
~Sally Lowell

A Spiritual Practice: Here are two possible ways to be with someone this Advent season (or anytime):

- (a) **be physically present with another or**  
(b) **be present "in spirit" by deliberately sending prayer, compassionate thoughts, and kind feelings toward another person or group.**

Either approach could be appropriate for each of the following suggestions.

Be with someone who needs you.  
Be with a person who gives you hope.  
Be with those who live in terror and fear.  
Be with an older person.  
Be with someone who has helped you to grow.  
Be with one who is in pain.  
Be with a war-torn coun-

try.  
Be with yourself.  
Be with someone who has written to you.  
Be with a child.  
Be with a refugee who is fleeing from harm.  
Be with an enemy, or someone you dislike.  
Be with a farmer losing his or her land.  
Be with someone who has terminal illness.  
Be with the homeless.  
Be with those who suffer from substance abuse.  
Be with hungry children.  
Be with a coworker.  
Be with those whose hope is faint.  
Be with world leaders.  
Be with someone in your family.  
Be with men and women in prison.  
Be with someone working for justice.  
Be with those who are abused and neglected.  
Be with your loved ones.

God of love, you were so generous, sending the presence of your Beloved to dwell among us and to tell us who you are. Encourage me during this Advent season to continue in the sharing of this loving presence through my attentiveness, given in prayer and deeds.



You who dwell within me, remind me often to let go of my busyness and my hurriedness so that I can be with others in a loving way. Convince me that "being" is as important as "doing." Thank you for your strengthening presence. Thank you for being with me. Amen.

Each of the above suggestions could be written on an index card and placed in the center of an Advent wreath. Draw one card out each day. The concluding prayer could be prayed each day after drawing the card out.  
By Joyce Rupp

May this Advent Season be a time of peace, of healing and hope, of the infusion of joy in your life!

Deep blessings,  
Pam Robertson

## Photo Gallery



Rally Day

## Photo Gallery



Circle of Women



Stewardship 2026



Friday Mahjong



Blessing of the Animals at WAVE



Harvest Fest



## Children and Youth

### Advent Waiting

Advent means to wait. As we enter the holy season of waiting for Jesus' birth, we can lean into Advent with our children. Whether it's



lighting candles in our Advent wreath, filling in new characters in our kids' lego Nativity scene, or sharing scripture in our Advent calendar, the time leading up to Christmas is an opportunity to share faith with our kids.

This Christmas, Central is focusing on Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy. During Sunday School we will match these themes with the stories of Christmas, exploring them with different focus in Sunday School - learning about St. Nicholas, sharing a Christmas movie, and having fun completing crafts and home made gifts for our families. Parents can check out our [Advent Devotional here](#). We can't wait to join with families on the journey!

### Special Events at Central this Advent Season:

Nov. 23:  
8:45 am Pageant rehearsal begins for children with speaking roles  
10:00 SHIP Food Drive donations returned  
11:00 Children's Choir

Nov. 30: Family Worship Sunday (No Sunday School)  
Advent Story Telling begins in the school

Dec. 3:  
11:00 Children's Concert "The Nutcracker" scored live for preschoolers and kindergartners

Dec. 7:  
8:45 am Pageant rehearsal for children with speaking



roles  
10:00 Sharing Tree Gifts Returned, sorted and delivered  
10:00 St. Nicholas Day  
11:00 Children's Choir

Dec 13:  
4:00 Living Nativity

Dec. 14:  
8:45 am Pageant rehearsal for children with speaking roles  
10:00 Christmas Movie- children are invited to Sunday School early to start the movie  
11:00 Children's Choir

Dec. 21:  
8:45 am Pageant rehearsal for children with speaking roles  
10:00 Christmas Crafts  
11:00 am Pageant rehearsal for all children- lunch served in Sunday School.

Dec. 24:  
Pageant Rehearsal 3:00 for all children in the Christmas Pageant  
4:00 Children's focused Service featuring the Christmas Pageant



### Advent Story Telling

One of the highlights of the Christmas season is always inviting our school children into the chapel to tell the story of Christmas. Each year we invite the children into that sacred space-



## Children and Youth, continued

where they hear again the story of the angels, the shepherds, the animals, and the miraculous birth of our savior, and each year the children wow us all with the depth of their understanding, and their closeness to God's love and mystery.

### Living Nativity

Like an embodied Christmas Card for the city of Summit, Central rolls out the welcome mat at Christmas time with the Living Nativity. Each year, we invite sheep, goats, rabbits, and even a few piggies to join us in telling the story of Jesus's birth. Each year we include over 40 children as actors and story tellers. This year, we are bringing back crafts and music in the auditorium along with the amazing story on the Maple St. Lawn. There are so many ways to get involved- actors, costuming, baking cookies, serving cocoa, helping with crafts: check



out our sign up here!

[https://  
www.signupgenius.com/  
go/10C044BA8A929A5FF2-  
60377028-living](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C044BA8A929A5FF2-60377028-living)

### Christmas Pageant

Each year on Christmas Eve our children lead the 4:00 service. Animals, angels, shepherds and wise ones come to life again to retell the birth of Jesus. We would LOVE to have your children join us as actors and story tellers. We have two types of actors- those with speaking roles who commit to extra rehearsals and practice, and those who would like to come to just two rehearsals who serve to create a beautiful tableau.

[https://  
www.signupgenius.com/  
go/10C044BA8A929A5FF2-  
60272380-christmas](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C044BA8A929A5FF2-60272380-christmas)

#### Speaking Roles:

For children comfortable reading, we invite you to serve as the primary story tellers for the pageant. We ask that you commit to at least 3 out of 4 of these rehearsals:

8:45 am 11/23, 12/7, 12/14, 12/21

Actors (Animals, shepherds,

kins, angels):

For children who would like less commitment, but who would like to put on a costume, and be a part of the pageant. We ask that all children who will be in the pageant to come to our dress rehearsal and run through:  
12/21 11:00 Dress rehearsal  
12/24 3:00 Run Through

#### Children's Choir:

Each year, talented children participate in the service by



singing with our group ensemble, offering solos, and playing instruments. If your child would like to be a part of the choir, come to rehearsal at 11:00 starting this week. Rehearsals are ongoing until Christmas Eve.

# Financial Report

## CENTRAL QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT TO THE CONGREGATION

ALL \$000

|                                                                              | SEPT<br>YTD 2025 | % OF 2025<br>BUDGET | SEPT<br>YTD 2024 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| <b>INCOME</b>                                                                |                  |                     |                  |
| REGULAR GIVING                                                               | \$460            | 77%                 | \$428            |
| TOTAL INCOME                                                                 | \$536            | 76%                 | \$543            |
| <b>EXPENSES</b>                                                              |                  |                     |                  |
| PERSONNEL                                                                    | \$808            | 78%                 | \$742            |
| BUILDING AND GROUNDS                                                         | \$241            | 92%                 | \$129            |
| ALL OTHER                                                                    | \$154            | 55%                 | \$104            |
| TOTAL EXPENSES                                                               | \$1204           | 76%                 | \$1016           |
| SHORTFALL IN EXCESS OF BUDGETED 4% DRAW<br>COVERED BY UNRESTRICTED ENDOWMENT |                  |                     |                  |
|                                                                              | \$464            | 77%                 | \$271            |
| VALUE OF UNRESTRICTED ENDOWMENT                                              | \$8,620          |                     | \$7,482          |
| MISSION DISBURSEMENTS FROM<br>RESTRICTED ENDOWMENT                           |                  |                     |                  |
|                                                                              | \$338            |                     | \$291            |
| VALUE OF MISSION ENDOWMENT                                                   | \$3,814          |                     | \$3,769          |

### TREASURER'S COMMENTS

Total income is slightly better than plan through the third quarter of the fiscal year. This is from regular giving, i.e. pledge donations, Sunday collections and contributions towards Per Capita as well as building use which is primarily WNSK.

Expenses are also trending slightly above plan through the third quarter. Expenses have increased over the same period as last year. Costs have also increased in general over the same period as last year.

Central expects to require additional funds from the unrestricted endowment above the budgeted draw of 4% to fund regular operations during the year.

The Mission Endowment continues to exceed \$3 million even with distributions through the third quarter.

## CPC Weekday Nursery School and Kindergarten

Weekday Nursery School & Kindergarten is very excited to announce a playground update has been completed!



The playground canopy over the sandbox has been replaced and a ground resurfacing has been installed. The ground covering was replaced with a poured rubber surface to improve the safety around the climbing apparatus and allow for a clear exit from classrooms.



Infantini Landscaping donated their time to tidy the playground and sandbox prior to the start of school in preparations to welcome the children to the updated playground.

The school accepted a very generous \$60,000 from the Parent Organization to fund this project. The CPC community participated in fundraisers the whole year last year, with current, former, and future families contributing to this project. We extend our deepest appreciation to our CPC community!

We are planning to hang a sign in recognition of the generous



donors and official “ribbon cutting”, though the children have been enjoying their time on the playground every day since school has opened this school year.

The children have the very generous CPC WNSK community to thank for the beautiful, safe outdoor space they enjoy everyday, for many years to come.

Rachel Diekman  
CPC WNSK Director





70 Maple Street  
Summit, NJ 07901

**Return Service Requested**



## **THE KEY**

Advent 2025  
The publication of  
CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
[centralpres.org](http://centralpres.org)  
Editor: Jeanne Thiemann

## **WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

10:00 a.m. Sundays

*Central is worshipping in the Sanctuary on Sundays.  
The 10:00 a.m. services are broadcast on HTTV and will  
be live streamed to our YouTube channel.*