

# Stories from Central

January/February 2026

Jot & Tittle

## 3 Simple Rules for the New Year

*Written by Rev. Dr. Mary Brown, Senior Pastor*

### Happy New Year!

Many of you will make resolutions for 2026. You might be giving up a bad habit or taking on a healthy routine. You may have a specific goal in mind, like paying off a credit card or losing weight. Whatever your resolution might be, it's always in the hopes that this year is better than the last.

Here at Central we are making a New Year's resolution together! It comes in the form of John Wesley's "General Rules" for experiencing God's saving grace: do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God. I hope that you'll join us by making a special effort to attend worship in January as we explore how to:

1. Do no harm (January 11th)
2. Do good (January 18th)
3. Stay in love with God (January 25th)

Reuben Job's short book, *Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living*, is a great compliment to this sermon series. We'll have copies available in the back of the Sanctuary (\$10 suggested donation).

Join us for a year where you grow deeper in your faith – and we become an even stronger community for Christ!

Much love,



Pastor Mary

## Central. United.

### Sermons – January 2026

- JAN 04 A Wesleyan Covenant Service  
*Jeremiah 31:31-34*
- JAN 11 "3 Simple Rules: Do No Harm"  
*Deuteronomy 5:1-21*
- JAN 18 "3 Simple Rules: Do Good"  
*Matthew 5:21-26, 43-48*
- JAN 25 "3 Simple Rules: Stay in Love With God"  
*Deuteronomy 6:1-9*

### Sermons – February 2026

- FEB 01 UWF Sunday
- FEB 08 "Our Weakness; God's Power"  
*1 Corinthians 2:1-12*
- FEB 15 "Transfigured"  
*Matthew 17:1-9*
- FEB 18 **Ash Wednesday**
- FEB 22 **First Sunday of Lent**  
"Social Principles: Intro"



# Central.Giving.

## No Better Time Than Now

by Lauralee Bailey, Stewardship Committee Co-Chair

With the New Year behind us and spring approaching, there is no better time for fresh starts, so why not take a moment to begin something new? Just as plants produce new growth, there is something simple we can do to bring newness to our lives by creating or updating our will. Many people are reluctant to write a will, or even discuss one. Contrary to what some believe, a well-written plan is not about life without us, rather, it affirms the life within us. When we write a will, we tell the world what is important to us. It affirms our hopes, our dreams, our values, and protects our loved ones and cherished causes. Take a moment to enjoy all that this wintery season has to offer. But also let it serve as a reminder to call your attorney about writing your will, or to ask if it needs updating.

*Planned giving offers an opportunity to care for loved ones while leaving a legacy for future generations.*

The Lenten season begins on February 18, this year. This is the perfect time to think about your values, your beliefs, your family members, and also, your church. Preparing a will is about as simple as writing a letter. A well-written will is nothing more and nothing less than a statement of what is important to you. The most difficult part of preparing a will is simply taking the first step. This year, decide to do it!

Whether you are creating a will for the first time or revising it for the fifth time, you should use an attorney. Most attorneys charge relatively little for this service. They are accustomed to writing wills and many of them utilize a questionnaire that will help you through the process. If you do not have an attorney, ask friends and neighbors who they have used to write their wills. Once completed, your will can protect your family and friends and benefit your church and those ministries that have been most important to you. And best of all, you will receive far more peace of mind than you thought possible.

In addition to creating a will, there are many planned giving vehicles which allow you to take care of both loved ones as well as your church or the programs and ministries that have had great meaning in your life. There are numerous planned giving vehicles that provide excellent opportunities to leave a legacy to fund ministries for future generations. If you are thinking about leaving a legacy to Central UMC and would like to speak with someone about your plans, our church leadership can be a great resource. Whether you are creating a will, updating your will or establishing a planned gift, it is a wonderful way to celebrate a fresh new start and affirm the life within you.



### Financial Update through 11/30/2025

- Year to Date Offering: \$ 1,328,172.55
- Total Annual Budget: \$ 1,550,000.00

# The Ministry of Welcome

## Welcoming Turf: Living the Gospel from Our Seats

*by Mike Bailey, a UMC Pastor*

My name is Mike Bailey. I am a United Methodist pastor and retired from parish ministry a little over two years ago. My wife and I came to visit Central UMC after my retirement. I was spiritually enriched by the worship, music and preaching here and my wife immediately became involved in the choir. We both fell in love with Central UMC and decided to move our membership here. After 45 years serving in ministry, I found myself, for the first time, sitting in the pew as a worshiper, "my" pew. Like most congregants I tended to gravitate to the same area in the sanctuary. My pew was always on the left-hand side, 2 or 3 rows from the altar rail. I considered a broad radius around my seat to be my "welcoming turf." In other words, I felt called to be an agent of "hospitality" to those around me, guests and "regulars" as well, no exceptions.

Following the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, I was overjoyed to be able to worship again in our beautiful sanctuary. One Sunday in February I was privileged to greet and welcome a wonderful guest, named Peter (a pseudonym). Peter was wearing a raincoat that first responders wear: bright yellow with a few stripes of reflective tape and trimmed in black. Peter was of a different background than me. I learned later he was originally from Oklahoma, perhaps his origin is from the "first people." During our first visit, he told me he had been living in a very inexpensive hotel for 5 months because of Helene. Peter had come to Asheville with very little in terms of material goods. He was living in his van that was parked at a body shop in the River Arts District. When the storm came, Peter was able to safely evacuate prior to the flooding, but he lost all he had.

After months of living in the hotel, Peter knew he needed to have his soul fed. He made his way to Central UMC by public transportation. He chose Central, he shared with me, because he was raised in the United Methodist Church and that his sister was a United Methodist minister serving in the Midwest. Peter was joyfully, lovingly and beautifully welcomed by the folks in the "welcoming turf" around him. The next week we sat together and he shared with me how much the welcoming spirit of this congregation and especially Mary Brown, had meant to him. We talked a great deal that Sunday. I remember him reflecting on his life and sharing, "The whole world sees me now as a displaced disaster victim. Central UMC sees and treats me as a child of God. Central helps me remember who I really am."

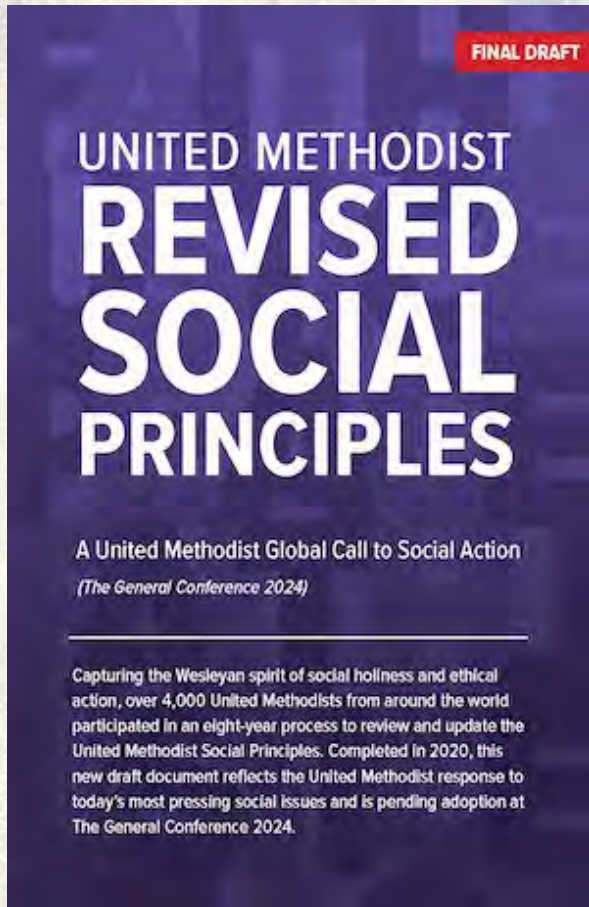
I was looking forward to sitting with Peter again, on my last Sunday at Central before leaving to serve a 3 month interim appointment at another United Methodist Church. On that final Sunday, my heart was touched beyond measure. On that day, Peter brought a friend from the FEMA hotel. I couldn't help but be reminded of a phrase by Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish theologian, who said, (and I paraphrase), "Invitation, welcome and evangelism, are like one hungry person sharing with another hungry person where to find an unlimited supply of free bread."

In my time at Central UMC observing this church from my "welcoming turf," I realized we are all called to be the hands and feet of Christ right from our very own pew. We can be welcoming, offering "holy hospitality" and inviting others to experience this Community in Christ which is, indeed, as Mary Brown says every Sunday, "... Where everyone is welcome without exception."

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, thank you for supporting this church's ministries of outreach and inclusiveness and this place of worship where the bread of life is found and lives are transformed.



# A Lenten Journey into the United Methodist Social Principles



Central UMC Family, I have a confession to make. Our baptismal vows call us to "resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves." They are presenting themselves every day on the news... and I am struggling with how to "resist" those forces.

Have you ever wrestled with how to respond to current events? Ever wished that we had a document that addressed hot-button topics in a thoughtful way that might help us take action?

Turns out – we do!

Our United Methodist Church Book of Discipline has an entire section called the "Social Principles." Within it you can find a biblical and theological framework for careful reflection on all sorts of social issues. And when I say "all sorts," I mean just about anything! Topics include addiction, capital punishment, cloning, the death penalty, divorce, fossil fuels, health care, pornography, refugees, tobacco, the United Nations...

Does that mean we have to think the same on hot-button topics like these? No! To quote the preamble to the Social Principles, "...unanimity of beliefs, opinion, and practice have never been characteristic of the church from the beginning... the church needs to embrace conflicts with courage and perseverance as we seek together to discern God's will!"

We will never think exactly alike, but (to quote John Wesley) "we can love alike." Join us this Lent as we study the Social Principles as a way to faithfully engage with contemporary issues and seek our own ways to "resist evil, injustice, and oppression."

Much love,

Pastor Mary





# Lent 2026

A season of preparation for Easter through self-examination, repentance, prayer, fasting, self-denial, and reading and meditation on God's word. Join us for special worship and gathering opportunities to enrich your own Lenten practice.

**Ash Wednesday Worship: February 18th at 6:00 PM**

***Imposition of ashes and holy communion.***

DATE	10:00 AM WORSHIP	11:15 AM SPECIAL STUDY
FEB 15		Preamble, Preface, and Introduction <i>led by Pat Wallenborn</i>
FEB 22	<b>Social Principles:</b> Preamble	Creation Care <i>led by Dianna Pierce</i>
MAR 1	<b>Social Principles:</b> Our Political Community with special guest preacher Rev. Dr. Jennifer Copeland, Executive Director of the NC Council of Churches	The Political Community <i>led by Rev. Dr. Jennifer Copeland during the Table to Table meal</i>
MAR 8	<b>Social Principles:</b> Our Social Community	Economics <i>led by Rev. Jim Kuse</i>
MAR 15	<b>Social Principles:</b> Our Economic Community	The Social Community <i>led by Peter Barrett</i>
MAR 22	<b>Social Principles:</b> Community of All Creation	The Social Creed <i>led by Rev. Dr. Mary Brown</i>
MAR 29	<b>Palm Sunday-Social Principles:</b> Social Creed	

# Central. Worship.

## *Children's Christmas Musical*

What a joyful and meaningful Sunday it was at Central United Methodist Church as we gathered to share food, fellowship, and the Christmas story together.

Our **Table 2 Table: Lite Bites** was filled with delicious dishes and even richer conversation. Thank you to everyone who brought food to share and helped create such a welcoming, joyful atmosphere. A special word of gratitude goes to our **Bereavement Team**, whose care, organization, and attention to detail made the meal not only beautiful, but deeply hospitable. Your ministry of compassion and presence continues to be a blessing to our church community.

Following the meal, we were delighted by the **Children's Christmas Musical, *Midnight Miracle***. Our children shared the story of Christ's birth with enthusiasm, confidence, and joy, reminding us all of the wonder and hope of the season. Their voices, smiles, and heartfelt performances filled the room and touched our hearts.

We are especially grateful to **Linda, Choir Director; Richard, Assistant Choir Director; and Corey, Music Director**, whose leadership, energy, and love for our children were evident throughout this production. Thank you for the many hours of preparation, encouragement, and care you pour into nurturing the gifts of our youngest members.

This Sunday was a beautiful reminder of who we are at Central—a community rooted in hospitality, creativity, and the love of Christ. Thank you to everyone who participated, supported, and celebrated together. What a blessing it is to share this season with one another.



*Pictured from left to right-Hannah Schweitzer, Miles Messer, Cora Brock, Graham Hickson, Thompson Norris, Huck Moody, Joey Hughes, Everett Lund, Tinsley Peterkin, Iris Mochrie, Marla Moody, Margaret Moore, and Parker Hughes.*



# A Joyful Offering

## Daniel Pinkham's Christmas Cantata at Central UMC

On Sunday, December 14, 2025, the Central Chancel Choir presented Daniel Pinkham's *Christmas Cantata* during the 10:00 AM worship service.

Composed in 1960, Pinkham's *Christmas Cantata* is a beloved work that blends classical tradition with a distinctive flair of jazz. Featuring Latin text accompanied by organ and double brass choir, the piece has been celebrated around the world for more than seven decades. Its music carries both grandeur and intimacy, drawing listeners into the wonder of the Christmas story.

The English translation of the text proclaims the mystery and joy of Christ's birth—shepherds and animals bearing witness to the newborn child, the Magi rejoicing at the star, and angels and archangels singing, "*Glory to God in the highest. Alleluia!*" In this season of waiting and hope, the cantata offered a powerful reminder of the good news at the heart of Advent: today Christ is born; today the Savior has appeared.

Under the leadership of **Linda Haggard, Conductor**, the Central Chancel Choir has been preparing this challenging and beautiful work since September. Their dedication and commitment were evident in every phrase, offering the congregation a deeply moving musical expression of faith.

The choir was joined by **Corey Powell, Organist**, and a superb **Brass Quartet**—Brad Ulrich and Forsby Quick on trumpet, and Michael Hosford and Bill Reichenbach on trombone—whose artistry added brilliance and depth to the performance.

We are deeply grateful to the Chancel Choir, musicians, and all who contributed their time and talent to make this worship experience so meaningful. Thank you as well to the Central UMC congregation for your presence, support, and shared spirit of worship. Together, we celebrated the mystery and joy of Advent through music that lifted hearts and proclaimed hope.



# Central. Worship.

## Chancel Choir Schedule

<b>Sunday, January 4 -- Communion</b> Ina Messer and Joshua Hager provide worship music. Thank you both.	<b>Wednesday, January 7</b> 6:30 PM – Chancel choir rehearsals resume! Can't wait!
<b>Sunday, January 11</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel choir sings in worship one piece. Rom Russell provides one solo. Thank you, Tom.	<b>Wednesday, January 14</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, January 18</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel choir sings in worship one piece. Music interns featured!	<b>Wednesday, January 21</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, January 25</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel choir sings in worship one piece. Wesley Singers sing in worship.	<b>Wednesday, January 28</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, February 1 – United Women of Faith lead worship, Communion</b> 10:00 AM – Women of all choirs and others will provide worship music this Sunday!	<b>Wednesday, February 4</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, February 8</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel choir will sing. Youth choir will sing.	<b>Wednesday, February 11</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, February 15</b> 10:00 AM – Handbell choir to play in worship. Chancel choir has this Sunday off from worship singing.	<b>Wednesday, February 18 – Ash Wednesday</b> 6:00 PM – Ash Wednesday Service 6:30ish – Chancel Choir rehearsal will follow the Ash Wednesday service.
<b>Sunday, February 22 – First Sunday in Lent</b> 10:00 AM – Brass Choir will provide worship music. Chancel choir has this Sunday off from worship singing.	<b>Wednesday, February 25</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, March 1 – Second Sunday in Lent – Communion</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel Choir sings in worship. Wesley choir sings in worship.	<b>Wednesday, March 4</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, March 8 – Third Sunday in Lent</b> 10:00 PM – Chancel choir will sing in worship. Youth choir will sing in worship.	<b>Wednesday, March 11</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, March 15 – Fourth Sunday in Lent</b> 10:00 AM – Handbell choir will provide worship music. Chancel choir has this Sunday off from worship singing.	<b>Wednesday, March 18</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, March 22 – Fifth Sunday in Lent</b> 10:00 AM – Chance choir sings in worship.	<b>Wednesday, March 25</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, March 29 – Palm/Passion Sunday</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel Choir sings in worship. Youth choir sings in worship. Brass choir plays before and during worship.	<b>Wednesday, April 1</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, April 5 – Easter Sunday!</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel Choir sings in worship. Brass choir plays Easter prelude music and hymns.	<b>Wednesday, April 8</b> NO Chancel Choir rehearsal tonight! Enjoy!
<b>Sunday, April 12</b> 10:00 AM – Wesley Singers sing in worship. Chancel choir has this Sunday off from worship singing.	<b>Wednesday, April 15</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, April 19</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel choir sings in worship.	<b>Wednesday, April 22</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal



# Central. Worship.

## Chancel Choir Schedule

<b>Sunday, April 26 – Confirmation Sunday</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel choir sings in worship. Youth choir sings in worship. 11:30 AM – Children’s Spring Musical after worship!	<b>Wednesday, April 29</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, May 3 – Communion</b> 10:00 AM – Wesley Singers sing in worship. Chancel Choir has this Sunday off from worship singing.	<b>Wednesday, May 6</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, May 10</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel choir sings in worship.	<b>Wednesday, May 13</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal
<b>Sunday, May 17</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel choir sings in worship.	<b>Wednesday, May 20</b> 6:30 PM – CC rehearsal – Last official rehearsal of the spring! Social gathering and celebration after rehearsal!
<b>Sunday, May 24</b> 10:00 AM – Brass choir will play in worship. Chancel choir has this Sunday off from worship singing.	<b>Wednesday, May 27</b> No chancel choir rehearsal.
<b>Sunday, May 31</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel choir sings in worship.	<b>Monday, June 1 thru Thursday, June 4</b> Broadway Review rehearsals for all involved. Times TBD. <b>Friday, June 5</b> Central’s Fifth Annual Broadway Dinner and Review!
<b>Sunday, June 7 – Communion</b> 10:00 AM – Special solo or small ensemble music. Chancel choir has this Sunday off from worship singing.	<b>Monday, June 8 thru Thursday, June 11</b> Chancel choir and friends’ trip to New York City!
<b>Sunday, June 14</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel choir sings in worship.	
<b>Sunday, June 21</b> 10:00 AM – Chancel choir sings in worship. VBS children’s choir sings in worship.	
<b>Sunday, June 28</b> 10:00 AM – Special solo or small ensemble music in worship. Chancel choir is off from worship singing.	

**\*There will be added events and possibly added rehearsals. This is a starting point.\***

**\*There will some Sunday’s where we need a soloist to compliment the Chancel choir. I will be in touch with those opportunities.\***

Please make note of the Sunday’s the chancel choir has **off** and do your best to plan trips and activities that will take you away from Sunday worship on those dates. I realize we all have lives. I certainly understand you must and want to be away throughout the year. Letting me know of conflicts with our singing in worship schedule as soon as you know helps me make decisions about music.

Corey and I appreciate each of you and the continuous glorious music ministry you provide. Many thanks!

Much love,

*Linda*



# Central. Worship.

## *Choirs Begin in the New Year*

**Central Chancel Choir will begin 2026 rehearsal on Wednesday, January 7 at 6:30 PM**

For more information or questions please contact **Linda Haggard** at (828) 575-1252 or [lhaggard@centralumc.org](mailto:lhaggard@centralumc.org)

**Central Children's Choir will begin 2026 rehearsals on Sunday, January 11 at 11:45 AM**

For more information or questions please contact **Linda Haggard** at (828) 575-1252 or [lhaggard@centralumc.org](mailto:lhaggard@centralumc.org)

**Central Youth Choir will begin 2026 rehearsals on Sunday, January 11 at 11:15**

For more information or questions please contact **Linda Haggard** at (828) 575-1252 or [lhaggard@centralumc.org](mailto:lhaggard@centralumc.org)

**Central Hand Bell Choir will begin 2026 rehearsals on Wednesday, January 7 at 5:30 PM**

For more information or questions please contact **Corey Powell** at [cpowell@centralumc.org](mailto:cpowell@centralumc.org)

**Central Brass will begin 2026 rehearsals on Monday, January 12 at 6:30 PM**

For more information or questions please contact **Richard Provine** at [provine78@gmail.com](mailto:provine78@gmail.com)

**Wesley Singers Choir will begin 2026 rehearsals on Tuesday, January 13 at 1:00 PM**

For more information or questions please contact **Corey Powell** at [cpowell@centralumc.org](mailto:cpowell@centralumc.org)

**All interested musicians and singers are welcome without exception to join and experience the Music Ministries at Central. Music is truly the universal language. Come be a part of the ministry and fun. There is a place for YOU!**

## Central's Holiday Ingles Gift Cards to Downtown Asheville:

**Appreciated by many and a blessing to all who participated!**

During the first two weeks of December, members of Central's chancel choir, children and youth ministries, along with Maggie Christy and Linda Haggard delivered joy and love to many downtown Asheville businesses. Continued donations to Central from churches and individuals far and wide enable our church to provide support for our downtown neighbors. Two hundred gift cards were handed out.

Thank you to everyone who delivered not just gift cards, but the gift of their presence and recognition of, and joy and love, to many downtown workers who continue to struggle as a result of Hurricane Helene.





# Central.Congregational Care.

## Congregational Care Council



**January marks 5 years** that our Congregational Care Council came into being to coordinate all the Care Ministries at Central – now numbering 10!

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Bereavement Care  
Health & Wellness Care  
Prayer Shawl Care

Child & Family Care  
Homebound Care  
Recovery Care Resources  
Well-Being Community Care Resources

Circle of Prayer  
Pastoral Care  
Stephen Ministry

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**Each of these ministries are committed to wrapping their arms around anyone** who is going through a challenging time or has specific needs that our church members can support. If you would like more information about our care ministries, please click on our Congregational Care Tab under CARE to learn about our care ministries for both support and for volunteering.

**The beauty of coming together intentionally** as a council is that our intercommunication allows us to pull together to meet needs adequately as they arise. Repeatedly, the Holy Spirit moves through our ministries in miraculous ways and deepens our connection with one another.

**For the next 5 years,** we hope to continue developing our congregation's care culture where each of us becomes even more sensitive, aware, and proactive when one learns that someone is in need, meaning: when one hears the words, "I haven't had a very good week," one can comfortably respond "how can I help?"

**Under Pastor Lisa's leadership,** our Congregational Care Pastor, the CCC has strengthened and flourished. Thank you, Central, for making caring for one another–***Congregational Care***–a priority!

# Central.Congregational Care.

## Bereavement Care Ministry



**Help us brighten up our tables for funeral receptions!** Do you have some artificial flowers to give to the church? Are you a floral arranger? Flowers can be dropped off in the church office/labeled "Bereavement" or **contact Pastor Lisa** for details!

## Homebound Care Ministry

**Looking to add some male volunteers** to spend an hour or so once a month fellowshiping with our male homebound peoples! **Contact Pastor Lisa** who will get you connected!



# Central.Adult Discipleship.

**NT 101 | WEDNESDAYS, JAN 7-APR 1 | 5:30-7:00 PM**

Join Rick Kuenning and Pastor Mary for a 12-week study of the New Testament! We'll meet in person on Wednesdays from 5:30–7:00 PM, January 7 through April 1 (no class on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18).

Participants will do about 15 minutes of reading each day to prepare for questions and discussion during class. NT 101 offers beginners a great overview and helps long-time students see the "big picture" of God's story in a fresh way.

**Pre-registration is required** so we can order your workbook and you can complete the first week's reading. **Suggested donation: \$20.** To register, email **Pastor Mary Brown** at [mbrown@centralumc.org](mailto:mbrown@centralumc.org).

## A Tradition of Giving: GIFTS Class Shares Christmas Joy

Once again this Christmas season, Central's GIFTS Sunday School class lived out the spirit of generosity by preparing 122 Christmas gift bags for our neighbors at Battery Park. This meaningful outreach is a tradition the class has faithfully carried on for many years, and it continues to be a beautiful expression of care, consistency, and community connection.

Each bag was thoughtfully assembled with love and intention—small gifts that carry a big message: you are seen, you are valued, and you are not forgotten. Through this simple but powerful act, the GIFTS class brings warmth and joy to others while embodying Central's commitment to serving our neighbors.

We are deeply grateful to the GIFTS class for their time, dedication, and generous hearts. Thank you for being a shining example of what it means to share Christ's love in tangible ways—especially during the Christmas season.







## Native Plants Beauty & Blessing

# Central. Creation Care.

On October 15, the Creation Care committee had a successful and fun-filled day planting 71 native plants in the church's pollinator garden and southeast end of the church property. Seventeen students (7th and 8th graders) from the Mountain City Public Montessori school, which is housed in our Educational Building, helped with the tasks. And seventeen adults worked with the students to plant: foam flowers, goats beard, lupines, green & gold, wild geraniums, coreopsis, coneflowers, asters, bluestems and blueberries—all native to our area. The students and their teacher, Nancy Van Winkle, were so involved that they bought



watering cans and assumed the chore of keeping the plants watered! Thanks to the students and church members who completed this project. The plants were purchased with a \$500 grant from Blessed Tomorrow and the National Faith & Climate Focus, national groups that promote taking care of God's creation and being good stewards of God's gifts to us.

## A Bright Step Toward Energy Stewardship

In late 2025, Central's Property Committee began the big job of replacing all of the church's light bulbs with energy-efficient, environmentally friendly LED lights. This upgrade will reduce our building's energy use and is expected to lead to significant savings on our electric bill. Committee members **Bob Maynard** and **Jeff Seymore** are leading the project.

In **Round One**, committee members, volunteers, and professional electricians removed and replaced **400 fluorescent tubes** on the church's fourth floor. **Round Two** tackled **375 tubes** on the third floor (office level) and in the hallways. **Round Three** begins **January 19, 2026**, when work on the second floor will start.

### Volunteers are needed:

**Monday, January 19:** 9:00 AM–1:00 PM or 1:00–5:00 PM

**Tuesday, January 20:** 9:00 AM–1:00 PM

Volunteers support the project by cleaning lenses, moving materials as needed, and assisting the professional electricians. To sign up, email **Karen Crutchfield** at [kcrutch@aol.com](mailto:kcrutch@aol.com).

Come help Central be more energy efficient!



# Central. Creation Care.

## You are invited to join us...

Central's Creation Care committee invites ALL who love God's creation to join us in 2026 as we continue to work on healing the Earth.

Please join us on **Sunday, January 11, 2026, at 11:30am** in the church office complex for our **first meeting** of the new year.

Here is a list of our Creation Care activities, programs, and projects completed in 2025. We are grateful for all that has been accomplished—and we need your help to continue this work!

### Programs & Events

March 27: Co-sponsored the National Faith & Climate Forum and provided food

April 9: Electric Vehicle (EV) program with Dave Erb, including an EV car show featuring 10 electric vehicles

April 12: Guided nature hike with Alexandra Holland

May 4: Composting program, Table2Table presentation, and Mission Moment during worship

July 15: Creation Care Mission Station at VBS

October 5: Program with Keith Aitken, Asheville's Urban Forester

October 15: Native Plants: Beauty & Blessing event—71 native plants distributed

October 26: Creation Care booth at the Fall Festival

### Ongoing & Supporting Work

Weekly Eco-Tips shared with the congregation

Updated Creation Care bulletin boards

Pollinator Garden workdays

Three Creation Care programs offered for United Women in Faith

### Grants & Funding

Received \$500 + \$100 in grants from Blessed Tomorrow

Contributed \$500 from the Creation Care budget toward an LED lighting project

## Council of Bishops Response Letter Re: Creation Care and Creation Justice.

As part of our ongoing commitment to caring for God's creation, Central's Creation Care Committee is sharing the following statement from the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church. This response addresses the UM Creation Justice Movement Open Letter and reminds us of our covenantal responsibility to "do no harm" to both humanity and the earth. Grounded in scripture, our Social Principles, and the urgent realities of climate change, this letter calls churches and individuals alike to faithful, concrete action in this critical moment. We invite you to read prayerfully and consider how we, as a congregation, are being called to live into this work together.

You can read it digitally here:

<https://www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/newsdetail/cob-response-um-creation-justice-19489090>





**COUNCIL OF BISHOPS RESPONSE TO  
UM Creation Justice Open Letter to UM Bishops  
UM Creation Justice Movement [Open Letter](#) to UM Bishops  
November 4, 2025**

Dear People called United Methodists,

In our scriptures, after the flood waters covered the earth and then dried up, God spoke to Noah and stated there was now a new covenant between God and humans and all of creation. God placed a bow in the sky saying,

*The bow will be in the clouds, and upon seeing it I will remember the enduring covenant between God and every living being of all the earth's creatures. (Genesis 9:16)*

The covenant promise was to do no harm to humans and to all of God's creation. This is the covenantal relationship we live within. God promises no harm, and as people who follow the ways of God, we too are committed to do no harm to any part of God's creation. For this reason, we must work as people of faith to keep God's creation in a state of health and goodness. We work to prevent all harm by our wrongful actions, our greed, or our inattention to the beauty and goodness of God's world. While the Council of Bishops has engaged in this discussion over time, including statements in 2009 and 2021, now is the time to once again address our care for God's world.

**Urgency of this moment**

In 2024, global temperatures rose to an average of 1.55°C, which is past the 1.5°C (2.7°F) lower limit that was agreed upon at the 2015 COP21 Paris Agreement. A science journal, *The Lancet*, noted a comprehensive report declaring, "Rising global heat is now killing one person a minute around the world." *The Lancet* also states "...the world's addiction to fossil fuels also causes toxic air pollution, wildfires and the spread of diseases such as dengue fever, and millions each year are dying owing to the failure to tackle global heating." [The Guardian, October 28, 2025](#)). While the greatest responsibility for the damage to our ecosystem lies with developed countries, we lament that those who suffer the primary impact of harm are those who have contributed the least to the problem, developing countries, communities of color, communities with economic stress, children, and future generations. We can no longer afford to ignore our covenant with God to care for creation and humanity.

Our [Social Principles](#) have also stated the urgency of this moment:

*We acknowledge that unsustainable human activities have placed the entirety of God's creation in peril. (Para. 160, pg. 110)*

Specifically, the *Social Principles* address the destruction of ecosystems, global warming and climate change, and the dependence on fossil fuels. Further, we acknowledge the

harms of environmental racism, food injustice, and environmental toxins which calls us to create sustainable policies and practices in our communities. We understand that harmful actions are counter to our responsibility as stewards of creation.

### **2024 General Conference Decisions**

It is our time to implement the decisions made at our 2024 General Conference. We agreed to:

- Create Green Teams in churches, districts, and conferences
- Implement sustainable practices in managing church properties as a recognition of their sacredness
- Join UM agencies and bishops in the commitment to Net Zero Green House Gas Emissions
- Establish conference Caretakers of God's Creation Coordinators
- Implement sustainable practices at Annual Conferences

These are the first steps we committed to in our work at General Conference.

### **Simple steps to action**

In addition to the above commitments, the bishops of The United Methodist Church are inviting all United Methodist local churches and ministries to:

- Create Green Teams in each local church/ministry**
- Organize one church-wide action around creation care at least once a year**
- Study together for deeper understanding of the work of creation care and Justice**
- Engage with partners in the Ecumenical Decade for Climate Justice Action**

### **We will continue to support, advocate, give voice and lead**

The bishops of The United Methodist Church commit to giving continued support in this endeavor to do no harm to God's world, to continue to advocate for creation justice, and to give voice and leadership to our commitment to care for all of God's creation.

We invite you into this urgent work. Together, and across the globe, United Methodists can make a difference and bring about health, sustainability, and care for the garden that we were created into. Please share this letter with your churches as soon as you receive it. This is our urgent work together. This is the way we respond to our call to be good stewards of God's creation and to fulfill our commitment to do no harm. This is how we live into our vision to ***love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously.***

In love and care for all God's world,  
The Council of Bishops of The UMC



# SUNDAY SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE! THIS JANUARY

Why not make trying out a **Sunday School** class one of your **New Year's resolutions**?

A small group experience helps our faith grow deeper and our connections grow stronger. We have 9 great options, each with their own vibe. During January, they are ready to welcome visitors! Expect to be greeted with smiles and name tags and maybe even some special treats. You might try a different class each week as a way to see all the options available!

<b>Discovery Class</b> <i>Room 220 near Fellowship Hall</i>	Uses the Standard Bible Commentary curriculum, with class members taking turns teaching and everyone adding to a lively discussion.
<b>Faith Discernment</b> <i>Room 219 near Fellowship Hall</i>	Rev. Jim Kuse engages a diverse class to connect Scripture and Christian tradition with daily life.
<b>Growing in Faith Through Service (GIFTS)</b> <i>Parlor, near Sanctuary</i>	A lively and curious group that loves meaningful discussion! Our studies are chosen by the group and are usually a book with accompanying DVD material, and study sessions are lead by class members who volunteer.  GIFTS also does service at Battery Park apartments and the Black Mountain Home for Children.
<b>New Morning Class</b> <i>Room 205 in education building near Fellowship Hall</i>	A longstanding group that focuses on scripturally based books designed for group studies.
<b>Inquirers Class</b> <i>Room 206 in education building near Fellowship Hall</i>	A large, vibrant class where members take turns leading a discussion/lecture format with lots of class participation.
<b>Serendipity Class</b> <i>Room 307 near church offices</i>	A caring group whose members volunteer to lead discussions on matters of faith or contemporary issues, complimented by Bible study sessions led by a seminary graduate class member.
<b>The NEST</b> <i>Byrd Room near Sanctuary</i>	A small women's class focused on growing in faith and applying it to everyday life. Studies range from current Bible studies to a wide range of books written by Christian authors.



United  
Women  
in Faith

## ***United Women in Faith...Stories to Share***

As 2025 ended, Central's United Women in Faith gathered at UWF's annual Christmas Brunch and General Meeting. In addition to sharing good food and fellowship, we shared the stories of our Circles and the women in them, the activities and accomplishments, and memories of the women who passed away in 2025. We were honored to have guest speakers Lucy Earles, President of Blue Ridge District United Women in Faith, and Jeannette Byrd, Blue Ridge District Nurturing Partner to Central join us and share the successes of our district, goals for 2026, and ways to continue growing our UWF Unit at Central.

Throughout the year, our continued work for women, children, and youth in our church and our community is our focus. Here are a few things that Central's Circles have participated in over the last year:

- Collecting non-perishable foods for ABCCM
- Preparing meals for Haywood Street Respite
- Learning about Asheville's Black Heritage Cultural Trail
- Attending WNC UWF Blue Ridge District events – Annual Prayer Breakfast at Skyland UMC, Blue Ridge District Annual Celebration in Marion, NC, and WNC UWF Annual Conference in Mooresville, NC
- Attending Mission u 2025 program Practicing Hope Together, in Hickory, NC
- Presenting the Maureen Carr Memorial UWF Scholarship to Bella Strupp, who is continuing her education at Appalachian State University
- Baking 100's of cookies (really!) for treats at Vacation Bible School
- Inviting speakers from Equal Plates, Water to Wine, Bee City USA, Haywood Street Respite, Central's Allies for Equity Committee, Central's guests at First UMC Kenya reporting on Moheto UWF activities, and Central's Creation Care Committee

### *Special Mission Recognition Pins and Honors*

Several of our members were recognized with Special Mission Recognition pins for the work and leadership they have provided UWF, their work at Central leading committees, organizing receptions, raising awareness of church and society, and around the community including Haywood Street church, Black Mountain Home, ABCCM, and Battery Park residents. Anna Circle recognized Carol Rychly and Mary Margaret Ingle; Eve Circle recognized Sharon LeDuc; and Ruth Circle recognized Sue Luttrell. The UWF Executive Committee also thanked Sue Luttrell for her work as UWF Reading Program Advisor for several years and honored her with a donation.

### *Looking for a good book to settle in with this winter?*

The following women were recognized as participants in the UWF Reading Program, designed to be informational and uplifting with several genres of books available for adults, youth, and children: Education for Mission, Leadership Development, Nurturing for Community, Social Action, and Spiritual Growth.

*Continues on the next page.*





# United Women in Faith

I am sure you can ask any of these women who completed the Reading Program plans for recommendations. **Plan 1** recognized Kim Everette, Mary Margaret Ingle, and Susan Snell (reading one book from each category); **Plan 2** recognized Sharon LeDuc (reading two books in each category); **Plan 3** recognized Sue Luttrell (reading two books in each

category and five additional books); **Plan 4** recognized Glenda Fuhrmann (reading two books in each category and 10 additional books and 12 issues of response magazine).

## *Memorials*

Sadly, United Women in Faith learned of the passing of three of its members this year. Harriett 'Bunny' Daniels (Anna Circle, March 31, 2025), Ann Elmore (former Grace Circle, August 19, 2023), and Elsie Howard (Eve Circle, December 8, 2025). Each was recognized at the brunch during a Memorial Service that included silence and prayer, remembrances of each, and their contributions to UWF and their Circles, and will be missed by many.

## *Time to Make New Stories*

If you are looking for a way to connect with other women of faith, consider joining one of Central's UWF Circles. Our Circles are ready to welcome you at any meeting. As we move into the new year with excitement and energy, we invite all women to come and be a part of the continued good work and new opportunities to advocate for women, children, and youth. We are ready to hear your stories, and make new ones together, as United Women in Faith.

Join us on **Sunday, February 1, 2026** as United Women in Faith lead us in worship. Mark your calendars now for a wonderful Sunday of celebration, music, and communion, with Table to Table to follow.

Real Women. Real Faith. Real Community.

Kathy Leftwich,  
President, Central United Women in Faith Unit

## United Women in Faith Monthly Meeting Information

**Anna Circle** – Meets the first Wednesday of each month, 10:00 AM Central UMC Parlor. Contact *Glenda Fuhrmann* ([glendafuhrmann@yahoo.com](mailto:glendafuhrmann@yahoo.com)) for more information.

**Deborah Circle** – Meets the second Tuesday of each month, 10:00 AM in a member's home. Contact *Susan Snell* ([ssnell123@bellsouth.net](mailto:ssnell123@bellsouth.net)) for more information.

**Eve Circle** – Meets the first Tuesday of each month, 10:00 AM Central UMC Parlor. Contact *Donna Anderson* ([danderson45@charter.net](mailto:danderson45@charter.net)) or *Sandra Wells* ([sandracwells@gmail.com](mailto:sandracwells@gmail.com)) for more information.

**Martha Circle** – Meets the second Tuesday of each month, 6:30 PM, Central UMC Library or at a member's home. Contact *Kathy Leftwich* ([kathleencleftwich@gmail.com](mailto:kathleencleftwich@gmail.com)) for more information.

**Ruth Circle** – Meets the first Tuesday of each month, 10:00 AM, Central UMC Library. Contact *Kim Everette* ([kimeverette525@gmail.com](mailto:kimeverette525@gmail.com)) for more information.

**Unnamed Women's Circle** – Meets the second Wednesday of each month, 6:00 PM, at a local restaurant. Contact *Sarah Hope Carraway* ([sarahstrickland92@gmail.com](mailto:sarahstrickland92@gmail.com)) for more information.



United  
Women  
in Faith



# Announcements from your circles.

**Anna Circle:** Anna is only mentioned once in the Gospels, in Luke 2:36-38. She is the prophet in the Temple who speaks of the infant Jesus to all who are looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. We're the Anna Circle, and we're a supportive fellowship of UWF women. We strive to carry a message about Jesus through our mission programs (local and international), hands-on mission projects, spiritual development programs, and reading programs. We meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 10:00. Our first meeting of the year will be on January 7 at 10:00 in the church parlor. You are welcome to visit or join us, and help shape the coming year. Info? Email **Glenda at [GlendaFuhrmann@yahoo.com](mailto:GlendaFuhrmann@yahoo.com)**.

## Deborah Circle | TUE, JAN 13 | 10:00 AM

Deborah Circle meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 10:00 AM in a member's home. All are welcome.

At our **January 13** meeting, we will introduce the new United Women in Faith program book, *Mapping Our Way Forward in Times of Change and Uncertainty*. We will explore how to stay grounded and find balance in God's Word through our history, especially as we prepare to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day on January 19.

Our **February 10** meeting will continue the story, with a particular focus on the history of home missionaries and deaconesses, as we have members of our circle who have served in these roles.

For questions, please contact **Susan Snell at [ssnell123@bellsouth.net](mailto:ssnell123@bellsouth.net)**.

## Ruth Circle | TUE, JAN 6 | 10:00 AM

Please join members of the Ruth Circle in the Library at Central UMC. We will reflect on our accomplishments of 2025 and set our sights on the exciting opportunities of 2026. We look forward to sharing the morning with you as we embark on a new year of service, growth, and connection. For more information about Ruth Circle, please contact **Kim Everette. [kimeverette525@gmail.com](mailto:kimeverette525@gmail.com)**.







## Angel Tree Gift Collection November Collection

C4C wants to thank everyone for their generous gift sponsorships again this year. We were able to provide Christmas gifts for 29 foster children from Black Mountain Children's Home and 15 children in need from Mountain City Public Montessori School. These gifts mean a great deal to the children, families and institutions involved. Thank you for helping us spread God's love this holiday season with the Angel Tree project.



## Save the date! Dorm Room Sponsors start in April!

Each year Central UMC sponsors Asheville High School graduates that need extra support transitioning to college. Selected by AHS' guidance counselor based on need, each deserving student needs our support to have the necessities, the basics, and the extras for their dorm room. We'll begin our work in April. Stay tuned for more details. Email [c4c@centralumc.org](mailto:c4c@centralumc.org) for more info or get your name on the sponsor list now.



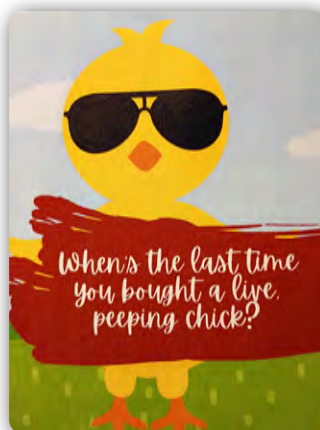


## Reconciling Ministry Group: Celebrating 2025 Achievements

The mission of Central's Reconciling Ministry Group (RMG) closed out 2025 with a meaningful burst of action, generosity, and celebration. Highlights from the year include:

- **Global Education Support:** RMG contributed **\$1,400** to Central's Kenyan Moheto High School Girls' Scholarship Fund, fulfilling Central's **\$14,000 commitment** to support ten students through the 2025 school year. We celebrate that **four of these young women graduated in December.**
- **Women's Entrepreneurship:** Through the "Chicks" Fund—initiated by RMG in June—over **\$1,000** was raised to support the Moheto United Women in Faith's poultry entrepreneurship project.
- **Resource Expansion:** RMG released the **fourth edition of the "Come to Me All" booklet**, featuring new stories that highlight Central UMC as a safe and welcoming space for families and LGBTQIA+ individuals. These booklets are free and available along Central's hallways.
- **Strategic Planning:** RMG held a workshop to prayerfully set its **strategy for service and witness in 2026.**
- **Mission Support:** RMG contributed to the Missions Council's **successful FriendsGIVING fundraiser**, supporting mission partners near and far.
- **Visible Inclusion in Worship:** During Advent, **same-gender parents participated in the candle-lighting tradition**, offering a visible and meaningful expression of LGBTQIA+ family inclusion within our worshiping community.

We give thanks for the faithful work of the Reconciling Ministry Group and for the many ways this ministry continues to live out Central's commitment to welcome, justice, and love.





# Central.Children.

## Upcoming Events!

### Valentine's Parents' Evening Out | FRI, FEB 13 | 4:30-7:30 PM

Parents, enjoy a night out while we take care of the kids! Children **3rd grade and below** are invited to join us for a fun, safe, and love-filled evening of activities while parents enjoy a Valentine's break. Students in **4th and 5th grade** are invited to assist, and **youth and adults** are welcome to help make the evening special.

This is a wonderful opportunity for families to enjoy some time together—or for parents to enjoy a date night—while kids and youth experience meaningful community at church.

**More details and sign-ups coming soon.**

Questions? **Contact Maggie.**

## New Sunday Rhythm!

**Beginning SUN, JAN 11 2025** we will have a new Sunday rhythm for our families. Check out the new schedule below!

Nursery	Elementary	Youth		Parents
9:30 AM-12:30 PM		Sunday School 8:45-9:45 AM		Sunday School 8:45-9:45 AM
	Worship 10:00-10:30 AM	Worship 10:00-11:15 AM		Worship 10:00-11:15 AM
	Children's Church 10:30 AM-11:45 AM			
	Children's Choir 11:45 AM-12:15 PM	Youth Sunday School 11:15 AM-12:15 PM	Youth Choir 11:15 AM-11:45 AM	Young Parent Gathering 11:15 AM-12:15 PM

## Save the Dates!

Our **3rd Grade Bible Class** will take place this **spring**—details coming soon!

**Vacation Bible School, June 15-19, 2026.**

It's going to be a fun and faith-filled summer at Central!



# Central.Youth.

## Youth Adventures

### **Confirmation Kick-Off 2026: Lock-in | SUN, JAN 9**

Confirmation is for all 6th graders and those yet to be confirmed. Confirmation kickoff is January 9 and will run until Confirmation Sunday on April 26. **Contact Maggie** for more information or to RSVP.

### **Youth Group Begins | SUN, JAN 11 | 5:00 PM**

We're excited to kick off Youth Group for the new season on Sunday, January 11 at 5:00 PM! Youth are invited to gather for an evening of connection, conversation, and fun as we grow in faith and community together. Whether you've been coming for years or this is your first time, you are always welcome.

Come as you are, bring a friend, and join us as we begin a new season of youth ministry at Central.

### **Youth MLK Commemoration Service & Conference Youth Group Outing | SAT, JAN 17 | Times TBD**

Youth are invited to join us for a day trip to Charlotte to participate in the Conference-wide Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Service. This meaningful and engaging event brings together youth from across the conference to honor Dr. King's legacy through worship, reflection, and community.

We'll travel together to Charlotte for the day and enjoy a fun, faith-filled youth group outing alongside this powerful experience. Exact departure and return times will be shared soon.

More details and sign-ups coming soon.

### **Youth Group Super Bowl Party | SUN, FEB 8 | 6:00 PM-Halftime**

Youth are invited to join us for a Super Bowl watch party on Sunday, February 8. We'll watch the game together, enjoy the commercials, and spend time hanging out.

Please bring a snack to share and wear your favorite team's gear. Friends are welcome!

### **Youth Lock-In | FRI-SAT, FEB 13-14 | 1:00 PM-9:00 AM**

Central youth are invited to kick off Valentine's weekend with a fun overnight lock-in! We'll gather Friday afternoon and enjoy games, activities, food, and fellowship before settling in for the night. Pick-up will be Saturday morning at 9:00 AM. More details coming soon.

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## Save the Dates!

**JUN 2026** – Youth Mission Trip

**JUN 15-19, 2026** – Vacation Bible School (VBS)

**JUL 13-18, 2026** – Wilderness Trail

Stay tuned for more details about each of these opportunities to grow, serve, and have fun together.

# Office Volunte~

Once upon a time in the "Community for Christ in the Center of the City," men were the funniest volunteers we had. They populated the Reception Desk, spreading jokes and good cheer every day they worked. They successfully operated the phones and toiled diligently to respond to ringing doorbells. They came in pairs and in singles. They worked mornings and they worked afternoons and livened the lives of all who visited our "Community."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if this phenomenon could be replicated? (Big words here, folks, I know, but I'm rolling with it!) Why give the women all the fun and excitement of being the Reception Volunteers? We love and appreciate our ladies, and we already have one new male volunteer, but we would love to welcome more gentlemen to our group, as well!

Currently, we have the **following opening** at the Reception Desk:

- **The third Thursday of the month from 12 noon – 3:00 pm,**

So, bring your friend, or bring your dog (we love animals!), and come join us for a rollicking good time in the reception area! (Okay, that's a bit of an exaggeration actually - bring your book and a pillow – sometimes it's really snooze-worthy on a slow day, which is why you may want to convince your friend to do this with you!) And, ladies, we love you too and want you (and possibly a friend) to join us as well, if you're interested!

Give me a call or send me an email if you (and maybe your friend) are entranced and captivated enough to want to fill in one (or both!) of these openings.

Thanks so much,



Jan Griffin

Direct line to my office: (828) 575-1260

[igriffin@centralumc.org](mailto:igriffin@centralumc.org)



# Staff Highlight

## Andie Simpson

If you've ever walked through Central United Methodist Church and felt that everything simply *works*—the building is ready, the space is welcoming, and events unfold smoothly—there's a good chance Andie Simpson had a hand in making that happen.

Andie began working at Central UMC in **1995**, but her connection to the church goes back even further. Central has long been woven into her family's story. Her parents, **Vivian ("Peggy") and Paul McDonald**, faithfully cleaned the nursery for years. After her father passed away in 2005, Andie's brother Mark stepped in to help their mother until Mark's death in 2009 at the age of 54. Andie's sister, **Amanda Edwards**, also served Central by cleaning for the Weekday School, and Amanda's husband, **Gary Edwards**, worked on contract doing various facilities repairs.



That family connection eventually led Andie herself to Central. In the early 1990s, **Alan Gibson**, our former long time Church Administrator, began working at Central and soon hired Gary as custodian. As the work grew, Alan and Gary realized they needed more help. At the same time, Andie had recently lost her job at Eaton Corporation when the facility closed. With her wide background in food service, catering, cleaning, and customer service, Andie was a natural fit. Gary asked if she would be interested—and the rest is history.

Over the years, Andie has worn many hats at Central, both paid and volunteer. She has done **cleaning, cooking, event coordination, newsletter work, office tasks, and correspondence**, often stepping in wherever help was needed. Her flexibility and willingness to serve have been hallmarks of her nearly three decades at the church.

One of Andie's favorite memories comes from a pivotal moment in Central's history: the pastoral transition from **Dr. Michael Brown** to **Dr. Rob Blackburn** in 1998. Alan called Andie into his office to talk about the change and asked if she could help. Andie was tasked with organizing *two large receptions*, each with well over **1,000 people in attendance**. When Dr. Blackburn and his family arrived, it was a scorching hot day, and the line seemed to stretch endlessly. Still, the event was a success—and from that point on, Andie became responsible for coordinating events at Central. With Gary, youth helpers, and the support of **Julie Bainbridge** (formerly Wilburn-Peeler), the team became something more than coworkers. "We were like a family," Andie says.

In earlier years, the maintenance staff handled **all the cooking and food ordering**, always coming in under budget. Andie helped prepare meals for funerals, Christmas Eve staff gatherings, Jesus' birthday celebration for the children, complete with cake, punch, and ice cream, and countless other occasions. She also took charge of **Wednesday lunches and dinners, Thursday Power Lunch**, that included the ladies at Givens, and assisted with weddings, funerals, and UMC Conference and District events.

Andie spoke with deep gratitude about the people she worked alongside. She credits **Alan Gibson** with being like a brother to her and **Hayes Brown**, Facilities Manager, as the best supervisor she's ever had.

Reflecting on her years at Central, Andie sums it up simply and beautifully:

**"I love it so much. We are like family."**








# CENTRAL AT-A-GLANCE JANUARY 2026 CALENDAR

**Central.**  
**United.**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 <h1>January</h1>				1 <b>Church Offices Closed</b>	2 <b>Church Offices Closed</b> First Friday Family Fellowship-5p	3
4 <b>Epiphany Sunday</b> Table 2 Table-11a RMN-11:45a Youth Group-5p	5 Theology Pub-5:45p	6 Eve Circle-10a Ruth Circle-10a Wesley Singers-1p (Un)Decorating: Removing of the Greens-1p Dementia Partners AVL-2p Allies for Equity-5p	7 Anna Circle-10a Centering Prayer-11a NT 101-5:30p Handbell Choir-5:30p Dementia Partners AVL-6p Chancel Choir-6:30p	8 Thurs. Morning Prayer-8a Circle of Prayer-10a	9	10
11 <b>Baptism of the Lord</b> New-ish to Central-11a Youth Choir-11:15a Young Parent Group-11:15a Children's Choir-11:45a Youth Group-5p 	12 Building Comm. Mtg.-12p Theology Pub-5:45p Brass Rehearsal-6:30p	13 Deborah Circle-10a Wesley Singers-1p Martha Circle-6:30p	14 Centering Prayer-11a History Comm Mtg.-1p NT 101-5:30p Handbell Choir-5:30p Unnamed Women's-6p Chancel Choir-6:30p	15 Thurs. Morning Prayer-8a Circle of Prayer-10a	16	17 <b>MLK Jr. Day</b> MLK Youth Conference Possie Raiford Memorial-2p Possie Raiford Reception-3p 
18 <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany</b>	19 Theology Pub-5:45p Brass Rehearsal-6:30p	20 Wesley Singers-1p Dementia Partners AVL-2p Church & Society-5p	21 UMW Exec Comm.-10a Centering Prayer-11a Stephen Ministry-4:30p NT 101-5:30p Handbell Choir-5:30p Dementia Partners-6p Chancel Choir-6:30	22 Thurs. Morning Prayer-8a Circle of Prayer-10a	23	24
25 <b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany</b> Youth Choir-11:15a Young Parent Group-11:15a Prayer Shawl Mtg-11:15a Children's Choir-11:45a Youth Group-5p	26 Building Committee-12p Theology Pub-5:45p Brass Rehearsal-6:30p	27 Wesley Singers-1p	28 Centering Prayer-11a NT 101-5:30p Handbell Choir-5:30p Chancel Choir-5:30p	8 Thurs. Morning Prayer-8a Circle of Prayer-10a	30 Habitat Work Day-8:30a  Asheville Area <b>Habitat</b> for Humanity <small>Serving Buncombe and Madison Counties</small>	31 Candlelight Concert-6:30p Candlelight Concert-8:45p

# CENTRAL AT-A-GLANCE FEBRUARY 2026 CALENDAR

**Central.**  
**United.**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany</b> Table 2 Table-11:15a Youth Choir-11:15a Children's Choir-11:45a RMN-11:45a Youth Group-5p	2 Theology Pub-5:45p Brass Rehearsal-6:30p	3 Eve Circle-10a Ruth Circle-10a Wesley Singers-1p Dementia Partners AVL-2p Allies for Equity-5p	4 Anna Circle-9:30a Centering Prayer-11a NT 101-5:30p Handbell Choir-5:30p Dementia Partners AVL-6p Chancel Choir-6:30p	5 Thurs. Morning Prayer-8a Circle of Prayer-10a	6 First Friday Family Fellowship-5p	7
<b>8 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany</b> College Mailings-9a Ad Board-11:15a Asheville Chamber Music Series-3p Youth Group Super Bowl Party-5p	9 Theology Pub-5:45p Brass Rehearsal-6:30p	10 Deborah Circle-10a Wesley Singers-1p Martha Circle-6:30p	11 Centering Prayer-11a NT 101-5:30p Handbell Choir-5:30p Chancel Choir-6:30p Unnamed Women's Circle-6p	12 Thurs. Morning Prayer-8a Circle of Prayer-10a	13  Parents' Evening Out: Valentine's Edition-4:30p 	14 
<b>15 Transfiguration Sunday</b> Youth Choir-11:15a Young Parent Group-11:15a Children's Choir-11:45a Youth Group-5p	16 Theology Pub-5:45p Brass Rehearsal-6:30p	17 Finance Meeting-12p Wesley Singers-1p Dementia Partners AVL-2p	18 Centering Prayer-11a Dementia Partners AVL-6p <b>Ash Wednesday Service-6p</b> 	19 Thurs. Morning Prayer-8a Circle of Prayer-10a	20 Habitat Work Day-8:30a 	21 Candlelight Concert-6:30p Candlelight Concert-8:45p
<b>22 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent</b> Youth Choir-11:15a Young Parent Group-11:15a Children's Choir-11:45a Youth Group-5p	23 Theology Pub-5:45p Brass Rehearsal-6:30p	24 Wesley Singers-1p	25 Centering Prayer-11a NT 101 5:30p Handbell Choir-5:30p Chancel Choir-6:30p	26 Thurs. Morning Prayer-8a Circle of Prayer-10a	27	28



February.



## Contact us:

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### **Stories From Central: Jot & Tittle Submission Deadlines:**

March/April Deadline - February 20, 2026

May/June Deadline - April 20, 2026

Email Michelle at [mhausler@CentralUMC.org](mailto:mhausler@CentralUMC.org) or go to [CentralUMC.org/Communications](http://CentralUMC.org/Communications) to fill out a Communications Request Form



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