

*Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer . Romans 12:12 ESV*

On publication of this newsletter, we are in the midst of the Lenten season, a time of reflection and preparation on this journey to Easter Sunday, which falls on April 5 this year. On that day, the tomb will have been rolled away, and we will celebrate and acknowledge that death, indeed, did not and *does not* have the final say (or sway). Until then, many of us will participate in various spiritual disciplines, whether recently begun, tweaked a little bit for the season, or consistently practiced for months or years. Maybe you are like me in that you turn to a special devotion from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. Perhaps you decided to make a sacrifice and give up a particular practice, food, beverage or something else during this time. Regardless, it is my prayer that we consider this journey to the cross before we rejoice at the empty tomb, and I did not come to this idea alone.

In a recent Sunday, Pastor Danny made mention of our need to meditate on the cross *before* we celebrate Christ's victory over death come Easter Sunday morning. That resonated with me. Too often, we are a society that glosses over discomfort, pain and grief. We want to move on, get to the happy ending, and focus only on positive outcomes. But what is victory without a fight? What is healing without pain? What is joy without despair? Indeed, what is new life without an understanding of death? Ultimately, what is grace if we have no understanding of why we needed grace and how that grace was even purchased?

Sitting with these questions got me to thinking that we do not often seek to sit with hard questions and contemplate hard truths. We want to be "busy," entertained, in-the-know, in-the-loop, on-the-go and in-the-middle of something all the time. We can't be bored, we can't be bothered to be still, and we can't stand to be quiet or in solitude. But these are the conditions that promote growth. These are the times we hear God speak. These are the situations that lead to the earnest pouring out of our deepest anxieties, longings and fears. I believe we, as a people and as a community of faith, are at an inflection point, and if ever we need to listen to God, pray without ceasing, and trust in God, it is now. Of course, we need God daily! But I am extending an invitation to you during Holy Week to open your heart to the Lord and to sit with a little bit of discomfort before the stone is rolled away. If any day symbolizes our discomfort with grief, waiting and uncertainty, it's Holy Saturday.

**So, this year, on Holy Saturday, we invite you to participate in a 12-hour prayer vigil in shifts of 30 minutes to one hour, starting at 6am and, of course, ending at 6pm.** During this time, on April 4, persons who have taken a "shift" will be invited to come to the sanctuary, where you may sit and pray silently, write out prayers, kneel at the altar—whatever methods of dialoguing with God that feel most comfortable and natural to you. A table and chair will be provided, pen/pencils and paper, devotions and candlelight. We will "keep vigil" in anticipation of Jesus' resurrection and pray for God's protection over our church, family, community, country, and world.

Please look for a sign-up sheet in the upper foyer of our church on the way to the sanctuary. Prayerfully consider participating in this vigil, and I pray for God's mercies on you as you continue your Lenten journey this month.

Grace and peace,

Kennette

# Central Happenings



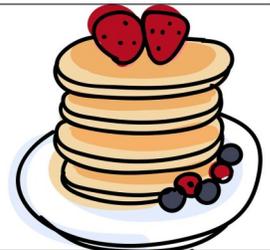
On Sunday, February 22, Central welcomed Forrest Beal as the newest member of the congregation. Forrest transfers to Central from Fellowship Community Church in Charlotte, NC. Welcome, Forrest! We are so honored you chose Central to be your church home.

## Year to Date Financial Summary

Revenue	\$91,861.52
Expenses	\$86,620.76
Balance	\$5,240.76

*Complete financials are always available in the church office. If you have any questions, please reach out to Logan Martin or Alan Connolly.*

On Tuesday, February 17th we gathered in the Fellowship Hall for our annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. A great big **THANK YOU** to Debbie Lyon for organizing the event and to all the volunteers who decorated, prepared, served, and cleaned up. The food was fantastic and the fellowship was even better! It was a wonderful way to begin the season of Lent.



Good afternoon Church,

We have recently updated and approved our Safe Sanctuaries program. In order to be considered a Safe Sanctuary congregation, we must all conform to and complete the below requirements to be accurately organized and compliant. The steps are as follows:

- 1.) Read Central's Safe Sanctuary policy that was approved by church council Oct 27<sup>th</sup> 2025.
- 2.) Complete the volunteer interest form. This form must be filled out by **all who volunteer** at CUMC. The completed form contains all the information needed for a background check (required) and will be filed in the church's database of volunteers. Please be sure to sign the form as this doubles as your permission for the background check. There is no charge for the background check.
- 3.) The safe sanctuary training required by the NC Conference of the United Methodist Church can be done by using an online link ([linked here](#)). You must first set up an account, and then sign in to the safe sanctuary portal. There are 6 training items in the portal that total about 49 minutes. After reading the material contained in these links, please take the test at the end. A score of 80 is the minimum passing grade. A passing grade will generate a printable certificate of your success. Donna has graciously volunteered to meet with anyone who does not have access to the online portal to complete the training with them. Please reach out if you would like her to do so.
- 4.) Print your certificate to attest your passing score, and give it, along with the volunteer interest form, to Logan to be included in the database. If you do not have a printer, you can usually tell your computer to print it as a pdf file, then email it to Logan.
- 5.) After successfully completing these steps, you will be considered trained in safe sanctuary.

Thank you for your participation. We are blessed to have a wonderful, helpful and loving congregation. Now, we will also have one that will be safe for children, youth, and disadvantaged adults. Adherence to the policy also protects us as volunteers. With our Easter Egg Hunt and Vacation Bible School quickly approaching, it is imperative that we get this training completed. Copies of the Safe Sanctuary Policy are available on our church website, or you can request a copy from Logan in the church office.

On behalf of the Trustees, thank you for getting this completed ASAP,

Scott Bailey



**LENT is HERE!**

Palm Sunday: March 29<sup>th</sup> \* Easter Egg Hunt\*  
EASTER: April 5<sup>th</sup>

Join us on Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup> for Palm Sunday service and Preschool Recognition Sunday. After the 11 am service, there will be a covered dish meal in the Fellowship Hall. Great food and fellowship, including our Easter Egg Hunt and activities for children.

Egg hunting will happen around 12:50 -1:00. Bring your own basket!!

We are excited to begin collecting candy and prizes to fill all the eggs! The Amazon Wishlist has been updated for anyone who would like to shop online and ship items directly to the church. Donations of locally purchased items or monetary gifts are also sincerely appreciated.

[https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1UNWD6HNGoZW9?ref=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1UNWD6HNGoZW9?ref=wl_share)



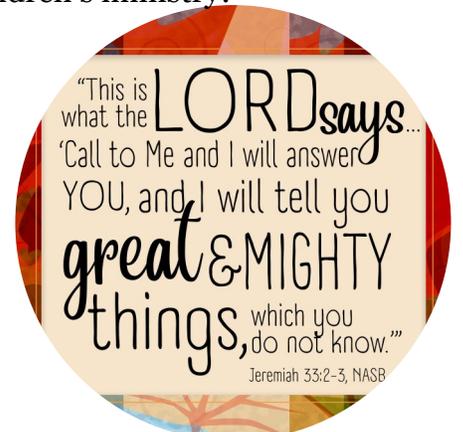
**\*MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!**  
**VBS 2026 – JUNE 1-4\***

**Our theme this year...**  
**#KidsConnect**

Come learn about connecting with family, friends, generations, community and JESUS!

**Acolytes and Crucifers** – We are looking for some wonderful youth to join in on this important role. Please let me know if you have a third grader or up who would like to be a special part of the service.

As always, **THANK YOU** for your support of our children’s ministry!





## grace note

Definition: *Noun:* an extra note added as an embellishment and not essential to the harmony or melody.

I hope everyone is enjoying the warmer weather we are finally having! It has been such a joy to my soul.

Holy week is just around the corner, and the choirs are planning for the days ahead. I hope you all will join us for all of our special services. The Bellissima bell choir will play two pieces for Palm Sunday including the favorite hymn *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*. We will have a Maundy Thursday, Good Friday Tenebrae service, and then of course the Easter sunrise service. In addition, for our Easter 11AM service, we will once again be welcoming the Rodney Money brass quartet to add jubilation to this very special occasion!

The Tenebrae service on Good Friday is one of my very favorite services of the year, second only to the Christmas Eve service. This service of diminishing light is such a poignant reminder of Christ's saving work on the cross. In addition to the traditional hymns for the occasion such as *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*, the choir will sing a lovely arrangement of *Were You There* by William Roger Price, a deeply touching passion spiritual.

# HOLY WEEK

at Central UMC



## PALM SUNDAY - MARCH 29

Jesus triumphantly arrives in Jerusalem!

11am Worship | 12pm Covered Dish | 1pm Egg Hunt



## MAUNDY THURSDAY - APRIL 2

The Last Supper

7pm Service with Communion



## GOOD FRIDAY - APRIL 3

The moments leading up to Jesus' crucifixion.

7pm Service of Tenebrae



## HOLY SATURDAY - APRIL 4

Pray. Reflect. Wait.

6am-6pm Prayer Vigil in Sanctuary



## EASTER SUNDAY - APRIL 5

He is Risen!

6:30am Sunrise | 11am Easter Celebration

3 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." 3 Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' 8 The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." 9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? 11 "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

(John 3:1-17, New Revised Standard Version, NRSV)

### **Loose Lines from Daniel's Den...**

John 3:16 is probably the most widely known and loved verse in the Bible. Remember the guy in the rainbow wig and the white bib overalls who used to show up at major sporting events with a sign that simply read, "John 3:16"? Interestingly, in the New Revised Standard Version, and several other translations, this verse is attributed to Jesus as indicated by the quotation marks. However, in other translations there are no quotation marks attached to this verse thereby making it part of the Gospel writer's narration. Of course, either way, whether John 3:16 reports the words of Jesus or the words of John the evangelist, it is God's Word!

What people most likely don't know that John 3:16 was a part of, or a commentary on, a conversation Jesus had with a Pharisee, named Nicodemus. Although Nicodemus was a Pharisee, although he was a leader of the Jews, and although he was a member of the Sanhedrin, something about Jesus intrigued him. Something was missing in Nicodemus' life, and he sensed that Jesus could help.

Jesus and his disciples were in Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. Word about Jesus' ministry in Galilee had evidently made its way to Jerusalem before Jesus' arrival. When he arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus went to the temple where he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, along with the moneychangers at their tables. The sight of merchants making money in the temple upset Jesus, so he poured out the coins of the moneychangers, turned over their tables, and drove out the animals.

Of course, what Jesus said and did in the temple that day created a commotion in Jerusalem. It was because of that commotion Nicodemus decided to approach Jesus under the cover of darkness to meet him and ask questions. Nicodemus, like the others who had been at the temple, did not understand who Jesus really was and is. Jesus' identity is much more than just a teacher or a miracle worker. Jesus is the Messiah, but he is even more than the Messiah, Jesus is the Word of God, the very Son of God – *the Word became flesh* (Jn. 1:14).

There is not much doubt that Nicodemus wanted to please God. Remember, Pharisees studied God's Word, they studied the Law of Moses, they did their best to follow God's Word – especially the Law of Moses - and they taught others to do the same. But something was missing. I believe that in trying so hard to please God; by following the letter of the Law, Nicodemus was missing the spirit of the Law.

Somehow, in studying every sentence, every paragraph of every book in the Bible, in paying attention to every jot and every tittle, and in committing it all to memory, Nicodemus had forgotten the most important thing about the Law of Moses. The Law was all about having right relationships with God and each other. That is why the Father sent Jesus to the world. Jesus came to put us all back into right relationships with God and one another. Jesus did that by fulfilling the Law for us with the blood he shed upon the cross. Jesus gave his own body and blood as a sacrifice for our sins so that by believing in him we may obtain forgiveness

Once we accept God's love for us in Jesus Christ, by faith, then we receive the Holy Spirit in our hearts. That is when we are born from above. Through the Holy Spirit living in our hearts, we are changed. As we are changed, we begin to live by the spirit of the Law not the letter.

Grace and Peace,  
Danny <>



# March 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 3pm - Disciple 3 7pm - AA & Al-Anon	2 CMCC Open House 6pm-7pm	3 9:30am:Class Meeting	4 10am - Disciple I MACS Spring Break Food Boxes 3pm 6:30 - Bells 7:30 - Choir	5 7pm - GriefShare, Al-Anon	6	7
8 Girl Scout Sunday 3pm - Disciple 3 7pm - AA & Al-Anon	9	10 9:30am:Class Meeting	11 10am - Disciple I 6:30 - Bells 7:30 - Choir	12 7pm - GriefShare, Al-Anon	13	14
15 3pm - Disciple 3 7pm - AA & Al-Anon	16	17 9:30am:Class Meeting	18 10am - Disciple I 6:30 - Bells 7:30 - Choir	19 7pm - GriefShare, Al-Anon	20 Girl Scout Event 5pm-9pm Fellowship Hall	21
22 3pm - Disciple 3 7pm - AA & Al-Anon	23 SIPPRC 5:30pm	24 9:30am:Class Meeting	25 10am - Disciple I 6:30 - Bells 7:30 - Choir	26 7pm - GriefShare, Al-Anon	27	28
29 Palm Sunday Fellowship Meal Easter Egg Hunt 3pm - Disciple 3 7pm - AA & Al-Anon	30 Holy Week	31 9:30am:Class Meeting	1 10:30 - Friendship Circle Palm Crosses & Eggs 7pm - Class Meeting	2 Maundy Thursday 7pm	3 Good Friday Tenebrae - 7pm	4 Holy Saturday Prayer Vigil 6am-6pm