

Announcements

Christmas Eve Offering to Haywood Street Congregation

Over 16 years ago, this congregation felt called to dedicate our Haywood Street campus to a special purpose: a church that would "include the most excluded," following the vision of Rev. Brian Combs. Central UMC provided volunteers and funding for meals, worship, respite, and genuine "relationship above all else" with our siblings on the streets.

The Haywood Street Congregation will always be a special part of our DNA at Central. For that reason, the offering taken up at our Christmas Eve services will go entirely to support Haywood Street. You can read more or donate directly at www.haywoodstreet.org.

Table 2 Table Potluck | SUN, JAN 4 | 11:15 AM: Join us for Table 2 Table Potluck! Central will take care of the fried chicken and chicken strips — just bring a side dish or dessert to share if you're able. The meal is free, and everyone is welcome. Come enjoy good food and even better company! *Donations accepted.*

Reconciling Ministry Group | SUN, JAN 4 | 11:45 AM: The RMG (LGBTQIA+ and allies) will meet at 11:45 AM in Room 219, near the Fellowship Hall. Join us as we begin planning for 2026.

(Un)Decorating: Taking Down Christmas Decor | TUE, JAN 6 | 1:00 PM

All the beautiful Christmas decorations that we're enjoying now need to come down after Epiphany. If you would like to help, please meet in the Sanctuary on Tuesday, January 6 at 1:00 pm. If you have any questions, please contact **Alexandra Holland** at alexandra@wncnature.com. A big thank you, as well, to everyone who helped decorate!

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 will meet Wednesdays from 5:30 - 7pm in person from January 7 to April 1 (excepting Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18). Participants will do about 15 minutes of reading each day to prepare for questions and discussion during class. NT 101 will provide beginners with a great overview and long-time students of the Bible with a better understanding of the big picture of God's story. Pre-registration is required so you can get a copy of the workbook and complete the first week's reading (suggested donation, \$20). To register, email **Mary Brown** at mbrown@CentralUMC.org.

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** at mchristy@CentralUMC.org for more information or to RSVP.

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

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 great opportunity for families to enjoy some time together—or parents enjoy a date night! 💕 More details and sign-ups coming soon. Contact Maggie for questions.

Ministry Staff

Rev. Dr. Mary Brown, Senior Pastor

MBrown@CentralUMC.org

Rev. Lisa Rettew, Minister of Congregational Care

LRettew@CentralUMC.org

Maggie Christy, Director of Children and Youth Discipleship

MChristy@CentralUMC.org

Corey Powell, Organist & Director of Music Ministries

CPowell@CentralUMC.org

Linda Haggard, Director of Choral Music

LHaggard@CentralUMC.org

Richard Provine, Director of Central Brass

Central.Congregational Care.



Stephen Ministry: As the holidays draw to a close, we offer our continued support if you are "just not feeling it." Central cares about you. Stephen Ministers are available to listen, empathize, and encourage you in a confidential, non-judging manner. Contact Pastor Lisa or fill out a referral On-line, located under Congregational Care at CentralUMC.org/stephen-ministry.



Pastoral Care: Our pastors are also available to support you if you are homebound, facing surgery, and or other medical treatments. Please let our Pastors know so that phone calls, visits, and Communion can be arranged. You are not alone!

Adult 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 its own vibe—and during January, all are ready to welcome visitors!

Expect to be greeted with smiles and name tags—and maybe even some special treats. You might even try a different class each week to explore all the options available.

To see a full list of our Adult Sunday School classes, go to CentralUMC.org/Adults, or simply scan the QR code.



Christmas Eve Services | WED, DEC 24: We still have two more Christmas Eve services. We invite you to join us at either of these services.

5:00 PM - Lessons & Carols: Central Brass prelude at 5:00 PM

11:00 PM - Candlelight Communion Worship Service

During worship service, the library is available for families wanting to watch the livestream. Nursery is available in Room 104 for children ages 0-5. See Ushers for assistance.

Plainclothes law enforcement officers are present during our services so that all may feel welcome, secure and free to worship, fellowship and experience God's grace freely. Our staff members are in direct communication with the officers should you feel the need to ask for assistance or voice a concern.

Central.United.



WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Dr. Mary Brown

CHIMES OF THE TRINITY

PRELUDE

"Angels We have Heard on High"

arr. Paul Fey

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Caroline and Graham Garland; Amanda Graham

Readers light the three purple candles and the pink candle.

Reader: Tonight we celebrate the birth of Christ!
We celebrate the arrival of a Light that cannot be extinguished.

As John 1:4-5 tells us:
"In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

Readers light the center white candle.

Reader: We light this candle as a sign of Christ,
Emmanuel: God-with-us. God is with us!

**All: God is with us!
May the light of Christ shine in us.**

OFFERTORY

"O Holy Night"

Adolphe Adam

Linda Haggard, soloist

Tonight's offering is dedicated to Haywood Street Congregation. Everything we receive will go toward the ministry that "includes the most excluded."

While the soloist makes their musical offering, the ushers will pass plates for those who wish to offer a financial gift or a prayer request. You may also use this QR code to make a financial gift. Whether you place something in the plate or not, you are invited to pause as you pass it and reflect on what you hope to offer God this week.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:1-20

Rev. Dr. Mary Brown

MESSAGE

"The Gift of Christmas: What is it?"

Rev. Dr. Mary Brown

THE PAPER BAG CHRISTMAS		
Adapted from a pageant by Susan Sloan		
Characters: Prophets <i>These people, the prophets, had a whole lot to say --- About the coming of Jesus ---- about his birth Christmas Day!</i>		
CAROL 234 (Stanza 1 and refrain)	“O Come, All Ye Faithful” O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem. Come and behold him, born the King of angels; O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.	ADESTE FIDELES
Characters: Mary, Joseph, Stars <i>The world was at peace, on this holiest of nights.</i>		
CAROL 230 (Stanzas 1)	“O Little Town of Bethlehem” O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie! Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by. Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light; the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.	ST. LOUIS
Characters: Manger Animals <i>But great was the love that shone on his face!</i>		
CAROL 217 (Stanza 1)	“Away in a Manger” Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head. The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.	AWAY IN A MANGER

Characters: Trees <i>When all of a sudden, without any warning, the sky was ablaze – just like it was morning!</i>		
CAROL 218 (Stanza 1)	“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, From angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold; “Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven’s all gracious King.” The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.	CAROL
Characters: Sheep, Ms. Gabriel, Angels <i>These angels appear, by Ms. Gabriel directed!</i>		
CAROL 240 (Stanza 1 and refrain)	“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King; Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!" Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies; with th' angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!" <i>Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"</i>	MENDELSSOHN
Characters: Mary, Prophets <i>Their voices rang out, over all of the earth to spread to God’s people the wonders of Jesus’ birth.</i>		
CAROL 238 (Stanza 1 and refrain)	“Angels We Have Heard on High” Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains, and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains. Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!	GLORIA
Characters: Shepherds <i>Go see for yourselves – that’s what you should do!”</i>		
CAROL 245 (Stanza 1 and refrain)	“The First Noel” The First Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay; in fields as they lay keeping their sheep, On a cold winter's night that was so deep. Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.	THE FIRST NOEL

<i>From the Prophets of old to all of us today – Here is the message we are given to say.....</i>		
CAROL 246 (Stanza 1 and 4)	“Joy to the World” Joy to the world! The Lord is come; Let earth receive her King; Let ev'ry heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove. The glories of His righteousness, and wonders of His love and wonders of His love, and wonder wonders of His love	ANTIOCH
CAROL 239	“Silent Night, Holy Night” <i>The ushers will come forward and get the light from the Christ Candle. As they pass the light, be sure to tip unlit candles toward lit ones. Be ready to raise your candles during the final verse.</i>	STILLE NACHT
Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright round yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant, so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.		
Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight; glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing Alleluia! Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!		
Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light; radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.		
Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light; with the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King; Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!		

BENEDICTION	Rev. Dr. Mary Brown
CHIMES OF THE TRINITY	
POSTLUDE	“Hark! the Herald Angels Sing” Traditional