

# Centering

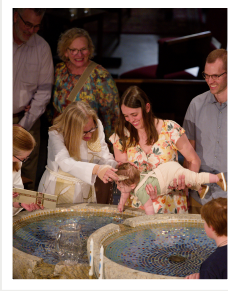
FALL 2025

NEWS OF CENTRAL LUTHERAN | MINNEAPOLIS

## Stories of Home







“When I discover that in my heart of hearts

God is closer to me than I am to myself  
then I have come home.”

-Brother David Steindl-Rast,  
*Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*

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Cover art:

Baptism of Tate, child of Jenna and Justice, at the Easter Vigil.

Photo credit: Phil Holst.





## Essential Stories of Home

**Y**ou're invited to a year of learning and growing as we launch a new season of being church together here at Central. Exploring the theme, "Stories of Home" you'll be encouraged to journey with others to explore the many images, feelings, and realities of what it means to experience 'home' in the world today.

In a culture where many of us move residences more than 12 times throughout our lives, what are the essential elements of home that give you a sense of love and belonging? It might be a place; it might be the people you're with. As one of our confirmation students wrote last spring, it might be a feeling that you can't explain but you know it when you feel it.

Rally Weekend kicks off the new year on September 7 with intergenerational learning for everyone on Sunday at 9:30 a.m. We will have a homecoming celebration to welcome the congregation back after summer adventures and experiential learning. There will be time to connect and share stories of home with friends old and new at tables in the Great Room.

**[We'll] focus on what God teaches us about the importance of home and place, not just physically, but spiritually.**

Throughout the year, we will dig into the great stories of home in Scripture. The Sunday morning forums, Wednesday night Bible studies, and Empowering Conversations will all focus on what God teaches us about the importance of home and place, not just physically, but spiritually. We will think intentionally about those who have houses and not homes and those who have homes and not houses. These will be deep and rich conversations for us to have together.

So, please plan to join us in these meaningful conversations. As we begin another year, you are warmly invited to connection and community. Our goal is to make Central one of those places you experience 'home' – a place of deep grounding, belonging, and love.

*Pastor Stephanie Friesen*



# Stories of Formation

The Lifelong Formation Area Cluster centers on lifelong faith formation where all can develop a closer relationship with God and deepen their call for mission.

## Rally Weekend

Another program year is about to begin and we are making plans to welcome all into a new season of learning and growing in faith together. In the spirit of a homecoming celebration, we invite you to mark your calendars now for the weekend of September 6-7-8 as we lean into our 2025-2026 theme, "Stories of Home." The year will begin with intergenerational learning on Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m. with activities and conversation about what makes you feel a sense of home. Is it a place, a person, a song or something completely different? We'll explore these questions and others as we begin a new year together.

All are encouraged to worship and gather for Rally Weekend as we share information about programming for the coming year. Schedules for forums, Bible studies, and Empowering Conversations will all be available. Calendars for Sunday School, Confirmation, and High School learning opportunities will be presented for children, youth, and families.

Come and be a part of this exciting weekend of homecoming and welcome.



*Knockerballs are a student favorite at Camp Wapo during the Confirmation Retreat.*

## Confirmation Retreat

The annual confirmation retreat is scheduled for **Saturday-Sunday, October 25-26**. We will travel to Camp Wapo again this year and plan an overnight to include time for getting to know each other, learning about Jesus, and spending

time together in those amazing knockerballs, Pastor Stephanie included. Under the umbrella of this year's theme, "Stories of Home," students will explore some of the

ways in which we make our home in Christ. Confirmation families should pencil-in this great weekend on their fall calendars now. More details coming as the program year begins.



*An Intergenerational Learning event kicks off the year at Rally Sunday!*

## High School Youth Group

After a 10-year absence, we are going to experiment with a Wednesday night learning time for our high school students. In addition to our Sunday morning fellowship time, we are planning to meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday night of each

month to learn about and discuss the church's role in our young people's lives. We will tend





*At least once a year, Central kids, youth, and family work together to pack health kits.*

to the big questions about faith, a life centered in Christ, and the ways in which we are called to love and serve our neighbors.

We will begin the season on **Wednesday, October 22 at 7 p.m.** (This is the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday in order to avoid MEA; all other Wednesdays will follow the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday rule.) Healthy snacks will be provided, and we will meet from 7 – 8:30 p.m.

### Adult Forums

The Sunday Adult Forums will begin on **September 14 at 9:30 a.m.** The forums will be grounded in conversations that align with Stories of Home. Throughout the year, Central's pastors and guest speakers will lead us in conversations about the essential spirit and nature of home in our churches and our culture. What does home mean to you? How are the images and realities of home captured in our theology, our worship and our lives of faith?

Join the forums with a curiosity about how your faith and how your church have created the spirit of home for you.

### Fall Bible Study

Join Pastors Melissa, Peter, and Stephanie for the fall's Bible study on Stories of Home in Scripture. The season **begins on October 1 at 6 p.m.** This offering is available both in person and online, so join us in whatever setting is best for you. The first four-week session will explore the stories of home in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament. The second four-week session shifts to the New Testament

where we will see that Jesus, while here to live and dwell among us, never really had a home of his own.

Join us as we read and study the many ways we find our home in community and in Jesus Christ. These Bible studies are created so that you can come every week or when it fits your schedule, so plan to come whenever you can.



*Adult learning includes an evening Bible study any can join, either in person or online.*

### Fall Prayer Retreat

"Stories of Home" is the theme for this program year here at Central. The fall prayer retreat will pick up on this theme and provide an opportunity to explore what it means that we are home in the presence of God. The retreat will be a half-day experience on **Sunday, October 12**, beginning at 12:30 p.m. and concluding by 4:30 p.m.

Pastor Kathie and Pastor Peter will lead contemplative prayer sessions for us as we explore the ways prayer grounds and "homes" us in God. Save the day and time frame and watch for more details in the *Spirit* in September. This prayer retreat is free and supported by the Prayer Ministry Team.



# Save the Date

Summer is full of opportunities for us to worship and be together in community.

**September 1**  
**Labor Day Monday**  
Building Closed

**September 3**  
**Wednesday**  
7:15 p.m.  
Choir Rehearsals begin

**September 6-8**  
**Rally Weekend**  
Sunday, 9:30 a.m.  
Intergenerational Learning

**September 14**  
**Sunday**  
9:30 a.m.  
Weekly Sunday School, Confirmation, High School Youth Group, and Adult Forums begin



*Kids of all ages help assemble health kits.*

**September 17**  
**Wednesday**  
6 p.m.  
Bell Choir Rehearsals begin

**September 21**  
**Sunday**  
Noon  
Empowering Conversations

**October 1**  
**Wednesday**  
6 p.m.  
Evening Bible Study begins

**October 4**  
**Saturday**  
2 p.m.  
Installation of the Rev. Yehiel Curry as Presiding Bishop of the ELCA



*The Central OWLS enjoy many adventures together in the fall.*





*Volunteers prepare the choir robes, as a new season of music begins.*

**October 12**  
**Sunday**  
 12:30-4:30 p.m.  
 Fall Prayer Retreat

**October 18-19**  
**Global Mission Weekend**  
 Sunday, noon  
 Empowering Conversations

**November 8**  
**Saturday**  
 Noon-4 p.m.  
 Hennepin County Fix-It Clinic

**November 15-17**  
**Sabbath to End Homelessness**  
 Sunday, noon  
 Empowering Conversations



*Global Mission Weekend is full of learning and fun!*

**October 22**  
**Wednesday**  
 7 p.m.  
 Monthly High School Youth Night begins

**October 25-26**  
**Confirmation Retreat**

**November 1-3**  
**All Saints' Weekend**

**November 20**  
**Thursday**  
 4-8 p.m.  
 Align Fall Fundraiser

**November 22-24**  
**Generosity Ingathering Weekend**

**November 24**  
**Monday**  
 11 a.m.  
 Thanksgiving  
 Worship and Meal

**November 27**  
**Thanksgiving Holiday**  
 Thursday, 10 a.m.  
 Downtown  
 Congregations  
 Interfaith Worship



*The kids have fun on retreat!*



# A Year of Stories:

## Narratives of Connection in Adult Formation

By Brenda Blackhawk

**S**tories come in all shapes and sizes. They are written as a 1,000-page saga, the little anecdotes told around the dinner table, a beautiful song that makes the emotions rise, acted out on the stage or on screen, or something else entirely. What is it about story that is so important?

Ultimately, stories are about connection. Writer Terry Tempest Williams says, “Story is the umbilical cord that connects us to the past, present, and future. Story is a relationship between the teller and the listener, a responsibility. Story is an affirmation of our ties to one another.”

As creatures of relationship, story is a tool and a tradition that human beings have always used as a means to pass down knowledge, connect us to the world and each other, and paint us a picture of who we are in a shared life together. As Christians, we have a whole book of stories (the Bible) that do exactly that.

We love stories. Without stories, would we, as human beings, even know who we are? People often think of stories as being something for children, something imagined and fantastic (fairytales), something that teaches a lesson (fables), or something that connects them to their family (anecdotes about relatives and ancestors).

Sure, stories are formative, but

they are not limited to children and human beings are not limited to growth only in childhood.

The theme for the 2025 program year at Central is “Stories of Home.” A theme that is not restricted to Sunday School and children’s sermons. There are myriad ways that we use story as an opportunity to teach and learn and connect with one another and the world around us in our adult formation opportunities.

### Central Book Club

One place where adults at Central can experience growth and connection through story is the Central Book Club.

Carol Rieger, longtime Book Club member and now one of its organizers, reflects on how stories open us up: “Stories connect

us through words that evoke feelings that touch our hearts or our heads and sometimes both, and they always bring us to a place in time where we are vulnerable enough to trust and share.”

One of the miraculous things about stories, especially when you’re in a book club, is that they don’t stay stranded in our minds, they are nourished by discussion and further sharing of our own stories.



*A copy of the monthly Book Club selection is available to borrow on the shelf at the back of the sanctuary.*

Book Club member Ben Longman asserts that, “In Book Club, whether the book we are discussing is joyous, painful, or kind of odd we look at the story up, down, and sideways. And everyone gets to share.”

This collective examination of a story and the sharing it invites creates bonds with all the members. And when examined through a lens of faith, those bonds are also connecting us to God and the wider world. Longman believes that “a story of faith that is biblical (or not) can nourish and refresh our own personal and communal faith stories.”

Each month, the Book Club gathers to discuss the pre-selected book for that month. Those books will appear in the *Spirit* and on the website. All are welcome to join and follow along whether or not you can make a gathering. The Book Club next meets on Thursday, September 11 at 1:30 p.m. and will be discussing *The Disciples of White Jesus: the Radicalization of American Boyhood* by Angela Denker.

## Empowering Conversations

Another place in which adult formation is nurtured by story is through the monthly Empowering Conversations.

Empowering Conversations occurs on the third Sunday of the month, following the community meal. A guest speaker is invited to come share stories about our community and the things that we and our neighbors are facing. Generally, those gathered are invited into discussion on the topic.

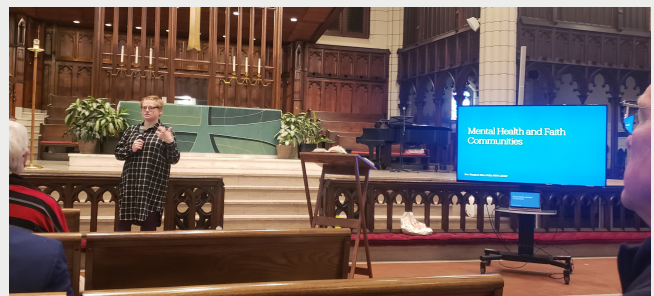
Jim Hart is a regular attendee of Empowering Conversations. He explains that the conversations “are meant to open our minds to how the church fits into our society and

what unique wisdom and hope we have to contribute to the future progress of our society.”

Over the years, many different speakers have shared stories about global mission, mental health, climate change, racial justice, Christian Nationalism, childhood development, Native American history, and so much more.

Hart names that these Empowering Conversations are “also a time for deeper thinking about societal issues. When we lose our capacity for serious thinking, tyranny is apt to take over. The church provides a safe place to have conversations based on critical thinking.”

The first Empowering Conversations of the year is set for September 21 where we will be joined by Karoline Lewis from Luther Seminary.



*Last year, the Rev. Margaret Kelly shared stories related to mental health and faith communities.*

As we enter this new program year guided by “Stories of Home” Pastor Peter reminds us that “When we gather at church for opportunities to learn and grow, we are grounded in stories. They help us remember, they ground us in the ways we belong to God, and they empower us as we go out into the world to share God’s love and care for all in need.”

Welcome to a new year of formation at Central, a year full of stories.



# Stories of Generosity

The Generosity Area Mission Cluster centers on the invitation for every child of God to share their gifts of time, abilities, and finances for the sake of God's mission in the world.

## Fall Generosity Appeal

The annual fall Generosity (stewardship) Ingathering weekend will be **November 22-23**. We will gather as a faith community to share our intentions (pledges) as an act of faith in worship. This year's theme will be "Stories of Home in God's Abundance," guided by the overarching image of "Stories of Home." One of the gifts of an awareness of our home in God is how deeply God shares from God's abundance for our daily lives. We are home in God's abundance, and through our generosity we join in creating a sense of home for others. Please save the dates and look for invitations for prayer and preparation as we look forward to November 22-23.

## Global Mission Weekend

The Global Mission Team is working on a wonderful weekend with our global partners, Lutheran Health Care Bangladesh (LHCB). On **October 16-18**, we will welcome Granar Marek, and Rebecca Quiah, representatives of the LHCB Board of Directors and the Rev. Franklin Ishida and the Rev. Dr. Chandran

Martin from the ELCA's office for Asia and the Pacific.

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Central's partnership with LHCB. We will celebrate our long-term partnership and cast a vision for the future for what our continued relationship may look like in the years to come.

During LHCB's visit to the Twin Cities, our guests will gather with the Global Mission Team, enjoy a reunion dinner with the group from Central who traveled to Bangladesh

in 2018, and visit other ministry partners and potential partners. Dr. Marek and Mrs. Quiah will be with us throughout Global Mission Weekend for worship, the Adult Forum,

and Empowering Conversations. Mark your calendars now for this amazing immersion into global ministry!

## Casavant Organ Project Update

The design phase is complete, with the drawings and details now in the hands of the Casavant

Organ Committee, Isaac Drewes, and our organ consultant, Russell Drager. In earlier communication it was shared that the timeline



*The fall Generosity Ingathering is a time of gratitude and giving.*



*The 2018 Bangladesh travelers from Central.*



*There is always something new to taste, see, and learn during Global Mission Weekend. In 2024 Rev. Franklin Ishida taught.*

for the project has moved back considerably. This is disappointing news.

In the organ building world, which is somewhat of an old-world craft style of work, the demand for organ building and renovation far exceeds the available firms. The current start date is in 2029 with the organ builder that completed the design phase for us.

The Organ Committee is reviewing the design work and is exploring options for how best to proceed. All options are on the table. There will be an information meeting this fall where Pastor Peter and Isaac will share the options and possible next steps with the congregation.

The silver lining is that because of the generosity of the congregation, the council, under the guidance of the Fiscal and Property Committee, has paid off the \$300,000 short-term loan for the design process.

## Sanctuary Renewal Project Updates

While many of you have been out enjoying this beautiful Minnesota summer, we have been making the most of our time during the lull in the program year. In keeping with the philosophy of being kind to our future selves, we continue to cross off projects on our



*Central's Casavant organ.*

long term “to do” list. So far this summer, we have completely resurfaced the parking lot, including a change to angled parking that we think will improve the traffic flow and boost safety for large events. Also in the interest of improving traffic flow, we have reversed the direction of the parking ramp, which will decrease the time it takes for it to empty after a large event or concert when everyone leaves at the same time. The resurfacing and restriping also provided us with the chance to add twenty-one additional handicap-accessible parking spaces.

We have also begun the boiler replacement project. At this point, the old boilers have been removed and recycled, and we have also removed as much of the nearly 100-year-old piping as possible. The new high-efficiency boilers are on site, and the installation process will begin soon.



*Replacing the boilers is part of the Sanctuary Renewal Project.*

We are so blessed to be able to proactively tackle these projects, focusing on the future and setting ourselves up to be able to help others. In a way, we are being kind to our future selves so we can be kind to our future friends and neighbors.



# Stories of Worship

The Worship Area Cluster centers on welcome, hospitality, and the central act of the church as people of God gather for corporate worship.

## Music Staff Update

We welcome Joel Bolen as our new Saturday Worship Musician! Joel will be the primary musician for this service, playing most Saturday nights, although Isaac will continue to play Saturday worship from time-to-time. In addition to his duties here at Central, Joel is the Director of Music at Ascension Episcopal Church in Stillwater, MN. Welcome, Joel!



Joel Bolen

## Music Happenings this Fall

### Reformation Sunday October 26

We will celebrate with a festive 10:30 a.m. Choral Eucharist featuring brass and choir, as well as much of Martin Luther's foundational hymnody.

### All Saints' Sunday November 2

The 10:30 Choral Eucharist will feature John Rutter's sublime *Requiem*, with the Central Lutheran Church Choir and musicians of the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. We will have additional singers join us for this offering. If you are not a regular choir member, but would like to join us for the requiem, see the next page.



*We light candles and remember our beloved saints.*

**A**t Central, we enjoy a rich liturgical tradition. Take a look at Central's worship settings:

**Sunday, 8:30 a.m. Service:** An intimate "First Light" service with Holy Communion. It features hymns and the word, musically enriched by vocal soloists and the Bell Choir.

**Sunday, 10:30 a.m. Choral Eucharist:** A festive service with Holy Communion. The service features hymns and anthems, led weekly by the Central Choir, as well as the Choristers and Bell Choir.

**Saturday, 5 p.m. Evening Service:** A contemplative time of prayer, scripture, and Holy Communion. The atmosphere is meditative and relaxed, with quieter music and hymns, often led by a soloist.

**Monday, 11 a.m. Service:** Grounded in community and followed by a meal. Each week of the month, worship has its own flavor, from testimony times and healing services to confession and forgiveness and Holy Communion. Music is led by members of the worshipping community.

# Stories of Music

Music has always been an important part of life at Central, whether singing in worship, hosting musical concerts, or enjoying the carillon bells on the plaza.

## Central Choir

**Who:** Adults and high schoolers

**Rehearsal time:** Wednesdays, 7:15-8:45 p.m.

**Contact:** Choir Director Joe Osowski at [josowski@centralmpls.org](mailto:josowski@centralmpls.org)

Do you love to sing and enjoy meaningful fellowship through music? The Central Lutheran Church Choir invites you to be part of a vibrant and welcoming community of singers! Rehearsals **begin Wednesday, September 3**, and we'd love to have your voice join us as we prepare music for worship, special services, and seasonal events. Whether you're a seasoned vocalist or looking to reconnect with choral music, there's a place for you here.

## Sing John Rutter's Requiem at All Saints' Day

You are warmly invited to join the Central Lutheran Church Choir this fall for a special musical opportunity: a collaborative performance of John Rutter's *Requiem* with members of the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. Rehearsals will be held **Wednesdays from 7:15–8 p.m., beginning September 17 through October 29**, at Central Lutheran Church. This is a welcoming choir open to all singers who love meaningful sacred music and want to be part of something extraordinary. Come sing with us! For more information or to register, contact Central Choir Director Joe Osowski.



*Central Choir singing at All Saints' Day worship.*

## Bell Choir

**Who:** Adults and high-schoolers

**Rehearsal time:** Wednesdays, 6-7 p.m.

**Contact:** Director of Music Isaac Drewes at [idrewes@centralmpls.org](mailto:idrewes@centralmpls.org)

The Central Lutheran Church Bell Choir performs a variety of handbell music throughout the program year. It is an engaging and unique way to make music together, and we have openings this fall. Basic music-reading proficiency is required; prior bell ringing experience is helpful. However, someone with a desire to learn who has never played bells before can be successful. This ensemble plays in worship about monthly.

## StreetSong MN Choir

**Who:** Persons 'experienced' in homelessness – i.e. persons currently or formerly homeless, and those who care about them.

**Rehearsal time:** Mondays, 12:15-1:30 p.m.

**Contact:** Katie Dillon, [katie@alignmpls.org](mailto:katie@alignmpls.org)

StreetSong draws on the experiences, hopes, and aspirations of its members to produce a choral experience promoting personal fulfillment and the development of community. A meal is available prior to rehearsal, and bus

tokens are provided. The choir has appeared at the Central Library in Minneapolis, the Mall of America, the annual Homeless Memorial March and Service, and at various worship.



# Stories of Community

The Community Area Cluster centers on welcoming all into life-giving community where relationships are fostered and a range of human needs are met.

## September Align to Learn

On **Wednesday, September 10 at 1 p.m.** at St. Olaf Catholic Church you are invited to come and learn what all the congregations in Align are doing to help folks experiencing homelessness. St. Olaf Catholic Church, Dignity Center at Hennepin Avenue Methodist Church, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, St. Mary's Basilica, and Central Lutheran will all have representatives to share the ministry we do. Our very own Karen Knox will be sharing from Central! There are many of our congregations doing amazing ministry. We coordinate how we serve so that our resources don't overlap, and we accomplish more for our neighbors in need. At this time when the needs are increasing and the support is decreasing, join us to learn what is available and how you can help.

## Fall Art Show

Art is a powerful way of sharing culture. All cultures have art that speaks directly to the heart of their people. As Christians we have a deep and wide experience of art. In the first 1500 years of our faith, art was one of the few ways the faith was passed along from person to person. This fall we have invited Indigenous artists with connections to the ELCA to exhibit their art at Central. We have pieces from all over our church to share.

Please take some time to experience this art as it comes to us as a shared gift that will be with us through Indigenous People's Day on October 13.

## Fix-it Clinic at Central

**Saturday, November 8** is a big day at Central. We are hosting a Hennepin County Fix-It Clinic from noon to 4 p.m. The C3 (Central Cares for Creation) Team have been planning for this event for years and are so excited to finally host!



*Volunteers help to teach and repair household items, appliances, and electronics.*

Fix-It Clinics offer free, guided assistance from volunteers with repair skills to disassemble, troubleshoot, and (hopefully) fix small household appliances, clothing, electronics, mobile devices, and more.

Fix-It Clinics teach valuable troubleshooting and basic repair skills, build community connections, and reduce the number of repairable items that are thrown in the trash.

The Clinic will take up the entire Great Room and will bring in hundreds of folks. Please consider helping that day (more info in the *Spirit* as we get closer) or plan on bringing your favorite toaster that just needs a new cord for a little fix-it action.

## Sabbath to End Homelessness

Join us once again this November as we gather to remember our neighbors who are



*The community will gather for the Thanksgiving Meal on Monday, November 24.*

experiencing homelessness. The weekend set aside this year is **November 15 through 17**. There will be an Adult Forum on Sunday that will focus on one of the myriad topics around preventing and ending homelessness. Additionally, at noon on Sunday, November 16, the Empowering Conversations will also have a focus on Sabbath to End Homelessness. These opportunities are still in the planning phase, so watch the *Spirit* for more details coming soon!

## Thanksgiving Meal

This year, the annual Thanksgiving Meal will take place on **Monday, November 24**. All are welcome to join us for worship at 11 a.m. where we will offer up our gratitude for God's abundance. Then, at 11:30 a.m., we will enjoy a feast of all our favorite Thanksgiving foods (turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, pie, and more!) gathered together with our beloved community.

## What is the work of the Restoration Center?

In the mid 1960s when the Free Store (then called the Clothes Closet) was begun the Sunday school teachers had one goal: to make sure the kids coming to Sunday School had enough warm clothes. How did the teachers know what the kids needed? Simple, they knew the kids and at least once a week they spent time together. Every time the Restoration Center has expanded since then, it has been out of that same genesis. It is people who know one another and can share their need and their lives. It helps that Jesus is very clear in Matthew 25 where he tells folks that when they give water to someone who is thirsty, food to the hungry, visit the sick or imprisoned, or clothe the naked they actually provide for Jesus himself.



*The Free Store is an important ministry of the Restoration Center at Central.*

We are not sure this work has been any more needed than at this moment in our history. Traditional benefits programs that have been the safety net for folks who don't have enough

to eat or make enough to pay the rent as it is steadily increasing, are more often now walking through our doors at Central. People who rarely worried are now asking what they will do if they get laid off from their job or if their Section 8 housing voucher is taken away. How do we know? Because these are folks who are a part of our community at Central. We are in relationships with folks in all places in the economic spectrum. How can we help? By making a donation directly to the work of the Restoration Center. You can do that in your online giving by choosing Restoration Center in the drop down menu, or if you write a check, put Restoration Center in the memo line. It is one simple way we can see Jesus in our neighbor and step up.





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**Rally Weekend:**  
September 6-8

**Global Mission Weekend**  
October 18-20

**All Saints' Weekend:**  
November 1-3

**Generosity Ingathering  
Weekend:**  
November 22-24



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