

# CENTRAL NEWS

## DECEMBER 2024



Central United Methodist Church  
1213 Porter St., Richmond, VA 23224  
Web Site: [www.umcentral.org](http://www.umcentral.org)  
Shayne Estes, Pastor Cell: 804-357-1107

804-232-0334 (answering machine)  
Email: [umcentral@verizon.net](mailto:umcentral@verizon.net)  
Facebook: Central United Methodist Church – RVA  
[shayneestes@vaumc.org](mailto:shayneestes@vaumc.org)

### **Pastor's Message – Divine Connections in Advent**

**Luke 2:8-15 (NRSVUE)** *Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."*

On our Iceland trip in September, one chilly evening we left our room at the farm B&B seeking an adventure. Our guide promised us stunning views of Iceland's "northern lights" in a comfortable setting. When we arrived at the neighbor's farm a half hour away (neighbors are pretty spread out in northern Iceland), it was in the 30s. We put on our bathing suits in a frigid little outbuilding but were rewarded by warmth of the farmer's makeshift hot tub. Iceland has so many thermal vents that most farmers in the north have their own hot tubs free of charge. Our guide was not exaggerating when we saw the northern lights. Ethereal lights in colors of green, red, white, and pink lit up the night sky. With no competing lights, the show took away our breath. I somehow felt closer to God those couple hours we spent in the "hot tub." I think that's what many of us are missing these days – a personal connection with the Divine.

In the above story from Luke, the shepherds witnessed unimaginable glory from the Lord's angels. They shone brightly in the night sky and were transformative for the shepherds. Do you think the shepherds would have ever been the same after an experience like that? This vision was also supplemented by being led to Jesus, the Messiah. If I were one of the shepherds, I would have been telling this story to everyone for the rest of my days.

We may not think about it, but most of us have insulated ourselves from Divine experiences. The stars, moon, and other celestial objects still give us an experience of the Divine. We may not have the same scene as the shepherds, but the night sky can give us a sense of awe. It helps us understand in some small way how big and mighty our God is. That night sky is waiting for us every night (weather permitting), but most of us prefer the dull glow of the television. This Advent I encourage you to look at the night sky and watch for angels. God usually rewards seekers with an experience of the Divine. May you come closer to our Lord by internalizing the message of those angels.

God Bless You, *Pastor Shayne*

## **Outreach Missions**

Janet Tyler delivered a trunkful for food and supplies to Sacred Heart Center that was donated by her friends. This was above our normal monthly donation. Two deliveries were made to the Share the Warmth homeless ministry in November. If you have warm clothing you didn't wear last year, blankets, sleeping bags, tarps, or tents, consider what you have, that others may need. Thanks to all who contribute to these worthwhile causes.

## **In Memoriam: Bonnie Neighbour**

Former member Bonnie Neighbour passed away mid November. She was on Central's Board, sang in the choir, and sometimes played flute. She had cancer surgery this summer, but a severe infection put her in ICU for about a month. Bonnie's body just couldn't fight all the complications. Her memorial service is at Ginter Park Presbyterian Church, Thursday, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm. Condolences can be sent to her wife, Mickie Chapman, at 816 Ryder Rd., Richmond, 23235.

## **Blue Christmas Service – Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>, 3 pm**

If you've experienced a recent loss, Christmas seems a lot different this year. That loss could be of a loved one, a relationship, a job, or other emotional experience that makes celebrating the holidays difficult. However, there's good news; Jesus can provide a bridge to healing and restoration. Come and experience the hope that only comes from Christ. Live violin and cello music will provide a calming atmosphere at this informal event.

## **Fellowship Lunch**

Our next luncheon will be December 8<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the holiday season. There will be ham, so bring a side dish of the season. There's always plenty of food, in case your forget or aren't able to contribute. In 2025, we'll gather on February 16<sup>th</sup>.

## **Christmas Eve Service**

A traditional candlelight Christmas Eve Service will be at 5:30 pm, Tues. 12/24. Bring family and friends to this inspirational service as we celebrate the birth of Christ.

## **Poinsettias for the Holidays**

The church will be adorned with poinsettias on Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the Christmas season. The list of those honored and memorialized will be next to the weekly bulletin at the back of the church. You may take your poinsettia home after the December 29<sup>th</sup> worship service.

## **Focus on a Central Family**

Russ Parrish is often at church, and sometimes with his family, as they are able to attend. He is a native of Gloucester, Virginia, and he and his wife, Lisa, just moved from Midlothian to Church Hill. Russ and Lisa are recent empty nesters with three children: Molly (22), Vaughan (20), and Addie (18). Russ has spent the last twenty years of his career as a CFO in the affordable housing industry and currently works for VCDC, a non-profit housing syndicator in Shockhoe Bottom. He enjoys hiking, reading, walking his dog, Arlo, playing guitar, and traveling. Russ has visited all fifty states, notching #50 in Alaska last summer travelling with his wife, two daughters, sister (who also recorded her 50<sup>th</sup> state), and nephew. He started attending Central in 2021 and loves the old church and its small, intimate congregation.

### **Moravian Love Feast in January**

Central celebrated the beginning of 2024 in a different type of service. We will do the same on January 26, 2025. Sweets like cinnamon rolls are traditionally served, plus a warm drink. All are invited to share a poem, song, scripture or personal story that relates to your spiritual journey. This informal service will be held in the Fellowship Hall at 11:00, instead of the sanctuary.

### **December Birthdays**

Julia Swagger 12/1  
Fay Lion 12/10  
Addie Parrish 12/15  
Betty Mann 12/16  
Russ Parrish 12/20

### **Upcoming Events**

Thursdays @ 6:30 pm weekly Bible study @ St. Francis Home: *Gospel of John*  
Dec. 6, Fri. – Northstar packs lunches for the Healing Place  
Dec. 7, Sat. 3pm – Blue Christmas Service  
Dec. 8, Sun. noon – Covered dish lunch after church  
Dec. 24, Tues., 5:30 – Christmas Eve Service  
Jan. 26, Sun., 11:00 – Moravian Love Feast  
Feb. 16, Sun. – Covered dish lunch after church

Central UMC Traditional Sunday Worship Service: Sun. @ 11am, All are Welcome!

Narcotics Anonymous meets weekly: Sun. @ 7pm, Wed. @ Noon & at 6pm; Fri. @ 6pm

Northstar Community: Sundays, 8:30am – Men's & Women's Groups in classrooms; 9:30am – Healing Service in Wesley Hall; Tuesdays 6:00pm – Recovery Yoga; First Wednesdays 6:30pm – Women's Group

A decorative red logo for "MERRY CHRISTMAS". The word "MERRY" is in a bold, serif font, and "CHRISTMAS" is in a larger, more ornate serif font. The letters are intertwined with elegant, flowing red flourishes and swirls, creating a festive and elegant design.