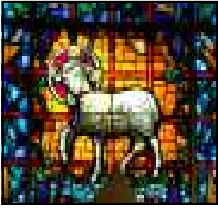




CENTRAL LIFE

JANUARY 2009

Photos by Greg Young, Dan Ballast, John Norden



WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

By Dr. Louis Lotz

Most of us go through life doing the tasks that are before us, without giving much thought to longer-term goals. Seldom do we stop and ask ourselves, What is important to me?

What's important to you? Many people would answer that question with something like, "My faith, my family, my health. I want to be my best self, to utilize to the fullest my human potential. I want to continue to learn, to grow, to stretch, especially as a Christian." But watch how we live and you discover that, frequently, how we spend our time doesn't match our professed priorities. We're so busy doing what's urgent that there is little time for what's important.

When I realize that I'm getting off track of what's important, I have to stop, breathe deeply, and regain control of my life, weeding out nonessentials before their roots penetrate too deeply. I have to keep asking myself two questions:

1) What's important to me? and 2) Does my life reflect those priorities?

Churches need to do this kind of thing, too. Last week I met with a group of Central folks to talk about church finances. Like all churches, Central is feeling the effect of the economic downturn. We asked ourselves: What is most important to our ministry, and does our allocation of resources match those priorities? Are we rightly proclaiming the gospel? Are we caring for the least and the lost?

Pray for your church leaders as we continue these discussions. And take time to review your progress toward your own goals. Remember what is most important to you, and beware of the tyranny of the urgent.

I will look for you in your proper place on Sunday.

ATRIUM PHOTOS TO ARCHIVES



From the beginning of construction to its completion, Ron Beuker took one photograph each week of the progress on the Atrium.

These sequential photographs have been secured in a notebook and will be placed in the church archives. Thanks Ron!!

THE CENTRAL PULPIT

January 18

Sermon: *The Substitute Son*
Genesis 4: 25-26, I Cor. 1:26-31
Dr. Louis Lotz, Preaching

Sacrament of Baptism: Anya Scarlett Bailey
Dr. Carl Schroeder Book Signing

January 25

Sermon: *The Bad Bargains We Make*
Genesis 25: 19-34, Matthew 16: 24-27
Dr. Louis Lotz, Preaching

February 1

Sermon: *The Tree of Life*
Genesis 2: 4-9, Revelations 22: 1-5
Dr. Louis Lotz, Preaching

The Lord's Supper
Blood Pressure Screening

February 8

Sermon: *On the Slow Slide to Perdition*
Genesis 18: 23-33, Galatians 6: 7-10
Dr. Louis Lotz, Preaching

February 15

Sermon: *Enabling is Disabling*
Genesis 9: 20-23
Dr. Louis Lotz, Preaching

February 22

Rev. Karen Fitz LaBarge, Preaching

HEARTSIDE CHAPEL RENAMED

"THE REV. BARBARA PEKICH CHAPEL"



On Sunday, December 28, members of the Heartside Ministry Board, plus a few family and friends, gathered in a room of a local hospice to show the Rev. Barbara Pekich a plaque renaming the Heartside Chapel as the Pekich Chapel, in her honor. The

next day, Barb died. She served as Executive Director and pastor of the downtown Grand Rapids Heartside Ministry. Barb and her family have been members of Central for over thirty years. She was courageous, compassionate, and maternal, finding her post-seminary "home" serving the downtown neighborhood that she loved. She is survived by four children, her sister, Helen Phillips, and her brother, Bill Phillips. She will be missed.

FROM THE MUSIC OFFICE

SUCCESSFUL AND EXCITING ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SEASON

A brand new year is upon us—and that means a new and exciting year for the music program. Those that attended the worship services during the Advent season heard the wonderful sounds of the anthems our Chancel and Handbell Choirs presented, as well as the beautiful services on Christmas Eve. All of the choirs, Children's Handbell, Chancel, and Klokkenkoor, were extraordinary in making the celebration of Christmas truly meaningful. Thanks to everyone involved in the music program for their work, dedication, and commitment to making Christmas so meaningful.

BARKER MEMORIAL FESTIVAL

Dr. Craig Cramer, Professor of Organ at the University of Notre Dame, closed out 2008 with a wonderful concert. He dazzled the audience with his incredible talents and stellar performance, and continued the "Central Tradition" of inviting the audience to sing *Auld Lang Syne*, and demonstrated the brilliant colors of the organ. **Mark your calendar now for Sunday, February 22nd at 4:00 P.M.**, for the next performance of the Barker Concert Series when we welcome the Valparaiso University Chorale under the direction of Dr. Christopher Cock.

YOUTH CHOIR—ADDITION TO MUSIC PROGRAM

The formation of a new Youth Choir is another exciting addition to our music program. Open to all children of the congregation in grades 5—8, this new ensemble will rehearse with Mr. Bartusch on **Sundays from 10:45 A.M. to 11:15 A.M. in the Choir Room**. Please contact Mr. Bartusch for answers to any questions. Parents, if your child/children is/are interested in joining this group, please contact Mr. Bartusch.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL FILLED WITH BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS



Christmastide at Central Reformed Church was filled with many beautiful moments, but one of the best was *A Christmas Carol*, a theatrical production directed by Mary Beth Timmer. The talented adults and children sang, danced, and spoke the message of Christmas through the eyes of Charles Dickens and into our hearts. Thanks to everyone

who worked so many long hours to make the production possible—the actors, the musicians, set production, makeup and the stagehands and parents who committed themselves to the program. Christmas came to life because of you.

BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKS STILL AVAILABLE



Thanks to several nurses, led by Sue Rudolph, blood pressure checks continue to be available.

NO APPOINTMENT IS NECESSARY!

When: First Sunday of each month.

Time: Immediately after morning worship.

Location: Atrium side of the Nell Brander Library.

THE FATHER AND HIS TWO SONS



From January 7 to February 7, the Center Art Gallery at Calvin College presents THE FATHER AND HIS TWO SONS—images of the Prodigal Son from the collection of our own Larry and Mary Gerbens. In Larry's own words,

"The parable of the Prodigal Son is one of the most powerful and evocative stories Jesus told. Its universal themes of greed and repentance, sin and redemption, jealousy and acceptance, and compassionate forgiveness resonates retelling."

A special time has been set aside for Central's members to visit. Larry will be available to answer questions and walk through the exhibit. That time is Tuesday, January 27, from 7—9 P.M. A new book depicting these images will be available for purchase.

Larry and Mary have donated their entire collection to their alma mater, Calvin College. Following this exhibit, the pieces will join the college's permanent collection.

**“WHERE GOD’S GLORY FLASHES”
2009 BAAS TEACHER IN RESIDENCE**



“Glory” is the name for the kind of beauty particular to God. Dr. Laura Smit will first share with us nine important things about the idea of beauty, and will then help us ask “So What?” and answer that question. How can an understanding of God’s beauty help me pray? How do these ideas influence our worship? What does beauty have to do with romance, and image, and media, and relationships? What does the glory of God have to do with justice? How does an appreciation of God’s beauty help us to care for the earth?

Mark your calendar now for two Sundays, March 15 and 22. Dr. Smit will preach on both of these Sundays, as well as lead second hour and evening classes. She will also lead the **March 18 Wednesday Bible Study**. Dr. Smit plans to help us better understand the beauty and glory of God and why an appreciation of God’s beauty is important for modern Christians, particularly during Lent.

Dr. Laura A. Smit is Associate Professor of Theology at Calving College. She is ordained in both the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Christian Reformed Church and has served in a variety of pastoral settings, and as the Dean of the Chapel at Calvin College.

Laura teaches medieval theology. The Christian theology of beauty is one of her primary areas of research. Other major areas of interest for her are Doctrine of God and the Ascension. Laura has written several articles introducing the Doctrine of God to a general audience, and she has begun work on a book about the significance of the Ascension of Christ for everyday life and worship. More about Dr. Smit is on her website at:

<http://www.laurasmit.com/AboutMe.htm>

YOUTH



God’s providence kept us safe in more places than Romania. On the way home from a junior high retreat, we found ourselves in the midst of a 50-car pile-up. We watched several cars crash all around us...and yet, God somehow protected both of our vehicles and all of us...not a single scratch.

We launched a small and somewhat experimental student leadership program in the fall. After some early glitches and awkwardness, it seems like it is beginning to bear fruit not just for the students involved, but for our whole youth ministry.

We’ve been blessed by some really great volunteer staff. Drew and Christine Meyers and Meghan Harsevoort each bring different gifts to senior high Clubs. Joy Eckstein continues to help with junior high Clubs, and we’ve been really blessed by Jesse Munroe’s energy and gifts there as well. Countless others gave of their time and resources to make various 2008 programs possible...and I thank you all!

Most importantly, in a random conversation a few months ago, a student informed me that he had accepted Jesus during one of last summer’s trips...WOW!!!

2009 will have stories of its own. Some will involve our mission trip to Nashville or the Mystery Trip or one of many retreats. Some will be those of a new (and HUGE) class of 56ers. Some will stem from one-on-one time (which I hope to create more opportunities for this year) between students and adults, and amongst students. Some will be totally unpredictable and make very little sense. From experience though...I suspect God will be rather easy to spot in all of them!

It’s about this time of the year that most people are already starting to lose track of their New Years’ resolutions...so I’d like to provide some inspiration to press on. Before we look forward at 2009 though, let’s glance back through the past year.

All of Central practically vibrated at the outset of 2008 in anticipation of our youth mission trip to Romania. The Romania trip represented so many new frontiers! Eastern Europe had never been a mission trip destination for us. Manual labor—as opposed to direct people interaction—had been the paradigm for all our past trips. No Central youth auction had ever raised \$20K. And we’d never done a trip to which Tanis Hooker could contribute so much!

His boy...todd <><



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REMEMBER OUR PRAYER LINE
855-0671

Remember that you can now receive updates on those needing prayers and care at any time, day or night. Simply dial **855-0671** for a listing of the persons on the care list for that day. Central takes pride in making **“Christ-like Caring”** one of its ministry priorities in the Constellation of Stars: **“Central will be a place of Christian care and concern. The congregation should expect and experience genuine caring from the pastoral staff and fellow church members, and should extend that care to others, especially to the least and the lost.”**

Praying for one another is an important way to express care.

FAIR TRADE COFFEE

Central Reformed Church serves only “Fair Trade Coffee.” Most of the people who grow coffee, the second most highly traded commodity in the world, do not have access to basic nutrition, sanitation, health care, and education. Serving Fair Trade coffee is one way of returning money to the very people who do the growing and harvesting. If you would like to sponsor Fair Trade Coffee for a Sunday, please see the sign-up sheet in the Atrium, or talk with Coleen Hamman.

IMPORTANT DATES

January 7 through February 7: Prodigal Son Collection at Calvin College. January 27, from 7—9 P.M. Special time for Central members.

February 22 @ 4:00 P.M. Barker Concert—Valparaiso University Chorale.

March 15 and 22: Dr. Laura Smit, Baas Teacher in Residence.

ADULT EDUCATION OFFERINGS

January 18: Patricia Duthler: Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women.

January 25: Steve Triezenburg, Van Andel Institute: Genetics for Church Folks.

January 25: Dawn Tillema: Lectio Divina Practicum.

February 1: Kimberly Offutt, Bethany Christian Services: A Child is Waiting.

February 1 through 22: J. David Muyskens, Contemplative Prayer.

February 22 through March 1: Jeff Tyler, Morality and Life Appreciation.

February 22 through May 3: Karen Fitz La Barge, Psalms.