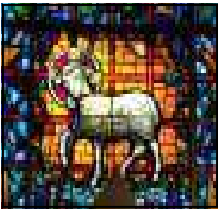




CENTRAL LIFE

LENT 2009

Photos by Greg Young, Dan Ballast, John Norden



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Amidst all the issues that swirl around us all, would you join me in NOT stepping back to evaluate it all? Let us instead make a determined commitment to step INTO every mess with which God presents us. Let us fix the world's numbers by rising above them...to know Christ, and to make Him known.

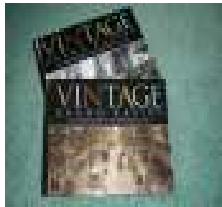
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CENTRAL AND VINTAGE II



Vintage II, published by *The Grand Rapids Press* in 2008 is full of personal and public milestones that portray the city's social, civic and cultural character from the 1800's to the 1960's. Three pictures submitted by our Archive Committee, Barbara

Davidson and Charlotte Geelhoed, were included in the book: the former Central Reformed Church on the corner of Fountain and Barclay; the 1934 Reformed Church Synod held at that church; and a picture of the church shortly after it was destroyed by fire in 1953. Congratulations Barbara and Charlotte.

CONNECTIONS

Want to be in a group, or form a new one? Many groups, both long and short-term, have been formed around common interests or needs, such as Bible study, theology, spiritual growth, books, travel, music, gardening, exercise, games, gourmet eating/cooking, church cleaning, etc.

If you would like to join one of these, or another existing group, or would like to form a new one based on one of your own passions or interests, please contact Rev. Karen Fitz LaBarge for direction and help.

IMPORTANT DATES

- March 8: Inquirers' Class. 11:00 AM. Dr. Lotz' office.
- March 11: "Visiting Volunteers." 7:30 PM. Parlor.
- March 15 and 22: Dr. Laura Smit, Baas Teacher in Residence.
- April 9: Maundy Thursday Seder and Worship.
- April 17: George and Eliza Young Society Dinner.
- April 19: Barker Concert. Ensemble Montage. 7:30 PM.

ADULT EDUCATION OFFERINGS

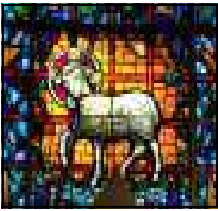
- February 22 and March 1: "*Christian Perspectives on Death and Dying*." Dr. Jeff Tyler, Professor of Religion, Hope College.
- March 29: "*Half Time*." A class based on the book by Bob Guford. Two stages of life— developing faith, and then doing something with it. Seminarian Nancy Claus.
- March 29: "*The Internet for Parents*." Kevin DeKam.
- February 22 to May 3: "*Psalms in Honor of Jim Karsen*." Seminarian Andrew Meyers and Rev. Karen Fitz La Barge.
- April 19: "*The Cultural Masculine Vs. The Sacred Masculine*." Rev. Al Heystek.
- April 19, 26, and May 3: "*The Micah Center*." Rev. Vern Hoffman.



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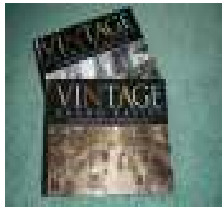
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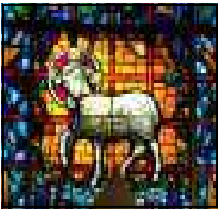
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CENTRAL LIFE

LENT 2009

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Andrew Meyers

Andrew "Drew" Meyers enjoying his first year of studies at Western Seminary. He is doing an internship at Central, meeting for an hour each week with Dr. Lotz, and working in areas like youth ministry, adult Bible study, and outreach to college students. Remember Drew and his wife Christine in your prayers.

Nancy Claus

Nancy Claus recently participated in an Intercultural Immersion Program through Western Seminary, traveling for two weeks throughout southern India. Nancy visited youth hostels, worshiped with Bishop K.G. Daniel in Kerala Province, and spent an afternoon with missionaries Dr. Bruce and Tamar DeJong in the town of Bodi. "One way for us to grow deeper into our faith is to experience God's presence through the lens of another culture," says Nancy. "I encourage Central members to take part in an intercultural ministry experience. It will not only encourage your heart, but your faith will surely grow." Remember Nancy and her husband Tom in your prayers.

David Veldt

David Veldt expects to graduate from Western Seminary in May. "Elizabeth and I prayerfully thank the Central community for all your prayers and support over the last couple of years," says David. "We are keeping our ears open to the direction God is calling us both, and would certainly appreciate your continued prayers." Pray that David and Elizabeth will discern God's leading in their life.

YOUTH

"Painting" By Numbers

Lately, it seems like the whole world is obsessed with numbers and amounts. At the top of every hour, from thousands of different directions, you can hear all about the latest levels of the S&P 500, job cuts at XYZ Industries, the cost of a barrel of oil, the death toll from the most recent natural disaster, the ridiculous and irresponsible spending of some CEO or another, etc...

Yup. It does in fact seem that any current discussion involving numbers is, at best, irritating. I can't say I don't buy into it myself a lot of the time. Central's Finance Committee asked us to cut next year's budgets by 10%...which will make the 2009-10 Youth Budget 55% of what it was in 2006. Given some increases in attendance and involvement, we'll have less than half of the budget-per-student I started with.

Did you notice how I so easily glazed over that? INCREASED involvement in Central's youth ministry! I too get so ticked about the numbers I don't like...I conveniently forget about anything positive. The reality is that we've had a 40% increase in the number of active students in that same time period.

And yet...it's also interesting how easily I whipped out a "good number", isn't it? What's *really* interesting is how **unhelpful** it was. There are only two reasons I need a "good number". Either I am trying to offset the depressing numbers (which doesn't change the fact that the "bad" ones still exist)...or I am doing my best to look like a hero despite the most awful circumstances (which does little more than illustrate my insecurity).

At the very heart of our numbers-obsession, there is a desire for reconciliation. We are either going to make it right, or make sure everyone knows we were powerless to make it right. Even the least of us wants to defend and stand for what is RIGHT. But—and by God's design, to be sure—that can *never* be done with numbers...not the biggest and best numerical results.



Hope does not come from numbers. Neither does good, right, responsibility, success or anything of the like. It has been said/sung that "...hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness," but I suggest there's one piece of a greater puzzle that our world often misses.

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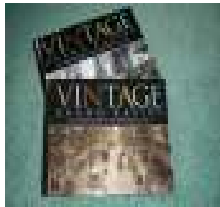
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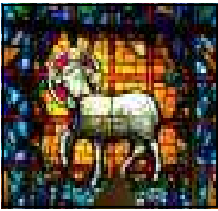
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Amidst all the issues that swirl around us all, would you join me in NOT stepping back to evaluate it all? Let us instead make a determined commitment to step INTO every mess with which God presents us. Let us fix the world's numbers by rising above them...to know Christ, and to make Him known.

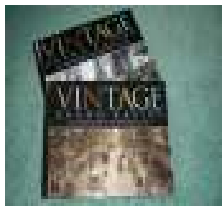
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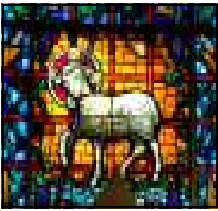
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CENTRAL LIFE

LENT 2009

Photos by Greg Young, Dan Ballast, John Norden



WE'RE GOING TO BE OK

By Dr. Louis Lotz

People ask how Central is doing in this ongoing economic meltdown. These are hard times, to be sure, but we're going to

be OK. My main concern is for church families who are hurting. Please remember that our in-house food pantry- Addie's Pantry- is for church members, too. Simply let me, or Pantry Director Sue Poll, know when you're coming, and we'll leave the pantry door open. Take what you need and lock the door when you leave.

As for church finances, to date the church is approximately \$25,000 behind budget. That's a worrisome deficit, but we are still able to maintain our facility and carry on ministries like worship, education, and outreach. We've postponed some maintenance projects. We've also shrunk our budget through attrition—recently retired Minister to Seniors, Dr. Carl Schroeder, will not be replaced this year; nor will our former secretary Vicki Hahn, who left our employment to take a job elsewhere. The cost of insurance offered to our full-time staff has been reduced through higher co-pays and greater deductibles, and come July, 2009, we will ask staff to pay a percentage of their insurance premiums. And, plans are underway to build a congregational mailbox system in the Atrium that will save thousands of dollars in postage fees.

The Consistory has worked hard over the past two years to cultivate independent streams of revenue. We rent our parking lot to GRCC. We make our sanctuary available for non-member weddings. The addition of our Atrium and the remodeling and renewal of existing space has prompted outside organizations to want to rent the church for meetings and conferences. Granted, these things clog our church calendar and put an extra burden on staff, but they also meet community needs, bring thousands of people into our lovely facility, and generate considerable income.

But, we have to do more than cut costs. Your faithful financial support is more important now than ever. Specifically, I ask three things of you. First, please pay off your pledge to the *Our Time, Our Turn* building fund. The three-year pledge period ends this year. If we all give what we pledged to give, Central will be left with an indebtedness of approximately \$100,000 to \$150,000. That's a lot of money, but for a church our size, it is a manageable amount. The more we can pay off now, the less we'll have to borrow later.

Secondly, please continue your generous support of the General Fund. The ministries and missions of the church are important and life-changing, but they can't happen without our continued support.

Finally, be of good cheer. Central is a wonderful church. Our hallways ring with the sound of children's laughter. Our



THE CENTRAL PULPIT

March 1—Lent #1

Sermon: Rejection: *The Unkindest Cut of All*
Psalm 55:4-22, 1 Peter 2:21-24, Luke 9:51-53
Dr. Louis Lotz, Preaching
The Lords Supper [Passing]

March 8—Lent #2

Youth Sunday
[Daylight Savings Time Begins]

March 15—Lent #3

Dr. Laura Smit, Teacher in Residence

March 22—Lent #4

Dr. Laura Smit, Teacher in Residence
Reception of New Members

March 29—Lent #5

Dr. Trygve Johnson, Dean of Chapel, Hope College

April 1—Palm Sunday

Sermon: *The Parade And The Marathon*
Hebrews 12: 1-2, Mark 11: 1-11
Dr. Louis Lotz, Preaching.
The Lord's Supper [Intinction]

April 9—Maundy Thursday

Seder Service, 5:45 PM
Worship, 7:30 PM
Dr. Louis Lotz, Preaching

April 12—Easter

Sermon: *Easter Shoes*
Colossians 3: 1-4
Dr. Louis Lotz, Preaching

"We're Going To Be OK," Continued...

worship is inspiring and uplifting. Young people accept Christ here. Poor people are fed here. Lives are changed here. Visitors keep visiting (six first-time visitors every Sunday, on average), and new members keep joining our ranks. True, these are tough times, but we'll get through them just fine. We're going to be OK.

NEW MEMBER CLASS SCHEDULED

Sunday, March 8, at 11:00 AM an Inquirers' Class will be held for persons who are thinking about membership at Central. Dr. Louis Lotz will share information about Central's worship, programs, and people. The class will be held in Dr. Lotz's office, located in the main hall of the Education Wing.

Those who choose to join Central will be **welcomed into membership during worship on Sunday, March 22.** The new members will be honored with a reception in the Atrium immediately following the worship service.

FROM THE MUSIC OFFICE

Even though the cold winds of winter may be lingering just a bit, the anticipation of the arrival of spring and the celebrations of the Lenten and Easter seasons are quickly approaching— bringing excitement, especially to our music program.



LENTEN SEASON AND EASTER MUSIC. Our weekly rehearsals on Thursday evenings with the Chancel Choir continue to go very well, and the excitement is beginning to build as the members prepare anthems by such prominent composers as Gilbert Martin, Joann Pachelbel (the *Canon* guy!), and Antonin Dvorak. These pieces will be presented at our services during Lent, Palm Sunday, and Easter. And, speaking of Easter, the majestic and uplifting sounds of brass will enhance our celebrations of the resurrection, beautifully led by our Central friend, **Pamela Smitter-Baker**.

HANDBELLS. Our handbell choirs have also been hard at work preparing selections for the upcoming seasons. The **Klokkenkoor** choir will be joining in our Easter service with two exciting anthems, and our very own children's handbell choir, the **Celebration Ringers**, will take part in our worship service on Sunday, March 29. These talented children have been working very hard on new and challenging music, and I am very proud of their accomplishments and their successes in stepping up to the musical challenges that I have given to them.

FINAL BARKER CONCERT. The final concert of our 2008-09 Barker season is coming up quickly at **7:30 P.M. on Sunday, April 19, 2009**, when we will cordially welcome members of **Ensemble Montage**, a collective of professional musicians based in Grand Rapids. They have dedicated themselves to presenting combinations of chamber music blending strings, woodwinds, and piano, and expanding as the program's repertoire expands. Looking forward to seeing everyone there.

Soli deo Gloria!

(Brian Bartusch)

THE MINISTRY OF CARE

VISITATION-WHAT'S NEXT? For years, Dr. Carl Schroeder faithfully visited elderly and homebound members of Central. As Minister of Seniors, Carl made hundreds of home and hospital visits every year. Carl retired from Central's staff on December 31. He will be missed.

Due to budgetary constraints, Carl will not be replaced this year. His ministry of care and visitation now passes to Dr. Lotz and the Board of Elders. Also, Central is fortunate to have many members who conduct their own personal ministry of care to older and homebound members. We thank God for these people!! **All persons who call on-or who would like to call on-older and homebound members are invited to meet with Dr. Lotz and the Board of Elders in the church parlor at 7:30 PM on Wednesday, March 11.** The more we can keep one another informed about whom we visit and when, the less likely that any of our beloved older members will fall through the cracks. If you are, or want to be, involved in this ministry of care to older members of Central, we hope to see you at this important meeting.

A NEW CARE MINISTRY ANNOUNCED. We are creating a new ministry - a "**Bereavement Basket Ministry**." After the busyness of an illness and death, the extended family goes back to their homes, the casseroles, flowers, calls and cards stop coming. That is when a bereavement basket will be given to the bereaved family as an expression of the congregation's ongoing love and care. This basket will include some or all of the following: a loaf of home-baked bread, a jar of honey or preserves, a book about bereavement, a scented candle, and stationery. **On February 22, a bereavement basket will be on display in the Atrium** during the coffee hour, and a Care Committee member will be available to take your questions and comments.

Central's Care Committee is responsible for finding creative and supportive ways to take care of our congregation. The Prayer Chain, the Prayer Shawl Ministry, the Meals Program, Blood Pressure Checks, Flu Shots, the Blood Drive, the new Prayer Line, are just some of the ministries that come under the Care Committee's "umbrella."

MAUNDY THURSDAY SEDER/WORSHIP

Maundy Thursday, April 19. Seder Dinner at 5:45 PM followed by Maundy Thursday Worship Service at 7:00

PM. Central celebrates its own version of traditions: the Seder Maundy Thursday worship service. The Seder is the centerpiece of the Jewish Passover Festival that celebrates the escape of the Hebrew people from Egypt.



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The second tradition on

2009 GEORGE AND ELIZA YOUNG SOCIETY DINNER

Mark your calendars for **Friday, April 17, 2009.** Our annual **George and Eliza Young Society Dinner** will be held at Kent Country Club. The George and Eliza Young Society recognizes those members and friends of Central who remember Central in their planned giving (wills, trusts, life insurance policies, etc.). Our special entertainment this year will be provided by the Embellish Handbell Ensemble. More details to come.

TEACHER IN RESIDENCE



Mark your calendar now for two **Sundays, March 15 and 22**. Dr. Laura 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 introduce us to nine important things about the idea of beauty, and help us understand why it is so important for modern Christians—not just theologians—to establish that God is beautiful, indeed glorious. When Christians understand God as originally and everlastingly beautiful, they are then free to wonder at the infinitely complex order of the universe, the mystery of the Gospel, and the mystery of the liturgy. All of this sets a context for how we want to live our lives as we allow our wonder at God to shape what we claim to understand about the world and what we are willing to accept as mystery.

God's glory and God's beauty shape our work, our worship, our relationships, our sense of justice, and our stewardship of the earth. We welcome you to join us for a time of exploration into this theme, for spiritual refreshment, study, and prayer.

On January 24, 1909, one hundred years ago, thousands of local residents attended sessions of visiting evangelist Gypsy Smith. The ***With the Churchmen Column in The Press*** speculated that Grand Rapids is getting "over churchied."

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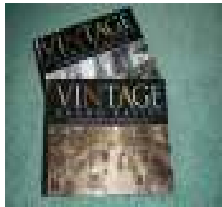
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