

Annual Report 2020
Central United Methodist Church

Introduction

To say that 2020 was an unusual year would be an understatement. All our lives have been dramatically affected by the pandemic. We've all had to learn to live differently, to not do things we were so used to doing – visiting friends and family, going to movies or restaurants, going to church, and wearing masks wherever we go. For those of us who need the community of others, it has been extremely difficult. Fortunately, as you will read in the ensuing pages, Central stepped up in an amazing way during these unprecedented times, to continue, and in many cases develop new ways of performing its ministries, programs and outreach. You will see the word Livestream many times in this report; this is a word that we barely knew the meaning of before this year, but it enabled us to continue having meaningful worship throughout the year. We have been blessed to have so many committed Christians in the Central family, living out the call to be disciples and to be the hands and feet of Christ in Endicott and in the world.

Knud Hansen, Church Council Chair

Pastor's Report

One of the stated expectations for me upon my appointment here six+ years ago was to lead the congregation in vision and planning for the future, and this work has been incredibly intense as well as rewarding. Huge decisions and change continued in 2020, despite the disruption of COVID-19.

Early in the year our Core vision teams were hard at work developing ministry ideas: For our original congregation, which we refer to as Central 1.0, this includes living into our Mission DNA, as well as addressing our need for a clearly articulated intentional discipleship pathway for persons along their faith journeys. We did a lot of pivoting and adapting for Central 1.0 once the pandemic erupted. We found new ways to use space, even given COVID, and are currently working on a partnership with Berkshire Farm foster care to provide space for some of their important work beginning November 1. We developed and applied for incorporation of a new non-profit entity for mission and service, called Central Serves, which will work in conjunction with our Missions Council. It happened so quickly, despite the pandemic, that we are still building the track as we travel along it! We continued our weekly community dinner and free clothing center ministries, though with significant adaptations.

We launched hope@central, our NFC, in person last December. Originally intended to continue as a live experience once a month, we shifted to online in May, and it has grown from there. With an average of 75-190 viewers each month, the live-stream is a vital and growing experience for the dischurched, the never-churched, and the spiritually curious. We have launched an Instagram presence and Facebook page, along with a ZOOM small group available through meetup, and are working on our web presence as well. We also implemented a Lay Leader for hope@central to help with the administration of it. As that person is becoming a candidate for ministry, we hope to grow that role into a Lay Pastor, then Licensed Local Pastor role.

We welcomed new staff into one existing and one newly created position: Our new Faith Formation Coordinator (Sarah Maroney) joined us under the supervision of a new Associate Pastor for Faith and Action (Laurel O'Connor). Laurel's role is to coordinate with Education and Missions/Central Serves to provide leadership and continuity of purpose for each. We hope to grow that role into a place for a Deacon, and grow into that as Laurel progresses in her candidacy for ordination as a Deacon. The Associate Pastor role grew out of our contract position, the Director of Mission and Community Engagement, filled until June by the Rev. Dee Lowman.

I am so proud of the leadership teams and staff here, who have worked and prayed so hard

and faithfully to follow God's leading for a vital future. I am deeply grateful to them, as well as to the retired clergy in our midst, who offer support and mentoring of all kinds!

Even with COVID, we continued to emphasize experiences that connect or re-connect persons with God and their own life in God, primarily through worship, which we adapted in March to a "Livestream+Live" hybrid experience, and to which we added an "early church" low-tech/high "touch" service that includes Holy Communion each week. Our in-person numbers are significantly low, even with the safety precautions we have in place and the 240+ persons we could have in worship according to the 50% currently allowed by NY State. In addition to worship, we have offered other opportunities as well, including our Book Study, which has pivoted to a ZOOM experience. Many from our previous *Companions in Christ* groups are continuing in self-led study, and some have gone on to develop ministry ideas within the congregation. My hope is always that parishioners are learning articulate their own discipleship and desire for spiritual growth.

We are going to begin piloting two very significant new endeavors for both Central 1.0 and hope@central, rooted in the reality that we need to begin working on the assumption that this COVID shift is not temporary, but a long-haul vision we need to implement and live into. We are presenting a House Church template to Church Council in October, which will allow persons engaging with the livestreams of both worship experiences to create community at home for fellowship, worship and service. We plan to make this template available for other churches as a resource. We have also developed an adult discipleship plan which will be applicable to both hope@central and Central 1.0, which will give persons an opportunity to grow in faith even without necessitating being in person in our church building. The content will be a mix of ongoing ZOOM classes and recorded evergreen content. Again, we plan to make these resources available to other churches.

We have continued to examine our programs and ministries and staffing in light of the changing financial and community realities facing us. Our internal demographic is aging, we are located within a community that is declining, and we are simply not attracting large numbers of younger people who might be interested in traditional forms of church. Even if we did, they likely would never be able to support the church financially as its older members do. We are looking hard at what that means for Central, and how to envision its support and vitality in the future.

In my connectional ministry work, I continued to serve on the District Committee on Ministry and the District Leadership Team. I am now certified as a lead trainer with the Intentional Growth Center in Transitional and Interim Ministry, and will be continuing this work in the future. I also continued mentoring candidates for Ordination. I was elected first Reserve Delegate to General Conference 2020, so I will be attending that and Jurisdictional Conference in whatever form they end up taking. It is my hope that the UMC can come to some sort of sane resolution to our current schismatic polarities; in any case, our Reconciling Task Force will be leading the congregation through the preparation and aftermath of GC2020/1.

For my own development, I attend a weekly lectionary study group with colleagues, have spent a couple of retreats in worship planning, and I am still exploring continuing education possibilities for 2021. I am currently praying about planning for developing an application for a Clergy Renewal Grant from Lilly for 2022, as we simply were not able to conceptualize it in the middle of all the COVID changes.

God has led the leadership at Central through an amazing discernment and visioning process. The future has so much possibility, even if it may seem drastically different from Central's past. Our laity is vital and empowered, and I believe that together, we can craft a powerful vision for that future. I am blessed by our ministry together.

In One Peace, Rev. Dr. Michelle Bogue-Trost

Faith Formation

As Central UMC strives to help people develop in their faith, there were a few changes to note this year that happened within the Faith Formation arm of the church:

- The Education Council, along with Pastor Michelle, decided to change the name of Christian Education to Faith Formation, to better encompass what we're trying to do as a church.
- Laurel O'Connor started the year as the new Faith Formation Coordinator (formerly Christian Education Director), and then transitioned in July 2020 to the Associate Pastor role. Sarah Maroney became the Faith Formation Coordinator at that time.
- Through December 2020, the Faith Formation team (formerly the Education Council) decided not to hold classes in person due to COVID-19, causing us to pivot into online and by-mail offerings.

For the first quarter of the year, we were holding small class groups of children upstairs, and were looking for a way forward that would bring more children into the program. We commissioned a curriculum from Jael Creative to start in September, and were excited about the prospect of renovating classrooms, recruiting volunteers, and re-thinking Faith Formation.

Just as the curriculum was commissioned, everything closed. We tried to shift as quickly as we could, and started a weekly mailing for several months that included faith formation materials, pictures to color, puzzles and more. We got a grant from the UMW to cover part of the postage cost of Ministry by Mail, which was a blessing as mailing costs were high!

When everything closed in March the children and youth did not have very much Zoom or Remote learning happening yet. Sarah volunteered to host an afternoon craft get-together with children and families every Thursday using Zoom. We began sending the children craft materials in our mailings so families had everything they needed to make something with Sarah. Crafts included rainbow sun-catchers, puppies, lions and a gumball machine all from paper plates! Sarah planned crafts around craft supplies from our closet in the education wing, which Sarah and Shannon Decker had cleaned out and Pat Hansen finished organizing right before the pandemic began. We now have a well organized and fresh space ready for when we can resume our education program again.

As summer approached, and Sarah came on staff, Laurel and Sarah embarked on a Virtual VBS connected to a private Facebook group. This was a new attempt to connect with the children and youth, making videos each day and engaging people and families in conversation. Videos included yoga, stories (by Horace and Marie King and Pastor Michelle), crafts, and more. Sarah gathered the children and families in-person for a socially-distanced tie-dye party to conclude VBS, and invited a few of our kids that couldn't attend VBS. It was great to get together and see a few families in person. We made white cotton VBS Shirts available for families to purchase for the tie-dye party, and they all turned out wonderfully! This is certainly something to do again.

We were hopeful that the Facebook group would continue to engage during the school year, so Sarah began using the new curriculum to create videos (after Laurel, Sarah Maroney and Sarah Hungerford took the video editing class) to share with families on the platform.

Sarah began looking for a space to create videos for the curriculum. She wanted to model the nice backgrounds people were using to create an inviting and familiar "space" for the children to come into, even if it was on a video. In the education wing there was a room previously created as a meditation space. Sarah brought in furniture and decor from other classrooms, but the room needed something more. Members of the Faith Formation team bought some wall art and throw pillows, and Sarah filmed 3 weeks of curriculum there. It is a space intended to use for Faith Formation, but we are exploring what is next.

We got feedback from families that they didn't have the energy to interact with more videos as their kids were getting "Zoom fatigue" and we had to pivot once again - to what, only 2021 will tell. But we did try Text in Church in the late months of 2020, and didn't get much engagement there either so we canceled the texting service in lieu of other options we're exploring. We mailed out an Advent package to keep families engaged in a less technological way, and began working on the Virtual Christmas Pageant.

As Christmas approached, we did a Virtual Christmas Pageant and a live-stream-only Christmas Eve service. The service was well-received, and highlighted some acting talent within both youth and adults. Each scene was filmed safely with social distancing, masks, and other precautions. Some scenes were even done with cartoons or via Zoom to further keep participants safe.

We're definitely pivoting to more video-based content, and continuing to include mail-based content. Faith Formation teamed up with hope@central to write an internal grant for video equipment, which as of January 1 was almost fully purchased. This video equipment will help us do videos in different areas of the church or even outdoors, helping us vary content.

While a Facebook page isn't working, the Faith Formation team began conversations about the possibilities of an app, a website, and other options. The 2021 budget year included a shift in budget funding for Faith Formation, including online communications - so we will be able to continue to invest in these new strategies. Sarah and Laurel have been researching different options and 2021 will see the fruits of those studies as the Faith Formation team decides a way forward.

Adult Education came to a screeching halt as COVID closed the church; the Faith Formation team decided to hold off on additional Adult classes until the Zoom infrastructure was better understood as the pandemic came in full force. Rather than doing Adult Education in a formal way, we decided to shift into a Soul Care model and began Soul Care gatherings once a week. It started as an evening and a morning time slot, but the morning time slot had the strongest attendance so we decided to pause the evening time slot. The Soul Care gatherings are still continuing, and will continue into the future.

Pastor Michelle held an Advent Video Study in December, and we realized that it was time to restart Adult Education in a new way: via Zoom, between services. Knud Hansen had created a Fellowship Hour between services, so the Zoom space already existed - and Faith Formation decided to use that time slot most weeks as a way to engage in Adult Education anew. There is also space in the basement in Fellowship Hall for adults who are in person, but the majority of participants are on Zoom. We're also going to start recording these sessions to share with a wider audience, as a "front door" for people who are interested in knowing and learning more about classes at Central. We're exploring the platform to share them on; this is a 2021 project.

Laurel O'Connor, Associate Pastor for Faith and Action

Education Council/Faith Formation Team

What a year it has been!! Looking back, it is hard to believe that our traditional church school program would be turned upside down and forced to remake itself. In March, our in person program became a virtual one, connecting with our church schoolers through Facebook and special mailings.

We still were able to have our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper before the shutdowns began. We had plenty of helping hands and the youth and children were gracious hosts. We served almost 100 people in all.

Then Coronavirus changed everything and we were put in the position of rethinking outreach and our connectional ministry. Laurel was able to find a curriculum through a company called Illustrated Ministry and we started to send packets to each church school child each week. The packets contained lessons and activities with specific themes and Bible references. This continued from Easter until the end of June. Easter bunny baskets were hand delivered to each child at Easter time, and in June we sent home summer fun kits. Since many of our children also spend a week at camp in the summer, special Sky Lake packages were sent out to them also. Camp was canceled this year too. We worked with the Lukens-Jackson Task Force on this.

In July, Laurel's job was changed and expanded to involve both Education and Missions. Her title was also changed to that of an Associate Pastor. And so, Sarah Maroney was hired as our Director of Faith Formation. Sarah jumped right in and was able to help Laurel coordinate a virtual VBS program, also through Illustrated Ministries. It was very well received with about 20 children taking part, some from other states! Sarah also organized a socially distant tie-dye party. The children loved making the shirts but were even happier being able to see their friends again.

In October we were able to hold a socially-distant, masked (how appropriate!) Trunk or Treat event. Families made appointments and came dressed in costume to collect candy, snacks and pumpkins. We had a great turnout.

Then the discussion came about, "What do we do for Advent and Christmas?" Illustrated Ministries came to the rescue again. They came out with a virtual Christmas pageant just when we needed it! Laurel and Sarah used their magic and managed to pull this together despite COVID outbreaks and a major, major snowstorm. The result was wonderful, involving many church families and talented musicians and, of course, their expert leadership.

We were also able to restart our Adult Class program with an Advent study led by Rev. Horace King. Laurel planned a wonderful program for January. We will continue to offer something for our adult population in 2021. This was missed by many.

Looking back on 2020 the pandemic posed many challenges but also gave us the opportunity to look at ministry differently. We were encouraged to look outside the box and create a new normal. The Education Council members, along with Laurel and Sarah, has made this journey an exciting one. I look forward to what the new year holds and how we can continue to reach out and connect with each other.

In His service, Pat Hansen

Worship Council

In 2020 the Worship Council continued to coordinate and support the church's worship ministries. Much of this Council's work in 2020 revolved around responding to Covid-19. We consulted regularly with Pastor Michelle on the changing situation and recommendations from the NYS Department of Health, the national Centers for Disease Control, and the Annual Conference. We met via Zoom as often as every week or two to stay current with the constant change.

In response to these guidelines, on March 22 the church moved to virtual-only worship via Livestreams on YouTube. After beginning with the 11am hour, the Livestreams moved to 9:30am on June 21 as services customarily do for the summer. On July 12 worshipers were welcomed back into the sanctuary, with distancing, masks, hand-sanitizing, and contact tracing protocols. On September 12, worship returned to its usual schedule of an 8:30am simple service (modified now to no-tech and communion each Sunday) and the Livestreamed 11am traditional. This schedule followed for the remainder of the year. The strict protocols remained in place. Worshipers followed them willingly and with good humor.

Understanding the sacrament of Holy Communion as needing a pastor present, the Wesleyan alternative of a Love Feast has been employed at the 11am services on the first Sunday of each month so that both in-house and on-line worshipers could participate. Worshipers at home were invited to provide their own beverage and a "bread-like" substitute and join as Pastor Michelle led the ritual. Worshipers at the 8:30am services participated in communion each Sunday. The traditional methods of distributing the elements were adjusted so that everyone stayed safe.

Livestream participation has remained strong, with sometimes over 100 devices logged in as the service takes place and many more watching the recordings during the week. Services broadcast on Spectrum cable have continued uninterrupted. The number of in-house worshipers has remained low, as most are waiting for vaccines so that it will once again be safe to be gathered together. Pastor Michelle encourages Central's congregation and friends to look forward to this time of celebration and resumption of Communion in the sanctuary.

A variety of vocalists and instrumentalists- including members of our handbell choirs- provided special music for our services. We are grateful to them. In addition, our Organist/Pianist Sean Stafford worked tirelessly to see that we had quality music each Sunday. Consistent with how the Covid-19 virus disrupted routines, music plans and needs changed from week to week, sometimes at the very last minute on Sunday mornings. Sean was a consistent and calming presence in seeing that quality music was a part of each service.

The lengthy organ rebuilding project formally concluded with its dedication on November 29. Project Coordinator Jeff Heald, via a recorded video presentation, gave behind-the-scenes looks at the work that had been done. Roger Richards on the organ joined Sean on the piano and Denise Johnson with vocals in bringing special music to celebrate the occasion. Because of the extensive and intricate nature of the work, organists continue to identify errant keys and stops that need adjusting. They work around these glitches and log them for the re-builder to address. Even so, all agree it is good to have this fine instrument back.

2020 saw the Worship Council and Central's worship life adapt to changing realities and needs of a type unprecedented since early in the 20th century. Through times of anxiousness, we have held confidence that we will emerge from these difficulties strong and better able to serve our congregation, our community, and the world. Indeed, as life and living return to a yet-to-be-defined

“new normal,” we look forward to facing the challenge of how to maintain robust, meaningful worship for our online worshipers as well as those who favor in-person participation. It is a challenge all congregations face. We will address it with faith and confidence in the year ahead. We are grateful to Central’s members and friends who have supported and sustained the church and its leaders during this unusual time.

Mark Marino Chair, Worship Council

Missions Council – Central Serves

This community of faith definitely has mission “in its DNA” and despite a pandemic and numerous obstacles never shrunk from its missional duty to serve the community.

The Mission Team started 2020 with our first Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service at Central, working inside the church to “get God's House in order” for what we thought would be a year of bold ministry and mission. Once the pandemic hit, we knew we had to reevaluate and pivot, but continue to serve.

During the pandemic, the need continued (and even grew). We continued to serve hot meals, found ways to serve take-out style, and increased what was prepared to allow us to feed every soul that came to our door during Shepherds Supper. In 2020 we served 5,760 Meals (more than 1,500 more than our 2019 total). We also became a distribution point for CHOW Emergency Meal kits, to get shelf stable food to those in need.

We continued to clothe those who came to our door for clothing, even putting together an outdoor Bazaar with a free hot dog stand to get clothes to those in need to comply with current safe practices that were constantly changing.

We put together "Packets of Love" for those who were not able to leave their homes due to the Lock-down to prevent the spread of COVID 19. Additionally, we emptied our UMCOR flood buckets and provided over 100 N-95 masks to first responders early on in the pandemic, when they were in short supply. The Mission Team hosted a Bottle and Can Drive to raise over \$600 for CHOW, and partnered with the Education Team to host a free socially distanced Trunk or Treat to allow kids to be kids, and more than a few of us "adults" to be kids too.

One of the highlights of 2020 was that Central Serves, the not-for-profit (501c3) arm of Central UMC, became certified within New York State. This organizational creation will allow the Mission Team to get more funding and better serve the community, something we're very excited about.

We are blasting into 2021 with new energy and excitement, we just had another very successful, "Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service" at Central. We started a new project which turns otherwise unusable clothing into useful rags for cleaning, painting, animal care, and more. Thanks to our masked-and-socially-distant volunteers, over 700 of these were made during the event. The Shepherd's Supper teams have begun to distribute bags of shelf stable groceries to those in need, and during the work day the volunteers set up the dish room as a preparation area for those bags. The Kitchen itself got a good scrubbing and also served a hot lunch to volunteers. Several storage areas were organized and cleaned. Work was done in the Clothing Center as well. All in all, it was another day that demonstrates the missional DNA that runs through our veins here at Central UMC; we are very blessed to be part of this missional group of Christians in service to our neighbors, our community and to each other.

Do you have a heart for service? You are so invited to become part of the family of mission-minded friends at Central. If you are looking for a way to get involved, just contact the church office and we will help you get involved. Central Serves, because you make it possible.

Through it all, Central Serves.

Respectfully submitted, Joe Frega

Fellowship Council

The Fellowship committee started 2020 as usual with the kickoff of Dinner with Friends. 3 groups of people were organized for people to have dinner together monthly. In February, a game night with board games and snacks was held in the dining room and a collection of soup for Chow was organized on Soup-er Bowl Sunday. And then March happened. As a committee, we wanted to continue fellowship within the congregation but how do you do that safely? It took a few months to organize as zoom meetings became a way of life. We now have 16 people who volunteer to send cards monthly to Central's home bound to continue the We Care program. We organized zoom meetings in the Fall for Trivia nights and Game Nights. One plus for zoom meetings is that members who live elsewhere during the year can continue to connect with Central. A Fellowship time between the Sunday services was also started in the Fall. To connect with Central's college students and military personnel, gift cards were sent in early December. In 2021, we hope to live-stream a Radio Show and host a Road Rally for more fellowship opportunities.

Respectfully submitted, Pat Breneman

Board of Trustees

The mission of the Board of Trustees is the care, oversight, and supervision of CUMC's property and equipment. This includes, but is not limited to, the Church, parsonage, vans, parking lots, equipment, and endowment funds.

In 2020, we continued our annual focus on the care and maintenance of our facilities and equipment, and when appropriate, replacement or renovation. This year also required the Trustees advice and consideration of many Covid-19 approaches and accommodations.

Items of note that required significant church or trustee resources included:

- Kitchen equipment maintenance: ovens, plumbing, and refrigeration
- Dish Room & Kitchen: Purchased and installed new LED ceiling lights
- Sidewalk: Replaced ~20 feet of sidewalk parallel to Liberty Ave to improve pedestrian safety
- Bathroom Renovation: Two Education Building first floor bathrooms have improved accessibility and a fresh look

Administration of the Endowment Fund included awarding

- \$2,000 scholarships to 3 well-deserving young women
- Shalom Funding for Audio Visual Equipment for the Education Council
- Annual funding of \$16,000 to the Allocations Committee for requests in 2020

Entering 2020, we will look to advance several projects from 2020, including replacement of the parsonage patio roof, parsonage front porch painting, church security, phone system upgrades, and additional LED lighting enhancements.

Respectfully submitted, Tom Hall

Finance Committee

Central is fortunate to have a committed group of generous givers. This was even more evident this past year, when the entire approach to giving change. For many of the Central membership, giving is through putting weekly offering in an envelope and placing it in the offering plate on Sunday. Obviously once we stopped worshiping in the Sanctuary this was not going to happen. All of us had to change our way of giving. Each Sunday's Live-stream mentioned alternative ways of electronic giving – Electronic Fund transfers, Credit Cards, Give Plus App and many continued to either drop their pledge in the office or mail it in.

As soon as the 2020 Stimulus plan was introduced, Central applied and received a loan from the Small Business Administration, which was largely instrumental in Central being able to have a year in which we could maintain staff and continue all our ministries.

2021 is going to be more challenging in that we are beginning the year with a gap between pledged income and the budget. We are not able to apply for a Stimulus loan this year. So getting through the year with a healthy financial posture is going to depend on the faithful spiritual stewardship of all of us. We will proceed forward in faith. It has served Central well in the past and I'm sure it will this year as well.

Respectfully submitted,
Knud Hansen

United Methodist Women

The vision of United Methodist Women is turning faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children and youth. As we all know and have experienced 2020 was a year like no other. Some of our programs and events had to be canceled. Even though our three circles have not met in person, we are thankful for the opportunity to meet on Zoom. It has provided members, that have moved or gone away for the winter, an opportunity to attend the meetings. In March, United Methodist Women's Sunday, was canceled due to Covid-19. Despite these trying times, our Garden Tour, featuring six beautiful gardens was held in August. In place of the October bazaar, a Take-Out Luncheon was held. Both of these were very successful. Proceeds went toward mission projects we support.

Our annual meeting and election of 2021 officers was held via Zoom in November. The Christmas Tea was canceled. However the planned organ/piano program presented by Roger Richards and Sean Stafford was enjoyed by many, either in person or on Livestream. We are grateful to Roger, Sean and the Tech Team for making it possible. In addition to our \$2600.00 district pledge to mission, we have given \$1400.00 to Sky Lake camperships, \$1000.00 to the Salvation Army, \$500.00 to UMCOR and \$500.00 to Central Serves.

Respectfully submitted Shirlenn O'Brien UMW President

CUMC Men's Group

The Men's group has met faithfully throughout the year. For the first few months, we had our usual meeting in person, but since March we have met via Zoom only. We changed the format a bit. When we met in person, we always tried to have a program with a guest speaker. Since we've gone virtual, we continue to have a devotion, but we spend more time socializing, finding out what's been happening with each of us. We also have had puzzles, brain teasers, trivia to work on during the week before the meeting, We will continue virtually as long as we need to, but we are certainly looking forward to when we can gather in the dining room together again,
Respectfully submitted,
Knud Hansen

Staff-Parish Relations

In 2020, we said goodbye to Rev. Dee Lowman as her contracted position came to a close. Laurel O'Connor moved into the position of Associate Pastor for Faith and Action. Sarah Maroney was hired as the Faith Formation Coordinator. Additional hours were added to the Director of Web and Media Engagement position for 2021, which Martina DiRose continues to support.

We applaud the staff at Central for continuing their good work, and we are grateful for all the ways they adapted to meet the challenges of ministry, building use, worship, and administration!
Lynn Heckathorn, Chair of SPRC

Reconciling Task Force

With the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, our committee only met one time in November over zoom to discuss what was happening as far as General Conference. 2020 was to be a year of gathering for our quadrennial meeting General Conference. It was to be in May but because of the pandemic it was canceled and rescheduled to meet in late August – early September 2021 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The likelihood of the meeting being in person is still in question. There has been talk of trying to have the meeting virtually. We are waiting to hear the decision of the organizers.

Respectfully submitted,
Bev Cosimano

TV/Video Ministry

Mission

The mission of Central's TV Ministry is to use television and video to share the ministry of the Central United Methodist Church with our congregation and the community.

Goal

In keeping with that mission, Central's TV Ministry continued to serve our congregation in reaching out to the local community. We broadcast Central's message via Spectrum Cable and the church's YouTube Channel. We have served the community by televising concerts and special programs such as the Martin Luther King service, the Binghamton Baroque Orchestra and others.

Broadcast Presence

Viewers can watch Central's services on:

- Spectrum Cable TV channel 1301— Sundays at 8:00a.m. and Mondays at 5:30p.m.
- Live Streaming on YouTube
- On Demand anytime on Central's YouTube Channel.

The YouTube channel and Livestreaming capability took on particular significance as we implemented safety practices in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In response to directives from the NYS Department of Health and US Centers for Disease Control, on March 22 Central, as did most area churches, began a period of virtual-only worship.

While this change was challenging for worshipers and worship leaders, it was a seamless transition for the TV Ministry Team. The Team was practiced in adjusting recording and projection needs from week to week depending on worship leaders' content and needs. Virtual-only worship did not change this.

What did change was the urgency of ensuring that the Live-stream work reliably each week. No longer was Livestreaming an "add-on" to in-house worship; it became essential. Establishing a livestream requires that several hardware and software components work together. Glitches, while uncommon, are not always easy to trace and correct. Despite some anxious moments on some Sunday mornings, we are pleased that Central's Livestream has, with one exception, been up and running for each service: Sunday mornings, special evening services, hope@central, funerals and a wedding. On the one Sunday morning when the Livestream was very erratic, Spectrum cable had a technical problem that affected the entire neighborhood around the church. The congregation's members and friends were able to view an edited, "clean" version of that service a day or two later on YouTube and Spectrum cable.

Central now has 246 YouTube subscribers, and the number is still growing. More and more people often first become aware of local church ministries and "check them out" online before visiting in person. In addition, hope@central has established regular monthly Livestreamed services using Central's TV Ministry equipment.

In the fall, TV Ministry conducted a 5-week Zoom-based workshop to train a cadre of staff and volunteers in video editing. Members from the Education Council, Missions, hope@central and other volunteers continue to meet monthly to improve their video editing skills. This cadre has been able to extend Central's video messaging beyond the sanctuary. They have successfully developed videos for Children's Time, Missions, the Christmas Pageant and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration. We have also established an online Media Exchange using Google Drive that allows content developers to share resources and submit videos for the livestream safely and efficiently.

Audio-Video Update Plan

In January 2020 the audio/visual system upgrade in the Fellowship Hall was completed. Large LED screens were installed at either end of the room. The ceiling speakers were replaced. A new amplifier, mixer, radio tuner, and other components were installed. Wireless microphones dedicated to the Fellowship Hall were put into use.

The system was used effectively and well for only a couple of weeks before the church had to implement Covid restrictions. More recently the system has been used increasingly for in-person, remote, and hybrid classes. In short, the updated equipment is serving us well in ways we could not have anticipated when the project was first envisioned and planned.

Although not a part of this plan, it was determined in the fall that increasing problems with sound quality and interference noise from sanctuary microphone cables needed to be addressed. To that end we engaged the services of Alan Briggs, AV Sound in Owego- the contractor who has installed the new equipment in the sanctuary and Fellowship Hall. He replaced all of the microphone cables from the front of the church back to the booth: pulpit, lectern, organ, and other nearby jacks. We now have shielded cables going directly to the booth, rather than unshielded wires going through multiple junctions and splices. He also did some re-wiring so that audio signals

flow more cleanly and directly through the amplification equipment.

Plans for the Future:

The TV Ministry team continues to recruit and train new persons, though Covid precautions have made this difficult. With the implementing of vaccines and easing of restrictions as the year goes along, we anticipate adding even more members to team. Stop by the booth if you are interested and would like to know more.

TV Ministry is exploring the possibility of upgrading the sanctuary lighting system. Presumably the new system would utilize more efficient LED lighting and support better balance and more control over lighting in the sanctuary. These changes would improve the images in our Live-streamed services and establish long-term savings in electrical costs.

As we have the ability to improve our video imaging by upgrading our existing cameras to a higher resolution, we would also like to upgrade our Live-stream resolution to true HD (i.e. 1080p). This is dependent on the quality and consistency of our Internet connection. Long-term, it might be helpful if Central could provide either a stand-alone Internet connection for TV Ministry or an upgrade of our existing Internet connection.

We thank Central's members and friends in supporting these efforts as well as for comments and suggestions on how we can continue to adapt, adjust, and improve.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Marino

Carl Muldner

Lay Leader

Always, I saw my first task was to help Pastor Michelle in whatever way I was able. She has been a wonderful guide and a place to bounce off new ideas and thoughts with grace.

2020 started the New Year as I continued attending councils to become knowledgeable on the workings of the church in order to be able to answer church family question as well as any visitors and help in whatever way was possible. I tried to be in touch listening to as many of our congregation as I could.

Leading a wonderful First Touch Team, together we put into effect a way of contacting and communicating with visitors. This required much thought and time and I am forever grateful to each of them.

Then Covid! And the Shut down.

So in March much time has been taken with Core1, Core2 and Worship council to figure out just how to proceed. In the meantime I continue to keep in touch as many of our congregation as possible with calls, cards etc. The past six weeks has blest us with a good number of visitors so First Touch Team has reconvened and are busy contacting them and are busy now working out ways to reach out to the communities around us.

I have resigned as Lay Leader and know it will bring new, exciting things from the able hands of Jeff Heald. I will continue with Core1, First Touch Team and Missions. I'm looking forward to all that Central Church is becoming.

You are all such a blessing to me.

Libby Shelp

Allocations

2020-2021 Budget Summary:

2019-20 Budget Carryover \$ 4,454
2020-21 Allocation Budget \$ 16,000
Total Budget Available \$ 20.454

Total Expenditures \$10,870
1/31/21 Balance \$9,584

The 2020 summary above reflects the budget and the actions of the committee through January 31, 2021. Allocations fiscal year runs from February 1 to January 31 each year. The source of the Allocations budget is earnings from the Endowment fund and is managed by the Trustees. The Allocations Committee acts on requests for funds from the church, community, and other not-for-profit organizations. Funds are awarded in the following categories: (1) Missions, (2) Pastor's Supplementary, (3) Local Church Program, (4) Local Community, and (5) National, International, or Conference Projects.

We supported 11 requests in 2020 to organizations such as: Broome County Council of Churches CHOW campaign, the Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier Crisis Respite Program, and missionaries through Innerchange East Harlem. We also approved requests for internal church programs and projects, such as supplies for the Clothing Center, AV Committee's Fellowship Hall Updates, and live-stream equipment for Education Council.

The Allocations request form was updated in early 2020 in an effort to make the request process more clear and user-friendly. The request form is on the CUMC website to remind our church family and larger community of its support for worthy projects not normally covered in the church budget. Requests are submitted to the Allocations Committee for consideration.
Respectfully submitted, Maggie Wolford

Organ Project

Over the last two years, we have made significant enhancements to our 1951 Moller organ. The first part of the project involved removing most of the pipes from the chambers so that the leather in the wind chests below them and in all the pouches that hold the pipes could be replaced. Two ranks of reed pipes were found to be in need of refurbishing and were sent to the factory. We also made room for new pipes, including piccolo, bassoon, and a festive trumpet. The cloth behind the wood grid was replaced by metal mesh, which still protects the pipes from dust but allows the sound of the pipes to come through more clearly. The shutters that control the volume of the pipes were updated to be controlled electronically instead of by wind, and now they open and close more quietly. The blower in the basement that produces all the wind for the organ was also replaced.

The second part of the project involved a complete rebuilding of the organ console. It is now completely digitized and is run by computer, with every key and pedal now wired to communicate with the pipes. This computer has greatly expanded the number of pre-sets we are able to save in memory, and also allows us to transpose music into different keys. A row of coupling stops was added to the console, freeing up room to add more stops for the manuals. We have our new trumpet, piccolo, and bassoon pipes available on the stops, and some of our existing pipes were

reconfigured so we can access them in new ways. And finally, the organ is now able to be moved to the front of the chancel area for concert use.

It was a joy to dedicate our newly renovated organ during worship in November. Tim Smith, our organ builder, has done an incredible job enhancing this instrument and we look forward to hearing him in concert on it soon. I'd like to take a moment to thank the many volunteers who helped at various stages of the project, the organ committee who guided its progress, and all who contributed financially. Together we have ensured that the legacy of this 70 year old instrument will live on to serve in worship of God for years to come.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Heald

Van Ministry

During 2020 year the vans saw limited use. Citizen Action, VINES and the Red Bird mission trip that Dave Alexander operates all used the vans. Each group took care of sanitizing the van after use.

For 2021 we are unsure if the vans will be utilized with the distancing requirements currently required. We are still keeping up with routine maintenance with them. We used the vans on Sundays for only 2.5 months in 2020. We lost 3 drivers from the pool with the resignations of Bruce Bishop, Patti Locker, and Chuck Whitney. We were serving 5 riders. We had 5 drivers on the schedule, with no backups. All have assured the team that they will tentatively drive if or when we can resume.

Respectfully submitted, Gregg Wood and Dave Henderson

Lukens – Jackson Camp

We kicked off January 2020 with an optimistic planning meeting. Plans included a pizza party/registration event in February, camping Sunday in March and then register as many children as we could so they could attend camp. The pizza party was held and we registered 12 campers that evening. The following Sunday was Camping Sunday and Pastor Michelle, Matt Williams and Eric Yetter presented an awesome service. We were on our way for an amazing camping season. It goes without saying that things changed for us all. Along with the pandemic we lost our beloved Phyllis Beech. She was the heart and soul of the Lukens-Jackson Committee.

After contacting campers with the news of canceled camps we focused on helping Sky Lake sustain their important ministry with contributions to both their Annual Fund and the Deans Fund. In July with the inspiration of Sarah Maroney, Laurel O'Connor and Matt Williams we made a connection with our campers by purchasing a Sky Lake drawstring bag filled with camp "merch" for each child.

Our hope is that we will soon be able to register children again so that they will be able to experience the beauty of the lake and love and grace of God through camps at Sky Lake.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carla Wood

Altar Guild

Typically floral arrangements are supplied weekly for the altar. Prior to Easter the florist had to be closed due to being a non essential business. We were able to obtain some Easter plants

from Farmer Browns garden center to have on the altar for our live stream service. Until the florist opened up again we used faux arrangements and some donated flowers from Central members. The usual memorial list for poinsettia plants was omitted this past Christmas due to difficulty obtaining plants from the florist's suppliers and growers. We were able to purchase a few plants for the Christmas altar.

We seem to be back on track and a new 2021 flower chart has been posted in the welcome center.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carla Wood

hope@Central

Our new church-within-a-church has had a year! Having officially found a name – hope@central – we were ready to see what God had in store for us as we stepped forward in faith to build this thing. We had great plans to launch community service projects and local book studies or small groups as "front doors" to meet more people looking for an inclusive and welcoming faith community. We didn't know what God would put before us, but I think I can safely say no one expected it to be a global pandemic. But even in the face of such a challenge, our vision team decided that we would move forward.

We decided to hold services online and to start by introducing ourselves. Our worship experiences have focused on "Why are we here?" and really tried to answer the question of who we are at hope@central – with themes on being fearlessly authentic in June, boldly progressive in July, and spiritually curious in August. From there, we shifted to themes which focused on exploring our perspective on some common topics within churches: Grace (September), Belonging (October), Gratitude (November), and Peace (December).

The pandemic forced us to reconsider so much of what we thought we knew about what this group and worship "should be" – and we are excited to explore this. We've ramped up our online and social media presence (website, Facebook, Instagram, etc.), we're developing new ideas for how to continue that growth (so stay tuned!), and we're doing all of it remotely.

While we look forward to the day we can come together and worship as a group in the same physical space, it is amazing to see the way God has moved this community forward through such a challenging and unprecedented time.

Our vision team is already hard at work putting plans in place for this year. In 2021, hope@central hopes to offer more ways for people to grow in their faith outside of our monthly worship experiences, including a small group which meets every Thursday at 7:30pm, service projects, and much more. We are also looking ahead several months as we plan our monthly topics for the worship experiences so we can work to include more voices and perspectives in our discussions.

I would encourage you to check out our previous worship experiences (all on YouTube) and to keep an eye out for upcoming ones the first Saturday of every month at 7pm.

May you all find hope @ central,

Maggie Wolford

Lay Leader to hope@central

Director of Web and Media Engagement (Social Media)

The pandemic has affected all of us in ways that we are still trying to navigate. One of the biggest challenges was how to keep people together while being physically apart? While we didn't know how to answer that, we knew it began with Social Media.

The first few months of the pandemic was chaotic. There was a constant need for Covid updates on all platforms but especially on our website. These had to be fast and accurate and I worked with Michelle to manage this. I also began looking at other churches, joining chat groups, reading, and talking to others to see how they were doing. Luckily, we already had a dedicated tech team in place- we were already streaming worship services. While we used the same proven foundations to do this:

- creating events
- promoting visual content
- engaging directly on our social media

I began following other pages and local public boards on the internet to broaden our engagement and extend our conversations outside of our social platforms. In-house I added the moderator feature on the YouTube live chat so that both Tyler and Maggie could have more control of the conversation as they needed. I continued to develop video and visual content to promote and support Sunday worship and other events. I pushed worship services on Instagram using stories and direct messages. I created a new YouTube & FB page for HOPE @Central. Supported instagram live videos, later editing those for pre and post use.

Other accomplishments include:

- developed new branding for hope@central's YouTube page [ex: hope speaks]
- added user profiles to Instagram & linked all accounts
- created a library of assets for the team to use
- increased Instagram organic follows to (first goal) 500 and (second goal) just under 1,000
- with a drop out rate under 5%. The followers we have gained have stated with us!
- updated Central's Web keeping similar navigation for members comfort
- posted weekly [bulletins]
- monthly newsletters
- boost posts
- created a social media calendar
- created a rules of the road for group
- created group pages
- edited video to promote our musical talent.
- created playlist

For me one of the biggest challenges was getting everything done within 10 hours a week. The first year with Central, I had more flexibility and often worked well over the allotted time. I was happy to do that. We did so much that first year. But 2020 was different. My Mom needed more care. She was falling more often, sleeping a lot less and we lost my brother to Covid. After 6 years of full-time care, emotionally I was tired. My goal was always to keep my mom home. I finally applied for her to receive Medicaid. After a long, complicated process she was approved for long-term care. This will allow us to bring in a skilled nurse and help me keep her home, longer. Two days ago she was approved for prescription coverage. I am so thankful because have been paying out of pocket! My point is, slowly I am getting back on track.

Future Goals

A better understanding of the target persona for hope@central. We offer something for the folks that have some religious background but have broken ties with their church or don't have a current church. They are comfortable with praying and a religious language. But what do we offer the people that don't? Maybe don't understand the language or presentation that the hope@central service provides today. I want to understand that better so I can help develop a complete marketing strategy and grow. We need people outside of us. Also, to develop YouTube; we are missing the bus with YT. this should be our number one focus as far as social media platforms. develop different videos: bring in other musicians. Feature monthly artists in the lounge. Streamline the Central website. Clean up the SEO on the back pages. Get back to scheduling posts.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martina DiRose