

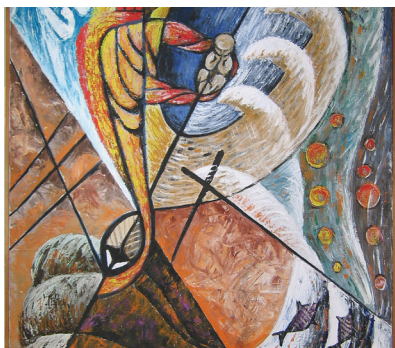
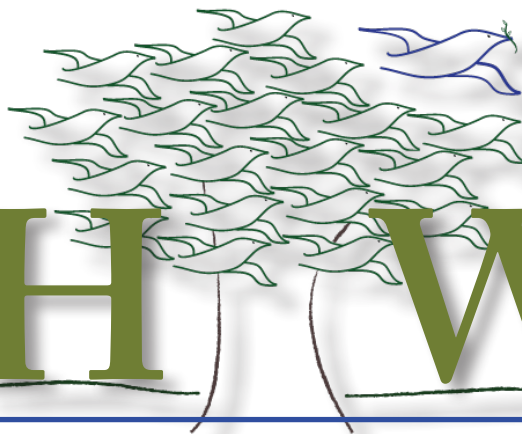
"Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?..." — Isaiah 43:19

Central Park Church

Summer's End... around the bend.

2023

# PATHWAY



September 2023 The "Good News" of Central Park Church

Vol. 23... #9

## In Transition. Change on the Horizon

*An Elder, Transition Team Member, and this Newsletter Editor Takes a Look at What this Means for Our Congregation and our Future.*

**Transition.** *The word often carries with it an unsettling sense of insecurity.*

For those of us who worship here, have been members here for years, or have recently crossed our threshold and have felt the warming embrace of a caring, compassionate congregation at Central Park Church, it means *change is coming*. So we seek, as human beings, to peer into the future for answers and too often fear the what we can't quite see. And then retreat when we can't quite hear that "still, small voice," and find a missing of "the Word" in a "wordless wilderness." It brings home that snippet of verse from 1 Corinthians 13:12, "*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*" Has the Lord not given us a handbook, a lifetime owners manual, to get us through these times?



### OUR SEPTEMBER PATH

#### Elder, Editor Reflects

Transition & Change on the Horizon  
Thoughts on what this Means...

#### Worship This Month

Worshiping Together  
Living/Serving/Connecting (pg. 2)

#### Consistory Notes

Decisions facing the Leadership  
& Stewardship at CPC in 2023 (pg. 2)

#### Student Activity

Fall '23 Kicks off!  
Here's what's happening (pg. 3)

#### Spiritual Life

Serving together to "Do Justice, Love Mercy,  
and Walk Humbly" (pg. 3)

#### Outreach & Mission

And We think We have Problems.  
A Haiti Update. (pg. 4)

#### People & Places

Healing & Hope through Faith,  
Redemption, and Restoration of our  
Families & Friends (pg. 4)

**We recently heard a guest pastor** here say that we, as a people— and as Christians— often see these events that take us to the depths of the valley of despair, and those "dark places of the soul," as an "end." And, too often, a "dead end," or that "Wordless wilderness" as he so vividly characterized it. We fear change because it represents the end of something, and we may not like what that may mean, and what may happen to us next.

**To be clear, our church family has been struggling** in that "valley," losing dear worship friends to attrition, to Covid Pandemic fatigue, to death. We have been losing financially for the past few months and we fear we may never recover. Our "home team" has taken some losses and the cheering has become faint as we dread falling to the bottom of the standings (and yes, I also dread the end of the baseball season). Losing takes its toll. Our hearts have been "divided" by the events of these past few years. And now we face the uncertainty of a full-time Pastor-less few months.

**Twelve years ago we were comforted** on our last transition by a guy named Al. He knew us. We knew him. And we breathed an 18-month sigh of relief — even as he challenged us to look ahead and see — with his trademark question, "*What's that going to look like?*"



*(continued on page 4.)*



# Our Gift of Stewardship



☐ The General Income total for <b>July 2023</b> ...	\$ 13,843
(monthly/annual need: \$26,464/\$317,568)	YTD: \$ 126,893
☐ Mission offering for <b>July 2023</b> ...	\$ 1,525*
*Note: As <u>part</u> of the total budget need	YTD: \$ 10,410

## OUR FAITH-LED DECISIONS

### Supervising Consistory & Shepherding Elders Leadership Notes ... from August 2023

- ☐ The Supervising Consistory continues to be shepherded and coached by Pastor Mark Waterstone from Rose Park Reformed Church as our Classis Supervisor during our pastoral vacancy.
- ☐ The Transition Team has spent a number of hours reviewing candidates, getting references from the two strongest candidates, and will present their findings in September to Consistory. As noted last month, Lynn VanHekken, Max Blumer & Jessica Stam were added to Exec Team to round out the Transition Team overseeing ministry and guiding the transition.
- ☐ Tom Grabill, who spoke to the congregation in July, is the Transitional Ministry Coordinator from the Regional Synod and has been thoughtfully assisting and guiding us through the next steps in the pastoral transition.
- ☐ Churches in Mission Team met and discussed their process which will take about 5-6 more months to complete. They discussed community outreach, the status of the Food Pantry and a possible invite to the community to visit us and get an idea of how they might be informed/brought up-to-date regarding our food ministry.
- ☐ Supervising Consistory discussed at length the budget and our concerns regarding the use and deployment of the Vision for Mission fund, including a recommendation for paying the RCA and local shares out of VFM in case there are future shortfalls on the income side of the ledger.
- ☐ A new desk needs to be purchased for the pastor's office (Kevin had his own desk and took it with him). Consistory approved up to \$500 to cover the cost of a new pastor's desk.
- ☐ The amount of money that was transferred last month from the VanPutten Fund to cover the budget shortfall resulted in a difference of \$1,629 more being transferred than needed. Treasurer Jessica recommended paying the open sprinkler pump bill out of this fund for the new well originally estimated at \$1000. Extra work still needs to be done to close stuck valves to increase water pressure. Consistory approved to pay the pump bill out of the overage taken out of Wells Fargo to cover the cost of the pump as per Jessica's request.
- ☐ Blood Drives will be discontinued as Mary VanWieren would like to step down. Donor numbers have also been down.
- ☐ Max Blumer reported that return to the Sanctuary has been a positive. Pulpit supply and lectionary plans are set through Labor Day into September to cover us up to the point that a transitional Pastor commences.
- ☐ First Wednesday Community Night class will be held outside on September 13th.

## OUR WORSHIP & FELLOWSHIP



Join On-Site Worship or Online YouTube Services.  
Past Services are also available Online...

Since we are in a state of transition, as we search for a new Senior Pastor, we rely on pulpit supply from clergy in our congregation and beyond.

*Until our "Transitional Pastor" is in place, the dates and times of our services remain in place, but our sermon and series titles are currently in development.*

*Please note that Youth Pastor Max Blumer, along with Ordained members to be announced, will be providing worship as well as teaching & preaching leadership for the next several weeks.*

### September 3

#### Labor Day Weekend Sunday

### September 10

#### Fall Kickoff

### September 17

Stay tuned!

### September 24

Stay tuned!

### October 1

Stay tuned!

*(It's Gonna be Great!)*

## Wednesday Community Nights Kicking off on September 13!

Come and enjoy a meal, join a men's bible study, play basketball or other games, and enjoy some fellowship with Central Park Church and its neighbors.

If you want to join in the fun in the kitchen, we are looking for volunteers! Contact Jessica in the church office or 616-820-9329.

## OUR LIFE & COMMITMENT

### School's On (Oh No!)... Welcome Back!

**central park  
kids & students**

### Central Park Students Fall Events & Happenings...

#### Central Park Kids!

Mark your calendar for September 10. We'll begin having class during the second half of worship every Sunday for the school year. We also have a tradition of handing out Bible's to our third graders that day. You're not going to want to miss it!

**Wednesday evenings will begin September 13** and have changed slightly since last year. Doors will open at 5pm for kids and they will be supervised in the gym. Dinner is 5:30-6:00 and class will fun from 6:00-7:00pm. Check out [thebiggeststory.com](http://thebiggeststory.com) for info on our new curriculum for the year!



Parents Visit Student Center to hear Fall '23 Plans

#### Central Park Students...

**We had an incredible summer together full of fun and serving!** The student center got a facelift, and we welcomed students and parents to an info meeting at the end of August.

Students, make sure to join us Sunday evenings beginning September 10. The doors open at 6pm and the evening runs from 6:30-8:00pm.



## Small Group Bible Studies this Fall...

**A Women's Group** meets every other Saturday morning, starting September 9, 10:30am to noon, in the Cornerstone Room. This Bible Study Group will be studying 1&2 Peter, "The Way to Endure Through Trials" by David Jeremiah.

**The Wednesday Night Men's Study Group** are watching and discussing the media series "The Chosen." They meet in the Cornerstone Room at 6:30pm on Wednesday evenings. Contact Jay Hescott for more information.

**Thursday Morning Women's Group** is meeting again and resuming their Beth Moore study of the Apostle John on September 21.

**Thursday Morning Prayer Time** will resume on September 21st. Please continue to lift up the people and concerns of Central Park Church in your daily prayers.

## Holiday Shoppe is on the Horizon!

**Saturday, November 11, 2023.. 9AM-2PM**

**We need Volunteers to make Holiday Shoppe 2023  
Another Annual Success!**

There are so many ways to help! Watch for the sign-up sheets in the back of the sanctuary to see how you can be a part of this ministry. Sign up for donations or help with workshops.

- Space is available downstairs for all your attic specials donations.
- We still have booths available for anyone that would like to sign up. Our online registration form is at [centralparkchurch.org](http://centralparkchurch.org)
- We had over 300 people that came to our event last year.
- There will be a booth for Central Park Church and Central Park Students.
- Donate items to sell at the Central Park church booth
- Make sure to share the [Facebook](#) event...

Contact the Church at **616.335.9462** or Lynn VanHekken if you can help at **616.218.0401**



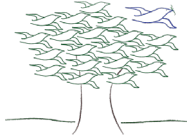
Fall is here this November at Holiday Shoppe!



## OUR RESTORATION

### Prayer & Thanksgiving

*Let us remember these concerns and praises as we hold our church family in our prayers:*



### For Healing, Hope, and Praise...

*We continue to ask for prayer for our families and friends of our worship community. We offer praise and thanksgiving for all who are reaching out to the Lord and finding answers through faith in His Word. We continue to hold our "family" members below in our prayers.*

- **Jean Osterhaven** was home with pneumonia.
- **Roger Sal** is now home and regaining his strength.
- **Scott Kramer** continues to seek relief from his ongoing back pain. Scott & Jen are thankful for your ongoing prayers.
- **Carlene Ramirez** receives physical therapy for her back pain. Please keep Carlene in your prayers.

### In Sympathy & Concern...

*For those unnamed requests for prayer during challenging times ... Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God... I am going to prepare a place for you." — John 14: 1-4*

We express our sympathy in Christ to **Kevin and Mary Kleinheksel**. Kevin's mother, **Arlene Kleinheksel**, passed away Sunday August 13. Keep Kevin and Mary in our prayers along with their kids, grandkids, and his father Earl Kleinheksel. May God bring the comfort of His Spirit through the words and presence of His people.

### Thank Yous...

We would like to express our deep appreciation for all of the prayers, cards, flowers, and other expressions of love and support we received after mom's passing. It was comforting to experience God's grace through his people in this time of sorrow and loss.  
—Pastor Kevin & Mary

### In Transition

*Continued from p. 1*

*And here we find ourselves, twelve years later, standing and staring, once again, at the abyss, the unknown, not knowing, and perhaps not fully trusting.*

*We are listening, and we hear you.* Please know that our transition Team progress has been thoughtful, slow and steady as we seek to work on God's time and discern His will, not ours. The Lord has delivered to us an outstanding doorkeeper in Pastor Mark Waterstone from Rose Park Reformed Church as our Classis Supervisor. He has blessed us all with a thoughtful and solid Transition Catalyst for our Regional Synod in Tom Grabill, whom many of you got to hear speak in July as we began the transition. Tom has provided us with the names and profiles of a number of potential transition ministers and soon you will meet the one whom this team has been led to call.

## Outreach & Missions Update:

### Surviving in Haiti

*By the Grace of God our partner organizations continue to function pretty well...* Schools will start the new school year in Sept. Most of the schools in that area are functioning. So far we have raised money for tuition, but are still in need of about \$30,000 for food for the students.



*There is no way for us to get anything down to them except money for the food and education.* It is unsafe for them to go into Port au Prince. They must rely on the shopkeepers who pay a ransom to the gangs so they can hopefully get through the streets safely in order to get rice, oil, etc from the city. That of course makes the food extra expensive.

*Please pray for their protection through the hurricane season* and pray for a Kenyan military contingent that is assessing the situation and hoping to lead a U. N. effort to get the gangs under control and restore some order and control. This will be a huge undertaking and we are thankful that the Kenyans have initiated action. Pray for justice and peace.

*We feel helpless from so far away, but we seek to continue to offer the education and food that we can.* By the grace of God, together we are making a huge difference in the village of Neply! We thank God for each one of you who has a heart for Haiti and supports this work. — Blessings, Al and Holly

*Know that the Spirit has been hard at work on all our hearts and we have laid our trust at His doorstep.*

I can't help but return to Scripture and think of how crushed those disciples were on that late Thursday night, "that dark night of the soul," when they saw their captured savior Jesus being bound and led out of the Garden down into the Kidron Vally, across and up the steep incline, back through the Gates of Jerusalem. *We can't even fathom the depth of their despair.* Oh Lord! If they only knew then what God had planned...

And there I was, a pilgrim, 2,000 years after, standing among those Olive trees in that same Garden on a brilliant May morning. Walking down that same Valley, with shepherded-led sheep bleating, and looking up at those same imposing city walls in tears. Rejoicing in the miracle which gives us all the Hope to go on, to face our future together as believers in His promise. Now God turns to us, challenging our "dead end" thinking.

And we trust in Him, because He abides. And because the Good Lord *always* delivers.