



**CENTRALCHURCH**  
— OF CHRIST —

[www.centrallive.net](http://www.centrallive.net)

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## STAFF

*Dr. Rory Christensen*, Lead Minister

*Tony Ross*,  
Creative Arts Minister

*Jessica Pastirik*,  
Director of Involvement Ministries

*Chelsea Davis*,  
Children's Minister

*Rico Diaz*,  
Director of Student  
Ministries

*Abby Carrow*,  
Christian Education Intern

## SUNDAY WORSHIP

1st Worship:  
8:15 a.m.

2nd Worship & Bible classes:  
9:30 a.m.

3rd Worship & Bible classes:  
11:00 a.m.

# the TORCH

April 18, 2017

## SPACE ADVENTURE PLANNED FOR THIS SUMMER



Vacation Bible School is right around the corner! From June 19-23, 2017, we will be going on an adventure through space and time as we search the visible to discover the invisible. If you have helped with VBS in the past or have some free time in the summer this is a great way to serve not only in the church but the community as many new families and children join us for a week of fun and excitement! There is a sign-up board located in the South Hallway, if you have any questions let Chelsea Davis, Children's Minister know.

## National Day of Prayer to be observed

Please save Thursday, May 4, 2017 to join us at Streator City Park Plumb Pavilion as we pray for our country, our state, and our city starting at 6:00 p.m. In case of rain, this will be held at here at Central Church of Christ.

— The 66th Annual National Observance —  
**May 4, 2017**

**FOR YOUR GREAT NAME'S SAKE!**  
HEAR US... FORGIVE US... HEAL US!

O LORD, LISTEN! O LORD, FORGIVE! O LORD, HEAR AND ACT!  
FOR YOUR SAKE, O MY GOD... DANIEL 9:19

**NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER**   
*The First Thursday of May*

[WWW.NATIONALDAYOFPRAYER.ORG](http://WWW.NATIONALDAYOFPRAYER.ORG)

# Fellow Co-workers,

Dr. Rory Christensen

I've long been a fan of conjunctions and the connections they make. You know what a conjunction is. It's little words we use to connect thoughts and clauses. Think of words like "and," "but," and (just used one) "if," and you're home. They're useful for chaining together ideas, and even for creating a "rapid-fire" feel to what you are communicating (think: excited children who start every sentence with "and" as they tell a story; or Mark's Gospel, where he uses the "and" (*kai*) to start 27 of 35 verses [scholars call this the "contagious conjunction"]).

Of all the uses of conjunctions, the one that has me interested currently is the way some of them can be employed to paint a contrast. I'm speaking specifically of words like, "but" and his contrast cousin "yet" and the like. They are useful and noteworthy to me for one simple reason: there are times when we need them.

As many of you well know, there are times in life when tragedy stalks and difficulty comes, times when we reach and come up empty. Those situations are more frequent than we would like. A handful of names, can take us there now: Jake Rodriguez, Brian Mascal, Judy North, Roy Robertson, \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill it in). Each name represents a love one gone (in the case of a couple, tragically, heart-breakingly so). With each name comes a difficult question we shoulder in the midst of like situations: How? "How do we stay standing in the midst of tragedy and difficulty?"

It's in that moment that those muscular contrast conjunctions step up to the plate. They take you for a trip through Biblical prose and toward clarity. First stop, the Garden, and the intensity of Jesus' prayer, Luke 22:42: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; **yet** not my will, but yours be done." Notice that it's "yet" that carves a path from struggle to surrender. Second stop, the end of a book, Habbakuk 3:17-19, Habakkuk's conclusion: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, **yet** I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength." "Yet" again showing up to provide the muscle needed to start the turn from personal barrenness and weakness to God's abundant provision and strength. Third stop, Paul's message, 2 Corinthians 7:5-6, "For when we came into Macedonia, we had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within. **But** God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus." This time, it's "but" that gives a reminder that even when we are beset by nagging conflict and fear, God can bring hope and peace, a reminder that starts us in that hopeful direction.

You look at those passages and you find why I don't think that I'll soon stop being a fan of contrast conjunctions. They're too helpful. At every turn, even in the depths of life, they remind us, forcefully so, of the love of God and his great provision for us; love and provision that are daily and eternal. And at every turn, they provoke us to live in that direction, to choose life instead of death, hope instead of despair; and to do it by turning in the face of difficulty to cast our cares on the one who cares for us.

So, when tragedy and difficulty strike, how do you stay standing? Let a muscular contrast conjunction shove you in the direction of God's love, strength, hope, and peace. You know how it goes: "I am at the end of my rope, **but God** . . ."; "I have lost much, or stand to lose much, **yet** . . ."; "I'm hurting, **yet** . . ."; "I'm struggling, **but still** I will." You do this, let the moment push you toward God, and His strength, love, hope and peace come close at hand, all over again. My prayer: that this would be your story.

Until next time. Be bold. Stay faithful. Choose conjunctions.

Rory

## Are you young at heart? Are you 55 or older?

If you have never attended a Young at Heart meeting, May 23 would be a great time to start. Young at Heart is a Christian non-denominational fellowship for men and women, ages 55 and over that is held at Central each month.

Young at Heart is designed to glorify God through fellowship, fun, and service. Activities include speakers on subjects of special interest to seniors as well as devotionals, trivia, games, movies, and occasional service projects followed by a delicious lunch.

Mark your calendars for May 23 at 11:15 a.m. and come and fellowship. The meal will be afterwards in the Fellowship Hall.

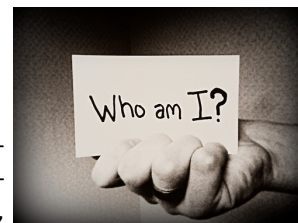
If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact Jean Kimes 815-672-5458.

# Creative Arts

Tony Ross, Creative Arts Minister

“Who am I, that the Lord of all the earth, would care to know my name?”

Would care to feel my hurt?”



Casting Crowns eloquently phrased a question we tend to ask ourselves quite often. Who am I compared to God? Why would He care about me. It's so easy to look at the grand nature of God and assume that He has better things to do than listen to my incessant complaining. There is war, disease, famine, death. In view of all those things are my seemingly self centered pity parties really something that God wants to deal with? It's probably going to come to no surprise to you that I would answer that question with a "yes". You see, first and foremost, we are children of God. He loves us and wants so desperately to help us and guide us. On a deeper level, when we claim that something isn't worth God's "time" I feel like we're putting this great God in a tiny... little... box... God is timeless. God has unlimited power and love. If you feel like something is weighing on you to the point that you want to share it with God, (spoiler alert. He already knows about it) then please share it with Him. He desires us. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love him because He first loved us". It's right there. He loved us first. He desires to have a relationship with His creation. So when you're thinking "Who am I", finishing it out by saying, "I am Yours".

## Central Kids

Chelsea Davis, Children's Minister



Serving children and families is a passion of mine and I love serving alongside so many wonderful people! Last week, we finished our last night of Awana with an awards' ceremony. It was neat to see so many children awarded for their hard work as they spent most of the year studying and memorizing God's Word. It was as equally exciting to see many of the leaders and helpers there that spent every Wednesday teaching and leading our children by example about God's love and His Word. Thank you Awana leaders and helpers for loving on our children and devoting your time to serving the Kingdom of God! The work you do here and the time you spent serving makes a difference not only in the here and now, but for eternity. Thank you for making an eternal difference in the lives of children and families!



## Central Youth

Rico Diaz, Director of Student Ministries

Rory has been going through the Book of Acts on Sunday mornings with us at Church. As we were reading through Acts 3 a passage really spoke to me. I've probably read this passage dozens of times and this phrase never jumped out until now. So, feel free to grab your bible and turn to Acts 3. Peter and John are going through their normal day until it gets interrupted by a lame beggar. In verse 4 it said, "Peter looked straight at him, as did John." Then Peter says to him, "Silver and Gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Now here comes the passage that really spoke to me, verse 7, "Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong." So, that first part of the verse where he said that he took the beggar by the right hand and helped him up, really popped out off the page! Peter reached into the world of this beggar and brought him up to Peter's world. This beggar had been living on the ground his whole life and now for the first time the lame beggar is able to see the world at a different perspective. This would've never happened unless Peter stopped and saw the need that was right in front of him. Peter had probably walked by this man numerous times in the past. Going to the temple every day at 3:00 pm, walking by the beggars was just routine. **Everything is routine until God shows up!**

This is one of the reasons why I love Ministry. I live for those small God interruptions to my daily routine. This is where the real "fun" of ministry happens. Being on stage preaching a message may seem like the most fun part of ministry, but it's not. It's the reaching down to people who have found themselves living on that lower level, calling out for someone to pull them up! Silver and gold, I do not have but what I do have I give it...and that is the hope of the world, Jesus Christ.

THE TORCH



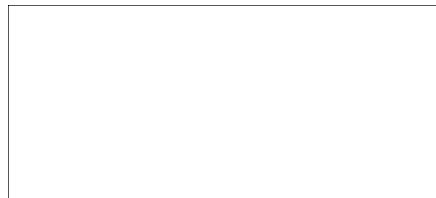
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## In Sympathy

Our sympathy and prayers go out to:  
Family and friends of, Jack  
Hauger, who passed away  
March 17, 2017.



Also, Carl North and family  
at the loss of his wife, Ju-  
dith, who passed away April  
10, 2017.

Amy Jo Mascal and family at the loss of  
her husband, Matthew Brian Mascal, who  
passed away April 15, 2017.



## Exercise Class for women

Exercise Class for women happens here  
Mon. - Thurs. at 5:00 p.m. If you have  
any questions please contact Dee Allen  
or the Church Office (815) 673-1581.

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## Baptized

Amber Leslie  
Jessica Cherveney  
Heather Vahl  
Shirley Lawton



## Offerings

### E Giving

Since April 2016 30 Givers



Offerings needed to meet Budget-Y-T-D  
for 2017:

\$210,720

Offerings given to-date:

\$215,704

Financial Statement available at the  
Information Kiosk or the Church Office

## Statistics for Mar. 26, 2017

1st Worship	86	
2nd Worship	303	
3rd Worship	174	Total 563
Bible Classes	184	

## Statistics for April 2, 2017

1st Worship	75	
2nd Worship	336	
3rd Worship	108	Total 519
Bible Classes	188	

## Statistics for April 9, 2017

1st Worship	83	
2nd Worship	266	
3rd Worship	161	Total 510
Bible Classes	190	

## Statistics for April 16, 2017

1st Worship	152	
2nd Worship	384	
3rd Worship	173	Total 709
Bible Classes	154	