

reaching up to God: the pastor's journal

Dear Central Friends in Christ,

After an unusually busy and exhausting summer week of ministry, I entered into worship on Sunday, July 26 just plum tired out. I know you have those weeks, and those days too, and still God summons us out of our Sunday beds to gather and worship and remember whose we are. It was one of those mornings for me too!

While so much of the morning followed format with every other Sunday—fellowship, Christian education, gathering, singing, praying—there was a fresh spirit. The congregation swelled in attendance through the opening hymn. From where I stand in the chancel area, I could see small and tall shadows entering from the front door of the sanctuary—some carrying babies in carriers, some using walkers and canes, others holding a loved one's or elderly parent's hand. We had visitors from Romania, Austria and the Philippines! Many of our student friends from Rockhurst and UMKC were back. Familiar friendly faces of those who have experienced the joys and sorrows of life together at Central for many years were gathered as well. The Summer Choir gathered in the choir loft, led by dedicated volunteers through our recent staff change. Family configurations of all kinds were represented. New visitors were being sought out and welcomed by long-timers.

This is the face of Central UMC! We have so much for which to be thankful! God is doing a new thing among us!

Frequently, friends of my children who have known them for many years, but who only see them occasionally, will comment on 'how tall you've gotten' or 'how much you've changed.' I can see the look on my daughters' faces that they've been living in the same skin day after day, and that they are not as aware of how much they have changed. That can happen in the church as well—as we live in the same context and skin day after day, we can't always see the growth



that we've done as a congregation in leaning into God's vision with faithfulness, flexibility and hopefulness. As your pastor, I have seen our congregation grow tremendously in our Ministry Plan to offer the unconditional love of Jesus Christ as we deepen our discipleship, reach out to others and develop ministry as we extend hospitality, worship, learn, serve and give sacrificially of our gifts.

A critical next step in growing into our church's vision is to attend an upcoming Feasibility Study Information Meeting on Sunday, Aug. 23. There will be two meetings to choose from: 9:30-10:30 a.m. on 8/23 in Kenwood Hall or 12:30-1:30 p.m. on 8/23 in Kenwood Hall. Both of these meetings will have childcare provided and the 12:30 meeting will include a light sandwich lunch.

At these meetings, the observations and recommendations from our financial feasibility study, conducted by RSI in May 2009, will be shared as well as the projected capacity for funding Phase 1 of our church's capital plan, which includes updated and newly developed space for hospitality, education, accessi-

bility and mission ministries. In addition to the results from the feasibility study, a description of the next steps that we will take as a congregation will be explained and explored.

It is my hope that you will continue in prayer for our shared work and that you will be a part of one of these Information Meetings on August 23. This is also Jazz Sunday, when we welcome the Tim Whitmer Consort to our 10:50 a.m. service to lead us in a time of praising God with jazz music—you will want to be a part of the entire day! Then that evening, we will have a Block Party from 6-9 p.m. to welcome back the UMKC community and let them know we seek to be their church home!

God is doing a new thing at Central—do you not perceive it? Come and be a part of it!

See you in church on Sunday!



Rev. Amy L. Gearhart,
Senior Pastor