

# MINISTRYREPORT

2015



## Highlights

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**Merry Christmas from Pastor Bob Hopper.** Thank you for making Central a special place in 2015. We look forward to the Lord's work in the year ahead.

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**What has your Session been working on?** The major work of the Session in 2015 focused on clarifying key questions that the Search Committee requested. Much progress has been made.

## Giving thanks for a fruitful year of blessing, mercy and hope.

Psalm 100 tells us that the Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. Surely this is our testimony at Central Presbyterian Church. For generations, the Lord has shown mercy, kindness and favor upon us. Through good times and hardship, he has held us close to his gospel and to his mission. The year of 2015 has been no different, and we again stand in awe of how the Lord is moving in our midst.

As 2015 comes to a close, we give thanks to the Lord for his continued blessing and kindness on Central Presbyterian Church. This report is a small glimpse at some of the highlights of the past year. It also provides a snapshot of several key topics currently under study. We hope that you find the information to be helpful, clear and encouraging. Thank you for being part of the amazing works that the Lord is doing in and through Central!

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# Merry Christmas, and Thank You for Making 2015 Special

On that silent night so long ago, our King Jesus lay in a manger, vulnerable and exposed to the world around him, the world that he himself created. There were no doctors to monitor his vital signs, no climate-controlled facilities to protect him from the elements. Mary and Joseph had little means to care or provide for him. A powerful ruler sought to murder him. This is the silent night that witnessed the birth of our Savior and King.

Christmas time is a smelling salt to our souls, waking us from our spiritual slumber to remember the incredible story of which we are a part. As Christmas falls upon you and your family this year, I pray that you are moved by this amazing reality of how Jesus came to us. I pray that you have time to slow down and fall to your knees in awe and wonder at what the Lord has done, at the lengths and risk to which he went in order that we might be saved. A baby in a manger changed everything for you, and for all of history.

Central Presbyterian Church exists to make the Christmas story known. For generations, God's people at Central have heard the story, proclaimed the story and lived the story. I want to personally thank each and every one of you for

being part of this work. Whether you serve in multiple ministries at Central or simply attend worship on Sunday, you are a vital part of our family. God has brought you to Central, and I want you to know how thankful I am that you are here.

Friends, the work of God Almighty at Central Presbyterian Church happens because you are here, and because you partner with us financially. Your partnership makes ministry possible; it makes the gospel known and changes lives near and far. On the pages that follow is a brief snapshot of 2015 in review. I hope you find it encouraging and inspiring. 2015 has truly been a year of the Lord's blessing and mercy.

As we look ahead to 2016, I have much hope for Central. Not because we have our act together perfectly. Not because we deserve it. But because our Heavenly Father desires to build up his church and to make it a light to the nations. We have seen fruit of that in 2015, and I am eagerly anticipating how he will move in our midst in the coming 12 months. Please pray for a wonderful year ahead.

Warmest regards,

Pastor Bob



“All the ends of the earth  
shall remember  
and turn to the Lord,  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before you.”

- *Psalm 22:27*

## Worship @ Central

At Central, the main artery of grace running through us is our worship together on Sundays. Week in and week out, rain, snow or shine, we gather on Sunday to worship the Lord in spirit and truth. As we look back on 2015, the Lord clearly used Pastor Hopper's sermons in profound ways to help us know the Lord more deeply.

Last spring during lent, we explored what it means to lament in our series "Bringing Our Pain to God." Pastor Hopper helped us to understand the liberation that we have in Christ, and how in Jesus we can find joy in spite of suffering.

More recently, we spent 27 weeks in the adventurous Book of Acts. Chapter by chapter, we examined the supernatural works of God in the early church. The concept of "the lid is off" is not one that we will soon forget. God has the power to open the box of this world and of our lives. He is able to reach in and change any circumstance. The Book of Acts depicts story after

story of God doing that very thing. We pray that he is doing it even now at Central!

It is difficult to imagine navigating our current senior pastor transition without Pastor Hopper as our interim, is it not? His preaching and pastoral care have touched us all. By God's grace, he makes the gospel clear for us every week, encouraging the hearts of long-time believers and stirring the hearts of first-time visitors. He is teaching us to be an increasingly principle-driven congregation, to "do the right thing and trust God for the results", to live with "high truth and high grace." And if we are ever in need of a free cup of coffee, we know where to turn!

52 times a year, Pastor Hopper and the entire worship team prayerfully pour their hearts into leading us on Sunday morning. It is a huge investment of time, energy and resources on the part of many, for good reason. We give thanks for all that it has been in 2015.





Music is also a key component of our worship. Be it the majestic beauty of our choir or the eclectic excellence of our later services, the Lord blessed us with tremendous worship music this past year. The talent that we have in Matt Mazzoni, Sherdonna Denholm and the countless choir members and musicians is a gift that few churches possess. It truly makes our worship environment a uniquely powerful experience. It helps us to encounter Jesus in a very real and tangible way as we worship him.

**Christmas Concert.** If you had the opportunity to attend the 2015 Christmas concert on December 11, then you experienced something truly special. God used Matt Mazzoni and the choir to put the gospel on beautiful display via music. From the opening song all the way through, the musical quality was exceptional. None of us will soon forget the performance of "Gaudete", will we? The combination of unique instruments

set against this ancient and sacred telling of the Christmas story was a rare presentation of a very rare piece of music.

We invested in a **new sound system** for the sanctuary this year, and it certainly was a contributing factor to the wonderful Christmas concert. The new system has elevated the quality of everything we do in the sanctuary, from the preaching to the music. An additional benefit gained is the relocation and artful construction of the new sound booth in the back of the sanctuary. Long-time member John Shiflett hit a home run with this project. The new booth fits seamlessly into our historic sanctuary as if it had been there for decades.

**Concert Series.** This tradition continues to go forward with excellence under Matt Mazzoni's leadership. The quality of music is first-class. Please see our website for details about upcoming events: [www.centralpres/concert](http://www.centralpres/concert)

## Music @ Central



# Missions @ Central

**Make Known.** This is our charge, and our privilege. The Lord Jesus has called us to be his light to the nations, so that all peoples might know of his saving power and grace. This imperative runs through our entire ministry at Central, and especially our Missions team. Pastor Randy Mayfield and many of you are making known the gospel around the globe and close to home. There is much to praise God for as we look at what he has done through us in 2015.

**Mission to Iraq.** Randy and his team recently returned from the mission field in Iraq. It was a courageous journey in light of the current climate in the Middle East. Travelling with Central's missionary, Jamal, the team spent a number of days ministering to and encouraging various groups. On Randy's first day back at Central, he shared with us that several persons received Jesus Christ while he was there, and he had the privilege of baptizing them. We rejoiced with Randy upon hearing this incredible news of God moving in the hearts of those in Iraq. These new converts are courageous, and need our prayers. Pray also that the gospel would spread like wildfire in this region and have a lasting impact for generations to come, in spite of persecution and opposition.

**Mission to France.** In June 2015, Pastor Randy and a team of Central members journeyed to France where they attended the annual Paris Prayer Conference and encouraged Central's missionaries in the region (Malia Bridwell and Nicholas Farrely). Our team spent time encouraging members of "France Vie", an organization currently planting 7+ churches

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"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob...I will make you a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach the end of the earth."

- Isaiah 49:6



in different areas of Paris. One of our team members says, "The passion and love these planters have for the Parisian people and culture was very apparent and their desire to spread the gospel message in this thirsty place was undeniable."

**Mission to Hungary.** Central's missionaries in Hungary are on the front lines of the Syrian refugee situation. It is a confusing situation on many levels, not the least of which is lack of information for the general public as to what is actually happening in Syria and other nearby regions. Be encouraged by an excerpt from a recent letter from our missionary Tunde Futo: *"These thoughts bring me before the throne of God and I am pleading for wisdom, discernment, praying for our government...to make good decisions for all who are involved and have power to change things...We're also praying for the refugees who are truly in need, and for all the volunteers. May the Lord protect us all, and help us to be boldly helping the migrants with wisdom and total dependence on the Lord. This people group needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ!"*

Friends, these are just a few of the highlights from a small number of our missionaries in 2015. Your prayers and financial support to Central make these ministries possible. Thank you!



**"May the Lord protect us all, and help us to be boldly helping the migrants...this people group needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ!"**



## Children @ Central

“Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”

- Mt 19:14

Through a talented and committed group of staff and volunteers, Central is passionate about equipping our children in the gospel from the earliest of ages. Beginning in our nursery and extending through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, our kids are welcomed and encouraged to trust Jesus as the sure foundation for their lives. In 2015, we saw the Lord continue to grow our children in the faith.

**Spring Storm 2015.** This annual retreat is a highlight for our kids and for our entire church. It is a ministry that has gone on for many years and bears gospel fruit in the hearts of the children (and adults!) every time. This year's theme, “The Amazing Chase” focused on

Jonah 4:2 and the amazing reality of who our God is and how he pursues us. About 120 kids attended this year, with 30 adult volunteers led by gifted staff member Karen Brown

**VBS 2015.** Vacation Bible School for 2015 happened on a series of Wednesday nights in July. The theme, “Son Spark Labs”, used fun and crazy science experiments to explore the reality of how Jesus is God's plan for us. Our children shared dinner together, worshipped God in song, played games, made crafts and did bible study together. Roughly 75 kids per night attended this summer event.

Week in and week out throughout the year, our children learn about God and his word every Sunday morning and every Wednesday night. Like clockwork, our team of staff and volunteers nurtures and serves these little ones with faithful diligence. It is truly a special facet of the ministry of Central Presbyterian Church.





**Student Central** is about walking with students as they come to know and be known by God, others, and ourselves, and to make him known in the places he has called us. As the ministry to youth at Central Presbyterian Church, Student Central's vision is to partner with parents to bring students to spiritual maturity through intentional relationships and excellent programming.

2015 has certainly been a fruitful year for Student Central on many levels. As exhibited by the photo above, the ministry is flourishing in terms of numbers and enthusiasm. But do not let the photo fool you. While fun is certainly had by all, there is a passionate focus to grow these young believers in their walk with Jesus. Mission trips, retreats, weekly small groups and a host of other intentional events are having a formative impact in the hearts of our kids. It is a joy to see them growing closer to the Lord.

The new building is a tremendous

facility and has served as a wonderful catalyst for ministry to our students. Because the building is detached from the main church building, you may not be aware of the talented staff team that serves our students week in and week out:

**Jeremy Blythe** (full-time)  
Director of Family Ministry

**Andrew Dickson** (full-time)  
Asst. Director of Student Central

**Cole Lescher** (full-time)  
Student Outreach Coordinator

**Jenny Smith** (full-time)  
Girls Ministry Coordinator

**April Johnson** (full-time)  
Girls Ministry Intern

This is the team pouring Jesus into our students. This is the team staying up all night on retreats to develop and grow our student community. They, along with a vast number of parent volunteers, represent a significant investment of resources in the church future.

## Students @ Central





**Be Known.** What a wonderful and sometimes intimidating thing. At Central, being known by one another in community is a ministry God has blessed for generations. It is truly a highlight of our church. As we look over the last 12 months, the Lord flourished this area of our ministry yet again. From children all the way up through our "VIPs", we watched the Lord bless our community in 2015.

Perhaps the most memorable community highlight of 2015 was the summer brunch. This tradition started in 2014, and it created such wonderful joy and fellowship between services that we did it again this year. Julie Kraus and myriad volunteers seemed to pull off miracles every week during July and August, feeding 300 or more of us over a two-hour time span. Old friends reconnected. New friends were made. We consumed many eggs, strips of bacon, creative casseroles and cups of coffee. The grace and joy filling the fellowship hall during these summer brunches was unmistakable.

Another key facet of community at Central happens year round in our Sunday School classes. In 2015, our adult Sunday School communities were bursting in number and in fellowship:

- 20s and 30s: young adults connecting, growing and learning.
- My Sunday Family: learning to follow Jesus as the family of God.
- Navigators: deepening faith and relationships in study.
- Gleaners: bible study for life application, for all ages.

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“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

- John 13:35

These communities grew closer together through prayer, study, fellowship and connection. Our 20s and 30s community read *The Art of Neighboring* to learn practical ways to share the good news of Jesus in word and deed. How cool! May their study in 2015 bear rich gospel fruit. Our Pastor of Spiritual Formation, Mike Farley, is bringing new ideas and structure to this already flourishing facet of Central.

**Equip Central** is a ministry that has flourished for over a decade. It is our Wednesday “family night” when we come together, share a meal and spend time in classes and community. In 2015, this ministry found renewed passion and vision. Julie Kraus and many of you provided the food and the environment that helped all of us to feel more connected, more like family.

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, when we celebrated the beginning of advent together. Karen Brown, our Elementary Children's Coordinator, led our young ones in the annual advent workshop at the Student Center. Tina Duke, ministry assistant, facilitated the hanging of the greens around the church. Does it not look magical at Central this time of year? And then Matt Mazzoni and the brass ensemble played carols outside as we counted down the lighting of the tree. This event brought us together in a special way, and kindled our hearts for Immanuel, for the baby in the manger, for Christ.



When the people of God gather together in fellowship, it is a means of grace that works in us and through us to shape us and form us in the likeness of Jesus.



## Women @ Central

“Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold.”

- Proverbs 3:13-14

On any given day at Central, women's ministry is almost always happening. Seriously. Walk into Central on a normal weekday and you are likely to see one of any number of women's groups studying, praying and serving.

In 2015, six different bible studies have been ongoing, serving over 200 women. Jamie Stowell, our Director of Women's Ministry, has shared her theological and administrative gifts to see these communities well-served and well-

equipped. Like Pastor Hopper, Jamie stepped in during a time of transition. God has used her to stabilize the ministry programs and to serve our communities of women faithfully. Here are just a few highlights from 2015:

- New bible study for working women of all ages on Wednesday nights.
- Tuesday morning study and fellowship – going strong for more than 100 years!
- Thursday morning bible study adding a service component.
- Women's retreat to grow and strengthen the community.
- Summer study on Malachi and Obadiah with the gospel in clear view.

If you would like to get plugged in, or if you just want to learn more about women's ministry at Central, contact Jamie at:

[jstowell@centralpres.com](mailto:jstowell@centralpres.com)





**Make Known.** A consistent theme of discussion, prayer and consideration over the last 18 months has been this question:

“How can Central, right here in our community, become more intentionally evangelistic?”

This question is born out of what we continue to learn about the current state of our church. The SWOT analysis conducted by Pastor Hopper identified evangelism as our greatest opportunity going forward. The recent survey of you, the congregation, reinforced this notion. The focus on evangelism is here to stay at Central, and for good reason.

As the primary mission of the church, evangelism is something that the Lord calls us to. We are to be a light to the nations, by God’s divine design. How humbling and exciting to know that the almighty God desires to use us for this mission!

Looking back on 2015, we are pleased to report that progress is beginning to be made in this area of ministry. We filled a new position specifically aimed at evangelism. Todd Denholm is our new Assistant Pastor of Evangelism and Assimilation. His sole focus is to equip our church to be more evangelistic. Don’t be surprised if Todd is working with you soon to figure out how your current ministry, whatever it may be, can be more evangelistic in its function.

A key to evangelism being effective at Central is to cultivate Central as a welcoming church. For those of us who have been at Central for a long time, of course Central is welcoming and warm! But we have identified the need to make it more so for visitors. As we evangelize and new people come to encounter the Lord at Central, we want them to be welcomed and to feel connected. This is the fundamental reason for the new fellowship hall format on Sunday

## Evangelism @ Central

We are so thankful to report that the Sunday morning “experiment” has worked beyond our wildest hopes. Between worship services on Sunday, the fellowship hall is teeming with fellowship and community. Of course, fine edibles and coffee by our beloved Julie Kraus is a key catalyst! A new coat of paint, a few new tables and chairs, and tasteful art on the walls have created a more inviting room as well. The morning has suddenly turned into a time when people can connect and engage with each other in ways that they previously could not.

Please pray with us as we enter 2016, that as we work in this new area the Lord would save lost souls to himself at Central. What a blessing it will be to see it happen!



## Central Christian School

Partnering with families to prepare children for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, instilling a **passion for God**, a **love of truth**, and a **zeal to serve**.

One of the shining ministries of Central Presbyterian Church is our school. Founded decades ago with a vision to educate children with a Christian worldview, Central Christian School has emerged as one of the best private schools in the St. Louis region.

Headmaster John Murray is in his second year of leadership, and doing a fantastic job. His enthusiasm and love of the students is contagious. Try attending chapel on Friday morning or assembly on Monday morning and see if you are not excited about what God is doing through John. We are so thankful that the Lord has blessed us with him in this role.

The school recorded record enrollment this year, and shows no sign of stopping but for the limited capacity of our building. Families from across the region and many different churches are part of the school community. Test scores are at the top of the scales.







**Central West End Plant** is a new work being led by our beloved Eric Stiller. Eric, feeling led by the Spirit, brought forth a proposal to the Session of Central Presbyterian Church. The Session studied, discussed and prayed much. Early in 2015, the Session unanimously and heartily approved Eric's proposal.

Eric and Jenny have long served Central, and they are dearly missed, but we are excited to see what the Lord is already doing in this new work. A strong core team is forming. Financial support is building from many different sources. Perhaps most importantly, Eric is already penetrating the neighborhood with presence, drawing many interested visitors to meetings and events.

Just this month, Eric and his team conducted a Christmas event in the Central West End. By all accounts, the event exceeded everyone's expectations and hopes. The room was packed and

the energy was palpable. The Lord is pouring out much favor and mercy on this new work.

In the months ahead, Eric and his team will be working to begin regular worship. While an official launch date is not yet set, they are working hard toward that end. Eric is also searching and praying for additional core team members, a worship leader, and most of all – people who do not yet know Jesus.

As 2016 begins, please pray for Eric and this new work. We look forward to all that the Lord will do in and through our dear brother.

The 5 p.m. service still remains at Central. While many core Trio members went with Eric, there is still strong worship and community at the evening service. Now in the Student Center and with music led by Sherdonna Denholm, it is still a very special worship service of Central. Come and check it out if you have not yet seen it (same sermon as Sunday morning).

## Central West End Plant

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”

- 2 Corinthians 4:7



## Finance @ Central

For many generations, God has poured out his abundance on Central Presbyterian Church. Certainly one of the ways that God has done so is financially. Central is a church blessed with a wealth of resources and financial strength.

As 2015 comes to a close, we are thankful and pleased to report that the year has been another year of God's favor. You, the faithful members of Central, provided significant gifts to make ministry possible. Half way through December, we have a good chance of meeting and even exceeding our budget for the year. This is truly a blessed position to be in, especially during an interim period of leadership. Thank you for faithfully partnering with us, season after season.

**Our Financial Rhythm.** Central is a church like most other non-profit organizations financially, in that giving to the church is highest at the end of the year. We typically receive 25% of the total annual

giving in December. This is a blessing, and a challenge. Beginning in January, giving slows down and remains at a relatively low level throughout most of the calendar year. By design and because of the year-end spike in generosity, we plan our expenses to run negative until December. This is a common trend, one that has persisted for many years. Central manages this trend by having enough cash in the bank to cover the deficit incurred over the first 11 months of the year.

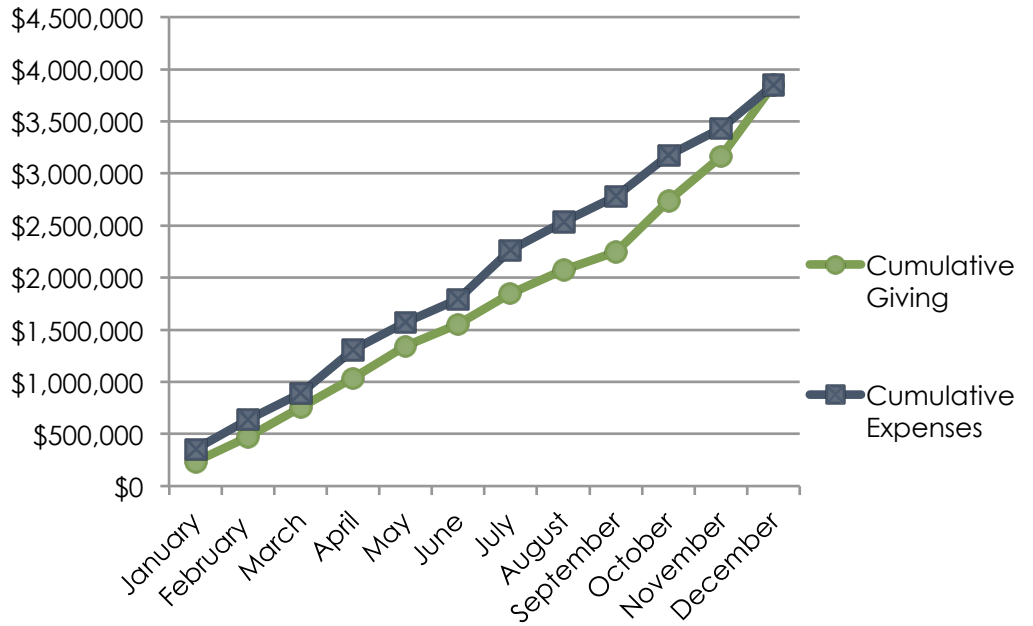
The challenge of this rhythm is that December is never a guarantee. It is subject to all kinds of variables, including stock market performance and general economic forces out of our control. Fortunately, God is in control, always. He continues to be faithful and generous to Central.

The following page contains additional financial data. Thank you, truly, for your generosity to Central Presbyterian Church.

**Figure 1: 2015 Cumulative Giving vs. Expenses**

*(December is projected, not actual)*

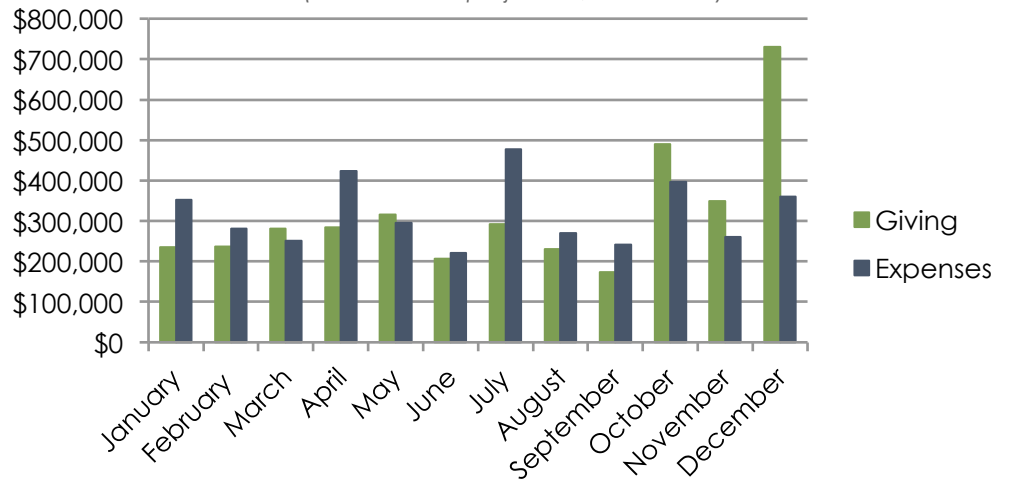
In Figure 1 at right, the trend described on the prior page is depicted for 2015. We project that we will finish the year roughly even, in terms of giving and expenses.



**Figure 2: 2015 Monthly Giving vs. Expenses**

*(December is projected, not actual)*

In Figure 2 at right, the monthly trend of giving vs. expenses is portrayed. The pronounced spikes in expense for Jan, Apr, Jul and Oct are due to the payment of quarterly disbursements to missionaries.



**Figure 3: Other Key Financial Data Points**

*(through November 2015)*

In Figure 3, a condensed and simplistic version of our balance sheet through November is provided. Please contact Tim Page, Executive Administrator, if you would like additional detail or information.

	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Cash for Ministry Ops	\$755,669	Excludes \$200k reserve
Non-Cash Assets	\$17,330,272	Land, buildings, equip.
Project Debt	\$671,501	Includes \$402k reserve
Other Liabilities	\$8,714	





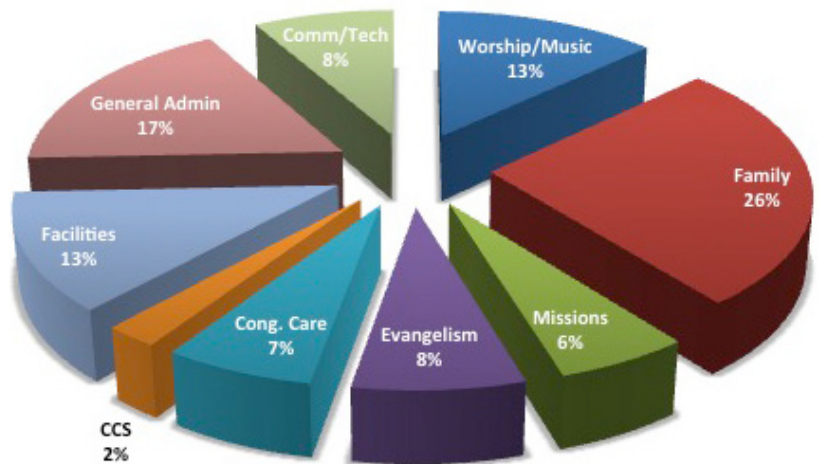
# 2016 Budget at a Glance

Looking ahead to next year, the Session chose to maintain current budget levels across all ministries of Central. This is in part due to growing confidence that the Lord is making Central healthier with each passing month, and that there are days of growth ahead. But it is a step of faith as well. Your ongoing generosity is the only way that we can sustain the wonderful ministries of Central.

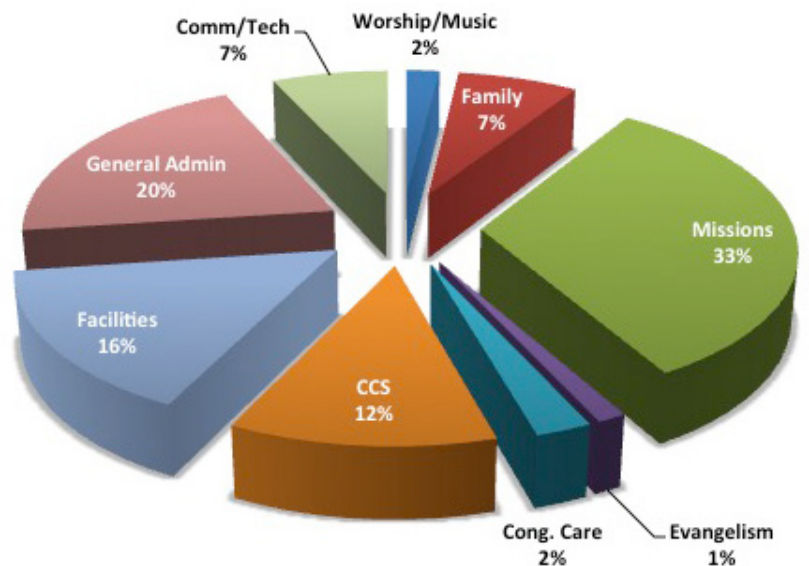
The total ministry operating budget for 2016 is \$3.75 million. Of this total, approximately \$2.20 million (roughly 58%) is dedicated to the compensation for full-time and part-time staff of Central. Central has 40 staff members, 26 of whom are full-time employees and three of whom are pastors (the budget includes compensation for the future Assistant Pastor of Congregational Care). Figure 4 at upper right depicts how this \$2.2 million of compensation expense is distributed across the ministries.

The remaining \$1.55 million represents our direct expense budget allocated to the various ministries of Central. Figure 4 at lower right depicts how this \$1.55 million direct expense budget is distributed across the ministry departments.

**Figure 4: Distribution of \$2.20 M Staff Compensation**  
(as budgeted for 2016)

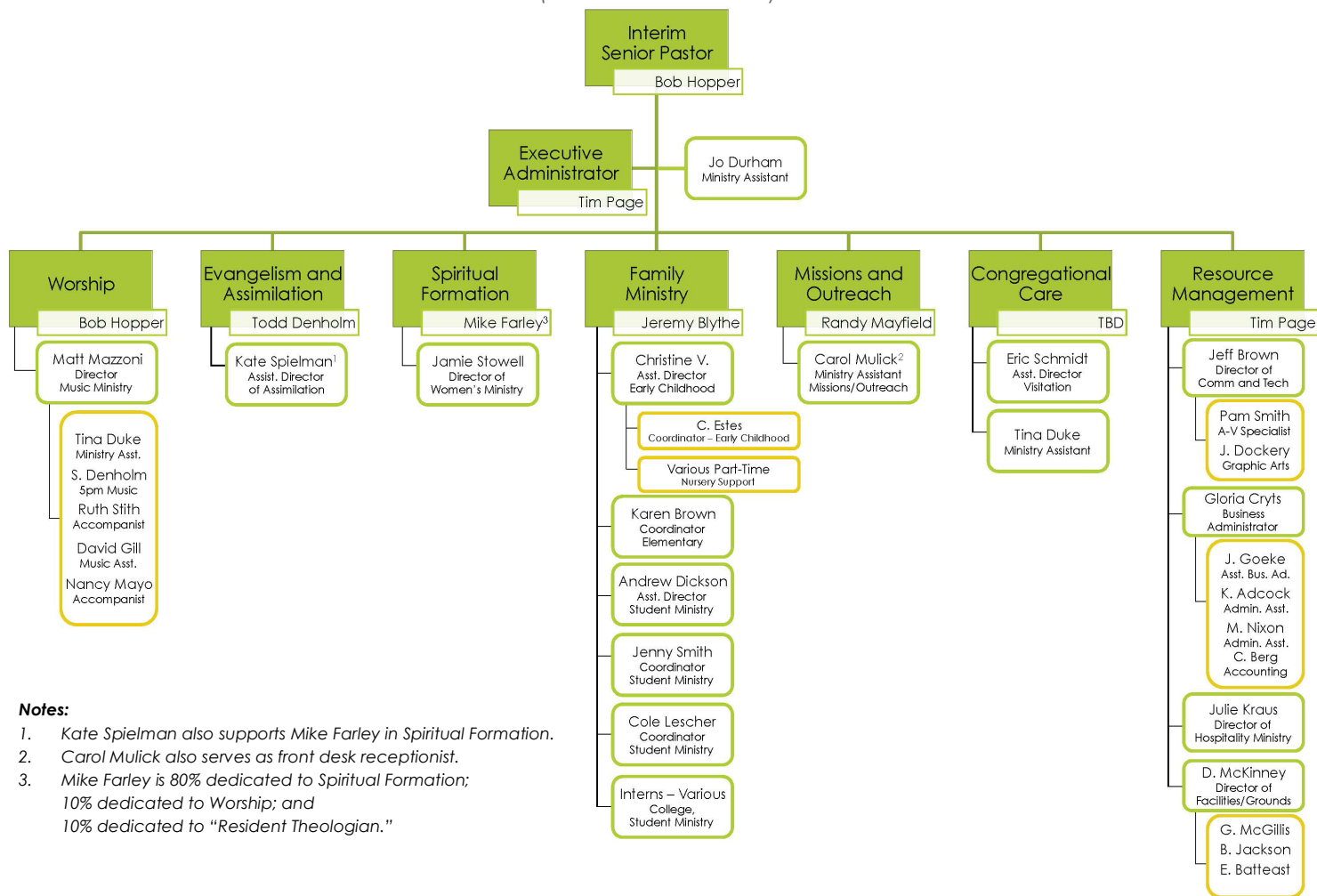


**Figure 5: Distribution of \$1.55 M Direct Expenses**  
(as budgeted for 2016)



**Figure 6: Staff Organization Chart**

(as of December 2015)



**Notes:**

1. Kate Spielman also supports Mike Farley in Spiritual Formation.
2. Carol Mulick also serves as front desk receptionist.
3. Mike Farley is 80% dedicated to Spiritual Formation; 10% dedicated to Worship; and 10% dedicated to "Resident Theologian."

**Your Staff:**  
Serving to Help You  
Know, Be Known and  
Make Known

As shown in Figure 6 above, Central employs a robust and talented staff team. This team is passionately dedicated to serving Central church and you, its members. From top to bottom and everyone in between, this team shares a deep desire for us to know God more intimately, to be known

by one another in community, and to make the saving truth of Jesus Christ known in our community.

Visually, the chart above paints a clear picture as to how the \$2.2 million in compensation (salaries and benefits) is distributed. A large number of staff serve in our Division of Resource Management under the leadership of Tim Page, our Executive Administrator. This team is mostly behind the scenes, working to ensure that our facilities, business functions, technology, communications, and hospitality are running as optimal as possible.

We also clearly invest heavily in people to lead and steward the Family Ministry at Central, as well as Worship and Music.

Your staff team, along with numerous volunteers across the Central family, makes ministry happen at Central. Week in and week out, the Lord is using everyone involved to advance the Kingdom work given unto us. The demands of ministry always exceed the supply available on this team. Your prayers for wisdom and protection are so important as they seek to properly prioritize.



## Your Session: Seeking to Discern the Will of Christ for His Church at Central

For the majority of 2015, Eric Schmidt served faithfully as interim moderator of the Session. Eric is a long-time member and ruling elder. His leadership and servant heart proved invaluable throughout 2015. He facilitated important discussions and decisions by the Session on several key topics.

### Site Ministry: The End of an Era

At the request of the Senior Pastor Search Committee, the Session carefully studied Central's investment in site ministry, namely with respect to West County Fellowship (WCF). In November 2014, the Session voted to discontinue WCF as a site of Central. Since then, a study was conducted to determine whether WCF should become a church plant, i.e. a church that would eventually become a separate church. The study report was presented in June and the recommendation for WCF to become a Presbytery sponsored church plant was adopted by the Session. The Presbytery has since approved the church, now called West County Presbyterian Church, as a Presbytery sponsored "mission church" with the goal of it becoming a "local church" as soon as that can be done in good

order. Three Central elders, Rex Dunlap, Jay Barrington and Craig Nelson, who had been serving at WCF, felt called to stay and serve the mission church and have stepped down from their positions as Central elders. These brothers were sent out with the love and encouragement of the Session and prayers for their ministry and the success of the church.

### Women in Leadership

With regard to women in ministry/leadership, the Session affirmed in March its position that "The Session believes that God, for His reasons and glory has assigned the office of elder (ruling elder and teaching elder) to men." At the same time, a study committee was formed to examine the make-up and role of the diaconate at CPC. In general, the recommendation proposed by the Committee was that the diaconate be a non-ordained, commissioned ministry team rather than a board of ordained officers and that the diaconate include both men and women. The committee presented its recommendation to the Session during study meetings in November and December 2015. No decision has been made yet by the Session, and in the months ahead it will continue to discuss, ponder and pray about what the Lord would have us do. At present, it is fair to say that the Session is not clear on whether it is wise to endorse and adopt the recommendation of the study committee.

### Governance: Seeking a Better Way

The Session is currently studying the issue of its governance, and plans to consider it in detail during the first quarter of 2016. In 2015, The Session identified several broad principles and areas for improvement:

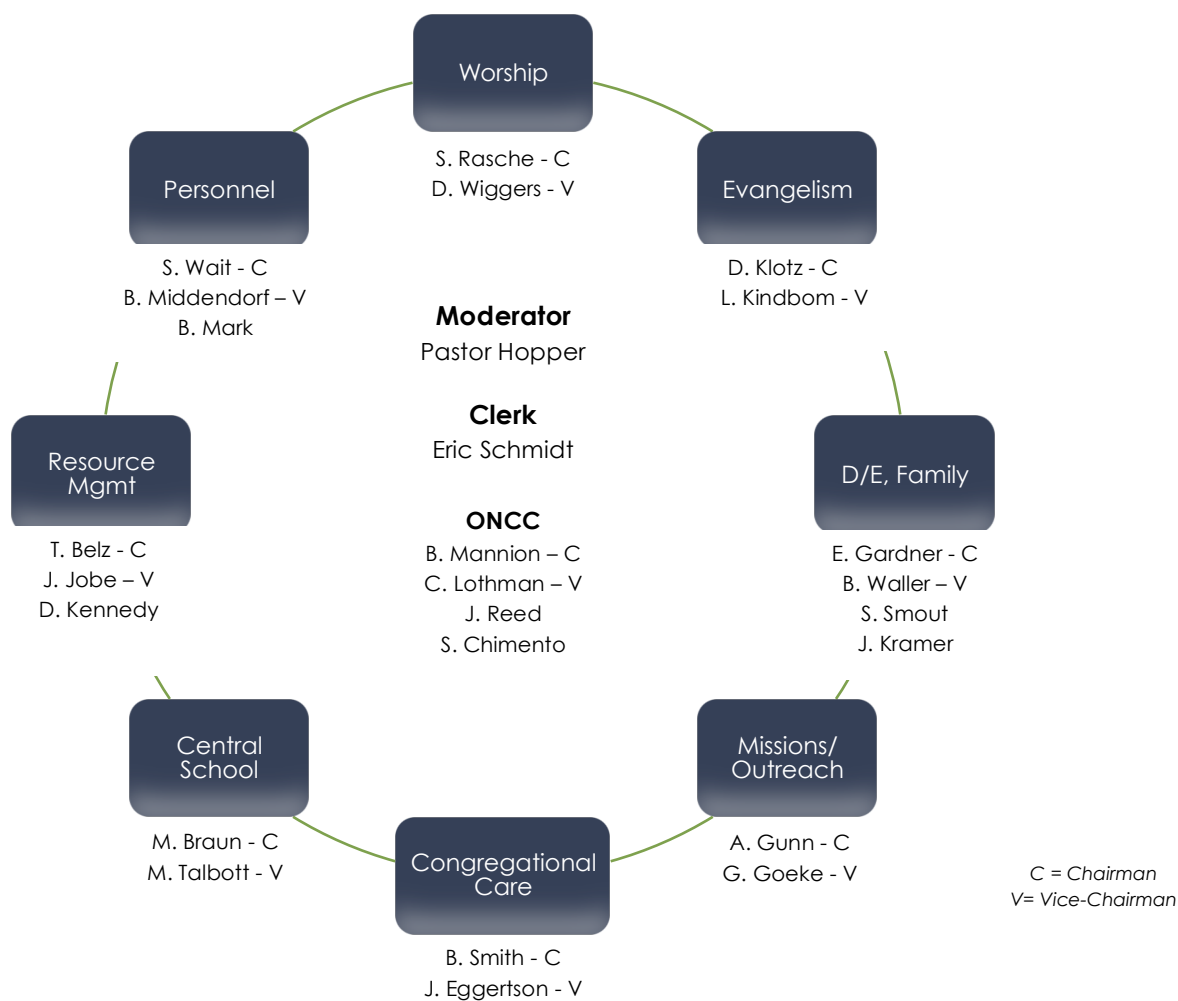
- Our form of governance should enable elders to fulfill their shepherding role (direct ministry to the congregation);
- Reduce bureaucracy and cumbersome processes; and
- Expand the ministry of the laity all toward the end of improving church health and encouraging growth.



**Thank you, Eric Schmidt!**

Eric served faithfully and effectively to lead the Session through several key issues.

**Figure 7: Session Organization Chart - 2016**



## Your Session: Shepherding the Ministries of Central

Each year, the active Ruling Elders of the Session are assigned to the ministry divisions of the church in order to shepherd and oversee the work within the respective ministry areas. Figure 7 above depicts the committee assignments for 2016.

The Ruling Elders within each division partner with staff leadership on a regular basis

throughout the year. Together, they tackle routine matters of ministry as well as new strategic initiatives. For example, in 2015 the Worship Division shepherded the study of our Sunday morning worship schedule, ultimately bringing the topic to Session for discussion and decision.

Twice a month, the entire group of Ruling Elders and staff leadership convene for a study meeting and a business meeting. The study meetings are strategic in nature, and no action is taken. The business meetings are more

mechanical in nature, but also strategic matters flowing out of the study meetings that require dialogue and action. For example, in 2015 several of the Session study meetings focused on the proposal from Eric Stiller to plant a new church. That discussion ultimately went to a business meeting for action and was approved.

These men give tirelessly and faithfully of their time to seek the Lord's will for Central. Please pray for them in 2016, that they might be used mightily for a year of fruitful ministry.



# Pursuing Long-term Health

**Church Health.** What church does not want to be healthy? After all, healthy things grow. Surely, any Bible-believing church desires health and growth for its congregation. And yet it seems all too common for churches to struggle in this category. Many factors influence church health. At the top of the list is the clear proclamation of the gospel on Sunday. Senior leadership, church governance, and organizational clarity also play a part in the overall health of a church.

Over the last several years at Central, we have observed there to be a correlation between staff health and congregation health. A healthy staff often contributes to a healthy congregation. We are so thankful to see the Lord strengthening the morale, collaboration and trust among our current staff team. While there is always room to grow, it is wonderful to see our staff flourish.

We desire our staff to flourish for the long-term, and it is toward this end that the Personnel Committee is investing in a new staff development program. The initiative, entitled “Gospel-Centered Leadership”, is in its infancy stages but starting to take root. The purpose of this creative initiative is to intentionally invest in our increasingly healthy staff so that they might be even healthier and more effective for the long-term future. As this is done, we believe it will result in an even more engaged staff team, an encouraged congregation, and fruitful ministry with broad participation across all of Central. A key focus of the early stages will be to further equip staff supervisors as leaders.

We have a wonderful staff team, and we want that to be the case for many years to come. This is an investment that, Lord willing, will do just that. Please remember this important initiative in your prayers.

**Investing in Our Future:**  
Equipping leadership to be Gospel-centered and optimally effective will result in an engaged staff team, an encouraged congregation, and fruitful ministry with broad participation.

## Looking Ahead:

Lord willing, the future at Central is bright and full of hope.

As Christmas Eve draws near, we ponder the beauty and mystery of that silent night so long ago. Light burst forth into the world, changing it forever with a King in a manger.

Here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century at Central Presbyterian Church, we wait upon the Lord for the restoration of all things. As we wait, we pray that the Lord would continue to use Central to shine his light into the darkness of the world that is so thirsty to hear the truth of the gospel.

The photo below is a striking image of what we hope Central will be in 2016: a light in the darkness drawing those around us to the Lord.

Please pray with us to that end.

Pray that lost souls would be found by coming to know the truth of the gospel. Pray that we as a church family would grow closer together in the gospel. Pray that our children will remain anchored in their faith from the earliest of ages. Pray for our missionaries to bear much fruit around the world. Next year at this time, may we stand in awe of all that the Lord has done at and through Central, all for his glory.

May this Christmas and New Year be a blessed season for you and yours, dear friends.

### **What's in a sign?** *A lot, actually!*

*Special thanks to Jeff Brown, Director of Communications and Technology, and long-time member Andy Roth, for their work in creating our new logo shown here in the new monument sign. Read this recent communication from a neighbor: "I'd just like to say that you hit one out of the park. The new sign is tasteful and contemporary. Everyone loves it. We, in the neighborhood, thank your congregation."*

*It doesn't get much better than that. Thank you, Lord!*







“He will be great and called  
Son of the Most High...  
and of his kingdom  
there will be no end.”

- Luke 1:32-33



### **Ministry Made Possible by YOU**

There is still time remaining to partner with us financially in 2015. Thank you to all of you who have done so already. The ministry of Central is possible because you give. You can do so in a number of ways:

1. Give on Sunday during the offering.
2. Stop by church to deliver your gift.
3. Transfer proceeds from sale of stock.
4. Give online at [www.centralpres.com/generosity](http://www.centralpres.com/generosity)
5. Mail to Central @ 7700 Davis Drive, Clayton MO 63105

### **2016 Pledge**

Pledge cards will be made available in early January. As you bring in the New Year, please consider partnering with us in 2016. If for financial planning reasons you would like to make your pledge sooner, please contact Gloria Cryts in our Business Office at 314.854.0115.