EASTER CHANGED Everything!

CELEBRATE HOLY WEEK WITH US // DETAILS ON BACK COVER

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Dear Church Family,

I can’t tell you how good it feels to see the body of Christ returning to live worship services after a long and difficult hiatus. I really need you to know how much you’ve been missed. Welcome back to everyone!

And what a time to come back! Easter is right around the corner, and we are planning a celebration like never before. As of now, we are inviting the choir, orchestra, and special brass to first service and an enhanced worship band in second service to help us celebrate the Risen Savior. Easter Sunday will begin with a Sunrise Service in the Chapel starting at 6:00am.

Following this 45-minute service, the Central Community Foundation will provide a free light breakfast in the Atrium and Chapel Garden. Our regular 9:00am and 11:00am services will follow the breakfast. Invite your friends and neighbors, because you won’t want to miss these special services! Please check the Holy Week schedule and plan to join us with your family in person or online. Remember, He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Now, I need your help: our calling is to be a light to the rest of the world, and it begins right here in Wichita. Beginning April 11, I will begin a new message series entitled “He Restores My Soul.” This three-week series will focus on three topics we have all experienced in one form or another throughout this pandemic: anxiety, depression, and suicide. Joining me in this series is a panel of Christian professionals who will help us refocus and renew our minds through Scripture and Christian counseling skills. There will be handouts and plenty of good information to help you and/or a friend back into a strong mindset of mental health.

Finally, I want to remind you of our commitment to our kids and families. There is no better time to reach people for Christ than when they are a child. You can never go wrong when you invest in kids! Pray about your part in this vision. You’ll be hearing about it a lot more in the near future!

Again, welcome back. And may God bless us as we move forward into a bright new future!

You are loved!

Pastor Bob
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Proof reader: Shirley Markley
A
fter Easter, Pastor Bob will begin a new sermon series called “He Restores My Soul.” In three sermons, the church will share frank and important conversations about mental health. It’s a subject that has become increasingly urgent over the COVID-19 crisis. Even in June 2020—early in the pandemic—the Center for Disease Control reported that 40% of Americans struggled with mental health or substance abuse. KAKE recently reported that Sedgwick Co. saw a 70% increase in suicides from November 2019 to November 2020.

It’s a topic that has implications for both our physical and spiritual lives. Sometimes, just bringing it out in the open is a step toward healing.

“Sharing can be so freeing,” said Rosalina Bishop, a Central member who has struggled with her own mental health. “I have found that sometimes helping others helps me more than anything else.”

THE DARKEST NIGHT

In 2013, Rosalina’s doctor prescribed medication to ease her anxiety. She was a single mom, grieving the loss of her sister two years prior, and navigating new family dynamics.

“I tried the medication for about a week but did not feel any different,” Rosalina recalled. “So, I just stopped taking it.”

About a week later, she awoke to feelings of extreme terror in the middle of the night.

“I had these vivid, horrible thoughts that I should just end my life,” she said. “It was one of the scariest moments of my life. I laid in my bed sobbing, too scared to move.”

As her 3-year-old son slept in the next room, Rosalina tried to figure out what to do next and desperately pleaded with God to wipe the thoughts of suicide from her mind. “I thought about going to the emergency room,” she said, “but I didn’t feel safe enough to drive, and I was scared they would take my child from me.”

Instead, she called her then-boyfriend, Drew (to whom she is now married), for support. It took a few calls, but he finally woke up.

“Talking with him distracted me enough that I was able to calm down,” Rosalina said. “I kept thinking, I have to make it to daylight. I cried and prayed all night.”

FINDING A BRIGHTER MORNING

Rosalina said the shame she felt the next morning about her suicidal thoughts was overwhelming. Originally hesitant, she finally called her mom.

AFTER THE DARKEST NIGHT

Rosalina Bishop found hope and security in her faith after facing the darkness of suicide
“My parents and Drew supported me through the next few days,” she said.

Allowing other people to help carry the burden of a mental or emotional struggle is vitally important, Rosalina learned.

“There is no shame in needing help!” she said. “Your family and friends would 1,000% prefer to walk through heartache with you than to be broken-hearted without you. You matter.”

That night of terror is the only time Rosalina felt thoughts of suicide. “My heart just aches for people who deal with that daily,” she said.

Sometimes medication is necessary to help, she said, and other times it’s enough just to remember that you aren’t the only one struggling: “Literally millions of people on this earth experience anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts,” Rosalina said. “Know that most of what you see of others is their highlight reel.”

But far beyond the remedies of this world is Jesus.

MUSTARD SEED OF FAITH

“You have to take care of yourself physically and spiritually,” Rosalina said. “Cry out to Jesus.”

That lonely, terrible night, it was her trust in Jesus that got her through.

“In my darkest time, I gripped tightly to my mustard seed-sized faith,” Rosalina said, referring to Jesus’s words in Matthew 17:20. “Honestly, that is all I had.”

She expressed her gratefulness that she can cry out to her Lord and Savior whenever she feels despair creeping in.

“Without the hope I have that light comes after darkness, who knows where I would be,” Rosalina said. “I hold onto the same fact that we teach our little ones: God created the darkness too, and even that He called ‘very good.’”

She added, “Joy comes in the morning.”

Rosalina encourages anyone who is experiencing feelings of anxiety, depression, or suicide to reach out to their friends, family, doctors, and Jesus for help. Especially Jesus.

“A Bible verse that I have clung to throughout my life is Proverbs 3:5,” she said. It’s a familiar and comforting one: Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding (NIV). Help is available. If you or someone you know is experiencing thoughts of suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255.

He Restores My Soul

STARTS SUNDAY, APRIL 11 // 9:00 & 11:00AM

Experiencing anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts? Discover God’s faithfulness even in the hard times. Learn more: centralcommunity.church/restore
Called to Act

Sharla Leverenz is using her theatrical gifts to bring the Gospel to life in KiDcentral

Sometimes God’s call to serve comes subtly. Other times, the direction comes through loud and clear. The latter is how it was for Sharla Leverenz recently.

“In mid-October, I felt God tugging me to a different ministry direction,” Sharla recalled. “He reminded me about some talents I hadn’t used for years.”

Sharla received a minor degree in theatrical arts as a student at Wichita State University and previously served in theatrical ministries at a former church.

“I mentioned to a couple of my friends my desire to get back into it,” she said. That very next week, Pastor Bob shared about the new vision for Kids Ministry at Central.

“It sounded like I’d be able to use some of my gifts,” Sharla said. She immediately reached out to Kids Ministry Director Jeff Fulton. “I was given this wonderful opportunity to use the gifts and talents God gave me,” Sharla said.

Since coming to Central in 2008, Sharla has participated in Care Central and Single Focus, and currently leads the Breaking Free support group and a LifeGroup. While she enjoys those other areas, she gets most excited about working with kids, where she acts, sings, directs, teaches, and writes dramas.

“Serving in KiDcentral is truly rewarding,” she said. “When I was in grade school, I never heard the Gospel message or about the love God has for me. It is a whole lot of fun!”

She added, “I’m so excited to be part of this ministry. It’s an honor to be helping it grow.”

Sharla encourages anyone who might feel even the slightest nudge to check into joining the children’s ministries.

“Don’t hesitate if you feel the Lord calling you!” Sharla said. “I didn’t know all of the specifics of how I’d be used when I reached out to Jeff.”

But, she added, God doesn’t always give every detail to those He calls.

“Abraham didn’t know what the Promised Land would hold. Moses didn’t know he’d face such opposition from Pharoah. And David defeated Goliath even with the odds against him,” she said. “God had the details, and each had to step out in faith to be used where He led.”

If you’re interested in serving in KiDcentral, email Jeff at jeff.fulton@centralcommunity.church for more information.
There are volunteers. There are dedicated volunteers. And then there are volunteers who attain legendary status.

That’s Jean and Warren Duscher, or as they are affectionately known in WeeOnes, Ms. Jean and Mr. Warren.

“We started helping when our granddaughter, Cass, was born 19 years ago,” Jean remembered. “I have a picture of Warren holding her in the nursery back then.”

Though they took a short break, it wasn’t long before they were back in the nursery. And even before Elizabeth Russell became the WeeOnes Director, she’d heard tell about this couple.

“About five or six years ago, my daughter, Cara, began telling me about this amazing team that worked in the nursery,” Elizabeth said. “I was so intrigued by this child’s excitement about watching other volunteers work. I asked, ‘Who are you talking about?’”

She continued, “Cara said, ‘There’s this one guy. He’s amazing! They call him the Baby Whisperer.’”

That’s Mr. Warren.

“We don’t know why,” Jean explained, “but for some reason Warren has a calming effect on some of the little ones.”

Elizabeth added, “Any child that is sad or crying, he holds them, and it’s like magic. They calm down. I don’t know how he does it.”

Through the years, Jean and Warren have served in a variety of rolls at Central—greeting, serving food, helping at events, and even volunteering at Central’s local ministry partners. But being in the nursery is special to them.

“We love working with the 1- and 2-year-olds,” Jean said. “They come in excited or a little apprehensive, and it’s just fun to help them come out of their shells and be excited to come to Sunday school.”

Even when a child comes in anxious and crying, Jean said she and Warren work with them to get them smiling and having fun. “It takes about four consecutive weeks,” she explained, “to get a child who is crying when they’re first dropped off to a place where they’re running through the doors. That’s our goal.”

It’s that special touch that has endeared the couple to the WeeOnes nursery.

“I believe that every baby who gets to be a part of our nursery is blessed by Mr. Warren and Ms. Jean,” Elizabeth said. “I am especially blessed, because my own child got to witness adults being the hands and feet of Jesus while doing what they do best: loving the babies.”

Working with children is an incredible way to make an eternal impact in the life of a child.

“If you’re interested in serving in WeeOnes, email Elizabeth at elizabeth.russell@centralcommunity.church for more information.

This photo was taken almost 20 years ago of Warren holding his granddaughter, Cass, while his wife, Jean (far right) looks on. Today, the couple is still serving in the WeeOnes nursery.
CREATING A SAFE PLACE TO WORSHIP

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began a year ago, the facilities crew at Central Community Church has worked tirelessly to keep the congregation safe and healthy.

Leading the charge is Director of Facilities John Wright.

“The staff at Central takes the spread of COVID-19 very seriously,” he said. “We are working hard and have invested heavily in equipment and supplies to keep the whole campus sanitized daily.”

The safety of the congregation is paramount, John said, especially now that Sunday numbers are going up.

“Church attendance is starting to rise,” he explained. “We want everyone to feel safe to come and worship with us.”

Among the sanitation plan are strategies that have become common at any public place: thorough hygiene reminder signs across the campus, convenient hand sanitizer stations throughout the building, and social distancing.

“Before the church began regathering last June,” he added, “we upgraded our bathrooms to be completely touchless.” Soap dispensers, faucets, and paper towel dispensers are now motion-activated.

But the attention to detail goes beyond that, John said.

“We have invested heavily in electrostatic sprayers,” he said, “which are industry-leading tools for spraying disinfectant. We spray the Sanctuary pews, platform, Chapel, classrooms, restrooms, hallways, entry door handles, and handrails after every event, every day.”

Additionally, a team wipes down high-touch areas between services so that everything is freshly cleaned for the next group coming in.

“For spraying and wiping down, we’re using Oxivir, which is the same one-step disinfectant cleaner that hospitals use,” he said.

John said they’ve been following these exact protocols in Central Community Preschool since day one, and it’s proven effective.

“CCP Director Jessica Fisher has told me that they’ve had fewer cases of all illnesses in...”

Facilities crew member Ron Dawson “fogs” the sanctuary with an electrostatic sprayer following Sunday morning services. Spraying down rooms with high-quality disinfectants is done following every event at the church as part of the COVID-19 safety protocols.

Volunteers Rob Hartman and Myiangel Harbin wipe down the pews following the first service. High-touch areas are cleaned with disinfectant before the second service begins every Sunday to provide a safe, clean environment to worship.
the preschool compared to prior years by far,” he said. “She is convinced that the spraying and daily wiping of high-touch areas has been the difference!”

The facility crew’s efforts are not going unnoticed.

Sarah Enterkin is a traveling trauma nurse with ties to Wichita and has witnessed Central’s sanitizing efforts first-hand.

“I believe Central is doing a better job protecting its congregation by the protocols set in place than some hospitals,” Sarah said. “The church was ahead of its time, using solutions to clean and prevent the spread of the virus months before some hospitals caught on.”

She affirmed Central’s work: “You’re using the same cleaning techniques and solutions that are used to clean patient rooms after a COVID-positive patient has left.”

As an ICU nurse working the frontlines, Sarah has witnessed the worst of what the virus can do and how quickly it spreads in places where people gather. “By doing what it’s doing, the church is protecting those who are at a higher risk for the virus, while also helping us in the medical field by preventing the spread of disease so the hospital system isn’t overwhelmed,” Sarah said.

It’s not just about physical health, she added, but it’s adding credibility to the mission of Central.

“The Church (capital C) has such a major influence on how people view Christ,” Sarah said. “By taking this virus seriously and doing what it can to help protect the congregation and others, Central is shedding light on who Christ truly is.”

She added: “It’s so great seeing a church do everything it can to allow the body of Christ to continue gathering safely during these trying times.”

John added, “I am convinced that our church is one of the safest places in town.”

But everyone has to do their part.

“As a church family, we need everyone to wear a mask when they’re inside the building, wash and sanitize their hands frequently, and physically distance from others by six feet,” John said. “We also ask that people leave the Sanctuary promptly after first service so we can sanitize everything for the next service, and please pick up your trash and communion cups and dispose of them in the provided receptacles outside each door.”

Providing a healthy and safe worship environment is at the top of John’s list each week.

“We are doing everything possible to keep our church families safe, so that everyone can feel comfortable coming to worship our Lord,” he said. “What an interesting time we are living in! But it is very comforting to know that our God is so much bigger than our circumstances.”

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**Generosity Update**

Valentine’s Day Cinnamon Rolls
Special thanks to an anonymous donor for providing 400 free cinnamon rolls on Valentine’s Day.

Non-Perishable Food Donations
The total weight of non-perishable food donated in January and February 2021 is 4,356 pounds. So far we have provided food to the Union Rescue Mission and His Helping Hands.

Dollar Club
Total Dollar Club donations for January-March 2020 are $7,778. Through the Dollar Club this year, we have supported Care Portal and provided resources for inmates at area prisons.

Vaccination Site
The church opened its doors to the Sedgwick Co. Health Department March 11-13 to serve as a temporary COVID-19 vaccination site. Up to 3,000 guests were introduced to Central because of this!
In Matthew 22, Jesus says that the second greatest commandment is to “love your neighbor as yourself.” What better way to share the love of God than to serve those who are outside of the church walls?

This year, Single Focus began a new outreach ministry called “SOS.”

The acronym is two-sided, standing for both “Singles Offering Service” and “Sharing Our Salvation.” Each month, the singles gather to participate in a service project.

Singles and Support Groups Pastor Cheri Clark said, “The SOS singles who serve together not only have fun and build closer relationships with each other, but they gain perspective when they realize we all have struggles. We see that God brings us together to help one another.”

SOS is a retooling of a Single Focus program from years ago, Pastor Cheri explained.

“We had a meeting for interested singles in February 2020, with about 21 signing up,” she said. “Our first project was scheduled for March 2020 to serve with Operation Laundry. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 shutdowns occurred that very same week.”

After a few months delay, the very first SOS service project happened in January, making Valentine door décor for residents of a Haysville nursing home.

“The residents there not only went through a COVID outbreak last spring, but had a second one this fall,” Pastor Cheri said. “We wanted to express our love, prayers, and support for these folks who are experiencing isolation in this difficult year.”

For the February service project, SOS went to His Helping Hands to work in the warehouse and sort clothing. In March, the singles will assist Wichita’s Littlest Heroes at its Easter EGG-Stravaganza.

“We hope to have projects this spring to help clean up the yards of senior citizens who have been cited by the city, minister to the homeless, and more,” Pastor Cheri said, adding that she invites suggestions for future opportunities.

Through SOS, Pastor Cheri said, the singles are experiencing Central’s mission to know Christ and make Him known.

“We’re growing deeper in our experience of ‘knowing Christ’ as we step out in faith to serve Him and witness His Holy Spirit at work through and with us,” she explained. “And ‘making Him known’ is responding to needs discovered in our community that let us share testimonies of God’s love and grace.”

All singles are invited to participate in SOS. Email Singles & Support Groups Administrative Assistant Rachael Pope at rachael.pope@centralcommunity.church for more information.
We would be hard-pressed to think of something COVID-19 hasn’t affected. But instead of focusing on what has been changed or lost, we are celebrating the testimony God has given us through His faithfulness to Central Community Preschool!

We have worked hard the past few years to create a culture of family and community at CCP.

To reopen last fall, we had to change many of our procedures, which we worried would affect that sense of community and challenge our staff and families. However, the opposite has proven to be true. Our families and staff have truly rolled with the punches, and we have received so much support and positive feedback. John Wright and the facilities team have provided incredible support this year, working diligently to provide us with extra cleanings, daily fogging, salting/shoveling sidewalks, keeping our disinfectant bottles filled, and providing us with the personal protective equipment we need, whenever we need it. They have been heroes in coming alongside us, and we would not have been able to do our ministry without them, this year more than ever!

COVID-19 is also affecting our enrollment: we reopened last fall with less than half the numbers of the previous year, but we also felt incredibly thankful for being able to have a program and serve the families that God had sent. Additionally, since reopening, we have steadily continued to enroll, and have grown nearly 25% since September 2020!

Perhaps the greatest blessing has come through one of our biggest changes. We moved to curbside drop-off and pick-up to limit the number of people coming into our hallway. We were concerned this change would decrease our interactions. However, it has been the greatest catalyst of all in building relationships. Each staff member has been able to interact with every child and family in the daily drop-off and pick-up line in a way that wasn’t possible before. Even more importantly, this has allowed us the opportunity to meet together as a staff each morning for a time of prayer before our students arrive. We now start each day seeking God first and asking for a continued hedge of protection over our families, program, and our church. We will never go back from this!

As we look back over this past year, it is breathtaking to see all that God has done at CCP, in our church, and in our community. God isn’t finished with CCP yet, and we look to the future with anticipation of what is yet to come!

-Jessica Fisher, Central Community Preschool Director
Central’s Director of Community Cori Broddle will be the first to tell you how social media can benefit the mission of the Church.

“The easiest way to share the Gospel is to share this post,” Cori tells online attenders in a short video before each Sunday’s services.

Usually, sharing a live worship service helps to get it in front of more people online. But occasionally, a person will actually walk through the door of the church because of it.

Diana Thomi was at home, mindlessly scrolling through Facebook one evening last October, when something caught her eye.

“I was sitting there, bored, when a post from Chelley Graves popped up,” Diana remembered.

That post was a live-streamed video from Chelley's iPhone of a hymn sing that was happening in the Chapel. Chelley, who is concertmistress and plays violin in the first service orchestra, was helping with the hymn sing.

“I listened to a couple of the songs, and I thought, I gotta go. I gotta be there,” Diana said.

She was already familiar with Central—she is friends with a few members, had watched services online before, and even knew Pastor Bob from years earlier. But for some reason, this video caught her attention.

“I live out east, so it took me a minute to get over here,” she said. “I drove over, came in the back door, and sat down in the back row.”

After the service ended, Diana said she was overwhelmed with friendly greetings. “Everyone was so gracious,” she said. “It was such a wonderful night of music and such a blessing. I thought, I’m going to go back Sunday.”

She did, and she stayed: “I don’t want to be anywhere else.”

Diana continued, “I’m not a big crier, but I cannot not cry. Boy, can you ever sense the presence of the Lord! It’s so rich and humbling. I have not experienced that in a long time.”

Diana remembered, “After the hymn sing, everyone said, ‘we’re so glad you’re here’. And I knew I was home.”

You can be a part of Central’s online ministry by simply sharing the live stream of the services each week on your social media accounts. You can also volunteer as an online greeter during services, lead online-only classes and studies, and join Central’s Online Community on Facebook to share in fellowship all week long. Email cori.broddle@centralcommunity.church for more information.
In January, Central began offering a unique new way to show the many opportunities to serve that exist within the church. It’s an experience that Serve Central Director Miranda Jones calls “Voluntouring.”

“Voluntouring is a time to see our volunteers in action and connect with ministry leaders,” Miranda said. “You get to see some behind-the-scenes activities, and maybe even some parts of the building you didn’t know about!”

The Voluntour takes place the third Sunday of each month at 10:30am. It starts in the Atrium and ends with a time for questions with coffee and donuts. Miranda tries to keep each touring group small to maximize the impact for each individual.

“Serving in the church is important because we were made to do it,” Miranda said. “God designed each of us uniquely, and it takes all gifts and all personalities to be successful in ministry. The more people who get involved, the more people we can reach.”

However, taking that next step to start serving can seem overwhelming, Miranda added. Voluntouring lowers that barrier.

“Many people aren’t sure what they want to do or what options are even available to them,” she said. “Joining us for this tour is a fun and easy way to learn about the church, and we hope that by the end of the tour each participant can see how they can contribute by using the gifts God gave them.”

Courtney Hobza is new to Central and participated in the first Voluntouring event in January.

“I wanted to get involved, but I didn’t know where to start,” she said. She added that she enjoyed getting to see all of the service opportunities Central has. “I was able to connect with a ministry that very same day and jump right in!”

Miranda said she hopes that by the end of a tour, each participant has a better understanding of what Central does and why it does it.

“It is fun to hear the excitement in each person’s voice after the tour,” Miranda said. “Many have no idea just how many things our ministries do.”

She added, “I get excited knowing that someone who takes the tour may receive affirmation to be in an area they already wanted to serve in, or that they may learn about a new ministry that is an even better fit for them!”

To sign up for Voluntouring, visit the Events tab at my.centralcommunity.church.

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**Volunteer Opportunities**

- **Welcome Team.** Help us welcome and connect with guests and regular attenders.
- **Facilities.** Are you skilled with building, plumbing, or electrical? We would love to keep you in mind for special projects at the church.
- **Kids Ministry.** Opportunities in Kids Ministry are endless! Work alongside children in the classroom, interact with families at check-in, prepare materials during the week, and more!
- **Shop Central Cashier.** If you enjoy interacting with people and are comfortable handling money, this spot is for you!
- **Barista.** Prepare lattes at Cafe Central. Training is provided!
A STORY OF GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

Luis Victoria grew up in a gang on the streets outside Los Angeles. Then God got a hold of his heart.

Sometimes, a person’s testimony has one single dramatic moment that turned their life around. Other times, it’s a story of gradual redemption that demonstrates God’s faithfulness. Luis Victoria would say that second scenario describes his testimony.

Luis and his wife, Lyndie, with their children Ava (7), Amelia (4), and Aria (1), have attended Central since 2015. In addition to volunteering and being in a LifeGroup, Luis joined Central’s council this January.

The long road that brought Luis to this place is his testimony.

“I didn’t know I was an illegal immigrant,” Luis said. He came to the United States as a 6-month-old, and received his U.S. citizenship in 2001. “I grew up in a loving family, but I didn’t grow up knowing God. We went to Catholic Mass twice.”

The family was living in California, just outside Los Angeles.

“I grew up in a very gang-infested neighborhood,” Luis said. “When I was around 5, one of the older gang members reached out to me and said, ‘You live in this neighborhood; the gang is here to provide you safety.’”

Without knowing it, he had joined. Through elementary and middle school, Luis acted as a recruiter, bringing in other kids that could benefit the gang. At age 8, he watched his friend die in a drive-by shooting.

Luis wanted revenge.

“I didn’t know there was life outside of that,” Luis said. “I didn’t know there was Christianity. I didn’t know there was a place people weren’t shooting each other all the time.”

By high school, he had worked his way up in the gang, leading his own crew: “I was the main guy. It was a disaster.”

After he graduated—barely, with a 2.4 GPA and a trail of detentions—he tried to distance himself. “I got into car shows and working on my own car,” he said. “I went to community college. I was trying to better myself.”

But he was still hanging out with the same friends, part of the gang.

“One night, a rival gang pulled up and shot three of my friends,” Luis said. One was killed.

Yet, this time he didn’t want revenge. “It was a God thing. I wanted to get away from it all. That was the last day I ever took part in it.”

Shortly after, Luis met Lyndie.

“She did this weird thing where every Sunday we had to go to church instead of car shows,” Luis said. “I had never seen anything like it. I had only gone to church two other times, and all you did was listen to Latin and kneel and get back up. This was building a relationship.”

Luis received salvation on March 20, 2015, and was baptized by Pastor Bob.

“That came with a bunch of nonsense,” Luis added. His family and friends began criticizing his faith, peppering him with questions. “I was reading books, listening to podcasts, watching debates,” Luis said. “Not just to defend my faith, but to learn.”

Luis said he sees God through his whole story.

“I don’t have that ‘aha’ moment. It was a collection of things that led me here,” he said. “My story is important because if God can forgive my past, then I know He is guiding my future.”

Luis added, “You don’t have to be perfect to know God. Just give yourself to Him, and He’ll take care of the rest.”
To a child, battling a life-threatening illness could feel like the complete opposite of the superheroes they watch in today’s blockbuster films. But a ministry here in Wichita sees the exact opposite.

Brianna Baskerville, daughter-in-law to long-time Central members Lynn and Joni Baskerville, founded Wichita’s Littlest Heroes in 2014 after her own son, Tristan—then 4—was diagnosed with a serious autoimmune disease.

“Our little family of four was struggling,” Brianna said of the years of treatments, medications, traveling, doctors, loss of income, and accompanying emotional, mental, and spiritual stress. “I knew if we felt alone on this journey, others did too.”

The idea for Wichita’s Littlest Heroes was planted when the family heard a boy crying down the hospital hall.

“Tristan quickly colored a picture and took it down to cheer him up,” Brianna remembered. “The connection between Tristan and Eagan was immediate.” The boys’ bond made her realize how important it was to have someone to share hard experiences with.

“One night after a particularly hard treatment, God spoke to me and gave me the vision for Wichita’s Littlest Heroes,” Brianna said. “God was giving purpose to our pain.”

Over time, Brianna connected with other families in similar situations. “Even though the children’s diagnoses were different, parents and kids were able to relate and support one another,” she said. Within the first year, over 80 “Heroes” were enrolled.

Brianna filed the paperwork to become an official nonprofit, and over the next two years, she developed a board of directors, set up office space, hired staff, and began implementing assistance and programs that couldn’t be found locally.

To date, more than 520 Heroes have joined.

Ranging in age from birth to 18 years old, the Heroes and their families receive a range of free resources as they battle their illnesses. Some resources are practical, such as financial assistance, educational classes, online support, and medical supplies. Others are simply meant to boost the morale of the little Heroes and their caregivers: Hero capes and t-shirts, monthly family events, and memberships to seven local attractions.

One focus over the next few months is constructing wheelchair ramps for eight Heroes, providing freedom most can’t afford. Central member Steve Ast is playing a big role in that, Brianna said, and Lowe’s is providing some of the lumber.

Much like how “The Avengers” superheroes are able to accomplish more as a team, Brianna said there are many opportunities for people to support Wichita’s Littlest Heroes.

“No matter the diagnoses, fighting a life-threatening medical battle is hard, and every child’s journey is as unique as they are,” Brianna said. “We’re providing hope, help, and happiness. Because no one fights alone!”

Visit wichitaslittlestheroes.com for more information and to get involved.
Join us this Sunday
9:00am Classic Worship
11:00am Contemporary Worship

Central Community Church
6100 W. Maple St.
Wichita, KS 67209

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP // IN-PERSON & ONLINE

Maundy Thursday
APRIL 1 // 6:30PM SANCTUARY

Good Friday
APRIL 2 // 12:00 NOON SANCTUARY

Sunrise Service
APRIL 4 // 6:00AM CHAPEL

Easter Sunday
APRIL 4
9:00AM // CLASSIC SERVICE WITH ORCHESTRA & CHOIR
11:00AM // CONTEMPORARY SERVICE WITH WORSHIP TEAM