

STRONGER

Dear Church Family,

Central Wesleyan Church has a unique history, and this year, our church is 120 years old! In a day when things disappear as quickly as they arrive, Central has stood the test of time. Our Stronger Challenge is being brought to you in the belief that God has so much more in store. If there was one word that would summarize Central's one hundred and twenty-year existence what would you choose?

The word we'd choose is, "stronger." Unusual perhaps. Perfectly fitting nonetheless.

Compelled to reach Holland and beyond, our forefathers pressed on through two world wars, the rise of nationalism and decolonization, Cold War and Post-Cold War conflicts, multiple economic depressions, booms in transportation and communications technology, world population growth, the sexual revolution, liberalism, the digital revolution, genetic modification and the rise of terrorism.

Our forefathers modeled an innovative faith that faced each of these challenges, victoriously overcame and our church became stronger as a result.

Every Sunday, I have the privilege of looking out at people who've never stopped innovating, never stopped moving and never stopped believing that God has more for us. Not more buildings. Not more numbers. Instead, more people for us to reach with the hope and life of Jesus.

It is true to say that we live in a very different world than the world into which Central was birthed. America is no longer a Christian nation, society is disintegrating, the nuclear family dissolving, self-serving leadership is not unusual, sickness is widespread, the truth is ignored, and injustice is rampant. These are troubled times.

In the face of these new challenges, we believe that it's time to do what Central has always done. It's time to find new ways to scale mountains and slay giants. It's time to take courage and find new ways of bringing the rule and reign of God to earth. It is time to become even stronger.

Our mission at Central is to amplify the hope and life that Jesus brings all people. By encouraging our congregation to live with God, in community and on mission, our Stronger Challenge will provide practical tools to enable us to become stronger at home to continue to be stronger away. By 2020, we aspire to be a church of at least six fully functioning campuses committed to bringing the hope and life of Jesus to the peoples of the world.

We have made a great start but there's more for us to do. In this phase of our vision, our needs are twofold.

First, to mobilize our church body to help us reach Holland and beyond for Jesus Christ through the continued growth of the Holland Campus, obtaining a home for our La Roca Campus, opening a third campus by Easter 2017, and strengthening our two international campuses.

Second, to raise \$7 million in new commitments in addition to the regular tithes and offerings over a three-year period, ending in May 2019. We have been richly blessed by our Heavenly Father and we are confident that, through Him, we can raise this amount.

Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means.

2 Corinthians 8:11

We've been waiting to provide adequate facilities for our Next Generation ministry. Now is the time. We've been waiting to deal with the mobility issues affecting our Legacy Generation. Now is the time. We've been waiting to create spaces that make Central a magnet for non-churched families in addition to a Sunday morning. Now is the time. We've been waiting to provide La Roca with a new home. Now is the time. We've been striving to take the Gospel from Holland to the ends of the earth. Now is the time to make that endeavor even stronger.

In my last communication I shared what the next few weeks would hold. Here's an update:

- 1) **We are working through the playland structure design.** The initial concept design has been forwarded to us for feedback. In the words of the designers, the playland is "*epic*." This is from someone that works on designing playlands every day. I am EXCITED!
- 2) **Our design team is working through the design & development phase.** The team has set the goal for having the building plans completed by March 1 for the renovated areas and April 1 for the new construction areas.
- 3) **Our design team has also been in communication with the City of Holland to ensure we are in code compliance especially as it relates to fire walls and fire barriers.**
- 4) **We are working with our AVL consultant from past projects to design a system for now and the future.** This is especially pertinent in the Next Gen space, but also in the other areas.
- 5) **This week we are starting to put together a construction team to represent Central.** The team will include representatives from the executive team, elders, deacons, facilities and people skilled in construction management. They will meet on a regular basis to keep up with the day-to-day decisions required.

Of course, all this is being done to ensure that we stay within the budget we communicated to all of you.

Finally, please make a note of important dates for us as we move forward.

Easter Sunday	March 27	Pastor Craig and Pastor Brad
Mother's Day	May 8	Guest Speaker: Sheila Walsh (sheilawalsh.com)
Challenge Sunday	May 15	Guest Speaker: Kevin Myers, Lead Pastor of 12Stone Church in Georgia
Commitment Sunday	May 22	Commitment Cards Returned
Water's Edge Sunday	May 29	Stronger Away
Celebration Sunday	June 12	Celebrating God's Blessing

We have an exciting few months ahead of us. Mother's Day and Challenge Sunday are certainly just two of the highlights of the next few months. Easter is also going to be amazing! Brad and I have worked hard with our team to ensure that saints are encouraged and our guests hear of the wonder of Jesus.

Don't miss the days ahead.

Let's grow stronger together...

Craig