MINISTER'S COLUMN, Scott Couper

"The key to everything is the 'in him'. All that we may rightly expect from God and ask him for, is to be found in Jesus Christ [...] If we are going to learn what God promises, and what he fulfills, we must persevere in quiet reflection on the life, saying[s], deeds, sufferings, and death of Jesus."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, correspondence from prison to Eberhard Bethge, August 21, 1944

Lately, I have spent a great deal of my time reading about **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** (1906-1945). Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran theologian and pastor who the Nazi regime hung for his defiance against German nationalism. I find myself frequently disagreeing with Bonhoeffer's theology, yet affirming his decisions. One can perhaps consider theology as 'means' and decisions as 'ends'. You see, Bonhoeffer was a conservative theologian who subscribed to at least two tenants of Barthian neo-orthodox theology (Karl Barth 1886-1968): God's absolute transcendence and our inability to know God except through revelation, or the 'Word of God'. I often disagree with neo-orthodoxy because I understand God to be 'closer' and suffering with us in solidarity. I also believe that God's wisdom is continually disclosed (not limited to a closed biblical canon); I believe "God is still speaking...." and through a variety of means.

In the quotation above Bonhoeffer made two points, one with which I disagree and one with which I agree. Bonhoeffer's neo-orthodoxy was demonstrated in the statement 'all there is to know about God is found in Jesus Christ' – which comes dangerously close to 'all there is to know about God is *exclusively* found in Jesus Christ'. As chair of the **Brattleboro Area Interfaith Leadership Alliance** (BAILA), I believe very much that God's wisdom is discerned in many faith traditions and the one to which I so dearly cherish and dedicate my life does *not* have a monopoly on truth. Yet, I agree with Bonhoeffer's belief that if we wish to better understand God's nature and God's relationship with us we must recognize Jesus' "saying[s], deeds, sufferings, and death". This recognition on Jesus' deeds is in contrast to the God advocated by Christian nationalism which is arguably more alive in the United States than it was in Nazi Germany (the Third Reich advocated a Germanic pagan occultism). Christian nationalism in the United States worships an idol: a god of economic dominance, military power, profit, violence, and retribution (all seen in global income inequality, the Pentagon's budget, tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations, a gun culture, and mass incarceration, respectively). In short, Christian nationalism in the United States is based on survival of the fittest – almost the *opposite* of Jesus' ethic – rather than on health care, education, child care, and restorative justice.

I am so proud of Centre Congregational Church, I could just burst! By opening our church space for **Afghan arrivals** to worship, pray, and practice their faith, we are being quintessentially Christian 'in deed' while not being exclusive 'in belief'. By supporting through accompaniment an Afghan family, we are engaging in interfaith dialogue with those who, while honoring Jesus, believe that 'the key to everything is the Qur'an' and 'the oneness and greatness of Allah'. By opening a clothing and household goods 'store', our church is feeding and clothing our vulnerable brothers and sisters. And, by cooperating with the Ethiopian Community Development Association (ECDC) we are using federal funds to give refuge, peace, comfort, and love to what the Bible often refers to 'the alien', the least, and thus, in part, reversing our country's march along an idolatrous Christian nationalist path.



CENTRE BELLS February 2022 The newsletter of

Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

Council Chair, LYNN HERZOG

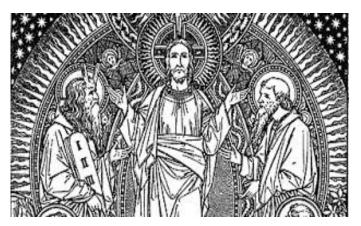
At our first Council meeting in 2022, we had to face some bad news. First, we were saddened to hear that Scott and Stephanie will be getting a divorce. I daren't say "our thoughts and prayers are with you" (too hackneyed), yet I hope we will all be praying for him and reach out to him as he goes through a difficult time.

The other bad news was the size of the projected deficit in our 2022 budget - \$130,000! This is 50% of the budget - enormous, much larger than any of our previous deficits, and shocking. There is no way we can deal with this by cutting \$100 here or \$1,000 there. In her Treasurer's Report below in *Centre Bells,* Anne requests that you not propose changes in the budget of a committee to which you do not belong. This is an important point. In addition, cutting the budget of Member Care, Deacons, Christian Education, or any other church committee, will make no significant difference. The big expenses in the budget are the staff and the building. It is time we looked seriously at our situation. If we were a business, we would either merge with another business, file for bankruptcy, or do some really drastic restructuring. As I see it, there are three possible ways to save the church from financial disaster: 1) cut staff, 2) get rid of the building, and 3) merge with another church to have more members and more money. These are all drastic steps, but we need to start thinking about them and not procrastinate any longer. Obviously, all of these require much thought. It will not help us in 2022 (we will have to use the endowment), but it is time to take our heads out of the sand and plan realistically for our future.

From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

During January, the choir has been pre-recording anthems and hymns for our weekly ZOOM services. We gather in the sanctuary, rehearse and record. Rehearsing this way is the next best thing to being in person on Sundays. When singing along with the hymns (in your homes) you now have the luxury of hearing a choir singing along with you. I have been quite impressed with the choir only needing one 'take' for each recording. Apparently, we are all concentrating!

Special thanks go out to all the members who have been helping make this happen. Though we haven't always had everybody at the same rehearsal, Sue Rowell, Joanne Clark, Lisa Keller, Rennie Washburn, Mindy Nadolski, Cynthia MacMillin, Marion Abell, Alison Hale, Jenifer Ambler, Matt Kennedy, Dart Everett, Eric Strickland, Peter Abell, and Roger Miller have been faithfully and generously giving of their time to provide choral music each week! Many thanks to all these folks!



Treasurer, ANNE FECTO

Last night at our Council meeting, I shared a summary of our DRAFT 2022 budget. We are about \$130,000 short of a balanced budget for the year. This means if we experience all the budgeted expenses, we will need to take \$130,000 from the Endowment to pay these expenses.

Last year's Finance meeting was difficult for all of us. The congregation asked the committee chairs to review the budget and submit reductions. We had two meetings for a few hours each and brought back a budget about \$13,000 lower. I sign all the checks, and honestly expenses were very thoughtful this year.

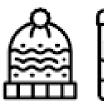
I am asking you to bring suggested cuts/adjustment to the chairs of the Committee of this expense prior to the Annual Financial Meeting in February. Please consider not recommending any cuts/ adjustments at the meeting to the budget of a <u>committee you are not on</u>!

Please feel free to reach out to me (Treasurer), Lynn Herzog (Council Chair), Sue Rowell (Council Vice-chair) or any committee chair/member with any questions or suggestions you may have. I also ask that you talk to other church members and friends of the church about our financial path.

DEACONS

In lieu of our usual monthly Deacon's column, we offer for your mid-winter amusement and edification The Centre Church Quiz. Test your knowledge!

- 1. In what year was Centre Church founded?
- 2. Who was our first settled pastor?
- 3. What is a narthex?
 - a A small carnivorous dinosaur
 - b A heavy metal band of the 1970s
 - c The vestibule leading into a church
 - d. A rod used by deacons to strike dozing congregants
- 4. How many dedicated stained glass windows are in the sanctuary?
- 5. Who was Florence Wells?
 - a. The mother of British author H.G. Wells
 - b. The daughter of CCC's first minister
 - c. Florence Nightingale's sister.
 - d. Long-serving Sunday School Superintendent for whom the Wells Wing is named
- 6. Who currently serves as our treasurer? Extra Credit: Who is our clerk?
- 7. True or False: Women were not permitted to serve Communion at CCC until 1969
- 8. What group of three well-known persons past or present, have either spoken at CCC, or in some way are connected with Brattleboro?
 - a. Henry Ward Beecher, Roz Chast, Henry David Thoreau
 - b. H.P. Lovecraft, George Clooney, Richard Russo
 - c. Toni Morrison, Saul Bellow, Richard Morris Hunt (architect)
- 9. What structure was razed in 1966 in order to build the Wells Wing?







- 10. What is a parament?
 - a. A colorful tropical bird
 - b. Liturgical banners that hang on the pulpit and lectern
 - c. What is stuck on a tree after an awkward skydiving attempt
 - d. What the pastor chews before delivering a sermon

Extra Credit: What is the difference between a pulpit and a lectern?

- 11. Which item(s) is/are NOT displayed in the Historical Cabinet?
 - a. An early 19th century foot warmer.
 - b. A nail from Paul Revere's horse's shoe.
 - c. An early 20th century audio device
 - d. Mary Milkey May's Motley Crue fan club membership card

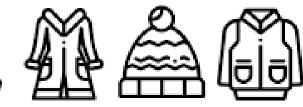
Answers

- 1. 1814 2. William Wells 3. c 4. 10 5. d
- 6. Anne Fecto, E.C. Jenifer Ambler
- 7. False, women were not permitted to serve until the mid-1970s
- 8. a 9. The Clapp House
- 10. b, E.C. the minister speaks at the pulpit, all others at the lectern
- 11. b & d

N.B. The Clapp House was a private residence, not as you may be imagining, an especially unsavory house of ill-repute

<mark>Scoring</mark>

- 0-3 Correct: Sunday School Drop-out 4-7 Correct: Proverbs 1:5
- 4-7 Correct: Proverbs 1:5
 8-11 correct: Congratulations! You are now eligible to become a Deacon. We will be contacting you shortly for further testing.



MISSION & SERVICE

Three local UCC Churches Join Together to Co-sponsor an Afghan Family

A message from Lynn Herzog, Centre Church Council Chair - our church has taken an important step this month with the formation of the UCC Co-Sponsorship Group for an Afghan family. Our members reached out to other UCC churches and found members of the West Brattleboro and Dummerston churches eager to help support the refugees. We now have a group of about fifteen people, half of whom are from Centre Church. It feels really good to be working with other UCC churches on a common mission.

We are happy that Gabi Martin volunteered for the challenging task of Lead Coordinator. Mission & Service will pay our share of \$1,000. The three churches will submit a total of \$3,000 for the cost of sponsoring our shared family. Now is the time for you, the congregation, to step forward - if you have not already done so. We hope to receive a family soon, and we have to furnish an apartment for them. The Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC) funds the apartment. Priscilla Svec and Marion Abell describe below what furnishings are needed and how to make donations. Gabi Martin has established a SignUp Genius for you to make donations on line. You can also contribute money to help purchase miscellaneous items. This is a wonderful chance for us to exemplify the Golden Rule - "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

There are two separate lists, one for furniture and another for household and linen items. Priscilla and Ron Svec are collecting the furniture listed below. They will arrange with you for pick-up and storage until we are ready to outfit the apartment. Their contact information is 802.505.8925 / svec:svectradiage with you for pick-up and storage until we are ready to outfit the apartment. Their contact information is 802.505.8925 / svec:svectradiage with you for pick-up and storage until we are ready to outfit the apartment.

Marion and Peter Abell are organizing the household/linen items listed below. Please bring these donations to church anytime Monday-Friday between 8:45am and 12:30pm and put them in the parlor. If this is not possible, please call them and they will arrange to pick up your household and linen items. Their contact information is 802.254.2653 / <u>water music@comcast.net</u>.

Gabi Martin can help you to donate via SignUp Genius using your computer. This electronic sign-up is an option for donating furniture and household items. Go to:

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080E4FADA829A4F49-apartment.

Simply check "sign up" next to that item and a "submit" button will appear at the bottom of the page. Please specify if you have one or more of that item in the comment section of the submit page. If we receive surplus items, we will give them to ECDC for future Afghans who will arrive here. Email Gabi: <u>cipolla.gabi@gmail.com</u> if you have any questions.

Thank you. Here's an opportunity to generously welcome our new Afghan neighbors.

FURNITURE - Baby crib 1, twin bed frames 2, full/queen bed frame 1, set of bureau drawers 3, dining room chairs 6, couch 1 or 2, lounge chair 1, table lamps 4, floor lamps 3, baby high chair 1.

LINENS - Twin bed sheets 8, full/queen bet sheets 6, pillowcases 12, twin blankets 6, bath towels 10, washcloths 12, bath mats 4, tablecloths 2, place mats 6, dish towels 8, bed billows 6.

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS - Flatware (8 each of knives, forks, spoons, soup spoons), large dinner plates 12, small plates 12, coffee mugs 8, soup bowls 12, tall drinking glasses 6, tumblers 6, large stockpots and lids 2, frying pans 2, baking dishes 2, baking trays 2, mixing/serving bowls 4, spatulas 2, wooden spoons 2, serving utensils 4, kitchen knives 4, serving spoons 4, can opener 1, sink strainer 1, dish drying rack with drainboard 1, dishpans 2, cutting boards 2, tea kettle 1, pot holders 6, drawer utensil tray 1, alarm clock 1, dustpan and broom 1.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

With a lot of ZOOM services in December and January, CE did not provide as many in person church school classes as we had all fall. However, Advent, the story of the Nativity, and plans for Epiphany still managed to happen with families participating, children's messages via ZOOM, and continuing meeting to have both a plan A and a plan B in cases of in-person and/or ZOOM services, whichever the leadership decides upon going forward.

Some highlights of the recent children's messages were Laura Slate's beautiful story of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's childhood and Lisa Keller's description of Epiphany. Scott Couper gave a tribute to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nan Mann continued to keep families informed of what was coming up for the children in the next session of worship. Laura Slate kept accurate notes on the meetings so that a report for the Annual Meeting was generated by Nan Mann.

While we cherish our volunteers, including Marion Abell, Priscilla Svec, and Kate Weeks, we are also looking to broaden our reach and seek more individuals to give the Children's Message and help in the classroom (when we meet in person again). Children's Messages can be done from home live for ZOOM, pre-recorded, or in person in the sanctuary. You can let us know your comfort level and we will place you in the right time. Please let Nan Mann know if you are willing and able to help with any of these activities. You too can be a cherished angel to the children of Centre Church.



BRATTLEBORO CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

As winter digs in, BCC has also. We have consolidated from four to three classrooms while we stabilize our staff and increase our enrollment. The state is responding to the pandemic employment crisis by examining regulations around ratios and staff qualifications for the Early Childhood field, both areas which would help BCC continue to grow.

Yet, the children don't know anything about that and are enjoying imaginative interactive play involving animals, dinosaurs, and recognizing infant friends. While we are forced to stay indoors when the temperatures are bitterly cold, we quietly explore the building, practicing climbing stairs, walking, and yes, even running in the halls. Movement activities, including acting out favorite stories with the addition of music, are also popular.

We have begun to use an online web-based program to support our families and staff. It's called Brightwheel and is a nationally recognized firm for integrating billing, attendance, payroll, and parent communication. By the time you are reading this, we hope to have it up and running smoothly.



MEMBER CARE

Prayer Requests

Lots of ways we do things at Centre Church have been changed or modified in some way during this of COVID-19 pandemic. I'm writing today about prayer requests.

Remember when we were gathered for worship in our beautiful sanctuary on Sunday morning? There were cards in the pew pockets available to write a prayer request. The ushers would walk up and down the aisles collecting them and bring them to the minister. He would include these requests in the morning prayer.

Now prayer requests are printed in the weekly *eNews*. How do they get there? Usually folks make a need known to our minister, Rev. Scott Couper. Some are phoned in to our administrator, Bruce Landenberger in the church office. When the prayer request should be included or removed is made by the minister.

When this list arrives at your computer, you are encouraged to include some or all of them in your daily prayers.

- Marion Daley, Member Care

PEOPLE

BIRTHDAYS

- 17 Nan Mann
- 20 Emily Randrup Dart Everett Carolyn Moore 22 Steven Brown

23 Ben Lefebvre





Mary & Verne Bristol are pleased to announce the birth of a new great-granddaughter.

Nilsa Bristol Woods

is the daughter of Karolyn & Ryan Woods of Fairbanks, Alaska. Nilsa weighed 7lbs 9oz and was the first New Year's baby born in Fairbanks.



A word of good cheer would be warmly received by members and friends of our church who are in nursing homes, assisted living centers, or housebound as of January 26.

Gary Carrier-Dirigo Pines c/o Allison Carrier Lucy 16 Page Place, Orono, ME 04473 207.944.0030

Wanda Godfrey—Vernon Hall 13 Greenway Dr., Vernon, VT 05354 802.254.2444

Bob Keller 153 Spruce St., Brattleboro, VT 05301 802.257.4588

Pat Neer—Thompson House 80 Maple St., Brattleboro, VT 05301

Karen Getty Peter-Pine Rock Manor 3 Denny Hill Rd., Warner, NH 03278

Jane Reed—Pine Heights 187 Oak Grove Ave., Brattleboro, VT 05301 802.257.0307

> Please let the Administrator know if we've missed someone.

Gisela Robeck



Gisela Robeck, age 92, passed away peacefully at home in West Brattleboro on Dec 14, 2021, with her family at her side.

Gisela was born in Leipzig, Germany in 1929. After training as a kindergarten teacher, she immigrated to the United States in 1952. As she raised her four children, the family lived in Chicago, Phoenix, Florida, and the Boston area. In her forties, Gisela went back to college and earned a degree in Computer Science and later a master's degree in Finance. She worked as a financial analyst for John Hancock Life Insurance in Boston until 1992, when she retired to Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii, enjoying the warm weather, the beautiful flowers, and the many visitors who basked in her hospitality.

In 2011, Gisela moved to Brattleboro. She became an active member of Brattleboro's Centre Congregational Church, serving on the Member Care and Fundraising committees, among others. She was a key member of the Centre Church Quilt Club, whose members make guilts for all the baptized babies in the church and for every new baby attending the Centre for Children. Gisela greatly enjoyed watching the parents' delight as they picked a quilt for their child. With the club, she also made quilts, cards, bags, and ornaments for the Holiday Bazaar.

Gisela is survived by her three daughters and a granddaughter: Katrina Robeck and husband Rolf Grandstaff of Garner, NC, and their daughter Erika, of Lawrence, KS; Diana Todd and husband Lee of Halifax; and Linda Fuhrman and husband Don of Marlboro. Her son Frank predeceased her. She is also survived by her sister Gunda Sadoine of Marseille, France, and a niece and nephews in Germany, France, and China.

A memorial service will be held at Centre Congregational Church sometime in the spring. To send flowers to the family in memory of Gisela Robeck, please visit our flower store.

FEBRUARY 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Afghan committee	2 11 ^{oo} Staff Meeting 12 ^{oo} Help Fund	3 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional ^{**} 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion ^{**} 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	4 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	5
6 10 ⁰⁰ Worship* - zoom 12 ⁰⁰ Deacons' meeting**	7 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology**	8 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Afghan committee	9 11 ^{oo} Staff Meeting 12 ^{oo} Help Fund 6 ^{oo} Mission & Service	10 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional ^{**} 3 ⁰⁰ BCC Board ^{**} 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion ^{**} 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	11 CB DEADLINE 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	12
13 10 ⁰⁰ Worship - zоом	14 Valentine's Day 7ºº Christian Theology	15 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 5 ³⁰ LRPT 7 ⁰⁰ Afghan committee	16 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 6 ⁰⁰ Church Council 6 ³⁰ NAACP	17 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional ^{***} 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion ^{***} 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	18 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	19 10 ⁰⁰ Harris Hill Ski Jump
20 10 ^{oo} Worship - zоом 10 ^{oo} Harris Hill Ski Jump 5 ^{oo} SOS Meal	21 Presidents Day Office Closed 4 [∞] Compassionate Brattleboro** 7 [∞] Pub Theology**	22 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Afghan committee	23 MAIL CB 11 [®] Staff Meeting 12 [®] Help Fund	24 10 ^{oo} UCC Devotional ^{***} 4 ^{oo} Sermon discussion ^{***} 5 ^{oo} Choir rehearsal 7 ^{oo} Worship Team	25 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 12 ⁰⁰ L&F Annual Meeting	26
27 1 0 ® Worship - zоом	28 7ºº Christian Theology					

SCOTT'S SERMONS can be accessed at the church website: www.centrechurchvermont.org -orfacebook page: <u>http://www.centrechurchvermont.org/audio--video.html</u> -orhttps://www.facebook.com/pg/Centre-Congregational-Church-Brattleborg-VT-632678343519640/potes/2ref=page_internal_-or-

https://www.facebook.com/pg/Centre-Congregational-Church-Brattleboro-VT-632678343519640/notes/?ref=page_internal -or-From the website *Welcome* page, click *Audio & Video* in the top list (or click *More* or *Other* on the top right).

NEW CONTACT INFORMATION

Wanda Godfrey, Vernon Green 61 Greenway Dr., Vernon, VT 05354



FEBRUARY LECTIONARY TEXTS

Sunday, February 6, 5th Sunday after Epiphany Isa 6:1-8, (9-13); Ps 138; 1 Cor 15:1-11; **Luke 5:1-11**

Sunday, February 13, 6th Sunday after Epiphany Jer 17:5-10; Ps 1; 1 Cor 15:12-20; **Luke 6:17-26**

Sunday, February 20, 7th Sunday after Epiphany Gen 45:3-11, 15; Ps 37:1-11, 39-40; 1 Cor 15:35-38, 42-50; **Luke 6:27-38**

Sunday, February 27, Transfiguration Sunday Ex 34:29-35; Ps 99; 2 Cor 3:12-4:2, **Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)**



Centre Bells is published monthly by Centre Congregational Church, UCC News items, articles, address changes, and requests to be added or removed from the Centre Bells mailing list should be submitted to the church office: 802.254.4730 / admin@centrechurchvtorg



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

193 Main Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301-2842 Office Hours: M – F / 8:30am–12:30pm Church Office: 802.254.4730 / <u>admin@centrechurchvt.org</u> Website: <u>www.centrechurchvt.org</u> Facebook: <u>Centre Congregational Church-Brattleboro VT</u> Instagram: @centrechurchvt Current news/information in the larger UCC Community: VT Conference: <u>www.vtcucc.org</u> / National: <u>www.ucc.org</u>

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Minister and Teacher: The Rev. Dr. Scott Couper: 786.622.8473 (cell) <u>centrepastor@centrechurchvt.org</u> Music Director: Mary Milkey-May: <u>music@centrechurchvt.org</u> Administrator: Bruce Landenberger: <u>admin@centrechurchvt.org</u> Financial Secretary: Christine Yost: <u>finance@centrechurchvt.org</u> Custodian: Emelio McCalla Treasurer: Anne Fecto Clerk: Jenifer Ambler