

MINISTER'S COLUMN, Scott Couper

Dear Friends in Christ, there are many heroes in our church. I celebrate two in March: **Margo Neale** through her hosting of the **Climate Group** (with accompanying 'Climate Wake-Up' bulletins) and **Nan Mann** through her leadership of **Christian Education**. These two brave women are keeping on my and the church's radar screen **climate change** and **children**, respectively. These two subjects are intimately linked; the deterioration of the former will lead to suffering of the latter.

Margo and Nan are like modern day **prophets** in our church. Just like the prophets, they have followers and supporters who enable them to feel that their efforts are not in vain. Yet, they are the lynchpins holding what will, God willing, be vital ministries in the future.

Prophets are important. They are vital for society and for faith communities. Prophets warn of dire consequences and they envision hope. Every other Monday at 7:00pm, our church hosts a Bible Study on ZOOM *and* in the church on prophets, specifically, 'minor' prophets. Perhaps next year, we will study 'major' prophets, like **Ezekiel**. In Ezekiel, God directs the prophet to "Eat the food as you would a barley cake; bake it in the sight of the people, using human excrement for fuel" (4:12-13). Whoa! What?! Yep, God told Ezekiel to publically eat food cooked over feces. That physically violates some sensibilities. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God implemented what some might call to be 'shock therapy'. God wanted the people to 'wake-up, and smell the coffee!', er, rather, smell the pooh! Through Ezekiel, God desperately warned the people of the consequences of not acting for right. The land would be barren, there would be no trees, desertification will come, you will cook what little food you have on only that which you yourself can produce, and your children will suffer. The nation's fate is in peril! Reverse course! While in chapters four and five, Ezekiel offers dire warnings, he offers hope in chapters thirty-seven and forty-seven.

The Long-Range Planning Team discerned that '**Super Adults**' will be our ministry's *primary*, but not only, beneficiaries and recipients. 'Super Adults' will be key to strengthening our church's reach to the Creation and to Children.

I know we are tired. We are struggling with health, struggling with age, and struggling with finances. COVID has left me and you with little energy to fight or promote anything. I pray and pray and pray that the last destructive variant of COVID is behind us and another is not around the corner. If so, it is time for our church to reactivate! It is time for us to pivot. It is time for us to implement our long-range vision and plan to be a faith community that "fosters belonging, believing, and becoming all that God intends". It will be time to grow – in the Spring!

When we recover from COVID and when our church sees evidence of its relevance and vitality in our community, we will look back at our two prophets, Margo and Nan. Margo and Nan, despite all the obstacles with which they struggle are keeping ministries to the environment and our children alive until we become strong enough to nurture and sustain them more substantively. Thanks be to God for both our prophets.

Be well. In Christ, Scott



CENTRE BELLS

March 2022

The newsletter of
Centre Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

Council Chair, LYNN HERZOG

Thank you all for attending our Annual Financial Meeting on February 13. I think we all agreed that we have to change our old ways of doing things. \Already Bob Pu is requesting data for his analysis of stewardship and I have set up a meeting with the Council Chair at First Church (which is what the West Brattleboro church likes to be called.) And as our reward – we have a surplus for January 2022 of \$1054. Savor the moment- it may not happen again for a while.

This month Council took an historic step – we voted to make our Heritage Room available to our new Afghan neighbors as a worship space. It will require some furniture moving – the Heritage Room table and chairs will go into the Finance Room, which will now be available for meetings (after it has been re-arranged). And the photos of previous ministers will be moved, as Islam agrees with the Second Commandment: “Thou shalt not make any graven images..”. Muslims have their main worship service on Friday (equivalent to our Sunday), but we will be able to use the room if necessary when they are not using it. The parlor and the chapel and the re-purposed Finance room are also fine places for meeting. How wonderful that our church has voted to show our love for our neighbors, not just talk about it!

We will begin in-person services again on March 6, still following our COVID protocol for masking and social distancing, of course.



From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

During January and February, the choir has been recording hymns and anthems for Sunday services. Because several folks have been away at various times, we have met every other week to accomplish this task. Fortunately, we have had enough folks present to be able to cover the music each week as long as we taped two weeks at a time.

In anticipation of in person services returning soon, we will plan to meet weekly again once those begin. We will also be preparing Lenten/ Easter music as the beginning of Lent is just around the corner!

Thanks go out to our choir members who have faithfully come out on Thursday evenings to provide music for our ZOOM services. They are: Marion and Peter Abell, Jenifer Ambler, Joanne Clark, Dart Everett, Alison Hale, Matt Kennedy, Roger Miller, Mindy Nadolski, Sue Rowell, and Rennie Washburn.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

At our most recent meeting, via ZOOM, we talked hopefully about beginning to meet in person again. CE wants very much to be together again with the congregation and the children. We have lessons in mind, service projects to prepare, and gathering to celebrate. We miss you guys!

We are also working hard on fine tuning a job description for a new CE Director in the hopes that we can open the job search and hire someone for the Fall. Our report to that end is in the Annual Meeting Program Reports. We hope you all get a chance to read it.

We are, even on ZOOM, sharing children’s messages each week. We would love to share that opportunity with other members and friends of the church, so if you have an idea of something to share with children, please let Nan know and we will find a mutually convenient time for you to participate.

With Afghan refugees arriving in Brattleboro recently, Priscilla Svec reached out to several of our families and asked the children to share toys and books with the newly arrived families. Some families did say they would help in that way and we are so grateful to the parents for encouraging the children to share and be kind. It is a wonderful service and we thank all who are involved.

-Nan Mann, Chair

DEACONS

We recently experienced what is known in ornithology as an 'irruption' of goldfinches. For days, our backyard feeders were inundated with a feathered flurry of ravenous little birds vying for the black oil sunflower and thistle seed we put out for them, to the seeming consternation of the usual suspects of chickadees, juncos, tufted titmice, woodpeckers and cardinals. Even the ordinarily brazen squirrels appeared overwhelmed.

We learned that a sudden large influx like this occurs when there is a shortage of 'mast' — that is, seeds, acorns, and other tree food — in the northern forests, caused either by natural cycles, or, as with this year, exacerbated by wildfires that have destroyed millions of acres of woodland. We were gratified that these small creatures found their way to our offerings, rewarding us with delight. And we wondered: how do they know, on their peregrination southward, that at any particular spot they will find nourishment and safety?

Matthew 6:26 naturally comes to mind: "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."

This avian exodus seems an apt metaphor for another recent migration of the displaced: the Afghan refugees fleeing to our shores. They, too, are seeking sustenance among strangers. As Michael and I feel blessed that a throng of goldfinches found a haven in our acre of yard, we are also blessed that our nation has so much to offer that our worldwide sisters and brothers in need would risk all they have to join us.

Jesus, in the parable quoted above, continues to say that if God cares so very much for even a tiny bird, how much more does God care for us?

I see my way as birds their trackless way...He guides me and the bird, in His good time.

—Robert Browning

In Faith,
Heidi Mario, for Deacons



PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

A Friendly Reminder from your Pastoral Relations Committee

We are a functioning and welcoming group and invite congregants to bring ministerial compliments and concerns to us.

Please remember that we exist to "maintain an open and healthy relationship between our minister and the members of the congregation in an atmosphere of trust, confidentiality, respect and honest dialogue" (Centre Church By-laws)

Judy Palmer, Chair

judithp41@gmail.com / 603.353.0590

Jim Bedard, Margo Neale, Ron Svec

Dear Friends,

During a heartfelt conversation in a recent meeting with our minister, Reverend Scott Couper, we extended to him our sympathies over the dissolution of his recent marriage to Stephanie Ducharme. When a marriage ends, as this one has, it is often a very sad event for everyone involved. While we have been especially concerned about our pastor, we hope for Stephanie and the girls the very best as they enter a new part of their lives.

Since Scott has returned to Brattleboro, he has taken an apartment in the Brooks House where he lived before this marriage. He has begun a sermon series on the United Church of Christ's Statement of Faith. He has joined several initiatives that are just getting under way — working with local UCC congregations to provide support for the Afghan refugees, revamping Pub Theology discussions to make them more relevant, and offering a new Bible Study on the Hebrew prophets. He is making every effort to offset what is a national trend — diminishing church membership in all denominations and all across the country. To that end, he continually steps out into the community to represent our church in the wider population.

In short, and typically, Scott continues to hit the ground running. We are grateful for his commitment to us and for the vitality he brings to the life of our community. We believe that his work helps our church stay relevant in these turbulent years when new thinking abounds and new practices demand our consideration. We welcome the energy he brings to the tasks ahead.

MEMBER CARE

Wondering?

I have often wondered what we as a congregation would have been able to do to hold ourselves together had this world-wide epidemic happened in 1990? I mean how could we as a congregation carry on without all the varied means of communication we have now?

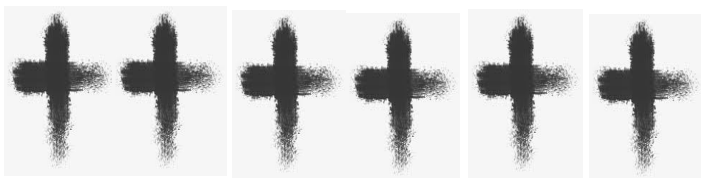
Back then, our older son was in Desert Storm 1990-91. Communicating with him was difficult. There were a couple of letters—telephoning was \$50.00 for a very short talk if there were phones available. I think we did some communicating by tapes; I really can't remember. Yet, up until the disastrous ending of our country's time in Afghanistan, where he flew helicopters, he was able to call me for free. I would answer his almost daily phone calls on my Grand-Pad phone. I am now able to message with my other son in Japan every week for free!

If this pandemic had happened in 1990, I wonder how we could hold the Bible studies, committee, board, and Council meetings. Not all homes had computers; there wasn't any ZOOM or Facebook.

During January and February of this year, we have been holding Sunday worship service on ZOOM. Many of the other church boards have also made use of ZOOM for meetings. Because of the ease and time savings, this most probably will continue as a means of communication.

But, what most are looking forward to is Sunday, March 4, when we will again in our beautiful sanctuary and hear our talented organist, Mary Milkey-May, play the organ (which sounds much better in church than hearing it over ZOOM). In the future, we will join in the Halleluiah Chorus at Easter and see each other in person. Even though coffee hour might be a longtime ahead, it will be good for some chance of socialization.

Before the pandemic and especially these many months of it, our minister Scott Couper has carried on an especially big ministry of visitations to almost everyone in our congregation, plus a great many more. I know because on my three stays at Pine Heights he visited me on a weekly basis. The itemization of his visits are submitted to the Counsel in his monthly report.



PEOPLE



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 are housebound as of February 26.

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

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.*

NEW CONTACT INFORMATION

Dennis Newman
PO Box 892
Brattleboro, VT 05302

ANNIVERSARIES

12 Deborah & Robert Cope
31 Mary & Verne Bristol



BIRTHDAYS

2 Priscilla Svec
3 Milton Eaton
5 Emma Rueter
6 Emmet Healey
7 Diane Bassett
18 Haley Marcil
20 Kathryn Fecto
Lily Lefebvre
21 Michael Ball
22 Wendy Susan Collins
Matthew Kennedy
26 Addison Minott
27 Henry Grobe
Marilyn Young



MARCH 2022

Women's History Month

**ZOOM events
*Holy Communion

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Afghan Team	2 Ash Wednesday 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 7 ⁰⁰ Worship	3 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	4 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 4 ⁰⁰ Afghan Welcome 5 ⁰⁰ Dedication 5 ³⁰ Muslim Prayer Minister's day off	5
6 1st Sunday in Lent New Members 9 ⁰⁰ Adult Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship* 12 ⁰⁰ Deacons' meeting	7 4 ³⁰ Christian Ed 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology	8 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Afghan Team	9 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 6 ⁰⁰ Mission & Service	10 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 3 ³⁰ BCC Board 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	11 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes Minister's day off	12
13 2nd Sunday in Lent Daylight Savings 9 ⁰⁰ Adult Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA	14 7 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology	15 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Afghan Team	16 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 6 ⁰⁰ Church Council 6 ³⁰ NAACP	17 St. Patrick's Day 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	18 CB DEADLINE 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes Minister's day off	19
20 3rd Sunday in Lent 9 ⁰⁰ Adult Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA 5 ⁰⁰ SOS Meal	21 4 ⁰⁰ Compassionate Brattleboro 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology	22 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Afghan Team	23 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund	24 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	25 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ WWAC film Minister's day off	26
27 4th Sunday in Lent 9 ⁰⁰ Adult Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA	28 7 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology	29 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Afghan Team	31 MAIL CB 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund	31 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team		

SCOTT'S SERMONS can be accessed at the church website: www.centrechurchvermont.org -or- facebook page: <http://www.centrechurchvermont.org/audio-video.html> -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 FRIENDS OF CENTRE CHURCH

Mindy & Rich Nadolski
907 Western Ave., W. Brattleboro, VT 05301
413.768.1802 / rnadolski@yahoo.com

Celestine Nkusi
573 S. Main St. #1, Brattleboro, VT 05301
802.579.8771

Brattleboro Centre for Children is looking for a volunteer to help with early morning receptionist duties. This involves answering the phone and the doorbell, letting families into the classrooms and taking messages for staff and teachers.

Hours would be 7:30-10:30am on an 'as needed' basis with plenty of notice.

Please call Nan Mann at BCC:
802.254.0300 or 802.380.5231

Thank you!

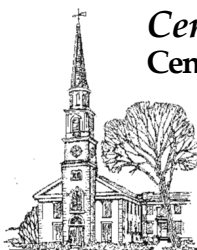
MARCH LECTIONARY TEXTS

Sunday, March 6, 1st Sunday in Lent
Deut 26:1-11; Ps 91:1-2, 9-16; Rom 10:8b-13;
Luke 4:1-13

Sunday, March 13, 2nd Sunday in Lent
Gen 15:1-12, 17-18; Ps 27; Phil 3:17-4:1; **Luke 13:31-35**
or *Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)*

Sunday, March 20, 3rd Sunday in Lent
Isa 55:1-9; Ps 63:1-8; 1 Cor 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9

Sunday, March 27, 4th- Sunday in Lent
Josh 5:9-12; Ps 32; 2 Cor 5:16-21, **Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32**



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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@centrechurchvt.org

MARCH



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2022

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**CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Church Office: 802.254.4730 / admin@centrechurchvt.org

Website: www.centrechurchvt.org

Facebook: [Centre Congregational Church-Brattleboro VT](https://www.facebook.com/Centre-Congregational-Church-Brattleboro-VT)

Instagram: @centrechurchvt

Current news/information in the larger UCC Community:

VT Conference: www.vtcucc.org / National: www.ucc.org

CHURCH STAFF AND LEADERSHIP

Minister and Teacher: The Rev. Dr. Scott Couper: 786.622.8473 (cell)
centrepastor@centrechurchvt.org

Music Director: Mary Milkey-May: music@centrechurchvt.org

Administrator: Bruce Landenberger: admin@centrechurchvt.org

Financial Secretary: Christine Yost: finance@centrechurchvt.org

Custodian: Emelio McCalla

Council Chair: Lynn Herzog

Treasurer: Anne Fecto

Clerk: Jenifer Ambler