



MINISTER'S COLUMN, Scott Couper

Dear Friends,

I enjoy listening to Esther Burnham (*A Year Remembered*, Women's Fellowship, Centre Congregational Church, 1983). Let us hear her again in this New Year.

After Christmas

*The carols are stilled, the Book is closed
On the oft-read story of a manger and Babe,
Of shepherds and angels, kings bearing gifts;
No longer we hear in the busy street,
The joyous greeting as friend meets friend,
The flame of good-will for all mankind
Which had warmed our hearts with a rosy glow,
Now flickers and dims – will we let it die?*

*In our love for that Babe, oh, would that we
Might fan that flame until it becomes
A consuming fire, devouring all trace
Of the hatred and greed, the want and fear
Of our troubled world: a fire that will spread
To the ends of the earth, all peoples and realms,
And leave in its wake a heavenly peace,
And the hope of that manger of Bethlehem.*

Esther writes of the 'passion' we have for our faith during the Christmas season. One definition of passion is 'a strong liking or desire for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept'. It is fair to say that during Christmas, we have a strong devotion to singing carols (activity), the nativity crèche (object), and Love (for family, friends, church, community, and the world). All of that is right and good.

Yet, as Esther advocates, I pray that we will maintain the passion we have for our faith and Christ Jesus 'after Christmas', throughout the new year.

In the new year, we will be exploring a partnership with the Sacred Places initiative as an extension to our long-range planning and vitality processes. We will need a new small fresh crop of leaders to direct our church's future. After July, I will be taking my first three-month sabbatical from Centre Church after five years of service. This year, we will need strong lay leadership so that our church does not miss a beat. This year we will continue to improve our The Green at Centre front lawn ministry that seeks to bring the church out on to Main Street. We continue to see new faces at our church – and the key to continue to be blessed by them is to establish personal relationships with them. Our passion for our church must be demonstrated by our extension of personal hospitality to those who are interested in what our faith community has to offer. Last but not least, our passion for the gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be confined to Sunday morning services. Rather, it needs to be seen and spread in our community through an increased involvement in the NAACP, the LGBTIQ+ community, justice networks (such as Action Corps and Vermont Interfaith Action), peace initiatives (such as Peace Jam), and forums (such as Compassionate Brattleboro).

We have just enjoyed the blessings spoken of in Esther's first stanza. Let us now in this new year demonstrate the passion she expressed in the second stanza. Happy New Year! Be well.

Love always in Christ, Scott

CENTRE BELLS

January 2023

The newsletter of
Centre Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ



Council Chair, LYNN HERZOG

I am happy to report that Council approved the proposal of the Long-Range Planning Team to work with the Partners for Sacred Places. Over the next six months, using their skills and expertise, we will investigate possibilities for our future, particularly as it regards the use of our building. The purpose of "Community Asset Mapping" (which is what we will be doing) is to work with other potential friends and allies in Brattleboro who share our goals, in order to fully utilize the great resource of our church building. This does not mean we are committed to changing the use of our building – just to exploring possibilities. The \$10,000 cost will not come from the operating budget or the endowment, but from a separate fund (the Johnson Family Fund).

Financially, we continue to spend more than we earn – we have withdrawn about \$45,000 from the endowment so far this year, in order to meet our expenses (much less than the predicted \$100,000). In terms of pledges for next year, we have received pledges of \$82,000 from 35 pledging units. We hope there are still more people out there planning to pledge.

We have been fortunate to receive a very generous bequest from Gisela Robeck. She was very committed to the church in so many ways. And now, from her position in heaven, she is still watching over our church, and we are extremely grateful!

I hope you have all received a copy of the results of the Congregational Self-Evaluation. If not, please let Bruce know, and we can send you one. Our evaluation team is now summarizing the results of the evaluation of the minister. These will be presented to Scott soon, and he will draw up an action plan for next year, based on our suggestions. This will be shared with the congregation.

Wishing you a Happy New Year, and hoping 2023 is a good year for Centre Church!



From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

Advent has come and gone, and the choir (and I) will take a quick break! These folks have diligently rehearsed every Thursday to prepare music for the Advent/Christmas season. They even recorded music for Christmas Sunday for our ZOOM service. They will have the week after Christmas off and will not be singing on January 1. After that, we will be back on our regular schedule, providing anthems for each Sunday service.

On Sunday, December 18, we had a wonderful Christmas sing-along during coffee hour. Thanks to Marion Abell, there were word sheets provided for many favorite secular Christmas songs. Those who were there joined in heartily! I think that event might just become a tradition!



DEACONS

After a very busy December, the Deacons are looking forward to a Happy New Year and a quieter January. Thank you to all who participated in worship services last year as liturgists and who assisted the Deacons in some of our many tasks, such as cleaning the chandeliers, decorating the sanctuary for the holidays, and agreeing to be liturgists at worship. The Deacons will continue to serve as ushers and greeters each Sunday and will reach out to schedule liturgists. Having a variety of members and friends participating adds so much to the service, so please consider saying 'yes' when you receive a call from a Deacon!

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

We welcome new participants in our *Sunday Spirit Book Discussion* group at 9:00am in the Heritage Room at church. We are continuing to read and discuss Kristin Kobes DuMez's *Jesus and John Wayne* (2020), an intriguing and well-documented historical account of how White evangelicals have affected the Christian faith and American politics in recent years.

For more information, contact Judy Palmer: judithp41@gmail.com 603.353.0590.

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Many thanks to a whole village of helpers who collaborated to make the 2022 **Christmas Craft Fair** so wonderful an event. It raised over \$2,000 for Center Church, but even more important, was the chance to get together and see and visit and reconnect with friends.

Bonnie Girvan, Dennis Newman, and Scott Couper were the backbone in setting up for the event. Tom Harriman decorated the parlor and café areas, keeping it simple and festive.

Darlene LaPlante helped put out cookies. Mary Bristol called all the cookie makers, and together with Lynn Herzog, Carrie Smith, and Judy Palmer helped sell them.

The craft table was staffed by Margit Bronson, Patty Reardon, and Joanne Clark. Anne Doesburg was in charge of organizing all the crafts.

The day was dedicated to Gisela Robeck, and in her honor there was a display of many quilts throughout the fair and sanctuary. Margit Bronson, Bonnie Girvan, Anne Doesburg, Karen Rydant, and Carlene McCarty hung the quilts. The display would have made Gisela proud.

Bonnie Girvan and her friend Hanna had hand-crafted items for sale. Jenifer Ambler brought items from her trip to Central America to share with our church. Priscilla Svec helped sell the items. Karen Rydant was in charge of the Silent Auction and Raffle Table.

Laura Slate entertained children at the Children's Craft Table.

Carlene McCarty, Bonnie Girvan, and Tom Harriman made hardy soups for Friday night. They sold out.

A high point of Saturday was and is Bill McCarty's waffles. This year was no exception. They were delicious! Bill was never at a loss for customers.

Beautiful wreaths and swags were made by Heidi Mario, Sen Pu, Priscilla Svec, and Karen Rydant. Their aroma and eye popping beauty filled the halls.

The clean-up crew at the end of Saturday was monumental. AJ McDonald, Wendy Randall, James Cera, Priscilla Svec, Karen Rydant, and Marion Abell put away tables and everyone cleaned up before the Messiah Sing. There were left over items that were centralized for shoppers later on and after Church on Sunday.

Apologies to anyone who I have forgotten to mention by name.

ManyThanks to all the hard workers.

Meg Harriman, Fundraising Committee Co-Chair

MISSION & SERVICE

Thank you to all who have been so generous this past year with their time and donations for our church's missions. We ended the year with the last of the Second Sunday Offerings and the 5 for 5 UCC offerings, The Christmas Fund. Christmas Eve's special offering went to the Samaritan Fund, the minister's discretionary fund for people who enter our church in need of a little help, that they are unable to receive elsewhere.

In January we will celebrate Luz del Mundo, the scholarship program, and our Sister Parish, Cabanitas, El Salvador. Our Second Sunday Offering in January will be going toward these scholarships. Jenifer Ambler and Scott Couper will share slides and stories of their recent trip. A luncheon talk and slideshow is being planned by Mission & Service for Sunday, January 29 fellowship time.

Thank you again for all who continue to serve the homeless in our community through our monthly Groundworks dinner. January's dinner will be on Sunday, January 22. Sign-up is available on the Signup Genius on-line:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F4DADA82DA6FFCE9-groundworks>

or on the Church Life bulletin board opposite the parlor. Please remember that if you are unable to deliver your food item, please speak to Jenifer Ambler or Priscilla Svec.



"True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.
("Beyond Vietnam" speech,
April 4, 1967, New York, NY)

MEMBER CARE

O Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree

In Dot Vander Meulens's book *This Jewel on Main Street*, the story of the huge tree that once filled the church's whole front yard is told. It had been planted by Dr. John Lord. It was a little blue Spruce planted in the middle of the church front yard. He planted it to keep the front yard from becoming a parking lot! That little blue Spruce grew and grew, tall and wide, expanding over much of the front lawn. For many years an anonymous donor paid for the lighting of that tree during the Christmas season. It provided much beauty and pleasure to viewers on Main Street for many years. I never found out who was the mysterious generous donor who paid for the lighting of that tree. Do you know?

This year there were three trees set up by our minister, Scott Couper, and a team of workers and decorators: AJ MacDonald, Mark Baxter, Alison Hale, Martha Swanson and her husband Clay, Dennis Newman, Bonnie Girvan and Drew Kacik. They were a beautiful sight in the front of Centre Church. These three trees were given from the 'tree farm' of Al and Karen Rydant. Tom Hariman assisted, decorating the railings and the sidewalk

For decades the Rydants supplied a big tree for the sanctuary. They hauled it over from their lot in West Chesterfield. It was decorated with lights and ornaments. They donated this until the powers that be outlawed live trees in public buildings. Since then a big artificial tree is erected in the sanctuary.

The story of how the Rydants got into the Christmas tree business is quite amusing...and when you corner Al, ask him about it. Something about making use of land that had once been a dairy farm. They sell trees at a very reasonable price (my neighbor spent \$100 at another tree growing place—that really shocked me!) The Rydant's trees sell for only \$18.

Their sense of humor shows up in the sign in front declaring that these trees are "Organic, Gluten Free, Cage Free, Non-GMO, 0-Cholesterol, and 0-Trans-fat!!" We hope they continue their annual Christmas tree tradition.

Marion Daley, Member Care



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 November 26.

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

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

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

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

NEW FRIENDS OF CENTRE CHURCH

Andrew Swift
185 Western Ave., Brattleboro, VT 05301
909.631.3403 / SWIFT927@yahoo.com

Nancy Waldron
316 Orchard St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
540.3057576 / nwaldron@gmail.com

Jean Brodie
631.786.3218 / jmbrodie5@gmail.com

BIRTHDAYS

- 11 Marion Daley
- 12 Scott Couper
- 13 Kathryn Kindopp
Adelaide Minott
- 14 Katherine Weeks
- 15 Christina Goodwin
- 16 Levi Healey
- 17 William McCarty
- 18 Dorothy Vander Meulen
Roger Daly
- 25 Ron Svec
- 26 Rennie Washburn
- 30 Holly Kennedy



Apologies to Roger Brown, whose birthday was not listed last month as December 31—it was, and to Roger Miller whose birthday was listed last month as December 31—it was not.

JANUARY 2023

**ZOOM events
*Holy Communion

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 NEW YEARS DAY 10 ⁰⁰ Worship*** ZOOM ONLY	2 OFFICE CLOSED	3 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 12 ³⁰ BAILA 6 ⁰⁰ Afghan Co-sponsorship Team	4 11 ⁰⁰ Staff meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 5 ⁰⁰ Contemplation Service 7 ⁰⁰ VT Humanities First Wednesday	5 1 ⁰⁰ Quilting ministry 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal	6 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	7
8 9 ⁰⁰ Book Discussion 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA 11 ³⁰ Fellowship Hour Scott vacation	9 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** Scott vacation	10 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes Scott vacation	11 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 5 ⁰⁰ Contemplation Service 6 ⁰⁰ Mission & Service Scott vacation	12 1 ⁰⁰ Quilting ministry 1 ⁰⁰ VIA meeting 3 ³⁰ BCC Board 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal Scott vacation	13 CB DEADLINE 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Rock Voices Scott vacation	14 Scott vacation
15 9 ⁰⁰ Book Discussion 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA 11 ³⁰ Fellowship Hour Scott vacation	16 MLK BIRTHDAY OFFICE CLOSED 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ⁰⁰ Compassionate Brattleboro 7 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology Scott vacation	17 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes Scott vacation	18 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 5 ⁰⁰ Contemplation Service 6 ⁰⁰ Church Council 6 ³⁰ NAACP Scott vacation	19 1 ⁰⁰ Quilting ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal Scott vacation	20 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	21
22 9 ⁰⁰ Book Discussion 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA 11 ³⁰ Fellowship Hour 5 ⁰⁰ SOS Meal	23 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 7 ⁰⁰ PubTheology	24 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	25 MAIL CB 11 ⁰⁰ Staff meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 5 ⁰⁰ Contemplation Service 6 ⁰⁰ WWAC Salon	26 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 1 ⁰⁰ Quilting ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 6 ⁰⁰ Scott @ CCV	27 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	28
29 9 ⁰⁰ Book Discussion 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA 11 ³⁰ Fellowship Hour El Salvador report	30 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 7 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology	31 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes				

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).

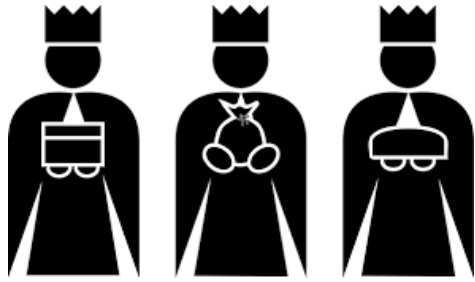
To the staff & congregation at Centre Congregational Church:
We wanted to extend a big "thank you" for donating to our DOVE food box. This year, you have provided food, cleaning supplies, and personal care items which have been on the wish list of many community members living with HIV/AIDS. Times are hard, but have been made a little bit easier through your generous donations, kindness, and steadfast love.
Thank you,
AIDS Project of Southern Vermont

JANUARY LECTIONARY TEXTS
Sunday, January 1 , 1st Sunday after Christmas Isa 63:7-9; Ps 148; Heb 2:10-18; Matt 2:13-23
Friday, January 6 , Epiphany Isa 60:1-6; Ps 72: 1-7, 10-14; Eph 3:1-12; Matt 2:1-12
Sunday, January 8 , 1st Sunday after Epiphany Isa 42:1-9; Ps 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matt 3:13-17
Sunday, January 15 , 2nd Sunday after Epiphany Isa 49:1-7; Ps 40:1-11; 1 Cor 1:1-9; John 1:29-42
Sunday, January 22 , 3rd Sunday after Epiphany Isa 9:1-4; Ps 27:1, 4-9; 1 Cor 1:10-18; Matt 4:12-23
Sunday, January 29 , 4th Sunday after Epiphany Mic 6:1-8; Ps 15; 1 Cor 1:18-31; Matt 5:1-12

 **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@centrechurchvt.org



JANUARY



2023

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CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Website: www.centrechurchvt.org

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

Current news/information in the larger UCC Community:

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

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