

CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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BRATTLEBORO, VT 05301



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Facebook: Centre Congregational Church-Brattleboro VT
Instagram: @centrechurchvt
Current news/information in the larger UCC Community:
VT Conference: www.vtcucc.org / National: www.ucc.org

MINISTER'S COLUMN, Scott Couper

Dear Friends in Christ:

The COVID-19 crisis has perhaps distracted us, causing us to forget that we are in the midst of Lent. There are so many schedule changes that are needing to be made. Our church, our homes, our vocations, and our social activities are all much different than they were a month ago. There seem to be so many anxieties that displace 'introspection' to the back-burner.

Yet, we must not forget that we are in the season of Lent. The three traditional Lenten practices for people of faith are:

1. Prayer
2. Fast
3. Serve (also, 'Give Alms')

Prayer: Following on the heels of David Stinson's Bible study investigating the Lord's Prayer, we began (but had to conclude) a study on the intersection of faith and science (*Lent Is Not Rocket Science: An Exploration of God, Creation, and the Cosmos*). It is a fascinating read. I love every devotional. I pray that you are also following the devotional booklet (copies are still for sale in the church office, \$5.00). 'Prayer' includes study, thought, and meditation. That we are not gathering for our weekly Bible study does not absolve us for taking personal responsibility for preparing ourselves for Easter.

Fast: It is customary during Lent to fast. Yet, fasting is forfeiting anything that we value. Sometimes it is food or drink, perhaps chocolate, or some other personal treat. We must keep in mind that the forfeiture of any one thing for the sole purpose of depriving us is *not* the point of fasting. The point of fasting is to remind us to focus or reflect on God. When we want that which we forfeit, the intention is that our attention be diverted from the world and re-focused on God. To fast is to remind oneself that ultimately, that which we crave is not the foundation of our existence, it is not that to which we belong, it is not that for which we live. Fasting is to remind us of that in which we should always be living, the heavenly kingdom. I pray you are all following our Lenten Carbon Fast that urges us to reorient our spirituality so that the natural world takes priority over our own wasteful, overconsuming, and destructive ways.

Serve: To be honest, I, and most other ministers and churches, have neglected this third aspect of Lent. If we pray to *God* and if we sacrifice like *Jesus* (as he did in the wilderness and on the cross), then the *Holy Spirit* inspires us to be compassionate, generous, and to serve others. That's the Trinity! We have an opportunity to give at Centre Church to assist our sexton, Emelio McCalla, legally reunite with his two sons in the United States, Jermall (age 12) and Tyreek (age 17). As part of my Lenten practice to serve, I have written a check and given it to our Administrator, Bruce, so that one of the boys' I-864 forms can be submitted. There are seven forms to be completed for the two boys, totaling \$3,285 needed. Jermall and Tyreek should be with their family and grandparents here in Vermont. Let us this Lent resolve to serve this beautiful family and thus invest in one of our own.

May you be well this Lent, despite the CONVID-19 pandemic.

Love always in Christ, Scott



From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

March has truly been a bizarre month in pretty much every possible way. Because of the Corona Virus, both choirs have come to an abrupt halt. The Children's Choir was on board to sing on March 15, but church was canceled. We had our first live streamed service on the 15th which had a few glitches, but seemingly was well received. It looks like we will be live streaming for a bit.

I continue to hold out hope that we will have the congregation present on Easter though it's difficult to predict whether or not that will be the case. We are in new territory and no one really knows how it will play out!

A special shout out goes to Peter Abell for his lovely banjo accompaniment to our communion anthem on March 1st. It was wonderful.

I hope to see you in church soon!

DEACONS

PENDING COUNCIL DECISION:

Sunday, April 12, Easter Sunrise Service will be on the front lawn of our beautiful church at 6:00am. We are hoping to have two surprises for the sunrise service. I hope the weather cooperates with us. The second Easter service will be at our regular time of 10:00am in the sanctuary.

We are introducing two new cards in the pew racks:

- One is a prayer card to be filled out asking for prayers for a family member or friend.
- The second card is for a guest to be filled out so that our minister can send a note and be in touch.

The Deacons will be putting together gift bags for all new members, one of the many ideas and suggestions from the Vitality Group.

April Harkness will be the Deacon in charge of the month of April!

My Best,

Carlene McCarty, *Deacons' chair*

CENTRE BELLS

April 2020

The newsletter of
**Centre Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ**

MISSION & SERVICE

How quickly things do change! April was to be our Bowl for Kids month, to set up teams from church and have some fun together. This, of course, is not happening. What is happening this month?

- Loaves & Fishes continues to serve meals on a take-out basis only. On Tuesday, March 17, 63 meals were served. The kitchen crew is down to three to allow safe distancing and Bridget's Kitchen and L&F are in close communication to keep the most marginalized cared for. L&F is excited to have received a grant for \$1,345 which was applied to the costs of the new Coolbot (air conditioner), where fresh foods are stored. L&F has also applied for a grant for their summer CSA food and hope to hear in the coming weeks.
- We continue to encourage you to donate to the 'Boys Fund' for Emelio's two sons' immigration paperwork. This process can take a year or more, so getting this paperwork going NOW is really important. All donations are going toward the \$3,585 needed for the paperwork. Again, if the paperwork can be submitted soon, these boys would hopefully be here by the end of this year or in 2021.

M&S is trying to stay up to date with what the needs are of our community, so please watch the *eNews* to learn ways that even in our isolation, we can be beacons of love and support to others. And please be in contact with us too!

Be Well. In love and faith to all,

Dennis Newman, Jenifer Ambler, Roger Brown, Bonnie Girvan, and Priscilla Svec

BRATTLEBORO CENTRE for CHILDREN

In response to the threat of COVID-19, BCC temporarily closed as of March 16. At the time of this writing, a date for reopen had not been set. Because BCC is housed in a busy downtown building, has staff, students, and parents who are immunocompromised or have respiratory concerns and has many families with siblings in the public schools (which announced a closure from March 16 until further notice) we felt it was more prudent to be safe. The staff of BCC went in on March 16 to clean the classrooms thoroughly. We are hoping by the time of this reading, we will be back in business and preparing for a spring work party to clean up the playground on April 25.

MEMBER CARE

It has been a couple of months since there was a written article about Member Care. During the time I was at Pine Heights, members drove there and met around the large table in the second floor lounge. A surprise came for me at the January meeting – a chocolate birthday cake!

It seems like we do the summertime lemonade refreshments served up by Member Care and then months whip around and time to make plans for the All-church Picnic. For years we have held this under the roof of the Kiwanis shelter at Living Memorial Park. This year it will be held as usual on the second Sunday of June, but right here on the front lawn of the church. More news about that in the May and June issues of *Centre Bells*.

We have a list of women who have signed up to make a meal to be delivered to ones who are sick at home. The contact person-of-the-month is listed in the bulletin and *eNews* each week. We are also trying to find drivers who can give those in need a ride to church on Sundays and to other church events. If you are willing and able, please contact Marion Daley: 802.387.5822 / medaley2@myfairpoint.net.

-Marion Daley, *Member Care chair*

CHURCH VITALITY TEAM

On Tuesday, March 17, our call-in with Paul Nickerson happened as usual on Zoom, which now is becoming the norm for meetings of all kinds! What was most talked about is how to stay connected as a congregation and to use this time to reach out, not isolate! Ideas were shared: calls from the pastor, phone tree for all congregants, moving Easter to the Summer, more mailings to those who don't have computers, etc. The main idea is to keep connecting! Connect with your neighbors, watch the service on Sundays and share it with others who may or may not be members at Centre Church, and set up meetings on Zoom.

In the coming month, we will be getting a Church Assessment to you, beginning with the Council and committee chairs. Please take the few minutes that it will take to complete this. It will be needed for Scott's call with Paul Nickerson in April and very helpful as one of the tools in looking forward for Centre Church. It also helps us think as individuals 'what can I do?'

"Lockdown"

by Brother Richard

Yes there is fear.
Yes there is isolation.
Yes there is panic buying.
Yes there is sickness.
Yes there is even death.
But,
They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise
You can hear the birds again.
They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
The sky is no longer thick with fumes
But blue and grey and clear.
They say that in the streets of Assisi
People are singing to each other
across the empty squares,
keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone
may hear the sounds of family around them.
They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.
Today a young woman I know
is busy spreading fliers with her number
through the neighbourhood
So that the elders may have someone to call on.
Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples
are preparing to welcome
and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary
All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting
All over the world people are looking at their neighbours
in a new way
All over the world people are waking up to a new reality
To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters.
To Love.
So we pray and we remember that
Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.
Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meanness.
Yes there is sickness.
But there does not have to be disease of the soul
Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.
Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
The birds are singing again
The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.
Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing

[from Lee and Carolyn Moore]

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 March 26.

Fran Burrows—Langdon Place
136A Arch St. #150, Keene, NH 03431

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

Phyllis Hickok
1520 Little Blue Stem Ct., Ames, IA 50014
515.337.1956

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

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

The Rev. Allen & Dorothy Vander Meulen
1 Harvest Circle #301, Lincoln, MA 01773

Sylvia Eaton
86 Brets Road, Brattleboro, VT 05301
802.254.6853

Alta Barber
13223 N 3937 Dr., Bartlesville, OK 74003

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

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

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

BIRTHDAYS

- 5 Nancy DiMauro
Caroline McCarthy
- 9 Cody Balin
- 11 Amy Balin
- 12 Kai Ming Pu
- 13 Sandy Daly
- 14 Deborah Brown
Judi Miller
- 17 Arnold Young
- 19 Bev Webster
Julie Ball
- 22 Meg Harriman
- 25 Alison Hale
- 27 Anne Doesburg
- 29 Susan Cay



The editor regrets the omission of
Milton Eaton—March 3
from last month's birthday list.

Best wishes from Centre Church!

The Buildings & Grounds Board would like to say **THANK YOU** to the volunteers who painted the hallway outside the church parlor a few weeks ago. Judging by the many compliments, your work was well-received and much appreciated.



"Pandemic", Lynn Ungar 3/11/20

What if you thought of it as the Jews consider the Sabbath - the most sacred of times? Cease from travel. Cease from buying and selling. Give up, just for now, on trying to make the world different than it is. Sing. Pray. Touch only those to whom you commit your life. Center down. And when your body has become still, reach out with your heart. Know that we are connected in ways that are terrifying and beautiful. (You could hardly deny it now.) Know that our lives are in one another's hands. (Surely, that has come clear.) Do not reach out your hands. Reach out your heart. Reach out your words. Reach out all the tendrils of compassion that move, invisibly, where we cannot touch. Promise this world your love—for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, so long as we all shall live. [sent by Compassionate Brattleboro]

APRIL 2020

**Holy Communion celebrated

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|------------------|
| | | | 1 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 5 ³⁰ AA Meeting | 2 | 3 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes (take-out only) 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting | 4 |
| 5 Palm Sunday 10 ⁰⁰ Worship (Facebook only) 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting | 6 | 7 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes (take-out only) 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting | 8 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 5 ³⁰ AA Meeting | 9 Maundy Thursday 7 ⁰⁰ Worship service (Facebook only) | 10 Good Friday 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes (take-out only) 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting | 11 Holy Saturday |
| 12 Easter Sunday 6 ⁰⁰ Sunrise service (Facebook only) 10 ⁰⁰ Worship (Facebook only) 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting | 13 6 ³⁰ AA District 8 | 14 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes (take-out only) 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting | 15 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 5 ³⁰ AA Meeting | 16 | 17 CB DEADLINE 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes (take-out only) 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting | 18 |
| 19 10 ⁰⁰ Worship (Facebook only) 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting | 20 | 21 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes (take-out only) 6 ⁰⁰ Church Council 6 ⁰⁰ AA meeting 7 ⁰⁰ Vitality call-in | 22 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 5 ³⁰ AA Meeting | 23 | 24 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes (take-out only) 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting | 25 |
| 26 10 ⁰⁰ Worship (Facebook only) 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting | 27 | 28 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes (take-out only) 6 ⁰⁰ AA meeting | 29 MAIL CB 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 5 ³⁰ AA Meeting | 30 | | |

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).



APRIL LECTIONARY TEXTS

Sunday, April 5, 6th Sunday in Lent / Palm Sunday
Ps 118:1-2, 19-29 (Liturgy of the Palms);
Matt 21:1-11 (Liturgy of the Passion);
Isa 50:4-9a; Ps 31:9-16; Phil 2:5-11; **Matt 26:14-27:66**
or **Matt 27:11-54**

Sunday, April 12, Easter
Acts 10:34-43 or Jer 31:1-6, Ps 118:1-2, 14-24; Col 3:1-4
or Acts 10:34-43; **John 20:1-18** or **Matt 28:1-10**

Sunday, April 19, 2nd Sunday of Easter
Acts 2:14a, 22-32; Ps 16; 1 Peter 1:3-9; **John 20:19-31**

Sunday, April 26, 3rd Sunday of Easter
Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Ps 116:1-4, 12-19; 1 Peter 1:17-23, **Luke 24:13-35**



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