

MINISTER'S COLUMN, Scott Couper

Dear Friends in Christ,

I greet you in Jesus the Christ's name in this new year of our Lord 2021!

This month, on January 18, our country will recognize the ministry of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. That now resigned Attorney General William Barr's stated in June 2020, "I don't think that the law enforcement system is systematically racist" signals that the work of Dr. King is still very much needed. That Chad Wolf, the then acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, stated that "systemic racism" was not an issue for law enforcement demonstrates that many still live in ignorance. That the national security adviser, Robert O'Brien stated in May 2020, "I don't think there's systemic racism in U.S. police forces" reveals that the people of our country are still very much in denial about its racist nature.

Many seek to deny the injustices, historic and present, of racism in our country. What is desired by the deniers is 'peace' and maintaining the status quo, even if it is at the expense of justice. Many seek to highlight, lament, and struggle against the injustices of racism in our country and they are willing to sacrifice peace for the achievement of justice, as there is really no peace without justice. So they are willing to loot, burn, violently retaliate, and destroy.

Martin Luther King, Jr., for good or for bad, offered a road whereby no longer would we accept the racism nor would we accept the denial that it exists in our nation. His leadership earned him the moniker of 'a radical' and 'a communist'. Even today, these are two insults are directed toward 'progressives'! Yet, Martin Luther King did not accept violence as a means by which to achieve justice. King advocated that there be disruption, that there be agitation, that there be 'tension' – without violence – to achieve justice peacefully.

In his "Letter from Birmingham City Jail", King wrote: "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I confess that I am not afraid of the word 'tension'. I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth".

It is my prayer that Centre Congregational Church will be willing to learn about the efforts in our own community that are being made to address the systemic racism of our nation and in our local law enforcement services (yes, in even our lovely, idyllic, and bucolic Vermont). Of course, no one is advocating for violence in Brattleboro. But, there are voices that do intend to create 'tension'. The acceptance and welcome of 'tension' is not about apologizing for being White. Rather the acceptance and welcome of 'tension' is about listening to BIPOC's (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) experiences and laments with attention and sympathy. The acceptance and welcome of tension is about recognizing that Whites are privileged by and benefit from their white-ness. The acceptance and welcome of tension is about standing in solidarity with the BIPOC community to halt and undo the strong vestiges of racism that have been with our country since (and before) its founding.

Long-live the ministry of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, one of our country's greatest *Christian* prophets!

CENTRE BELLS

January 2021

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



Council Chair, LYNN HERZOG

We discussed a variety of issues in Council this month, as we do every month. They are all detailed in the minutes available through the church office. I would like to highlight the Financial Report. As usual, we spent more than we earned by \$4000 this month. That includes \$2800 of pledges that were expected but not received. So far this year we have taken \$30,000 from our endowment. It would have been \$60,000, if not for the \$30,000 we received from the Paycheck Protection Program. Fortunately, our endowment fund is relatively high, thanks to the vagaries of the stock market. But that could change in a moment. So, please continue your financial support of the church, and send in your pledge for next year.

It is always heartening to hear the reports of the work being done in various committees. This month we enjoyed a report from Bob Pu on the important and inspirational work being undertaken by the Long-Range Planning Team, which you can read about elsewhere in *Centre Bells*.

We are in a difficult time – trying to feel the hope and joy of Advent and Christmas, while watching the spread of sickness and death from COVID-19. We pray that the church will continue caring for others and that God will guide us to a better New Year.

From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

Here it is, almost 2021, and I'm sure hoping we will begin to see an end to the COVID virus during this next year. I am also hopeful I will see my choirs again IN PERSON during this new year.

Meanwhile, I'd like to thank several folks who agreed to do an anthem (either vocal or instrumental) during the Advent season. Thanks go to Peter Abell, Jenifer Ambler, Alison Hale, Holly Kennedy, Matt Kennedy, Sue Rowell, and Priscilla Svec.

These folk were willing to come into the sanctuary to be recorded (vocal soloists using a shield) or to record themselves at home (instrumental). It was wonderful to have this special music for Christmas.

It was also nice to see Scott preaching in the sanctuary, the Advent candles being lit by several families along with a beautiful background of various decorations put up by the deacons and others. Even though we couldn't be present in person, I think what we did and what we are doing is the next best thing to being there.

Here's hoping 2021 will be filled with even MORE music!

DEACONS

Ordinarily, the season of Advent is one of the busiest times for the Deacons. Happy chatter fills the sanctuary as we gather to lug the boxes of greens, the candles and the creches, the lights and the Giving Tree, down from where they have lain in storage on the upper floor. The stately Advent wreath stand is positioned on the chancel, tall new candles placed in the sockets to await a flame. Starry blue paraments are hung on pulpit and lectern, and the green Ordinary Time banner, the work of our dear Joanne MacLean, is replaced by an exultant angel. The beloved figures of Mary and Joseph, shepherds and kings, oxen and donkey, are gently unwrapped from their tissue paper swaddling and carefully placed in reverent position within and around the creche.

This has been no ordinary year, of course. Yet, candles, symbols of hope and promise, were placed on the sanctuary window ledges. The venerable wooden creche, its plaster figures chipped and worn and revealing years of quiet service, again held center stage on the chancel. The deep greens and brilliant reds of wreaths, ribbons and poinsettias echoed our glowing stained glass windows. And even if we could not gather to uplift our voices, each week beloved carols pealed gloriously from the organ.

We are grateful that modern technology has provided us a means to worship safely during this precarious time. We were blessed by the Day family, the Healey family, James Cera and the Davenport family as they graciously shared their time in the lighting of the Advent candles. And we are thankful for Mary, our gifted and tireless music director, for Reverend Scott's words of inspiration, and for Jenifer, whose technical know-how continues to, as they say at the Academy Awards, "make it all possible".

January is the month of Epiphany, or "manifestation". May we of Centre Church serve as manifestations of hope, joy, faith, love, and confidence, in the coming New Year.

-Heidi Mario

MISSION & SERVICE

January 10 marks the day for our Second Sunday offering. We will honor *Groundworks Collaborative* with our offering. Thank you for your generous donations to this very important organization in our community.

BRATTLEBORO CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

BCC will enter the new year with new classrooms for a few children. A mid-year move is made when we have space available and children of the right ages. We've said 'good-bye' to a couple families who had to move out of the area, so we have openings for more new children too--ages of infants up to 18 months and also for 3 and 4 year olds. If you know of anyone with young children or new babies, let them know they can call Nan Mann, Director of BCC, to arrange for a virtual tour and apply for part or full time care. We also just completed our annual appeal and are putting those funds toward helping pay for extra expenses due to COVID-19. An increase in both cost and usage of PPE and other supplies has put a strain on our budget and we are very grateful for all the contributions we have received to date. We believe we will not only survive this pandemic but be stronger because we survived it.

Thank you all for your generous support!

-Respectfully submitted, Nan Mann



LOAVES & FISHES

Gratitude and an Opportunity

During these never-ending days of COVID, Loaves & Fishes has faithfully joined in with Groundworks and Everyone Eats to provide food for those who have temporary lodging in the neighboring hotels. Often these meals have stretched themselves to include dinner and other edible support. Just recently the Cares Act sent a sizable check to Loaves & Fishes to reimburse us for the paper products used in abundance for those take-out meals. The last check totaled \$4695.55 and included payment for May Hnath, who cleans both the kitchen and Memorial Hall. More checks for paper products and May's wages are expected in the coming months. We are grateful.

An opportunity for service is available; what a fine opportunity this appears to be. The L&F Steering Committee is looking for a Treasurer to handle the varied financial tasks of our work. Mary Ellen Bixby is retiring, and she has pledged to support and mentor anyone from our church who would assume the responsibility beginning in late January. The 'electronic checkbook' will travel with new Treasurer if a computer is needed; it's an old MacBook with Quicken installed.

The Treasurer's tasks include receiving and depositing checks and donations, thanking those who make those donations, assisting in grant writing, paying bills, paying May Hnath for her cleaning services, and serving on the L&F Advisory Committee.

Please, someone from our church step forward; this is a wonderful and interesting way to serve Loaves & Fishes. Contact Dennis Newman: 802.254.6184 / dnfinesse@outlook.com, Priscilla Svec: 802.387.2373 / psvec48@yahoo.com, or Mary Ellen Bixby: 802.257.1068 / mebixby@comcast.net if interested.

-Mary Ellen Bixby

LONG-RANGE PLANNING TEAM (LRPT)

The Long-Range Planning Team (LRPT) was established shortly after our annual meeting on September 13, 2020, and is composed of the following individuals:

Bob Pu – chair, Bonnie Girvan – vice chair, Jenifer Ambler, Jack Bixby, Scott Couper, Matt Deen, April Harkness, Holly Kennedy, Kate Maisner, Margo Neale, Al Rydant, and Karen Rydant

The goal of the LRPT is to engage in a year-long vision/discernment process to determine how God is calling Centre Church into the future. We are being guided in this process by The Rev. Paul Nickerson of Nickerson Coaching, who has thirty years of experience as a minister, regional denominational leader, and church consultant. We will be having monthly online ZOOM counseling sessions with Paul. Once the pandemic crisis is behind us, Paul will visit Centre Church for a 3-day weekend, preach in worship, socialize with the congregation, observe and analyze the church physical plant and governance, and participate in a series of workshops with members of the congregation.

As preparation for our task we have been reviewing the following scripture passages:

Genesis 15:1-6; Exodus 3:1-12; I Kings 19:11-18; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 17:1-8; Luke 24:13-16, 28-34; Acts 8:26-40; Acts 16:6-10

Members and friends of the congregation are encouraged to review these passages as we anticipate Scott will be referring to them in future sermons.

MEMBER CARE

Greetings from deep in the heart of Texas!

I've submitted an article to *Centre Bells* for over two decades - but this is the first time from out of the state of Vermont.

I arrived here in early November before our older son returned to Afghanistan for three months. He is a helicopter flight instructor employed by the US Department of State.

This is my first no-snow Christmas since years of California living in the early 1960s. On my Samsung tablet I was able to see pictures of the Christmas tree being set-up on the front lawn of the church. Karen and Al Rydant donated that tree as they have in many past years.

It brought to my mind the tale written in Dot Vander Meulen's book *This Jewel on Main Street* of that huge tree that took up much of the front lawn. It had been purposely planted long ago by a church member who never wanted the front lawn to become a parking lot!

The Member Care person for the month of January is Judi Miller. Because of the Corona Virus we have not met as a group since early March. Meeting by ZOOM is not a reality as only half of our members have computers. The telephone is our most used method of communication.

Hurrah for Alexander Graham Bell!

-Marion Daley, *chair Member Care*

PEOPLE

B I R T H D A Y S

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



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 house-bound as of December 26.

Alta Barber

13223 N 3937 Dr., Bartlesville, OK 74003

Fran Burrows—Langdon Place

136A Arch St. #150, Keene, NH 03431

Gary Carrier—Dirigo Pines

c/o Allison Carrier Lucy

16 Page Place, Orono, ME 04473

207.944.0030

Sylvia Eaton

86 Brets Road, Brattleboro, VT 05301

802.254.6853

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

Bob & Dee 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

The Rev. Allen Vander Meulen

1 Harvest Circle #301, Lincoln, MA 01773

802.380.0735

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

NEW FRIENDS OF CENTRE CHURCH

Martha Swanson

35 Estey Circle

Brattleboro, VT 05301

860.716.4957 / mfswan@comcast.net

Gary Stroud

PO Box 6273

Brattleboro, VT 05302

802.490.4878 / garycs2004@gmail.com

JANUARY 2021

*ZOOM events
**Holy Communion

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 New Years Day OFFICE CLOSED	2
3 10 ⁰⁰ Worship zoom 12 ⁰⁰ Deacons' meeting	4 4 ⁰⁰ BCC Board	5 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	6 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 7 ⁰⁰ First Wednesday	7 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional* 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion* 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	8 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 12 ³⁰ L&F Steering Committee	9
10 10 ⁰⁰ Worship zoom	11	12 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 6 ⁰⁰ Long Range Planning Team	13 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ Mission & Service	14 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional* 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion* 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	15 CB DEADLINE 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	16
17 10 ⁰⁰ Worship zoom	18 MLK Birthday OFFICE CLOSED 1 ⁰⁰ Compassionate Brattleboro	19 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	20 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ Church Council	21 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional* 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion* 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	22 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	23
24 10 ⁰⁰ Worship zoom	25	26 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	27 MAIL CB 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting	28 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional* 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion* 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	29 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	30
31 10 ⁰⁰ Worship zoom						

SCOTT'S SERMONS can be accessed at the church website: www.centrechurhvermont.org -or- facebook page: <http://www.centrechurhvermont.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 CONTACT INFORMATION

Mary Robertson
107 Elliot St. #309
Brattleboro, VT 05301

Becky Day
167 Main Street #1
Brattleboro, VT 05301
802.380.8639

Haley Marcil
186 Maple St.
Brattleboro, VT 05301

JANUARY LECTIONARY TEXTS

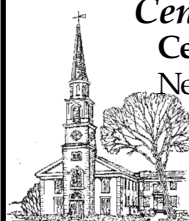
Sunday, January 3, 2nd Sunday after Christmas
Jer 31:7-14 or *Sirach* 24:1-12; Ps 147:12-20 or
Wisd of Sol 10:15-21; Eph 1:3-14; **Jn 1:(1-9), 10-18**

Sunday, January 10, 1st Sunday after Epiphany
Gen 1:1-5; **Ps 29**; Acts 19:1-7; Mk 1:4-11

Sunday, January 17, 2nd Sunday after Epiphany
1 Sam 3:1-10, (11-20); **Ps 139:1-6, 13-18**;
1 Cor 6:12-20; Jn 1:43-51

Sunday, +January 24, 3rd Sunday after Epiphany
Jon 3:1-5, 10; Ps 62:5-12; 1 Cor 7:29-31; **Mk 1:14-20**

Sunday, January 31, 4th Sunday after Epiphany
Deut 18:15-20; Ps 111; 1 Cor 8:1-13; **Mk 1:21-28**



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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@centrechurhvt.org

JANUARY



2021

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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

193 Main Street Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
centrechurch@centrechurchvt.org

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 / 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