

CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
193 Main Street Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
centrechurch@centrechurchvt.org
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FEBRUARY



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Financial Secretary
Music Director
Substitute Music Director
Sexton
Church Administrator
Council Chair / Vice-Chair
Treasurer / Clerk

CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
193 Main Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301
Office Hours: M - F: 8:30am - 12:30pm
Church Office: (802) 254-4730 / centrechurch@centrechurchvt.org
Website: www.centrechurchvt.org
Facebook: Centre Congregational Church-Brattleboro, VT / Kidz Club at Centre Church

INTERIM MINISTER'S COLUMN, Rev. Bert Marshall

Leaning Toward Lent

I was thinking: how odd that Jesus would go into the wilderness to encounter temptation. Aren't we most sorely tested when we are immersed in the pressure cooker of our crowded daily lives? How odd, indeed, that anyone would imagine temptation as a wilderness experience in a literal sense. In Mark's Gospel, the Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness. In Matthew, the Spirit *leads* him there. In Luke's account, Jesus is tempted for forty days by the devil; in Matthew, he fasts for forty days and *then* the tempter appears. Mark says only that he was tempted and was with the wild beasts and the angels waited on him. Matthew and Luke each tell of a three-pronged temptation having to do with turning stones to bread, having power over the kingdoms of the world, and a dare to risk death in order to lure God to the rescue (no wild beasts or angels here). John's Gospel will have nothing to do with any of this, of course, because Jesus is the divine, pre-existing Logos, the Word made flesh. It must have seemed ludicrous to John that Jesus would waste his time being tempted, so in the Fourth Gospel, after his encounter with the Baptist, Jesus goes to a wedding at Cana instead.

I was saying: how odd that the Gospel writers take Jesus away from the real world to be tempted. In our very real world, it seems we think of it in exactly the opposite way. Wilderness experience is most commonly an escape from the trials and tribulations of the daily grind. We go to the wilderness to renew and refresh, to go on retreat, to leave behind for a time the burdens of the everyday world. Or maybe I've been going to the wrong wilderness. Nevertheless, the temptations Jesus confronts in the wilderness are in fact temptations of and about living in the world. In Matthew and Luke, the devil has to transport Jesus back into the world in order to tempt him with fame and power. Some have suggested that these stories are formalized accounts of some sort of initiation ritual that Jesus went through in the company of the Essenes or some other desert sect. The Gospel temptations of Jesus seem more suited to the crowded streets and byways of human societies, rather than the remote environs of a wilderness.

On the other hand, we might say that it is in the wilderness places of our lives where we tend to get ourselves into trouble. It may be that we are most vulnerable when we become isolated from friends and loved ones, when we attempt to make all our choices and decisions entirely on our own without the counsel of those who are close to us. I wonder if the purpose of these temptation stories is not to portray Jesus as victorious over the devil's testing, but rather to show him as a vulnerable being, like us, who in the isolation of a wilderness experience struggled with some of the most alluring desires of human existence. Like us. If Jesus did *not* struggle at all with any of the "temptations" of human life, then we might ask: what was the point? What was God's point?

One more thing: in each of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke), the wilderness temptation stories are followed immediately by the calling of disciples and the beginning of Jesus' public ministry – a ministry characterized by his radical teachings on love, nonviolence, forgiveness and compassion; his healing of the sick; his confrontations with both the religious and political leaders of his time; and his steadfast solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. Jesus came back from the wilderness and joined the insurgents, those who resisted the brutal Roman occupation. He sided with the victims. He never aligned himself with the imperial powers; he was always part of the resistance against them. It cost him his life. He said, "Pick up a cross and follow me." Ah, Lent! The cost of discipleship stares us in the face, even as the joy of faithfulness awaits us in every moment, in every step we take.

Rev. Bert



CENTRE BELLS

The Newsletter of
Centre Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
February 2016



The desert

A further word from your Interim Minister:

February marks my one-year anniversary as your Interim Minister. I have to say it's been a very good year. I think we've done some good work, made some good progress, done some good ministry together. It's been a great joy and a wonderful gift for me to be with you all. There's so much to love about Centre Church, so much history, so much promise and potential, so many reasons to be excited about the present and hopeful about the future. As my second year begins, I note that the cottage meeting process is nearly complete. About 60 members of our congregation have participated thus far, and we will hold one or two more meetings so that everyone can have an opportunity to share their words of wisdom. As this stage comes to a conclusion, it is time to begin forming a **Pastoral Search Committee**. This is a very important task. I have a template for gathering a committee, with criteria that should be met by those who are selected to serve on it. These will be made available to the church council, and disseminated widely throughout the congregation. I will guide us through this process, but once the committee is formed it will then take the lead in creating a new church profile and setting the stage for receiving candidates. This step takes time and cannot be rushed. I hope you will all include the church in your prayers going forward. —Rev. Bert

From Council Chair, BILL McCARTY
This Jewel on Main Street

How lucky we are to have this "Jewel" and to be able to utilize it for our Church Services, events, and private moments. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to all those Centre Church Members who preceded us in the past 200 years so that we may enjoy this sacred place.

I am sure by now you have seen *This Jewel on Main Street*, Centre Church's past 200 years in one volume. A sincere appreciation and congratulations to Dot Vander Meulen for her work and devotion in preparing this wonderful book.

The 200th Bicentennial Year has begun and the many events will be forthcoming. All are invited to enjoy and participate in the celebrations. Workers are needed, so please join us in making this an outstanding 200th Birthday!

A special "thank you" to Rennie Washburn, who is retiring as our Treasurer. She has devoted many long hours of work. And a welcome to Holly Kennedy, who will be assuming the Treasurer's tasks. Many thanks Holly!

It is hoped that we can begin the selection and organization of the Settled Pastor Search Committee after the Financial Meeting. This is a very important Committee, and Council is looking for people who desire to serve on it. Stay tuned for more information and applications.

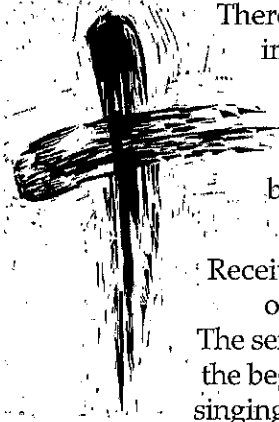
I am looking forward to this 200th year and know it will be a success as we continue to grow and revitalize Centre Church.

See you all at the Celebrations!



CHURCH LIFE

ASH WEDNESDAY at CENTRE CHURCH

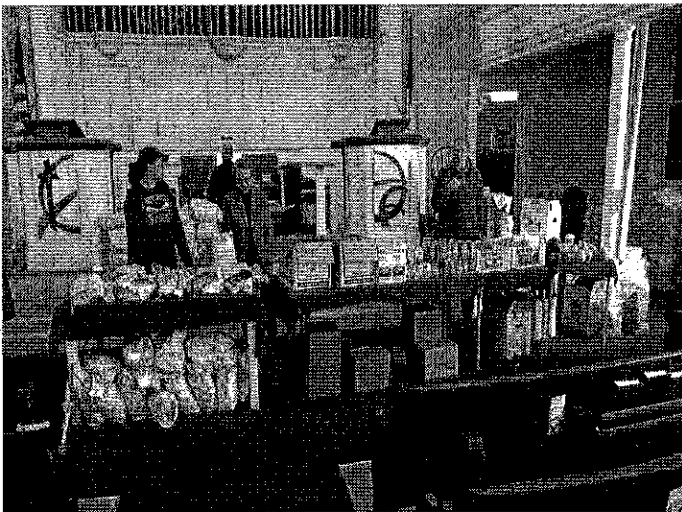


There will be a service for the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday **February 10** at Centre Church beginning at 7:00 pm.

All are welcome!
Receiving ashes is not required of those in attendance.
The service is also meant to mark the beginning of Lent with some singing, scripture, and quiet time.

GROUNDWORKS & CENTRE CHURCH

Centre Congregational Church partnered with Groundworks Collaborative last November and December by being the site for their Thanksgiving turkey and Christmas ham distributions. Tables were set up in the sanctuary for two days prior to each of these holidays, and a steady stream of folks from town came in to receive their holiday dinner fixings. Numerous volunteers and recipients commented on the beauty of our sanctuary, and thanked us for providing the space for this important local service. Many thanks to our Mission & Service team, and our Deacons, who collaborated to make this possible and who supported these efforts each time! Going forward we have all agreed that this is an important partnership in our community, and we will continue to work together to serve the neediest among us. As a gesture of support and solidarity, our *Christmas Eve offering* was donated to Groundworks, along with a prior designated offering, which brought the total gift to \$1,500! Thanks to everyone for your generosity, and for opening our doors to those in need!



BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Bicentennial February Event

As we continue to celebrate Centre Church's Bicentennial, please bring your friends, neighbors, and family to our Community Pancake Supper on **Tuesday, February 9** (Shrove Tuesday) at 5:30-7:00pm in Memorial Hall. Dixieland music will be provided by the West River Wild Cats. A gathering of new timers and old timers expect to make up a batch of pancakes and other vittles that will make your mouth water and encourage you to celebrate our first 200 years...but won't make you fat...even though it's "Fat Tuesday." It will be a fun, full, filling occasion. Don't miss it. Donations will be welcome!

BOARD FOR MEMBER CARE

Why Anniversaries Count

It was a perfect way to kick off our bi-centennial year--a catered luncheon in the Fireside Parlor prepared by members of the bicentennial and fund raising committees. It was the official recognition of the work of author Dorothy Vander Meulen and the book *This Jewel on Main Street*. Co-chair of the bicentennial committee, Judy Palmer, commended her for her work and presented her with a small token of appreciation. Dorothy then thanked others for their help. She read one passage from the book about her own observations of changes in the church service from the time she was a little girl until now. Dot shared what inspired her to undertake such a big research and writing project and spoke of the love and support of other church members and her family. Her husband, Allen Vander Meulen II was there, along with their son Allen Vander Meulen III and their youngest grandson Allen Vander Meulen IV.

I had read much of the material in the early drafts. There were many changes, revisions additions and deletions. I was impressed with the tiniest bit of information that Dot would pursue in her desire for accuracy—all the while knowing that there would be small bits and pieces that could never be completely verified---after all it is a history book!

Even though I had read most of it in draft form before, I opened the book as if it were brand new to me, and it was! The photos in color, the carefully placed illustrations by Heidi Mario, and the long sought after perfect cover photo, the input from members stating what Centre Church has meant to them. Even the parts I contributed looked better in print!

This year of celebrating the church's 200th anniversary gives us a chance to take stock---to appreciate all the church has meant in the past, to celebrate its place on Main Street today to think about who we are, what we need, and what are our goals as we look ahead.

It's been decades since I studied Shakespeare, but the Bard wrote "What's past is prologue." When I was 20 years old this didn't make sense,---now it does. So the celebration of 200 years of our history can also be a way of looking ahead.

That's why anniversaries count.

I look forward to the many special events planned for this year 2016. We hope that you will be able to attend/ participate in many of them. And if you haven't purchased the book *This Jewel on Main Street* put that on your Must Do List

-Marion Daley

BOARD FOR MISSION & SERVICE

The Cabanitas Connection

Just before Christmas, Dr. Jenifer Ambler, with Kate Maisner and Darren Weeks, made yet another trip to Cabanitas, a neighborhood in the city of Apopa in El Salvador. Since 1997 she and many others from this area have been traveling to Cabanitas almost every year with various groups and with various missions. As a member of Rotary in Brattleboro, she, Peter Abell and Dart Everett of Centre Church were part of the team that established Pure Water for the World, a non-profit devoted to solving the problem of unsafe drinking water in developing countries. She was part of the Sight and Bite Team, a group of local doctors that have been making almost annual visits to Cabanitas to offer free optometric and dental care. Currently, she represented Centre Congregational Church at a Sister Parish meeting celebrating many church partnerships, in this case a partnership with a small congregation in Cabanitas called Cristo Redentor, led by Reverend Francisco Aquilar.

On her semi-annual trips to Cabanitas, Dr. Ambler has been joined by many members of Centre Congregational Church as well as people from the Brattleboro community at large. Over time, more than 80 people from the Brattleboro area have visited Cabanitas, some many times. Some years, the visits have been simple "get acquainted" visits characterized by home visits, shared meals, games and worship. Other years the visits have been more mission related, bringing much needed health care, material goods, and money to Cristo Redentor. The result has been a lively and enriching friendship between Cristo Redentor in Cabanitas and Centre Congregational Church in Brattleboro.

On her most recent visit to Cabanitas, Dr. Ambler carried funds from Centre Church to apply to Luz del Mundo, a scholarship program that pays school fees for 18-25 students each year. She also helped to pay for repairs to the car Rev. Aquilar needs to travel between several parishes where he oversees youth activities. Finally, but perhaps most importantly she took cards and letters from Centre Congregational Church to friends in Cabanitas.

Recently, life in Cabanitas has taken on a darker hue that reflects current issues of poverty and violence in Central America. On her last visit, the group visited the family of a five year old girl who was killed in a shoot-out between local gangs. Just recently members of the sister parish group received an e-mail

from Rev. Aquilar reporting a brutal assault on one of his neighbors in Cabanitas. People are often afraid to report these incidents to the police.

On a somewhat hopeful note, Dr. Ambler attended a meeting of sister parish representatives and officers of multiple Lutheran Synods when she was in El Salvador. A group of Lutheran and Evangelical clergy had been in dialogue with several local gangs and, the same week as the meeting, leaders of three gangs came forward to declare a truce and to lay down their arms. In geopolitical terms, neither the death of a child nor the truce declared by three gangs will change what seems to be an ongoing war over drugs, money and territory in Central America but both can help us understand the depth of the challenges our friends in Cabanitas are facing.

Meantime, Dr. Ambler and others are planning another trip to Canbanitas later this year. They will go with material goods, financial support, a huge sense of commitment to the friends they have come to know well. It takes courage but you might want to join them on this trip.



CARRY ME HOME is now locating its packing and shipping hub on the stage of Centre Church's Memorial Hall. Coordinated by local resident, Vedrana Greateorex, it is a rapidly growing relief effort to aid Syrian refugees who have arrived in Eastern Europe and are desperately in need of winter clothing and other survival items. Items currently being collected are baby carriers, children's jackets, lined pants (no bibs), socks, snow boots, scarves, gloves, hats, small stuffed animals, toy cars, adult warm shoes, and adult new socks. These items can be brought to Centre Church, boxed or bagged for convenient handling. DONATIONS for shipping costs can be made (and are critically important!) through:

- PayPal at carrymehomecampaign@gmail.com
- by check to Vedrana Greateorex (address upon request) or
- direct to the volunteers of the organization **Are You Syrious**, based in Croatia, at generosity.com/carrymehome.

Local donations are being held and processed through a designated account at Brattleboro Savings & Loan. If you'd like to volunteer to help with sorting and packing, please feel welcomed to come to the church on Monday or Friday mornings at 10:00am.

Thanks to everyone!

The *Special Offerings* for February will be shared between the *Carry Me Home* project (see Bert's article elsewhere in this issue) and *Groundworks Collaborative*. The latter is a 2015 merger of the Brattleboro Area Drop In Center and Morningside Shelter and offers ongoing support to individuals and families facing housing and food insecurities in the greater Brattleboro area.

Thanksgiving and Christmas turkeys... Bert reports favorable community feedback on Centre Church's partnership with Groundworks Collaborative as the central distribution site for .

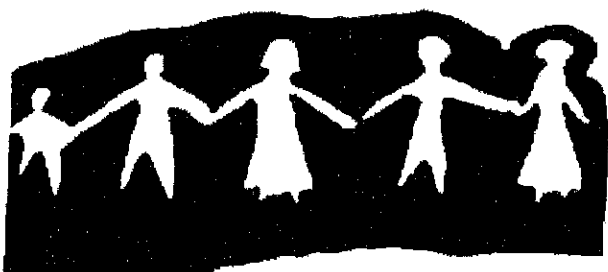
Reminder: Gloria Vicente, our UCC mission worker in Guatemala, will be visiting New England April 16-30, and Centre Church during part of that time. Dee and Bob Keller are looking for volunteers to transport and/or host her during that time.

PEACE & JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Everyone is invited to the
MOMENT for PEACE,
Friday, February 5, 5:30-6:00PM,
Centre Church Parlor

This month Sheila Garrett will lead the meditation. She spent 3 1/2 months walking for New England to Georgia this past summer and fall, occasionally with a friend and twice with a Buddhist group, but mostly by herself. When asked why, she said: "...for the earth and all its beings, including you." She walked on secondary roads and stayed mostly with Quakers. Her final destination was Koinonia Farm and School for the Americas Watch vigil in Fort Benning.

Sheila is a member of Putney Friends Meeting and lives in Putney. She is a long-time activist, artist and gardner/grandmother.



BOARD FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION @ CENTRE CHURCH

Sunday School every Sunday from 9:00 to 9:45 for ages 4+; nursery care is provided during this time for ages 0-4.

Faith in Action during the worship service for ages 5+; nursery care provided during the service for ages 0-5. Every Sunday except Communion Sunday, the 1st Sunday of the month.

ADULT EDUCATION OFFERINGS

BOOK STUDY: an adult group book study currently reading *Rumi: The Life and Work of the Great Sufi Poet* by Annemarie Schimmel.
Sunday mornings, 9:00-10:00AM

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS: Led by the Rev. Sandy Daly, a group of adults gather in Chesterfield, NH at Hallelujah Farm to discuss how and where God is moving in our lives and what we are being called to be and do. Directions to Hallelujah Farm are in the church office.
Fourth Monday of each Month, 7:00-8:30PM



WOMEN'S SPIRIT.....

Please join us for reading and discussion each **Thursday at 4:30** in the library.

We're beginning a new book:

CONVICTIONS (How I Learned What Matters Most), by Marcus J. Borg. It's believed that this was the last book he wrote before his recent death. All women are invited to join in on the spirited conversations.

ORDER *This Jewel on Main Street*

The history of Centre Congregational Church published for our bicentennial year, became available for purchase at the December Christmas Craft Fair. Since then they have been available for sale every Sunday during coffee hour.

For those who do not intend to be in the area and wish to buy a copy of this remarkable book, you may purchase it by sending a check for \$20.00 made out to Centre Church. This covers the \$15.00 book and shipping. Please send your orders to:

Marion Daley
PO Box 445
Putney VT 05346

Dot Vander Meulen will be happy to autograph the book before they are packed and mailed to you

UCC CONFERENCE NEWS

Here is what we are doing and why

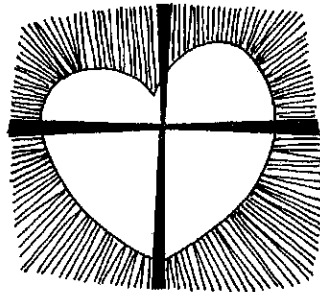
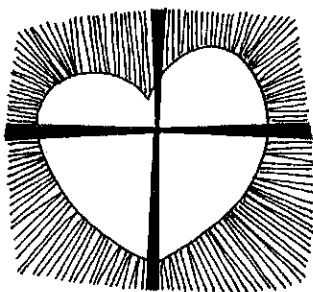
Here are some of the statistics that we know about the UCC. As of December 31, 2014

- we have 5,062 congregations and 943,521 members in the United States.
- Our average church size is 191 members.
- The average UCC worship attendance size is 79.
- 70% of UCC congregations are located within population areas of less than 50,000.
- Over 17% of churches share their buildings with another worshipping congregation
- For the 4.5% of UCC congregations that reported holding a weekly worship service in a language other than English, the following languages were named more than once: Spanish, Korean, Samoan, Marshallese, German, Hungarian, and Hawaiian.

These statistics are now a year old now. You should know that the collection of Church Data is the data that is used to determine these and other things about who we are as a denomination and as a Conference.

Information from Church Data is used in the UCC National Directory for both Churches and Ministers. Church Data is used for the "Find a Church" map, so people who want a UCC church can find yours. Church Data provides data used for discerning and responding to trends in the UCC.

It is used to determine the number of Synod delegates the Vermont Conference is allowed, who to give thanks to for supporting 5 for 5, and the correct amount for the per capita dues. It allows the conference to show you an 11 year history of membership and giving to help determine trends and do long range planning. This same 11 year report is a part of a congregation's search for a new minister and for churches applying for Church Building and Loan Fund or the Cornerstone Fund.



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 January 25th.

JEANNE RUETER

Thompson House, 80 Maple St.,
Brattleboro, VT 05301 254-4977

NANCY CLARKE / BABS DUNN

Holton Home, 158 Western Ave.,
Brattleboro, VT 05301 254-5005

WANDA GODFREY

Vernon Hall, 13 Greenway Dr.,
Vernon, VT 05354 254-2444

PHYLLIS HICKOK

1520 Little Blue Stem Ct.
Ames, IA 50014 (515) 292-9196

ROBERT & JANE REED

461 Grafton Rd., #201
Townshend, VT 05350 (802) 221-4213

MARJORIE SPRAGUE

Nason Center, Room 221
Breckenridge Village, 36859 Ridge Road
Willoughby Ohio 44094 (440) 497-5208

DON STOCKWELL

Vernon Green, 61 Greenway Dr.,
Vernon, VT 05354 254-6041

Please let Bruce know if we've missed someone

This past Sunday, January 10th, a most wonderful event happened at church. Two things happened during a reception held after the church service. Our 200th anniversary celebration had its kick off event with a delicious lunch and a well attended gathering of our church family. It was also where I was honored as author of our church History, *This Jewel on Main Street*.

I want to thank the members of the Bicentennial Committee and the Fund Raising Committee who made this event so very special. I know that a lot of work and planning went into making it such a success. I have never felt so honored and loved as I was that day. This memorable experience reinforces my feelings for this beautiful church of ours and its' members. I felt truly loved and I want you all to know that I cherish you in return. Thank you, each and everyone!

-Dot Vander Meulen

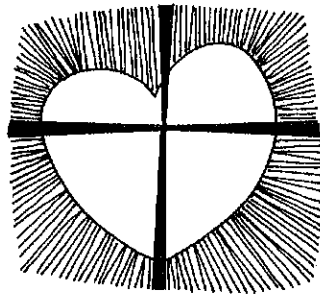
FEBRUARY 2016

*Holy Communion celebrated

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	3	4 9 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Woman Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	5 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 5 ³⁰ Moment for Peace 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	6
7 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study/ Sunday School 10 ⁰⁰ Worship* 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 2 ⁰⁰ BMC concert 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	8 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl 7 ³⁰ AA District 8	9 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 5 ³⁰ Pancake Supper 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	10 <i>ASH WEDNESDAY</i> 7 ⁰⁰ Worship	11 9 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Woman Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	12 <i>CENTRE BELLS DEADLINE</i> 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	13
14 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study/ Sunday School 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FIA 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	15 <i>PRESIDENTS' DAY OFFICE CLOSED</i> 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl 5 ⁰⁰ Overflow Shelter	16 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 6 ³⁰ Meeting Night 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	17 12 ⁰⁰ BAIL 6 ¹⁵ Race Dialogue 6 ³⁰ Church Council	18 9 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Woman Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	19 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	20
21 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study/ Sunday School 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FIA 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	22 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl 7 ⁰⁰ Spiritual Conversations	23 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 3 ³⁰ Fundraising 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	24 <i>MAIL CENTRE BELLS</i>	25 9 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Woman Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	26 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	27 7 ³⁰ BMC Concert
28 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study/ Sunday School 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FIA 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	29 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl					

BIRTHDAYS

- 9 Ron Pollard
- 17 Nan Mann
- 20 Dart Everett
Emily Randrup
- 22 Stephen Brown
- 26 Rennie Washburn
- 27 Mary Ann Donovan



NATIONAL UCC NEWS The national United Church of Christ has a home web site: <http://www.ucc.org> which covers many topics and directories. It also has web sites for several different publications such as "UCC Congregational Vitality" newsletter. There's a weekly "Keeping You Posted" e-zine to which anyone with a computer may subscribe free, full of UCC news. *God is Still Speaking* is an 88-page, oversize, full-color magazine "Still Speaking" to be published twice annually in spring and fall. Order online at UCC.org/magazine.

OFFICE SPACE FOR RENT

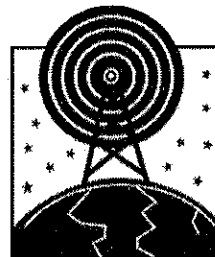
Centre Church has THREE separate and private offices available, ranging in size from 200 to 500 square feet, which can be rented individually or in combination. Reasonable rent includes heat and electricity, and shared bathrooms. For more information and to view the space, contact the church office at: 254-4730 / centrechurch@centrechurchvt.org

YOU CAN STILL ORDER PAVERS

Don't forget, you can still order pavers for the front walkway. These benefit the Capital Campaign, and are a fine way to recognize a loved one, mark an anniversary, or quote a Bible verse. The cost is \$100. Order forms are on the desk in the foyer outside the Church Office.

Buying or Selling a House? A Bike? In need of / offering Services?

Check out the
COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD
in the Hall to the Library



Members & Friends are encouraged to post personal business, for-sale, and event announcements here. Support your church community by **spreading the word!**