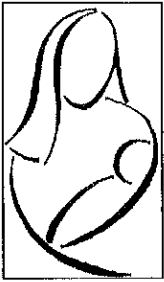


Making the Two One

Jesus saw some infants nursing. He said to his disciples, "These infants are like those who enter the kingdom of heaven." They said to him, "How then can we enter?" Jesus said to them, "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the upper like the lower, and when you make male and female into a single one, then you will enter the kingdom." [The Gospel of Thomas]



This is the time of year when we dare to imagine God appearing in the world as a nursing infant. Scholars tell us that the infancy narratives about Jesus in the gospels of Matthew and Luke are mythical accounts imagined by the writers, based on a variety of sources and traditions; they are fictionalized stories composed by people who were not present when Jesus was born. I agree with the scholars. It has been shown that the two accounts – Matthew's and Luke's – cannot be reconciled into one seamless story; there are too many discrepancies, contradictions. This is true.

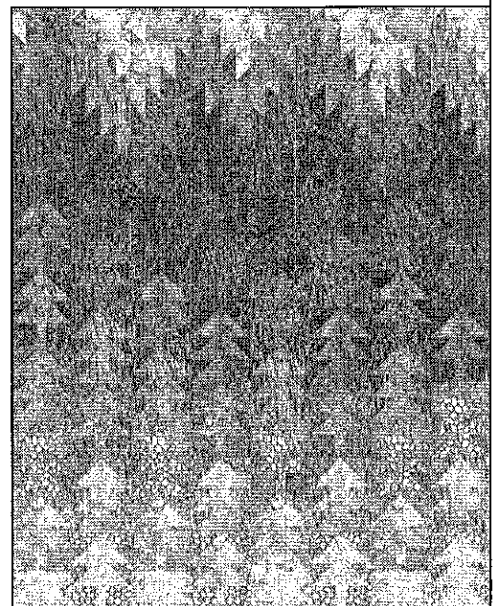
And yet, there is something about the birth of Jesus that we *know* is true, in a way that transcends rational knowledge. There is something about this ancient Nativity scene that finds a place in our consciousness beyond intellectual understanding. Children know the way to that place, and perhaps the child within us still knows, because I think even as adults we search for ways to enter into this scene. Alice Miller once wrote: "someday we will no longer treat our children as creatures to manipulate and change, but rather as messengers from a place we once deeply knew, but have long since forgotten." This is especially true at Christmas. It is a truth that lives beyond historical truth, and reaches instead for the unfathomable mysteries of mythical truth. As children, we knew it instinctively. Remember?

The place we seek each year at this time is somewhere near the convergence of the divine realm and the human realm. The heart of the Christmas story is found where the two are made one. There are no glittery paved streets – only a dirt path that leads to a barn. And gathered in that barn are all the people who *know*, like children, that mystery and wonder dwell within – alongside shepherds and angels and cattle, under a star as bright as any you've ever seen.

With the winter solstice now past, and the days of Christmas fleeing away, and the year turning to new year again, may we seek diligently for the Child who has come into the world, and who now walks the dirt paths and back roads of our lives, calling each of us by name and inviting us into his realm of peace and justice, compassion and mercy. The divine and human have merged, the two made one. The Holy Night has come and gone. We are the chosen ones now.

Grace & Peace to all,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bert". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.



CENTRE BELLS

The Newsletter of
Centre Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
January 2017



"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." ~MLK Jr.

From Council Chair, MATT KENNEDY

As we turn the page to a new year and settle down from the ever increasing franticness of the holidays, I want to take a moment to reflect on a saying that we often hear at Christmas time: "Jesus is the reason for the season." This saying came about as a reaction to the commercialization and consumerism that have seemingly taken over the holiday. The purpose of the saying is to encourage people to shift their focus (back) to Jesus, and the message of caring and compassion that he imparted. Here's my thought: the saying is too long. Why should we only focus on living the word of God during this time of the year? Why not simply "Jesus is the reason." Period.

I mention this because we've spent much of the past year celebrating how Centre Church has been serving the Brattleboro community for 200 years, and even though the celebration is over we can't let our focus on being "in the heart of Brattleboro" fade. Even though as we begin our next 200 years we find ourselves in a time of transition, with fewer hands to lighten the load, it is important that we all do what we can to ensure that Centre continues to be a rock, and shelter from the stormy past, for the community. Given the anxiousness that currently persists in our area, and the country as a whole, people need to know that no matter where they are on life's journey, "Jesus is the reason," and Centre will be there for them.

From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

MUSIC NOTES

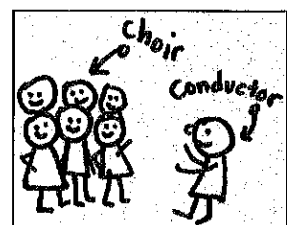
Well, here it is.....almost 2017!! How did that happen so quickly??

I have just finished a long Sunday, having left my house this morning at 7:00 AM returning to Amherst around 6:00 PM.....and it's time to do the Centre Bells blurb!! Ah, what to say!?

Well, first of all, I'd like to thank the Centre Choir folks for the wonderful job they have done all year, but especially during this past Advent season. As I listen to recordings of their anthems, I see the results of their hard work. They are such dedicated singers who, despite my pickiness for phrasing, dynamics, consonants, singing in tune, etc., keep coming back for more! I would also like to thank Eric Strickland and Cynthia MacMillin for answering my plea for more singers. Their presence has been deeply appreciated!

Part of today's schedule included caroling in several different places after church. Thanks to Dart Everett, Tony Grobe, Henry Grobe, Eric Strickland, Cynthia MacMillin, Jenifer Ambler, Virginia Knuebel, Stephanie Cary, Roger Miller and Kate Maisner for singing to shut-ins. We sang for my mom (Dorothy Milkey), Don Webster, the Thompson House residents and Holton Home residents. It was wonderful to spread some holiday cheer and I think I can safely say it brought as much joy to us as it did to them. Despite the icy weather and slippery walks, we all made it back in one piece! Thanks to Roger, Dart and Jenifer for being our chauffeurs!

I will leave you with one closing thought as we begin the New Year.....how about joining the choir????



CHURCH LIFE

NEWEST MEMBER

I was delightfully surprised when **Stephanie Cary** joined the church this past November. Why was I surprised?----because she had been a faithful member of the Centre Church choir for several years. I thought she was already a member. It was through music that she became acquainted with Centre Church. Several years ago our then church organist, Christian Huebner, put out the call to the Brattleboro community for singers to participate in the production of Vivaldi's "Gloria." Stephanie, who had been singing in choirs and choruses since age nine, signed up. Christian used parts of the "Gloria" in the Sunday worship service in the weeks leading up to the performance. Stephanie sang on those Sundays and says she felt very welcomed into the church choir.

Another group that reached out with friendship is the quilting group that meets weekly at the home of Gisela Robeck. The minister at that time was Cara MacFadden. She was a help to Stephanie when her sister was quite ill. Stephanie told me that she appreciates the preaching and writing style of our current interim minister, Bert Marshall.

Stephanie was born raised, educated, and taught in the state of New York. I asked what brought her to Brattleboro? It was because this is the area where her son, Philip Bloch, and grandchildren live. Philip played the violin at the worship service when Stephanie became a member. Her other son, Lewis Bloch, lives in California.

Music and singing have been an important part of Stephanie's life. She told me that Mary Milkey-May is one of the best choir directors she has ever known. We're so glad to welcome Stephanie into the congregation and pray God's guidance in her journey of faith among us.

~Interviewed by **Marion Daley**

Note: Marion will be interviewing our other new member, **Harvey Nystrom**, for an upcoming issue.

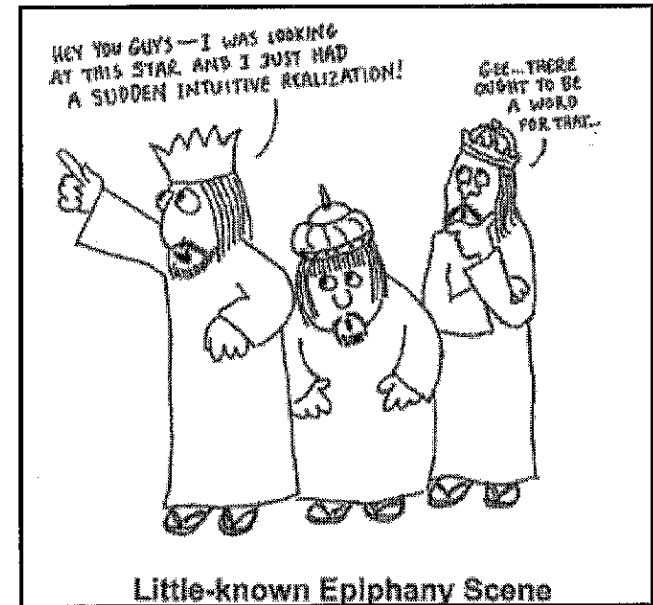


MERRY CHRISTMAS to all our Centre Church friends! It's been a wonderful year. Thanks to everyone for your encouragement and support, your honest feedback and critique, and your faithful commitment to *Being The Church* here in beautiful downtown Brattleboro. It's a privilege to serve in your midst. Prayers for a Christmastide and New Year of peace and prosperity for all. Wishing you all many blessings always!

~Rev. Bert and Kare

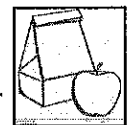
WOMEN'S SPIRIT

Women's Spirit is beginning a new book, **HILLBILLY ELEGY** by J. D. Vance, with the hope of better understanding the cultural crisis that is going on in our country today. The group meets each Thursday afternoon at 4:30 in the library. All are welcome for an hour of sharing and discussion.

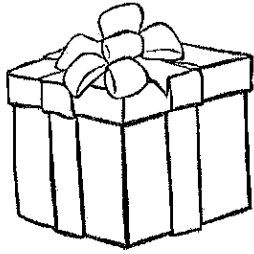


BROWN BAG GROUP

December's meeting was an in-depth discussion and sharing of prayer experiences and could have continued for a long time but was concluded after the hour of lunch and conversation. It was decided to NOT meet in January, as it will be so soon after the holidays and weather in January is iffy. Keep tuned for February meeting plans.



BRATTLEBORO CENTRE FOR CHILDREN



This is an open Thank You to the many members of Centre Church who chose ornaments from the Giving Tree for the Brattleboro Centre for Children. I want to express how joyful

it was to see the gratitude on parents' faces when I handed them bags full of beautifully gift-wrapped presents for their child. These families struggle to do what they can for their children, and material gifts are not available in abundance because of so many many reasons. Thank you, one and all, for your thoughtfulness, your time, your generosity, and your Christian spirit at Christmastime. These children had a better Christmas because of you. I am sincerely grateful.

~Nan Mann, Director

Help Wanted:

Classroom Aide sought for preschool classroom at Brattleboro Centre for Children beginning January 2017. Grant-funded part-time position to support individual child's learning and goals. Must have knowledge of child development and ability to work patiently with children and teachers. Willingness to learn new systems, think quickly on one's feet, and engage in strategies for individual student success required. Support and training provided, but experience with early learning and young children preferred. Send letter of interest, resume and 3 written references to : Nan Mann, Director, Brattleboro Centre for Children, 193 Main St, Brattleboro, VT 05301 or email to brattleborocentreforchildren@gmail.com. EOE.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION @ CENTRE CHURCH

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.

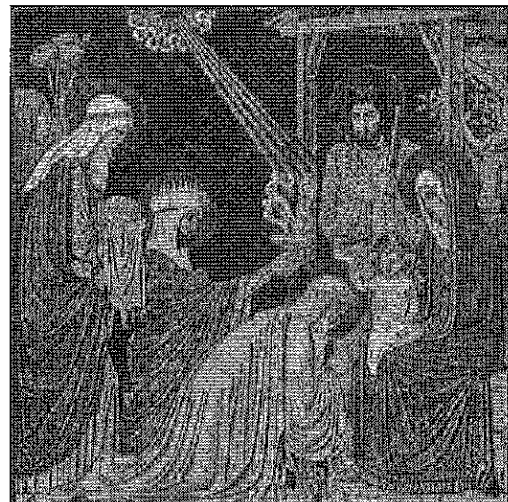
MOMENT FOR PEACE

Friday, January 6, 2017
5:30 p.m. in Centre Church's parlor

The Sacred Journey of Grief- Supporting Yourself and Others

Grieving the death of a loved one can be one of the most difficult of human experiences, but it can also be a time of deepened spiritual awareness and even transformation. The key is to allow oneself to feel the emotions of grief and find support as you move through them. We'll explore highlights of this process, in terms of self-support and supporting others.

Connie Baxter is Bereavement Program Coordinator at Brattleboro Area Hospice and a member of the W. Brattleboro Quaker Worship Group.



January Lectionary Texts:

- 1 Eccl 3:1-13•Ps 8•Rev 21:1-6a•Matt 25:31-46
- 6 Isa 60:1-6•Ps 72:1-7, 10-14•Eph 3:1-12•Matt 2:1-12
- 8 Isa 42:1-9•Ps 29• Acts 10:34-43•
Matt 3:13-17
- 15 Isa 49:1-7•Ps 40:1-11•1 Cor 1:1-9•John 1:29-42
- 22 Isa 9:1-4•Ps 27:1, 4-9•1 Cor 1:10-18•Matt 4:12-23
- 29 Micah 6:1-8•Ps 15•1 Cor 1:18-31•Matt 5:1-12



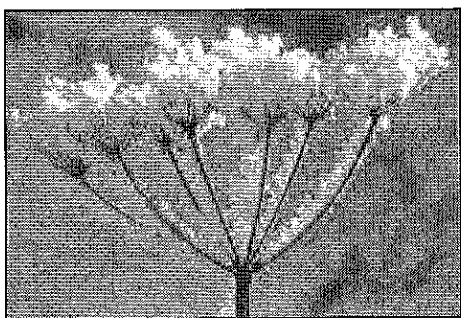
Congratulations to **Torin Kindopp**, who placed ninth (out of 401 runners) in his first USATF Cross-Country National Championships in Hoover, Alabama, on December 10. Torin, a seventh grader at the Chesterfield (NH) School, competed in the 11- and 12-year-old division.

BOARD FOR MISSION & SERVICE

January's Special Offering goes to the **Luz del Mundo Scholarship Fund**, which helps the children from our Sister Parish, Cristo Redentor in El Salvador, afford to attend school. Education is the best way for them to make their way out of poverty, to obtain better jobs so they can support their families in the future.



El Salvador Dinner Fiesta! Save the date! Friday, February 3, Mission & Service will host a celebration and fundraiser for our Sister Parish scholarship fund. Food, music, slide shows of past trips, and more! Stay tuned to eNews, Bulletins and the February Center Bells for more details!



Somewhere beyond the January mist,
The magic of our landscape still exists.
"January Mist" (2008), Sandra Fowler

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 December 25th.

JEANNE RUETER

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

NANCY CLARKE

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

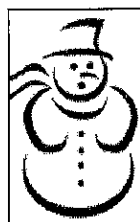
461 Grafton Rd., #201
Townshend, VT 05353 (802)221-4213

KAREN PETER

Langdon Place, 136 Arch Street, Room 152
Keene, NH 03431 (603)357-3902

Please let Hilary know if we've missed someone.

ITEMS NEEDED: CARRY ME HOME



Most needed: Blankets and Shoes
(all sizes)
Also needed: Hats and Gloves
(all sizes)
***We are still collecting
children's winter clothing.

ORDER This Jewel on Main Street

The history of Centre Congregational Church, published for our bicentennial year, is 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 to cover the book and shipping, made out to Centre Church. Please send your orders to:

Marion Daley
PO Box 445
Putney, VT 05346

Dot Vander Meulen will be happy to autograph the book before it is packed and mailed to you.

From Groundworks Collaborative:

Dear all,

We have just finished a very successful first month at the **Seasonal Overflow Shelter**. We have been full, or within 1-2 open beds each night, ranging from 17-20 folks. We have had many excellent meals served, with many thanks to the meal teams who are participating! Our volunteer shifts have continued to fill up, but we are always interested in training new folks, especially to cover the 1am-7am shift. Some interesting statistics from our first month:

- 41 people served-32 men, 7 women, 2 transgender
- 29 client in community regularly accessing shelter (17 of whom are actively engaged in services)
- 9 people have moved through the area
- 17 people have income, 3 via employment, 14 through SSDI
- 2 folks relatively unknown demographics
- 0 calls to the Police Department

Centre Church's next Overflow Shelter Dinner will be **Sunday, January 8**, and the contact person will be Harvey Nystrom. Look for the form on the church bulletin board for food and worker sign-ups. It's a fun way to spend the evening, the more the merrier!

Please contact Parker Anderson at volunteer@groundworksvt.org or 490-8178 to sign up for a shift. Please contact Jenna Lanoil at meals@groundworksvt.org or 257-5415 to sign up to serve a meal. Many thanks for your dedication to this amazing program! ~Rhianna Kendrick, Director of Operations

SAVE THE DATE!

Brattleboro Area Interfaith
Clergy Association

MLK Jr. event: Celebrating Community

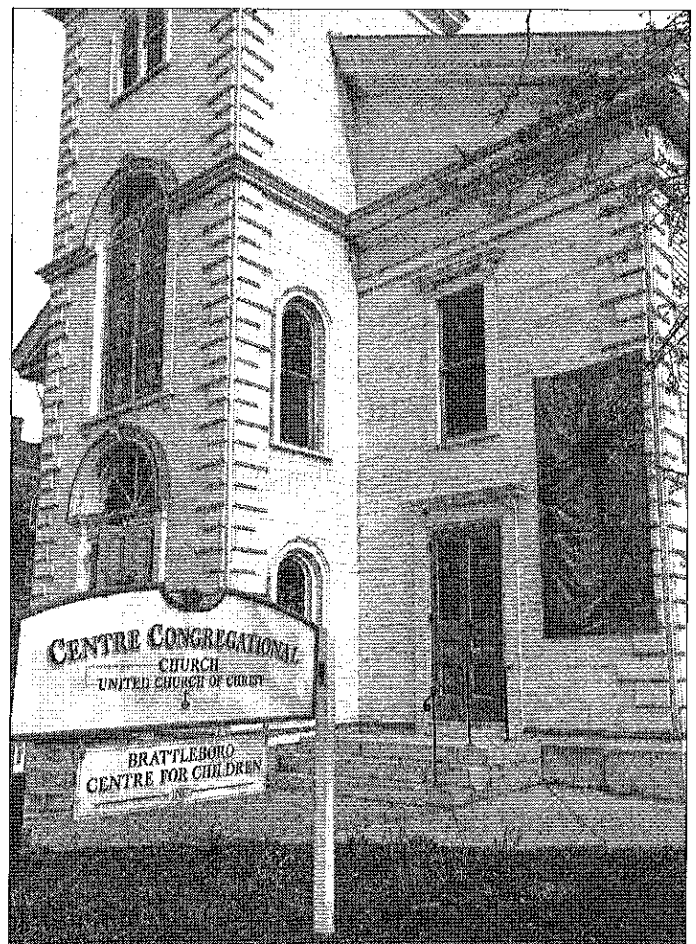


"We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

~Letter From Birmingham City Jail

Sunday, January 15, 4 p.m.
at Centre Church

Special Music: Details to come
Interfaith Youth will provide a spaghetti dinner fundraiser at 5:30 p.m.



JANUARY 2017

*Holy Communion celebrated

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship* 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	2 <u>NEW YEARS DAY</u> <u>OFFICE CLOSED</u> 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl	3 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 5 ³⁰ Search Comm. 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	4	5 1 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit	6 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 5 ³⁰ Moment for Peace 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	7 10 ⁰⁰ AAJW
8 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FIA 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	9 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl 7 ³⁰ AA District 8	10 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 6 ⁰⁰ Meeting Night 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	11	12 1 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	13 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting <u>CENTRE BELLS</u> <u>DEADLINE</u>	14 7 ⁰⁰ Rock Voices
15 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FIA 4 ⁰⁰ MLK Memorial Service 5 ³⁰ Spaghetti Dinner 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	16 <u>MLK DAY</u> <u>OFFICE CLOSED</u> 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl	17 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 5 ³⁰ Search Comm. 6 ⁰⁰ Church Council 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	18 12 ⁰⁰ BAIL	19 1 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	20 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	21
22 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FIA 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	23 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl 7 ⁰⁰ Spiritual Conversations	24 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	25 <u>MAIL</u> <u>CENTRE BELLS</u>	26 9 ¹⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	27 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	28
29 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FIA 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	30 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl	31 5 ³⁰ Search Comm.				

BIRTHDAYS

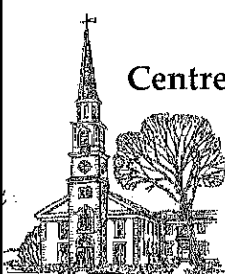
- 4 Rene LaPlante
- 5 Torin Kindopp
- 6 Terrance Slate
- 7 Marielle Holbrook
- 11 Marion Daley
- 13 Kathryn Kindopp
Adelaide Minott
Nancy Wittler
- 14 Myrna Melroy
Katherine Maisner
- 15 Christina Goodwin
Joanne MacLean
- 16 Levi Healey
- 17 William McCarty
- 18 Dorothy Vander Meulen
- 21 Bert Marshall
- 25 Ron Svec
- 26 Rennie Washburn
- 30 Holly Kennedy

SHAKESPEAREAN NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS, part 2

<p>JULIUS CAESAR</p> <p>TO ACHIEVE MY CAREER POTENTIAL!</p> 	<p>PETRUCHIO & KATHERINA</p> <p>TO START ATTENDING MARRIAGE COUNSELING.</p> 	<p>SIR JOHN FALSTAFF</p> <p>TO DRINK LESS SACK. ...DID I SAY "LESS"? I MEANT "MORE". TO DRINK MORE SACK.</p> 
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www.goodtickiebrain.com



Centre Bells is published monthly by
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News items and articles should be submitted to the church administrator. Please contact the church administrator with address changes or requests to be added or removed from the *Centre Bells* mailing list at:
802-254-4730 / centrechurch@centrechurchvt.org

CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
193 Main Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301

Celebrating 200 years in the heart of Brattleboro!

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

Current news and information in the larger UCC Community:

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

CHURCH STAFF AND LEADERSHIP

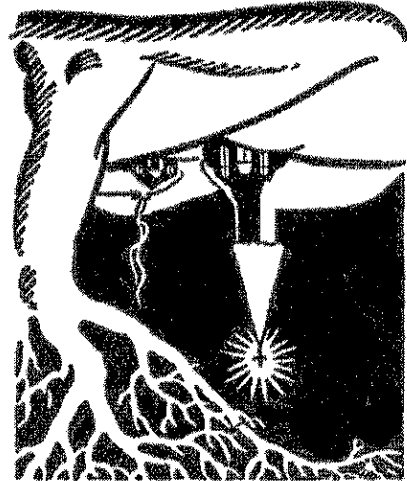
Interim Minister
Financial Secretary
Music Director
Sextons
Administrative Assistant

Rev. Bert Marshall: revbert@centrechurchvt.org
Christine Yost: finance@centrechurchvt.org
Mary Milkey-May: music@centrechurchvt.org
Gary and Paul Smith
Hilary Farquhar: hilary@centrechurchvt.org

Council Chair
Treasurer / Clerk

Matt Kennedy
Holly Kennedy / Constance Bresnahan

2 0 1 7



JANUARY

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