

INTERIM MINISTER'S COLUMN Rev. Bert Marshall

Surprised By Lent?

Lent is traditionally the forty-day fast before Easter. The practice is first noted in the canons of Nicaea (AD 325); prior to that, it appears that the period of fasting in preparation for Easter did not exceed two or three days. It may have originated as a fast required of candidates for baptism. The Church has used different methods for calculating the period of the Lenten fast (the Eastern church exempted Saturdays and Sundays; the Western church exempted only Sundays). Local customs have always varied. Observances tended to be very strict in the early centuries, but by the 9th century in the West, the practice began to be noticeably relaxed. Today, Lent is generally observed as a time of penance – a time for almsgiving, a time for abstaining from excessive festivities, and a time for devoting oneself to more frequent religious practices. Fasting has receded into the background as a common Lenten exercise.

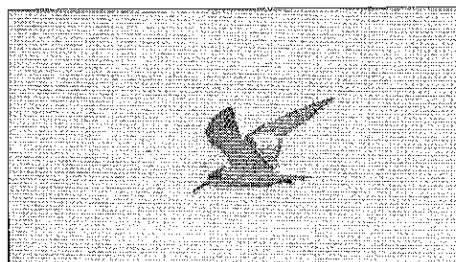
I have for some time been interested in the implications of a long preparatory period leading up to Easter, and how that might affect our experience and understanding of the Passion story. Jesus' arrest, trial, torture, and execution at the hands of the Roman Empire came as a complete shock to his followers, and was initially seen as a stunning defeat and a crushing loss for them and for their Teacher. They had neither the benefit of a long period of preparation, nor the advantage of nearly two thousand years of theological reflection – though the gospels try to portray a form of preparation in Jesus' remarks about his imminent suffering and death. In spite of this, however, the disciples seemed not to understand or believe those warnings, and when the moment arrived they scattered in fear.

We, of course, are no longer shocked by this at all. We know the story *all too well*. We approach Easter not only with assurance and supreme confidence, but perhaps with a certain smugness as well. Easter is "our" great triumph – and every year we manage to skip over all the hard parts that lead to resurrection. Bunnies and

butterflies are nice, but you can't get to the glory of Easter without first confronting the scandal of the Cross. Which is why I sometimes think we should come up with another way to observe all of this. But, I'm getting ahead of myself; we're only at the very beginning of Lent . . .

. . . and here at the beginning I am, for my part, once again trying to find ways to enter a state of deeper meditation and more focused reflection. This much I know: Lent is hard to find in the chaos of daily life. It is not connected to our society's definitions of success or power. It has nothing to do with wealth or social status. It does not conform to the world's order; rather, it turns the ways of the world upside down. It comes quietly and settles around you like morning mists. You look for it in the space between your breath and the sky. It is like seeking the source of the river in the sea.

It is in the place where the tidal surge begins, in the thought that created the birds' flight. It is a journey already made and not



yet begun, a word formed but not yet spoken, a song from the heart of the earth, a voice crying out in the wilderness.

Or not. Perhaps Lent is just too much of a diversion for the church. It leads us down the wrong path. It tempts us with certainty. It deludes us into thinking we actually understand what happened. It denies us the opportunity to be suddenly confronted with what we did not witness and never would have expected – the shocking violent end of Jesus' life at the hands of Rome. And in denying us that wrenching experience, it also denies us a true and profound awakening on Easter morning, which was every bit as shocking as his death was to his closest friends and followers.

But we are the bearers of 2000 years of history, which we cannot unlearn or undo. We know the story. We know what happened. Still, even if Lent cannot shock or surprise us, if we're going to have a Lent, it should at least remind us where we came from, and who we are, and whose we are. That would make the journey worthwhile.

Rev. Bert



CENTRE BELLS

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

From Council Chair, MATT KENNEDY:

As I have mentioned in the past, because of the time frame needed so that Centre Bells can be put together and mailed out to everyone so they receive it before the beginning of the month, I often find myself stuck between writing about either things that will have happened quite some time before everyone actually receives their Centre Bells, or things that are still a bit far off, so not all of the details may be set yet. Well, this month I'm going to write about both.

As I sit here writing this we have recently finished our Annual Financial Meeting. This can sometimes be a difficult event, more so than almost anything else in the life of a church, and this year we continued to have many of the same challenging conversations that many churches seem to be having. Though we may not have agreed on everything we had a respectful dialogue as always, and came to some tough decisions. Another great Centre tradition that shone through at the meeting was that in times of need our congregation steps up, as the average pledge amount is up this year. Unfortunately, with many members moving away or passing on we have found ourselves with fewer resources to carry out our missions.

As was mentioned at the meeting, in an effort to develop new ideas and creative ways of approaching our finances, Council will be holding a financial brainstorming session the morning of Saturday, May 6. The gathering is open to all, and we are planning to serve breakfast. We will be sharing more details once they are confirmed, but in the meantime if you might be interested in helping with the breakfast please let a member of Council know. We hope to see everyone there that morning wearing their best thinking caps, so mark your calendars and please plan to attend.

From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

MUSIC NOTES

Recently, the Music Committee met and we decided to use the bells (inside and steeple) once a month on Communion Sunday. You may have noticed this happened on February 5th. Before the Prelude, I will play a hymn tune using the bells. If anyone is interested in playing them sometime during the week, I'd be happy to show you how. They have a lovely sound, especially when they ring outside.

As you receive this newsletter, we will be entering the season of Lent. I love selecting anthems for Lent. I find the repertoire to be soulful, expressive and engaging. Honestly, musically, it is my favorite time of the "choir" year. As we prepare and present many anthems during this season, I hope you will also be moved. It is a time of contemplation. I hope the music provided will do just that!

It's still not too late to join the choir!! We'd be happy to have you sing with us any time, even just for the season of Lent! We would welcome you with open arms and would promise you a pleasing experience. Think about it!!



Ash Wednesday, March 1, at

Centre Church, a Service with Imposition of Ashes at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome.

Rev. Bert is planning a **Bible study/Lenten group** for the Mondays during Lent. Probably one daytime group and one evening group. Please contact him with your interest and best time — day or evening.

It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade. ~Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

March Lectionary Texts:

- 1 Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isa 58:1-12•Ps 51:1-17•2 Cor 5:20b-6:10•Matt 6:16, 16-21
- 5 Gen 2:15-17; 3:1-7•Ps 32•Rom 5:12-19•**Matt 4:1-11**
- 12 Gen 12:1-4a•Ps 121•Rom 4:1-5, 13-17•**John 3:1-17** or Matt 17:1-9
- 19 Ex 17:1-7•Ps 95•Rom 5:1-11•**John 4:5-42**
- 26 1 Sam 16:1-13•Ps 23•Eph 5:8-14•**John 9:1-41**

SEARCH COMMITTEE

Our Search Committee had a hard time meeting in January due to Tuesday night winter storms! We were finally able to meet January 30th! With two January meetings finally put in the record books we continue to work on putting the surveys you filled out into our Church Profile. Our January 30th meeting brought us back together with redirected focus. We continue to work hard moving to get a strong draft of our Church Profile filled out.

We are still planning to ask our Church family for input on the Church Survey as part of our process. More on this as we get closer to having something ready for you to give us your input on. Remember this search committee is filled with members of our church. Ask us questions, give us input as you have ideas about our church family, home, community and world. We are doing all this work for you. We continue to work in Faith, Love, Joy . . . following Jesus's light. *Anne Fecto*

BOARD FOR MEMBER CARE

Prayer Requests

Every Sunday morning during our worship time we participate in the ministry of prayer. This is usually listed in the bulletin as JOYS, CONCERNS, PRAYERS. It is an important part of our worship as we share joys; ask for healing for friends and family members; and pray for courage for others facing long periods of ill health.

In order to submit a prayer request, there are cards in the pew rack to fill out. During the opening hymn the ushers walk down the aisles and collect them to hand to the minister.

Usually, before the minister begins praying he reads these cards aloud. Some of these are requests for healing, for comfort for the bereaved, and some are joys people are glad to share.

In a way this is my preferred method because the congregation can clearly hear for whom we are praying.

If you haven't had an opportunity to write your request on a card the minister asks for others to raise their hands and speak their prayer requests. Often it is difficult for others in the congregation to hear these. (We know God does!)

Some people do not want to be prayed for in such a large setting. Many years ago when we first started this practice, a woman, Jane Doe, was indignant that a well-meaning member had asked for prayer for her healing of a certain medical condition. Jane did not want it announced in such a public gathering. I am just including that so you will be sensitive to people's wishes. The minister often says that we also pray for those whose names have not been spoken aloud, but are in our hearts.

We pray with faith. We pray with positive hope. We pray for each other.

Marion Daley, Member Care

International Heritage Potluck Luncheon Sunday, March 26

Come one, come all to an international potluck in Memorial Hall after church on Sunday, March 26! With all the discussions about immigrants in the news, **Mission and Service** was pondering the fact that we are all immigrants or descended from immigrants, and also the fact that many members have said they'd love to see more dinners and potlucks. Look for the signup sheet on the bulletin board to sign up for appetizers, main dishes, salads and desserts, and bring something based on your family history. It could be an old favorite family recipe, or something from a country your ancestors came from. Creativity encouraged! If you have stories or pictures or items to exhibit based on your heritage, bring them to show others! Stay tuned for more information in upcoming eNews and Bulletins.

BOARD FOR MISSION & SERVICE



sharing resources. changing lives.

The **Second Sunday Offering for March** will be One Great Hour of Sharing, which is a multid denominational offering supporting global disaster and refugee relief and development actions. Brochures and special envelopes will be available in pews and bulletins. Please give generously on March 12, especially considering the present Middle Eastern refugee crisis. If you are not able to give on the actual Second Sunday, you can still give; just use the special OGHOS envelope and/or make sure the memo line of

your check clearly designates OGHOS.

A sampling of what OGHOS does: "Think of all the ways you have used water today. Now imagine walking each morning to gather water for your family, knowing the water you were collecting was unclean and could make the members of your family sick."

"UCC Disaster Ministries has just transmitted funds to Global Ministries partners in Japan who are reaching out to an underserved group of survivors of the triple earthquake-tsunami-nuclear disaster in March 2011: immigrant women. Some 1,100 Chinese, Korean, Filipino and Thai immigrant women in Fukushima and Shirakawa, Japan, continue to struggle for information and support following the disaster."

"In preparation for this year's heavy storm season, United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries is turning to church congregations to help overcome a shortage of much-needed cleanup buckets,



THANK YOU EVERYONE!!!!!! After collapsing on the couch on Friday night [following Mission and Services Latin American dinner], I reflected on the evening and the days leading up to the dinner and realized that there are so many meanings to "SUCCESS"! Our successes were twofold...we earned \$658 for Luz del Mundo scholarships and had a very fun evening! Many people spoke to me and said "thank you for doing the dinner" and "we had so much fun." GREAT! The only down point is that Harvey Nystrom missed it after doing SO MUCH for the dinner!!!! We missed you and thank you for all you did!!!

After our meeting yesterday, I am even more sure that we need to continue doing this dinner and maybe more!? Several people from the community asked if we do these 'community' dinners frequently! Gallery walk seems like a wonderful time to consider this.

~Priscilla Svec

stocked with essential supplies that are used after a disaster strikes. UCC Disaster Ministries is offering congregations matching grants of up to \$250 as an incentive to assemble Church World Service kits - in particular, CWS Emergency Cleanup Buckets but also CWS School and Hygiene Kits.



Rev. Bert helping unload buckets of supplies in December 2012 following Hurricane Sandy when he worked for Church World Service.



CHURCH LIFE

Everyone is invited to the
MOMENT for PEACE
Friday, March 3, •5:30-6:00PM
Centre Church Parlor

Interfaith Prayers for the Earth
Prayers, Chants, Silence & Reflection

Sponsored by Brattleboro Interfaith Clergy
Association & Brattleboro Interfaith Initiative
All Welcome!

OVERFLOW SHELTER MEALS: Centre Church provides a Sunday night meal each month for First Baptist's winter overflow shelter; next month, it's March 5. For more information contact Judy Palmer at (603)256-6163 or judithp41@gmail.com and check the board in the hallway the 2nd to last Sunday of each month to sign up. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!**



WOMEN'S SPIRIT

Women's Spirit continues to work with THE HILLBILLY ELEGY and have found studying another area of America that seems so different, yet so the same as us, has brought the group to experience new insights. Anyone is welcome to join the group, which meets in the library at 4:30 each Thursday.

◇◇**BROWN BAG GROUP**◇◇ Again, put a big mark on **March 1st**, as it's the first Wednesday of the month again. No one knows where the conversation will go, but it's always interesting and a chance to catch up on what is going on at church as well as elsewhere. Just bring your brown bag and join the friendly group.

WORKING TOGETHER! Brattleboro Centre for Children enrolled a new family last month, and BCC's newest member received a baby quilt made by **Stephanie Cary** and **Patti Reardon** of Centre's **Quilting Ministry**. BCC Director **Nan Mann**: "It is such a wonderful thing they do and the families are SO appreciative. Also, I know that no other center in the area does this sort of welcome gift for newly enrolled infants."

The Quilting Ministry meets most Thursdays at Gisela Robeck's house in West Brattleboro at 1:30 p.m. Contact Gisela at giselarobe@gmail.com if you're interested in joining them!

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.

ADULT EDUCATION OFFERINGS

BOOK STUDY: Join a self-led book study group currently reading *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi*, by Amy-Jill Levine. Copies are available at Everyone's Books for about \$15.00. Everyone is welcome in the church library!

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

The Fundraising Committee is meeting on Wednesday, March 15, at 3:30 p.m.

"The afternoon is bright,
with spring in the air,
a mild March afternoon,
with the breath of April
stirring. . . ."

~Antonio Machado
(trans. by Alan S. Trueblood)



ORDER *This Jewel on Main Street*

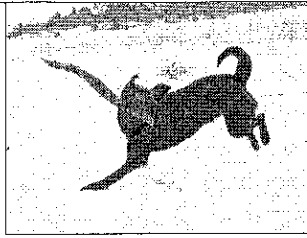
The history of Centre Congregational Church, published for our bicentennial year, is still available for purchase from the office or during coffee hour following Sunday services.

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 it is packed and mailed to you.

Come to a Doggone Brunch!
On Sunday, March 5, the
Friendship Hour hosted by the
Council and members of the
Kitchen- Handicapped Acces-
sibility Renovation Team



(KART) will serve appropriate food for the occasion. You will have an opportunity to visit with friends and share your ideas and wishes for making some improvements in our church. A brief survey will help KART collect information to focus on replacing the stove in the kitchen and investigating the possibilities of installing a lift. We need to hear you and honor your wishes.



SUNDAY FLOWER SIGN-UPS: For, 2017, the Sunday worship flower process has changed. Going forward, if you would like to sign up to dedicate flowers for worship we ask that you write your name on the Flower Sign-Up calendar as

usual and also fill out one of the slips below and return it to Hilary. Also, Windham Flowers will no longer be automatically delivering flowers every week. As a result, we are asking that you supply the flowers by either:

1. Purchasing an arrangement directly from a local florist (a list is provided on the back of the slip) and arranging for them to deliver them to the church during regular business hours (M-F: 8:30am – 12:30pm).
2. Providing them yourself from your garden or by purchasing them yourself at a local florist or store such as Price Chopper or the Food Coop (they do not have to be an arrangement per se) and bringing them to church by 9:30am on the Sunday morning you have signed up for.

We realize this may create an inconvenience; however, a change needed to be made as, many weeks, the Deacons have been paying for flowers that no one had signed up for, which became a large unbudgeted expense.

The **Annual Flower Power Fundraiser** is set for Sunday, March 5, thru Sunday, April 2. Please be sure to pick up your bulb catalog, order form, and return envelope in the parlor any Sunday in March. Orders must be returned by April 2. Please remember **NOT** to include shipping charges. Spring is on the way—that means time to garden! For info please contact Wendy Randall, ponente@comcast.net.



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

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 GETTY PETER

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

Please let Hilary know if we've missed someone.

Four Pennies

A friend, Susan Wilmott, has recently been donating pairs of boots and shoes for use by visitors of the Loaves & Fishes kitchen. One of our volunteers, Ken, had been looking out for folks whose footwear is less than adequate for the winter weather and figuring out whether we had the right size. This Friday, Ken was ill and was absent from the kitchen, but in true Loaves & Fishes style, another volunteer, Diane, happened to show up to take his place. She pointed out to me a man I have seen walking, almost constantly, around town, always carrying a shopping bag. She said he was wearing "flip-flops" — meaning not the sandals, but that the soles of his shoes were becoming detached from the uppers. I took him aside and asked if he could use a pair of shoes and then found one in his size. He tried them on, gave me a thumbs up, and reached in his pocket and gave me four pennies. He kept one back for himself, as a lucky penny, flipped it in the air and caught it on the fly. We both laughed.

~Robert A. Oeser

MARCH 2017

*Holy Communion celebrated

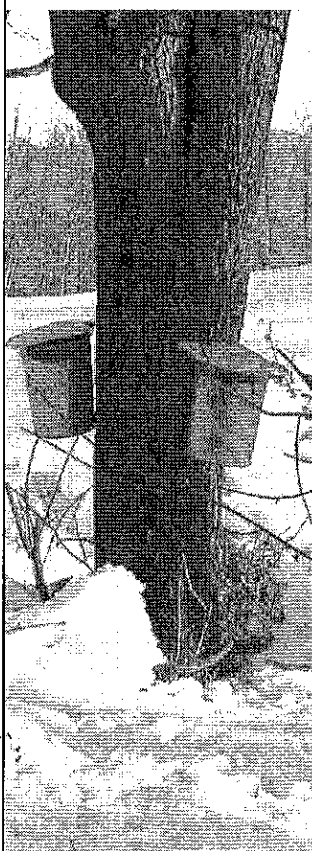
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 12 ⁰⁰ Brown Bag Lunch 7 ⁰⁰ Ash Wednesday Service	2 10 ⁰⁰ BWC 1 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	3 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 5 ³⁰ Moment for Peace 7 ³⁰ Big Woods concert 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	4
5 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship* 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 11 ¹⁵ KART Brunch 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	6 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl	7 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	8	9 10 ⁰⁰ BWC 1 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	11 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	11 7 ³⁰ BMC Concert
12 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FIA 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	13 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl 7 ³⁰ AA District 8	14 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 5 ³⁰ Search Committee 6 ⁰⁰ Meeting Night 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	15 12 ⁰⁰ BALL 3 ³⁰ Fundraising Com m	16 10 ⁰⁰ BWC 1 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	17 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 12 ³⁰ Centre Bells deadline 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	18
19 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FIA 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	20 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl	21 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	22	23 10 ⁰⁰ BWC 1 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	24 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	25
26 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FIA 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 11 ¹⁵ M&S Potluck 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	27 4 ³⁰ Prayer Shawl 7 ⁰⁰ Spiritual Conversations	28 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 5 ³⁰ Search Committee 6 ⁰⁰ Church Council 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	29 Centre Bells mailed	30 10 ⁰⁰ BWC 1 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	31 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	

BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Priscilla Svec
- 3 Patricia Brown
Milton Eaton
- 5 Emma Rueter
- 6 Emmett Healey
- 7 Dianne Bassett
Sylvia Eaton
- 8 Richard Dunn
- 13 Jon Potter
- 18 Haley Marcil
- 20 Cynthia Terzariol
Kathryn Fecto
- 21 Mike Ball
- 22 Matthew Kennedy
- 26 Addison Minott
- 27 Marilyn Young
Aidan Kindopp
Henry Grobe

ANNIVERSARIES

- 12 Deborah & Robert Cope
- 31 Mary & Verne Bristol



The Brattleboro Women's Chorus resumes rehearsals on Thursday, March 2, at 10:00 a.m. at Centre Church. Becky Graber, BWC's director, and her Big Woods Quartet will hold an informal fundraising concert for the chorus on Friday, March 3, at 7:30 p.m. in the parlor. Come join them for an evening of music! Contact Becky at ragtime@sover.net for more information.



"March is the month that God designed to show those who don't drink what a hangover is like."

~Garrison Keillor

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

CHURCH STAFF AND LEADERSHIP

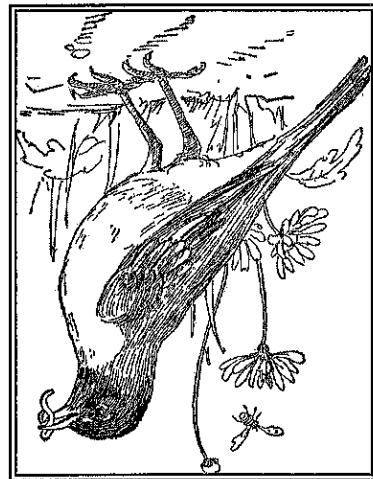
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Christine Yost: finance@centrechurchvt.org

Council Chair
Treasurer / Clerk

Matt Kennedy
Holly Kennedy / Constance Bresnahan

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MARCH

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