

MINISTER'S COLUMN, Scott Couper

“We pray for the big things and forget to give thanks for the ordinary, small (and yet really not small) gifts.”

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*

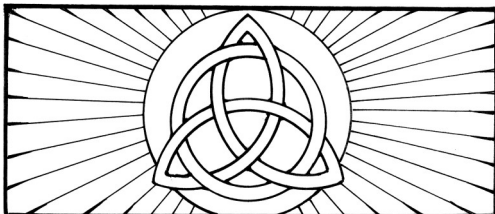
Dear Friends, despite the COVID-19 pandemic our church is blessed with ‘new faces’ at our ZOOM worship services. I recently married one ‘new face’. One ‘new face’ was the first to sign-up for my class on Christian Theology. Another ‘new face’ assisted our church and other allies to broadcast the Martin Luther King, Jr. service. Another ‘new face’ has many times from the pulpit ably interpreted the Word for us with his thought provoking and sensitive sermons. Our church prayed. Our prayers are answered! We prayed for life and growth in our church – and that is a big thing! These ‘new faces’ are God’s gifts to us. One of my favorite scripture verses of all time is from Psalm 133:1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer made it the lynchpin scripture of his book *Life Together*: “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” I will soon announce an **Inquirers’ Class** for anyone who is curious to learn more about our local and wider church (United Church of Christ). This class will be open to ‘new faces’ and to those who have fellowshiped with us for some time but have not yet become members. Thus far, I have discerned at least sixteen people who I will invite to an Inquirers’ Class that will meet weekly on Saturdays (May 1, 8, 15, and 22) at 7:00pm on ZOOM. All are welcome.

One of the ‘new faces’ is **Matt Deen**. Matt affirms our fellowship by his choosing to be with us. And Centre Church affirms Matt. Matt has discerned a call to ministry (Member in Discernment, MID). He has completed his studies for ministry. Now the wider church in partnership with Centre Church will consider affirming that calling. Following this discernment process, a faith community will likely confirm Matt’s calling and request him to serve it as an ordained minister of the Word and Sacrament. To achieve this end, our Council established a **Local Church Discernment Committee** (LCDC) that will *explore* with Matt his call to authorized ministry and realistically consider the challenges that will be faced (money, time, family etc.), *review* Matt’s spiritual journey, personal history, experience of church and other questions he might face, and *help discern* the particular gifts for ministry God has given to Matt as he journeys toward possible ordained ministerial leadership. We give thanks to Ron Svec, Jack Bixby, Margo Neale, Nan Mann, and Marion Abell who compose the LCDC for their labor of love.

God gave us a beautiful gift with Matt’s presence. The most appropriate way I can think of to say thank you to God for the gift of Matt is to help prepare him and return him to God to further serve the wider church. Love always in Christ, Scott

CENTRE BELLS

May 2021



The newsletter of
Centre Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ



From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY



Last year at this time, I was certain we'd be back to regular choir rehearsals and regular church services by now, but unfortunately, this pandemic continues onward. As more people become vaccinated, however, I do feel some optimism about heading in a better direction soon.

Because Alison Hale and I have both been fully vaccinated, we were able to record together IN CHURCH for the service on April 18. What a treat it was to be able to play WITH somebody, especially Alison! Also, Sue Rowell and Jenifer Ambler (also fully vaccinated) were able to sing a beautiful CONTEMPORARY piece "I Am" for Earth Day, acknowledged on April 25.

I will continue to look for more singers and instrumentalists to provide us with special music during services in May. Thanks go to Peter Abell, Jenifer Ambler, Alison Hale, Matt Kennedy, Sue Rowell, and Priscilla Svec for providing music during Advent, Lent, and Easter. We are so lucky to have folks who have been willing to step up and keep music afloat during ZOOM services!

Council Chair, LYNN HERZOG

As I write this on Earth Day 2021, I am happy to report that Council is discussing ways we as a congregation can reduce our destructive footprint on the Earth. I believe our only actions so far have been to recycle some waste (as directed by the town). At this month's meeting we discussed two initiatives that would make Centre Church more environmentally responsible. The first would be to put all our endowment money into a socially responsible fund, or perhaps it would now be called a 'sustainability fund'. There is no reason why we should invest in companies that are destroying the environment when there are so many that are trying to improve things. There are many different socially responsible funds, and they have an acceptable rate of return. We will continue our discussion of this next month and hopefully make a recommendation to the Endowment Committee then.

The other initiative we discussed – putting solar panels on our roof – is obviously a major investment and requires serious thought and planning. But wouldn't it be wonderful if we generated our own electricity and even had some to sell to others?

We would also love to hear any other suggestions people may have, and also to hear your thoughts about the two initiatives under discussion. It's time to stop talking and take some action.



DEACONS

*May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,
Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May.*

Like Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Knight, we rejoice to welcome "faire, fresshe May, perhaps more this year than ever". Our Winter- and COVID-weary souls yearn for her 'floures' and 'grene'. Sydney Carter, a more recent British poet, writes, "Love, like the yellow daffodil, is coming through the snow/ Love, like the yellow daffodil, is Lord of all I know". What more felicitous expression of resiliency and resurrection than the golden trumpets that burst forth so freely in our gardens and on our hillsides, the sturdy brave heralds of Spring?

On April 4 we observed our second COVID-era Easter, beginning with a well-attended a 8:00am service under the tent on our front lawn, and again at 10:00am with a celebratory ZOOM worship from our blossom-bedecked sanctuary. Many thanks to our tireless pastor for his creative and meaningful services. We are also grateful to Holly Kennedy for valiantly wresting herself from a cozy bed on a nippy morning to represent Deacons at the early service, and to all who contributed their time and talent to the glory of this joyous day.

The repainting of the Chapel has been completed, and currently clean-up and decorating work is underway. Thank you to Scott Couper, Scott Hoess, Daniel Guerra, and Lynn Herzog for their assistance with this project, and especially to Michael Mario, for his extensive ladder work above and beyond the capacities of this dedicated acrophobe. We look forward to inviting Centre Church friends and the greater community to a refreshed and brightened space, and hope it will be found inspiring, contemplative, and welcoming.

We greet splendorous Spring once more, even as we continue to grapple with a plethora of challenges. Again, quoting Sydney Carter, and Dame Julian of Norwich, the medieval mystic whom he paraphrases — "All shall be well again, I know".

In Faith, Heidi Mario

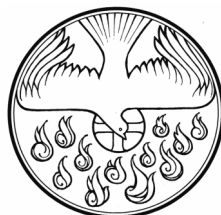
LONG-RANGE PLANNING TEAM

Your Long-Range Planning Team (LRPT) was tasked this year to facilitate envisioning a plan for the future of Centre Congregational Church (UCC). We are guided in this critical mission by The Rev. Paul Nickerson. Over the past several months, we have met as a Team and with other members monthly via ZOOM with Nickerson to document our church's ministerial history and the regional demographics of our church community. Several reports have appeared in *Centre Bells* and the Team has presented during Sunday worship services. We have consistently solicited participation from church members and to date the response has been less than hoped for and anticipated. Soon, we will be working to ascertain our vision and mission for the future.

This notice is to impress upon you the importance of your input and participation. Church membership, service attendance (not counting ZOOM participation), and pledges have consistently declined in recent years. Our financial position is unsustainable. We must regularly draw from our endowment at ever increasing rates to meet even the most basic church expenses. At the current/projected rate of withdrawal CCC's survival into the next decade is somewhat problematic or at risk. After that, we will need to face the difficult choices surrounding our viability and ability to remain open. Without re-thinking our mission, reasons for our existence, and the expansion/renewal of our membership base, our future is uncertain. Therefore in the coming months as we reach out to you, we encourage you to take a more active role in our future as the "Jewel on Main Street". Please feel free to contact any member of the LRPT.

- Al Rydant, *Long-Range Planning Team*

Bob Pu, *Co-Chair*; April Harkness, *Co-Chair*;
Bonnie Girvan; Jenifer Ambler; Jack Bixby;
Matt Deen; Holly Kennedy; Margo Neale;
Al Rydant; Karen Rydant; Kate Weeks;
Scott Couper, *Ex Officio*





MISSION & SERVICE

Second Sunday Offerings continue to be an important way for Centre Church to reach many locally, nationally, and internationally. In March our Second Sunday Offering of \$525 went to *One Great Hour of Sharing* which UCC administers to help both nationally and internationally during times of disaster and severe need. On April 11, we honored the work of our local *Community Asylum Seeker Program* and on May 5 we will benefit *Brattleboro Summer Lunch Program*. This program provides nutritious lunches throughout the Summer vacation to children who would be receiving free or reduced lunches in school during the school year. This program is administered by the school district, but mostly funded by grants and donations. Mission & Service applies for a small grant from the Vermont Conference each year, as well as raising funds in the Offering. Many children from low-income families would be going hungry through the summer without programs such as this.

During Holy Week, the wooden cross, made by Peter Abell, became decorated as donations were made to support the students in Cabañitas. The money (\$750) will go specifically for the students' books and the lovely cross adorned our sanctuary for Easter. What a wonderful image of unity with our sister parish at our Easter morning services, both outside and in the sanctuary. Thank you, Scott, for such a wonderful idea!

Centre Church Is a 'Just Peace' Church

Please see the following advocacy correspondence written by our member, Peter Abell (edited and slightly adapted by Scott Couper).

Dear Senator Leahy,

You will not remember me, but I remember speaking directly to you at the August 2019 twentieth anniversary celebration of the founding of PURE WATER for the WORLD in Burlington, Vermont. Having just read the *New York Times Magazine's* feature article on the United States' role in creating the border immigration crisis in general (and in regard to El Salvador in particular) and knowing that you have personal sympathy for the people there, I ask that (if you have access to the United States President) you please do what you can to encourage him to countermand the damage done by the previous administration to the Temporary Protected Status law. We owe it to those people to do what we can to help them. Our policies and financial aid to the Salvadoran government and military during the time they were murdering their own people, especially in violation of the 1961 act prohibiting such aid, cry out for justice! We just can't be deporting these people who've been here for years, which is what is apparently going to happen unless Congress or the President acts. I know that you are very busy, but if you have time, please read the article in this week's *New York Times Magazine*.

Thank you for your time, skill, and care.

Peter J. Abell, DMD, MsD, Brattleboro

Co-Founder, Pure Water for the World (in its genesis, a Rotary water project in El Salvador)

[The article about which Peter spoke, "Their Lawsuit Prevented 400,000 Deportations. Now It's Biden's Call", can be found in *The New York Times Magazine*, April 7, 2021 or at

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/07/magazine/immigration-el-salvador.html>]

MAY DAY

May 1 is May Day, a traditional day to welcome spring. In the spirit of welcoming, Centre Church is extending a welcoming hand to the dancers of the Brattleboro School of Dance (BSD), who will be our neighbors beginning this summer. BSD is moving into the space next to the Mitchell-Giddings Art Gallery on Main St, where Candle in the Night used to be.



A theme of "Neighbors Welcoming Neighbors Welcoming Spring" has blossomed into a lovely dance event beginning at 1pm for two brief shows on Saturday May 1st on the front lawn. The second performance will begin at 1:15 pm.

Sixteen dancers, ages 7 to 13, will perform original choreography by Bridget Struthers, the owner and director of Brattleboro School of Dance. The music is classic spring: the Garland Dance from Tchiakovsky's "Sleeping Beauty". Bridget is assisted by Centre Church member and BSD instructor, Nan Mann.

We hope many members of Centre Church and the wider community will join in watching this wonderful, live, outdoor dance performance. Be on time; the shows are brief and we don't want anyone to miss a second!

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 April 26.

Alta Barber

13223 N 3937 Dr., Bartlesville, OK 74003

Gary Carrier—Dirigo Pines

c/o Allison Carrier Lucy
16 Page Place, Orono, ME 04473
207.944.0030

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 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 CONTACT INFORMATION

Bonnie Girvan: girvangardens@gmail.com

NEW FRIENDS OF CENTRE CHURCH

Raymond & Suzie Paquet
(parents of Stephanie Couper)

65 Setian Lane
West Warwick, RI 02893
401.374.3022 (Raymond) / 401.862.1696 (Suzie)
401.821.8575 (home)
suzie3125@msn.com

Frances LaClair Burrows

May 20, 1923 - March 14, 2021



Dynamic energy, a flaming vivacious spirit entered into eternal life Sunday, March 14, 2021 after a great run of 97+ years.

Fran was born in Saxtons River, VT. on May 20, 1923, the daughter of William F. and Phoebe (Walker) LaClair. She graduated from Montpelier High School in 1941 and Becker College in 1943, where she received a Medical Secretarial Degree and was a member and President of Beta Chi Sigma sorority.

In 1945 she moved to Brattleboro with her family, and prior to her marriage was employed in the office of the late Dr. Leighton Noyes. On April 29, 1950 she married Pliny N. Burrows at Centre Congregational Church in Brattleboro. Fran and Pliny built their home together in 1953, a home which they loved and enjoyed sharing with others.

Her civic interests included being a volunteer at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital for over 50 years, a cause which she truly enjoyed. Fran was a greeter at the front desk for many decades, faithfully there at 7 AM every Monday with her infectious smile. She was a member of the BMH Auxiliary where she was an Honorary Director and worked on their many fundraising committees, honored one year by being named Auxiliarian of the Year. She was an active volunteer with the Red Cross blood drawing program for at least 35 years. She was involved with the Brattleboro Winter Carnival, the Brattleboro Outing Club, the Brattleboro Garden Club, and longtime member of Centre Congregational Church. Frances and Pliny, established Burrows Sport Shop at 97 Main St., where she served at a buyer and part-time worker. Her interests included antiques, singing, swimming, skiing "in early years!" with family, working in their yard, and revered time with her family.

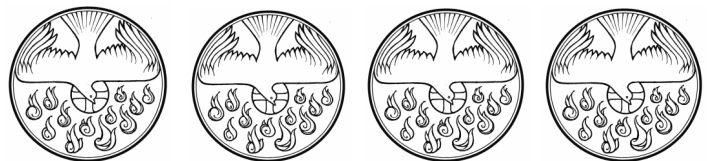
She is predeceased by her dear husband, Pliny, and a brother, Robert W. LaClair of Montpelier. Fran leaves two daughters, Anne B. Gragen (Kevin) of Brattleboro and Lynn B. Sullivan (Jim) of Riverside, IL; four granddaughters, Courtney Rocco (Rob) of Everett, MA, and Margaret, Katherine and Amy Sullivan of Chicago, IL; a grandson, Ryan Miller of Boston, MA; and two great grandchildren, Robert, Jr. and Brianna Rocco.

A faithful and devoted wife and loving mother, she adored her children, grandchildren and family. Fran was an amazing soul, matriarch, tower of example, a strong woman and the dearest pal!

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in Fran's name may be made to:

- ♦ Brattleboro Memorial Hospital
17 Belmont Ave., Brattleboro, VT 05301
- ♦ Brattleboro Fire Dept.
103 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301; or
- ♦ Memory Care Unit of Langdon Place,
136 Arch St., Keene, NH 03431.

A special 'Thank You' to COMPASSUS Hospice and Palliative Care of Bedford, NH. Our deepest appreciation to the compassionate and special staff at the Memory Care Unit of Langdon Place. You are all wonderful and we will be forever grateful for your beautiful care of our pal.



BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Bruce Landenberger
- 16 Jackson Grobe
Karen Rydant
Dawn Grobe
- 18 Li-Ming Pu
Arthur Freeman
- 26 Albert Rydant



ANNIVERSARIES

- 20 Fred & Carol Edmonds



MAY 2021

*ZOOM events
**Holy Communion

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 8 ⁰⁰ Green-up Bratt 8 ³⁰ Church Clean-up 1 ⁰⁰ Dance performance 7 ⁰⁰ Inquirers Class*
2 9 ³⁰ Meditation zoom 10 ⁰⁰ Worship** zoom 12 ⁰⁰ Deacons' meeting 1 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology* 7 ⁰⁰ Windham Union Spring Gathering	3 4 ⁰⁰ BCC Board	4 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology*	5 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 7 ⁰⁰ First Wednesday	6 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional* 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion* 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	7 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	8 7 ⁰⁰ Inquirers Class*
9 Mothers Day 9 ³⁰ Meditation zoom 10 ⁰⁰ Worship zoom 1 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology*	10	11 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology*	12 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ Mission & Service	13 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional* 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion* 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	14 CB DEADLINE 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	15 10 ⁰⁰ AIDS Walk for Life 7 ⁰⁰ Inquirers Class*
16 9 ³⁰ Meditation zoom 10 ⁰⁰ Worship zoom 1 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology*	17 1 ⁰⁰ Compassionate Brattleboro	18 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology*	19 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ Church Council	20 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional* 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion* 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	21 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	22 7 ⁰⁰ Inquirers Class*
23 Pentecost 9 ³⁰ Meditation zoom 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / New Members—zoom 1 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology*	24	25 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology*	26 MAIL CB 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting	27 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional* 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion* 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	28 1 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	29
30 9 ³⁰ Meditation zoom 10 ⁰⁰ Worship zoom Union Service w/ Guilford Church 1 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology*	31					

SCOTT'S SERMONS can be accessed at the church website: www.centrechurchvermont.org -or-
facebook page: <http://www.centrechurchvermont.org/audio-video.html> -or-
https://www.facebook.com/pg/Centre-Congregational-Church-Brattleboro-VT-632678343519640/notes/?ref=page_internal -or-
From the website Welcome page, click *Audio & Video* in the top list (or click *More* or *Other* on the top right).



MAY LECTIONARY TEXTS

Sunday, May 2, Fifth Sunday of Easter
Acts 8:26-40; Ps 22: 25-31; 1 Jn 4:7-21; **Jn 15:1-8**

Sunday, May 9, Sixth Sunday of Easter
Acts 10:44-48; Ps 98; 1 Jn 5:1-6; **Jn 15:9-17**

Sunday, May 16, Seventh Sunday of Easter
Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; Ps 1; 1Jn 5:9-13; **Jn 17:6-19**

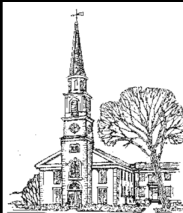
Sunday, May 23, Pentecost Sunday
Acts 2:1-21 or Ezek 37:1-14; Ps 104:24-34, 35b; Rom 8:22-27
or Acts 2:1-21; Jn 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Sunday, May 30, 1st Sunday after Pentecost / Trinity Sunday
Isa 6:1-8 and Ps 29; Rom 8:12-17; **Jn 3:1-17**

Church Clean-up Day



Saturday, May 1
8:00am-12:00pm
All Welcome!



Centre Bells is published monthly by
Centre Congregational Church, UCC
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@centrechurchvt.org

MAY



2021

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BRATTLEBORO, VT 05301

**CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
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