

MINISTER'S COLUMN, Scott Couper

Has anyone noticed? For the past year-and-a-half there has not been many, if any, homeless sleeping on the streets in Brattleboro. Now, this morning, I observed a person sleeping on a Pliny Park bench. The reason: On July 1, Vermont's pandemic related emergency housing in hotels and motels voucher program ended. With its conclusion, about 700 people out of 2,100 (1/3) had to vacate their state sponsored accommodation. Understandably, there is *not* an outcry from some. Understandably, there is an outcry from others.

There is *not* an outcry from some because according to the *Brattleboro Reformer* 2/3 of the indigent population can remain accommodated for at least another 84 days as they are 'vulnerable' (families with children, disabled, over 60, pregnant, victims of abuse or violence). Presumably, the other 1/3 is capable of living without state sponsored accommodation and thus 'not vulnerable'. There is not an outcry from some because almost 80 million dollars has already been spent, it could only be afforded because the Federal Emergency Management Agency paid the bill, and this font of money is drying. Presumably, those who are 'not vulnerable' had plenty of time to save while being housed *gratis* by the government for so long. There is not an outcry from some because the 1/3 who are vacating are being given \$2,500 (that's two or three months' rent) upon departure from the hotel program – and up to \$8,000 is possible - in addition to the savings that should have been made from not having to pay rent or mortgage for over a year. One could honestly say, such largess should be responded to with a big 'thank you' rather than with an ungrateful 'more!' Last but not least, the hotels are opening back-up for business and they need the space.

There is an outcry from others because it is far more expensive for society *not* to provide accommodation for homeless people than it is to accommodate them. According to *VT Digger*, it costs \$97 a night per room (or about \$40-\$50 a night per person) to accommodate the homeless. Emergency room visits, law enforcement expenses, addiction recovery programs, incarceration, profit losses for businesses, etc... all cost far more. So, there is a good argument that it costs more *not* to accommodate the homeless than it does to accommodate them.

As people of faith, we must ask, 'what are we called to do and say as followers of Jesus' way?'

No matter right or wrong, after reading the gospels I can't conceive that Jesus would respond by saying 'enough is enough and no more – fend for yourself'. No matter right or wrong, after reading the gospels I can't conceive that Jesus would respond by saying 'it is cheaper to take care of the homeless than it is to *not* take care of them'. I do not think Jesus' 'sayings and doings' would be based on an individual's merit ('does one deserve help?') nor do I think Jesus would be weighing economic advantages and disadvantages ('Is treating an overdose and accommodating folk in correctional facilities more expensive than providing safe and secure housing?').

First, my understanding of the gospels leads me to understand that Jesus' 'sayings and doings' regarding the homeless in Brattleboro would be based on **his vision of the kin-dom of God**. Second, my understanding of the gospels leads me to understand that Jesus' 'sayings and doings' regarding the homeless in Brattleboro would be based on the belief that all people are made in God's image (*imago dei*) and that God's will is that all reach their **fullest God-given potential**. Neither one of these considerations are dependent upon, one, personal responsibility accountability (that I affirm) nor with, two, a societally beneficial fiscal balance sheet (that I also affirm). As a follower of Christ whose allegiance is to our church, my perspective is neither liberal nor conservative. It is, or should be, well, 'Christ-like'.

CENTRE BELLS

August 2021

The newsletter of
Centre Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ



Council Chair, LYNN HERZOG

We talked a lot about water in our Council Meeting this month. Not, alas, the 'living water' that Jesus promised to the Woman at the Well, but the waters that inundated the Brattleboro Centre for Children on July 12. It was not a flood of biblical proportions, thankfully, but it did take two days to clean it up, with the help of many volunteers and ServPro. It was presumably due to blocked drains on the roof, that we will keep a close eye on in the future. Meanwhile, Building & Grounds has been doing extensive repair work on the frequently-flooding drains in the kitchen and Memorial Hall that have been blocked by extensive grease deposits. All this takes time and money to repair. Not exactly spiritual stuff, but the drains underpin the structure of the church building the way our committees (and boards and teams) underpin the social structure of our church – they keep it functioning.

We are also fortunate to have many ways to strengthen our spiritual structure. Besides worship on Sundays, there is Guided Meditation, the UCC devotional, the sermon discussion group, Women's Spirit, Pub Theology, and the Christian Theology class. So if you don't want to sit in front of a screen on a lovely summer Sunday, there are many other ways to connect with "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4) through our home at Centre Church.



The August 9 Second Sunday Offering will go to **Brattleboro Senior Meals**, a private nonprofit agency that provides a nutritious daily meal to people over 60 living in the Brattleboro area. Please give generously!

From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

As I write this month's article, we have already experienced our first in-person service in July and will be soon in-person for our August Sunday. What was especially notable to me was the splendid sound of hearing folks singing hymns again. Out of all the losses from the pandemic, I found that one to be particularly difficult. Hymn singing sounds SOOOOO much better with voices joining along! I also realize that when I write my next *Centre Bells* article, we will be just about ready to re-start the choirs, and for me, that is equally as exciting as the congregation singing hymns again. If you haven't yet participated in our choir, please consider giving it a try!

Thanks go to Jenifer Ambler, Alison Hale, Matt Kennedy, and Sue Rowell for providing special music during July/August. It has been wonderful having folks providing anthems each week while we have been ZOOMING!

DEACONS

It was a gladsome morning for the Deacons on July 11 as we took our places at the sanctuary doors for the first time since November, 2020. After so many months away, there was some trepidation that we might have lost the hang of "deaconing", but, except for a stumble or two (our apologies for forgetting the hand-held mic), all fell pretty much into place and we were right at home. What joy to again greet dear friends, to see the long-empty pews at last occupied, to share lively chatter, and voices in song and prayer—even if muffled by masks.

That day also saw Centre Church's maiden foray into a hybrid model of worship, with live-streaming on our Facebook page to accommodate those not yet comfortable with group gatherings, and those at a distance. We are, as always, indebted to Jenifer Ambler for her technical proficiency and generosity of time which makes this possible. We anticipate that we will continue with hybrid services even after we have our "Grand Re-launching" and return to weekly congregational worship in September.

In other great news, Kate Maisner Weeks has recently signed on with the diaconate crew! We are utterly delighted, and thankful, that Kate will be bringing her energy, bright smile, and youthful spirits to the board. Welcome, Kate!

We'll have one more 'soft' opening on August 8, giving us another opportunity to get the rust out before we resume weekly in-person worship.

Until we re-unite,

In Faith, Heidi Mario

LONG-RANGE PLANNING TEAM

The LRPT held its first in-person meeting in the church parlor on June 13 followed by another in-person meeting on July 7. We are working on a brief one-sentence **Purpose Statement** that is broad enough to cover the primary work of our church, clear enough so that members of the congregation as well as members of the community will understand it, and memorable so members can easily recall it. We anticipate we will have a **Purpose Statement** to present to the congregation by the time in-person worship fully resumes in September, if not sooner.

The Rev. Paul Nickerson, of Nickerson Coaching, who has been guiding us in our vision/discernment process will be coming to Centre Church the week-end of October 8 – 10. Paul will lead us in a congregational meeting as we develop a **Vision Statement** that will be a description of what our church will look like when we live out our purpose as stated in our **Purpose Statement**. On Sunday, October 10 Paul will be preaching from the pulpit.

HOT OFF THE PRESS: the LRPT is pleased to unveil the **Purpose Statement**, adopted at our meeting on Tuesday, July 20, 2021: Centre Church's purpose is to be a faith community fostering *belonging*, *believing*, and *becoming* that which God intends.

-Robert Pu, on behalf of the LRPT

BRATTLEBORO CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

The flash flood warning in July brought a deluge to the Brattleboro area and on Monday, July 12 at 7:00am, when I arrived at BCC I found the interior quite flooded with rainwater. Water damage was all over the classrooms and office on the lower level. I went to Memorial Hall to see if it also was flooded (as had been the case so often in the past), and the good news was, it was not! A handful of Loaves & Fishes workers were already there and I told them BCC had about 3/4 inch of standing water all over. They immediately brought over their two shop-vacs and several mops and began to help me take up the rugs, and soak up the water. By 8:00am, when I could call ServPro, they had done so much work that the bulk of water was soaked up, but the damage was done, the Center was closed, and sanitation and drying out was required. This is a shout-out to the Monday morning Loaves & Fishes crew, the best neighbors ever in a time of severe need. I am so very grateful to this other mission of the church and their selfless assistance to BCC at a time when I could not have managed it alone.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you all.

-Nan Mann, Director, BCC



ANNUAL NON-WELCOME CENTER FUNDRAISER

Dear Friends and Members:

Our church needs your help. We are holding a Non-Welcome Center fundraising event starting on July 1, 2021. Instead of baking for days on end, and making enough sandwiches to feed the world, we are asking everyone to contribute money directly to the church. We have done this in the past and have always received the money to reach our goal.

As everyone knows, the last 18 months have been difficult, especially for the Fundraising Committee, because we were isolated and non-functional. NOW is the time to make up our losses, reach into our pockets, and help.

Please make payments to this event with a note that your contribution is earmarked for the *Centre Church Non-Welcome Center Event*. We are hoping to reach our goal of \$3,000 before the end of the summer.

We thank you for your effort on behalf of our wonderful congregation.

Sincerely, the Fundraising Committee

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

On September 12, we will have our 'home -coming' Sunday, complete with an Ice Cream Social for Fellowship Hour, a children's sermon, and nursery care! We are excited that this kickoff is ready to happen again. We have missed you all!

Church school classes will resume September 19, following the Children's Time in worship and divided into three age groups: Nursery Care will be offered for those a few weeks old up to age three, by Kate Weeks. A Youngers class will be offered for three year olds through second grade and an Olders class for third through seventh graders. These will be taught by volunteer teachers who have access to curriculum provided by the church and ample time to prepare for their classes. In some cases, it may not be the same teacher all the time, however, we will do our best to provide consistency, especially for the Youngers.

We hope Adult Education classes will also be starting up, either in the form of book studies on Sunday mornings or in some other enjoyable form of fellowship and gathering.

We are still looking for volunteers to teach and lead children's sermons. If you would like to volunteer, or have any questions, please contact Nan Mann: nanmann17@gmail.com / 802-380-5231.

MEMBER CARE

Six of us on Member Care met in-person for the first time since early March 2020. ZOOM was not a possibility for us, so the telephone has been our primary means of communication.

We gathered for a salad/desert luncheon at Marion Daley's home in Putney. Over lunch we had a chance to catch up on each other's lives.

After lunch we held our meeting, starting off with the minutes Judi Miller took in early March at our last meeting held at the church. We listed members to serve at the reception following the memorial service for long-time member, Phyllis Hickok. Coming up in August will be the memorial service for another long-time member, Joanne Maclean and her husband. This service was delayed because of the pandemic. We take turns being the Member Care person-of-the-month. Those names are listed in the weekly *eNews*.

And we began to think of making plans for an ice cream social that used to be done by Board for Christian Education.

Marion Daley, Chair

PEOPLE

BIRTHDAYS

- 
- 3 Patricia Reardon
 - 4 Lynn Herzog
 - 8 Carlene McCarty
 - 10 Laura Slate
 - 12 Margo Neale
 - 13 Carol Edmonds
Lisa Keller
 - 14 Wendy Randall
 - 15 Victoria Svec
 - 16 J. Clyde Johnson
 - 17 Verne Bristol
 - 20 Sue Rowell
 - 23 Patricia Neer
 - 26 Dan Healy
 - 31 Mary Bristol
Peter Abell

ANNIVERSARIES

- 3 Dawn & Tony Grobe
- 12 Al & Karen Rydant
- 27 Ron & Priscilla Svec
- 29 Allen & Dot Vander Meulen



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 May 26.

Alta Barber

13223 N 3937 Dr., Bartlesville, OK 74003

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c/o Allison Carrier Lucy

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207.944.0030

Wanda Godfrey—Vernon Hall

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802.257.4588

Pat Neer—Thompson House

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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

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Daniel Guerra

PO Box 6274, Brattleboro, VT 05302

Bill McKim: billgmckim@gmail.com



AUGUST 2021

**ZOOM events
*Holy Communion

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 9 ³⁰ Meditation** 10 ⁰⁰ Worship** 12 ⁰⁰ Deacons 1 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology**	2	3 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology**	4 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting	5 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	6 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 5 ⁰⁰ Gallery Walk / Green at Centre	7
8 9 ³⁰ Meditation-chapel 10 ⁰⁰ Worship -sanctuary 1 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology	9	10 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology**	11 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 4 ⁰⁰ BCC Board 6 ⁰⁰ Mission & Service	12 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	13 CB DEADLINE 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	14
15 9 ³⁰ Meditation** 10 ⁰⁰ Worship** 1 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology**	16 Bruce vacation	17 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology**	18 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ Council 6 ³⁰ NAACP	19 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	20 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 1 ⁰⁰ Joanne MacLean Memorial svce.	21
22 9 ³⁰ Meditation** 10 ⁰⁰ Worship** 1 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology**	23 Bruce vacation	24 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology**	25 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting	26 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	27 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	28
29 9 ³⁰ Meditation** 10 ⁰⁰ Union Worship Centre Congregational 1 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology**	30 MAIL CB 1 ⁰⁰ Compassionate Brattleboro	31 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology**				

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

Everyone is invited to

The GREEN at CENTRE

Friday, August 6

Ben Carr performs a solo 'ukulele set of originals, standards, and covers; steeped in a fingerpicking and percussive style of folk rock, classical, and jazz.

In association with Brattleboro's Gallery Walk, please come join us on the lawn for a fun night of beautiful music. Bring a blanket (we have chairs if you prefer).



AUGUST LECTIONARY TEXTS

Sunday, August 1, 10th Sunday after Pentecost
2 Sam 11:26-12:13a and Ps 51:1-12; Ex 16:2-4, 9-15
and Ps 78:23-29; Eph 4:1-16; **Jn 6:24-35**

Sunday, August 8, 11th Sunday after Pentecost
2 Sam 18:5-9, 15, 31-33 and Ps 130; 1 Kings 19:4-8
and Ps 34:1-8; **Eph 4:25-5:2**; Jn 6:35, 41-51

Sunday, August 15, 12th Sunday after Pentecost
1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14 and Ps 111; Prov 9:1-6 and
Ps 34:9-14; Eph 5:15-20; Jn 6:51-58

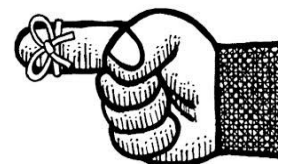
Sunday, August 22, 13th Sunday after Pentecost
1 Kings 8:(1-6, 10-11), 22-30, 41-43 and **Ps 84**; Josh
24:1-2a, 14-18 and Ps 34:15-22; Eph 6:10-20;
John 6:56-69

Sunday, August 29, 14th Sunday after Pentecost
Song of Sol 2:8-13 and Ps 45:1-2, 6-9;
Deut 4:1-2, 6-9 and Ps 15; **James 1:17-27**;
Mk 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23



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News items, articles, address changes, and requests to be added or removed from
the *Centre Bells* mailing list should be submitted to the church office:
802.254.4730 / admin@centrechurhvt.org



AUGUST



2021

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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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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

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