

## MINISTER'S COLUMN, Scott Couper

Dear Friends in Christ,

In mid-February, we will celebrate **Valentine's Day**. Valentine's Day can be considered to focus on 'Love'. Yet, I feel Valentine's Day more specifically focuses on the means by which we *communicate* love (flowers, cards, chocolates, jewelry, etc...).

This year, I hope to focus on how our church *communicates* its love for God, our community, the world, and all of Creation.

Christianity is a powerful and deeply meaningful faith tradition because it is able to *communicate* the love of God and the love we should have for one another to even a selfish and hard-headed meathead like me. The genius of Christianity is not so much its emphasis on Love, but on the persuasive means by which it *communicates* Love.

Last month, the Christmas season concluded whereby God's love for the world was communicated with **Emmanuel** (God with Us): Jesus the Christ.

Forthcoming, during Holy Week, we will focus our gaze on the **Cross** that again communicates God's solidarity with us – even through, or *especially* through, our pain and suffering.

And during Easter, when we celebrate the **Resurrection** of Jesus Christ, we are proclaiming the fulfillment of a promise that God never abandons us, not even, in death.

The Nativity, the Cross, and the Resurrection are means by which to *communicate* God's love.

As a church, we are called to continually discern means by which to best *communicate* God's love. Crassly put, that is 'marketing'. Marketing, at its essence, is communication. Yet, our faith is not commercial – love is not a commodity to be bought and sold through transaction. So, Christians use the word 'evangelism', a faith-based term for 'marketing'. The word *evangelize* comes from the Church Latin *evangelizare*, 'to spread or preach the Gospel', with the Greek root *euangelizesthai*, or 'bring good news'.

Last month, we celebrated the New Year. It is 2023. How do we evangelize *today*? How do we communicate God's love to a world that desperately yearns to know of it? How do we, like Hallmark, during this month we celebrate Valentine's Day, most effectively and efficiently communicate our faith? The traditional methods have been music, yes, pastoral care, yes, feeding the hungry through Loaves & Fishes, yes, caring for 'the little ones' through Brattleboro Centre for Children and Faith in Action, yes. These methods are still very much effective and should be continued.

Yet, in 2023 we also need to employ modernity in how we communicate the gospel: social media, hybrid worship, contemporary Christian music, and on-line giving. Centre Church will soon discern new methods of 'being church' in our community through our future partnership with the **Sacred Places** initiative. Innovation is not a threat. Innovation is a means by which to better *communicate* that which is ancient, traditional, and tried and true. Let's continue to communicate the gospel – God's love for the world – by 'old' and 'new' ways.

Happy Valentine's Day!

## ***CENTRE BELLS***

**February 2023**

The newsletter of  
**Centre Congregational Church,  
United Church of Christ**



## Council Chair, LYNN HERZOG



We began our Council meeting (and thus the New Year) with some very good news about our finances. It looks as though we will end the year with a small surplus, rather than the huge deficit we had predicted. A combination of many small savings and a few large donations brought about this miracle. Let us all offer a prayer of thanks!

Looking back on 2022, many good things have happened in the church. We have come through the pandemic pretty well.

Attendance at Sunday worship is slowly increasing, and we have a new on-line congregation, thanks to the pandemic.

- People are very happy to get together at our new Hospitality Time, especially when it includes food and singing (a great new addition!).
- Our refugee team worked with the West Brattleboro and Dummerston churches to welcome our Afghan family and help them adjust to life in the US.
- Our church offered space for Muslims to worship (and we will now have Zen Buddhists renting a room from us, too – making us quite an inter-faith center).
- We yielded our basement to the good work of Loaves & Fishes and Carry Me Home.
- And the Green@Center is now putting on wonderful entertainments once a month, with an art show that lasts all month.

This year also saw the conclusion of the work of the Long-Range Planning Team. These hard-working, thoughtful, and creative people have given us a new vision of a church that is believing and becoming all that God intends. Now it is up to us to bring about that vision.

## From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

The choir is now rehearsing back in the Music Room as of mid-January! The last time we rehearsed there was in March, 2020 when we had to abruptly stop practicing and were sent home. That was when everything shut down because of the pandemic. When we returned to in-person services last year, we rehearsed in the sanctuary as it was a larger space and felt safer. I was planning on going back to the Music Room this past fall, but the electric piano died. We explored having it repaired...it was even taken apart, but Technics is no longer in business and therefore parts aren't available nor is anyone fixing that brand. Thanks to Ron Svec and Peter Abell, the well-used keyboard was brought to the dump. After a few months of searching for a replacement, I found a second-hand Roland Digital Piano that was gently used. Jenifer Ambler and I loaded it in my truck, carried it up the stairs and it is now resting comfortably in the Music Room. Digital pianos do not require tuning so we save \$130 a year (or twice a year) by going this route. We have already used it for rehearsals. Roland Digitals are an excellent brand and the one we purchased retails for \$2,000. We were able to purchase it for \$950 even though the asking price was \$1,200. The woman from whom we purchased it lowered the price because it was going to a church! This was an unexpected purchase and it wasn't in the budget. If anyone feels moved to help cover this expense, please feel free to make a check out to Centre Congregational Church and indicate 'piano fund' in the memo section. Any amount would be helpful. I will start the ball rolling with a \$100 contribution.

Thanks go to Alison Hale for her beautiful flute playing on Martin Luther King Sunday. We played several Spirituals arranged by Mark Hayes for the Prelude and Postlude. It is always such a gift to hear Alison's exquisite playing!



## DEACONS

The Christmas decorations have been stored away for another year, and the Deacons thank those who helped with this task!

Our New Year's Day service was on ZOOM with a brief sermon and beautiful recorded music.

The Rev. Dr. David Stinson and Rev. Lise Sparrow preached January 8 and 15 respectively while Rev. Scott Couper was away on leave.

Every Sunday after the service the congregation is invited to Hospitality Time in the parlor!! Marion Abell is responsible for figuring out how to make this important social event occur and we appreciate all her organizational skills. Please volunteer to help.

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Look for us to help host the All-New Hospitality Time this month. We are a small committee, so if you feel the pull to offer us some help, we will gladly accept! One of our major efforts right now is building community and this seems a delightful way to do just that. We will be hosting on February 12, 19, and 26. See Nan or Laura Slate to sign up. Thank you in advance for your support to the families of Centre Church.

Another effort we are undertaking this month is to make and send 'thank you' Valentine's cards to the workers at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital. Kate is helping by listing all the departments for us. Each week the children who attend are drawing pictures and those who are able are copying words for the cards. Nan brought in envelopes and our goal is that by Valentine's Day we'll have enough cards to bring to the hospital and let those workers know they are valued by the children of Centre Church.

We continue to provide the messages at children's time during worship, and this is where the bulk of our 'lessons' are given at this time. If you would like to help us deliver those messages, please contact Nan to sign up. We're gearing up for February messages right now.

-Nan Mann

## MISSION & SERVICE

Thank you to all who helped us support Loaves & Fishes in January. Not only did we support this important mission of our church through the Second Sunday Offering, some people also helped with the deep cleaning of the kitchen on January 21. Then on January 29, Rev Scott Couper and Jenifer Ambler shared photos and stories of their November trip to El Salvador and Cabinitas. We will continue this focus in February with the Second Sunday Offering on February 13, donating to the *Luz del Mundo Scholarship Fund*. Each year we contribute \$1,500 toward this fund, sponsoring at least twelve students ranging from elementary school age to university. We also look forward to the possibility of a July concert at Centre Church which will benefit the *Luz del Mundo* fund.

Thank you for your donations to other special offerings in December:

- 5 for 5 offering- The Christmas Fund (December)- \$356
- The Samaritan Fund(Christmas Eve)- \$1,336
- The DCF/Giving Tree – Gifts to six different children in foster homes

We will continue to provide one meal a month at the Groundworks Shelter on South Main Street. This month's dinner will be on Sunday, February 19. Food is to be dropped off by 5:00pm (or brought to church that morning to give to someone who will be going at 5:00pm). Dishes should be fully heated and in disposable containers. You can sign up on the bulletin board in the hall or online:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f4dada82da6ffce9-groundworks#/>

Questions? Contact Priscilla Svec:  
802.505.8925 / [svecpriscilla4@gmail.com](mailto:svecpriscilla4@gmail.com)

Please consider a donation.



## AFGHAN CO-SPONSORSHIP TEAM

Over the past year, I had the privilege of serving on an Afghanistan refugee co-sponsorship team composed mostly of members of three local United Church of Christ congregations. Our family consisted of two parents and, until a recent joyful addition, three children. There were countless ways that our community inspired us with the welcome they extended to the family. I want to speak specifically about the area I helped facilitate - education.

Our family's children were warmly welcomed by school representatives from the outset, and they and their parents were treated with compassion and dignity. The English Language Learners (ELL) teachers were the first and most constant connections between the family and the schools. From the initial encounter, an intake interview, I was struck by the high degree of preparation and care these teachers showed. Deb Coombs, Jen Course, and Rachel Scarano were remarkably ready for the large influx of ELL students created by our community's resettlement of refugees. Despite the stress this must have caused them, they were calm, gentle and reassuring as they discussed the previous educational background of the children, what the process was for enrolling them at Academy School and Brattleboro Area Middle School, and what their experience would be like as they began attending. Once the students started going to school, the sense of a warm embrace was extended by the entire school population, from the classroom teachers who welcomed and fully included each child in instruction as well as their classroom communities, to the students who reached out and befriended them and created room signs in Dari or Pashto languages, to the administrators who extended offers of support and created spaces for the children to privately observe their noontime prayers, to the coordinators of after school programs who eagerly included the children into their activities. But the anchor of support, educationally, culturally, and personally for the children remained to be their ELL teachers. Jen, Deb, and Rachel as well as Olivia Clark and Heidi Pancake established strong, healthy, positive relationships with the children, helping them to understand academic content in a new language, and creating a space in which they felt comfortable and known. The children loved their schools and looked forward to attending every day.

The family we welcomed to Brattleboro last February has recently relocated to another part of the country where the father has found a good job in his professional field. As our work with them concludes, our team felt it was important to shine a positive light on the outstanding experience this family of refugees had in our schools.

Sincerely,  
Stephen Rice, *Educational Liaison for a refugee resettlement co-sponsorship team from First Congregational Church of West Brattleboro, Centre Congregational Church, and Dummerston Congregational Church.*

## PEOPLE

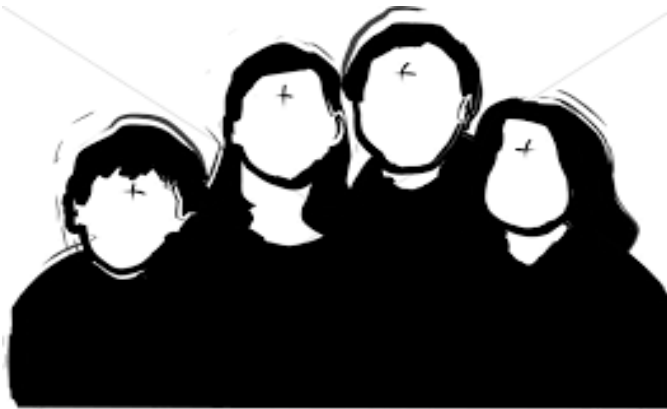


A word of good cheer would be warmly received by members and friends of our church who are in nursing homes, assisted living centers, or are housebound as of November 26.

**Gary Carrier**—Dirigo Pines  
c/o Allison Carrier Lucy  
16 Page Place, Orono, ME 04473  
207.944.0030

**Karen Getty Peter**—Pine Rock Manor  
3 Denny Hill Rd., Warner, NH 03278

*Please let the Administrator know  
if we've missed someone.*



## B I R T H D A Y S

17 Nan Mann  
20 Emily Randrup  
Dart Everett  
Carolyn Moore  
27 Mary Ann Donovan





# FEBRUARY 2023

**\*\*ZOOM events**  
**\*Holy Communion**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			<b>1</b> 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff meeting 12 <sup>00</sup> Help Fund 5 <sup>00</sup> Contemplation Service 7 <sup>00</sup> VT Humanities First Wednesday	<b>2</b> 10 <sup>00</sup> UCC Devotional** 1 <sup>00</sup> Quilting ministry 4 <sup>30</sup> Women's Spirit 5 <sup>30</sup> Choir rehearsal	<b>3</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes 12 <sup>30</sup> L & F board	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b> 9 <sup>00</sup> Book Discussion 10 <sup>00</sup> Worship* 11 <sup>30</sup> Annual Financial Meeting	<b>6</b> 4 <sup>00</sup> Sermon discussion** 4 <sup>30</sup> Christian Ed 7 <sup>00</sup> Pub Theology	<b>7</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes 12 <sup>30</sup> BAILA	<b>8</b> 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff meeting 12 <sup>00</sup> Help Fund 5 <sup>00</sup> Contemplation Service 6 <sup>00</sup> Mission & Service	<b>9</b> 10 <sup>00</sup> UCC Devotional** 1 <sup>00</sup> Quilting ministry 3 <sup>30</sup> BCC Board 4 <sup>30</sup> Women's Spirit 5 <sup>30</sup> Choir rehearsal	<b>10 CB DEADLINE</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b> 9 <sup>00</sup> Book Discussion 10 <sup>00</sup> Worship / FIA 11 <sup>30</sup> Hospitality Time	<b>13</b> 4 <sup>00</sup> Sermon discussion** 7 <sup>00</sup> Christian Theology	<b>14 Valentine's Day</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	<b>15</b> 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff meeting 12 <sup>00</sup> Help Fund 5 <sup>00</sup> Contemplation Service 6 <sup>00</sup> Church Council 6 <sup>30</sup> NAACP	<b>16</b> 10 <sup>00</sup> UCC Devotional** 1 <sup>00</sup> Quilting ministry 4 <sup>30</sup> Women's Spirit 5 <sup>30</sup> Choir rehearsal	<b>17</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b> 9 <sup>00</sup> Book Discussion 10 <sup>00</sup> Worship / FIA 11 <sup>30</sup> Hospitality Time 5 <sup>00</sup> SOS Meal	<b>20 PRESIDENTS DAY</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 4 <sup>00</sup> Sermon discussion** 4 <sup>00</sup> Compassionate Brattleboro 7 <sup>00</sup> PubTheology	<b>21</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	<b>22 MAIL CB</b> 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff meeting 12 <sup>00</sup> Help Fund 5 <sup>00</sup> Contemplation Service 6 <sup>00</sup> WWAC Salon	<b>23</b> 10 <sup>00</sup> UCC Devotional** 1 <sup>00</sup> Quilting ministry 4 <sup>30</sup> Women's Spirit 5 <sup>30</sup> Choir rehearsal	<b>24</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> 9 <sup>00</sup> Book Discussion 10 <sup>00</sup> Worship / FIA 11 <sup>30</sup> Hospitality Time	<b>27</b> 4 <sup>00</sup> Sermon discussion** 7 <sup>00</sup> Christian Theology	<b>28</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes				

SCOTT'S SERMONS can be accessed at the church website: [www.centrechurhvermont.org](http://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](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).



## FEBRUARY LECTIONARY TEXTS

**Sunday, February 5,** 5th Sunday after Epiphany  
Isa 58:1-9a (9b-12); Ps 112:1-9 (10); 1 Cor 2:1-12 (13-16);  
**Matt 5:13-20**

**Sunday, February 12,** 6th Sunday after Epiphany  
Deut 30:15-20 or *Sirach 15:15-20*; Ps 119:1-8;  
1 Cor 3:1-9; **Matt 5:21-37**

**Sunday, February 19,** Transfiguration Sunday  
Ex 24:12-18; Ps 2 or Ps 99; 2 Peter 1:16-21; **Matt 17:1-9**

**Wednesday, February 22,** Ash Wednesday  
Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or *Isa 58:1-12*; Ps 51:1-17; 2 Cor 5:20b-6:10; **Matt 6:1-6, 16-21**

**Sunday, February 26,** First Sunday in Lent  
Gen 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Ps 32; Rom 5:12-19; **Matt 4:1-11**

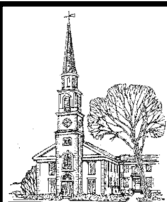
### NEW FRIENDS OF CENTRE CHURCH

#### Terry Rounds

608 North St., Chagrin Falls, OH 44022  
[terrencerounds@hotmail.com](mailto:terrencerounds@hotmail.com)

#### Jean Brodie

PO Box 1034, West Townshend, VT 05359  
[yogajean5@yahoo.com](mailto:yogajean5@yahoo.com)



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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](mailto:admin@centrechurhvt.org)



**FEBRUARY**



**2023**

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

**Current news/information in the larger UCC Community:**

VT Conference: [www.vtcucc.org](http://www.vtcucc.org) / National: [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org)

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**Council Chair:** Lynn Herzog

**Treasurer:** Anne Fecto

**Clerk:** Jenifer Ambler