

**WORSHIP LEADER'S COLUMN, Rev. Lise Sparrow**

*12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.*

*13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"  
(1 Kings: 12-13)*

In the last Centre Bells edition, Rev Scott described your recent analysis and recommendations for the future of the church. It was an exciting, hopeful exploration of all which is here and possible for the church.

Now, just one month later, Scott is making a different exploration, described beautifully in these pages...journeying to the far reaches of your ministry and its impact in the small community of Cabanitas, El Salvador.

For each of these explorations the same question, brought to Elijah in 1 Kings, might be asked: "What are you doing here?" Elijah kept poking his head in and out of the cave-- and each time he would appear he heard the same question, drawing him into the heart of his faith and his life's purpose. Similarly, Scott has led you to look at the very space you have supported for centuries and its purpose and its role in the Brattleboro community.

This past month, even just since I arrived to fill in, extremes of weather (wind, water, earthquakes and fire) have also drawn these same questions out of us and to the heart of our faith:

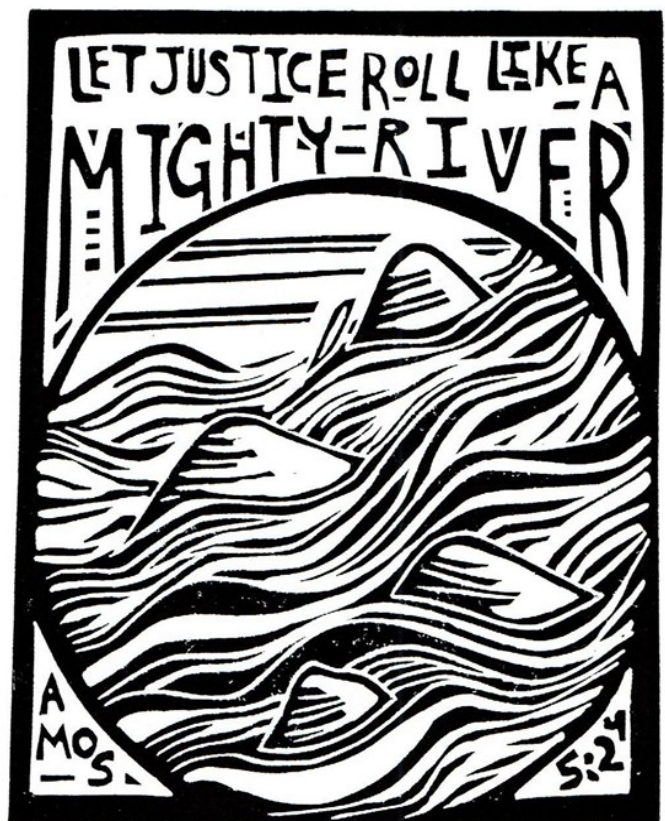
"What are we doing here??"

We can't help look at the earth and its extreme events, its peoples and their tumult, only to consider what we, in our small Vermont lives, can do. Joanna Macy, a mystic and environmental warrior, has worked for years encouraging "we, who despair for the earth and its peoples" to use that cave of despair and the questions which proceed from it as the grounding for our work together in the world.

In September this same despair and our love for the planet will frame our worship services.

If you are interested you can join online on September 1 and October 4 with people around the world at opening and closing services for the Annual Season of Creation. We will send the links to you in our September eNewsletters.

This year's theme is the "Mighty River", perfect for a church which sits poised on the bank of the Connecticut, the celebration hitting close to home, with all the floods and fears, the freedom and festivities rivers bring to us. I hope you can join in the beautiful music Mary has found for us and help me with prayers and poetry to lift up all our love for the earth and our hopes for things to come.



**CENTRE BELLS — SEPTEMBER 2023**

The newsletter of Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

## COUNCIL REPORT

With Council Chair Lynn Herzog on vacation and Pastor Scott Couper on Sabbatical in El Salvador, things have been relatively quiet as of mid-August. Sometimes in past years, Council hasn't met in July and/or August. But, we Council members decided there were enough important issues to discuss that it was worth meeting, even if not everyone could be present. Anne Fecto stepped up to the plate as meeting moderator.

Time was devoted to additional follow-up on the Sacred Places Asset Mapping event. Copies of the report have already been made available to church members and friends, and soon will go to event participants outside of the church. Everyone is strongly encouraged to read it thoroughly and give feedback at opportunities for further discussion in September (stay tuned!). Council will work through the Fall on ideas for reorganizing our committee structure in hopes of more effective use of our limited pool of volunteers.

The good news on the financial front is that pledges have been over budget, and expenses have been under budget recently, meaning, although we have taken money from the Endowment, we have not needed to take as much as we feared we might. In the long run we hope, guided by the Sacred Places report, to make and implement action plans for our future financial health.

Submitted by Jenifer Ambler, Clerk

### From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

Centre Church was fortunate to have a wonderful variety of anthems and special music this summer. Big shout-outs go to the following folks for their musical gifts: Jenifer Ambler, Alison Hale, Lisa Keller, Matt Kennedy, Nan Mann, Teddy Martin, Monadnock Recorder Society (Lynn Herzog), Sue Rowel, and Greg Sweeney. Thanks to these folks, we had special music each Sunday!

The choir will be back for the season on **Sunday, September 10!** We will be rehearsing again on Thursday evenings, beginning September 7, from 5:30-6:30pm in the choir room! We would love to have some new folks join us. Please know you are welcome to attend our first rehearsal. If you have any questions, feel free to snag me on any Sunday after church! It's always exciting to have the choir back again and I look forward to beginning another season!

## DEACONS

We are pleased to have Rev. Dr. Lise Sparrow as our ministerial leader during this Sabbatical time, August/September/October. Rev. David Stinson is also willing to help if needed in an emergency. He is just not able to do regular calls on members. He will be preaching October 8.

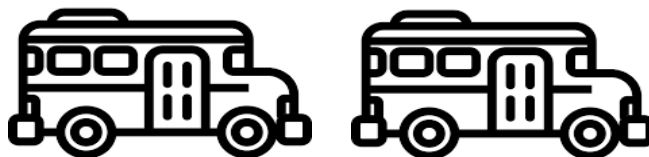
For the 3-month period, Member Care, led by Marion Daley, will be calling members of our congregation occasionally to assist with phone calls and/or visits to anyone in our church who needs that supportive personal touch that is usually provided by Rev. Dr. Scott Couper.

As the one who volunteered to help organize this important program, I sent Marion Daley a list of names of those I felt would be able to assist Member Care. If she calls you, please do your best to help out with a phone call, visit or even a meal if needed. Any member who feels they would like to be a part of this valuable mission can let me or Marion Daley know.

Of course if there is a more urgent need, you can contact me at 802.579.8892 or 802.254.9258, and I will get in touch with Rev. Sparrow or Rev. Stinson.

Thank you everyone!

-Joy Everett, Deacon's chair



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

We are looking forward to a new year of Faith In Action/Sunday School. In September, we will host two special events.

On September 9, we are inviting the families of Centre Church to paint a Noah's Ark on the wall of the Riverside Room, which is also known as the Sunday School room and used to be known as the Noah's Ark Room. We plan to hold a pizza party afterward to thank those who helped. Anyone else interested in helping is welcome to join us. Watch *eNews* for more information.

Also in September are the Sunday School registration and Ice Cream Social. This year, they will be held on the third Sunday – September 17. Please join us.

-Laura Slate, Chair

**Women's Spirit** is a group of women, intentionally, who meet weekly on Thursdays at 4:00pm (except for the second Thursday when it is 4:30pm) in the Heritage Room.

We choose subject matter about current events, social or spiritual issues we want to explore. The focal point is the springboard for discussion and personal sharing, whether we agree or not, but a safe place to do so. Our current book is *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. All women are welcome!

The **Sunday Spirit Book Discussion** group is currently reading and discussing *The Wisdom of No Escape and the Path of Loving-Kindness* by Pema Chodron, an American Buddhist nun.

We meet weekly at 9:00am in the Heritage Room and always welcome new participants.

For more information contact Judy Palmer:  
[judithp41@gmail.com](mailto:judithp41@gmail.com) / 802.579.9027.

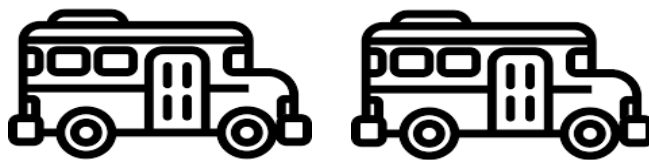
## **MISSION & SERVICE**

### **Second Sunday Offering**

The September Second Sunday Offering will be the HELP fund, which is administered by SEVCA and provides funding locally for urgent needs: housing, utility bills, heat, property taxes, and auto repairs. Many recipients are single parents, underemployed, barely getting by, with no savings in reserve to cover such things as first/last month rent and security deposit.

### **Luz del Mundo Fundraiser!**

On **Friday, September 22** at 7:00pm in our sanctuary, Jesse Lepkoff and his Baroque ensemble will perform another one of their wonderful concerts to benefit the Luz del Mundo Scholarship Fund, which helps the children in our El Salvador Sister Parish to attend school. The longer children stay in school, the better jobs they can obtain to support their families, the less likely the boys are to get involved with gangs, and the less likely the girls are to get pregnant. Unlike last year, when grant funding fell through, this year the concert expenses are already fully funded, so ALL of the proceeds that night will go to the scholarships. Come enjoy some excellent music!

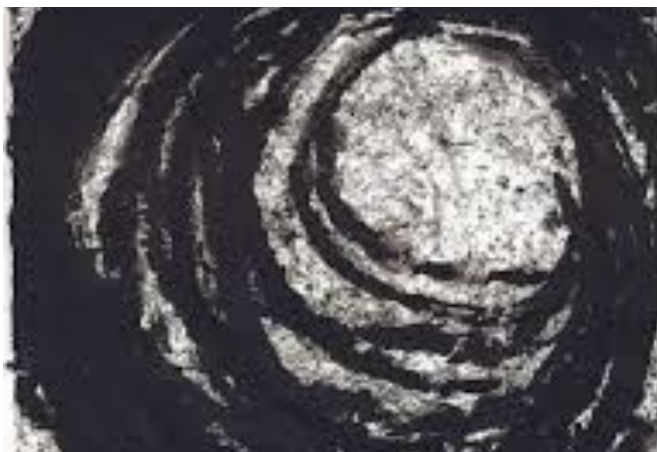


## **BRATTLEBORO CENTRE FOR CHILDREN**

The staff, families, and children of Brattleboro Centre for Children want to extend our sincere thanks and eternal gratitude to the members of Centre Church for their help and support during our time of recovery from the damaging flood on June 27, 2023. Without the congregation's aid, we would have had a much more difficult period of recovery to get through and we are so humbled and honored by your help. Thank you for your compassion, generosity, and your prayers. We have worked hard to maintain our quality child-care center and the state licensing board has given us permission to do the things we need to get back to normal and we are enthusiastically moving in that direction. Thank you again for all your caring and support. We are grateful.

In August we graduated three students who are going off to public school Kindergarten this month. Helping raise and educate children from infancy all the way through to preparation for kindergarten is an honor and a privilege we are very proud to have. The bonds and love that form for us as we live through those first five years with a child and with their parents means so very much and we are grateful for the parents' trust in us as we partner with them to bring their children to the next important milestone of their life—public school. This month we start over again with some new infants and a new group of "olders" who will be ready for kindergarten next year!

- Nan Mann, Director





## SCOTT'S EL SALVADOR ADVENTURE

Pretty much everyone is aware that Pastor Scott Couper is spending August, the first month of his sabbatical in El Salvador. But some may not be aware of the background of our Sister Parish relationship there and his reasons for going.

Back in 1992, shortly after the peace accords were signed ending the long Salvadoran civil war, Peter Abell and his son Kim traveled there with a Vermont delegation on an educational tour. Then-pastor Jack Bixby had visited there previously. The group were very impressed with the determination of the Salvadorans to rebuild their lives and country. Conversations at church and Rotary meetings grew into a group of Brattleboro and Vermont medical personnel traveling to do clinics in 1994. Centre Church started the process of considering a Sister Parish relationship, inspired by Bethany UCC in Montpelier. Meanwhile mid-90s Associate Pastor Jo Shelnutt-Melendy had already adopted one child from El Salvador and was in the process of adopting another. It all seemed like destiny!

We formalized the Sister Parish relationship in 1996 and visited the Cabanitas community for the first time in 1997 and many times since for both clinics and church activities. We wanted to find a long-term sustainable way of helping them, instead of just week-long projects, and the conversations kept returning to education as the best way out of poverty. So we started the Luz del Mundo Scholarship Fund and have been helping the children of the Cristo Redentor Lutheran Church ever since.

After COVID-related postponements, the tri-annual Sister Parish Encuentro finally resumed in November 2022; this is a meeting in El Salvador to which representatives of all sister parish communities are invited. So newcomer Scott Couper joined longtime El Salvador veteran Jenifer Ambler to attend. He was very impressed with the energy and spirituality of the people in the Salvadoran Lutheran Church and in the Sister Parish program it administers. He said at that time that he wanted to devote part of his sabbatical to spending more time in El Salvador!

Scott is spending most of his time in El Salvador staying at a beautiful hilltop guest house in a safe neighborhood of San Salvador owned and operated by Christian Chaverria, a Lutheran Pastor very active in the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod. He has already worshiped at the main Lutheran Church, La Resurreccion, in the city, and has met with Pastor Francisco Aguilar of our sister church Cristo Redentor a couple of times. Plans are afoot to worship with Cristo Redentor a couple of Sundays, meet scholarship recipients, discuss more deeply the local community's conditions, needs and desires, and work out ways for us to continue supporting them as effectively as possible.

Meanwhile, as of press time, Scott has been finding the good safe places to indulge his love for running, visited a beautiful park near the guest house, visited the top of the volcano overlooking the city, and has many more sightseeing and history-learning plans saved up for the week his son Micah will be visiting with him.

See Scott's news and photos in Centre Church's Facebook group, and stay tuned for more later!



## MEMBER CARE

### Coffee Hour...Fellowship Time ...HOSPITALITY TIME

The name of our gathering after Sunday church service has changed, but the purpose of gathering for the opportunity to meet and greet old timers and new comers is the same! Looking over the lists of the many boards and committees it soon shows that some names appear on several. That means making a list of which board or committee has a month is difficult. Look at the end for assignments for September – December 2023.

My memory went back to the time my husband, Darrel, and I attended the big 4,000 member Presbyterian Church in San Diego way back in the late 1950's. There were three services every Sunday and coffee and tea served in the court yard, but it was done by a catering group. No calling around to see who was bringing what.

It was a big contrast for us when we moved to Alaska to teach school and attended the Chugiak Methodist Church. We met in the basement of what would later be a beautiful church building with windows behind the pulpit with a stunning view of Denali (Mt McKinley). If the sermon was boring you always had a good view!

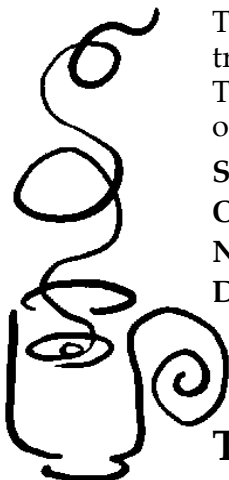
Following the long period of time attending Centre Church via the computer, the congregation began to meet again...minus Coffee Hour. There came a call to bring it back.

Marion Abell set up a schedule, renamed it "Hospitality Time" and the church goers enjoyed getting together in the parlor for conversation coffee, cookies etc.

Back in the old days this was a simple task because committees and boards were chock-a-block full of people to fill all the slots. This plan from September through the end of the year 2023 is set for different groups. Those not listed will appear on the January 2024 list.

You might have to call on some people to help fill in. Setting up, serving and cleaning up are tasks needed to continue to have Hospitality Time after church service.

Marion Daley .... Member Care



The second Sunday of the month Duo Xi has been treating us to a selection of her own Chinese cooking. The committee provides coffee, cream, and some other beverage.

**September** Member Care and Christian Education

**October** Music Committee

**November** Brattleboro Center for Children

**December** Personnel Committee

**Thank you for your participation!**



## 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 August 26.

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

**Alice Stockwell**—Vernon Hall  
13 Greenway Dr., Vernon, VT 05354  
802.254.5504

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



## FUNDRAISING EVENT

As part of the First Friday Celebrations,  
Centre Church will host a

### Summer Salad Supper

on Friday, September 1, 2023  
from 5:00 – 7:00pm  
on the church front lawn.

There will be appetizers,  
a wide variety of salads,  
and fabulous blueberry cobbler.  
Lemonade will also be available.

The cost is \$15 adults,  
\$5 children age 5-12,  
free for children under 5.

Please come support the church  
while you enjoy your friends and  
a great meal!

## BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Alex Day
- Emma Day
- 6 Mary Robertson
- 10 Jim Bedard
- 17 Elizabeth Fecto
- 23 Joy Everett
- 24 Bonnie Girvan
- 29 Rebecca Day



## Brattleboro Area Youth Group to Re-Launch September 10

Young people, ages 13-18 in the greater Brattleboro area are invited to attend the re-launch of an inter-faith youth group on **Sunday, September 10** from 5:00 – 7:00pm at the Guilford Community Park Pavilion, supported by various local faith communities. Youth: Come check it out and bring a friend!

During the kick-off, individuals will get to know each other through games, share a pizza meal and explore which activities they'd be interested in pursuing one Sunday afternoon a month this coming year.

In the past decade, youth have taken a service trip each year to places as diverse as New Orleans, Kenya, St. Croix, El Salvador and the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in S. Dakota, with the group fundraising to support each venture and to insure its affordability.

The Guilford Community Park Pavilion is located at 24 Church St. in Guilford, VT. If inclement weather, the gathering will move indoors. Come share their ideas!

For more information, contact Priscilla Svec: 802.505.8925 / [svecpriscilla4@gmail.com](mailto:svecpriscilla4@gmail.com) or  
Nanci Leitch: 802.258.8348 / [nanci.leitch@gmail.com](mailto:nanci.leitch@gmail.com)



# SEPTEMBER 2023

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

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes 5 <sup>00</sup> Green @Centre/ Summer Salad Fundraiser <b>Bruce / Lise vacation</b>	2
3 9 <sup>00</sup> Book Discussion 10 <sup>00</sup> Worship* 11 <sup>15</sup> Hospitality Time 11 <sup>15</sup> Sermon Discussion	4 <b>LABOR DAY</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	5 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff meeting 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes 7 <sup>00</sup> Dharma evening	6 <b>eNews Deadline</b> 7 <sup>00</sup> VT Humanities First Wednesday	7 1 <sup>00</sup> Quilting ministry 4 <sup>00</sup> Women's Spirit 5 <sup>30</sup> Choir Rehearsal	8 <b>CB DEADLINE</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	9
10 9 <sup>00</sup> Book Discussion 10 <sup>00</sup> Worship / FIA 11 <sup>15</sup> Hospitality Time 11 <sup>15</sup> Sermon Discussion 5 <sup>30</sup> Interfaith Youth Group	11	12 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff meeting 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes 7 <sup>00</sup> Dharma evening	13 <b>eNews Deadline</b> 6 <sup>00</sup> Mission & Service	14 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	15 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	16 9 <sup>00</sup> Buddhist 1/2 day Sitting
17 9 <sup>00</sup> Book Discussion 10 <sup>00</sup> Worship / FIA 11 <sup>30</sup> Ice Cream Social 11 <sup>15</sup> Sermon Discussion 4 <sup>30</sup> Groundworks meal	18 1 <sup>00</sup> Compassionate Brattleboro	19 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff meeting 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes 7 <sup>00</sup> Dharma evening	20 <b>eNews Deadline</b> 6 <sup>00</sup> Church Council 6 <sup>30</sup> NAACP	21 1 <sup>00</sup> Quilting ministry 4 <sup>00</sup> Women's Spirit 5 <sup>30</sup> Choir rehearsal	22 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes 7 <sup>00</sup> Amphion Baroque Fundraising concert	23
24 9 <sup>00</sup> Book Discussion 10 <sup>00</sup> Worship / FIA 11 <sup>30</sup> Hospitality Time 11 <sup>15</sup> Sermon Discussion	25	26 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff meeting 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes 7 <sup>00</sup> Dharma evening	27 <b>eNews Deadline</b> <b>MAIL CB</b> 6 <sup>00</sup> WWAC Salon	28 1 <sup>00</sup> Quilting ministry 4 <sup>00</sup> Women's Spirit 5 <sup>30</sup> Choir rehearsal	29 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	30

**LISE'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).



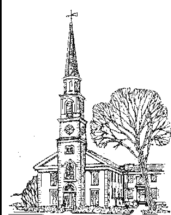
## SEPTEMBER LECTIONARY TEXTS

**Sunday, September 3**, 14th Sunday after Pentecost  
Ex 3:1-15 and Ps 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b or Jer 15:15-21 and  
Ps 26:1-8; **Rom 12:9-21**; Matt 16:21-28

**Sunday, September 10**, 15th Sunday after Pentecost  
Ex 12:1-14 and Ps 149 or Ezek 33:7-11 and Ps 119:33-40;  
Rom 13:8-14; Matt 18:15-20

**Sunday, September 17**, 16th Sunday after Pentecost  
Ex 14:19-31 and Ps 114 or Ex 15:1b-11, 20-21 or Gen 50:15-21  
and Ps 103:(1-7), 8-13; Rom 14:1-12; Matt 18:21-35

**Sunday, September 24**, 17th Sunday after Pentecost  
Ex 16:2-15 and Ps 105:1-6, 37-45 or Jonah 3:10-4:11 and  
Ps 145:1-8; Phil 1:21-30; Matt 20:1-16



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802.254.4730 / [admin@centrechurh.org](mailto:admin@centrechurh.org)





**SEPTEMBER**



**2023**

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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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**Scott's days off:** Friday and Saturday

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**Website:** [www.centrechurchvt.org](http://www.centrechurchvt.org)

**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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