

Last Time Around

This will be my final Centre Bells piece as your interim minister. Three years ago I arrived here for an interview and walked into the parlor to face a rather large interim search committee – what was it, 12, 13, 14 people? I responded to your questions, we talked, I said a few things about myself. Some of you had concerns about the Gospel of Mark – that is, how could I be off touring around the country doing performances and still be your interim pastor? How would I respond to your situation? What were my ideas for church growth and vitality? I felt a lot of anxiety in the room, uncertainty about the future, some pain about the present, a sense of loss about a past that had somehow gotten away from you when you weren't looking. I left that interview holding some mixed signals, not knowing if you would decide to call me or not. I did two other interviews and waited to hear from you.



I've enjoyed these past three years as your interim minister. But at some level I've been waiting to hear from you all this time, still waiting for a sign that you are ready and willing to embrace meaningful change. We've done some good work, accomplished some good things. But the way forward requires an openness to change and innovation that we never quite achieved. The Church in our present day must learn how to be more agile, more able to respond to its surroundings, more skilled at evaluating and acting upon its potential, more ready to engage in theological reflection and prayer with regard to the signs of the times. The Church in our current culture must tend to its spiritual health and growth, must re-dedicate itself to community worship, must learn to recognize and fully welcome those who are seeking to be part of it. You have to take some chances, try some new ideas, risk becoming a new church that doesn't look like you. I think we found some stability and hope during my time here. I wish we could have found the path to a more active re-visioning and renewal. That path still awaits you and is there for you if you will trust God to guide you.

Your people, your community, and your world are waiting to hear from you. What Word will Centre Church speak to them? What Word will you speak to the brokenness and injustice in our society? What Word of compassion or mercy will you proclaim to the poor and the marginalized? What Word of comfort and healing will you speak to the wounded and hurting ones? What Word of love will you speak to the lonely and the lost and the forgotten? What Word from God will be born into the world through the lives and voices of the people of this church? Your lives. Your voices.

I hope and pray that you will find your path. I hope and pray that the past three years will someday be seen as a stepping stone to a new flourishing here, a new era of faithful ministry. I hope and pray that through the grace of God you will find a new settled pastor who will walk with you toward a new incarnation of the Realm of God on Main Street in Brattleboro. If you really believe it can happen, it will.

I will miss all of you. Thank you for the many kindnesses you've shown to me and to Kare. Trust in God, follow Jesus, listen for the Spirit, pray without ceasing, and never give up the struggle for peace and justice!

Love and Peace, and God's blessings to all –

Rev. Bert

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bert".

CENTRE BELLS

The Newsletter of
Centre Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ
February 2018

From Acting Council Chair, MARGO NEALE

Greetings to all,

After a successful 2017, Council is looking forward to an even better 2018. Although our financial reports have been much delayed by computer outages at the church throughout the month of December and into January, we are beginning to assemble appropriate information for the Annual Meeting. That meeting will be held after church on **February 18, 2018**. Please be present if you can.

It is my hope that several of the Council meetings this winter and spring can focus on issues that are emerging in the life of our church. The first will be the Council meeting on January 23 when the focus will be on Membership Growth and Development. Subsequent meetings will address topics such as Church School Development, Stewardship, and Centre Church in Community, probably in that order. Council meetings are open meetings and, should you be interested in any of these topics, please feel free to contact any member of a committee or the Council to get the exact time and place for the discussion.

I would like to use this column to thank members of the church who are making exceptional contributions to the life of our church and our community. This month I would like to thank **Mary Ellen Bixby** and **Marion Abell** for their work with Loaves and Fishes to bring the coolbot room up to par. The coolbot room is used to store produce that does not require refrigeration but does require cool storage. It is a critical part of the Loaves and Fishes functioning. The repair involved not only the interior space but the inside wall of our building. The cost for this repair was borne, largely, by Mary Ellen and Jack Bixby, Marion and Peter Abell, Anne Doesburg, and Allen and Dot VanderMeulen. They deserve thanks from all of us for seeing this project through. It is of benefit not only to Loaves and Fishes but to the entire church.

Finally, I would also like to use this column to bring attention to certain needs of our church, one of which is to find tenants to rent space in the second floor level of our main building. There is at least one large room that is currently unoccupied that might be suitable for a children's dance program, an exercise program of some sort, a large and ongoing discussion group, etc. If any of you reading this column can imagine a group that might be interested please let me, Dart Everett, or Roger Miller know and we will follow up.



...Why, what's the matter,
That you have such a February face,
So full of frost, of storm and cloudiness?
~William Shakespeare,
Much Ado about Nothing

Council Meetings Through February 18

**January 23—Church Council Meeting –
Focus on Membership, 6:00 pm**

**January 29—Church Council Meeting –
Review of the Proposed Budget for 2018, 6:00 pm**

**February 4—First Notification of the
Annual Financial Meeting**

**February 11—Second Notification of the
Annual Financial Meeting**

**February 18—Annual Financial Meeting,
11:30 am**

BRATTLEBORO CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

Centre for Children is often grateful for the many donations and gifts the members of the church make available to us. Your generosity is a mark of the relationship we have built with you and we thank you for it.

However, we cannot use everything that is anonymously left by our door. Storage space, developmental appropriateness for the ages we serve, and condition are just a few of the reasons.

If you wish to leave us something, please contact the office first, at 802-254-0300 or brattleborocentrefor-children@gmail.com to inquire if it is something we can use. If you are unable to reach us, and wish to leave a donation, we'd appreciate a note so we know where it came from. Thank you for all that you do to support our centre. ~Nan Mann, director

Board for Member Care

We were pleased to welcome **Karen Rydant** as the newest member of Member Care Board. Karen is a longtime member of Centre Church. She and her husband, Al, joined in 1985 when Jack Bixby was minister. Their two daughters grew up in this church and are among those confirmed here. Their names are on that plaque up in the belfry of this church. (See page #48 of *This Jewel on Main Street*.)

During her long membership she has contributed her talent in the crafts, creating beautiful items for the Christmas Craft Fair (formerly Church Bazaar). She taught Sunday School, served on the Finance Committee, knitted with the Prayer Shawl group, worked on numerous events.

Karen taught K-2nd in the Chesterfield Elementary School. Though now retired she subs in that same school. There's still a trace of Canadian accent in her voice. She and Al spend a couple of months each year back in beautiful British Columbia where Karen grew up.

During the past two months there have been five memorial services. We have served at four receptions following the service. After Christmas, poinsettias were delivered to several people who cannot come to services. Bitter cold weather prohibited some of the planned deliveries.

Under the creative eye and skill of **Gisela Robeck** a picture letter is sent to faraway members and others, showing people meaningful and happy events at our church.

Judi Miller continues to keep the main bulletin board up to date and seasonal. **Heidi Mario** assists with this project.

~Marion Daley

From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

MUSIC NOTES

February! This year, it means Lent begins in a couple of weeks! I'm always caught by surprise when Lent is on the earlier side as the shift from the joy of Christmas (joyful music) moves to the deep contemplation of Lent (lots of reflective music), seeming to occur suddenly! It feels kind of like a whip-lash to me. However, as I think I may have mentioned before, I love Lenten music. I love the soul-searching, introspective ways in which composers have sought to capture the Lenten spirit. The music is beautiful. I look forward to it. I like that much of it is in minor. I like the mood it creates. I hope that you do as well. I look forward to traveling through Lent with you again this year and I hope that you find inspiration through the music of the season.



BOARD FOR MISSION & SERVICE

The **Second Sunday Offering** for February is Groundworks Collaborative, which operates the Drop In Center, Morningside Shelter, the Seasonal Overflow Shelter, and a wide variety of other services for the homeless, poor, and hungry.

From the Groundworks website: "Basic Needs Met with Dignity. Groundworks Collaborative was established in 2015 following the merger of two well-established organizations: the Brattleboro Area Drop In Center and Morningside Shelter (having previously been in existence for 27 and 36 years respectively). Groundworks Collaborative provides ongoing support to families and individuals facing a full continuum of housing and food insecurities in the greater Brattleboro area." This includes "...working collaboratively with area non-profit and public agencies to help people connect to a wide range of services including: job training and placement, medical and mental health treatment, family and substance abuse counseling, budget management, nutrition, health education, parenting and child care services, and assistance in identifying and applying for subsidized housing opportunities."

LOAVES & FISHES

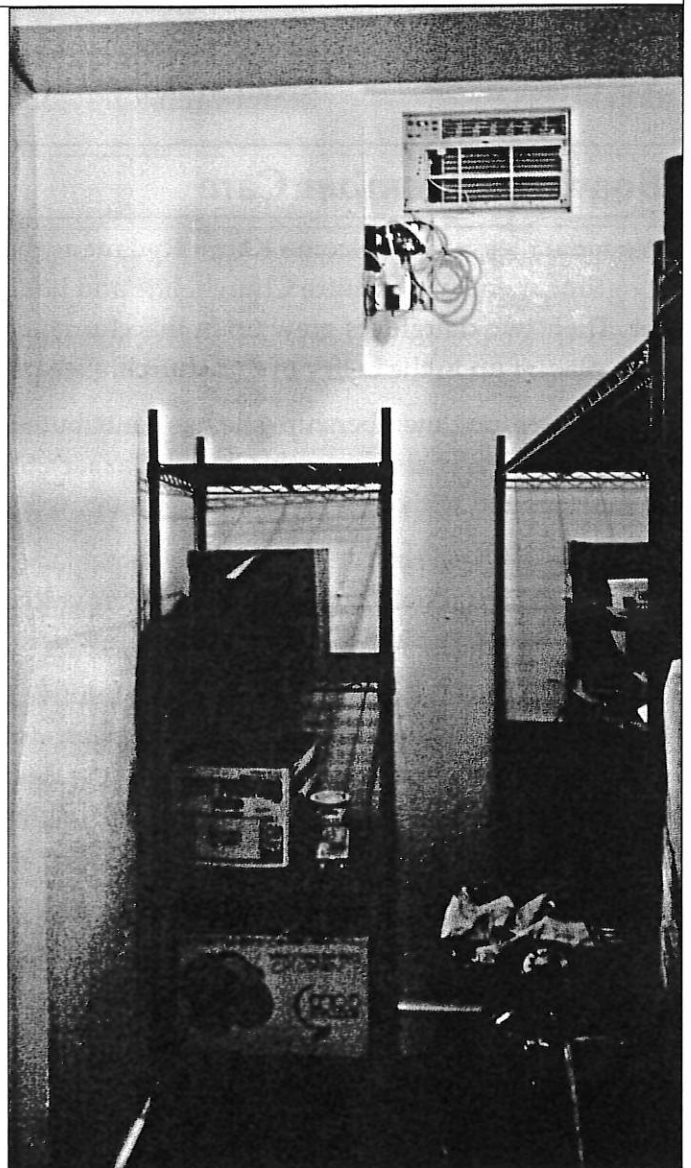
With many thanks to Suzanne Laliberte, the Loaves & Fishes CoolBot Room has been refurbished and is ready to be put back in duty.

For those of you who might not have made it to the "inner sanctum" of the L&F kitchen, the CoolBot Room houses the robot that serves as the kitchen's substitute for a walk-in cooler. The science is described here: <https://www.storeitcold.com/how-it-works/>

When the cooling mechanism was first installed, the room was not well insulated. Over time, the condensation ate away at the plaster walls and compromised them. Suzanne completely demolished the interior and reconstructed the walls, insulated them and covered them and the floor with water resistant materials.

The picture (right) shows the CoolBot back in action!

If you missed it: *The Brattleboro Reformer* recently had an excellent article about Loaves and Fishes; look for the Saturday, January 13-14, edition. There's a copy on the bulletin board outside the sanctuary. It's a stark reminder of the need for the most basic services in our community, and recognizes the people who step up each and every week to help fill the gaps.



WINTER POTLUCK
LUNCH at
Kare and Bert's
Saturday, February 3
1 - 4 pm



Directions to their house in Plainfield, MA,
will be available in the office.



New Contact Information

Just in case you don't have it: Stephanie Cary's phone number is now 802-254-3654.

The Copes are moving! Their new information is:

Deborah and Robert Cope
600 Carolina Village Road #508
Hendersonville, NC 28792
(210)842-COPE(2673)

VOLUNTEER WANTED

We are seeking someone with experience with helping people of faith, to join our team of volunteers. Applicants with knowledge and concern about children, the difficulties involved in quitting smoking, and how young people obtain alcohol and other drugs are also encouraged to apply.

Responsibilities include sharing your opinion and knowledge once a month, either by coming to Brattleboro Area Prevention Coalition meetings, or by answering a few questions each via email or Skype.

For more information: send an email to Cassandra cassandra.bapc@gmail.com or call her at (802) 257-2175.

...
If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
If the unheard, unspoken
Word is unspoken, unheard;
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,
The Word without a word, the Word within
The world and for the world;
And the light shone in darkness and
Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
About the centre of the silent Word.
...

~T.S. Eliot, *Ash Wednesday*

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 22.

DON WEBSTER

50 Highlawn Road
Brattleboro, VT 05301 257-1434

FRAN BURROWS

66 Green Meadow
Brattleboro, VT 05301 254-4934

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)337-1956

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

ROGER KETCHAM

c/o 8 Williams Court
Weymouth, MA 02188

Please let Hilary know if we've missed someone.

IN SEARCH OF ODD JOBS FOR THE WINTER:

Offering snow removal (driveways, walkways, roofs), home repair and improvements (painting, construction, and general fix its), basic auto work, and as the weather allows, general lawn care, landscaping, stonework (walls, patios, pavers), and professional moving services.

Please contact Fred Crosby 802-579-8251.

Copies of the **Centre Church Profile** are available. If you would like a PDF copy, please contact Jim Bedard at jbedaoak@comcast.net or stop by the church office for a printed copy.

CHURCH LIFE

NOTICE OF ANNUAL FINANCIAL MEETING

Pursuant to our By-Laws, this is to notify you that the annual financial meeting of Centre Congregational Church will be held on **February 18, 2018, at 11:15 AM.** The purpose of this meeting is to receive financial reports, approve the annual budget, and conduct such other business as may appropriately come before the meeting.

All members are encouraged to attend.

WOMEN'S SPIRIT . . .

After holiday time and bad weather, we have begun Viktor Frankl's book *MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING* as we continue to meet each Thursday afternoon in the church library at 4:30. Come join us for conversations as interesting as the books we study.



The next **Fundraising Committee** meeting is on February 7 at 3:30 p.m.

Everyone is invited to the
MOMENT for PEACE
Friday, February 2
5:30-6:00PM
Centre Church Parlor
Everyone is welcome.

Joann and Ben Coonrod will present a program on "The Seventh Story." As a society and even personally, we live under the influence of six age-old paradigms based on fear and lack. However, there is a new emerging "Seventh Story," based on love and enough for all. This powerful new story is defined in the collaborative work in progress of Brian McLaren and Gareth Higgins, one of hope and collaborate vision. The presentation will also include references to *Subtle Activism* by David Nicol.

Joann and Ben are friends of Parker Huber and are annual winter visitors to Brattleboro.

FAITH FORMATION formerly BOARD FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Calling all volunteers! Faith in Action had a nice run this fall with volunteers signing up on the sign-up sheet in the parlor up through December. However . . . now January is here and we are not covered with volunteers for the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month anymore. If you are interested in spending a Sunday with our elementary aged children please sign up or contact Logan Lefebvre (loganff@gmail.com) or James Cera with your ideas. Any idea is welcome, but as an inspiration point we were thinking of a February theme of Love in keeping with Valentine's Day.

We will also be losing one of our beloved child-care providers—Haley Marcil—next month as she embarks on a semester abroad. This is a paid position, every Sunday with our 0-5 year olds. If anyone knows of someone who might be interested in taking over, or if anyone is interested in volunteering for a Sunday or two while a more permanent replacement is found, please let us know!

Additionally, we have decided to change the name of our committee from Christian Education to **Faith Formation**, echoing larger trends within the national UCC family. It seemed to be a more accurate representation of what we are doing—forming our faith—then the more traditional sounding Christian Education.





Brown Bag Lunch Group

Frigid weather kept us from meeting in January, but if the weather cooperates, we will be meeting again on Wednesday, **February 7**, at noon to reacquaint each other with our winter adventures. Bring your sandwich and something hot to drink will be provided. All are welcome.

FEBRUARY 2018

*Holy Communion
celebrated

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 11 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	2 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 5 ³⁰ Moment for Peace 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	3 1:00 Potluck at Rev. Bert and Kare's
4 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship* 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 2 ⁰⁰ Reed Service 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	5 1 ⁰⁰ Prayer Shawl	6 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	7 12 ⁰⁰ Brown Bag Lunch 12 ⁰⁰ ACA 3 ³⁰ Fundraising Committee	8 1 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	9 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting 7 ³⁰ Charter for Compassion	10
11 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FiA 12 ⁰⁰ Meetings Day 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	12 12 ³⁰ Centre Bells deadline 1 ⁰⁰ Prayer Shawl 7 ³⁰ AA District 8	13 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	14 Ash Wednesday 12 ⁰⁰ ACA	15 1 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	16 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	17
18 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FiA 11 ³⁰ Annual Financial Mtg. 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	19 OFFICE CLOSED Presidents' Day 1 ⁰⁰ Prayer Shawl	20 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	21 Centre Bells mailed 12 ⁰⁰ ACA 12 ³⁰ BAI	22 1 ³⁰ Quilting Ministry 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 7 ⁰⁰ Choir Rehearsal	23 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	24
25 9 ⁰⁰ Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship/FiA 10 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ AA Meeting	26 1 ⁰⁰ Prayer Shawl 7 ⁰⁰ Spiritual Conversations	27 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 6 ⁰⁰ Church Council 7 ³⁰ AA Meeting	28 12 ⁰⁰ ACA			

"The most serious charge which can be brought against New England is not Puritanism, but February.... Spring is too far away to comfort even by anticipation, and winter long ago lost the charm of novelty. This is the very three a.m. of the calendar."
~Joseph Wood
Krutch



February Lectionary Texts:

- 4 Isa 40:21-31 • Ps 147:1-11, 20c • 1 Cor 9:16-20
- Mark 1:29-39
- 11 2 Kings 2:1-12 • Ps 50:1-6 • 2 Cor 4:3-6
- Mark 9:2-9
- 14 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
- 18 Gen 9:8-17 • Ps 25:1-10 • 1 Peter 3:18-22 • Mark 1:9-15
- 25 Gen 17:1-7, 15-16 • Ps 22:23-31 • Rom 4:13-25 • Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9
- 28 Deut 18:15-20 • Ps 111 • 1 Cor 8:1-13 • Mark 1:21-28

BIRTHDAYS

- 9 Ron Pollard
- 17 Nan Mann
- 20 Dart Everett
Emily Randrup
- 22 Stephen Brown
- 26 Rennie Washburn
- 27 Mary Ann Donovan



Centre Bells

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centrechurch@centrechurchvt.org



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

CHURCH STAFF AND LEADERSHIP

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Administrative Assistant
Sextons
Financial Secretary

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Mary Milkey-May: music@centrechurchvt.org
Hilary Farquhar: hilary@centrechurchvt.org
Gary and Paul Smith
Christine Yost: finance@centrechurchvt.org

Acting Council Chair
Treasurer / Clerk

Margo Neale
Holly Kennedy / Constance Bresnahan

2 0 1 8



FEBRUARY

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