



CENTRAL NEWS

Jun/Jul 2021 Vol. 29, No. 10

From Rebecca

*And you – what of your rushed and useful life?
Imagine setting it all down – papers, plans, appointments,
everything – leaving only a note: "Gone to the fields to be lovely.
Be back when I'm through with blooming." ~ Lynn Ungar*

During lunch the other day, one of you shared with me that you had taped these sentences to the wallboard above your desk. We agreed – it is perfect for these days. The long months of the pandemic are easing, summertime is beckoning, schools and work places are opening up to new chapters, and we at Central are looking forward to this coming season of longer days, relaxed afternoons, time to read and reflect.

But I think there is even a larger meaning in Ungar's gracious words. Are we ever really "through with blooming"? I don't think so. Yes, we can put aside papers and plans and appointments. But the blooming continues – in ways we cannot now envision. Who knows what new task you might undertake? Who knows what different skills you might want to learn? Who knows what awaits any one of us?

So let's take the first part of Ungar's thought and use it to enrich our rushed lives. And let's take the second part and use that to imagine what God has in store for us that is way beyond our current imaginings.

Another one of you told me this week about finding a baby bird fallen from its nest too soon. You carefully researched how to help it live and followed all the directions for mending a motherless bird. But it died, despite your tender loving care. So you buried it and read St. Francis' prayer at the burial: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand, to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life."

That little bird, given a peaceful end, and all of us ... who in the coming months may indeed go to the fields to be lovely and come back when we are through with blooming ... all of us, God's creatures ... may we find blessings in the simple routines of daily life, in respites from that daily life and in next chapters which we do not today know, but which shall surely, in God's grace, keep us blooming in ever new and splendid ways.

Yours, in the spirit of Jesus' love and the blessings of God - *Rebecca*

Historian Ted Widmer to Speak at Central

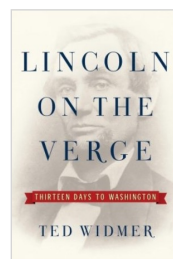
Ted Widmer – historian, author, former White House advisor, and Central neighbor – will be the featured speaker at the 2021 Rebecca L. Spencer Lecture Series on **Thursday, June 10, at 7 pm.**

Dr. Widmer will discuss his nationally acclaimed book, "**Lincoln on the Verge: Thirteen Days to Washington,**" which chronicles the president-elect's 1861 journey to Washington and his inauguration – as he overcame repeated obstacles while maintaining his integrity and moving forward against a previously corrupt administration. It is a timely and suspenseful story

with fascinating parallels to what is happening in the United States today.

Dr. Widmer will examine the lessons that apply to other divided moments in history, how Lincoln still speaks to us, and if anyone can rise to the occasion as he once did. The evening will conclude with a question-and-answer forum and book signing.

The lecture series shares stories to enrich, enliven, and strengthen the Ocean State community, so bring your friends!



SUMMER EVENTS

June

- 2 Gallery Committee 9:30 am
Religious Education Committee 6 pm
- 6 Stewardship Committee 9:15 am
Church School 10:30 am
Worship 10:30 am
Annual Meeting 11:30 am
- 7 Mondays with Scripture 8 am
Technology Committee 7 pm
- 8 Board of Deacons 5:45 pm
- 10 Nominating Committee 5:30 pm
Rebecca L. Spencer Lecture /
Food for Thought: Ted Widmer 7 pm
- 13 Children's Sunday / Bible
Presentation 10:30 am
Church School Gathering 11:30 am
- 14 Mondays with Scripture 8 am
- 16 Membership Committee Potluck 6 pm
- 17 Caring and Sharing 7 pm
- 19 Ed Luciano Memorial Service 12:30 pm
- 20 Children's Stories with Judy 9 am
Worship 10 am
Children's Summer Program 10 am
- 21 Mondays with Scripture 8 am
- 24 Rebecca's Book Group 12:30 pm
- 27 Children's Stories with Judy 9 am
Worship 10 am
Children's Summer Program 10 am
- 28 Mondays with Scripture 8 am

July

- 4 Children's Stories with Judy 9 am
Worship 10 am
Children's Summer Program 10 am
West Lawn Gathering 11 am
- 6 Spiritual Companionship Group 6 pm
- 8 Food for Thought Book Group 7 pm
- 11 Children's Stories with Judy 9 am
Worship 10 am
Children's Summer Program 10 am
Summer Bible Study 7 pm
- 15 Caring and Sharing Outing 7 pm

(continued on page 4)

SUMMER WORSHIP BEGINS JUNE 20 AT 10 AM!



The Deacon's Bench

Seeking a Church Home?

If you are looking for a church – or know someone who is – we would love to talk with you about it at our Inquirers' Meeting. It's very informal. You'll meet with our senior minister, Rebecca Spencer, and others like you who think Central may be the right church home. No commitment necessary. To join us, fill out a pew card during Sunday Worship or call the Church Office at 401-331-1960, and Rebecca will get in touch.

Inquirers' Meeting
Tuesday, October 26, 7 pm

Faith Exploration
Wednesday, November 3, 7 pm

New Member Sunday
Sunday, November 7, 10:30 am

Last Sunday, I arrived a bit early before the Worship service. After settling in my seat, my attention was drawn to the brilliant sunshine flowing into the sanctuary through the open doors facing Diman Place. I thought to myself, "We are really opening up. We are opening our doors and welcoming everyone to come in and be together!"

Being welcoming is a big part of maintaining and building Central's church community. During the past year, the Deacons have been especially determined to serve our members and community – not only when we were holding strictly virtual services, but also later, when we were gathering in person, and some congregants continued to stay home as a safety precaution.

In response, the Deacons have been calling and writing notes to Central members who have been especially impacted by the pandemic. We helped the Flower Committee deliver poinsettias at Christmas time and lilies at Easter time to Central members who had lost loved ones during the year. We also sent cards to members who were ill and who had suffered losses. These efforts were intended to preserve Central as a community that really cares.

Now that many of us are fully vaccinated and new cases of COVID-19 are reported to be going down, it is time to come together, to open our doors both physically and metaphorically. It is time for us all to not only return to church, but also share what we have at Central with others who might be interested in joining us.

Of course, any Sunday is a perfect opportunity to invite a friend to join us at Central. But coming up on Thursday, June 10, at 7 pm is a rare – and exciting – opportunity to be welcoming and introduce a friend to Central. American historian Ted Widmer – a neighbor and friend of Central – will discuss his book "Lincoln on the Verge: Thirteen Days to Washington" at this year's Rebecca L. Spencer Lecture Series. I look forward to seeing and greeting everyone as we continue to open up, and I look forward to meeting the new people who come to Central "to check us out." - *Peter N. Woodberry*

Summer Worship

In-person summer Worship services will start at 10 am on June 20 and run through Sep. 5. If you cannot attend, a recorded version will be posted on Central's YouTube channel later in the day.

Central's Task Force on Reopening continues to advocate mask-wearing and social-distancing for everyone's protection – even for those who are fully vaccinated and especially for members and visitors who are immunocompromised and may not be protected by the vaccine. **Sundays, June 20 through Sep. 5, 10 am**

West Lawn Gatherings

We are not quite ready to reinstate our traditional Coffee Hour, but this summer we hope you will join us out on the West Lawn after Worship for some tasty frozen goodies and good conversation with fellow Centralites. **Sundays, July 4, Aug. 1, and Sep. 5, after Worship**

Bring Your Own Picnic!

Join us for a mid-summer celebration as we continue to reconnect with one another. Bring your own picnic lunch and enjoy it on the West Lawn in the company of your friends at Central. **Sunday, July 18, after Worship**

Mission Moments

Every April, the Mission & Action Committee makes donations to two charities – one domestic and one international. These contributions are funded by the interest from two accounts set up in the late 1800s by Central's Women's Home Missionary and Women's Foreign Missionary Associations. The selected charities must benefit women – or women and children – and reflect the missions of these two early women's associations, as well as Central's mission and values today. This year's funds went to SSTARbirth in Cranston, R.I., and Wisdom Stoves in Zimbabwe.

Established in 1994, **SSTARbirth** is a long-term, residential substance abuse treatment program designed for pregnant, postpartum and parenting women. The program fosters family reunification by allowing women to participate in treatment with their young children. It accommodates up to 12 women and 24 young children at any given time and is the only program of its kind in Rhode Island.

Wisdom Stoves was founded in 2018 by the Rev. Dr. Edward Matuvhunye, a friend of Central who spoke here while studying at Andover Newton Theological School. Wisdom Stoves designs and distributes safe, portable, sustainable, fuel-efficient stoves to reduce health risks for women and children who cook over open fires. Central's donation purchased 12 stoves for women who couldn't afford their own.

Church Administrator

Our good friend Marilyn Brown has once again returned from a happy retirement to help out in Central's office until we can find a replacement for our church administrator, Jennifer Fallon. Jenn resigned to pursue other opportunities. We have assembled a search committee – consisting of Barbara Bayon, Sandi Connors, Kathy Mandel, Winn Major, Mary Hazeltine, and the Rev. Rebecca Spencer – and are actively soliciting potential candidates. **If you can recommend someone for this vital position, please contact Rebecca.**

Volunteers Needed

While the Church Office staff is in flux, we need volunteers to help out. There are many projects that require helping hands, including Central's annual report. So we need your time and talents now! If you have a day or even just a couple of hours that you can contribute, please contact Marilyn or Rebecca at 331-1960.

In Memoriam
Our prayers and sympathy are with the family and friends of Ruth Whitford ...
Natalie and Franklin Arnold ... and Louis Maiello, Carol Maiello's husband and Mary-Beth Fafard's brother-in-law.
Requiescat in pace

From Claudia

Many of you have wondered about our doves, so here is an update. They have again created a nest on top of our arbor surrounded by the wild rose plant that arches up and over the arbor. They are devoted bird parents, and they take turns sitting on the nest. The female has the night shift from about 4 pm to 8 am when the male takes over until the female returns in late afternoon. With thorns and foliage from the roses, one might think that they would be well protected. But this doesn't mean that bad things don't happen.

We also have grackles living in our pine tree. Grackles are omnivorous and have opportunistic natures. We actually saw the first nesting of the doves come to an untimely end when a group of grackles raided the nest and ate the eggs. They have also been known to eat hatchlings. It is a tough world out there for doves and others.

There is uncertainty all around us whether we are birds or humans. While I know none of us are raiding nests, there are people in this world who do not respect the nests of others. Perhaps you have encountered some in your lives? I know that I have.

As we come into the warm sunlight of being together again, we recognize there will always be those who "prey" on others. We've heard stories of pipelines shut down and the closure of Ireland's healthcare system due to cyber attacks. COVID-19 is still in our midst. Racial and other injustices abound. It would be easy to give ourselves over to despair.

But we don't. We, like the doves, start over in the expectation that life is unpredictable in all sorts of ways, the not so good and the very good. And, we can choose the ways that we react. For we are people of faith. And whether times are good or not, we have hope that we can participate in making our world a better place. Take that, grackles! Let us be like the doves who never give up, my friends.

May this summer be one of health and connection with those whom we love. May we soak up that warm sunlight into our very souls after this wintery time of our lives. And, may God grant the world overflowing peace as we interact with one another.

With love - *Claudia*

Summer Bible Study

This year, Summer Bible Study will focus on three foundational books of the Hebrew Testament – Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers – exploring the journey of God's people from slavery, into the wilderness, and on to the Promised Land. Each week will cover a different topic:

- Moses and Confrontation with Pharaoh
- Divine Deliverance and Guidance
- God's Covenant with Israel
- Disobedience and Forgiveness
- Approaching God in Purity
- Sanctification and the Holiness of God
- Preparations to Leave Sinai
- On the Plains of Moab

We'll discuss how to live faithfully, leadership, conflict, disobedience, and forgiveness, as they are addressed throughout these stories.

Summer Bible Study will meet virtually **Sundays, July 11 through August 29, at 7 pm**. Books are available for \$3 each. Please contact Claudia to participate.

SAVE THE DATE

Sunday, June 6

Annual Church Meeting

Please remain in the Sanctuary
after Worship

UCC Conference

Over 400 individuals, clergy and lay – representing United Church of Christ congregations in Conn., Mass., and R.I. – gathered virtually on May 8 for the annual meeting of the Southern New England Conference, UCC. The theme: "Living into the Fulfillment of God's Promise." The Rev. Dr. Claudia Demick was part of the planning committee for this meeting.

Five short worship segments – one led by the Rev. Rebecca Spencer – along with choral and instrumental music, filled the daylong meeting. The Rev. Darrell Goodwin, new Executive Conference Minister, reviewed his first months in office and vision for the future. Other presenters outlined past accomplishments, new directions for the Conference, and budget for the coming year. Central's own Frances Munro and Larry Kellam were re-elected to their positions on the Conference Board of Directors. The Rev. Jocelyn Gardner-Spencer, wife of former Central choir member Matt Spencer, thanked the Conference for the privilege of serving as president during the past year.

The meeting utilized a new electronic platform, Whova, which allowed participants to interact much as they would at an in-person conference. Meeting participants, including those from Central, could network with other attendees, join small group discussions, and mingle in other ways, all in real time. ~ *John Peters, Central Delegate*

Many Central groups continue to meet virtually. For a Zoom invitation to the following meetings, just contact Claudia.

Spiritual Companionship Group

Where is God in your life? Discover how the ancient tradition of spiritual companionship with others will help you listen for God in day-to-day living, encounter your own inner wisdom, and find new possibilities in both your spiritual and secular lives.

Tuesday, June 1, 6 to 7 pm

Mondays with Scripture

Here's a wonderful way to begin your week: Start each Monday in June with Scripture and with one another! We will look at a reading and discuss what we hear in it to inform our lives for the coming week and beyond. **Mondays, June 7, 14, 21 and 28, 8 to 8:45 am**

Food For Thought Book Group

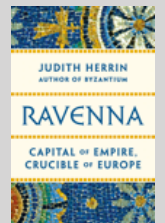
A change of pace this month: We'll meet in the sanctuary to hear author Ted Widmer discuss his book, "Lincoln on the Verge." If you haven't read this fascinating history of Abraham Lincoln's 13-day journey to his inauguration, you can pick up the book that evening – and get it signed! **Thursday, June 10, 7 pm**

Coming up ... **July 8:** "The Night Watchman," by Louise Erdrich. **Aug. 12:** "Deacon King Kong," by James McBride

Rebecca's Book Group

We'll discuss "Ravenna: Capital of Empire, Crucible of Europe," by Judith Herrin – a riveting history of the city that led the West out of the ruins of the Roman Empire. Check with Rebecca to see if the meeting will be in person or virtual.

Thursday, June 24, 12:30 pm



Caring & Sharing Outing

We'll meet at the picnic tables outside of Eskimo King (29 Market St., Swansea) for good conversation, ice cream, and more. Choose from 300 soft-serve and hard ice cream flavors! **Thursday, July 15, 7 pm**

Mark Your Calendar!

Bring your sunglasses and join Central friends for a delicious outdoor lunch at Blount Clam Shack on the beautiful Warren River (335 Water St., Warren). **Sunday, Aug 15, after Worship**

Church School News

This month marks the end of the Church School year. On June 13, the children will take part in the morning Worship service. Our fourth and fifth graders will receive their Bibles. After Worship, we will have some refreshments out on the West Lawn.

The ending of our Church School year does not mean that programming for children is done. This summer, we are having a special program on Sunday mornings. The children will be learning about what life was like in Jesus' time. This will be a time filled with crafts and activities as we look at many different aspects of Bible-time life. Throughout the year, the children were always amazed with all that did not exist in those times. Together we'll discover ways people lit their homes, traveled, kept food from spoiling, and more. We'll look at what people did for work, how they worshiped, and got their clothes. Throughout the summer, the children also will be building Bible-time houses from LEGO bricks. At the end of our summer program, we might even have a whole village!

WORD and NEOS will meet a few times over the summer with the dates and times to come. In June, WORD will share a supper and get to know the youth from the Congregational Church in South Glastonbury in Conn. The church's youth group will stay at Central while they do mission projects in Providence. At the end of July, WORD will have its own "stay-at-home mission trip." The high schoolers will stay at the church and work on mission projects throughout the area.

This year's confirmation class ended on May 23 when eight young people stood and confirmed their faith in front of the congregation. We look forward to seeing these young people use their talents in many different ways in the church. Our next confirmation class will begin in earnest in September. This summer, they will meet for fun and fellowship, as well as learning the class expectations. Blessings - *Judy*

Check Out Chapel Hall

Come see the creative and inspired new vision for our beloved 180-year-old community gathering space! This imaginative walking tour around Chapel Hall opened on Sunday, April 25, and will be open at least through the Annual Meeting on Sunday, June 6.

With lots of room to enjoy and imagine, you can see Chapel Hall as it is and how it will look as a vital, "re-imagined" resource. It is just the experience we all need as we emerge from a year of pandemic retreat.

The presentation is designed to be fun, informative, safe, brief – and inspiring! Architect's renderings, as well as historical photos of activities in Chapel Hall, are presented on rolling display boards.

See our plans for the beautiful double staircase and the elegant new doorways that provide much-needed soundproofing and privacy. Focus on the original arched windows and new light sources that brighten the entire space. Find "hidden" areas for storing essential chairs and tables. Think of all the times the newly accessible stage with modern AV capabilities will be enjoyed by every group that uses it. And, appreciate the warm welcome of Central's Diman Place entrance and the dramatic, new Gallery designed to accentuate our community art exhibits.

It is great testimony to Central's intrepid team – experts in architecture, preserva-



Above: A double staircase frames office entrances, hiding storage underneath. Doors provide soundproofing and privacy. Below: The lowered stage makes the room look larger. Curved steps invite easy access.



tion, engineering, contracting, and our church history – who have worked with Centerbrook Architects and lead architect Jim Childress that the planning for this wonderful project – with the help of Zoom and the internet – never stopped! The design is a fitting tribute to the service Chapel Hall has provided Central Congregational Church since it served as an interim sanctuary in 1893 while the rest of the building was under construction!

The capital campaign to make this shared vision come to fruition was approved by the congregation on January 26, 2020. You'll hear more about the campaign in the weeks and months to come!

SUMMER EVENTS

(continued from page 1)

July

18	Children's Stories with Judy	9 am
	Worship / Commissioning of	
	CCC Youth for Mission	10 am
	Children's Summer Program	10 am
	Bring Your Own Picnic	11 am
	Summer Bible Study	7 pm
25	Worship	10 am
	Summer Bible Study	7 pm
29	Rebecca's Book Group	12:30 pm

Children's Sunday

Church School children will lead the Worship service, as we celebrate the child in each of us. **Fourth and fifth graders receive their Bibles.** Please stay after for refreshments on the West Lawn. **Sunday, June 13, 10:30 am**

Children's Stories with Judy

During this virtual summer program, Judy will share a story – either from the Bible or about aspects of our faith – and then lead the children in discussion. It's a great way for kids to stay connected whether or not they're attending church. Contact Judy for a Zoom invitation. **Sundays, June 20 through Sep. 5 (except July 25), 9 am**

Children's Summer Program

In this new Sunday-morning program, Central's children will learn about life in Jesus' time while enjoying crafts and other activities. **Sundays, June 20 through Sep. 5 (except July 25), 10 am**

Stay-at-Home Mission Trip

This summer, WORD will work on mission projects throughout Providence. The congregation will commission our youth on **Sunday, July 18, 10 am**

Confirmation

While confirmation class will not officially begin until September, next year's confirmands will get together this summer just for fun, as well as a preview of what's to come. **Dates TBD**

NEOS and WORD

Our middle school and high school groups will meet a few times over the summer for fun and fellowship. **Dates TBD**

Central Congregational Church

296 Angell Street
Providence, R.I. 02906
401.331.1960
www.centralchurch.us

