



# CENTRAL NEWS

Mar 2022

Vol. 30, No. 7

## From Rebecca

Dear Friends, in this letter, which you are receiving at the very beginning of Lent, I offer a poem and a prayer.

First the poem – “What If You Slept...” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) – which helps remind us that hope blossoms in all sorts of different ways ... some of which we simply do not yet know.

*What if you slept  
 And what if  
 In your sleep,  
 You dreamed  
 And what if  
 In your dream  
 You went to heaven  
 And there plucked a strange and beautiful flower  
 And what if  
 When you awoke  
 You had that flower in your hand  
 Ah, what then?*

In these shorter days that are slowly lengthening, days of tension and crisis worldwide, it seems a good time to remember that kind of a dream ... "Ah, what then?" With God, all things are possible ... way back in Coleridge's time and certainly in our own.

And I close with these words from John Calvin (1509-1564), "We should ask God to increase our hope when it is small, awaken it when it is dormant, confirm it when it is wavering, strengthen it when it is weak, and raise it up when it is overthrown."

May it be so. Yours in faith - *Rebecca*

## Ways To Pledge

Picture this: Carnac the Magnificent holds an unopened envelope to his forehead. (For those "less-tenured" Central members, Carnac is late night host Johnny Carson's enigmatic mind-reading character. Check him out at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuFSWcNe8bY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuFSWcNe8bY).)

The hermetically sealed envelope has been stored in a mayonnaise jar on Funk & Wagnall's porch since noon today. With his mind, Carnac reads the question contained in the envelope, stating the answers aloud, "The U.S. Postal Service, the late inventor Ron Popeil, and the Tithe.ly app."

Carnac tears off the end of the envelope, blows it open, pulls out the card inside, and reads: "What are three ways church members can fulfill their pledges to Central?" Laughter and applause ensue!

Okay, maybe not laughter and applause. But Dedication Sunday, March 13, is nearly upon us, and you may be trying to decide

how best to make your pledge. And, you're in luck as the church offers myriad ways!

- The U.S. Postal Service: **Mail your pledge** to the church office (296 Angell Street, Providence, RI 02906)
- "Set it and forget it" – like inventor Ron Popeil's famous rotisserie: **Set up automatic bank payments** ([youtube.com/watch?v=IS1fRUG5ayg](http://youtube.com/watch?v=IS1fRUG5ayg))
- The Tithe.ly app: **Give electronically** (The green Tithe.ly app is available in all major app stores).

But wait, there's more!

You can pledge in person with other members of the Central community by bringing your pledge card to worship on Dedication Sunday, where Barry Bayon will deliver his Stewardship Moment for all to hear.

Thank you for your consideration in support of Central Congregational Church and its mission! - *Brian Angell*

## MAR EVENTS

1	Tuesdays With Scripture	8 am
2	Gallery Committee	9:30 am
	Bylaws Committee	4 pm
	Ash Wednesday Service	7 pm
5	Community Dinners	5 pm
6	Adult Sunday School	9 am
	Stewardship Committee	9:15 am
	Worship	10:30 am
	Church School	10:30 am
	Confirmation Class	11:30 am
	Bylaws Committee	11:45 am
	Women Gather	11:45 am
7	Women's Retreat Group	7 pm
8	Board of Deacons	5:45 pm
9	Lenten Meditation	5:30 pm
	Lenten Mission Speaker	6 pm
12	Homelessness Awareness Sleep-out	6 pm
13	Dedication Sunday	10:30 am
	Church School	10:30 am
15	Play Group	10 am
	Plant & Properties	5:45 pm
	Prudential Committee	7 pm
16	Lenten Meditation	5:30 pm
17	Central Men's Group	7:30 am
	Nominating Committee	5 pm
18	Friday Film Fare	7:30 pm
20	Worship	10:30 am
	Church School	10:30 am
	Confirmation Class	11:30 am
23	Lenten Meditation	5:30 pm
27	Worship	10:30 am
	Church School	10:30 am
	NEOS and WORD	11:45 am
28	Technology Committee	7 pm
30	Lenten Meditation	5:30 pm
31	Rebecca's Book Group	12:30 pm

*Daylight Savings is Sunday, March 13.  
 Don't forget to spring forward!*

## JOIN US FOR DEDICATION SUNDAY: MARCH 13 AT 10:30 AM!



## The Deacon's Bench

*O Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!*

*For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. - Psalm 95:1-3*

### 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

Wednesday, April 20, 7 pm

#### Faith Exploration

Tuesday, April 26, 7 pm

#### New Member Sunday

Sunday, May 1, 10:30 am

As of March 11, 2022, it will be two years since the World Health Organization declared SARS-CoV-2 pandemic! Our world has been turned upside down. In the United States, the death toll has now passed 900,000. Our society has become incredibly polarized around the issues of masking, social distancing, and vaccine mandates. Families are in conflict about vaccines, testing, and how much contact they should have with people outside their "pods." Children have spent a year doing distance learning, which seems to have compromised not only their educational development, but also their emotional well-being. We have seen a dramatic increase in pediatric anxiety and depression. Many individuals – adults and children alike – have become socially isolated.

"Thank you, thank you!" I said to the parent of an autistic child who agreed to vaccinate his child against SARS-CoV-2 despite significant initial reluctance and concern about vaccine safety. "Thank you, thank you!" I said to the eight-year-old who agreed to receive a COVID vaccine. "You are not only protecting yourself, you are also protecting me!"

Children are amazingly resilient. A recent study in "Pediatrics" reported that children could accurately assess facial expressions despite mask wearing. They could tell if someone was happy, sad, angry, or excited. Children look forward. They do not worry about things that have happened in the past or inappropriate things they have done. To quote the Rev. Judith Martowska, "They have relaxed hearts." I think they have assumed grace!

As I write, it is 5 pm on Feb. 6. COVID cases have begun to decline. The sky is still bright. The sun has started to rise earlier in the morning! I am grateful for the coming of spring. I am hopeful for the end of the pandemic. I am grateful for a great God. - *Bob Griffith*

### Ash Wednesday

Central's Ash Wednesday service is a time for quiet contemplation. On this first day of Lent, we share in communion, and those who wish receive ashes – an ancient custom that not only marks the beginning of Lent, but also represents a time of repentance and reflection. **Wednesday, Mar. 2, 7 pm, in the Sanctuary**

### Memorial Easter Flowers

The beautiful flowers that adorn our chancel every year are a special part of Central's Easter celebration. They also are wonderful ways to remember and honor your loved ones. To order your Memorial Easter Flowers, contact the Church Office. The suggested donation is \$40 per order. Remembrances received by **Monday, April 4**, will be included in the Holy Week and Easter Sunday orders of worship. And after the holidays, the Flower Committee and Deacons will deliver the flowers to members of our community who are homebound or who have lost loved ones this year.

### Spring Church Clean-Up

Come one, come all – young and not so young – to help prepare our church building and grounds for Holy Week. It's an opportunity not just to clean and rake, but also to deepen friendships and start new ones. It will be one of the most rewarding mornings you've ever spent at Central. Please send project ideas and supply needs to Antonia Greco, church administrator ([antonia@centralchurch.us](mailto:antonia@centralchurch.us)). And when you arrive, there will be coffee, doughnuts, and plenty of good cheer! **Saturday, Apr. 9, 9 am to 12 noon** – or whatever time you can stop by.

## One Great Hour

On Palm Sunday – April 10 – Central Congregational Church will collect a special mission offering for One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS). This UCC-wide fundraiser helps people – in places of poverty, hunger, sickness, conflict, emergency, and natural disaster throughout the world – help themselves. Its holistic development programs include health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, microfinancing, and women's empowerment.

OGHS began in 1948. Bishop Henry Knox Sherrill, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, set out to raise \$1 million dollars for the Fund for World Relief. On national radio, he challenged the Christian community to raise "\$1 million in one hour." And

## One Great HOUR OF SHARING

they did! This one-time challenge has become an annual tradition for Christian churches. In recent years, OGHS has supported a host of missions and ministries targeting hunger, homelessness, wild fires, earthquakes, flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes, and other natural disasters.

On Palm Sunday, as we celebrate Jesus' joyful entry into Jerusalem and welcome Him into our hearts, please remember those with the greatest need and give as generously as you are able.

## Lenten Meditations

Lent is a time for self-reflection and prayer, a chance to draw closer to God. This is the goal of Lenten Meditations, held in Wilson Chapel from 5:30 to 6 pm every Wednesday in the weeks leading up to Palm Sunday. Each week, a member of Central will share his or her journey of faith.

**March 9:** Doug Werner

**March 16:** Teresa Schraeder

**March 23:** Sue Chase

**March 30:** Lisa Stanziani Griffith

**April 6:** Don Wolfe

These brief, meditative services let us contemplate our own spiritual paths, share in another's journey, and find connections in common ideas, concerns, questions, and experiences. Perhaps most importantly, we come to know one another in thoughtful and faith-filled ways.



### In Memoriam

Our prayers and sympathy are with the family and friends of Carolyn Platt ... with Carol Terry and her family on the death of her mother Elma Terry ... and with Jim Kissack and his family on the death of his wife Barbara Kissack, who was Donald McIntosh's daughter. *Requiescat in pace*



## From Claudia

Easter is late this year and that means that Ash Wednesday is later than usual, too. February has come and gone. Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Lenten season, is at the very beginning of March. My mother-in-law's 98<sup>th</sup> birthday is on Ash Wednesday this year. For close to 100 years, her life has revolved around the liturgical seasons of her faith. Remembering her relationship with Christ and all of the moments that liturgically mark her Christian journey has sustained her for almost a century. What a blessing that is!

We are all called to deepen our relationship with God always, but especially during the season of Lent when we contemplate the stories of Christ's life, even through his death on a cross and culminating in the joy of Easter morning. Through such deep listening, there is continual growth within us. Henri J. M. Nouwen once wrote, "Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you the Beloved, you will discover within yourself a desire to hear that voice longer and more deeply."

We remember that at his baptism Jesus was called God's beloved. We remember that we are beloved of God, as well. Listening with great attentiveness is a Lenten discipline. On Ash Wednesday, we receive the ashes that remind us of God's love for humanity – each and every one of us. Created by God from the "dust" to which we return, we are all on a journey to discover what it means to be beloved children of a God who loves us and calls us beloved.

Paul wrote in Romans 8:38-39, "I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love - not life or death, not angels or spirits, not the present or the future, and not powers above or powers below. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord!" Amen to that!

I am thanking God that I travel life's journey with each one of you. What a blessing it is to have such wonderful traveling companions accompanied by a wonderful Savior.

Lenten blessings to you all - *Claudia*

## Guest Preacher

On **Sunday, Mar. 27**, Central will welcome The Rev. Robert H. Naylor as guest preacher. Bob is a retired United Church of Christ (UCC) minister, noted church consultant, and author. Most recently, he was senior minister of Second Congregational Church in Greenwich, Conn., where our own senior minister, Rebecca Spencer served before coming to Central.

During his 41 years in the ministry, Bob was lead pastor at three churches in Connecticut and served in UCC conference and national staff positions. His faith foundation can be summed up in the three Js: Jesus, Joy, and Justice. He finds humor and humility to be essential to living a vital life of faith.

A prolific writer, Bob is the author of numerous articles and two books: "What Church Leaders Really Need to Know" and "Artful Ministry." He is currently completing a third on "Sports/Faith – Essential Life Lessons."

Since leaving full-time ministry, Bob has consulted with churches regarding communications, conflict resolution, church vitality, financial stewardship, innovative and creative program development, racism, and church growth.

Bob is a graduate of Ursinus College in Collegeville, Pa., and earned his master of divinity degree from Lancaster Theological Seminary.

## SAVE THE DATE

Friday • April 15 • 12 noon

## Good Friday Service of Music

## Mission Speaker



On Mar. 9 – immediately following the Lenten Meditation – Central will host two volunteers from Food Recovery for Rhode Island. This new Cooperative Extension Program from the University of Rhode Island aims to "rescue" and recycle food in order to address our state's food waste and food access issues.

Approximately 25 percent of people living in Rhode Island experienced food insecurity in 2020. Yet more than 100,000 pounds of wasted food enters the Johnston landfill each year. As waste enters the landfill, it starts to break down and emit greenhouse gases, which contribute to climate change.

Food Recovery for Rhode Island seeks not only to salvage wasted food and repurpose it for feeding people and animals, creating energy, and generating compost; but also to bring people together to learn, engage in dialogue, and take action to strengthen our local food system.

Ultimately, Food Recovery for Rhode Island hopes to alter how we shop for, store, prepare, preserve, and compost food – to benefit Rhode Islanders, the economy, and our planet. **Wednesday, Mar. 9, 6 pm, in Chapel Hall**

## Tuesdays With Scripture

On Tuesday morning, we'll look at and discuss a short Bible passage. Think of this as a community devotional to rev up your week. Contact Claudia for an invitation. She'll also send you the reading and questions to consider ahead of time. **Tuesday, Mar. 1, 8 am, via Zoom.**

## Adult Sunday School

We'll continue to focus on "The Story of the Jews," a compelling argument about distinctiveness and difference, separation and isolation, tolerance and prejudice. Yet it is also a celebration of the ways in which Jewish thought, Jewish imagination, and Jewish achievement have transformed the world for us all. Questions? Ask Claudia. **Sunday, Mar. 6, 9 am, in the Fireplace Room**

## Women Gather

This month, we're asking each person in our women's fellowship group to bring a photo of herself as a child and share a little about herself at that age. All are welcome to join this vibrant community of women. Questions? Ask Claudia. **Sunday, Mar. 6, 11:45 am, in the Fireplace Room.**

## Women's Retreat Group

The women of Central are invited to gather in solidarity to pray and check in the first Monday of every month. **Monday, Mar. 7, 7 pm, via Zoom.** Contact Claudia for an invitation.

## Central Men's Group

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with Central Men's Group. This monthly breakfast gathering is open to all ages. Come for fellowship and spirited conversation on topics ranging from current events and ethics to trends and shared experiences. Questions? Contact Ed Bishop at 401-274-4666. **Thursday, Mar. 17, 7:30 am, in the Fireplace Room**

## Rebecca's Book Group

Take part in a lively discussion about "The Lost City of the Monkey God," by Douglas Preston, a New York Times and Wall Street Journal #1 bestseller. This true story takes readers on an adventure deep into the Honduran rainforest with a riveting narrative about the discovery of a lost civilization – culminating in a stunning medical mystery. **Thursday, Mar. 31, 12:30 pm, via Zoom.** Contact Rebecca for an invitation.

## Food For Thought Book Group

Food for Thought will not meet in March. Our April book is Reading Across Rhode Island's 2022 selection, "Firekeeper's Daughter," by Angeline Boulley. "A rare and mesmerizing work that blends the power of a vibrant tradition with the aches and energy of today's America, this book will leave you breathless!" **Thursday, Apr. 7, 7 pm, via Zoom.** Contact Claudia for an invitation.

## Church School News

It seems like just yesterday I was writing about Advent. Now we're at the beginning of March, and as I look outside my window I see the daffodils beginning to come up to celebrate spring. Throughout all this time, the church school has been meeting each week.

As we begin the season of Lent, the older children will be involved in a special series all about the Lord's Prayer. The series is from Illustrated Ministry, the same company that provided the base for our virtual Christmas pageant in 2020. This series looks to have great discussion starters on the different phrases we find in the Lord's Prayer. The first week focuses on the communal nature of the Lord's Prayer. It is prayed using the plural, and so not only connects us individually with God, but also connects us with one another and with all of God's creations. The following weeks focus on the different phrases in the prayer. The children will learn the version we use in worship, in addition to different versions used by other churches. The words may be slightly different, but the intent is the same. This series will help the children understand what is behind the words Jesus taught us, so they will be able to pray it with meaning and intention.

The younger children will continue to use the Seasons of the Spirit curriculum during Lent. We are blessed to have a wonderful teacher, Susannah Hopkins, leading this age group. She has a wonderful way of handling the children's different needs and wants, as well as telling a good Bible story. It is wonderful to walk by a class of nine three-, four-, and five-year-olds and see everyone sitting around the table, intently focused on the day's project.

Peace and blessings - *Judy*

*Office Hours: Judy Martowska is available to discuss any issues, concerns, or questions you may have about children, teens, and faith. She is at the church all day on Tuesdays, but can also meet at other days and times. Contact Judy via email, phone, or text to set up an appointment: 781-718-0202 / judy@centralchurch.us*

## Accolades

**Tracy Baran** has received this year's Top 100 Corporate Counsel Award! This peer-voted honor recognizes leaders and innovators who have significantly contributed to their organizations and professional communities. Winners represent some of the world's top legal professionals. Tracy is General Counsel for Ocean State Job Lot.

**Henry Hodge** is a recipient of Rhode Island Monthly's Tech10 Awards! Tech10 recognizes the cutting-edge work of Rhode Island's leading technology innovators, as voted by their peers. Henry is the founder and CEO of HCH Enterprises, LLC.

## Friday Film Fare



In **Jojo Rabbit**, lonely, ten-year-old Jojo, a hopeless misfit in his Hitler Youth troop, finds solace and encouragement in his imaginary friend Adolf. That's right.

The friendly Fuhrer is Jojo's unseen companion. Jojo's world is turned upside down when he discovers a Jewish girl hidden in the attic. Oddly, she seems quite human. And being a Nazi no longer seems such a jolly frolic. Writer-director Taika Waititi's unconventional fantasy/drama offers comedy, surprises, and ultimately heart-stopping intensity in an unforgettable blend. Wintertime for Hitler, perhaps? [108 minutes, color, rated PG-13, 2019] **Friday, Mar. 18, 7:30 pm, in the Fireplace Room**

## CCC Youth

**A Time of Service**, led by CCC Youth last month, was a great success. Our congregation came together to make origami peace cranes, which are hanging in the Fireplace Room, and bookmarks to welcome visitors to Central. Some people wrote letters and made cards for homebound members and people in need. Others painted prayer rocks, which the Calling Committee will share on its visits.

**Ash Wednesday:** Have you wondered where the ashes come from? This year, WORD created them by burning last year's Palm Sunday palm fronds. As you receive ashes on Mar. 2, please remember CCC Youth were a part of making it happen.

**Youth Mission Trip:** July 16 to 22, CCC Youth will travel to Zanesville, Ohio, a disadvantaged region in northern Appalachia. Our mission partner, Praying Pelican Ministries, will provide three meals a day and secure our work sites and accommodations. We will undertake a variety of mission projects there: painting, building, cleaning yards, etc. We will also take part in children's ministry – perhaps leading story time, teaching crafts, or organizing games. We encourage all Central teens to sign up. It's a chance to learn more about the world as well as yourself, while strengthening faith and friendships.

**Mission Trip Volunteers:** We need adults to join our CCC Youth mission trip team for what promises to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. If interested, contact Judy Martowska or Larry Kellam.

## Teen Tuesdays

Judy is at the church every Tuesday, morning and afternoon. Teens are welcome to drop by – to say hi, talk sports, “speak geek,” study, share whatever is on their minds, or just hang out. **Tuesday, Mar. 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29 – all day – in the Church School Wing**

## Confirmation Class

The Confirmation Class is in full swing. We've had many lively discussions, with the confirmands sharing their beliefs and their doubts, participating in the Sunday services, and connecting with their Deacon mentors. And they are nearing the final leg of their yearlong journey when they will thoughtfully write about their faith, beliefs, and the confirmation experience. **On Sunday, Mar. 6, 11:30 am**, the topic will be “Living as a Christian.” **On Sunday, Mar. 20, 11:30 am**, the topic will be “Jesus: Threat to the Status Quo.”

## Homelessness Awareness Sleep-out

NEOS and WORD will spend the night – in boxes out on the West Lawn – to learn about the prevalence of homelessness, measures being taken to help those in this difficult situation, and what we can do to help prevent it. **Saturday, Mar. 12, 6 pm, on the West Lawn.**

## Play Group

At Central's play group for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, the children enjoy games, crafts, music – and snacks. As they play together and become more comfortable in the church setting, parents and grandparents can talk, share experiences, and support one another in the journey of parenthood. **Tuesday, Mar. 15, 10 am, in the Church School Wing**

## Nerf Games

NEOS and WORD will enjoy a fun-filled afternoon of Nerf games: darts, tag, team competitions, and lots of laughter. Refreshments will be served. **Sunday, Mar. 27, 11:45 am, in Chapel Hall**

## Easter Sunrise Service

This month, WORD will begin preparing our Easter Sunrise Service, which will be held at daybreak in Swan Point Cemetery. We are hoping youth from other churches will join us in planning this very moving ecumenical service.

## Spring Yard Sale

We're planning a yard sale! Ten percent of the proceeds will benefit Central's mission outreach with the balance going to supplement the church budget. Please set aside those items that have just been waiting for a good cause. Tentative date: **Saturday, May 21, on the West Lawn**

## Central Congregational Church

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