



# CENTRAL NEWS

Jun/Jul 2022 Vol. 30, No. 10

## From Rebecca

Dear Friends, one of you sent me a poem based on Exodus 33:12-23 – “God’s Breadcrumbs,” by Jennifer McLean – because it spoke to you.

*The forest is dark and scary.  
We are afraid!  
We don't know the way!  
What shall we do?  
How do we go on?*

*Right foot goodness,  
Left foot grace;  
Right foot mercy,  
Left foot love.*

*God: Think! Remember!  
I have told you the way!  
You are not my equal  
so FOLLOW me!*

*One step at a time.  
Keep your eyes on my back.  
Never forget what I told you.  
I am with you  
Always.*

I think this poem speaks to many of us! So many times we wonder: What shall I do? How do we go on? Well, goodness, grace, mercy, and love have been given abundantly to us. Just one step at a time. And if we keep our eyes on God's back and never forget what God has told us, we will make it through. This is so.

A small example: just this week, the little bull Sony got out again. I couldn't figure out how he got out, much less how to get him back in with the girls! But I stopped and thought, "What can I do?" I realized God had given me a brain that was a bit smarter than Sony's and figured it out. This week, a much more important example: One of you was very sad over a variety of issues. We talked it through, and you realized one step at a time would make it possible to go forward – slowly, to be sure, but surely.

I think of those in Ukraine, hiding in bomb shelters, in hospitals being shelled, their loved ones fighting for freedom. And I pray, God, may my prayers make a difference in their lives so they can go on, knowing that God is with them throughout the terror.

I think of the families whose loved ones were murdered on May 14. As John McWhorter wrote in the New York Times, "Since Saturday, the mass shooting in Buffalo has rarely left my mind. Ten innocent people killed at a supermarket in a predominantly Black neighborhood. Out of 13 people shot, 11 were Black. The man accused of shooting them was motivated by racist hate. Sheriff John Garcia didn't equivocate when he said that it was a 'straight up racially motivated hate crime.'" Nor did Mayor Byron Brown when he said, "This individual came here with the expressed purpose of taking as many Black lives as he possibly could." It's impossible not to be reminded of the 2015 massacre at Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, S.C., and, sorrowfully, we have no reason to think that something like this won't happen again.

What shall we do in the face of such unspeakable horror? How do we go on? We go on by fighting racist hatred, working to eliminate its roots in every way we can. We remember God is with us no matter what, everywhere, always. We remember that the Good will always conquer the evil. The darkness is defeated by the Light every time.

Yours, in faith and love - *Rebecca*

*I wrote this piece before the horror of the children's murders in Texas. Our words and actions must work together to end our nation's epidemic of gun violence. May our love and God's grace be with the families who have lost their children to this evil violence. - RLS*

## 170th Annual Meeting and Luncheon!

Central's Annual Church Meeting will take place Sunday, June 5, following Worship. On the agenda: budget approval and electing officers and committee members. We will provide childcare and creative programming for children during the meeting. Please plan on attending. **We need a quorum of 60 people!**

A luncheon will follow in Chapel Hall, featuring rotisserie chicken salad and our famous strawberry shortcake. Luncheon tickets are \$15 per person. Mary Francis Bishop, Caroline Considine, and Mark McLaughlin will be your hosts. If you haven't yet RSVPed, please contact the Church Office at 401-331-1960.

## JUN EVENTS

1	Gallery Committee	9:30 am
3	Confirmation Class Dinner	6 pm
5	Confirmation Class Breakfast	9 am
	Worship / Confirmation	10:30 am
	Church School	10:30 am
	Annual Meeting / Luncheon	11:30 am
12	Worship / Children's Sunday	10:30 am
	Church School	10:30 am
	Church Picnic	11:30 am
16	Central Men's Group	7:30 am
	Chapel Hall Design Committee	5 pm
	Food for Thought Book Group	7 pm
18	Rhode Island PrideFest	12 noon
19	Worship	10 am
	Children's Summer Program	10 am
	Women Gather	11:15 am
21	Commissioning Service	5:30 pm
	Board of Deacons / Prudential Meeting and Potluck	6 pm
26	Worship	10 am
	Children's Summer Program	10 am
	Lunch at Gregg's	11:15 am
30	Rebecca's Book Group	12:30 pm

## JUL EVENTS

3	Worship	10 am
	Children's Summer Program	10 am
	Ice Cream Sundae Sunday	11 am
10	Worship / Commissioning Youth	10 am
	Children's Summer Program	10 am
	Women Gather	11:15 am
14	Food for Thought Book Group	7 pm
17	Summer Bible Study	9 am
	Worship	10 am
	Children's Summer Program	10 am
	Brunch at The District	11:15 am
20	Central Newsletter Deadline	3 pm
	Chapel Hall Design Committee	5 pm
21	Central Men's Group	7:30 am
24	Summer Bible Study	9 am
	Worship	10 am
28	Rebecca's Book Group	12:30 pm
31	Summer Bible Study	9 am
	Worship	10 am

*The Church Office will be closed on Monday, July 4, for Independence Day.*

# SUMMER WORSHIP BEGINS JUNE 19 AT 10 AM!



# The Deacon's Bench

For the 40 years that my professional life kept me centered in the Boston area, I was a free-range congregant. Or – forgive me – a peripatetic parishioner.

This was not how I grew up. My parents met singing in the choir at Grace Church, and my brother was a boy soloist. Glorious music, though, was only a part of what drew us to church every week. Entering that sacred space together as a family, hearing stories from the Bible, and learning of God's love for us were gifts that would last a lifetime. On some weekends we drove to Storrs, Conn., to be with my widowed aunt, our two cousins, and Nana, who took care of them all. Sunday mornings at Storrs Congregational Church made us feel like welcome members of that community. As a college student, I "discovered" Central Congregational Church and would walk over for worship on Sunday mornings. It always centered and inspired me. The impact was lasting.

In the years that followed, as I traveled to far-flung places to be with family and friends, I vividly remember the many churches I visited. The prayers and liturgy I had learned as a child made me feel at home wherever life took me. So decades later, when I came home to Rhode Island, I knew I could get to Central from anywhere in the state! Early in 2013, I began a new phase of my life and joined Central as a member. In Robert Frost's immortal words, "And that has made all the difference."

What I found again at Central is what has kept this congregation vital for 170 years: A clergy led by Rebecca Spencer, who delivers sermons not only rooted in Biblical understanding, but that challenge us to think. Glorious music, led by Patrick Aiken, that both stirs the soul and lets it soar with every harmony and descant by the dedicated choir. Programs offered by Claudia Demick that let each of us explore issues that enrich our lives. Judy Martowska, who creatively provides pathways for our children and youth to be embraced by God's grace. Mission and Action that strives to relieve suffering and attend the needs of others here at home and around the world. And officers, staff, and volunteers who so beautifully conduct the work of the church.

In this sacred space, this vessel dedicated to God and Jesus Christ, we are blessed to be a part of this congregation, aware each week of our neighbors, present and missing. Thank you to all who have believed in and sustained Central Congregational Church over all these decades. It is a gift to a world so much in need. - *Caroline Considine*

## 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 25, 7 pm

**Faith Exploration**  
Wednesday, November 2, 7 pm

**New Member Sunday**  
Sunday, November 6, 10:30 am

## Scripture Readers Needed

We need scripture readers for our July and August worship services. Let your voice ring out ... as often as you like! Please contact Judy Jamieson or the Church Office to volunteer. Many thanks!

## Pentecost Celebration

On Pentecost, we celebrate the wonder and mystery of God, the teachings of Jesus Christ, and the powerful gifts and movements of the Holy Spirit. Please wear red in celebration of the tongues of fire. Greet our newly confirmed young people. And, stay for the 170th Annual Meeting and luncheon! **Sunday, June 5, 10:30 am, in the Sanctuary**



## Church Picnic

It's back! We'll eat hotdogs and hamburgers – and celebrate Children's Sunday and nine months of in-person worship. The latter is not usually a milestone, but it certainly seems like one after two-plus years of COVID-19. Plan on bringing some picnic sides or sweets, and we'll enjoy the fresh air and warm weather as a community of faith! **Sunday, June 12, 11:30 am, on the West Lawn**

## PrideFest Volunteers Needed

Central is a longtime supporter of Rhode Island PrideFest, which will take place on Saturday, June 18. And, we need volunteers to help staff our booth! PrideFest is one of Rhode Island's largest festivals, attracting more than 100,000 people and offering fun for the entire family! Liam Newberry and Judy Martowska are organizing Central's booth this year. Please call or email Judy to volunteer.

# Yard Sale Central Raises \$5,000

There was only a two percent chance of rain that Saturday morning, so naturally it rained – and then the temperature climbed into the low nineties, with humidity to match. But the many volunteers who made Yard Sale Central possible – too many to name here – forged ahead: sorting sale items, pricing, picking up, organizing, setting up, selling, breaking down, and everything in between!

Staci Fisher came at 7 am to set up tables and tents. Hope McCullough brought tarps to protect items from the wet ground. Temi Sonubi worked the entire day. Mother-daughter duo Heidi Iuliano and Emelia Chambers had other commitments, but still stopped by to do their part. Joe McNamara had a great time grilling burgers and working the refreshment stand with CCC Youth. While Jerry Brown staffed the "money table." As Buddy Kling said, "It was a great time – aside from bringing home more than I donated. Oh well, a pack rat's gotta do...."

Many commented that Yard Sale Central would not have been possible without Nancy Gage's good-humored leadership. "You made this effort a success. So

organized, so helpful, and so incredibly cheerful!" wrote volunteer Feather Sedam.

At the end of the day, Yard Sale Central had raised approximately \$5,000 – more than anyone dreamed. Thirty percent of the proceeds will benefit Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Haiti relief organizations:

- UCC Ukraine Relief Fund;
- Dorcas International: Afghanistan Refugee Resettlement; and
- Haiti Partnership of Southern New England Conference of the UCC and CONASPEH: The National Spiritual Council of Haitian Churches.



**In Memoriam**  
Our prayers and sympathy are with the family and friends of longtime Central member Dick Lundgren. There will be a service this summer at the convenience of his family. *Requiescat in pace*



## From Claudia

In this season of hope and new life, spring has finally arrived. The birds have returned and are singing their songs outside my windows in the wee hours around dawn. For them it is the beginning of a new day, as well as the beginning of nesting season and renewed life ... for all God's creatures. The flowers are finally blooming. The grass is growing and already needs mowing. And, there is hope that we can participate in God's creation, remembering that in the beginning God created.

And yet with all the beginnings, there are also endings. Some of them are expected, and we may greet them with resignation rather than anticipation. The world keeps on spinning. Sometimes we rejoice in what happens, and other times we find ourselves mourning or even angered – wishing events hadn't happened in the way they did. However, as people of hope, we do what we can.

As God's children – part of God's glorious world with its many flawed people – we pray and we hope. Why? Because, in the words of the Apostle Paul, “for us there is but one God from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live” (1 Corinthians 8:6).

Sometimes we might feel overwhelmed, as wars and rumors of wars and other events in this world naturally made and human-made threaten to overtake us. However, in the ancient words of Ecclesiastes, “God has made everything beautiful in its time and has set eternity into our hearts, yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” In the words of Paul, “If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!” There is always hope for new life.

When I hear the songbirds, I hear hope. Yes, the hawks of life are never far from them, but still there is hope and new life in their songs. Danish theologian and philosopher Soren Kierkegaard said, “Hope is passion for what is possible.” Actor Christopher Reeve took this one step further, saying “once you choose hope, anything's possible.”

Let us choose hope and see what will unfold around us. It's just possible that hope will begin the process of new creation in our lives as well in the lives of others. A French proverb says that “hope is the dream of a soul awake.” May we all walk through this life together, awake and alert to the joys of hope and the blessings of new life in this season and in all seasons.

In blessed hope - *Claudia*

## Accolades

Congratulations to **John Azar, Oscar Punchak, Miles Rardin**, and three other members of Central-sponsored Scout Troop 28 who have attained the rank of Eagle Scout and were recognized at a Court of Honor held May 22 in Chapel Hall.

Eagle Scout is the highest achievement in the Scouts BSA program. Since 1911, only four percent of Scouts have earned this rank. To have six in one troop achieve this goal in a single year is a rare event.

We salute Troop 28, Scoutmaster Charley Rardin, and all of the new Eagle Scouts – especially John, Oscar, and Miles, who are lifelong Centralites!



## Interfaith Iftar



On Friday, April 29, Central hosted an Interfaith Iftar, drawing a large crowd that not only included Muslims, but also Christians, Hindus, and Jews.

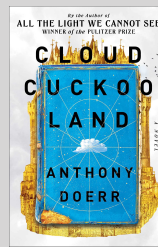
Iftar is the fast-breaking meal Muslims observe each evening at sundown during the holy Islamic month of Ramadan. An Interfaith Iftar brings together people of all faiths and nationalities to celebrate in the spirit of peace, tolerance, and cooperation.

The program featured speakers from a variety of religions. Guests learned about the importance of fasting to the Muslim community and about fasting rituals. Two young women, who were fasting during Ramadan for the first time, spoke about their experiences.

Following the program, a delicious potluck dinner – with foods representing all different cultures – raised funds for the homeless in our community.

## Food for Thought Book Group

Join us for a lively discussion of “Cloud Cuckoo Land,” by Pulitzer Prize winner Anthony Doerr. This wildly inventive novel tells of children on the cusp of adulthood – in fifteenth century Constantinople, in



present-day Idaho, and on an interstellar ship decades in the future – who find resilience, hope ... and a book. **Thursday, June 16, 7 pm, Fireplace Room**

In July, we'll read “Braiding Sweetgrass,” by Robin Wall Kimmerer, an indigenous botanist who argues that ecological consciousness requires appreciation of our relationship with the rest of the living world. **Thursday, July 14, 7 pm, Fireplace Room**

## Central Men's Group

Open to all ages, Central Men's Group is a monthly breakfast gathering – held on the third Thursday of each month – 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. **Thursdays, June 16 and July 21, 7:30 am, Fireplace Room**

## Women Gather

Bring a chair and picnic lunch and enjoy the fellowship of



Central women and “The Jewel of the City”! Only minutes from Central, this park features a 35-foot statue of Roger Williams and fabulous panoramic views of Providence. Questions? Contact Claudia. **Sunday, June 19, 11:15 am, Prospect Terrace Park** (60 Congdon Street)

Next month, Women Gather will meet on **Sunday, July 10, 11:15 am**. Activity TBD

## Rebecca's Book Group

Take part in a lively discussion about “The Gates of Europe, A History of Ukraine,” by Serhii Plokhy. Today's conflict in Ukraine is only the latest in a long history of battles over its existence as a sovereign nation. Award-winning historian Plokhy writes that we must examine Ukraine's past in order to understand its fraught present and likely future. **Thursday, June 30, 12 noon, via Zoom**. Contact Rebecca for an invitation.

## Summer Bible Study

This summer we'll explore three books from the Old Testament – Joshua, Judges and Ruth – taking on a different topic each week. Come to one session or all of them. **July 17:** Learning From the Past (Joshua 1-12). **July 24:** Expanded Horizons and a Renewed Covenant (Joshua 13-24). **July 31:** How Does God Bless Us (Judges 1-9). **Sundays, July 17 to Aug. 24, 9 am, Fireplace Room**

## SAVE THE DATE

Sunday, July 3 • 11:30 am

## Ice Cream Sundae Sunday!

We'll provide the ice cream.  
You bring some toppings to share!

## Children and Spirituality

Summertime brings a nice change of pace for adults and children alike. With summer's varied schedules, families may have a bit more time together. We may see places that inspire us to think and talk about God and God's good creation. We may have more opportunities to enter into conversations about faith, God, and Jesus. This is a wonderful time to use "wondering questions" and exercise our faith imaginations.

There is an aid to help in creating family faith experiences. "Families Celebrate Summer" is a collection of cards, each with a suggestion that connects us with the divine. The activities are very accessible and good for all ages. All our church school families will receive these cards, and I hope you'll be able to use them this summer. If you'd like cards to share with your grandchildren or any other children, just contact me.

This summer, Sunday mornings at Central will bring changes to our usual church school routine, as well as new opportunities. We are introducing special summer programming that will enable Central children to engage with Bible stories in new and different ways. There may be an art activity one week, an active game another week, and a dramatic retelling of the story another week. By creatively interacting with the Bible, children will hopefully experience its teachings in more personal ways.

Summertime opportunities to engage in faith exploration and discovery are not just for Sunday mornings. During the week, I will be offering "Sensational Science" – a time to explore the wonderful ways of this world God made. We'll do experiments like making elephant toothpaste and setting off Alka-Seltzer rockets. We will spend time exploring the world of electricity. We'll make circuits that light LEDs. We'll make "brush bots" and "scribble bots." If your child is interested or you would like more information about "Sensational Science," please speak with me.

Peace and blessings - *Judy*

## Online Directory

In recent months, the Technology Committee has been developing a virtual online membership directory accessible from the church website: [www.centralchurch.us](http://www.centralchurch.us).

The committee's ultimate goal is to combine all of the church's membership information into a single database that can be used consistently through all Central systems. The new online directory – which launches this month – is the first step towards that exciting future.

Only Central members will be able to access the directory via a "Members Only" link on the website's "Home" menu. The first time you click on this link, you will be asked to fill out a registration form. Once the church has reviewed the form and your membership is confirmed, you will receive an email granting access.

Thereafter, to view the directory, you will just need to log in to the "Members Only" section with your email and password. The listings are searchable. There is even a way to save these listings to your own Outlook or Apple contact list.

The virtual listings were created using information in Central's most recent printed membership directory. Since contact information frequently changes, the site includes a form where you can submit any necessary edits or changes. The church will use that form to update not only the online and print directories, but also other Central databases – until we succeed in creating one universal database.

## CCC Youth

**Confirmation:** This month, the confirmation class reaches its final summit. The confirmands have written their faith reflections and will share them with their families at a celebration dinner on June 3. On June 5, the confirmands will enjoy a wonderful breakfast prepared for them by the Deacons. The confirmands will then lead the Worship service and be confirmed. It is not only a day of joy and celebration, but also the holy day of Pentecost when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. Please wear red as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and the tongues of flame.

**Children's Sunday:** On Sunday, June 12, the church school will celebrate the end of the program year. The children will help lead the Worship service. Third and fourth graders will receive their Bibles, and we will recognize our graduating high school seniors. Please come and join in this day of celebration, joy, and gratitude. And after the service, please stay for the annual Church Picnic out on the West Lawn with activities and games. It will be a fun time for all ages!

**Go-Karts and Mini-Golf:** On June 19, all CCC Youth – both NEOS and WORD – are invited to a fun-filled afternoon of go-karts and mini-golf. Stay tuned for details on this and other summer youth events.

**Mission Trip:** WORD is preparing for the July mission trip to Rainelle, W. Va. Upon our return, we will share our interactions and insights with the congregation. Meanwhile, if any adults would like to join us, please speak to Larry Kellam or Judy.

## Central Babies!

Congratulations to Elizabeth Howland and Adrian Doran on the birth of their first child, a daughter, **Evelyn Aisling Doran**, born on April 22. And congratulations to Caroline Hunter and Jeff Reitzel on the birth of daughter **Eleanor Melissa Anne Reitzel**, who was born on May 7. Eleanor joins big sisters Charlotte and Alice. Welcome, Evelyn and Eleanor, to the Central Congregational Church family!

## Teen Tuesdays

Judy is at the church every Tuesday, morning and afternoon. Teens are welcome to drop by her office – to say hi, talk sports, "speak geek," study, share what ever is on their minds, or just hang out.

**Tuesdays,**  
**June 7, 14, 21, 28**  
**and July 5, 12,**  
**19, 26 – til 5 pm**

**TEEN**  
**TUESDAY**

## Block Party

"Celebrate your Life" at Olney Street Baptist Church's block party. There will be a bounce house, monster truck, games, prizes, raffles, vendors – including \$1 haircuts, braids, and nails – concessions, performances, and even a surprise guest!  
**Saturday, June 11, 1 to 6 pm, at Olney Street Baptist Church (100 Olney Street)**

## Lunch At Gregg's Restaurant

Join Central friends after Worship for good conversation and delicious food at Gregg's, a Rhode Island tradition for 50 years. Check out the extensive, family-friendly menu ([www.greggsusa.com/Menu/Daily-Specials](http://www.greggsusa.com/Menu/Daily-Specials)) and RSVP to Claudia. **Sunday, June 26, 11:15 am, at Gregg's (1303 North Main Street)**

## Ice Cream Sundae Sunday

I scream! You scream! We all scream for ice cream! Especially in the middle of summer. Plan to stay after Worship for Ice Cream Sundae Sunday. We'll provide

the ice cream; you bring some toppings to share! **Sunday, July 3, after Worship, on the West Lawn**



## Brunch at The District

Let's enjoy brunch together at what the Providence Journal calls a "gem in the heart of the Jewelry District." The menu ([thedistrictri.com/new-page-3](http://thedistrictri.com/new-page-3)) features innovative brunch fare, as well as their signature pizzas – voted Best in Rhode Island three years running. RSVP to Claudia. **Sunday, July 17, 11:15 am, at The District (54 South Street)**

## Central Congregational Church

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