



# CENTRAL NEWS

Jun/Jul 2023 Vol. 31, No. 10

## From Rebecca

Dear Friends, "If the world has not approached its end, it has reached a major watershed in history, equal in importance to the turn from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. It will demand from us a spiritual blaze: we shall have to rise to a new height of vision, to a new level of life where our physical nature will not be cursed as in the Middle Ages, but even more importantly, our spiritual being will not be trampled upon as in the Modern Era." So pronounced Alexandr Solzhenitsyn in his June 8, 1978, Harvard Commencement Address.

We are now 45 years past his speech, and yet we still need to be inspired by that "spiritual blaze." In 2023, we have the challenges of artificial intelligence (AI). We see the urgent need to recover the importance of community and that sense of belonging after the incursions of social media and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, which left so many feeling isolated and lonely. The narrative of the decline of mainline churches is a drumbeat that makes me shudder. What would our neighborhoods look like if there were no churches, mosques, or temples in the landscape?

Central Congregational Church, here on Angell Street, is a strong presence in our community and throughout the world through our mission. Each of you is an inspiration to others to recognize and steward our spiritual selves. As summer comes and the season changes our days, let us each explore new possibilities of inviting others to join our community of disciples. Let us do what we can to help and support searchers to find God, to feel hope and courage for our journeys.

Dear friends, we have the vision of the world that God so loves – in our hearts, in our hands, and in our heads. We have only to try to follow our Lord Jesus and love others as we have been loved. We will meet this challenge and see the spiritual blaze come alive ever more in our world!

With you all and Jesus on the way - *Rebecca*

## Accolades for Central Members

HopeHealth, one of New England's largest hospice, palliative, and home care organizations, has named **Bob Iovino-Zuniga** Volunteer of the Year. Bob learned about HopeHealth when his partner Ken was in hospice care. Bob often wondered what he would have done without that support and vowed to pay it forward. He eventually trained as a HopeHealth volunteer, and for a decade offered companionship and respite visits to hospice patients. Two years ago, he started facilitating HopeHealth's biweekly LGBTQ+ Grief Support Group. "LGBTQ+ people know they won't be judged or made to feel something's wrong with them," said Bob. "They know they'll be interacting with others who have been marginalized and share similar problems. They realize they're not alone."

Some reporters wait a lifetime to have a front-page article in a major metropolitan daily. But for **Noble Brigham** – a junior journalism student at Brown University – it happened on May 3, when The Providence

Journal published "She wanted a comfortable retirement and made all the right plans. How did it go so wrong?" – an in-depth analysis of the legal guardianship of Joan Lusk, a retired Brown professor and dean. Noble followed the case for six months, reporting the story under the guidance of retired reporter Tracy Breton.

Another Brown student, **John Nicklas**, was the subject of a front-page article in the Brown Daily Herald (Feb. 24). John – a second-year medical student on leave from the Alpert Medical School – is also enrolled in a self-designed Ph.D. program focused on planetary health (interdisciplinary studies that link human health and health of earth's natural systems and resources). In the article, John explains how pursuing parallel careers in medicine and planetary health can address the root causes of diverse health challenges. He currently is working on multiple projects, including mitigation techniques for groups vulnerable to diseases as a result of climate change.

## JUNE EVENTS

- 4 Cherub Choir Rehearsal 10 am
- Worship 10:30 am
- Church School 10:30 am
- Annual Meeting / Luncheon 11:30 am
- C3 @ CCC 6 pm
- 5 Children's Choir Rehearsal 5 pm
- 7 Gallery Committee 9 am
- 8 Food for Thought Book Group 7 pm
- 9 Gallery Opening 5 pm
- 11 Cherub Choir Rehearsal 10 am
- Worship / Children's Musical 10:30 am
- Church Picnic 12 noon
- C3 @ CCC 6 pm
- 14 Classical Guitar Concert 1 pm
- 15 Central Men's Group 7:30 am
- Board of Deacons / Prudential: Commissioning Service 5:30 pm
- Potluck Dinner 6:30 pm
- 17 PrideFest 2023 11 am
- 18 Worship 10 am
- Children's Summer Activities 10 am
- 21 Mission & Action Committee 6 pm
- 25 Worship 10 am
- Children's Summer Activities 10 am
- Carousel Sunday 11:30 am
- 27 Rebecca's Book Group 12:30 pm

*The Church Office will be closed on Monday, June 19, for Juneteenth.*

## JULY EVENTS

- 2 Worship 10 am
- Children's Summer Activities 10 am
- Ice Cream Sundae Sunday 11 am
- 9 Summer Bible Study 9 am
- Worship 10 am
- Children's Summer Activities 10 am
- Women Gather 11:30 am
- 13 Food for Thought Book Group 7 pm
- 16 Summer Bible Study 9 am
- Worship 10 am
- Children's Summer Activities 10 am
- 19 Ice Cream at Eskimo King 6 pm
- 20 Central Men's Group 7:30 am

*(continued on page 4)*

**SUMMER WORSHIP BEGINS JUNE 18 AT 10 AM!**



## The Deacon's Bench

Joan Chittister writes, "June is the time for being in the world in new ways, for throwing off the cold dark spots of life." As we look back to the pandemic years, and gradually return to many of our treasured Central traditions, let us be grateful for our church community that has carried us forward with strength, knowledge, patience, and kindness.

Traditions are important because they give meaning to our lives and bind us together. Traditions help to teach us and our children about the value of customs both religious and secular. Traditions give us a sense of belonging as in the reciting of the Salem Covenant, singing cherished hymns, sharing favorite Bible passages, and joining in prayer.

With the passage of time, change is inevitable. There have been many challenges the past few years, yet an acceptance of the realities we faced – what the Japanese call "ukeireru." Author Sarah DiGiulio writes that ukeireru encompasses the concepts of mindfulness, making incremental changes, practicing kindness, and accepting the present realities around you. According to Shigenori Nagatomo, Ph.D., professor of religion at Temple University, this philosophy of acceptance is the "harmony of being in nature" or being in the world. Here at Central, we have experienced all that ukeireru defines.

Change fosters continuing renewal, which is necessary for progress. It establishes a new normal and promotes secure relationships as we work together toward common goals – despite our differences. We must combine our talents to forge a new whole, uncover new ideas, and encourage new development – even though it may be challenging. As psychotherapist Julia Samuels wrote, "pain is the agony of change and forces you to wake up and see the world differently." But in the words of Virginia Woolf, "A self that goes on changing is a self that goes on living." This certainly applies to Central's congregation.

So in the spirit of ukeireru and with God's blessing, let us be mindful of the promise of change and greet it with acceptance rather than resignation – secure in the knowledge that, as a congregation, we will achieve future harmony. ~ Janet Harris

### 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 24, 7 pm

#### Faith Exploration

Wednesday, November 1, 7 pm

#### New Member Sunday

Sunday, November 5, 10:30 am

#### Special Guest

Rabbi Wayne Franklin – who served as Senior Rabbi at Temple Emanu-El from 1981 to 2019 – will be at our worship service to offer a special, not-to-be missed Word of Fellowship. **Sunday, June 11, 10:30 am, in the Sanctuary**

#### Board of Deacons and Prudential Committee

Central will commission the 2023/24 Board of Deacons and Prudential Committee members at a special ceremony on **Thursday, June 15 at 5:30 pm**. Meetings and a celebratory potluck dinner immediately follow.

#### 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 our annual Ice Cream Sundae Sunday. We'll provide the ice cream; you bring some toppings to share! **Sunday, July 2, 11 am, on the West Lawn**, weather permitting.



#### Scripture Readers Needed

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



### Summer Bible Study

This summer we'll explore The Gospel of Mark – taking on a different topic each week. Come to one session or all of them. Contact Claudia for more information.

**Sundays, July 9 to Aug. 27, 9 am, in the Fireplace Room**

July 9: Jesus' Authority as Son of God

July 16: Jesus' Authority and Power Revealed in Healings

July 23: Jesus' Authority and Power Revealed in Nature Miracles

July 30: Teachings and Parables to the Chosen

### Church Picnic

Central's annual Church Picnic is always a wonderful celebration of almost-summer. But this year, the children and youth of Central will offer a musical / dramatic presentation during Worship. Afterwards, we'll enjoy the fresh air and warm weather as a community of faith. We will also be celebrating Judy's accomplishments and wishing her well in her next endeavor!

Please bring some tasty picnic sides or sweets to share. The Religious Education Committee will provide the hotdogs, hamburgers, vegetarian burgers, and beverages! **Sunday, June 11, 12 noon,**

### Annual Meeting



The 171st Annual Church Meeting of Central Congregational Church will be held **Sunday, June 4**, immediately following Worship. Simply remain in the Sanctuary. On the agenda: electing officers and committee members, approving the Annual Budget, and dealing with miscellaneous business matters. Judy will provide creative programming for the children during the meeting. Please plan on attending.

Central's annual luncheon will follow at approximately 12:15 pm in Chapel Hall. We'll be serving your choice of rotisserie chicken salad, tuna salad, or egg salad; fresh greens, pasta salad, rolls. and assorted beverages – with our famous strawberry shortcake for dessert. Luncheon tickets are \$15 per person.

The deadline for luncheon reservations and payment was May 30. But there's still time. If you would like to attend, please call the Church Office at 401-331-1960.

## From Claudia

I have just finished Central's summer schedule, which you will find in this newsletter. Before I plan the schedule, I think about it and talk with many of you – and then think some more. It is a big undertaking and takes a while. But in it you will find opportunities for fellowship, learning, and time just to be together supported by our Worship each week. For we people of faith, the foundation for all our interactions is always our faith in the God whom we worship and serve and our community found here in this place.

I've also been thinking about sabbath rest. In the busy-ness of spring, I think we all look forward to the warm and hopefully quieter days of summer. While sabbath time is important throughout the year, I think summer gives us the permission we need to take some time to rest in God. Sometimes we need such permission to simply "be."

In "Earth Gospel," Sam Hamilton-Poore writes this prayer: "Grant me grace this day to rest and remember that there is nothing I have to do, nothing I have to buy or sell, nothing I have to produce or consume in order to become who I already am: your beloved creation. May your overworked creation and those who cannot rest today come to know the liberation of your sabbath."

As we travel through God's wonderful creation in the coming weeks, may we take one another along with us. May we remember our conversations before or after worship. Perhaps tears were shed or maybe joy was celebrated. May we keep all our children in our prayers as they continue to grow into the people God created them to be. May we continue to grow into the people God created us to be! May we experience profound and deep moments of resting in God. And when we meet one another, may we be to each other the rested place of peace that we all need.

Beloved and wonderful people, may you find your place of rest and the equilibrium we all need in the presence of God who is always with us. This is my prayer for us all.

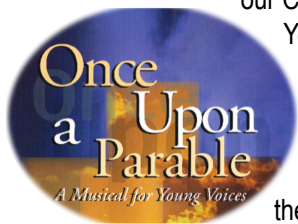
Much love - Claudia

## Musical Notes

**Choir Recognition:** On **Sunday, June 4, during Worship**, we will recognize The Central Congregational Church Choir and Children's Choir. Their dedicated, weekly service in church brought us inspiration and joy through the power of music – and we thank them for their many gifts shared with the congregation.

**Children's Musical:** This year, with the pandemic on the wane, we reconstituted our Children's Choir. You can see and hear the progress they've made on **Sunday, June 11**, when they once again present a musical during

Worship. This year's selection is "Once Upon a Parable" This exciting musical – written by Allen Pote and Tom S. Long – takes a dramatic, yet contemporary look at some of Jesus' most familiar parables, capturing their humor and sharing their lessons through story and song. As the music says, "The stories may be old, but the meaning's always new."



## Not Just Supper

Not Just Supper closed out the year with a barbecue at Peter Woodberry's house. The group sat around his firepit, sipped wine and roasted saugy hotdogs. Potato and pasta salad, bean dip, fabulous homemade pickles and mustard, and even shrimp cocktail rounded out the picnic fare!

If you're not familiar with Not Just Supper, it's the brainchild of Peter Woodberry: A social group for people who are single and may want company to take a walk, go to a movie, see a play, or share a meal. They've even had banana split parties! To join the email list, contact Peter.

*Check out Not Just Supper's happy barbecuers below: (standing) Mary McDonald, Caroline Inlow, Buddy Kling, Ellen Miller, Cheryl Ludwig, Feather Sedam, Janet Harris, Frances Munro, Bob Stout, Hannab Woodberry, Peter Woodberry, (sitting) Hope McCullough, Martha Nielsen, and Nancy Gage.*



## Food for Thought Book Group

Join us for a lively discussion about "True Biz," by Sarah Novic, an unforgettable journey into the Deaf community and a



universal celebration of human connection. **Thursday, June 8, 7 pm, in the Fireplace Room**

Coming up: "The Phone Booth at the Edge of the World," by Laura Imai

Messina: **Thursday, July 13, 7 pm;** "There There," by Tommy Orange: **Thursday, Aug. 10, 7 pm**

## 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 John Trevor. **Thursdays, June 15, and July 20, 7:30 am, in the Fireplace Room**

## Carousel Sunday

Let's meet after Worship at the amazing Crescent Park Carousel, a National Historic Landmark built in 1895 by the famous designer Charles Looff.



Whether you ride or watch, it is a piece of Americana – and fun for children and adults alike! If you like, bring a snack or picnic lunch. Questions? Ask Claudia. **Sunday, June 25, 11:30 am, at the Crescent Park Carousel (700 Bullocks Point Avenue, Riverside)**

## Rebecca's Book Group

Rebecca's Book Group will meet on **Thursday, June 27, 12:30 pm, on the West Lawn**. The book is TBD.

## Women Gather

We'll meet at Providence's only fully restored 1940s soda fountain! For made-to-order ice cream floats, malts, shakes, sodas, sundaes, egg creams, and phosphates. Ingredients are all-natural and organic – plus there are vegan and dairy-free options. All come with a healthy serving of nostalgia! **Sunday, July 9, 11:30 am, at the Green Line Apothecary (905 North Main Street, Providence).**

## Brunch at Diego's

Let's meet after Worship for "fresh Mexican fusion food" and fascinating conversation at this Wayland Square eatery. Check out the extensive menu (<https://www.diegospvidence.com/new-page>) and RSVP to Claudia. **Sunday, July 23, 11:30 am, at Diego's (192 Wayland Avenue, Providence)**

## From Judy

With my upcoming departure from Central on June 15, this is a bittersweet article for me to write. While I'm excited to follow God's call and move forward, seeing what new ministry with its people, places, and traditions lies ahead, there is also the difficulty and sadness of saying goodbye. It is something we contend with throughout our lives. There is always the excitement and anticipation as we move into new phases and places, yet there is also sadness and concern as we leave behind people we care about and places and routines we've grown comfortable with. It happens when we graduate high school and college, when we change employment, get married, and have children.

It happens for children as well. The incidents may seem minor to us, but for children they are indeed monumental. There's going to daycare or preschool for the first time, changing childcare providers, moving into the next grade with a new teacher and classmates, or going onto a new school entirely. Times of transition bring a mix of emotions with them.

The one thing throughout it all that is always there – a constant we can count on and turn to – is the presence and love of God in our lives. I don't know about other people, but for me knowing God, God's love, God's forgiveness, and the work and teaching of Christ is there through all of life is immensely important. It is my hope for you at Central to help make this truth accessible to the children so they too will know the One they can turn to in all the times of their lives. My second hope is that Central continue to be a place that the children and youth can always turn, knowing they will be listened to and accepted.

I will miss everyone here. I know that I will often think of you and whenever I do, I will pray for your well-being. There are things I have learned here that I take with me and that will make me a better minister to the people in all my future places of ministry – and, more importantly, a better person in my life. Thank you for all that you have given me, including encouragement, laughter, caring, challenges to grow from, and most significantly your trust in me to care for the spirituality of your children and youth.

In Christian love - *Judy*

## In The Gallery



In June, the Gallery will showcase the work of abstract artist **Gail Esposito** – in a show entitled "The Art of Color." Please come meet the artist at the opening reception on **Friday, June 9, 5 pm, in the Gallery.**

## Poetry Corner

### Summer

We await the signs of summer  
Stop to look for it in sunny days and  
warm nights  
Listen for the call of tree peepers, the  
smell of the soil  
Be amazed at the colors in a sunset  
Celebrate school break, graduations,  
family vacations  
Stop to enjoy a vegetable garden, the  
leaves of trees  
Sit on the sand of a beach and listen to  
children playing  
Pause to be thankful for all that you have  
And, when summer ends, and you put it  
away in your mind,  
May your memories not be lost, your heart  
always grateful

- *Barry Bayon, 2023*  
*Central Poet Laureate*

## Volunteers Needed!

Central is a longtime supporter of Rhode Island PrideFest, which will take place on Saturday, June 17. **We are in desperate need of volunteers to help staff our booth!** There are three shifts available: 10 am to 12 noon (set up), 12 noon to 2 pm, and 2 to 4 pm (clean up). For additional information or to volunteer, please call or email the Church Office.

PrideFest, held in downtown Providence, is one of Rhode Island's largest festivals, offering fun for the entire family! The gates will open at 12 noon, at the new Providence Innovation District Park (near the Michael S. Van Leesten Memorial Pedestrian Bridge) with access to more than 250 non-profit organizations – including Central – businesses, and food vendors. Local, regional, and national acts will perform on the main stage all day long. The 47th Illuminated Night Parade kicks off at 8 pm with a dazzling display of floats,

## RHODE ISLAND PRIDE FEST

performing artists, marching groups, and businesses that wind through downtown Providence and culminate under the historic marquee of the Providence Performing Arts Center.

**If you can't volunteer, please join us at the festival and cheer us on!**

## JULY EVENTS (cont.)

<b>23</b>	Summer Bible Study	9 am
	Worship	10 am
	Children's Summer Activities	10 am
	Brunch at Diego's	11:30 am
<b>30</b>	Summer Bible Study	9 am
	Worship / Communion	10 am
	Children's Summer Activities	10 am

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

### Cherub Choir

Central's Cherub Choir – for children in pre-school through the second grade – is led by Caroline Hunter. The choir will rehearse for 15 minutes on **Sundays, June 4 and 11, 10 am, Church School Gathering Space.**

### C3 @ CCC

Central's group for young adults in college through their early thirties – called Conversation, Contemplation, and Christ ... aka C3 – meets virtually, so you can join from wherever you may be. We'll talk about faith, the intersection of current events and our beliefs, living as a Christian, and whatever else is on your mind. Meetings last about an hour. **Sunday, June 4 and 11, at 5 pm, via Zoom.** Contact Judy for an invitation.

### Classical Guitar Concert

This month Hamilton House presents guitarist Scott Hacker and The Domani Trio. Scott has performed with The Boston Classical Guitar Society Orchestra. Connecticut Guitar Ensemble, as well as other groups. The concert features Scott's solo and ensemble work with musicians Ian Maysmith and Paul Norton. **Wednesday, June 14, 1 pm, in the Fireplace Room.**

### Ice Cream at Eskimo King

Bring the whole family! We'll meet outside at the picnic tables, near the playground, for good conversation and ice cream. Choose from more than 200 flavors – soft or hard. RSVP to Claudia. **Wednesday, July 19, 6 pm, at Eskimo King** (29 Market Street, Swansea, Mass.)



### Central Congregational Church

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