As I sit writing this reflection, the sun has set on the last day of Spring 2021, and come morning, we will all awaken on the summer solstice – a whole new season! Though I have been an adult far longer than I ever was a child, my spirit continues to groove to the rhythm of the school schedule of my formative years. The coming of summer still evokes feelings of greater spaciousness for me, despite the fact that I’m not “off” for 10 weeks the way I was in elementary school. That spaciousness feeds my soul. Suddenly it’s possible to go on long walks in the woods, to lie in my hammock at the end of a day and not have to hustle to beat the shadows of evening, and to sit on my porch in the morning slowly sipping my coffee. Summer doesn’t bring the absolute freedom from schedules that I remember from my childhood, but there’s something more humane about the pace in my life anyway.

This season of pandemic isolation from which we are emerging – some of us with giddiness, and some of us more warily – has been deeply stressful even for those of us who didn’t ever experience living it in a “hot spot.” Though our sense of personal risk may have been lower than much of the world, it’s undeniable that there was trauma associated with our plunge into extreme caution, with our eyes on numbers, and with the sudden limitation of our ability to do everything we used to do without thinking. In a culture that values action and activity, we are defined by both our productivity and the busyness of our schedules. Our pre-pandemic world was a world built for extroverts, offering those of us with a little bit of financial privilege many chances to be involved in our communities through committee work, activism, and the constant “doing” of extra-curricular activities, and requiring of those of us with less financial breathing room more and more and more hustle just to make ends meet. Nearly everyone I know has spent the last several decades desperately trying to keep way too many balls in the air, and feeling like we just can’t get off the treadmill (a terrible mix of metaphors, but then again, hasn’t it sometimes felt like we’re juggling while running on an ever-faster treadmill?).

Then … pandemic. No, I won’t argue that it has been a blessing. Far too many lives and livelihoods have been lost, and the scope of suffering has been immense. But still, there have been lessons to be learned. As an introvert whose spiritual type can probably best be categorized as “contemplative,” the change of life’s circumstances allowed me to press pause and reassess the things in my life that had seemed so inescapable. I have been reintroduced to the idea that doing more doesn’t always lead to greater joy, health, love, or peace. I have been reminded that, as Rabbi Steve Leder wrote in his recent book The Beauty of What Remains: How Our Greatest Fear Becomes Our Greatest Gift, “Behind every ‘no’ is a ‘yes.’” We have a chance, as we navigate this time of re-emergence and recombination, to remember that saying no to the siren song of busyness for the sake of busyness may be a way of saying yes to the longings of our spirits.

I don’t know what our world will look like a year from now. I hope we can find ourselves moving towards compassion and away from bigotry, towards true equality and away from a system that seeks to limit the rights of people based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and wealth. I am so grateful that we don’t need to live in a locked-down world anymore, but I am not eager to return to things the way they were pre-pandemic; the world of hustle-bustle, of juggling while running on the treadmill dishonors our basic humanity in too many ways. I hope we can step into a world that has that summertime rhythm, where we realize that there is time and daylight, birdsong and beauty. I hope we can hold on to time for contemplation and prayer, relationship with neighbors and with God, tending our bodies, our spirits, the earth, and saying a gentle but convicted “no” to those earlier ways of being.

For me, it is my personal faith as well as my involvement in such a caring faith community that helps me to remember that my value is not to be measured by everything I can do, but that my value is inherent to me, as a beloved child of God. The same is true of all of us! In worshiping in such a thoughtful community, I am given space to be a contemplative, I am challenged by the work of interpreting scripture, I am called to active hope and consistent compassion, and I am filled with the joy and peace that the world can neither give nor take away. If you’re similarly committed to envisioning a changed future rather than going back to the old normal, I hope you’ll come join us!

Yours in peace, Susie
THE WHISTLE BLOWER

Maria Basescu and Mary Rodriguez are proud to share that Simon and Sophie Rodriguez Basescu have graduated from college: Simon from Middlebury, Sophie from Dartmouth. Simon will be working at Deloitte in Washington DC and Sophie at Bloomberg Philanthropies in NYC. They now join their older brother in the workforce; Max, graduate of Johns Hopkins University ‘2018, works at the JHU Applied Physics Lab in Columbia, MD. Thanks, community of Westminster West, for helping us raise three wonderful children!

Abbie Axtell and Evan Blake, both originally from Westminster but now living in Jay, Vermont, are expecting the arrival of a baby boy in late August. Happy grandparents are Dan Axtell and Charlotte Gifford.

Pia Rabin’s son Gabriel Rabin and wife Hong are visiting her for the summer.

Leah Wilner-Deutsch and Jonathan Riedel are the proud parents of a baby boy, Kaleb Noah, born April 7th. He joins older brother Matthew, age 4 ½, who is very excited to have a little brother. They reside in Sutton, MA. Leah is the daughter of Eileen Deutsch and Ira Wilner.

CONGRATULATIONS TO RECENT GRADUATES


Putney School: Tula Campman, Magda Sharff, and Izlin Weinberg.

Colorado College: Ben Shumlin, Magna Cum Laude with a BA in art.

Jennifer Latham’s former foster son Stewart Hartwell, graduated from 8th Grade on Saturday, June 5, 2021 from Kurn Hattin. He won The Residential Suitcase Award for 8th graders who show outstanding progress (shared with Kaitlin Monroe) and The Eleanor Ward Achievement Award, for the 8th grader showing the greatest improvement. He was adopted by his aunt and uncle. Below is photo of Stewart.

Our condolences to two Westminster West families and our community on the death of Buster Newcomb (1934-2021) and Kendall Gifford (1946-2021). Buster was known for his fancy grade maple syrup. He valued farm to table gardening. Kendall loved building, fine carpentry, and skilled woodwork. He was also a true wordsmith. Both had many other interests and were devoted to family. Our condolences to their families for two lives well lived. Left is a photo of Kendall provided by Liz Bourne.

Attention gardeners, there is a weekly perennial plant swap every Wednesday at 6:30, often it meets at Saxtons River Fire Station and sometimes farther north. First time gardeners don’t have to bring anything to the swap as there is always an excess of plants. After the swap they visit someone’s garden. To get notification of and directions to each weeks swap, get on the mailing list by emailing Sandra Binion at sbbinion@gmail.com. Henry Homeyer says it’s time to prune lilacs, rhododendrons, and other spring bloomers before they form buds for next year’s flowers. Lilac love the wood ashes from your wood stove. If you have boxwood, they need a light haircut every year, you could even get creative and shape them into topiary sculpture.
Did you know that the Facebook page on our church’s Facebook page, FACEBOOK: www.westminsterwest.org, to reserve the space. For use guidelines and information on fees, and contact Tom Griffith, our building use coordinator and the keep some sensible guidelines in place, for everyone’s safety. Please We are now meeting for in-person Sunday services at 10 am, starting outdoors, weather permitting, in the amphitheater space on the north side of the building. (Did you know that the seating there is made up of the original foundation stones of the church?)

All are welcome, and we recommend that you bring a chair (if you don’t want to sit on the stones or a church chair), bug spray and a sun hat. Masks and hand sanitizer will be available. Masks are optional outdoors, though it’s still a good idea for non-vaccinated people to use them. We aren’t yet planning a formal coffee hour, but if you want to bring snacks for yourself afterwards, that’s a fine idea.

Our plan is to stay outside through the summer months as we all readjust to post-pandemic norms. If light showers are forecast, consider bringing an umbrella; in case of heavy rain, we will move the service indoors and mask up.

We will be using Facebook Live to stream our weekly services, but you do NOT have to have a Facebook account to join us virtually. Just go on Facebook to the church’s page, Congregational Church of Westminster West.

Shortly, we also will be restarting our weekly Silent Meditation sessions on Sunday afternoons. Please stay tuned for more information!

The church will also be open for community use once more, with some sensible guidelines in place, for everyone’s safety. Please contact Tom Griffith, our building use coordinator and the keeper of the calendar, for use guidelines and information on fees, and to reserve the space. tgriffith@hilltopmontessori.org


**CHURCH OFFICE HOURS**

Due to our church building being closed for the time being, our pastor, Rev. Susie Webster-Toleno, is not holding on-site office hours. That said, she reserves Thursday afternoons for visits to people’s homes or outdoor walks when requested, and appointments for other times can be made via email susiewt@gmail.com or phone call or text: (802-579-8356).

BUILDING USE: Tom Griffith 387-5694 tgriffith@hilltopmontessori.org DEACONS: Charlotte Gifford 387-4145 gifford@languagehead.com TRUSTEES: Guy Payne 869-2600 Gpaynev@gmail.com WEB SITE: www.westminsterwest.org FACEBOOK: Congregational Church of Westminster West
WESTMINSTER SCHOOL BOARD UPDATE
Submitted by Cheryl Charles.

All three candidates won their uncontested candidacies in the June 30 election to fill the first three seats in the newly-reconstituted Westminster School Board. Huge thanks to those of you who were able to vote. New school board members are David Major (March 2022), Charlie Hutchison (March 2023), and Cheryl Charles (March 2024).

Westminster now needs two candidates for the August 31 special election--and candidate consent forms need to be in to Town Hall by July 26. COVID rules apply until the end of 2021, so no petitions need to be circulated in order to be listed as a candidate. A candidate needs only to complete the form indicating consent to serve if elected. The question of whether or not to expand the board from three people to five will be on this ballot. If approved, the elected candidates would then serve in those roles. The August 31 special election is also where the towns of Athens, Grafton and Westminster will vote to approve the financial agreement for Westminster’s withdrawal from the Windham Northeast Union Elementary School District.

TIME TO CLEAN UP YOUR BOOKSHELF

Clean up your book shelf in order to free up space for this year’s book sale. You end up with new reading material and help your local library by donating those books you know you are never going to read again. It’s a win win situation. Please make sure your books are clean and in readable shape. We do not take textbooks, encyclopedias or VHS tapes. Bring your books to the Westminster West library and leave them in a box by the back door. This year’s book sale will be Saturday Sept. 11th.

OTHER NEWS: Greetings from your well-loved Library. Thank you for voting for additional town funding to keep our Libraries active. WWPL has a goal to have our entire collection automated- entered into a digital catalog by September 1st. We have over 19 volunteers trained to help accomplish this goal. Our hours are the same (Mon 7-9, Tue 2-6 Wed 2-6 and Sat 10-12) but there are a few holes in the schedule because we are still short a few volunteers. Have you ever thought of picking up a Saturday shift? Our current guidelines try to protect our youngest community members and state that: Social distancing is recommended for all but masks are optional for fully vaccinated people. Thank you for your support of the Plant Sale. Plastic Pots can be returned to the Library. Leave them behind the back porch and ramp. We will reuse them next year. Stop by and see us.

VERMONT BICYCLE DIARIES.
Steve Belczak

Coming across a sailor’s unmarked grave

We did not know we were walking on graves hidden from view
tombstones falling in names and dates smoothed away

We made our way
On the way to the place where the tide turns the smell of old seaweed landlocked in that man meant for better things

BBQ 2021
SATURDAY JULY 31st
From Chef Tristan Toleno

Pre-order only.
Pick-up between 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM

ENTREES: $12
3 Home-Smoked Vermont Pork Sliders
OR
3 Vegan Jackfruit “Pulled Pork” Sliders
(G/F Available in both)

Every Entree Includes:
Coleslaw - Olive Oil, Spices, Cider Vinegar (vegan and g/f)
Sweet Corn Salad - Basil and Tomatoes (vegan and g/f)
Potato Salad - Kale, Sweet Onion, Olive Oil and Lemon (vegan and g/f)

DESSERT: Lemon Blueberry Buttermilk Cake $3
G/F Version available

Add a Pint of Homemade Ginger-Mint Lemonade $4

To pre-order email Tom Griffith at tomgriffith1051@gmail.com
and state your preferred time of pickup. Tom will confirm your order and pick-up time. Thanks for your support!

DON’T FORGET THE GOLDEN RULE OF DONATING:
Only donate what you would want to keep if you had the room or if you had grandchildren or if you suddenly lost your job.
Sue Venman and Sharon Boccelli preparing dinner for us all last May. Although it was a lot of work it looks like they were also having a lot fun (either that or going crazy.) Photo by Ingrid Sellboccelli

The Westminster West Congregational Church, the First Congregational Church in Westminster, the Westminster West Public Library, the Putney Library, the Westminster Institute, the Butterfield Library, the Westminster Town Hall, and the Nature Museum have all opened this month. The road crew and firemen have been on the job all along, excepting when they ride around town honking their horns. We appreciate you even when you are out celebrating our Country’s birth. We loved the parade!!!!

This is the barred owl that came to visit outside my window on the spring equinox here on Davidson Hill Road. Photo and text by Cheryl Charles

HOPE
a poem from liturgist Alden Solovy
Submitted by Eshagh Shaoul

Oh you children of Abraham,
You sons and daughters of Sarah and Hagar,
What will you become?
How long before shalom and salaam
Echo in these hills,
In these valleys and on these shores,
As shouts of awe and amazement?
How long before we remember
To hold each other dear?
One God,
Maker of All,
Banish war from our midst.
Speedily bring forth justice, understanding and love.
Bind these wounds and heal our hearts.
On that day the children of Ishmael
And the children of Isaac
Will dance as one.
Joy will rise to heaven
And gladness will fill the earth
May the One Who causes peace on high,
cause peace to descend upon all of Israel
and upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

They are putting together a new exhibit on the Massacre and hope to have it ready in August. At the moment they don’t have plans to open the Bradley Law Office this summer.
THE NATURE MUSEUM RE-OPENS JULY 17TH
with a New Natural Playscape

The Nature Museum in Grafton, Vermont has been running full programs, both virtually and in person, since closing the doors to their museum in March of 2020. During this time, they’ve been hard at work building a new element for museum visitors, the Magic Forest Playscape. The public is invited to join for a public re-opening celebration, and an introduction to the new playscape, on July 17th from 12-4. Beginning at noon, there will be stickers, prizes, and treats to celebrate the re-opening for the season.

The Magic Forest Playscape is designed with elements from nature creating a whimsical trail that leads through the woods. Part obstacle course, part path of exploration, the new natural playscape has elements that challenge balance and strength and elements that encourage rest and reflection. It’s designed for all ages and will be open from dawn to dusk every day. The students from Grafton Elementary were able to give the playscape a test run and provide feedback on the elements, and their participation was an important part of creating this new feature at the museum.

Beginning on July 17th, the museum will be open Friday - Sunday from 10-4, and the Playscape is open every day. The museum is running a full schedule of summer camps, free nature-based lessons at local libraries and the Bellows Falls Fish Ladder in the Summer Unplugged program, and workshops for adults on wild medicinals, invasive species, and native mushrooms and fungi. See their website for more information about the Magic Forest Playscape, the full schedule of events, and the Fairy House Festival coming up the weekend of September 25th. Above Students from Grafton Elementary test the new natural playscape

HUMANITY NETWORK of GREATER FALLS OFFERS
AN INTRODUCTION TO
RESTORATIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The introduction will be on Thursday, July 8, 6:30-8:30 p.m. on the lawn behind the Westminster Institute on Rte 5 in Westminster. Bring a lawn chair! Please register with Anne Dempsey programming@rockinghamlibrary.org if you will be attending this event, but you are welcome to come to the event without registering.

Would you like to learn skills that might help you improve communication with people in your community and your family? We have all experienced the discomfort of a disagreement that did not end well for either party. Whether with co-workers or family members, neighbors or professional interactions, we can all benefit from learning and practicing Restorative Conflict Resolution (RCR), aka Nonviolent Communication (NVC) skills. Although we may not always agree or we may not even solve a conflict, RCR can help us to remember the humanity of those with whom we are in conflict and ourselves.

The Rockingham Free Public Library is sponsoring a collaboration between The Humanity Network of Greater Falls (HNGF) and Restorative Community Practice of VT (RCPVT) to offer a free introductory workshop on Restorative Conflict Resolution and to learn more about HNGF and RCPVT. Join us Thursday, July 8, 6:30-8:30 on the lawn behind the Butterfield Library in Westminster on RT 5 (bring a lawn chair). The Humanity Network of Greater Falls is a recently forged grass roots group that is working toward an egalitarian society by supporting cultural education and social engagement opportunities.

The workshop will be led by Dan Dewalt, Laurie Rabut and Claire Webb of Restorative Community Practice of VT. Dan is an educator with many years’ experience in teaching Restorative Practice, facilitating conflict resolution conferences and founder of RCPVT. Laurie began her studies in NVC under the tutelage of founder of the method, Marshall Rosenberg, in the early 1990’s. She is also an educator with 20 years of experience with NVC consciousness and circle work. In recent years, she has been facilitating restorative circles and co-facilitating trainings for RCPVT with Dan. Claire has a degree in restorative justice from Bennington College and leads community impact circles for RCPVT. Together, Dan, Laurie and Claire are dedicated to practicing and teaching the skills useful to de-escalate potentially antagonistic interactions, while honoring relationships and restoring well-being in our local communities. To learn more about RCPVT visit their website at https://rcpvermont.org/

We hope this free introductory workshop will inspire your membership in the Humanity Network of Greater Falls and encourage your participation in Restorative Circle Conference Practice, a 6-week workshop planned for September. Clear, honest and empathetic communication is a learned skill and a muscle that requires nurturing and practice, a skill that benefits both individuals and communities. All Are Welcome. For more information on the HNGF or to get the link to the monthly meetings, contact Jeanette Staley at jeannette.staley@vcfa.edu or Representative Michelle Bos-Lun at mbossun@leg.state.vt.us Contact Laurie Rabut with any questions about RCPVT’s work at rabutlaurie@gmail.com.
HAYWARD GARDENS OPEN TO PUBLIC JULY 10TH

On July 10 the Hayward’s garden will be open to the public (10 am- 6pm) in support of The Garden Conservancy, a national organization that conserves fine gardens. To get tickets, e-mail opendays@garden conservancy.org or call 1-888-842-2442.

PINNACLE NEWS

WHPA is sad to say good-bye to retiring trustees Vanessa Stern and Erin Rodgers. We thank them for their countless hours of work and energy to ensure the fulfillment of our mission.

We welcome the following new trustees and are looking forward to working with them to further our work on the Pinnacle Ridgeline, Athens Dome, and the Bald Hill Reserve: Nora Gordon and Sean Long, both from Westminster West. Sean was a founding trustee and after a long hiatus to raise his family has rejoined the board. Nora, a newcomer to the area, has probably walked every Pinnacle trail.

Pinnacle trails are open for visitors, with the Pinnacle cabin open for day visitors and overnight reservations. Please observe social distancing and other safety measures. People who are not fully vaccinated should wear masks while in the cabin. Check our website at www.windmillhillpinnacle.org for updates on our programs starting in September.

BALANCE OR AN ODE TO THE PANDEMIC PAUSE

Every now and then go away
Have a little relaxation
For when you come back
To your work
Your judgement will be surer;
Since to remain constantly at work
Will cause you to lose your power
Of judgement . . .

Go some distance away
Because the work appears smaller
And more of it
Can be taken in at a glance,
And a lack of harmony
Or proportion
Is more readily seen.
Leonardo da Vinci (1452 – 1519)

THE 31ST ANNUAL COMMUNITY FAIR SEPT 11TH

SOMETHING NEW: Plans are underway for the 31st annual Community Fair, which will be on Saturday Sept 11th. One thing that will be different from previous fairs is the silent auction. Following the success of last year’s online auction, we are doing that again this year. It gives folks who can’t be at the fair a chance to bid on the donated auction items. There will be a smattering of silent auction items for you to bid on the old way, but most will be online. This frees up the community room for people to gather in, especially if it rains. The guideline for this event is below.

EVERYTHING ELSE OLD: All the other usual events are staying the same; road races, parade, chicken BBQ, Golden Elephant, veggie contest; raffle, talent show, and others. While it’s too early for you to bake some brownies, it is not too early to think of what goody you have in your garage or attic that you can donate to the Online Silent Auction or the Golden Elephant Sale. Please remember, no electronics, books or clothes, and do follow the Golden Rule for the sale: donate only what you yourself might want to buy that doesn’t create more clutter. Details on the parade and the grand marshal(s) have yet to be ironed out.

We invite you to join the fair committee and help us plan this glorious event. To get on the committee mailing list, contact Laura and Betsy, email: laladust@gmail.com or phone 802-387-5694.

ONLINE AUCTION GUIDELINES

During July and August, we need folks to let us know of possible donations to the silent auction. Please send a photo and description of the item and if there is a minimum bid to Cheryl Charles at cherylcharles01@gmail.com. Our deadline is August 31st. Ray Huessy, our website guru, will post them on the auction page. The bidding kickoff will be announced via an email, but before Labor Day weekend. On the day of the fair, a few chosen items will be on display in the community room with a stack of printed lists of all the online auction items (with donors’ names and minimum bids) available for people to take with them. Sunday September 12th is the last day of bidding. Last bid updates will be posted on the auction website at 1, 2, 3, and 4pm. Bidding closes at 5pm. In the next week, volunteers will arrange transport of auction items to the winners.

2019 Community Fair: Nick Keil and Bill Ballard discuss prices (or the state of the world or how to play the saxophone) at the Golden Elephant venue. Photo: Ira Wilner
BIRDS FLY
From Howard Davis, age 73

Recently, on a rainy April afternoon, I watched from my window intently as a robin bobbed and pecked through the newly green grass. I was hoping to see it pull up a juicy worm for it’s supper.

I continued to watch and became mesmerized as it would, from time to time, run or hop to a new spot and resume bobbing and pecking. Quite suddenly it flew away! I laughed at myself for being surprised.

SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER

SUMMER CALENDAR

WEEKLY EVENTS:

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH of WEST WEST
Church Service - 10am Sunday outside

HEALTH AND FITNESS:
For new comers to exercise classes, Westminster Cares needs to if the person is appropriate for that class first so they need to call Donna Dawson at Westminster Cares 722-3607 and she will put them in touch with the instructor.

STRONG LIVING is happening by ZOOM
Karen Walter and Ronnie Friedman lead online weight classes 10:30am on Mondays and Thursdays. To get on Karen’s list email her Karensww7@gmail.com, the Zoom host is Karen Blanchard, karen.blanchardreddog@gmail.com To get on Ronnie’s list email her veronicafriedman24@gmail.com

YOGA is happening by ZOOM
Lisa Nigro leads a class Monday mornings from 10 to 11:15. Email Lisa at lisa.nigro.yoga@gmail.com

PRE-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
Cancelled due to Covid 19

WESTMINSTER WEST LIBRARY
Mon 7-9pm * Tue & Wed 2-6pm * Thur 10am-noon
Sat 10am - noon

BUTTERFIELD LIBRARY
The Institute and the library are now open. For service, contact their website: https://butterfieldlibraryvt.wordpress.com/ The Institute & the Library share a Facebook page

SENIOR ACTIVITIES
Secrets of Healthy Aging is happening by phone (WebEx). To register for this activity, call Donna Dawson 722-3607 and a number will be emailed to you the day before the event.

RECYCLING
Recycling Center on Rte 5 - Wed & Sat - 9am - 1pm

HAVE SOME SUMMER FUN AT OUR JULY OUTDOOR FUNDRAISER CONCERT

Saturday, July 10th (rain date: Sunday, July 11th) from 5 to 7 pm at 1197 Westminster West Road in Westminster West! Local band Bourbon Shuffle (Sue Caviola, banjo, Mark Baker, fiddle, and Janet Goldstein, upright bass) will be singing and playing a program of eclectic Americana acoustic music (“sometimes old, sometimes new, sometimes a little blue”) in a beautiful setting.

Come one, come all! Bring something to sit on and whatever you’d like to eat and drink*. There is plenty of parking available (across the road, + onsite for less able-bodied) and you pay “at the door.”

*S livewater Farm will have some delicious goodies to share as well!

Suggested donation: $10 to $50

The Strong Living weight group that Ronnie Friedman leads met to say goodbye to Jenny and Ian Eddy who have since moved to Colorado to be near family. Photo by Rick Cowan