



WINTER EDITION 2021

WHISTLER: Alison Latham 387-5711 aliemae1@outlook.com

"My friend Frog always said, "The spreadsheet mentality does not exist for us. Can you measure a cup of war or a quart of love? Some things cannot be measured and we are better for it."

From Mike Plant, Elnu Abenaki citizen as shared by Melody Walker Mackin, of Atowi Project.



Cheryl Charles' photo of a barred owl near her house

REFLECTIONS

"THIS SACRED SEASON"

Pastor Susie Webster-Toleno

Greetings, Dear Church,

I write to you in still-early December, but usually it's hard to know where to jump into the story, since usually I have written this Advent reflection back before Thanksgiving. That change is because the Whistler used to go out before the Soup Sale, which was connected to the Putney Craft Tour, but this year though there was a Craft Tour, we did not have a soup sale, and so our pattern of publication shifted.

Do you find yourself doing what I've just done? In so many aspects of our lives, we have routines and patterns that have long been familiar and comforting, but pandemic has caused shifts in so many of those things. Though last year was hard in innumerable ways, one thing that was easy about it was how few hard decisions we had to make. There was so much clarity about the danger of the pandemic before vaccines were available that we simply had to shut things down and set the old way of doing things aside. As sad as it was not to do certain traditional things, we truly had no real choice in the matter, so we let go of our old patterns and did our best to find joy and meaning despite social distancing and an absence of familiar structures in our lives.

This year is different ~ better in many ways, actually ~ but there's far less clarity for churches. Having set aside for the last year so many of the things we've always done and the way we've always done them, we now are in the position of picking back up; but unfortunately, there's no right answer to what we can and should pick up, and what must or could simply be let go. These days, some people feel completely comfortable being in large groups again, and some don't. Within our church, I think everyone who comes on Sunday mornings is grateful that we're still all masking for our time together; I also know some don't feel comfortable coming to public places despite masks, and I suppose there are some who would rather not come until we are unmasked. I have always known that it's impossible to please all of the people all of the time, but it's hard to choose when there is so little clarity.

It's also hard to give up traditions, or have them change. There's comfort in "the way we've always done it." But as a pastor, I have to admit that I hope that the *meaning* of what we do will always be more important than the way we do it. In a world where the secularization of the Christmas story seems to tame it into sentimental mush, it's counter-cultural to focus on the Good News of the birth of the Christ Child far more than the bells and whistles of elaborate liturgies played out for the sake of tradition. And the counter-cultural story is this: in a backwater byre, in a time of political unrest, occupation, and power grabs, to a young unwed mother with few resources, a baby was born who was the very incarnation of Love. This baby was born for the healing of the nations, that there might be peace on Earth. And this baby, Love Incarnate, was born to bring glad tidings to those who live in poverty, and to turn the power structures of the world upside down. It's truly amazing, this story, and the fact that we can't all gather in large numbers to sing unmasked and have a choir and do all of that in our Christmas best is truly beside the point.

Though we will not be hosting our usual pre-Christmas gathering in our usual way, we *will* gather on December 19 at 5 pm ~ outdoors, with a fire pit ~ to hear the story and sing familiar carols. We will sing among ourselves, with and to our neighbors, and to all who need to hear Good News. And we will know that it is all truly True ~ that love is born in unexpected places, in unexpected forms, for the healing of the world, and most especially that we can be part of the story of healing, hope, and transformative love in God's name.

Blessings on your whole household in this sacred season of possibility, hope, and joy.

In faith, Susie

THE WHISTLE BLOWER

Our next issue will be our **GRATITUDE** issue. So get ready to send me ONE, just ONE thing you are grateful for. Me, I am grateful for all the community contributions to the Whistler.

Abbie Axtell and Evan Blake welcomed a baby boy on August 21, Hugo Axtell Blake. (7lbs., 13oz; 20 in.) The whole family is doing well, grandparents Charlotte Gifford and Dan Axtell enjoy frequent visits with them in their home in Jay, Vermont.

Isaac Proctor and Haley Hopkins got engaged in September. After a year of celebrating, they are planning a small family wedding at Lake Dunmore next September.

Thank you!
THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!

The trustees and members of the Congregational Church would like to thank each and every one of you for making our 32st Annual Community NON-Fair a great success. So many of you helped by attending concerts, partaking of our take home chicken BBQ dinner, bidding on a virtual Auction item, taking a chance on our raffle offerings, or by donating your time or money. It didn't totally fill in the hole in our budget, but it made a big dent. During this difficult pandemic time, we are truly grateful for your support. Stay safe over the holidays.

RAFFLE WINNERS:

Weekend at Emily and Zach Weinberg's Maine cottage:
Susie and Tristan Webster-Toleno
Air B and B \$200 gift certificate: Betsy and Laura Williams
Toby Young's oil painting: Peggy O'Toole

From Ira Wilner: "We added a PV array (solar panels) to our home here in WW late last year, during the height of the pandemic and late this week added a Tesla Power Wall via Green Mountain Power lease arrangement to give us some backup power during outages and providing battery storage for the grid too. Both were installed by a small local company headquartered in Westminster West, "Southern Vermont Solar" owned by husband and wife team Simon Piluski and Victoria Roberts. BTW, Simon grew up in WW.

Eileen and I are doing our best to encourage local businesses to thrive and were able to continue to make purchases all through the pandemic by virtue of my continued full time employment at Saga Communications in Keene and my other radio station clients such as VPR. We know not everyone was as blessed and we are grateful. We hope everyone stays healthy and continues to use prudent behavior during this new infection peak in VT & NH which has not yet seen the more contagious Omicron mutation but will shortly."

WHAT IS CABIN FEVER SUPPER? An event where we eat scrumptious foods and tell true outrageous stories of coping with Vermont's challenging weather, may have to be postponed again due to Covid. So what can we do?? Well Tristan Toleno can still cook a delicious meal which we take out rather than sit down to. But those stories?? If you mail your stories to me now, we can print them and hand them out to you when you pick up your supper.

Caitlin and Peter Adair's daughter Ani Cahill, her husband Kevin and two kids, Owen (11) and Mia (6), will be visiting from Bend, Oregon, for a whole week over the holidays! They are hoping for lots of snow for sledding and sleigh rides!

Our condolences to the families of **Alice Maes, Linda Lowe, Jimmy Haas, and Bill Lockerby** on their recent deaths.

Alice Maes (10/16/30 – 11/22 21) was a fascinating woman who showed great courage in how she faced her final illness. She was a pioneer in her industry (working in the tech sphere for IBM as one of very few women who did so in her era), and a staunch advocate for non-violent communication and for trying to address climate change through good building practices, solar panels, and the like.

From Susie Webster-Toleno: "We mourn the death of our dear Alice Maes, who had been a member of this church for the past several years and served faithfully as one of our Trustees. Alice's care for the building and the community that gathers there prompted great creativity and generosity from her. She was a fixture in Putney for so these many years, and will be missed not just by the church but by folks at the Putney General Store and Café Loco, where she held court daily. Alice's activism for non-violence was inspiring to us all. She leaves daughters Sylvia and Sarah, and grandchildren Dylan and Alena. Alice died on November 22; a memorial gathering will be held on Zoom on January 8 at 10 AM. The Zoom link will be available on our church website in early January..

Linda Lowe (10/10/44 – 11/28/21) She was a caregiver all her life whether it was at home with her family or at Thompson House nursing home. She was an avid Red Sox fan.

Bill Lockerby (4/24/73 – 10/28/21) He loved sports, especially baseball. He was a player, coach and a fan. He had a great sense of humor and a fun loving personality.

Jimmy Haas (8/4/61 – 11/30/31) His passion was hunting and fishing. Jimmy was a mountain man, who hated technology and should have lived in a different century. He was a tireless worker and an equally tireless partier (back in the day). He took real pleasure in doing a job well and in helping people. A celebration of his life will be held at apple blossom time.

COMING IN JANUARY: FOOD AND SHELTER

Food & Shelter, an original play by award winning New Hampshire playwright and former NHPR radio reporter Sean Hurley, opens January 21st at Next Stage Arts in Putney. With intricate set design and direction by artist David Stern, music by composer Greg Wilder, and choreographic work by the LOOM ensemble, *Food & Shelter* is a ghost story for those who sometimes wonder if they themselves might be the ghosts. The play runs through January 30th. Tickets available at nextstagearts.org

THE WESTMINSTER VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NEEDS YOU

They are always looking for new members, especially from the Westminster West area. During calls, more help is always welcome to utilize the engine and rescue vehicle located in the Westminster West fire house. Our heartfelt thanks to the volunteers from the west, more so because you are few in number. They also have fire extinguishers for sale in 4 size. See the chief or stop by the fire station located on Grout Avenue.

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL HANDPRINTS

Living Earth Action Group recently sponsored a presentation by Laurel Green on Environmental Handprints. She says it's time for a positive, new way to look at our relationship with our home planet. It's time for each of us to create our own sustainable, Earth friendly environmental handprints.



You may know what your ecological footprint is already. Maybe you have used an online calculator to add up all the resources you require to live on a daily basis. Now, you get to decide what complementary actions you want to take to heal the life systems on which all life depends. In short – footprints are what you use and handprints are what you give back to the earth. This workshop is based on a recently published

book titled Our Environmental Handprints: Recover the Land, Reverse Global Warming, Reclaim the Future by Jon Biemer.

PAST ACTIONS: first we listed all the past things we have done to help the earth, to promote sustainable living. Here are some of our past accomplishments:

- Educating youth on renewable energy
- Driving hybrid or electric vehicles
- Living in a small house
- Conserving land, saving it from development
- Protest Nuclear Energy (Vermont Yankee)
- Installing Solar Panels
- Writing for Green Energy Times
- Composting
- Buying food from local farmers
- Participated in Earth Day
- Clean up creeks and/or rivers
- Recycle packaging and other materials
- Consume less, I ask myself, do I really need this?
- Car pool or hitchhike
- Convert lawn to gardens, vegetable and flower
- Support good building (construction) practices
- Participate in window insert project to save energy
- Travel less, combine errands to make less trips
- Made my house energy efficient
- Replaced oil furnace with geothermal or heat pump(s)
- Turn the thermostat down
- Eat less meat or become a vegetarian

**Use it up, Wear it out
Make it do, Or do without**

Well that is quite a list, but Laurel, says we should stretch ourselves and think of things we can do in the future. Some folks repeated as new projects things that were already done by others (PAST) so I will not repeat them.

FUTURE INTENTIONS:

- Share home with others if you have the space
- Share a pickup truck, post on community bulletin board
- More involved with promoting the Green Amendment in VT
- Improve the soil on your property
- More involved in Politics, write letters, make calls
- Support non-profits supporting earth friendliness
- Learn from Indigenous people how to respect the earth
- Get involved in Town Plans about energy conservation
- Let your lawn go wild
- Learn how to talk to litterbugs and carbon creators without anger and how to minimize the effect of anger on me
- Talk to my grandchildren about renewable energy
- Change my investments to support earth friendly companies
- Forming a group of gardeners to help each other,
- Use my buying power. Money has power, buy organic
- Spread the good word, talk to others – proselytize

“Every time you spend money you’re casting a vote for the kind of world you want”. Anna Lappe

This process helped us celebrate the actions we had already taken and inspired us to map out our future goals for lending a hand to Mother Gaia We need both our hands and our feet to keep our balance on the Earth! If you feel daunted, Laurel says “Just do something!” Reported by Alison Latham

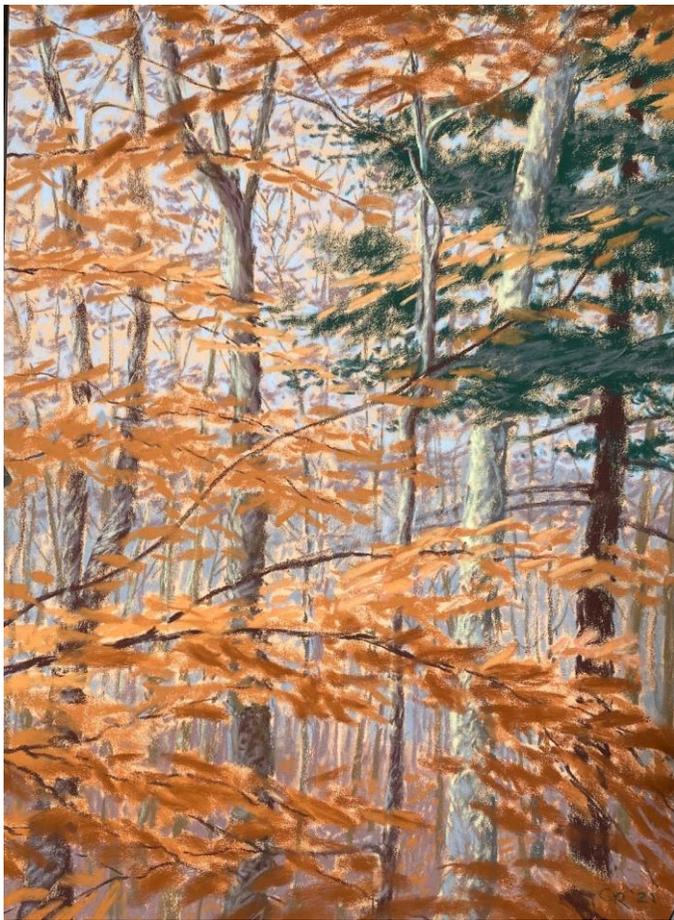
LIBRARY READING GROUP READS ON

The library book group meet over Zoom the 3rd Monday every month (from 7-9 pm). The job of presenter and discussion leader is shared among members, with the person who proposed the book under discussion being the leader. New members are welcome. Please call Lise Cavanaugh (387-4682) with your questions and/or to sign up as a participant. Lise will order copies of the books through inter library loan. Please get in touch with her if you have, or are planning to have, copies of the books. Here is our list for the new year:

- December 20: “A Libertarian Walks Into a Bear” by Matthew Hongoltz-Hetling
Facilitator Mary Scherbatskoy
- January 17: “Owls of the Eastern Ice; A Quest to Find and Save the World's Largest Owl” by Jonathan C Slaght
Facilitator: not me
- February 21: “Under a White Sky, The Nature of the Future” by Elizabeth Kolbeert
Facilitator: Tatiana Schreiber
- March 21: “Heart Spring Mountain” by Robin McArthur
Facilitator: not me
- April:18: “American Nations” by Collin Woodard
Facilitator: Charlie Hutchison
- May 15: “Learning From the Germans” by Susan Neiman
Facilitator: maybe you
- June 20: “How Beautiful We Were” by Embolo Mbue
Facilitator: who knows

BIG NEWS: LIBRARY GOES LIVE IN 2022

The Westminster West Library has almost completed the colossal task of cataloging its collection. Thank you, volunteers! The library goes LIVE in 2022, meaning you can browse for books online. Please make use of this tremendous resource, the library is here to serve YOU! So when you get their appeal letter in the mail, think of how it would be if they weren't here.



"For love of the woods", a pastel by Camilla Roberts

LOST JOSEPH

By Hafez, a famous Iranian poet
Translated by Marzieh Ghiasi, June 2009
A friend of Eshagh Shaoul

Your lost Joseph will return to Canaan, do not grieve
This house of sorrows will become a garden, do not grieve
Oh grieving heart, you will mend, do not despair
This frenzied mind will return to calm, do not grieve
When the spring of life sets again in the meadows
A crown of flowers you will bear, singing bird, do not grieve
If these turning epochs do not move with our will today
The state of time is not constant, do not grieve
Lose hope not, for awareness cannot perceive the concealed
Behind the curtains hidden scenes play, do not grieve
Oh heart, should a flood of destruction engulf the world
If Noah is at your helm, do not grieve
As you step through the desert in desire of Ka'aba
The thorns may reproach you, do not grieve
Home may be perilous and destination out of reach
But there are no paths without an end, do not grieve
Our state in separation from friends and with demands of foes
The divine who turns circumstance knows all, do not grieve
Hafez, in the corner of poverty and loneliness of dark nights
Until your words echo prayers and lessons of Quran,
do not grieve.

Editors notes:

Ka'aba is a small stone house in the courtyard of the great Mosque at Mecca that contains a sacred black stone and is the goal of Islamic pilgrimages and the point toward which Muslims turn in prayer.

Quran or Koran is the Islamic sacred book.

THE WESTMINSTER WEST LIBRARY NEWS

Bringing it all back home! From the 1890's and 1990's

The Library has been caring for many village memories in addition to books. Back by popular demand for the holiday season, videotapes of children's performances in 1988-90 led by Elena Dodd with the 4H Club, School and others are now online through January 31. Full of smiling faces, enthusiastic audiences, local musicians and good fun, The Little Prince, Westminster History Pageant, Heidi and more will bring back memories! So will oral history interviews with the Shumlins, Prozzos, Zimmermans and others. So if you or your children were in any of these shows, or just want to revisit the past in Westminster West go to the site listed below and enjoy the great memories - with apologies for 1990 technology. (DVDs of all these will be permanently available at the Library:

imemories.com

Login as: westminsterwestlibrary@gmail.com

Password is **llibrary1!** (capital I/library/one/exclamation)

And farther back - from the 1890s - the Library preserves a group of photo albums collected from Westminster West families by local son Edwin Gorham which show village faces and scenes from Civil War times to World War I. Families depicted include Braleys, Campbells, Clarks, Crowells, Goodhues, Goodells, Gorhams, Halls, Harlows, Millers, Ranneys, Stevens, Wilcoxes, Wrights and others. Through a new program called WESTORY, the albums will be displayed at the Library during 2022, providing a window on the past and a link to the community today. All descendants of the early Westminster West families are invited to get in touch so that we can keep you informed of progress and invite you to events.

Please send your name, family connection and how to contact you to: WESTORY, Library Association of Westminster West, 3409 Westminster West Road, Putney 05346. You may also email us at westminsterwestlibrary@aol.com (note, this is a separate email account)

JOB OPENKNG - RECORDING CLERK FOR THE WESTMINSTER PLANNING COMMISSION

The Westminster Town Planning Commission is looking for a Recording Clerk to take minutes for our monthly meetings. Meetings are held on the 2nd Monday of each month from 6:30-8:30 pm via Zoom until further notice, and then in person at the Town Hall. When the 2nd Monday is a holiday we meet the following day (Tuesday).

Minutes must give a "true indication of the business of the meeting" - which may require supplementing the following statutorily-required elements: members present; active participants at the meeting; motions, proposals, and resolutions made, offered, and considered and what disposition is made of the same; the result of any votes taken; and a record of individual votes if a roll call is taken. 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(1). Meeting minutes do not have to be a transcript of the meeting. Meeting minutes must be formatted and submitted to the Town Office within 5 days of the meeting.

Attendance: Candidate must attend all meetings or give advance notice to the Commission Chair for planned absences.
Pay: Stipend is \$70/meeting (estimated 3 hours per month)
Please respond to westminstvt.planningcom@gmail.com with qualifications and personal contact details.

WEST WEST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday worship begins at 10am

come as you are (but please wear a mask)

We are an Open and Affirming Church, fully accessible

We are 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.

Dec. 19 - Outdoors Candlelight Service, **5 pm**: Susie Webster-Toleno

Dec. 24 – Zoom Christmas Eve Service, **11 pm**: Susie Webster-Toleno

Dec. 26: Susie Webster-Toleno

Jan. 2: Susie Webster-Toleno, Holy Communion

Jan. 9: Sue Venman, Manna collection

Jan. 16: Adrienne Major

Jan. 23: Susie Webster-Toleno

Jan. 30: Charlotte Gifford

Feb. 6: Susie Webster-Toleno. Holy Communion

SUNDAY DECEMBER 19th 5PM

COMMUNITY CANDLELIGHT AND CAROLS SERVICE

Traditionally this service is held on the Sunday before Christmas, but this year it will be **OUTDOORS**. Please note the new time! It will be a briefer than usual service, but with the familiar Christmas readings and many carols, concluding with Silent Night by candlelight. We're hoping to have a fire pit, too, for both warmth and beauty. All of this is because we simply don't feel comfortable opening our doors and inviting the usual large crowd indoors. We hope you'll support our attempt at doing a new thing! (I imagine that if people have mobility issues, it would be possible for a few people to park near enough to the front door to participate from within their cars.

TUESDAY DECEMBER 21st BETWEEN 7 AND 8 PM

SOLSTICE LABYRINTH WALK

This will take place in our sanctuary. This is always a very small gathering, and people come and go without singing or even speaking, so we feel comfortable doing this indoors.

FRIDAY DECEMBER 24th 11PM VIA ZOOM

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Due to the same concerns as above, we have decided to worship via Zoom at **11 p.m.** Yes, it'll probably be a small crew at that time, but we so missed that gathering last year! Zoom link To access Zoom, go to our website, www.westminsterwest.org and the link is at the top of the homepage. Password is 05346

SUNDAY DECEMBER 26th 10AM

This would traditionally be our all-carol hymn sing, but there are concerns about that much singing ... so it will be instead a traditional service. Rest assured, carols will be part of it!

ONLINE PAYMENT OPTION NOW AVAILABLE

Did you know how easy it is to support the work of our church? There is a "button" on the home page of our website (www.westminsterwest.org), where a one-time or repeating donation can easily be made, either using your favorite credit/debit card or using PayPal. We certainly thank you for helping us get through this difficult season!

SUNDAY NIGHT SILENT MEDITATION

In the interest of saving energy and keeping heating costs down, the Sunday afternoon silent meditation will be on hold until the spring brings warmer weather. We will announce the return of this practice in the Whistler.

FOCUS ON HUNGER

The Second Sunday of each month is Hunger Sunday at the church. On this day we receive our monthly Manna Offering benefiting Our Place in Bellows Falls. Each \$ that is given can be used by them to purchase \$10 worth of food from the VT Food Bank. The deacons suggest that people consider offering the cost of one meal for their household. If folks aren't able to be in church but wish to participate, they can send money to the church directly. Worshipers are also given the option of non-monetary donations, such as extra produce from your garden, that are helpful to Our Place.

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Due to the delta variant of Covid, our pastor, Rev. Susie Webster-Toleno, is observing more flexible office hours, not always on-site. 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 to: susiewt@gmail.com or phone or text: (802-579-8356). She takes Mondays as her day of Sabbath rest.

BUILDING USE: Tom Griffith 387-5694

tgriffith@hilltopmontessori.org

DEACONS: Charlotte Gifford 387-4145

gifford@languagehead.com

TRUSTEES: Guy Payne 869-2600 gpaynevt@gmail.com

WEB SITE: www.westminsterwest.org

FACEBOOK: Congregational Church of Westminster West

A TRADITION OF REACHING OUT

by Pastor Susie Webster-Toleno

As has become our tradition, the church will be sending gift cards to a number of local families. Each year we are supported in this effort by some of the funds from the Women's Fellowship Soup Sale, for which we are so grateful. But alas that sale did not take place again this year. Luckily others have stepped forward to insure we can continue this tradition. We would welcome community help with our project too – if you would like to donate money to offset our costs, please call Susie (579-8356) or email (alimae1@outlook.com).

WEEKLY MID-DAY PRAYER SERVICE

Pastor Susie continues to set time aside for prayers for the community, usually on Thursday afternoons from 1:30-2:00. She is not welcoming prayers in person at the church at that time due to current restrictions on gathering beyond household groups, but most weeks during that time she offers prayers and a brief reflection time via live stream on our church's Facebook page. This can be accessed even by people who don't have Facebook accounts! Join her at that time (or later, as it remains available online) to light a candle and raise the joys and concerns of our community in prayer. If you have prayer concerns that you'd like to include on her list (to be said aloud or held in confidentiality), call or email her and let her know. (See contact information in Church Office Hours.)

SUGGESTED DONATION FOR THE WHISTLER

Basic \$15 Neighborly \$50 Angelic \$100

Send donations to CCWW Whistler, 44 Church St, WW, 05346

OUR REPRESENTATIVES SPEAK

MONTHLY ONLINE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Your local Vermont State Representatives, Michelle Bos-Lun of Westminster and Mike Mrowicki of Putney want constituents to know that in the new year, they will continue with their monthly Online Community Conversations. Their next online forum for constituents will be Sat Jan15 from 10-11 am.

Michelle and Mike will be available for questions and comments and will provide updates on the start of the 2022 Legislative session. (that runs from Jan-May) Residents can contact their State reps at any time, as well, by email or phone, as well as good old US Mail.

mosuln@leg.state.vt.us 802-289-2495
mmrowicki@leg.state.vt.us 802-387-8787

WINTER SAUNAS

Relaxing, Warming and Private. 2-4 people, \$30/hr For more information :Lauren to.feel.massage@gmail.com

SOME THOUGHTS FROM A NEIGHBOR

From Allison Ounanian: This is a new holiday season for my family calling for some adjusting. We lost my dad at 101.5 years in August and have been in the process of getting used to that. I had built up over the past few years a regimen combining on-site visits to my office in Bedford, MA with stays at my dad's, doing errands, chores, shopping, preparing some meals ahead to bring to him, and doing some cooking on site. Everything I do now, unfortunately or no, reminds me of that schedule (e.g., making coffee in the morning, reminding my dad how to use the Keurig machine, doing crossword puzzles while waiting with him at hospital visits) and I try not to take too much to heart on that.

Meantime, I am getting more free time at home and not worrying when the phone rings that it may be about my dad. My work is still very interesting; I have been involved since February 2020 in work on COVID-19, supplying research support to mathematical modelers who have been working on pandemic modeling for COVID and for outbreaks we will face (in the US and elsewhere) in future. Team modeled infection spread with parameters like adoption of mask usage, social distancing, state/city shutdown mandates. I have liked working with them on all this.

In addition, more time back to making clay vessels and participating in life at Brattleboro Clayworks, exercising, decluttering my house a bit (I am not very cluttered, anyway. I can't think in clutter.) I have not settled down adequately to reading, to my mind. I follow all the news, read newspapers, research papers, and science news but would like to add some recreational reading. We went to see "The Iliad" last summer at Weston Playhouse; I have a copy of that but have barely touched. I did get through "The Odyssey" though. Took me awhile. I wish you all the best for a nice holiday season, however you may do it – enjoying time with family, enjoying our outdoors, reflecting on changes and adjustments. It has been a "long strange trip," right?

WESTMINSTER CENTER SCHOOL NEWS

By Charlie Hutchinson and Elizabeth Harty

Photos by Bridget Goodell

What a year this has been. But despite 13 positive Covid diagnoses in the school community this year, and the multiple days compromised due to quarantining, nonetheless ALL the classes are fully engaged in exciting and interesting learning opportunities. For the first few months of school classes have flowed from in-person to remote learning as needed. We have grown from our experience last year and are able to pivot with as little disruption as possible. This month, though, we have put in place our "test to stay" program. Students and staff who have been in contact with an infected person can get a rapid test every morning for 7 days and stay in school for as long as those tests come back negative. This will hugely reduce the disruptions caused by contact tracing and keep our students safely in school.

Meanwhile back at the main campus the students have been getting back into the rhythms of learning at each grade level; making up for time lost last year and forging ahead with new projects. First graders studied shadows out on the playground. Second graders explored word families. The third grade built structures in the woods while the 4th grade has been designing and building wheeled vehicles in their classroom. Grade 5 took a hike up Gap Mountain in Troy NH this week and the sixth grade explored for signs of human impact in Evan's wood and took time for silent reflection in nature.



Second graders at WCS are designing feeders tailored to the habits of local bird species.

SCHOOL NEWS continued. . .

Our Studio Y program is back up and running again this year. All the classes visit at least 4 times and under Janelle Beard's (aka "Mr Foxwood") inspired leadership the Kindergarteners have been solving problems and building boats this week.

At the school wide level we face three big challenges this year. Keeping the school community Covid safe; addressing the social and emotional needs that children bring to school and meeting our students where they are academically. This pandemic has impacted each person of our school community differently, and we are creating systems to identify and address these needs.

Over the next few months we'll write more about each of these challenges in these pages and explain what we are doing in school to meet the students' needs. We'll talk about the continuation and expansion of outside learning which has been shown to greatly reduce Covid transmission AND to have powerful emotional and learning benefits for children. We'll report the overall results of our on-going assessments (MAP, running records, Benchmark Assessments) which are completed throughout the year to help guide instruction. And we'll report on other curriculum and initiatives to help build students' resilience, confidence and skills.

We wish we could invite parents and community members to visit our school, but for now that's still not possible. Soon we hope. It's a happy and productive place full of dedicated professionals and busy learners. Our strongest goal right now is to provide just the right help and support to every one of our children – social, emotional and academic – so they can settle back into the challenging and supportive learning environment that they deserve.

THE FARM TO FIELD DAY

Westminster Center School celebrated Farm and Field Day on the 29th of October. Students from grades K-6 took part in six different activities crafted to link students to the outdoors and celebrate the harvest season. In addition to the excitement of scarecrows, pumpkins, and musical chairs (renamed "Boo=tiful Music!" in honor of the season of Halloween), students went on a story walk, harvested kale from the garden for lunch, watched working farm equipment in action, and watched as the chicken for their kale salad cooked over coals in the outdoor cinder block kitchen, the "Cinder Café," built especially for this event. Despite the frigid temperatures, students were excited to be outside

The librarian and Garden Coordinator, Mandy Walsh, said she was inspired by a similar event at Newbrook Elementary School. Mandy has been growing the Farm to School program at WCS for several years, and was excited to host her first Farm and Field Day. "We are so lucky to have the resources of gardens, animals, woods, and fields, and we live in a historically agricultural community. The day was about celebrating what's around us, coming together as a school community, and being joyful.

OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH FOOD CONNECTS

Food Connects is an entrepreneurial non-profit that delivers locally produced food as well as educational and consulting services aimed at transforming local food systems. The food hub aggregates and delivers from over 115 regional farms



A group of kids that are on the "Story walk to the Garden Tour



.A student shows off his decorated pumpkin.

and food producers to over 225 buyers in the SE Vermont, SW New Hampshire and western Massachusetts.

Their educational services focus on Farm to School programming. Acknowledged as a statewide leader, the program supports over 30 schools to increase local food purchasing, school meal participation, and food, farm, and nutrition education. Together these core programs contribute to a vibrant local economy by increasing local food purchases by schools and improving student nutrition and academic performance.

**Congregational Church of Westminster West
THE WEST PARISH WHISTLER**

44 Church Street
Putney, VT 05346-9098



Christmas Card made by Jennifer Latham many years ago

W I N T E R C A L E N D A R

WEEKLY EVENTS:

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH of WEST WEST

Church Service 10am but please wear a mask

HEALTH AND FITNESS:

For new comers to exercise classes, Westminster Cares needs to determine 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. There is room for more folks and a donation to Westminster Cares is appreciated. To get on Karen's list email her Karensww7@gmail.com. However the Zoom host is Karen Blanchard, ren.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 Questions: email Lise Cavanaugh
Masks and social distancing are required
LiseHCavanaugh@aol.com

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
Toleno

JET TRAINING OVER WESTMINSTER WEST

From Lise Cavanaugh:

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recently sent a letter to the library asking for public comment on the issue of making an airspace slightly west of us into a permanent Military Operations Area (MOA). Since 2016, MA has been using this as a temporary MOA but they are now hoping to make it a permanent site. I remember the planes flying over us initially and how it shook our little library and slightly frightened the kids and I wanted all of you to be able to have this information if it is something you want to weigh in on.

Although the new site is no longer directly over us (they shifted 5 NM to the northwest) it might still feel too close to some of you and they are asking for the space for 8-12 times per month for 30 min per time, which seems like quite a bit. I will have a copy of the letter at the library and another in the kiosk outside. Comments and recommendations on this issue need to be received by January 10 in writing to:

FAA Eastern Service Center
Operations Support Group (AJV-E23)
Military Liaison Officer
1701 Columbia Avenue
College Park, GA 30337

WHEN THERE'S A SCARCITY OF CHRISTMAS TREES

"A number of years ago I had a Charlie Brown Christmas tree and I liked it because you could see all the ornaments. Below is a drawing of that tree. Well this year when I went to buy a tree they were all sold out, a situation similar to that of trying to buy toilet paper. So this year I will be having another Charlie Brown Christmas tree in my house." Alison Latham



GIFT IDEAS FROM LOCAL NON-PROFITS

HATS FOR SALE

From Charlotte Gifford: "One thing that I've greatly missed during the pandemic is the annual Putney Harvest Festival, where each year I offer knitted hats for sale. All the proceeds go to the church, and I'm sad that this has been another fundraising hole in our budget.

However, COVID has not stopped me from knitting – on the contrary! My stash of hats ready-to-go is extensive, and so I'm resuming the informal holiday sales of hats. I have many styles and colors to choose from, in sizes ranging from child's small to adult large. They range in design including cables, stripes and textured patterns, and styles include both snug- and loose-fitting hats: cloches, slouchy tuques and berets. They are made with all-natural fibers, no synthetics ever!

These hats make wonderful one-of-a-kind holiday gifts at a reasonable price: children's hats are \$16 (wool) and \$20 (silk or alpaca), adults are \$20 (wool), and \$25 (silk or alpaca). You can contact me (Charlotte Gifford) by email to see my hats and to arrange a purchase: gifford@languagehead.com Thanks in advance for your support of the church!



BEYOND SOUP NIGHT

is now available for Holiday shoppers

"Beyond Soup Night," is a collection of recipes to benefit the Congregational Church of Westminster West donated by the congregation's members, families and friends, to whom this book is gratefully dedicated.

The book's spiral binding opens flat for ease of use To order a book contact Charlotte Gifford

gifford@languagehead.com.

You can pick it up at Charlotte's home (1674 Westminster West Rd.) She or Dan will be happy to do a socially-distanced transfer of your copy for \$25, cash or check. Please call 387-4145 to arrange a pickup time; leave a message if necessary. Generally, we can complete the handoff between 8 am and 8 pm.



Beyond Soup Night

Recipes from West West

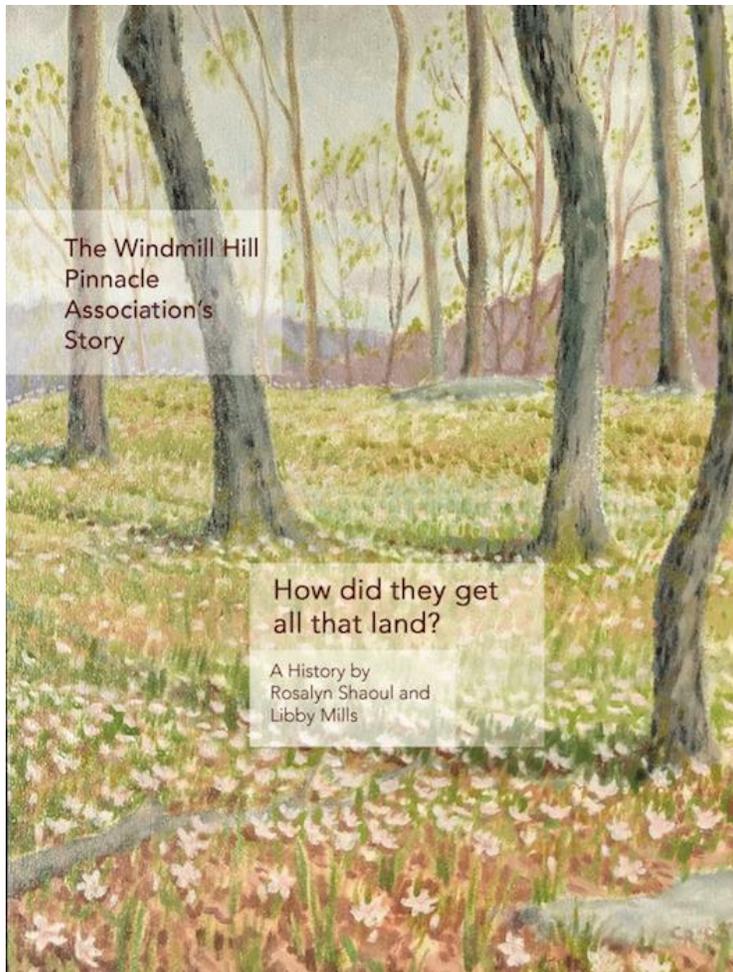
THE WINDMILL HILL PINNACLE ASSOCIATION

The WHPA has some merchandise left over from their successful online pop-up store held in November. If you are interested in any of the items, please place your order through whptrails@gmail.com. All proceeds support the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association

We will fill orders only until DECEMBER 22nd!
All orders must be paid for online with a credit card, we'll send you an invoice and a link for easy payment.
You must pick up the items in Westminster West

Book: The WHPA's Story: How Did they get all that land?
\$25 Donation

This delightful and rich history, authored by WHPA Trustees Libby Mills and Rosalyn Shaoul, tells the story of a grassroots conservation organization from inception to a successfully managed reserve of over 2,000 acres in southern Vermont. Based on research and extensive interviews, the book offers personal anecdotes as a lively balance to the local history and detailed maps. *Illustrated, 89 pages, Spiral Bound.*



String Backpack with Graphic Logo \$9

Available in Four Colors: Gold, Maroon, Royal Blue and Light Blue – please specify color when you order

This lightweight but durable polyester drawstring backpack is the perfect accessory for travel or day hikes, and a fun carryall for kids. Pack features a large front zippered pocket with drawstring closure, reinforced corners, and a built-in slot for ear buds.



NEW DESIGN: PINNACLE CABIN IN WINTER

Athletic Pullover with New Design \$38 (only 4 left!)

Black: **SIZE LARGE ONLY** [Sizing info: Body Length 30"/Body Width 23"/Neck 8"/Sleeve 35"]

This ¾" zip pullover is perfect for the active person. Fabric is a thin knit, making it a compact companion for any outdoor activity — rolls up small to fit in your day pack or wear it as an essential layer. Pinnacle design is on the back. 100% polyester, Moisture wicking, odor resistant, stain release, Fade and snag resistant for durability, UPF 44+ for sun protection.

