



WINTER EDITION 2024

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

"Speak to us of Love:"
"When love beckons to you, follow him,
Though his ways are hard and steep.
And when his wings enfold you, yield to them
Though the sword hidden among his pinions may
wound you."
Kahlil Gibran (1883 – 1931)

REFLECTIONS

"A LOVE LETTER"

Pastor Susie Webster-Toleno

To my beloved congregation and wider community,

Well, there's no getting around the fact that this is a more difficult reflection to write than usual. Presumably by now, even those Whistler readers who don't connect with the church at all on a regular basis will have heard that, after 22 years of serving the church here among you, I will be stepping away from my pastoral role in early January. In this season of preparation and change, I find myself unable to focus on my usual task for this space, which is to reflect briefly on the season of Advent in ways that might be meaningful to those within the church as well as those without.

It turns out that, rather than writing my usual thing, it's unavoidable that this must be a love letter: a love letter to our church and our community, to the quirky individuals, the courageous voices, to those I know well and those I've only just barely encountered.

It must be a love letter because this is the truth: I love this community with all of my heart, and I know I always will! I hope that you have recognized that love over the years, and known yourselves to be worthy of it. It has been my honor and privilege to live out that love over almost a quarter of a century, during which we have all grown older and hopefully wiser. In that time, you have generously

invited me into your workshops and homes, and to your hospital rooms. You have allowed me to accompany you through joys both great and small, as well as most grievous losses. You have entrusted me with the task of memorializing your loved ones and helping to bury them. For 22 years, we have walked together, sung together, prayed together, and served meals together. You have responded to my sermons with support as well as thoughtful critiques, laughed at my absurd jokes, and helped me to grow as a pastor and preacher, while also providing my children with a spiritual home that was nourishing and encouraging to them.

In fact, given how much I love our church and this community, you might wonder why it is that I have made the decision to leave. It's as complex and as simple as this: I have heard very clearly the call to newness, both for me and for the church, and the commitment I have made in my ministry is that I will follow where God's call leads me.

Back in the Advent 2019 Whistler, I shared with you an off-the-cuff description of my vocation that bubbled up in response to a prompt at a Vermont Interfaith Action meeting: "to seek, through worship leadership, pastoral care, and courageous interaction with the powers that be, to show God's heart to the world." The wording came in the spur of the moment, and yet I think it was and is apt, not just for me but also for our congregation. This has been our shared work, and we have been faithful in our efforts to live it out.

Showing God's heart to the world: there are so many ways to do that! For me, the essence of the call remains the same, but I feel a tug and a nudge to explore new ways to live it out. And for your part? I continue to be amazed at all of the ways you show God's heart to the world, and I believe with my whole being that you will continue to do so in the years to come. I know that we will all have chances to be a blessing to the most vulnerable, to be a thorn in the side of those who hoard power and resources, and to be bringers of beauty and light and hope with us as we go forward.

I will miss you – your familiar voices, the fact that I know which hymns you love, that I know your stories (at least some of them), and I will carry those things with me. I'm sure I will see you at the grocery store from time to time, or run across you at a vigil or a protest, and that's fine, but there's no getting around the fact that I will grieve the loss of our direct, deep connection perhaps more than you can imagine. I ask for your prayers as I leave this beloved place, because this truly is difficult for me. I also promise my prayers for you. You are inclined to be good neighbors, and I know you will take care of each other; I also know that you are held in the hand of Love itself, our God who will never forsake you.

I'm not gone yet, of course. I will hope to see you between now and my departure date, and to worship with you even if you're not usually a church-goer. Because I do not

know how else to end this missive, I will leave you with a blessing by Jan Richardson, whose work I've shared many times over the years:

"Blessed are you who bear the light"

Blessed are you
who bear the light
in unbearable times,
who testify
to its endurance
amid the unendurable,
who bear witness
to its persistence
when everything seems
in shadow
and grief.

Blessed are you
in whom
the light lives,
in whom
the brightness blazes—
your heart
a chapel,
an altar where
in the deepest night
can be seen
the fire that
shines forth in you
in unaccountable faith,
in stubborn hope,
in love that illumines
every broken thing
it finds.

(by Jan Richardson, from her book "Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons" ~ I highly recommend this and other books of hers.)

Be well, my beloveds and keep bearing the light!

With much love, and in faith,

Susie

SAYING FAREWELL TO SUSIE WEBSTER-TOLENO

Susie Webster-Toleno, our beloved pastor at the Congregational Church of Westminster West for the last 22 years, will be delivering her last sermon on January 5, 2025 at 10:00 AM. Members of the community are welcome to join us for a memorable worship service followed by a pot luck meal in our community room, complete with heartfelt memories and well wishes for Susie's next chapter.

While this will be a challenging time for the congregation, we are anchored by our unique expression of faith and by our strong bond with the community. We hope to see you on January 5th. Guy Payne, Chair of the Trustees

ANNUAL WESTMINSTER WEST SOUP SALE A COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND RAISER

Pause for a moment while on the Putney Craft Tour for a delicious meal of homemade soup and bread! The annual Soup Sale at the Westminster West Congregational Church will be held on both Friday and Saturday, November 29-30 from 11:00 to 4:00. Conveniently located about half-way through the Craft Tour route at the church in the village center of Westminster West, it offers a delicious lunch featuring a wide choice of hot soups, breads, coffee, tea and home-baked treats. Vegetarian options will be available. The Soup Sale is a benefit for local families living on the edge. It's the perfect way to take a break and warm up between stops on the Craft Tour, and help your neighbors at the same time.



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 34th Annual Community Fair a great success. So many of you helped by donating baked goods, silent auction and golden elephant items, or your time, we are so grateful. See you same time next year.

VEGETABLE CONTEST WINNERS

(Judged by Michael Daley)

FLOWERS: ADULTS, 1st – Alison Latham, 2nd – Emily Weinberg, 3rd – Caitlin Adair.

VEGETABLE SCULPTURE: ADULTS, 1st – Emily Weinberg (Dragonfly), 2nd Dan Savel (chicken zucchini), 3rd – Emily Weinberg (dazzling orb)

LONGEST ZUCCHINI: ADULTS, 1st – Dan Savel, 2nd – Carla Bossard, 3rd – Hyim Savel.

ODDEST VEGETABLE: 1st – Kathy Kingston

THE WHISTLE BLOWER

In late August **Nate Hayward**, son of Gordon and Mary, and his family came east for five days from Mendocino County CA where he lives with his wife Kati, 2-year-old son Zion, 9-year-old daughter Ililani and 11-year-old daughter Mehana. They picked blueberries at Green Mtn orchards, swam in East Putney Brook Falls, hiked up to the Putney Mtn lookout, flew a kite over their meadow which reached a good height when a Bald Eagle came soaring out of the sky above the kite. In September, Kati and Zion and a caretaker for him flew to SW India for a two-month practicum in Kerala, India in support of her doctorate-level work in Ayurvedic medicine. On their flight, they likely snacked on Vermont Shepherd Cheese served now on many Emirates flights.

Caitlin Adair has finished her 500-hour training in Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT Tapping) and is eager to spread the good news far and wide. Everybody can learn this scientifically proven yet simple technique to reduce anxiety and unhappiness of all kinds. Contact her at pcadair@sover.net to set up a free personal session on zoom, or an in-person free demonstration for your group. ♥

Tyler Harlow, son of Chris and Amy Harlow was married to Erin Neary on September 28 at the home of his grandmother, Toby Young. A reception was held at the home of his father and Bettina Berg on Bump Road. Below is a photo of Tyler, Erin, and their dogs Ruby and Hank at their home in Burbank, CA!



From Peter Stamm: **Noro" (Neil) Metrick** has returned to Vermont after a year and a half in Colorado, living with his stepson, David, in Crested Butte. It was a lovely place, but not convenient, and he missed all the wonderful Vermonsters -- and the Putney Diner. Don't worry, the roads are still safe because he's given up his license, but he would love to take a road trip with you from his temporary Airbnb abode in Putney, or you can meet him for breakfast.



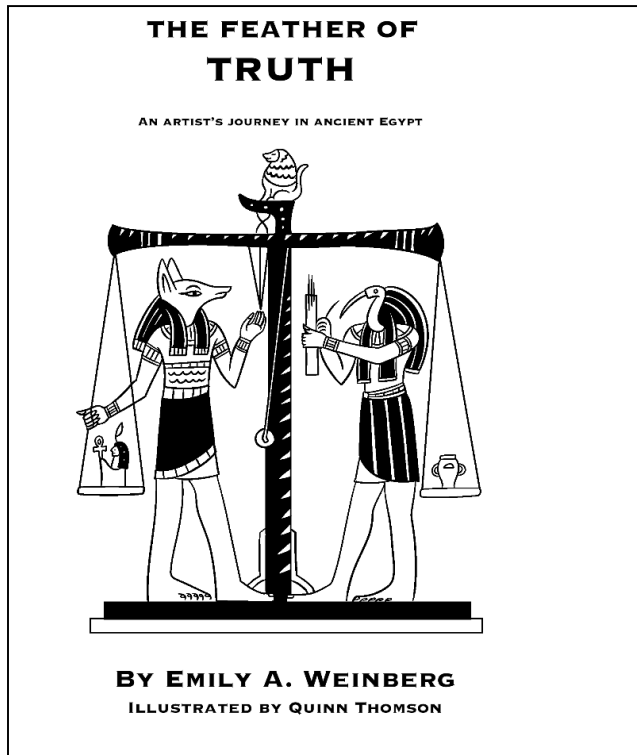
Hannah Brigham carries off the lightweight canoe she won in Fair's Online Auction. Photo: Susan Roman

Gordon Hayward wants the community to know that the profiles he published in The Reformer newspaper last Winter and Spring of about 25 working people in SE Vermont are now gradually going up on his website (haywardgardens.com). If you go to the website and then on the menu, click "Profiles of Working People." There are five profiles up there now, including Kevin Waters who drives the Ruggerio rubbish/recycling truck who takes our rubbish away every Weds. Dan Deitz's profile is also up there now. Others will be added every Friday morning on the website as well as a new profile in The Daily Reformer newspaper most Fridays.

From Susan Talbot: There will be a free community dinner on Friday, January 17, 2025 starting at 5:30 highlighting our local Milkweed Farm. Menu will be a hearty soup, bread, salad, etc. and of course, dessert. It will be fun to rekindle these community dinners like the "old days" but I need volunteers on Thursday and Friday. Please give me a call at 387 5623 to volunteer. Editor's note: We all know that Susan is an amazing person but she truly can't do this alone.

From Lisa Moir: I'm the owner of The Blue Pig ice cream. I did a bunch of pop-up events this summer including Rod's good truck park and Retreat Farm. I'm excited to share the news that my husband and I just purchased 5859 route 5 property - previously The Cottage by the Brook. It will be an outpost of our award-winning ice cream store that we've run for 15 years in the Hudson Valley(Croton on Hudson). We hope to open the shop in May with lots of outdoor seating, music, amazing ice cream / vegan ice cream - making it a warm community space. Editor's Note: She also donated ice cream to the Community Fair. The blueberry was yummy.

THE WHISTLE BLOWER continued . . .



Emily Weinberg's debut historical middle-grade novel is finally being released on January 21, 2025. Published by Histrion Books, "THE FEATHER OF TRUTH, An Artists Journey In Ancient Egypt" is the story of two artists living in New Kingdom, Egypt (1166 BCE). Read more about it on the website: thefeatheroftruthnovel.com

We offer our condolences to the families in our community who have recently lost a loved one.

Faith Learned Pepe, 89 – 7/31/1935 - 8/6/2024

Kevin Thomas, 74 – 1/21/1950 - 9/1/2024

Dirk Jager, 85 – 1939 - 9/9/2024

Jessica Ryea, 41 – 5/18/1983 - 9/30/2025

Eileen Deutsch, 74 – 4/18/1950 - 11/13/2024

Eileen Deutsch Eulogy by Leah Wilner-Deutsch

Excerpts: "My mom was not one to seek fame and fortune and yet she led a truly magnificent and admirable life. She liked simplicity, and honesty, and truth, but she wasn't afraid of the gray areas. She believed in the power of individuals to make a difference and in the power of unconditional love."

Eulogy for Dirk Jager: Excerpts: He was a humble family man who consistently took on additional work to benefit the security of his loved ones. After retiring in 1995, he took great pride in stewarding his family's beautiful home and land in Westminster West.

Eulogy for Faith Pepe: Excerpts: Over the course of her life, Faith immersed herself in creative pursuits and feminist causes - a love of the arts was the force that dictated many of her life choices. From her own sculpture and assemblages to her historical writing and education, she defined herself in the act of creating.

From Peter Stamm: We have a long-term guest looking for work. He's 32, super friendly, *very* hard working, rugged and capable. Plus, he's available NOW, and only charges \$20-\$30/ hour, depending on the job. Get in touch for a visit, as I'd imagine that he'll get busy quickly. You won't be disappointed. He can do light Roofing, landscaping, chain sawing, rough carpentry, etc., etc..

From Dean Lynch:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

—Pastor Martin Niemöller

UNEXPECTED DIVING DISCOVERIES IN THE CONNECTICUT RIVER

Presented by Annette Spaulding
At the Westminster Institute - 6 pm on December 3rd



The Connecticut River Valley chapter of Trout Unlimited (CRVTU) is pleased to present Annette Spaulding an experienced Master scuba diver whose favorite place in the whole world (and yes she has visited dive sites worldwide) is to dive in the Connecticut River. Her power point presentation along with a display of items will show attendees some of the unusual and interesting things she found in our River. Annette will be asking for your help in identifying some of the more unusual items. CRVTU invites adults and kids who swim, boat, fish, bird, catch frogs, or paddle on the river to attend this free event to see what is below the surface of our great river.

WHAT I AM GRATEFUL FOR:

From Karen Blanchard: I am grateful for poets and poems (like the one below) that can both move us and soothe us.

FOR MY STUDENTS, AFTER THE ELECTION

By Joseph Fasano

There are still your stories, still stars
in the pine trees. There are still children
making their way back from school, trying
not to step on cracks in the sidewalk,
believing it matters. There are still mothers
kneeling in the ruins, promising
the gunshots aren't coming.

There are still fathers
alone in the night, the wounds in them
like mule-deer in the orchards, trying not
to clack their antlers. There is still
the heart, the moon.

Come loves, let's stand here
After madness. The world
Is not over, only broken.

There are old books, there are horses
in the lemon trees. There are children, still,
waiting in the classrooms, looking up
with tired eyes full of wonder.

Look at them, There is work we have to do.

From Rick Cowan: I'm grateful that I will become a grandfather for the first time in 2025. Daughter Emma and her husband Caleb are expecting a baby boy. Libby McCawley and I can't wait to experience the joys of grandparenthood!

From Alison Latham: When the wind starts to blow and the snow is swirling around, I am grateful I am not homeless and have a warm bed to sleep in.

From Pia Rabin: I am thankful for The Lord God, His righteousness, love, forgiveness, provision, protection, mercy, and truth, and more besides. Below is her drawing of a horse.



Photo of Lily Pond Highlands by Jerry Monkman
EcoPhotography courtesy of Open Space Institute

NEW TRAIL AND NEW PARKING LOT

You can see in this photo that the Pinnacles new property at Lily Pond Highlands is incredibly beautiful and a unique piece of land. Spanning 615 acres in Athens, Brookline and Townshend, this parcel is an ecological gem!. An old logging road runs to a stunning beaver pond and surrounding marsh, where large boulders create a perfect platform for wildlife watching or a picnic. As enjoyable as this hike can be, the trustees have been dreaming of how to make it even better. From the start, they've had visions of a longer loop trail to allow access to multiple habitats in a single hike, and a parking area for a handful of hikers.

After a long-sought effort, they've obtained a permit to construct a full looping trail and a parking lot to fit 8 cars and the good news is that the lot is now ready to use, but the loop trail is not. In the spring, there will be a hike to celebrate these new additions to the Lily Pond Highlands parcel and hope you'll be able to come. In the meantime, you are encouraged to visit it on your own using the old logging road trail.

PINNACLE PHOTO CONTEST ENTRIES WELCOME

Enter your photos in the 2024 Pinnacle photo contest by Dec. 31, 2024! Prizes will include Pinnacle T-shirts and other swag. Photo entries must have been taken on Pinnacle lands anytime during the year 2024. No more than 5 photos per entrant. Please email larger file sizes (ideally 1 MB or more), horizontal/landscape orientation preferred, to WHPAphotos@gmail.com. Please include a photo credit with your submission. We look forward to seeing your photos!

By entering this contest, you grant the WHPA the right to use the photos in its publications, website, or social media platforms in perpetuity. The photographer retains all other rights to their photos.

WESTMINSTER WEST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday worship begins at 10am
come as you are (masks are optional)
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. Use the Facebook search bar to find "Congregational Church of Westminster West"

- Dec. 1, 10 AM: David Mulholland preaching / Fred Gray music ~ Holy Communion / First Sunday in Advent – HOPE
- Dec. 8 10 AM: Susie Webster-Toleno preaching / Amy Cann music ~ Second Sunday in Advent – PEACE
- Dec. 15, 10am: Susie Webster-Toleno preaching / Fred Gray music ~ Third Sunday in Advent – JOY
- Dec 22, **5 PM:** Community Candlelight & Carols Service: Susie Webster-Toleno and the Deacons / Fred Gray music ~ Fourth Sunday in Advent – LOVE (no service in the morning)
- Dec. 24, **11 PM:** Christmas Eve service: Susie Webster-Toleno preaching / Amy Cann, music
- Dec. 29, 10 AM: our annual all-request post-Christmas Carol (and hymn) sing; Amy Cann, musician
- JAN 5 10am: Led by Susie Webster-Toleno and the Deacons / Fred Gray Music. This is Susie's Final Sunday with us & will be followed by a pot luck lunch in the community room.

GREENING OF THE SANCTUARY

On December 7th, we'll gather at 9:30 AM to "green" the sanctuary for the Advent and Christmas season. This is one of those fun tasks that, yes, has to be done, but also add a great deal of conviviality to our lives! If you'd like to join the fun, do come. If you can't come, but have interesting greens to donate (cedar greenery! holly berries! fluffy ornamental grasses!), leave them outside the church that morning or the night before, and we will use them with gratitude..

WINTER SOLSTICE LABYRINTH WALK SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21ST 7-8 PM

The church is fortunate to own a gorgeous labyrinth, based on the ancient design in the cathedral of Chartres, France. It is a beautiful pattern, painted purple on canvas, and it rolls out to fill our sanctuary. Traditionally, we have opened the labyrinth each solstice and equinox, to observe the cycles of the natural world, as well as on Ash Wednesday, to open the season of Lent.

All are welcome to stop by between 7 and 8 pm. Beyond the peaceful presence of the labyrinth, there is no particular program. It's very easy to walk the labyrinth: simply come with clean socks (masks are optional), and follow the path at your own pace. We encourage you to try this contemplative practice for yourself

COMMUNITY CANDLELIGHT & CAROLS SERVICE

This service will begin at 5 PM on Sunday, December 22 – one day after the Winter Solstice, which is the longest night of the year. Through sacred story and song, we will share the story of the birth of Love (as we understand the coming of the Christ child), and we will celebrate the persistence of Light amid the shadows. The service will be led by Susie and the church deacons, with musician Fred Gray at the organ. The service will end with the congregation singing Silent Night by candlelight, and there will be a gathering with hot cocoa and goodies in the fellowship hall after the service. The church is fully wheelchair accessible, and the service is appropriate for all ages. We welcome one and all to celebrate with us in this joyous time.

CHRISTMAS EVE LATE SERVICE

On Christmas Eve at 11pm, late-night in the sanctuary, will be our traditional service of lessons and carols in a quieter, more reflective mood. Led by Pastor Susie Webster-Toleno, this service will include Holy Communion and a table bedecked with memorial candles / prayer candles. This service is where you'll find the more traditional readings, and a (not too long) sermon. Susie says: "In my experience, this moving service is not to be missed, and I'm sure if you want to come but are someone who doesn't drive late at night, we can likely find ways to get you there and home safely." Folks who attend this service regularly remark that it brings special meaning and an island of time for reflection in the midst of an otherwise high-energy holiday.



David Mulholland's photo of the sunrise seen from his house

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Once again we are asking folks to buy their own Poinsettias and bring them to the church. We'd like to have the poinsettias arrive at church prior to the Dec. 22nd Candlelight and Carols Service. If you wish to honor or memorialize someone, email the names to Susie so that she can include them in our worship bulletin.

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. Thank you to those who stopped by for a cup of soup during the Craft Tour. We would welcome community help with our project too – if you would like to donate money to offset our costs or if you know of someone who could use a little TLC over the holidays, please contact Susie - see info - Church Office Hours

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

UNTIL JANUARY 5TH: Our pastor, Rev. Susie Webster-Toleno, welcomes visits and calls, and is also happy to visit YOU in your home, workplace, hospital room or wherever. Susie's generally in on Thursday afternoons, and can be reached at the church any time at 802-387-1175 if it's not an emergency, but the fastest ways to reach her are email susiewt@gmail.com or via cell 802-579-8356.

AFTER JANUARY 5TH: In case of pastoral care need, contact one of our Deacons: Karen Blanchard, Charlotte Gifford, Adrienne Major, David Mulholland or Sue Venman.

BUILDING USE: Tom Griffith 802-387-5694

tgriffith@hilltopmontessori.org

DEACONS: Charlotte Gifford 802-387-4145

gifford@languagehead.com

TRUSTEES: Guy Payne 802 869-2600

Gpaynevt@gmail.com

WEB SITE: www.westminsterwest.org

WESTMINSTER CARES RE LAUNCHES COMMUNITY NURSE PROGRAM

Westminster Cares welcomes Kathy Shuster as our new Community Nurse. Kathy is a dedicated nurse case manager experienced with the health care needs of Vermonters. She has worked in community nursing and public health settings for most of her 30-year career. As a former resident of Westminster, Kathy will combine her knowledge of the community with her extensive experience in skilled home care and care management and coordination.

What is a Community Nurse? Community Nurses work to improve the health and well-being of the community they serve by educating them about illness, disease prevention, safe health practices, and how to obtain health care services. They also facilitate communication between people, their families, and the medical community in order to improve health outcomes.

Community Nurses also support older adults who desire to remain at home, through phone calls and emails with the client and family members along with home visits and coordination of care with providers. This service is provided to clients at no cost. The Community Nurse *does not* do direct hands-on care or treatments. She will assess needs, provide education and refer to an appropriate provider when necessary. The nurse *does not* replace regular physician visits or visiting nurses ordered by your physician.

To re-launch this program, Westminster Cares is partnering with Community Nurse Connection, an organization that supports Community Nursing projects. They provide start-up grants; host virtual monthly nursing peer support meetings; provide access to a confidential electronic documentation system and provide outcome data for use in reports and grants. Initially, Kathy will be working one afternoon per week, but we have plans to secure additional funding to support more hours.

The Community Nurse model of in-home support and health care coordination for older adults fills significant gaps in the health care continuum, particularly for rural communities such as Westminster. Having a locally based program allows the nurse to tap into and work with community partners as well as partners from the traditional health care system, to improve the quality of life for older adults.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment with the Community Nurse, call the Westminster Cares office at (802) 722-3607. In January, you can meet Kathy at one of the SOUPer Wednesday lunches at the First Congregational Church on Rte 5 in Westminster.

WESTMINSTER CARES ANNUAL APPEAL

For 36 years funds raised from the community, the Town of Westminster, and local businesses, in combination with fundraising events and grants, have enabled Westminster Cares to meet our budget requirements and pay for the programs and services we provide to seniors and adults with disabilities in our community.

The Annual Appeal is our primary fundraising source. Appeal cards are mailed out at Thanksgiving and our goal is to raise 30-35% of our annual budget from this mailing. Funds generated from the Appeal support programs and services such as Meals-on-Wheels; Equipment Loans; Transportation Program; a part-time Community Nurse; Shopping Assistance; Friendly Check-Ins; Healthy Aging Exercise classes; Workshops and Resource and Referral Assistance.

Gifts made in someone's honor or memory will be printed in an upcoming Gazette. Donations to the Annual Appeal can be made throughout the winter by check and mailed to Westminster Cares at: P.O. Box 312 Westminster, VT 05158. Donations can also be made on our website via Credit Card or Pay Pal: www.westminstercares.org.



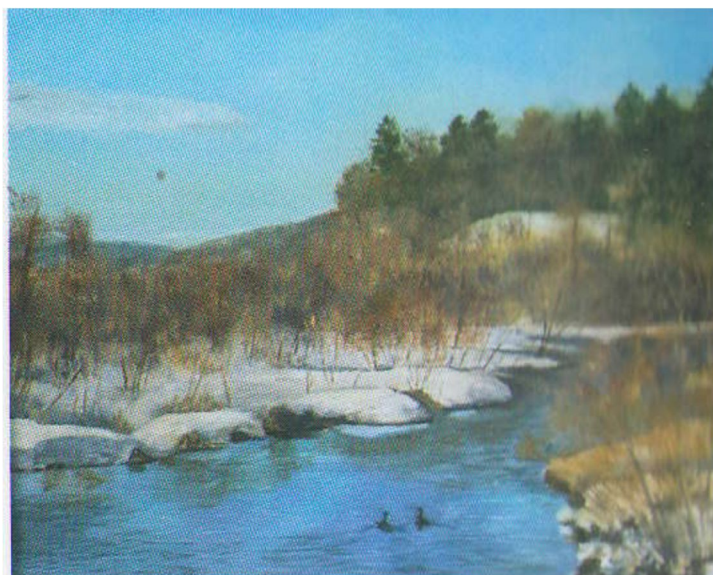
Rachel Schall at Parish Hill Creamery

PUTNEY CRAFT TOUR NOV 29 - DEC 1

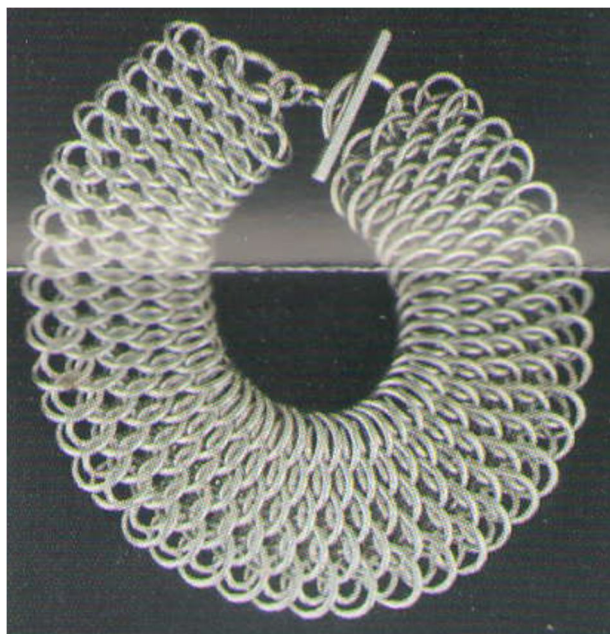
The 46th annual Putney Craft tour will be held Friday through Sunday (after Thanksgiving) from 10am-5pm. There will be 24 artisans within a 12-mile radius of the village, hills and farmlands of these quiet Southern Vermont towns. Visit their studios and do your Christmas shopping at the same time. Maps are available at area stores, the church, and at each artist's studio. The good news is that you don't have to get in your car and drive to visit their studios, you can go on line to putneycrafts.com and see what each artisan is doing and what is for sale. In addition to the 5 locals whose crafts are included on this page are the studios of other locals and community supporters: Robert Burch Glass, Green Mountain Spinnery, Blake Johnson furniture, and Putney Mountain Winery. Please support these locals and Zach Weinberg Sculpture who is not on the tour. Oh, and don't forget to stop by the WW Church for a bowl of soup, a benefit for community outreach.



Wood fired and soda fired pottery by Joshua Gold



Vermont Landscape paintings by Nancy Calicchio



Hand Crafted Silver Jewelry from Jeanne Bennett



Landscape painting by Judy Hawkins

RIVER SINGERS WINTER CONCERT

The River Singers led by Mary Cay Brass will present a lively, soulful concert of songs celebrating joy, love and peace on Saturday, December 14 at 4pm and Sunday, December 15 at 4pm at the Westminster West Church. The choir is now in its 34th year devoted to singing songs of great diversity from many cultures. The December concert focuses on songs celebrating the seasons from England, South Africa, Croatia, Bosnia, Republic of Georgia, African American gospel and more. Admission is \$15-\$25. The concert will benefit the Village Harmony camp scholarship fund as well as local agencies helping New Americans. For information contact: mcbraas@vermontel.net www.marycaybrass.com

CIRCLE SINGING

From Paris Kern

Join Long River Circle Singing at the Putney Friends Meeting House on November 24th, 3:00–5:00 PM (and every 4th Sunday of the month) 17 Bellows Falls Road (aka Rt 5). Register via Meetup <https://tinyurl.com/LRC-meetup> or text 410-303-8003. Step into the transformative world of Circle Singing—an afternoon of improvisational vocal harmony and creative expression. Led by Paris Kern, this event offers a chance to immerse yourself in the joy of music, connect with others, and explore the power of sound.

Inspired by the work of Bobby McFerrin and Rhiannon, Circle Singing is an opportunity for participants to co-create music in the moment, blending rhythm, melody, and harmony in a supportive and joyful environment. Whether you're a seasoned musician or a complete beginner, *everyone* is welcome to join in the fun. No prior musical experience is needed!

Paris will guide the group through the process of creating vocal parts that come together effortlessly, building a rich, harmonious experience that resonates within and beyond the circle. Come sing, laugh, and let your creativity flow as we send out waves of positive, uplifting energy into the world through our voices.

What to Expect:

- No experience required—just a willingness to sing and be present
- A space for creativity, joy, and connection through music
- An opportunity to be part of a unique community experience
- Come explore, unwind, and let your voice soar in this beautiful, soul-nourishing event. We look forward to singing with you

SUGGESTED ANNUAL DONATION FOR THE WHISTLER

Basic \$25 Neighborly \$50 Angelic \$100
CCWW, 44 Church Street, Westminster West
Vermont, 05346

HOW TO FIND THE HISTORY OF YOUR LAND

Westminster Land Week launches the Ruth Grandy Database of the land records of the Town of Westminster (1780 - 1960) in our public libraries. Ruth copied all the Town Property Records by hand from the large ledgers written in Spencerian hand-writing, and created a searchable database which is easy to use. Both the Butterfield and the Westminster West Libraries will hold copies of the Grandy Database which can be searched on the libraries' computers. As part of Land Week, there will be two workshops on how to use the database and what it can do, led by Ruth and Mary Scherbatskoy. On Tuesday, January 14 at 7pm the workshop will be in the Butterfield; on Thursday January 16 at 7 pm, the workshop will repeat in the Westminster West Library.

Westminster Land Week will also feature the rediscovery of the Crook's Mills *Ghost Town*, the original Westminster West village. Mary Scherbatskoy has been working on the site with the advice of archeologists Chris Bergman and Gail Golec. She will give a talk on Wednesday January 15 at 7pm on the *Rediscovery of Crook's Mills* in the Westminster West Library. The exhibitions *Village Treasure - the West Parish between the Wars* and *Crook's Mills - How to Find a Ghost Town* will on display all week from Tuesday January 14 through Friday January 17 in the Westminster West Congregational church from 2pm to 6pm each day. Please drop in!

FAIR NEWS

The results of the road races will be in the next Whistler. The winners of the 50/50 raffle were Laura and Betsy Williams.

The Fair Committee is looking for a new freezer and for a newer refrigerator. The old freezer uses a lot of power, so help us lower our energy use and save the planet. If you have one to donate, please call Alison Latham at 802 387-5711 or email her at aliemae1@outlook.com.

This is what a pumpkin looks like if it is growing in a rock wall. Kathy Kingston's winning entry in the Oddest Shaped Vegetable at Community Fair Vegetable Contest..





. 1,000 plus days of horror. And then there is Gaza.

W I N T E R 2 0 2 4 C A L E N D A R

WEEKLY EVENTS:

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH of WEST WEST

Church Service – Sunday 10am

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 802 722- 3607

STRONG LIVING is happening by ZOOM

Karen Walter and Ronnie Friedman lead online weight classes 9:30 to 10:30am on Mondays and Thursdays. There is room for more folks and a donation to Westminster Cares is appreciated. To get on Karen and Ronnies' list email them Karensww7@gmail.com
veronicafriedman24@gmail.com

YOGA is happening by ZOOM

Lisa Nigro leads a class Monday mornings 10 to 11:15.
Email Lisa at lisa.nigro.yoga@gmail.com

TAI CHI

Tuesday's at the Westminster Institute from 11:00-12:00pm; led by Leslie Lassetter. Contact the Westminster Cares office if interested @ (802) 722-3607.

WESTMINSTER WEST LIBRARY

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 1-6pm,
Saturday 10am to noon
Questions: LiseHCavanaugh@aol.com

BUTTERFIELD LIBRARY

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 1-6pm,
Saturday 10:30 – 12:30
The Institute & Library share a website
And a Facebook page.

website: <https://butterfieldlibraryvt.wordpress.com/>

RECYCLING

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

WESTMINSTER WEST SCHOOL NEWS

By Elizabeth Harty,

Principal of Westminster Center School

With the start of the school year well underway, Westminster Center School (WCS) is buzzing with excitement as we dive into the heart of autumn. This season is filled with favorite traditions, creative new activities, and chances to get together, celebrate and make memories.

The WCS annual Farm and Field day was held on Thursday October 31st. Students spent the morning outside rotating through a variety of nature based educational situations including horse wagon rides, a story walk, pizza making, and a variety of tag games including one about predator-prey relationships.

A huge thank you to local community members for parking vehicles in our parking lot for the day. Students loved exploring all the different vehicles from tractors to harvesters, to a vehicle from Green Mountain Power, and even one with baby farm animals.

The fun continued into the afternoon as students and staff changed into costumes and participated in our annual Halloween parade. The parade went down School Street, onto Route 5, turning at the Town Hall and back to school. The Windham County Sheriff's Department was there to direct traffic. Students loved showing off their costumes to all the spectators. It was a beautiful day to be outside as a school community.

With fun events and engaging academics, it's no wonder WCS has had a stellar attendance rate this year. Our average daily attendance has been steady at 96% which is just above the WNESU's goal of 95%. When students come to school prepared to engage, we can maintain enthusiasm, momentum and a strong commitment to learning.

CAUTIONARY ADVICE

FROM OUR VOLUNTEER FIRE AND RESCUE

Now that standard time has arrived, people will be out walking after dark. If you are a walker or a biker, be sure to be wearing bright colors including a protective vest or piece of clothing. Even carrying a flashlight is a good idea. We see so many people out there wearing dark clothing. And of course, always walk of the left side of the road facing traffic and bike on the right side of the road with the flow of traffic. When crossing the road or street, even in a cross walk, don't assume the driver or the on-coming vehicle can see you. You are in charge of your own safety.

IF YOU LIKE THE WHISTLER BETTER
ON PAPER,
GO AHEAD AND PRINT IT.

THE THANKSGIVING ADDRESS

Or

The Words That Come Before All Else in the Onandaga language, from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy
This text is the widely publicized version of John Stokes and Kanawahientun, 1993
From the chapter entitled Allegiance to Gratitude, from "Braiding Sweetgrass", by Robin Wall Kimmerer, 2013

Today we have gathered and when we look upon the faces around us we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now let us bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as People. **Now our minds are one.** (a response like amen said at end of prayer.)

We are thankful to our Mother the Earth, for she gives us everything that we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she still continues to care for us, just as she has from the beginning of time. To our Mother, we send thanksgiving, love, and respect. **Now our minds are one.**

We give thanks to all of the waters of the world for quenching our thirst, for providing strength and nurturing life for all beings. We know its power in many forms---waterfalls and rain, mists and streams, rivers and oceans, snow and ice. We are grateful that the waters are still here and meeting their responsibility to the rest of Creation. Can we agree that water is important to our lives and bring our minds together as one to send greetings and thanks to the Water? **Now our minds are one.**

We turn our thoughts to all of the Fish life in the water. They were instructed to cleanse and purify the water. They also give themselves to us as food. We are grateful that they continue to do their duties and we send to the Fish our greetings and our thanks. **Now our minds are one.**

Now we turn toward the vast fields of Plant life. As far as the eye can see, the Plants grow, working many wonders. They sustain many life forms. With our minds gathered together, we give thanks and look forward to seeing Plant life for many generations to come. **Now our minds are one.**

When we look about us, we see that the berries are still here, providing us with delicious foods. The leader of the berries is the strawberry, the first to ripen in the spring. Can we agree that we are grateful that the berries are with us in the world and send our thanksgiving, love, and respect to the berries? **Now our minds are one.**

With one mind, we honor and thank all the Food Plants we harvest from the garden, especially the Three Sisters who feed the people with such abundance. Since the beginning of time, the grains, vegetables, beans, and fruit have helped the people survive. Many other living things draw strength from them as well. We gather together in our minds all the plant foods and send them a greeting and thanks. **Now our minds are one.**

Now we turn to the Medicine Herbs of the world. From the beginning they were instructed to take away sickness. They are always waiting and ready to heal us. We are so happy that there are still among us those special few who remember how to use the plants for healing. With one mind, we send thanksgiving, love, and respect to the Medicines and the keepers of the Medicines. **Now our minds are one.**

Standing around us we see all the Trees. The Earth has many families of Trees who each have their own instructions and uses. Some provide shelter and shade, others fruit and beauty and many useful gifts. The Maple is the leader of the trees, to recognize its gift of sugar when the People need it most. Many peoples

of the world recognize a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength. With one mind we greet and thank the Tree life. **Now our minds are one.**

We gather our minds together to send our greetings and thanks to all the beautiful animal life of the world, who walk about with us. They have many things to teach us as people. We are grateful that they continue to share their lives with us and hope that it will always be so. Let us put our minds together as one and send our thanks to the Animals. **Now our minds are one.**

We put our minds together as one and thank all the birds who move and fly about over our heads. The Creator gave them the gift of beautiful songs. Each morning, they greet the day and with their songs remind us to enjoy and appreciate life. The Eagle was chosen to be their leader and to watch over the world. To all the Birds, from the smallest to the largest, we send our joyful greetings and thanks. **Now our minds are one.**

We are all thankful for the powers we know as the Four Winds. We hear their voices in the moving air as they refresh us and purify the air we breathe. They help to bring the change of seasons. From the four directions they come, bringing us messages and giving us strength. With one mind we send our greetings and thanks to the Four Winds. **Now our minds are one.**

Now we turn to the west where our grandfathers the Thunder Beings live. With lightning and thundering voices, they bring with them the water that renews life. We bring our minds together as one to send greetings and thanks to our Grandfathers, the Thunderers.

We now send greetings and thanks to our eldest brother the Sun. Each day without fail he travels the sky from east to west, bringing the light of a new day. He is the source of all the fires of life. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to our Brother, the Sun. **Now our minds are one.**

We put our minds together and give thanks to our oldest Grandmother, the Moon, who lights the nighttime sky. She is the leader of women all over the world and she governs the movement of the ocean tides. By her changing face we measure time and it is the Moon who watches over the arrival of children here on Earth. Let us gather our thanks for Grandmother Moon together in a pile, layer upon layer of gratitude, and then joyfully fling that pile of thanks high into the night sky that she will know. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to our Grandmother, the Moon.

We give thanks to the Stars who are spread across the sky like jewelry. We see them at night, helping the Moon to light the darkness and bringing dew to the gardens and growing things. When we travel at night, they guide us home. With our minds gathered as one, we send greetings and thanks to all the Stars. **Now our minds are one.**

We gather our minds to greet and thank the enlightened Teachers who have come to help throughout the ages. When we forget how to live in harmony, they remind us of the way we were instructed to live as people. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to these caring Teachers. **Now our minds are one.**

We now turn our thoughts to the Creator, or Great Spirit, and send greetings and thanks for all the gifts of Creation. Everything we need to live a good life is here on Mother Earth. For all the love that is still around us, we gather our minds together as one and send our choicest words of greetings and thanks to the Creator. **Now our minds are one.**

We have now arrived at the place where we end our words. Of all the things we have named, it is not our intention to leave anything out. If something was forgotten, we leave it to each individual to send such greetings and thanks in their own way. **Now our minds are one.**

