

# THE CHURCHMOUSE

Newsletter of The First Congregational Church, Canton Center, CT

February 2022

## *Given Enough Time....*

Quote in a visitors' center at the entrance of the Grand Canyon:

*"Given enough time, nothing is more changeable than rock."*



If you have ever seen the Grand Canyon, or any other huge and magnificent rock formation, you most likely have not thought of it as "changeable." Nothing looks more permanent than rock, especially rock that's been there for eons. A mere human stands before it, with a lifespan a tiny fraction of the rock's ages, and feels small, brief, and so impermanent by comparison. That, for sure, is how I have felt in my visits to the Canyon.

Which is why the quote struck me so much. *Given enough time, nothing is more changeable than rock.* The formations we see that look like they've been there unchanged since the beginning of time actually have not been: they are the product of years and years of constant etching, eroding, and reforming. They too are the products of change, like us, like virtually everything in our environments. They once were something else, now they're this. Changing, changing, being reformed and reshaped all the time, over time. This is the way of the universe, and therefore the way of God. All things evolve.

*Given enough time*, that is. Patience to let things happen over time is not our strong suit, usually. When we are desperate for something to change, we typically want the change right away. But the natural world, the handiwork of God, suggests to us that we could see more beauty and good and meaning if we could have more patience – that is, if we could trust that things are unfolding even when it feels not fast enough for us.

Here's one of my favorite spiritual insights of all time, from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (French philosopher, priest, scientist, theologian, d. 1955):

*Above all, trust in the slow work of God.  
We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.  
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.  
We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.*

*And yet it is the law of all progress  
that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—  
and that it may take a very long time.*

*And so I think it is with you;  
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,  
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.  
Don't try to force them on,  
as though you could be today what time  
(that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)  
will make of you tomorrow.*

A word for the impatience in us. A reminder that "the slow work of God" is still the work of God. And that we can't possibly know today where it all might be going some eons hence, only that we've been given precious parts to play in the unfolding.

Faithfully,

Rev. Brenda

**WORSHIP IN FEBRUARY***Pandemic update:*

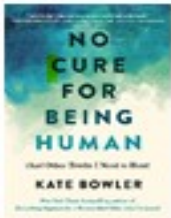
*At the time of this writing, we remain in a temporary suspension of in-person services, and are doing live stream only. It is possible that that will change some time in February, depending upon pandemic conditions. Please watch weekly email communications from the church for the latest updates or call the church office for information.*

*See recordings of past services on our website (under "Connect with Us"), or go to [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) and search Canton Center Church."*

*There is no church school while there are no in-person services; it will resume just as soon as we are back in-person.*

- Feb. 6 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany;  
Communion**
- Feb. 13 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany**
- Feb. 20 Seventh Sunday after Epiphany**  
Ali Hager preaching
- Feb. 27 Last Sunday in Epiphany Season**

*Lent begins on March 2, Ash Wednesday.*

**Winter Book Discussion****No Cure for Being Human (And Other Truths I Need to Hear)**

by Kate Bowler

**Wed., Feb. 23, 7:00 p.m. on Zoom**

In her second memoir, Kate Bowler Duke Divinity School faculty & NY Times best-selling author) writes about her diagnosis at age 35 with Stage 4 cancer and the challenges of a newly limited and fragile life. As with her first memoir, *Everything Happens for a Reason (and Other Lies I've Loved)*, this one is a deeply honest reflection on what acceptance of our finitude means. Regardless of what cultural messages we may receive, she says, the nature of life is that "we cannot out-eat, out-learn, out-perform our humanness." Fragility is part of the package; what would it mean to be able to acknowledge that? The book has been called "a sensitive memoir of survival."

Please obtain your own copy of the book and contact Rev. Brenda ([pastor@cantoncenterchurch.org](mailto:pastor@cantoncenterchurch.org)) to sign up for the discussion. If you are interested but cannot make the date, please let her know.

**CHURCH COUNCIL UPDATE**

The new President, elected at the Jan. 23 congregational meeting to fulfill the unexpired term of Dave Poleyestewa, is Marianne Burbank. Grant Hagedorn, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, was elected to fill Marianne's unexpired term as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President. Their regularly scheduled full terms as President and 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President would begin as of May 1, pending congregational vote on all officer and committee nominees for the next full term year.

**2022 Offering Envelopes**

Offering Envelopes may be picked up from the church office between 8– 3 p.m. if you have ordered them.

## Deacons' Bench

Vicki Rees

## WORSHIP MINISTRY

We are at an interesting point in our existence as a human race right now. Life is always "interesting", but I think we thrive on routine and find comfort in certain expectations. Throughout this pandemic, we have been forced to expect the unexpected on a daily basis, NEVER knowing what might happen next, which has sent some of us to the brink of anxiety, panic, or depression. And while we are all going through this persistent uncertainty together, it feels isolating and questionable to each one of us as individuals.

I heard this new song the other day by Cody Johnson, and it made me realize there are, in fact, ways we can "make it better", even if just for ourselves or just in the short term. While it seemed like yet another reference to the old "Carpe Diem" philosophy, as in "seize the day because you never know what tomorrow will bring", I enjoyed it and the message it conveyed. I've shared the lyrics below, and if you'd like to hear the musical version (with music video), you can find it here [https://youtu.be/v2LixP7n\\_hM](https://youtu.be/v2LixP7n_hM).

**'Til You Can't ~ Cody Johnson**

You can tell your old man  
 You'll do some largemouth fishing another time  
 You just got too much on your plate to bait and cast a line  
 You can always put a rain check in his hand  
 'Til you can't  
 You can keep putting off forever with that girl who's heart you hold  
 Swearing that you'll ask some day further down the road  
 You can always put a diamond on her hand  
 'Til you can't

If you got a chance, take it, take it while you got a chance  
 If you got a dream, chase it, 'cause a dream won't chase you back  
 If you're gonna love somebody  
 Hold 'em as long and as strong and as close as you can  
 'Til you can't

There's a box of greasy parts sitting in the trunk of that '65  
 Still waiting on you and your granddad to bring it back to life  
 You can always get around to fixing up that Pontiac  
 'Til you can't

So take that phone call from your momma and just talk away  
 'Cause you'll never know how bad you wanna 'til you can't someday  
 Don't wait on tomorrow 'cause tomorrow may not show  
 Say your sorries, your I-love-yous, 'cause man you never know

Yeah, if you got a chance, take it (take it), take it while you got a chance  
 If you got a dream, chase it, 'cause a dream won't chase you back  
 If you're gonna love somebody  
 Hold 'em as long and as strong and as close as you can  
 Until you can't  
 'Til you can't  
 Yeah, take it

Source: [LyricFind](#)

Songwriters: Benjamin Stennis / Matthew Rogers ~ 'Til You Can't lyrics © Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd.

## Musical Notes

Mary Lou Keefe, Director of Music



With the Omicron variant still among us, we have had to scale back some of our plans in every case throughout our church. I hope and I hope all of you feel the same way, that we can once and for all put this virus behind us and move on with our normal lives. In spite of fewer members at church services and then once again going to live streaming only services since Christmas Eve, I have a smaller choir than usual who have been singing for these services. Let me say that we are all looking forward to that time when all mandates in general will be lifted and the members of the congregation can safely and happily attend the Sunday services and sing loud and proud.

As per usual, my ultimate goal is to be able to perform a cantata on Palm Sunday with both the Senior and Handbell choirs participating. The hope is that we can reconvene by mid-February to begin rehearsals to that end as well as Easter, which fortunately is a little later in April this year. At the same time I am hoping to snag some guest singers and possibly instrumentalists.

On another note, the handbells were delivered to the Malmark factory in Plumsteadville, PA on Jan 3rd, and as of this writing have been fully refurbished and are ready to be picked up. Because of this process, the members of the choir have been on a hiatus of sorts and hopefully are looking forward to playing their cleaned, tuned, and polished bells.

A few months ago I was told by Kristin Oswald that Bob's mother, Suzanne Ramsdell had made a donation to the music fund in his memory. At the time the bell choir did not have lights with the exception of a new member, Allison, who had brought her own. Seemed like a good idea so I ordered two different types and it was a unanimous decision to go with the smaller one. Thus they were ordered and arrived in time for Christmas Eve. Now, each station is equipped with a battery operated led light and we have very happy ringers. Thank you to Sue. Bob would have approved.

## Trustees News, Dave Heyer

### Stewardship

In spite of 2021 being a classically bad year for many reasons, I'm happy to tell you that our end-of-year financial report tells us that the amount of pledges paid is significantly over the budgeted values, and that our pledges for 2022 have exceeded our goal of \$155K. Unfortunately, due to year-to-year increases in our other expenses, if things go exactly according to plan, we will be forced to draw down our endowment by some fifty-four thousand dollars in excess of our 4.5% guidance number. By contrast, in 2021 we exceeded the 4.5% guidance number by less than forty thousand dollars. Thank you for your support.

### Parsonage Improvements

We completed the first of the planned electrical improvements to the parsonage in December, and have installed the attic insulation. The insulation (blown-in fiberglass) is now a uniform depth of eighteen inches, throughout the attic. We've asked our tenant to track how much less she spends this winter on fuel oil than she did last year.

Could it be time to upgrade your attic insulation similarly? Let me know if you would like to discuss this opportunity to save money (I have no personal association with this). The remaining electrical work at the parsonage will begin when an on-order breaker panel arrives.

### Energy Costs

The starting point for trying to reduce energy costs is to conduct an energy audit, a fifty dollar investment what should return many times that every year. The energy audit takes two hours to perform, and provides a wealth of information to help you judge what needs improvement. The report we had done for the parsonage told us that the cost of added insulation would pay back in only four years, and included a significant cash rebate (funded by the State of CT). If you are interested in looking at the parsonage energy audit results, contact me [heyercd@comcast.net](mailto:heyercd@comcast.net) and I will forward you the report and explain it if you want. This is seriously a can't-lose opportunity.

## Scrip Year in Review - 2021

Thank you to the 49 dedicated Scrip shoppers who participated in our gift card fundraiser throughout 2021. In just a couple months, we'll be celebrating our 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the program at our church. I'm sure that by then, we will be back to in-person services and hopefully coffee hours. You will always find me there - in the parish hall with cards on hand for immediate purchase and order forms for cards that you'll receive within one week. Until we get back to that point, or if you're ever not in church, you can always call or email me (860-693-0134 or [c.levine@comcast.net](mailto:c.levine@comcast.net)) or you can place an order online or through the RaiseRight app. Reach out to me for our church's unique enrollment code if you wish to place an order electronically.

For the calendar year 2021, the Scrip program sold 660 cards and netted \$892.83. This is very close to what we made in 2020, and less than half of what we typically had done in prior "normal" years. December and November are still consistently the two months where our fundraising is the highest and in 2021, we made \$171.38 and \$146.64, respectively. That is slightly higher for both months than in 2020. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> highest month in 2021 was July, coming in at \$106.75. The top 3 most popular cards remained unchanged from 2020 – Stop & Shop (163), ShopRite (92) and Dunkin Donuts (81). These 3 retailers made up just over half of all cards sold in 2021. One of the main drivers of this were the collections ran over the course of the year by the Missions Committee where gift cards were requested. Walmart and Target came in at #5 and #6 and all 5 of these retailers were specifically requested for the Missions collections. This was a great collaboration that helped our church as well as the worthy organizations. And it made it very easy for everyone to participate. New to the top 5 this year was Visa, with 54 cards sold. Did you know that when you buy a Visa gift card through the Scrip program, you pay no activation fee? If you buy one at the grocery or drug store, that can be \$4 to \$6 on top of the face value of the card.

There are so many ways to use Scrip gift cards and every single one of them, no matter what the amount, gives a little bit of money back to our church.

Thanks, as always, for your support!  
Casey



**The Missions and Outreach collection for February  
will be money for Holy Joe's Café.**

In 2006, members of The First Congregational Church in Wallingford started Holy Joe's Café to support chaplains in Iraq and Afghanistan by providing coffee to serve the troops. As stated on their website, "Holy Joe's Café has become a dynamic part of military Chaplains 24/7/365 service to the troops...in 70 countries throughout the world." As one chaplain explains, "Holy Joe's Café is a place where chaplains in makeshift chapels are able to bring a taste of home to the tired, the anxious, the angry, the lonely and the wounded. They all can get a gourmet coffee, a reminder that the world they willingly left behind still cares."

Our church has supported Holy Joe's for a number of years by having people collect change in labeled cups you can put in your car, on your kitchen counter, etc. *If we're in church in February, we will hand out the cups. If we're unable to return to in-person services, feel free to use any container you have at home to collect your change (or bills).* **We will provide containers in which to deposit your money in the sanctuary once we return.**

In 2020, Coinstar estimated that the average household has \$113 in change around the house. Maybe you've turned in your change due to the coin shortage, but think about how much you spend on coffee at Dunkin or Starbucks. Maybe you can donate some of that money. Any amount helps support the chaplains and our troops.

***OUR MISSION STATEMENT***

*We gather as a welcoming community in worship, learning, service and fellowship to embody Christ's message of love, compassion and justice. Joining faith with action, both within and beyond our church, we strive to build a community that serves all.*

An Open & Affirming Congregation

**NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING**

of the First Congregational Church, Canton Center, Connecticut, on Sunday, **March 6, 2022** at 10:45 a.m.  
OR on subsequent Sundays at 10:45 a.m. until a quorum is obtained.

AGENDA:

1. Call to order and opening prayer.
2. Reading of the call to the meeting.
3. Presentation of the Minutes from the previous meeting(s).
4. Receiving and accepting of the reports of the church officers, committee chairpersons, and staff.
5. Any other business proper to come before the meeting.

Respectfully submitted, *Bev Sealand, Clerk*

**REMINDER, ALL COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS & OFFICERS – ANNUAL REPORTS DUE 2/13**

Each committee and pertinent officers are asked to please have their 2021 annual reports in to the church office no later than Feb. 13. Annual Reports will be available a week before the Annual Meeting.

**Super Saturday**

***"A Future With Hope: Relevant, Prophetic and Transformative"***

***An annual day of workshops for the congregations of the Southern New England Conference of the UCC***

Due to the increase in Covid cases, Super Saturday is now Virtual.

**Saturday, March 19, 2022 ~ 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM**  
**Registration Deadline: March 13, 2022**

Agenda: <https://www.sneucc.org/eventdetail/15280214/agenda>

**Downloadable workshop list:**

<https://www.sneucc.org/files/tables/content/15280214/fields/files/ee3f531d2feb44bf81d6724cf326d0b5/march+2022+workshop+list.pdf>

**Registration** <https://sneucc-reg.brtapp.com/SSMarch2022>  
Please contact Andrea Bellarosa - [bellarosaa@sneucc.org](mailto:bellarosaa@sneucc.org) with any questions.

**God is still speaking !!!**

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Visit our website at [www.cantoncenterchurch.org](http://www.cantoncenterchurch.org)

Listen to recorded **Sermons and Music** from worship services!

Follow us on 



**IN THE EVENT OF INCLEMENT WEATHER:**

Please tune to **WFSB Channel 3** or **NBC CT** or check the church web site at: [www.cantoncenterchurch.org](http://www.cantoncenterchurch.org)

# FEBRUARY 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 Deacons Zoom 7:00 pm	3	4	5  AA 11:00 p.m.
6  Worship & Communion 10:00 am	7  ACA 7:00 pm	8  AA 7:00 pm	9	10	11	12  AA 11:00 p.m.
13 14 Missions Meeting 9:00 am  Worship 10:00 am	14  Trustees 7:00 pm  ACA 7:00 pm	15  AA 7:00 pm	16  Council Zoom 7:00 pm	17	18	19  AA 11:00 p.m.
20  Worship 10:00 am	21  ACA 7:00 pm	22  AA 7:00 pm	23  WINTER BOOK STUDY Zoom 7:00 pm	24	25	26  AA 11:00 p.m.
27  Worship 10:00 am	28  ACA 7:00 pm					



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(United Church of Christ)  
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Kristen DiMattia, Secretary  
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M-F 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

**Pastor**

(860)693-4207

Rev. Dr. Brenda Pelc-Faszczka  
pastor@cantoncenterchurch.org

**Organist/Director of Music:**

(860)693-4216

Mary Lou Keefe  
music@cantoncenterchurch.org

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*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

[www.cantoncenterchurch.org](http://www.cantoncenterchurch.org)

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