

CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

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• www.centrechurchvt.org

Hope Grant Proposal to the New Ministries Team of the Vermont Conference, U.C.C.

Mission Statement: The mission of Centre Congregational Church is to worship and serve God, following the example and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Overview

Jesus delivered his most provocative and best remembered message ‘on the mount’ (Matthew 5-7), that was outdoors. Being outdoors and on a mount enabled Jesus to be **accessible and visible**, respectively. After almost two years of coaching and consulting by Paul Nickerson, Centre Church better understands that its location (central) is key to its relevance and viability in the greater-Brattleboro area and thus the **accessibility and visibility** of the church is seminal. Yet currently, the vital ministries implemented and the gospel demonstrated are almost ‘hidden under a bushel’ (Matthew 5:15) – the bushel being our beautiful edifice that is the ‘Jewel on Main Street’. If we are to follow “the example of ... Jesus”, we must improve our **accessibility and visibility**. During the COVID-19 crisis, Centre built a beautiful illuminated ice labyrinth dedicated to those who died during the pandemic. During Holy Week, Centre raised hundreds of dollars of our El Salvadoran sister church with the display of our interactive “Flowering of the Cross” to the community on our front lawn. For its early Sunday morning Easter service, Centre served smoked salmon outside under a tent to members of the congregation and community, in part, reenacting Jesus’ reunion with his disciples in Galilee. We recently hosted a Buddhist group for meditation and the Brattleboro School of Dance for three performances on our lawn. We are already planning a ‘flash mob’ dance event and many musical performances for the first Fridays of each month on our lawn. These initiatives reinforce upon our leadership the importance of expanding our **accessibility and visibility** to the community so that all who walk, work, and drive along Main Street will see on a regular basis a ministry that does not hide its light under a bushel. By conducting more of our ministry on Main Street’s front lawn, we hope to attract those who have never been to or those who have been wounded by ‘church’ and would be less likely to pass through doors to discover light previously hidden under a bushel.

Vision: “The Green at Centre”

Centre Church’s vision is to foster a highly **accessible and visible** outdoor ministry to the community on its front lawn. The new ministry would include, but not be limited to: worship services, musical concerts, dance performances, films showings, and labyrinth walks. Centre requires outdoor seating, lighting, and sound for this vision to come to full fruition. In the future, more landscaping, and gardening for beautification and education could be added. Perhaps a community garden, on a small scale would also be looked into.

Anticipated Costs and Use of \$2,500 Grant Funds

- \$250 outdoor seating (used) that can be easily moved and placed anywhere on the front lawn (perimeter, theater in the round, at tables, under tent)
- \$850 storage shed for chairs, trash receptacle, and extension cords, table(s)
- \$500 raised outdoor lighting sets (2)
- \$900 lawn improvement, signage, advertising, technical costs (remuneration for a professional service provider to provide training to reconstituted Technical Team)

Purpose & Hope

Through this new ministry we hope to:

1. Demonstrate our mission statement through Jesus’ example;
2. Increase the **visibility and accessibility** of our ministry to the public (foot and vehicle traffic);
3. Recognize the importance of Creation Theology, Climate Change, and of our Natural World and reflect this emphasis in the worship space and format; by celebrating in our outdoor space we recognize its importance.
4. Provide a worship space and format that possesses few, if any, barriers for those who have little or no church background, have been previously wounded by and have left the church, or are physically handicapped.
5. Learn, have fun, and spread love.

Faithfully submitted,

The Rev. Dr. Scott Couper, for Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Brattleboro, Vermont