

MINISTER'S COLUMN, Scott Couper

Dear Friends:

The local Galanes Vermont Shop on Main Street sells a T-shirt on which is printed "Keep Vermont Weird". For good or for bad, I do not consider myself 'weird'. But there is part of me that really wishes I was 'weird'. While I may not be 'weird', many of those whom I admire most in Brattleboro are. It is why I love our town and our state.

Centre Congregational Church, for good or for bad, has the historical reputation of being, well, conventional, staid. Most of us at Centre Church even describe our church as 'traditional'. That is all well and good. I like traditional. Tradition is positive - provided it does not stifle the spirit, the Holy Spirit, who causes us to be bold, relevant, and vital to the community and the world.

In our bulletin on Sunday, September 18, I printed an extract from a wonderful contemporary version of 'The Beatitudes' (Matthew 5:1-12) entitled "Beatitudes for the Weird" by Jacob Nordby. The Vermont Conference Board of Directors used Nordby's writing as a reading to open our morning worship. Here, I share with you the entire biblical extrapolation.

Blessed are the weird people – poets, misfits, writers, mystics, heretics, painters, and troubadours, for they teach us to see the world through different eyes.

Blessed are those who embrace the intensity of life's pain and pleasure, for they shall be rewarded with uncommon ecstasy.

Blessed are you who see beauty in ugliness, for you shall transform our vision of how the world might be.

Blessed are the bold and whimsical, for their imagination shatters ancient boundaries of fear for us all.

Blessed are you who are mocked for unbridled expression of love in all its forms, because your kind of crazy is exactly that freedom for which the world is unconsciously begging.

Blessed are those who have endured breaking by life, for they are the resplendent cracks through which the light shines.

Friends, as a person, some might consider me the epitome of 'standard'. That is all well and good. I am who I am. I am as God created me. Yet, God help me if I do not see and appreciate those who might be considered unorthodox. If I do not – then I am almost spiritually dead inside. If I understand that I am The Standard, then I have, as some would say, 'lost the (Christian) plot'.

Let us together as a community of faith continue to be who we are – and if that is 'traditional', then let us be proudly and properly 'traditional'. That is all well and good. Yet, God help us if we do not admire, cherish, support, defend, protect, elevate, and even seek to move closer in spirit to 'the weird'. Keep Vermont weird. Blessed are the weird.

Be well. Love always in Christ, Scott

CENTRE BELLS

October 2022



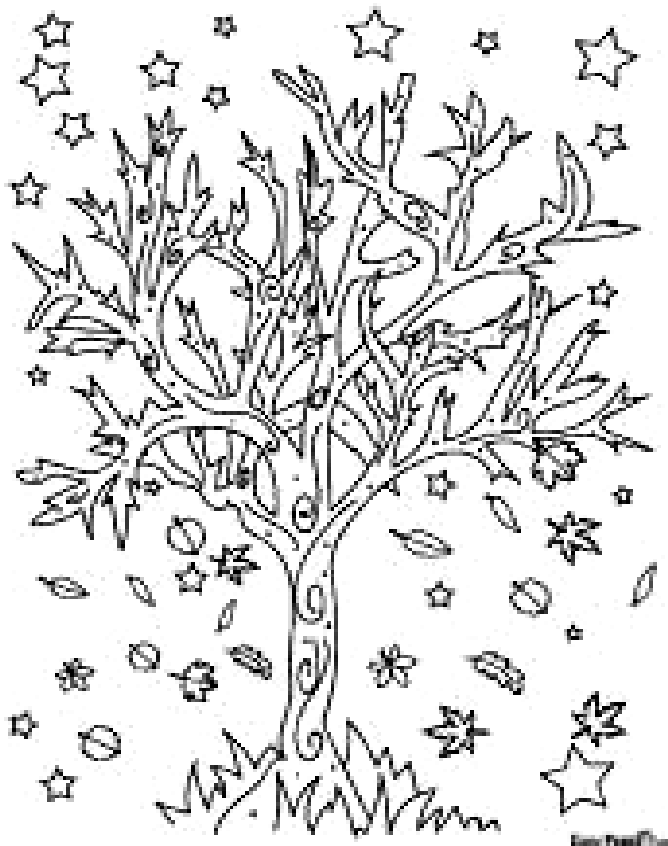
The newsletter of
**Centre
Congregational
Church,
United Church
of Christ**



Council Chair, LYNN HERZOG

You will soon receive in your (paper) mail two questionnaires from Centre Church. One is an assessment of the minister's performance and the other is a congregational self-evaluation. The minister's performance is evaluated annually by the Personnel Committee with the help of the Board Chairs and Council, but many denominations recommend a church-wide evaluation every few years. And since the congregation is even more important than the minister in the functioning of the church, we are including a congregational evaluation as well. At this time Centre Church is discussing its vision and goals for the future, and this seems to be a good time for a process which will hopefully clarify and strengthen the relationship between pastor and parishioners. We hope you will respond thoughtfully, prayerfully, and productively, and that your comments will help us grow and function better as a church.

Since this is now election season, lawn signs are popping up all over. Council discussed the use of the church lawn for signs, and approved a policy that the church lawn cannot be used for political campaign signs – i.e., signs urging you to vote for a candidate or ballot issue.



From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

The choir at Centre Church is back, as I'm sure you have noticed. We have been rehearsing on Thursdays from 5:30—6:30pm in order to prepare for Sunday services. Most of our members are retired and are often away for weeks at a time. I'm putting out a plea to those of you out there in the congregation who sing. We REALLY need your help. If there has ever been a time when we could use more voices (although we always can) it is NOW! It is especially challenging to plan much ahead when I don't know how many singers I will have each week. It is also difficult to do four part music with 5 voices. Can you help?



DEACONS

Our faithful team of deacons assisted at three memorial services this summer and then worked well with The Rev. David Stinson for two Sundays while The Rev. Dr. Scott Couper was on leave with his son.

We spent some bonding time together polishing all our brass, taking inventory of supplies, making sure the pews were well stocked and cleaning the chapel. Our efforts did us proud when we hosted the well-attended union service in August!

It was our pleasure to announce that Council voted to approve "masks are optional in the sanctuary".

A big thank you to Matt Kennedy for the printed instructions he gave the deacons so we have some idea now about how to assist if there is a need to adjust the large, complicated sound board. Hopefully, we don't have to be put to the test.

Please remember to sign up to donate a flower arrangement any Sunday you want to celebrate an occasion, or honor someone whom you care about. They are always appreciated and add so much beauty to our Sunday services.

Looking forward to seeing more folks at church as the lower temperatures cool the sanctuary to a more comfortable place to worship together with optional wearing of masks. Social distancing for seating is still in effect. Thank you for remembering to sanitize your hands when entering.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The ice cream social was a pleasant success! It was lunch AND dessert this year; how fortunate we were! We're kicking off the new 'season' with a monthly theme. September was "Children Are Teachers Too". October will be "What Would Jesus do?" (a study of his parables). November will be "Families and Thankfulness". December will be "Advent and Preparation for Christmas". We plan to have a monthly 'Lesson Sunday' on the second Sunday of each month and will offer activities that support and complement that theme the rest of the month. This will enable us to meet the diverse needs of our widening age span and give our small teaching leadership some breaks to plan ahead without developing lessons every week and also allow children to not feel they're missing out on anything if they miss a Sunday of church school.

We can still use volunteers for giving the children's message and also extra hands on the Christian Education board itself. See Nan Mann if you are interested or have questions.

Thank you for keeping CE in your thoughts.

-Nan Mann, CE chair



The **Sunday Spirit Discussion Group** welcomes you to join us Sunday mornings at 9:00am in the financial office as we read and discuss *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation* by Kristin Kobes duMez. It's described on its fly-leaf as "a sweeping account that reveals how American evangelicals have worked for decades to replace the Jesus of the Gospels with an idol of rugged masculinity and Christian nationalism." No homework and thoughtful participants! Come to disagree with the author or to relate her analysis to your own spiritual journey.

For more information contact Judy Palmer:
judithp41@gmail.com / 603.353.0590.



Calling all Co-op Shoppers

October is round up month for Loaves & Fishes. When you are checking out, you can round up your purchases to an even dollar.

We are excited to be part of this community involvement since people have been very generous and groups have received thousands of dollars. We are in need of support to purchase foods for our Afghan market. We support our community with specialty foods as well as our grocery bags, hot meals, and Everyone Eats meals to our community. Thanks for your support in this fund raiser for Loaves & Fishes.

-Ruth Tilgman, Loaves & Fishes



BRATTLEBORO CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

Labor Day has come and gone and that means the start of a new school year at BCC. We said goodbye to a handful of children who went off to public school Kindergarten and other public school programs. We added seven new children this fall, at least one in every classroom. We are also welcoming some new teachers. So it's a time for all of us to get to know each other and make new friends, young and old.

The preschoolers are starting to examine the leaves on the trees as they turn color and begin to fall. Toddlers are welcoming new friends and getting to know about their families. The infants are getting teeth, learning to share, and be in a new space. Everyone is still enjoying the beautiful weather.

-Nan Mann, Director

MISSION & SERVICE

Mission & Service (M&S) has been busy in various different ways, both as a team helping with the Green@ Centre, as individuals helping the Masoudi family, and as a committee keeping the Second Sunday Offerings updated and represented. In addition, Jesse Lepkoff returned this summer for a wonderful concert on August 6 in our sanctuary.

To update the congregation, our latest Second Sunday offerings are listed below:

- June: *Centre for Children* received \$1,250 with a large donation and our offerings *Strengthen our Church*(UCC 5 for 5 offering) \$135 with no additional donation added
- July: *PINS* \$387 that was used to buy Walmart gift cards that went to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) for car seats and other needs for children coming through their care.
- August: *Senior Meals* received \$104 by the time our September meeting happened. Perhaps more donation have come in. M&S's policy is to donate \$300 total for our offerings excluding 5 for 5 UCC offerings which receive what is donated without any additions. Senior Meals, therefore will receive \$300 with \$196 being donated from the M&S budget and the \$104 coming from Second Sunday offering.
- September: *HELP Fund*. No total yet.
- October: *Neighbors in Need* (UCC 5 for 5 offering)

September 6th concert by Jesse Lepkoff and two other musicians:

This marks the third concert that Jesse has organized and presented at Centre Church. This year, despite hard work by Jesse and M&S, no grant to pay the musician was found, so tickets were sold and any profits went toward the *Luz del Mundo* Scholarship fund. Total profit after expenses was \$100. We were disappointed to not have a sponsor or grant to offset the expenses and therefore provide a larger donation toward Luz del Mundo. Perhaps next year we can find a sponsor or grant for Jesse's wonderful Baroque concert, enjoy the music, AND support *Luz del Mundo* in a bigger way.

Upcoming for M&S :

- Apple picking with families and congregation - all apples are for Loaves & Fishes.
- Seasonal Overflow Shelter meals (Groundworks) to begin in October or November depending on need.
- *Project Feed the Thousands*, which supports Loaves & Fishes (L&F) both by our donations and through the organizations. The more we support L&F through this, the more the Project gives to L&F. It's a win-win for L&F.
- December Church Fair where M&S will sell goods from El Salvador.

CABANITAS, EL SALVADOR

The following interview with Jenifer Ambler is part of the Compassionate Brattleboro 'Compassionate Stories' series published in the Brattleboro Reformer.

Can you tell us some things about the community that folks in the Brattleboro area might not know?

The Cabanitas community near Apopa, El Salvador is the oft-referred-to and unofficial name of the sister community to which the Brattleboro community in the United States (U.S.) is linked. Cabanitas is just north of the capital city of San Salvador.

Cabanitas and Brattleboro are primarily linked ecclesiastically, in that the relationship was founded and is maintained by various ecumenical Christian faith communities called 'sister parishes'.

The ecclesiastic link to Brattleboro is the Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ, UCC) and the ecclesiastic link to Cabanitas is the Cristo Redentor Lutheran church located in a small neighborhood called 'Colonia Pandora' on the outskirts of the city of Apopa. Parishioners come from multiple neighborhoods surrounding the church.

The name 'Cabanitas' came about because there is a Lutheran school called 'Colegio Luterano Cabanitas' located in a small neighborhood quite a bit further away and the sister community can be found on "the road to Cabanitas".

[Continued next page]

How did this sister relationship begin?

In 1992, members of Centre Church traveled to El Salvador on an educational tour with a group from multiple Vermont towns. This was at the end of the long civil war. The representatives were very impressed with the determination of the Salvadoran people to rebuild their lives and communities. Talks given after the trip led to a group from the Brattleboro Rotary Club returning to El Salvador in 1994 on a medical and relationship-building trip. Centre Church applied to be a sister parish in El Salvador around 1995. At that time, the associate pastor at Centre Church was adopting an orphan from El Salvador adding an additional connection. Representatives made their first trip to visit Cabanitas in 1997. Soon after, it was decided a scholarship fund (*Luz del Mundo*) would be the most sustainable long-term way to be in relationship and to assist Cabanitas.

What do folks in our sister community know about our community?

Mostly that we're in a much colder climate!

And what do they think about the sister community relationship?

They are grateful for the partnership because the main focus has been to give scholarships to send the children of the Cabanitas community to school. The longer students remain in school, the less likely the boys will get into gangs and the less likely the girls will get pregnant. Education is the lynchpin to better their future employment opportunities.

Are there any commonly held misconceptions about us?

They think we're incredibly rich. We're far from 'incredibly rich' by U.S. standards, but we definitely are by El Salvadoran standards.

What do you think would be the ideal activities to strengthen the relationship between our communities?

Continuing correspondence on a regular basis and visits when possible. For example, this coming November, the ambassador to Cabanitas is Brattleboro optometrist, Dr. Jenifer Ambler, will be visiting for a week and will be accompanied by the Centre Church minister, The Rev Dr Scott Couper.

How did Cabanitas fare during COVID. What steps are being taken to facilitate recovery?

They masked but only limited social distancing due to the lack of electronic means of gathering. It took El Salvador much longer to get vaccines than the U.S., and the vaccination rate is still much lower than ours. Children tried to attend school on-line, but it was very difficult due to unreliable internet and lack of access to electronic devices larger than cellphones. The Cristo Redentor church helped by making its computer and internet connection available to students who could manage to safely commute to the church.

What is the biggest worry/concern facing individuals and families in Cabanitas?

Financial hardship and lack of good job opportunities are always the greatest worry and concern. Many families have one or more members in the U.S. wiring money back to El Salvador. We're aware of one family in which the grandmother raised the kids because both parents had gone to the U.S. in search of better opportunities. Crime and gangs are also big issues. Most people try to be off the streets before dark or at least very close to their homes, for safety. It's very hard to start small businesses because the gangs run protection rackets, taking what little profit an entrepreneur might make.

What are the primary sources of joy? What do folks in Cabanitas do for enjoyment/entertainment?

Friends and family, church gatherings, music, dance, singing together, playing soccer. Occasionally the church arranges transportation for groups of youth to attend larger church gatherings in the capitol city, or to visit a water park for fun.

Is 'compassion' something that's actively discussed in Cabanitas?

'Compassion' is not directly discussed, but kindness and caring for others are topics at church and Sunday School.

What would folks in Cabanitas consider a prime example of the community demonstrating compassion?

One thing that comes to mind is when a flash flood happened several years ago. The church leadership quickly mobilized to prepare meals for those affected and to offer space to stay overnight if needed.



MEMBER CARE

My husband, Darrel Daley, died of cancer almost four years ago. Back in 2009 he had a quadruple by pass at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. When he came home he wrote a list he entitled "THINGS I LEARNED IN REHAB". I will share part of it here.

"When you are on your back or sitting most of the day the mind does more ruminating. At least mine does. Now I have to just find out what 'ruminating' means!

Force that gray matter to find the good, the positive in whatever circumstance you find yourself.

This is a good time to stop whining. If you've never indulged yourself, I compliment you. I always hearken back to the old American Indian saying "I used to feel sorry for myself because I had no shoes, until I met a man who had no feet"

Give thanks for the doctor/surgeon who stayed awake long enough in medical school to learn what to do, and how to do whatever it took to get you into rehab in the first place.

Be thankful for those who work in the medical care professions—nurses, assistants, pill pushers, home care givers, and some I probably missed. Many are skilled with anticipating your most every need:

"Is your drinking water fresh?"

"Can I get you anything?"

"Would you like this or that?" and politely responded to my request, "No, I'm afraid I can't bring you a Bass Ale."

"Let me move this so that you'll be able to reach it more easily"

The above drove home the point that thinking of others' needs is a great quality of the human soul. I'll try to do better at developing this skill in the future.

There are a LOT of people out there offering up positive thoughts and prayers for your well-being. There are a LOT of people out there who unselfishly go out of their busy day to take time to visit. There are a LOT of people out there who took time to send a card or email expressing their hopes for my speedy recovery.

Wives are great! At least mine is. I'm glad she didn't have her fingers crossed when over fifty years ago she answered in the affirmative to 'For better or worse—in sickness and in health'.

Life is good, as are the vast majority of the inhabitants of this planet.

The list could go on and but, the constraints of time and space always step in."

-Darrel Daley 2009



PEOPLE



A word of good cheer would be warmly received by members and friends of our church who are in nursing homes, assisted living centers, or are house-bound as of September 26.

Gary Carrier—Dirigo Pines
c/o Allison Carrier Lucy
16 Page Place, Orono, ME 04473
207.944.0030

Pat Neer—Thompson House
80 Maple St., Brattleboro, VT 05301

Karen Getty Peter—Pine Rock Manor
3 Denny Hill Rd., Warner, NH 03278

*Please let the Administrator know
if we've missed someone.*

B I R T H D A Y S

2 Steve Fecto
5 Duo Xi
7 John Crutcher
15 Louisa Marie Mann
17 Tara Rydant



OCTOBER 2022

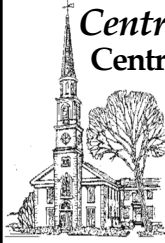
**ZOOM events
*Holy Communion

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2 9 ⁰⁰ Book Discussion 10 ⁰⁰ Worship*	3 4 ³⁰ Christian Ed Board 7 ⁰⁰ Pub Theology	4 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 12 ³⁰ BAILA	5 11 ⁰⁰ Staff meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 5 ⁰⁰ Contemplation Service 7 ⁰⁰ VT Humanities First Wednesday	6 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 1 ⁰⁰ Quilting ministry 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal	7 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 5 ⁰⁰ Gallery Walk / Green@Centre 7 ⁰⁰ WWAC Event	8 2 ⁰⁰ Bob Keller Funeral 3 ⁰⁰ Reception
9 9 ⁰⁰ Book Discussion 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA 11 ³⁰ Fellowship Hour 3 ⁰⁰ Matt Rogalsk Installation	10 Indigenous Peoples' Day OFFICE CLOSED 7 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology	11 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	12 11 ⁰⁰ Staff meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 5 ⁰⁰ Contemplation Service 6 ⁰⁰ Mission & Service	13 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 1 ⁰⁰ Quilting ministry 3 ³⁰ BCC Board 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal	14 CB DEADLINE 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	15 8 ⁰⁰ Brattleboro Literary Festival
16 9 ⁰⁰ Book Discussion 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA	17 4 ⁰⁰ Compassionate Brattleboro 7 ⁰⁰ PubTheology	18 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	19 11 ⁰⁰ Staff meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 5 ⁰⁰ Contemplation Service 6 ⁰⁰ Church Council 6 ³⁰ NAACP	20 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 1 ⁰⁰ Quilting ministry 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal	21 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	22
23 9 ⁰⁰ Book Discussion 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA 6 ³⁰ CASP Fundraiser	24 7 ⁰⁰ Christian Theology	25 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	26 MAIL CB 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 5 ⁰⁰ Contemplation Service 7 ⁰⁰ WWAC Event	27 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 1 ⁰⁰ Quilting ministry 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal	28 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	29
30 9 ⁰⁰ Book Discussion 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA	31 Halloween 7 ⁰⁰ PubTheology					

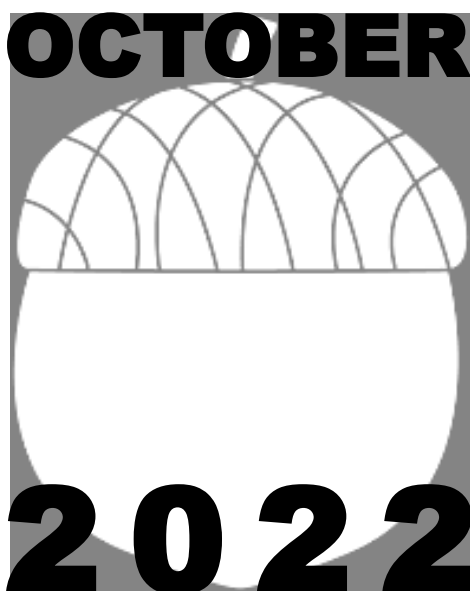
SCOTT'S SERMONS can be accessed at the church website: www.centrechurhvermont.org -or-
facebook page: <http://www.centrechurhvermont.org/audio-video.html> -or-
https://www.facebook.com/pg/Centre-Congregational-Church-Brattleboro-VT-632678343519640/notes/?ref=page_internal -or-
From the website *Welcome* page, click *Audio & Video* in the top list (or click *More* or *Other* on the top right).



OCTOBER LECTIONARY TEXTS
Sunday, October 2 , 17th Sunday after Pentecost Lam 1:1-6 and Lam 3:19-26 or Ps 137 ; Hab 1:1-4; 2:1-4 and Ps 37:1-9; 2 Tim 1:1-14; Luke 17:5-10
Sunday, October 9 , 18th Sunday after Pentecost Jer 29:1, 4-7 and Ps 66:1-12; 2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c and Ps 111; 2 Tim 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19
Sunday, October 16 , 19th Sunday after Pentecost Jer 31:27-34 and Ps 119:97-104; Gen 32:22-31 and Ps 121; 2 Tim 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8
Sunday, October 23 , 20th Sunday after Pentecost Joel 2:23-32 and Ps 65; Sirach 35:12-17 or Jer 14:7-10, 19-22 and Ps 84:1-7; 2 Tim 4:6-8, 16-18; Luke 18:9-14
Sunday, October 30 , 21st Sunday after Pentecost Hab 1:1-4, 2:1-4 and Ps 119:137-144; Isa 1:10-18 and Ps 32:1-7; 2 Thess 1:1-4, 11-12; Luke 19:1-10



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802.254.4730 / admin@centrechurhvt.org



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**CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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centrechurch@centrechurchvt.org

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

193 Main Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301-2842

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Website: www.centrechurchvt.org

Facebook: [Centre Congregational Church-Brattleboro VT](#)

Current news/information in the larger UCC Community:

VT Conference: www.vtcucc.org / National: www.ucc.org

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