

## MINISTER'S COLUMN, Scott Couper

*"My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."  
– Isaiah 32:18*

The following was my appeal to Vermont legislators to improve access to affordable housing in Vermont. I made this appeal on November 15 on behalf of Vermont Interfaith Action and its Affordable Housing and Homelessness Organizing Committee in a joint press conference held in Montpelier and on our front lawn at Centre Congregational Church underneath the backdrop of our "A Just World for All" banner. Accommodation and shelter from the cold during Christmas and the winter months is for people of faith a theological and a biblical issue more than a political issue. "Mary and Joseph brought forth their firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, *because there was no room for them in the inn*" (Luke 2:7). May you and your family have a blessed Christmas and may we strive so that others might as well. Be well. In Christ, Scott

Good morning, my name is Scott Couper and I am the minister of Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in downtown Brattleboro.

With Vermont Interfaith Action and the faith communities that it represents, I advocate strongly that Vermont's leaders rapidly develop permanent affordable housing.

The Vermont Housing Needs Assessment for 2020-2024 makes it clear that there is not enough housing supply to meet current or future demands. This shortage is negatively affecting both low and middle income families. By 2025 new home construction is expected to be virtually stagnant, with the slowdown occurring in every Vermont county.

Because our state, including our beautiful town of Brattleboro, is in desperate need of affordable housing, we are thankful that this past April Governor Phil Scott and his administration proposed a Housing Recovery Plan that designates 249 million dollars over three years in capital funding for housing as part of his Economic Recovery and Revitalization Plan. This investment would bring 5,000 new housing units to the market making it "the greatest investment in housing in the history of Vermont".

To this 249 million dollars we say, "Yes!" Yet, as is often the case with plans, there is a "Yes, but..."

The "Yes, but..." to this plan is that the Vermont legislature has thus far only approved 150 million dollars. That is about 100 million dollars short. Therefore, Vermont Interfaith Action urges the legislature to approve the full amount and more planned by Governor Scott. Why more? We call on the legislature to allocate more funds for permanent affordable housing because additional federal funds are already available from the American Rescue Plan Act and from the infrastructure bill that was just passed in Washington. All of these funds are needed and must be supplemented with supports for mental health and substance use disorder treatment to keep people in housing. The problem is and will no longer be resources, but the leadership needed to ensure speedy construction of this housing.

This leads to my last "Yes, but..." Even if all the above is done it will already take years for enough units to be built to supply current demand. Funds must be allocated now, thus sending a strong signal to housing developers that more funding is coming so that they can continue pre-development work to ensure projects will be ready as soon as possible.

Vermont needs the development of affordable permanent housing 'post haste'. This phrase, used since Shakespeare's time, has connotations of delivery *already* being too late. In Vermont's case, the construction of new housing is already too late. We need our leaders to act now, post haste.

Thank you.



**CENTRE BELLS – December 2021**  
The newsletter of  
**Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ**

### Council Chair, LYNN HERZOG

By the time you read this, it will be the season of Advent – a time of joyful anticipation. Yet many around us are neither joyful nor hopeful for the future. At our Council meeting, Mission & Service brought us an exciting proposal – a chance for us to welcome strangers who are far from home, just as that unknown innkeeper welcomed Mary and Joseph so long ago. Refugees from Afghanistan will be arriving in Brattleboro in December, and we hope that we can provide them with more than a stable. They are looking for a place to worship, and we have a very large building and many resources. It would be wonderful if we could give them a warm welcome.

On the more mundane side, we continue to run a budget deficit (we spent \$6700 more than we earned in October). But it is not as bad as we anticipated, thanks to the Paycheck Protection Program from the government. And, we have been blessed with a large endowment. How can we use that for the greater glory of God? Must it be used only for capital improvements, or can we use it to improve the services we provide? By hiring a Christian Education director, for example? Or by giving raises to our hard-working and deserving employees? By giving aid to refugees? By supporting our community outreach at “The Green at Centre”? We may never again have a balanced budget, but hopefully we will be following the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, and becoming all that God intends for us.



### From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

We had such a warm October that it hardly seems possible Thanksgiving is here and Advent is right around the corner. It amazes me how quickly we immerse ourselves in the Advent season which begins on the last Sunday in November this year.

The choir has been busily preparing an anthem each week and we have already begun working on Advent/Christmas music. Because our numbers are small, we often only have one on a part and if someone is away or ill, that can leave us without a whole section. We sure could use some help. If you would be willing to join us for the Advent season we would be especially appreciative. We are particularly in need of altos. Jenifer Ambler has been holding down the fort by herself each week and she would love some company.

As I reflect on Thanksgiving this year, I am deeply grateful to have the choir back, albeit with masks! It felt like a huge loss to me not to have any singing for the last year and a half. Even though we are singing with restrictions, it sure feels good to have folks back in the loft. For that I am so appreciative!

### BRATTLEBORO CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

On Saturday, November 13 a good-sized group of church members, former and current staff of the Brattleboro Centre for Children (BCC), alumni families, and BCC Board members joined together for a celebration of history, gratitude, and looking ahead to commemorate twenty years. BCC was founded by Centre Church, but remains an independent, non-sectarian child care center of high quality (rated four STARS out of a possible five by the state of Vermont). A slide show of the center's history was shown, catered food was enjoyed by all, and tours were given to share the classrooms with all the guests. A card sale fundraiser and book sale are also connected to the event and can be accessed from the BCC facebook page. As the current director, I gave a speech which quoted in part from a *Moment for Peace* that board member John McFadden gave in 2021 "Maybe someday we will be known as that marvelous church that worships in the BCC building." We at BCC give thanks weekly for the support of the church, its membership, our friends, and families. Our gratitude will only grow as we do.

-Nan

## DEACONS

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It's difficult to believe, but by the time this issue of *Centre Bells* hits your mailboxes, we will have just observed—or are just about to—the first Sunday in Advent!

Twenty months ago, who among us would have imagined that here at the close of 2021 we will have just observed our *second* pandemic era Thanksgiving? Yet, as fraught with anxiety as our days continue to be, we still have much for which to be thankful.

While many of the events we usually enjoy at Centre Church this time of year remain on hold, with that Grinch COVID stubbornly rearing its ugly head, we *have* begun a cautious resumption of church life as we once knew it. Prayer cards and Bibles have been returned to the pews, soon to be followed by the hymnals. The children's worship bags of coloring books, crayons, and picture books await busy small hands at the rear of the sanctuary. The sanctuary is again bedecked in full Advent glory, the viridian wreaths with their crimson bows suspended from the balconies, window sills filled with candles and (faux) greens, creches large and small sheltering their reverent occupants placed throughout the church, and banners and paraments in shades of purple and blue proclaiming the season gracing pulpit, lectern, and wall.

We ardently hope to be able to gather in person on the evening of December 24, as has been our custom for so many years, to joyously herald together, with song and scripture, the birth of the Holy Child, but the safety of our community remains paramount.

Every year about this time, I enjoy re-reading *A Christmas Carol*. (Michael and I also always view at least one film adaptation of the Dickens classic; we especially like the 1999 Patrick Stewart version.) In the midst of a month that is so often a frenzied flurry of tasks and obligations, of must-dos and must-haves, it remains a gentle but urgent reminder of what the season can, and should, truly mean. Within its first pages, Ebenezer Scrooge's dauntless good-hearted nephew, Fred, opines:

*...I have always thought of Christmas time...as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they were really fellow passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.*

Perhaps we may endeavor to follow the example of Fred's repentant uncle, who, eventually, as we all know, vows to "...keep Christmas in [his] heart, and try to keep it all the year."

God Bless Us, Every One!

In Faith, Heidi Mario



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

In November, the church school classes focused on their very own Stewardship Campaign doing service projects. They made beaded jewelry to donate to non-profit organizations in Brattleboro like the Senior Center and Groundworks. They talked with each other about love, generosity, giving, and caring. They gave of themselves.

In December, the focus will be on Advent and preparing for Christmas with a woodland creature Advent calendar. The fellowship talks will be of protecting the earth to preserve it for the future and 'What Would Jesus Do'?

-Nan, Marion, Priscilla, and Kate

## MISSION & SERVICE

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Thank you to those who contributed in October to *Neighbors in Need (NIN)* and our three-pronged giving to United Church of Christ (UCC), *NIN*, and local outreach to the Multicultural Community Center (ECDC/Afghan migrants to Brattleboro) and the Rural Women International (Afghan judge program). Three hundred dollars is being donated to each of these organizations. We are so thankful for Joe Wiah's visit and presentation at Centre Church in October re: ECDC and his role as the director of the Multicultural Community Center in Brattleboro.

In November, we welcomed Susan Howes and Sarah Zumbruski of *The Help Fund* (SEVCA) on our Second Sunday. On the Second Sunday of December, we will honor *The Christmas Fund*, a UCC offering which helps retired ministers who need assistance; for example, a UCC pastor of one or more small churches. This pastor might not have received any benefits, putting stress on their retirement years. Many of our small Vermont communities have such churches, with part-time or seasonal pastors who then must serve a number of churches to earn a living.

On Christmas Eve, an offering will support the *Samaritan Fund*. This fund is a discretionary fund available to our minister, Scott Couper. This fund has been used for emergency transportation, overnight housing, food, diapers, etc. Our Christmas Eve offering is the primary financial support to replenish this fund annually, so please give generously.

**Of utmost concern and focus** for Mission & Service (M&S) this month is the upcoming arrival of Afghans to Brattleboro. Margo Neale has been committed to attending weekly meetings at St Michael's Episcopal Church, who have become a 'Sponsoring Group'. This group will be supporting several people/families when they arrive in mid-December. Their commitment includes pick-up at the airport, bringing people to their arranged housing, which the group has furnished and readied with food, linens, and other necessities. Further support of rides, orientation to grocery stores, banks, schools, public transportation, etc. will be provided by the church and the Multicultural Community Center/ECDC, directed by Joe Wiah. M&S would like to help in any way possible. We have not committed to becoming a Sponsoring Group at this time, but feel that through St Michael's efforts, we can also provide help. Can you help—provide rides; orient

someone to a doctor's office, school, grocery store; provide furniture, linens, lights, warm clothing; make a call to welcome our new community members, or offer support through a phone call or a visit? M&S can help you find the right person if you can offer to help. Please contact one of the members of M&S listed below.

And lastly, seasonal meals to Groundworks Overnight Shelter on South Main Street will have begun on November 21 and will continue each third Sunday of the month. So, December 19 will be the next meal we provide. Unlike in the past, the meal is just dropped off at 54 South Main Street between 5:00-5:15pm in disposable dishes. There is no serving or clean-up involved. Our church sign-up will be posted by the first Sunday of the month on the Church Life Bulletin Board. Please consider donating to this meal. Both cooked and non-cooked items will be needed. All should be dropped off at the shelter, not the church. Thank you so much for participating. Whether you have or have not in the past, we need your help!

### M&S Committee

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As some are already aware, we have discontinued contracting to have our recycling removed by an outside service as a cost-saving measure. Instead, we are relying on folks in our church community to empty the indoor bins. Please consider taking a load of recyclables (and compost) to add to your home materials, or to the roll-offs at the landfill (there is no charge). There are large paper bags in the big lower cabinet in the kitchenette for paper and cardboard, if you do not want to take the plastic bin. Green compostable bags are in the lower cabinet opposite, with the plastic bags, wraps, and napkins.

Thank you!

## Project Feed

**“How can we live with ourselves if our neighbors are living with hunger?”**

Project Feed starts November 1 through December 31, 2021.

**Hunger has become an epidemic.** Our friends and neighbors are having an increasingly difficult time putting healthy, nutritious meals on the table. Often hidden, hunger affects countless individuals and families in our community. In fact, there are over 5,500 people in our area that regularly use a food shelf or community kitchen. These individuals include senior citizens, veterans, and working families with children who do not earn enough to make ends meet (less than 2% are homeless). Project Feed the Thousands' mission is to address this epidemic.

**Everyone can help.** Project Feed the Thousands is unique in that **EVERYONE** can participate in some way. Whether you choose to make a cash contribution, pick up an extra non-perishable food item every time you go grocery shopping, or drop your extra change in a collection box, **YOU** are helping **YOUR** friends and neighbors fill a critical gap – the need for the most basic of human needs – **FOOD!!**

**How Centre Church people can help:** Everything people at Centre Church donate to in the name of Project Feed goes directly to Loaves and Fishes. Last year we brought in 3361 pounds of food and \$4220. Project Feed also gave \$4,500 to Loaves & Fishes. This was put into family grocery bags and boxes of food delivered to people at Dalem Chalet and the housing projects. Some of the food was put directly into meals which we served to the homeless in the motels and Foodworks food shelf. The donations of money gave us money to purchase more food from the Food Bank and for all the paper products to go meals generate.

**What we need:** Pam Carr who faithfully packages our family grocery bags has a list of needed items that we can't always get from the Food Bank.

- Canned goods especially with pop top lids: baked beans, beans, canned chicken, tuna fish, deviled ham, hash, fruits, and vegetables, spaghetti sauce
- Dry goods: crackers, individual packets of rice and mashed potatoes, mac and cheese, pasta meals
- And of course, cash donations

**How to donate to Loaves & Fishes?**

- There will be a bin at Centre Church.
- People can deliver to Loaves & Fishes at the church.
- People have ordered from Amazon and had food delivered to the church.
- Donations of checks can be made out to *Loaves & Fishes* with *Project Feed* in the memo.

**With YOUR help we can make a difference in our communities – with dignity, courtesy, and respect for those less fortunate than ourselves.**

**THANK YOU! Ruth Tilghman: 802.258.1765 / rtilgh09@aol.com**

## MEMBER CARE

These days of Advent leading up to Christmas seemed like a special season to print this poem by Harold Cornelius Sandall:

*Love that is hoarded, molds at last  
Until we know some day  
The only thing we ever have  
Is what we give away  
And kindness that is never used  
But hidden all alone  
Will slowly harden till it is  
As hard as any stone.  
It is the things we always hold  
That we will lose some day;  
The only things we ever keep  
Are what we give away.*

The true spirit of Christmas is giving.







To give one or more poinsettias for Christmas, please fill out the form below for each plant ordered and return to the church office with your check made payable to:

**Centre Church**  
 193 Main Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301

by **Sunday, December 5**. The plants will decorate the sanctuary from December 13 to the 24. You are invited to take your plants home after the Christmas Eve Service.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one:  
 IN HONOR / MEMORY / CELEBRATION OF /  
 THANKSGIVING FOR

\$12.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Donation toward other decorations \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one:  
 IN HONOR / MEMORY / CELEBRATION OF /  
 THANKSGIVING FOR

\$12.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Donation toward other decorations \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one:  
 IN HONOR / MEMORY / CELEBRATION OF /  
 THANKSGIVING FOR

\$12.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Donation toward other decorations \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_

# PEOPLE

## BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Damon Kindopp
- 7 Deborah Cope
- 11 Olivia Brisson
- 12 Holly MacLean
- 13 Alice Stockwell  
Isabelle Mann
- 15 Sarah Gray
- 19 Pat Austin
- 22 Lee Moore
- 24 Mary Ellen Bixby  
Sen Pu
- 25 Jesus of Nazareth
- 31 Roger Brown



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 housebound as of November 26.

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

**Wanda Godfrey**—Vernon Hall  
 13 Greenway Dr., Vernon, VT 05354  
 802.254.2444

**Bob Keller**  
 153 Spruce St., Brattleboro, VT 05301  
 802.257.4588

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

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

**Jane Reed**—Pine Heights  
 187 Oak Grove Ave., Brattleboro, VT 05301  
 802.257.0307

**The Rev. Allen Vander Meulen**  
 1 Harvest Circle #301, Lincoln, MA 01773  
 802.380.0735

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



# DECEMBER 2021

\*\*ZOOM events  
\*Holy Communion

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff Meeting 12 <sup>00</sup> World AIDS Day 7 <sup>00</sup> Conversation on Climate	2 10 <sup>00</sup> UCC Devotional** 4 <sup>00</sup> Sermon discussion** 4 <sup>30</sup> Women's Spirit 5 <sup>30</sup> Choir Rehearsal 6 <sup>00</sup> LRPT meeting 7 <sup>00</sup> Worship Team	3 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes 12 <sup>00</sup> L&F Steering Committee	4
5 9 <sup>00</sup> Adult Book Study 10 <sup>00</sup> Worship* 12 <sup>00</sup> Deacons' meeting 7 <sup>00</sup> Channukah service on the common	6	7 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	8 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff Meeting 6 <sup>00</sup> Mission & Service	9 10 <sup>00</sup> UCC Devotional** 4 <sup>00</sup> Sermon discussion** 4 <sup>30</sup> Women's Spirit 5 <sup>30</sup> Choir rehearsal 7 <sup>00</sup> Worship Team	10 <b>CB DEADLINE</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	11
12 9 <sup>00</sup> Adult Book Study 10 <sup>00</sup> Worship / FIA	13	14 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	15 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff Meeting 6 <sup>00</sup> Church Council 6 <sup>30</sup> NAACP	16 10 <sup>00</sup> UCC Devotional** 3 <sup>00</sup> BCC Board 4 <sup>00</sup> Sermon discussion** 4 <sup>30</sup> Women's Spirit 5 <sup>30</sup> Choir rehearsal 7 <sup>00</sup> Worship Team	17 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	18
19 9 <sup>00</sup> Adult Book Study 10 <sup>00</sup> Worship / FIA 5 <sup>00</sup> SOS Meal	20 4 <sup>00</sup> Compassionate Brattleboro	21 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	22 <b>MAIL CB</b> 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff Meeting	23 10 <sup>00</sup> UCC Devotional** 4 <sup>00</sup> Sermon discussion** 4 <sup>30</sup> Women's Spirit 5 <sup>30</sup> Choir rehearsal 7 <sup>00</sup> Worship Team	24 <b>Christmas Eve</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes 7 <sup>00</sup> Worship	25 <b>Christmas Day</b>
26 9 <sup>00</sup> Adult Book Study 10 <sup>00</sup> Worship—ZOOM	27 <b>Office Closed</b>	28 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	29 11 <sup>00</sup> Staff Meeting	30 10 <sup>00</sup> UCC Devotional** 4 <sup>00</sup> Sermon discussion** 4 <sup>30</sup> Women's Spirit 5 <sup>30</sup> Choir rehearsal 7 <sup>00</sup> Worship Team	31 <b>New Years Eve</b> 11 <sup>30</sup> Loaves & Fishes	

SCOTT'S SERMONS can be accessed at the church website: [www.centrechurchvermont.org](http://www.centrechurchvermont.org) -or- facebook page: <http://www.centrechurchvermont.org/audio--video.html> -or- [https://www.facebook.com/pg/Centre-Congregational-Church-Brattleboro-VT-632678343519640/notes/?ref=page\\_internal](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).

## NEW FRIENDS OF CENTRE CHURCH

**Maria Rose**

7 Morningside Commons  
Brattleboro, VT 05301  
978.201.1286

**Kristen Crabtree & Jacqueline (Jaye) Shaw**

PO Box 1895  
Wilmington, VT 05363  
[jacq7333@icloud.com](mailto:jacq7333@icloud.com)



## DECEMBER LECTIONARY TEXTS

**Sunday, December 5,** 2nd Sunday of Advent  
Bar 5:1-9 or Mal 3:1-4 ; Luke 1:68-79; Phil 1:3-11;  
**Luke 3:1-6**

**Sunday, December 12,** 3rd Sunday of Advent  
Zeph 3:14-20; Isa 12:2-6, Phil 4:4-7; **Luke 3:7-18**

**Sunday, December 19,** 3rd Sunday of Advent  
Mic 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55 or Ps 80:1-7; Heb 10:5-10;  
**Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)**

**Friday, December 24, Christmas Eve**  
Isa 62:6-12; Ps 97; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20

**Saturday, December 25, Christmas Day**  
Isa 9:2-7; Ps 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

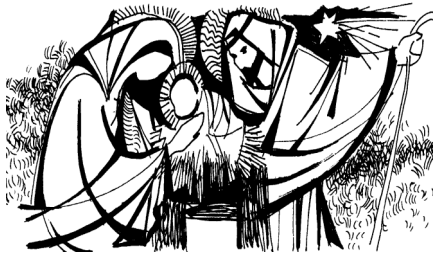
**Sunday, December 26,** 1st Sunday after Christmas  
1 Sam 2:18-20, 26; Ps 148; Col 3:12-17, **Luke 2:41-52**



*Centre Bells* is published monthly by Centre Congregational Church, UCC  
News items, articles, address changes, and requests to be added or removed from the *Centre Bells*  
mailing list should be submitted to the church office: 802.254.4730 / [admin@centrechurchvt.org](mailto:admin@centrechurchvt.org)



**DECEMBER**



**2021**

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**CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

193 Main Street Brattleboro, Vermont 05301  
[centrechurch@centrechurchvt.org](mailto:centrechurch@centrechurchvt.org)

**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

**CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

193 Main Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301-2842

**Office Hours:** M – F / 8:30am–12:30pm

**Church Office:** 802.254.4730 / [admin@centrechurchvt.org](mailto:admin@centrechurchvt.org)

**Website:** [www.centrechurchvt.org](http://www.centrechurchvt.org)

**Facebook:** [Centre Congregational Church-Brattleboro VT](https://www.facebook.com/Centre-Congregational-Church-Brattleboro-VT)

**Instagram:** @centrechurchvt

**Current news/information in the larger UCC Community:**

VT Conference: [www.vtcucc.org](http://www.vtcucc.org) / National: [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org)

**CHURCH STAFF AND LEADERSHIP**

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