

MINISTER'S COLUMN, Scott Couper

'Well done' to Centre Congregational Church. Well done! You have shown the light of Christ throughout this pandemic and 'the proof is in the pudding' (if there is any left over after the Christmas holidays). At the request of the Long-Range Planning Team and on behalf of the Council, I prepared a list in December. It was not a list to 'out' who in 2021 was 'naughty or nice'. Rather, the list brought to light the many 'new faces' seen in the last two years since the onset of the pandemic. Many of you may be surprised to learn the list was **35 names long! And 47 names long** (if you include partners and children)! If you are surprised, it is because you have not necessarily been able to see people behind their masks and because they are participating virtually on-line or one-on-one with the minister.

While it is true that 'new faces' does not mean 'new members', I believe that, in what some may describe as the post-modern era, **'membership' is becoming an obsolete categorization** and thus a very inaccurate barometer of church growth and health. Just as 'country club' golf membership is almost becoming (for most middle-class folk) passé, so is 'church membership'. No longer are they societal demonstrations of 'respectability'. If one pages through our church directory of members *and friends*, it is clear that membership does not necessarily mean 'involvement' and non-membership does not at all mean 'uncommitted'.

What are we at Centre Congregational church about – what is our purpose? We exist to foster **"belonging, believing, and becoming that which God intends"**. Note, nowhere in our purpose does it state that we are about increasing our membership. That's for sure! Now, do not get me wrong. I believe very much in the church as an institution. As an institution, the *local* church (and yes, even with its polity, bureaucracy, and history) is better able to withstand the vicissitudes of time and crises. As an institution, the *wider* church allows us to participate in common liturgy, health care, building insurance, and most importantly mission beyond the local church's reach. So, 'membership', complete with tithes, pledges, and voting privileges is important. Yet, membership is not our purpose nor our barometer.

Rather than membership, we want **participation** from our 'new faces'. And from Centre Church, our new faces want **relationships, connection, and meaning**. Certainly, certainly, certainly, our new faces are not looking for 'membership' nor are they looking for committees or boards on which to serve.

'Relationships, connection, and meaning' from our side and 'participation' from their side are painfully difficult to achieve in this day and age of increasing secularization, let alone all but impossible during a two-year-long pandemic! Yet, Centre Church has attracted a great deal of returned members who live far away, established relationships with folk who have recently moved into the area, and has reached out into the community to welcome those who have long called Brattleboro home. Well done, Centre Church. 2022 looks bright!

For us to continue our growth and to achieve our purpose, we must continue our **The Green at Centre** ministry that visibly reaches-out to those who would otherwise never walk into our sanctuary for worship. We must continue to **invest in technology** so as to improve our ability to worship relevantly and virtually (hybrid). We must continue to fulfill and live-out **mission** through Loaves & Fishes, Brattleboro Centre for Children, and our offering of radical hospitality to Afghan arrivals. And we must continue to follow our coach and consultant Paul Nickerson's advice to **"invite, invite, invite"** people to fellowship opportunities our church continues to offer despite all odds. And most importantly, 'Do everything in **'love'** (I Corinthians 16:14).



CENTRE BELLS
January 2022
The newsletter of
Centre Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ

Council Chair, LYNN HERZOG

Our Council meeting this month was wide-ranging and (I hope) fruitful. Some of the topics we touched on were COVID (of course), Afghan refugees (how we can help them), climate change (what we can do about it), Christian Education (a great job being done by volunteers), Children's Choir (wish we had one), recycling (who will do it), meals for Groundworks (how to sign up), the Boy Scout room (new use of), and (of course) money. You can read more about some of these topics elsewhere in *Centre Bells*.

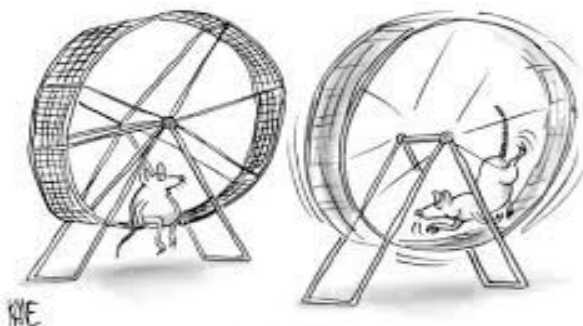
At this season of joy and generosity, let us give thanks to all the angels working in our church. And may we all have good health in 2022, may there be peace in the world, and may the church become all that God intends for us.

From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

Well, here we are in the New Year having made it through another Advent/Christmas season. I especially want to thank the choir folks for being so adaptable for the unexpected ZOOM services in December. Recording the hymns and anthems made for longer rehearsals but everyone pitched in to make it work. That was the first time the whole choir has been recorded during the pandemic! We do realize that the words to our anthems are likely more difficult to understand even though we work on diction. The masks make it challenging to hear ending consonants and various words. Unfortunately, there's really no way we can HAVE a choir without masks, so please bear with us as we do our best with covered faces.

Special thanks go to Lisa Keller and Alison Hale for providing our music on the 26th of December. Also, since we had three sopranos away on Christmas Eve, Lisa joined us in addition to singing the solo part for our anthem on the 26th. Alison also recorded music for the 26th which was greatly appreciated.

Here's hoping for more music making during 2022!



"I had an epiphany."

DEACONS

After our re-launching in September, we enjoyed two and a half months of in-person worship and a partial return to many of our pre-COVID practices and customs. Alas, "The best laid schemes o' mice and men/Gang aft a-gley", as Robert Burns observed. If your Scots dialect is rusty, that just means that no matter how carefully we may plan, stuff happens (this being a church publication, I shall refrain from employing a saltier term). Our Advent schemes went somewhat a-gley when Rev. Couper was diagnosed with a non-symptomatic case of COVID, and, out of concern for the well-being and peace of mind of our community and congregation, we reverted to ZOOM worship for the first two weeks of December. We are thankful there have been no further reports of the virus in our Centre Church community.

No doubt for many of us much anxiety accompanies the dawn of this new year. Will 2022 be another tremulous twelvemonth of dashed hopes, polarization, and setbacks? Will we watch as seconds tick down to midnight, not with raised glasses, kisses, and glee, but with dread and weary resignation?

Or will we resolve to embrace challenge and change, in gratitude, confidence, hope, and faith?

With a cup o' kindness to acquaintances auld and new,

Heidi Mario

LONG-RANGE PLANNING TEAM

Another brief update from your Long-Range Planning Team. Over the last few weeks we've met a couple of times in-person and once with Paul Nickerson on ZOOM. We had scheduled a workshop for last Sunday, December 5th, but sadly, we moved to remote as COVID continues to affect our plans. We hope to reschedule very soon as we're eager to hear from you and to share our ideas so far.

As I've stated several times, our plan is to present a list of *recommendations* to the church and to create an action plan based on ideas we all support. Please look for future correspondence from us as we finalize our list of recommendations with clearly stated action items, timeframes, delegation of duties, and benchmarks. We're really excited about this work and hope you will be too! Questions? Email:

Bob Pu at robertpu2010@gmail.com or

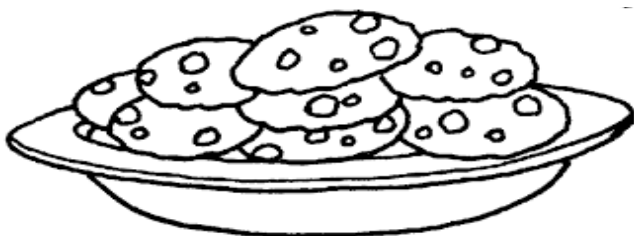
April Harkness at april-harkness@comcast.net.

Hope to see you soon!



find someone who isn't afraid to admit that they miss you. someone who knows that you are not perfect but treats you as if you are. someone who's biggest fear is losing you. one who gives their heart completely. someone who says 'i love you' and means it. last but not least, find someone who wouldn't mind waking up with you in the morning seeing you in wrinkles and your gray hair but still falls for you all over again.

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE



The **Centre Church Cookie Sale** was a great success!!! We did not have many orders BUT we sure made a lot of people very happy. Everyone loved getting a container of Homemade Christmas Cookies.

We delivered cookies to all our shut-in members, families with children, and others like Elizabeth who rakes the leaves at the church. Emilio who cleans our church, the Center for Children Nan Mann, Loaves & Fishes, and a container for Scott & Stephanie and their girls.

Our team of workers were Mary Bristol, Meg Harriman, Karen Rydant, Carrie Smith, Margo Neale, and Carlene & Bill McCarty.

But none of this would be possible without our **GREAT COOKIE BAKERS!!!**

Thank you all so much!!!

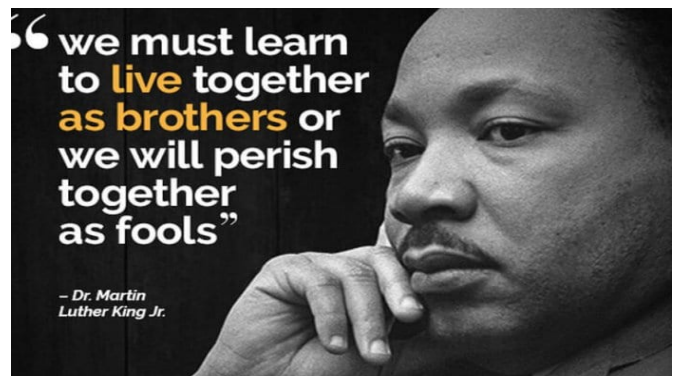
LOAVES & FISHES

Hello! Loaves & Fishes is alive and well. Currently, we are serving over 700 meals a week in two days. According to our new by-laws, we have recently selected our Board of Directors. They are Bonnie Girvan, Margo Neale, Bob Oeser, David Treadwell, Ruth Tilghman, May Hnath, Rennie Washburn (Treasurer), Mary Ellen Bixby (Secretary), and Dennis Newman (Chair).

We have two new volunteers. We can always use more volunteers - including members of Centre Church. Many of our meals go out to people living in housing projects and, of course, to the homeless and to Groundworks.

Thank you for your great support!

Dennis Newman



STM Interfaith Refugee Ministry Updates December 9, 2021

We are now anticipating our first refugee family sometime in early January. Several of us received ECDC required training this past Saturday, December 4, 2021. A Mock Preparedness Event will probably occur sometime in and around seasonal holiday activities with the intent to complete it by the end of this calendar year. As a result of training with ECDC the many volunteer areas and activities in which you might wish to participate are now being publicized. Participating as a volunteer could mean just a single, one-time participation, or it could be an occasional participation over time, or it could mean you are a permanent volunteer in one of the six refugee service groups described below.

Refugee Co-Sponsorship Service Groups Volunteer Opportunities

Homing and Welcome Service Group: assists in gathering household and furniture items, setting up the home, providing ready-to-eat food upon arrival as well as appropriate clothing. They also welcome the family at the airport and support them in understanding how to stay safe and handle issues related to their home. Temporary housing will be at SIT; however, securing permanent housing will eventually be needed.

Transportation Service Group: coordinates transportation needs and teaches the family how to access and navigate public transportation as well as apply for a driving license. A critical piece is enabling the family to get to and home from their job.

Health Service Group: assists the family in finding primary health providers, tracking and attending follow-up medical and dental appointments as well as teaches them how to stay healthy and safe in the North American context (i.e. nutrition, hygiene, vaccinations, identity protection, etc.).

Education Service Group: assists parents/guardians in enrolling children in school and following up on participation as well as supports adults to access English language and job training classes.

Cultural Adjustment Service Group: assists the family in learning how to accomplish daily tasks and take full advantage of services in the community (i.e. finding the grocery store, library, parks, etc.) as well as teaches elements of American culture and life that they might need help with – i.e. using appliances, assessing technology, etc.

Jobs and Finance: supports employable individuals to understand how to apply for jobs, network for employment, maintain a job once employed, set up a bank account, pay required bills, establish good credit, and plan for future goals. The primary refugee program goal of self-sufficiency is chiefly attained through employment. Refugees will arrive generally with authorization to work and will be encouraged to see employment right away.

The descriptions of each service group, because of lack of space, may seem brief. More details are available in the “ACDC Co-Sponsorship Manual for Refugee Resettlement”. This Manual is available on line from members of our ad hoc committee on resettlement. That committee consists of Priscilla Svec, Margo Neale, Marion and Peter Abell, Lynn Herzog, and Scott Couper. Hard copies of the Manual are in our hands and can be reproduced as needed. If you wish to volunteer to help our refugee arrivals please contact any members of the ad hoc committee.

Priscilla Svec - svecpriscilla4@gmail.com

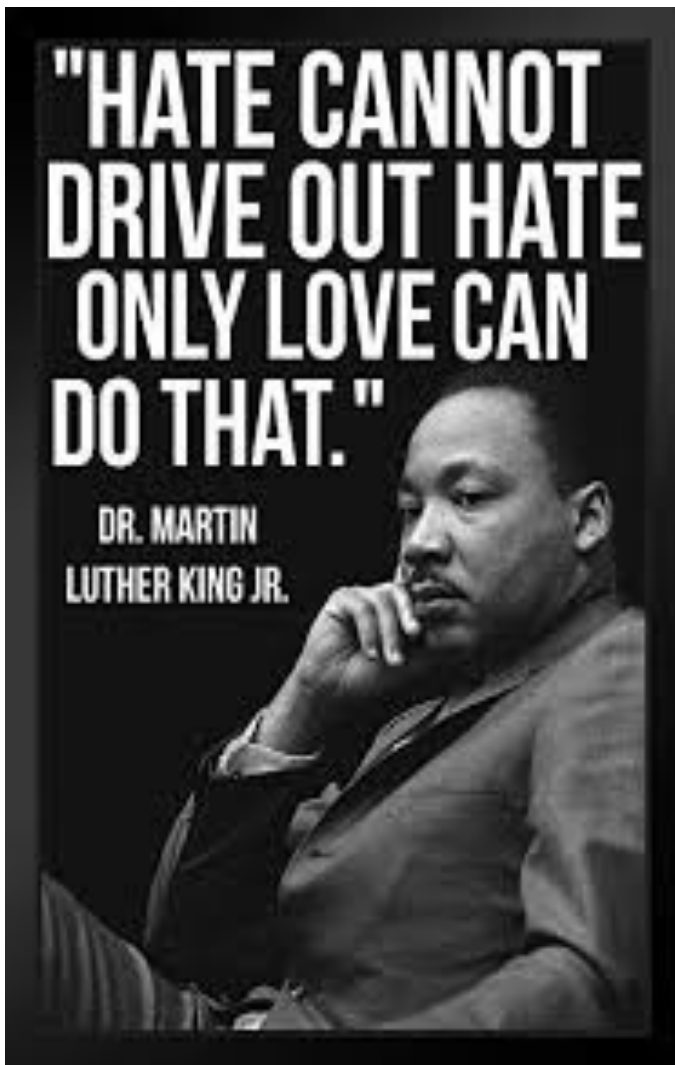
Margo Neale - margoblue@myfairpoint.net

Marion & Peter Abell – water_music@comcast.net

Lynn Herzog – glherzog@sover.net

Scott Couper – centrepastor@centrechurchvt.org





MEMBER CARE

After Christmas

In the words of the poet Howard Thurman:

*When the song of angels is stilled,
When the star of the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins.*

Maybe we could write, "When the Christmas tree is taken down, the wrapping paper gone to recycling, the thank-yous sent (a written note is still appreciated), school vacation is over, then we can put in practice the inspiration we gained from the celebration of Jesus Immanuel.

Member Care continues its practice of having one of our members be the contact person of the month. Judi Miller is the contact person for January. Of course, contact our pastor, Scott Couper, but we are here as a small group of members who can provide help.

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 housebound as of December 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

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

NEW CONTACT INFORMATION

Holly MacLean: 802.579.5657
hmaclean606@gmail.com

A J McDonald: 802.999.6219

B I R T H D A Y S

- 11 Marion Daley
- 12 Scott Couper
- 13 Kathryn Kindopp
Gina Hammett
Adelaide Minott
- 14 Katherine Weeks
- 15 Christina Goodwin
- 16 Levi Healey
- 17 William McCarty
- 18 Dorothy Vander Meulen
Roger Daly
- 25 Ron Svec
- 26 Rennie Washburn
- 30 Holly Kennedy



Obituary for the Reverend Dr. Allen Vander Meulen, Jr.: 1932 - 2021

Allen Vander Meulen, Jr., 89, died peacefully at The Commons in Lincoln, MA on November 22, 2021. Born in Chicago, Illinois on June 23, 1932, he was the eldest child of Allen (Sr.) and Alice (Connor) Vander Meulen of Chicago.

The grandchild of Irish and Dutch immigrants, Allen grew up on the south side of Chicago. He graduated from Fenger High School in 1950. His youth was a happy time, despite the challenges his family faced while he and his siblings were born and grew up during the Great Depression and World War II. He graduated from Northwestern University with a BS in Economics (1954) and from Yale Divinity School (1958).

Allen was Minister at Third Congregational Church in Waterbury, CT 1958-63, where he met the love of his life, Dorothy Overbaugh, and married on August 29, 1959. Their children Allen III and David were born there; daughter Ruth was born in Vermont.

Allen's gifts as a teacher, mentor, and administrator, were widely appreciated. He had a strong drive to advocate on behalf of those who had no voice; and to seek justice and opportunity for those who had none. Soon after moving to Vermont he joined other area ministers to travel to Washington, DC and stand in solidarity with hundreds of thousands of others from all over the nation to hear Martin Luther King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

Allen became Minister at Centre Congregational Church in Brattleboro, VT in 1963. He left in 1968, serving as an interim minister throughout Massachusetts and Vermont while attending school, graduating from Brown University with a PhD in Economics in 1974.

In 1973 he became an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. He also directed the school's extension program in Casper. In 1978, Allen joined North Central College in Naperville, IL as a Professor of Economics. He oversaw the school's new 'Weekend College' and helped establish what is now their Computer Science Department. He also helped establish the school's MBA program. In later years, he taught Business Ethics as well.

Retiring in 1997, Allen and Dorothy returned to Brattleboro. There he served as Chair of Centre Church's Endowment Committee, a Trustee for the town library, and participated in several other organizations. He enjoyed family, travel, biking, long walks, and conversing about philosophy, ethics, or politics. Allen and Dorothy moved to Lincoln, MA in late 2019.

Allen was predeceased by his parents and his sister Eva. He is survived by his wife Dorothy; son Allen III and wife Stephanie of Lincoln, MA; son David and wife Julie of Aurora, IL; daughter Ruth and husband Tim of Rockford, IL; brother Ross and wife Kay of Galesburg, IL; brother-in-law Robert Overbaugh and wife Nancy of Westford, MA; and numerous cousins, nieces, and nephews. Allen's grandchildren are Elizabeth Anne Vander Meulen, Aaron Taylor, Joshua Taylor, and Allen Vander Meulen IV.

There was a private memorial service at the Dee Funeral Home of Concord, MA. A celebration of his life will be held at Centre Congregational Church in the Spring of 2022.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in his memory to Centre Congregational Church (centrechurchvermont.org), Brown University (brown.edu), Yale Divinity School (divinity.yale.edu), or the Alzheimer's Association (alz.org).

To share a remembrance or to offer a condolence in his on-line guestbook, please visit www.DeeFuneralHome.com

JANUARY 2022

**ZOOM events
*Holy Communion

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 New Year's Day
2 9 ⁰⁰ Adult Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship* 12 ⁰⁰ Deacons' meeting	3 Office Closed	4 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	5 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund	6 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	7 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes 1 ³⁰ VIA Homelessness	8
9 9 ⁰⁰ Adult Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA	10	11 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	12 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 6 ⁰⁰ Mission & Service	13 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 3 ³⁰ BCC Board 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	14 CB DEADLINE 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	15
16 9 ⁰⁰ Adult Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA 5 ⁰⁰ SOS Meal	17 MLK Birthday Office Closed	18 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	19 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund 6 ⁰⁰ Church Council 6 ³⁰ NAACP	20 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	21 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	22
23 9 ⁰⁰ Adult Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA	24	25 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	26 MAIL CB 11 ⁰⁰ Staff Meeting 12 ⁰⁰ Help Fund	27 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional** 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion** 4 ³⁰ Women's Spirit 5 ³⁰ Choir rehearsal 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	28 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	29
30 9 ⁰⁰ Adult Book Study 10 ⁰⁰ Worship / FIA	31					

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).



JANUARY LECTIONARY TEXTS
Sunday, January 2 , 2nd Sunday after Christmas Jer 31:7-14 or Sirach 24:1-12; Ps 147:12-20 or Wisd of Sol 10:15-21; Eph 1:3-14; Jn 1:(1-9), 10-18
Sunday, January 9 , 1st Sunday after Epiphany Isa 43:1-7; Ps 29; Acts 8:14-17; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22
Sunday, January 16 , 2nd Sunday after Epiphany Isa 62:1-5; Ps 36:5-10; 1 Cor 12:1-11; Jn 2:1-11
Sunday, January 23 , 3rd Sunday after Epiphany Neh 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Ps 19; 1 Cor 12:12-31a, Luke 4:14-21
Sunday, January 30 , 4th Sunday after Epiphany Jer 1:4-10; Ps 71:1-6; 1 Cor 13:1-13, Luke 4:21-30

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JANUARY



2022

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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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 / National: www.ucc.org

CHURCH STAFF AND LEADERSHIP

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centrepastor@centrechurchvt.org

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Treasurer: Anne Fecto

Clerk: Jenifer Ambler