



# The Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ



**Purpose (from the Gospel of Matthew):**

*To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves*

**Vision:**

*United in Christ's love, a just world for all*

**Mission:**

*United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all*

Weekly E-News Winter "

March 18 , 2021

## *Message from the Conference*



### **Please be kind to yourself!**

In our Conference clergy conversation on Tuesday, a number of pastors shared about how tired they feel as we have now passed the one year anniversary of Covid's direct impact on our lives in so many different ways. During this past year, our clergy and lay leaders have all had to do so much in our churches to adapt to Covid's impact. Now with talk of people who have been vaccinated wanted to return to in person worship, many pastors and lay leaders and their churches have to think about how best to try to do hybrid worship, so as to continue to include those who have been sharing online or through the mail. And on top of everything else during this pandemic, we have not been able to take time off for vacations, and even if we have, there is nowhere really to go!

So with Lynn as your Conference ministry team, I want to say to you officially: We understand, and we get it. We understand that you will not be able to be the best pastor or lay leader in your church right now-we are more concerned about having you there over the long run with your congregation. So whatever you need to do to rest or refuel right now, please do so. If you are a pastor and need some time off after Easter, or a longer break this summer, please begin planning now how you can do that now. If you are a lay leader and are feeling burned out, please make a plan to take some time off in the next several months. We can also offer spiritual counseling options for those in need of them.

In a funny sort of way, and with absolutely no research to back it up, I believe that there are going to be people who will be looking for us when the worst of this pandemic is over. They will be meeting us in the community, showing up at our churches, or connecting with us online, because they will be spiritually seeking. May we be ready when they are, by being kind to ourselves right now!

Faithfully yours,  
Paul

## **ARE YOU A PRESENTER AT ANNUAL MEETING?**

All Presentations (this includes but is not limited to: PowerPoints, Documents, PDF's, anything Prerecorded, Workbooks for Participants, etc.) are due no later than

**Friday, March 26th at 6 pm.**

If you need any help with anything having to do with your presentation, please reach out to Elise ([vermontconference@gmail.com](mailto:vermontconference@gmail.com)) and she will do everything she can to make sure your presentation is exactly as you picture it to be!



### **The 226th Vermont Conference Annual Meeting will take place April 23 - 24 on Zoom!**

We are excited to welcome our keynote speaker and preacher the **Rev. Traci Blackmon**, Associate General Minister of Justice & Local Church Ministries for The United Church of Christ and Senior Pastor of Christ The King United Church of Christ in Florissant, MO.

Also, on Friday, April 23, the Vermont Conference presents a special panel discussion:  
***"What is the Minority Experience in Vermont?"***

For more information on both of these exciting Conference Events, [click here!](#)  
You can also [Register Here!](#)

Yes, there will be . . . . .

### **Peacemakers Gathering at Annual Meeting!**

Friday, April 23 beginning at 3:30 p.m.

Meeting via Zoom will make attendance possible for EVERYONE who has a story to tell! What kind of story? We want you to share about a project, program, initiative or action your church is involved in that increases peace with justice in our world. Have you recently been working on or learning about: climate change, global ministry, food insecurity, advocating for marginalized groups, housing issues, racial justice, gun violence or the violence of war, human trafficking, migrant or refugee ministries, or just bringing people together to promote peace and love in your community? These are examples – the sky's the limit! Your brief presentation will inspire others to consider how they and their churches might get involved in some form of peacemaking.

We will also pay tribute to the late Rev. John Nutting, who originated Peacemakers Breakfast decades ago. This will be the first Peacemakers event since his death on June 10, 2020.

Please email [Theresa Lever](#) with your idea for a presentation!!!

Thank you!

### **Peacemakers Pulpit- March 2021**

submitted by Rev. Sally May, Pastor, Malletts Bay Congregational Church UCC

"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives.  
Don't be troubled or afraid." ~ John 14:27

Peace isn't always easy. This scripture reflects this. The peace of Jesus Christ is very different from the idea of simply getting along. This passage may help some of us recognize why we don't feel too peaceful these days. Because there is not a lot of overt peace in the midst of the pandemic and our social and political divisiveness.

There are ways, though, to feel that peace, even in a moment, to re-energize your spirit. By faith and with hope, we are able to find that feeling of peace so as to breathe.

In this time of great grief, anxiety, fear, anger and conflict, how do we find peace? We must first remember that in honoring the value in taking care of others, one must also take care of self. Many of us have felt transformed with a sense of peace in the collective work found by participating in seeking justice by demonstration. Others find great peace by helping feed the hungry.

How do we, people of faith, promote peace? The first step is to offer space and place to acknowledge the reality of our personal and communal grief, anxieties, fears. In doing so, we invite peace to replace the stress and turmoil within and without.

Our faith offers so much in our ability to overcome fear with love and with peace. May our congregations value the great privilege we all have to claim ourselves as family with a God of Grace and the Prince of Peace ever present and at the center of our faith communities and in our lives as we seek to share such Grace and Peace in God's world.

(excerpts from Ecumenical Advent series, week 2, edited and revised;  
<https://lcatv.org/ecumenical-advent-series-0002>)

## NICKERSON COACHING

Congregations Moving Forward



Rev. Paul Nickerson

[Nickersonp@comcast.net](mailto:Nickersonp@comcast.net)

[Nickersoncoaching.com](http://Nickersoncoaching.com)

8 Iverson Road, Beverly, MA.  
01915

508-930-9327

## **VITALITY EVENT!!!**

As churches re-open, there is a great opportunity to do church differently and to engage many people.

***Sat, May 22nd, from 10am to 3pm!!!***

Come and learn:

- How to do hybrid worship, both in-person and online. This is possible for even the smallest of churches.
- How to identify the “next group” your church is called to reach
- How to have a month of celebrations as you re-open for public worship
- How to adjust staff and structure for the “new normal” of post-Covid
- Each church will develop an Action Plan

***This workshop will be followed by 6 months of coaching!!***

Read more about this [HERE!](#)

[REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT HERE!](#)

## Hybrid Worship Webinars!!!

Some time after Easter, mid to late April, the Indiana Kentucky Conference will offer a two part webinar series on hybrid worship. The first webinar will be on best practices for engaging multiple audiences through hybrid worship and some ways to structure that for local churches.

The second webinar will focus on equipment needed for this kind of venture, plus a focus on smaller churches, larger churches, financial budgets to meet the needs for equipment depending on your church size, etc.

**STAY TUNED!!!**

**More Details to be released next week!!**



### Annual Candle Lighting Ritual - COVID-19 pandemic

Molly G. Hicks created a Candle Lighting Ritual to mark one year since the beginning of the pandemic. It is designed to be used annually, if desired. Please feel free to use it and share it with whomever might benefit. It was inspired by the Four Candles ritual, with which many of you may be familiar.

"We light this first candle to represent our past. We could not have conceived of how profoundly our lives would be affected by this virus. Our grief is complex, and we mourn for the ways in which life has changed."

You can read the entire ritual [here!](#)

## **UCCMA Conference 2021 - Registration is now open!**

Join the UCCMA online for workshops, worship services, a wonderful concert, vendors and networking. We will be virtually hosted by the First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC in the historic town of Glastonbury, Connecticut. From Thursday evening through the Saturday 4 pm closing worship service, we provide a plethora of activities that will enhance your music skills and give you resources and ideas for new ways of expressing God's Spirit in these pandemic times. We also provide glimpses of the historic scenery around the church in Glastonbury, which you would have enjoyed if you had come in person as originally planned. Join us instead online for a mental reset and spiritual refreshment with a taste of Connecticut.



[Find out more and register HERE!](#)

Lent is the sacred season in the church that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Easter Sunday- [Read more here!](#)

We invite you to reflect during the next six weeks/40 days of Lent on where you find hope. As you reflect, please share an original poem, perhaps a short piece of writing, a photo you have taken, or piece of art, that we can post on Facebook and our E-Kit with others. Please send anything that moves you to [vermontconference@gmail.com](mailto:vermontconference@gmail.com)

Week 1: Where do you find hope in your life?

Week 2: Where do you find hope in your work or vocation?

Week 3: Where do you find hope in your church?

Week 4: Where do you find hope in your local community?

## **Week 5: Where do you find hope in giving and serving?**

Week 6: Where do you find hope in the world?

## **EVENTS AROUND THE CONFERENCE**

(Please let us know what your Congregation is up to by sending an email to

[VermontConference@gmail.com](mailto:VermontConference@gmail.com) .

You may just see yourself or someone you love in the eKit or our Facebook page!)

### **A Message from Norwich Congregational Church's Climate Action Group!**

Our group was founded in 2019 on the premise that the Church is uniquely positioned to both lead the transformation of our society necessitated by global warming as well as to provide comfort and relief to our congregations and broader communities as they are increasingly affected by the results of climate crisis. We are interested in joining forces and sharing ideas with groups at other churches as we work advance this critical mission.



To read more, [CLICK HERE!](#)

To contact Pam directly, [CLICK HERE!](#)

## **DISABLING LENT** **AN ANTI-ABLEIST LENTEN DEVOTIONAL**

### **Disabling Lent – An Anti-Ableists Devotion for Lent**

Disabling Lent is an amazing collection of reflections on the scriptures for each Sunday of Lent as well as every day of Holy Week.

You can find the PDF [here!](#)

You can find the full audio collection [here!](#)

# COVID-19 NEWS

In light of: the growing number of Covid-19 infections in Vermont, increased hospitalizations, the onset of flu season, the potential spreading of the disease during holiday gatherings and the advice of our Governor and experts in infectious disease, we strongly urge that **worship not be held in person until criteria for safe in person gathers have been meet.**

[For more info click here](#)



## Resources for resilience support clergy through COVID-19

It's been almost a year since COVID-19 irrevocably changed United Church of Christ churches.

Members have become ill. Many never recovered. Countless buildings remain closed—some reopening, only to shut down again.

Congregations worship and gather virtually. Clergy have to find ways to cope and carry on. As Americans line up for vaccinations, health experts warn against darker days ahead.

Eleven months of uncertainty. The pandemic is taking an emotional toll on mental health and ministers are not immune.

Continue reading [here](#).

The Vermont Department of Health has provided new guidance specifically for Communities of Faith including holidays, services, and events. This includes (but is not limited to) precautions and actions for organizational leaders. It can be found [here](#).



## **Need Extra Support During the Pandemic?**

COVID Support VT is a statewide program offering free and confidential emotional support and connections to resources for anyone needing help. They offer a wide range of supports on their [website](#).

# SAVE THE DATE!



## Online Boundaries Training, May 19 & 20

LeaderWise's online boundaries training workshop is lively and interactive, full of reflection and conversation. Attendees have given us feedback that our boundaries training was a great experience, AND caused them to re-evaluate some of their own practices.

This live online boundaries training is 5 total hours split over 2 consecutive days (1:30 pm to 4:00 pm Central each day). Following the first session, participants are asked to engage in a bit of reflection work in preparation for the second session. This online boundaries training will be conducted via secure Zoom video conferencing.

[Click here to register \(\\$75\) for the May 19 & 20 Boundaries Training with LeaderWise.](#) LeaderWise can also bring a Boundaries Training session to your judicatory tailored to your specific schedule and needs. Please [contact Mary Kay](#) for more information.

## Spring Boundary Training Opportunities

### The Foundations of Understanding Boundaries

*(This is the basic/initial boundary training and should be taken before engaging in other boundary training opportunities.)*

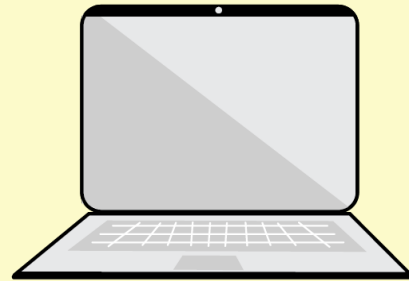
Saturday, May 1st, 9 am to 1 pm

Via Zoom

Facilitated by the Reverend Gordon Rankin



Registration Fee: \$25

To register for either of these Boundary Training opportunities, please send an email to: [events@nhcucc.org](mailto:events@nhcucc.org). Instructions for making the registration payment will be provided.



## The 50th Annual NEAUCE Conference!

The 50th Annual New England Association of United Church Educators Conference is Virtual this year! The Keynote speaker will be Rev. Dr. Gay Byron addressing "Racism in the Bible". You can find more information [here!](#)

New England Association of United Church Educators registration February 2021 auce-ucc.org	<b>SAVE THE DATE</b>
	Friday April 30 6:30-9:00 pm & Saturday May 1 8:30am-1:30pm
NEAUCE 2021 Tear down, Transform, Transcend, A Call To Action	keynote Rev. Dr. Gay L. Byron
	worship & plenary Rev. Dr. Jason Brian Santos
	music Dan Brownell
	workshop Rev. Suzi Townsley
<i>Virtual 50th Celebration!</i> Jeremiah 18:1-4 The Potter and the Clay	 AUCE members \$50 non-AUCE members \$55 Scholarship fee \$25



## GENERAL SYNOD 2021

Since 1957, when the first “uniting” General Synod gathered in 1957 in Cleveland, Ohio, to the meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1919, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ has faithfully convened a meeting every two years in physical locations throughout the United States.

2021 will be different. We are moving through a pandemic that has taken many lives. This pandemic has disrupted our routines and many of our well-established practices as we adapt to the new demands for safety and social distancing. The meeting of the General Synod is no different, and the 2021 gathering of the General Synod will take place entirely online.

[You can find all the information you need here!!!](#)

## RESOURCES FOR ONLINE MINISTRY!

Do you need help with getting your church services online?  
Find resources and help here:

[Click here for WorshipWell information and resources](#)

[Worship Resource Links for How to Live Stream- from the Southern New England Conference UCC](#)

[Free-Use, No-Licensing Music and Worship Materials here](#)

[Zoom Worship Laboratory Video Tutorial](#)

[How to prevent Zoom Bombing](#)

If you have additional resources to share please email the conference office at [VermontConference@gmail.com](mailto:VermontConference@gmail.com) !

DEADLINE for E-Kit News must be received by **Tuesday of each week.**  
Please send any and all information to Elise at [vermontconference@gmail.com](mailto:vermontconference@gmail.com).

Thank You for Your Support!

Our Churches Wider Mission Basic Support, Association Dues, and Friends of the Vermont Conference make this communication possible.

[Donate](#)



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Connect with us



visit our website at <http://www.vtcucc.org/>

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