



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 Palm Sunday Edition

March 25 , 2021

Message from the Conference

Dear Beloved Community in the Vermont Conference,

I want to think with you about two different kinds of silence. The first type is silence as a spiritual practice. I remember the first time I went on retreat and discovered only after I arrived that it was a silent retreat. I still remember the panic I felt that first night.

However, the longer I was silent, the deeper I was immersed in communion with the Divine. My prayer conversations were different and I learned that praying beyond words, praying with presence and attentiveness is a whole new "language." I also know that the journey to my real self beyond all the roles and self-deceptions can be reached best in attentive silence. I have learned to cherish times of silence - in worship, on retreat, in my own time of prayer and meditation. This is how I intend to gratefully walk through Holy Week.



There is another kind of silence that is not sacred and does not bring us closer to God. I am speaking of silence in the face of injustice, racism, misogyny, homophobia. There have been 103 mass shootings in our country in 2021. In less than three months. The most recent mere days ago in Colorado. While some seem randomly targeted, many have their roots in the fear and hatred of difference. The gunman in Georgia targeted primarily Asian women. There has been silence except the voices of AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islanders) sounding the alarm and crying out for justice, protection and change. Their cries too often fall into white silence. So, my other Holy Week practice will be to raise my voice to bring awareness of the injustices and violence that is perpetrated on persons of color. The truth is that violence against not only Chinese but all Asian persons who are mistakenly blamed for the pandemic has grown at an alarming rate. We must not be silent when silence is easily seen as complicit.

There is a sample letter here in EKIT shared by Lise Sparrow, for those who would like to lobby both state and federal legislators for true and lasting protection and change. The other issue I feel I must address is the continuing lax laws and attitudes about sensible gun control and limiting access to high powered, multi shot weapons. On these issues I will raise my voice and not be silent.

Blessings to you this Holy Week. Might God be inviting you to the gift of deep and

loving silence? Listen attentively also for those places where you may be asked to speak up and add your voice and actions to cries for justice.

In hope and peace,
Lynn

[Sample Letter written by the VT APIDA and shared by Lise Sparrow](#)

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) and she will do everything she can to make sure your presentation is exactly as you picture it to be!

ONLY ONE MONTH UNTIL ANNUAL MEETING!!!



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!](#)*

SO THEY TOOK
BRANCHES OF PALM
TREES AND WENT
OUT TO MEET HIM,
CRYING OUT,
"HOSANNA! BLESSED
IS HE WHO COMES IN
THE NAME OF THE
LORD, EVEN THE
KING OF ISRAEL!"

JOHN 12:13

Hybrid Worship Meeting with the Vermont Conference

Are you wondering about how to do hybrid worship in the future? To connect both with people for in person worship and online? Join Paul Sangree and a group of Vermont Conference pastors to talk about these issues on Thursday, April 15th at 9:30 AM.

Let Paul know at sangreepucc@gmail.com if you would like to participate, and he will send you the Zoom link.

Thanks!

Vermont Interfaith Action
Transforming People and Communities



**Save the Date:
Action
on Affordable
Housing/Homelessness**

Vermont Interfaith Action Needs Our Help!

Join us for a virtual Action on **Thurs, Apr 15 from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm.**

Our Organizing Committee seeks to build on the rapid housing of our precariously housed neighbors during the pandemic to create long-term solutions to homelessness in our state. We'll present our research, hear

personal stories, and request commitments from the VT House and Senate Appropriations Committees to make this goal a reality.

REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT HERE!

Peacemakers Pulpit - Holy Week Special Edition Resurrection: Restoration

Our Lord's passage from crucifixion to resurrection plays out once a year in Holy Week on the west end of Main Street, Hyde Park, at Second Congregational UCC. On the east end, it happens every week of the year at Lamoille Restorative Center (LRC).



A young man, full of his abusive father's rage, picks a fight over a parking spot at his condominium village. Charged with disturbing the peace, he is referred by the court to a reparative circle at LRC. As a volunteer, I sit with other volunteers and a staff facilitator to work with this man to bring the harm to light, ask how amends can be made, and, yes, address the anger management issues that contributed to the offense.

An older woman who has gradually lost control of her drinking drives intoxicated, crashes her car into another car at a busy intersection. Fortunately, no one is killed. At LRC, with the patient help of the reparative circle, she names the harm, owns her responsibility, and works on repairing what damage she can. Resurrection, in this case, equals addiction recovery.

Countless cases of people amending their lives make up the hidden legacy of restorative programs in every county in Vermont, and, now, increasingly, in most states, and on every continent. Like leaven in the loaf of a punitive criminal justice system, restorative process brings a redemptive orientation not only to correcting behavior, but also, more widely, repairing lives which have been damaged, in many cases, by crucifying trauma.

In Easter season, may we focus year-round on resurrection as restoration – in families, schools, communities, and between nations.

Rev Dr Michael Caldwell, North Wolcott, Vermont

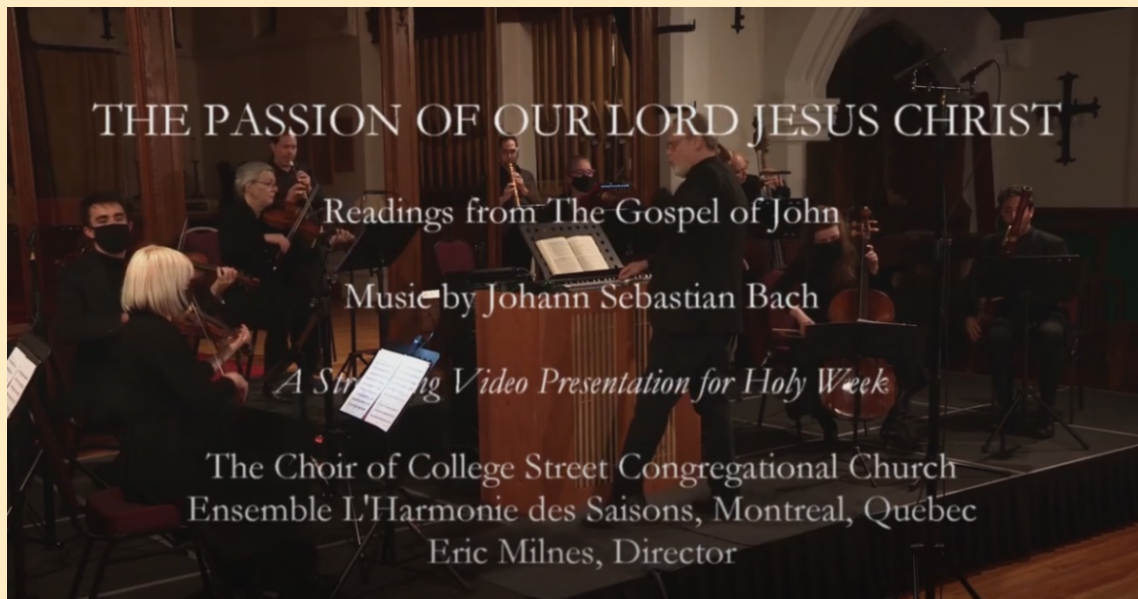
Hybrid Worship Webinars!!!

The Indiana Kentucky Conference is offering 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.

2 part series webinar event
April 21st and 29th 6pm Eastern
So You Want to Build a Hybrid Worship Experience?

Session 1: Time and Talent (21st)



The Passion of Jesus Christ According to the Gospel of John 8 PM Friday April 2nd

Readings from the Gospel of John, music of Johann Sebastian Bach presented by the Choir of College Street Congregational Church and Ensemble L'Harmonie Des Saisons with reflection by Pastor Kenneth White.

This Good Friday service is open to all.
The link to the streaming video [will be listed 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

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 .

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

**NICKERSON
COACHING**
Congregations Moving Forward



Rev. Paul Nickerson

Nickersonp@comcast.net

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!

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!

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!](#)



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!](#)

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 met.**

[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.)

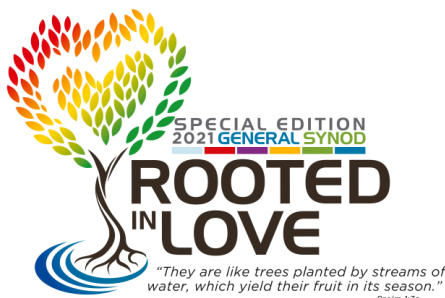
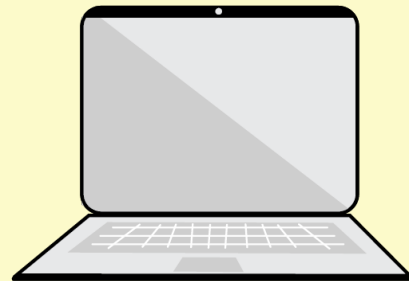
Saturday, May 1st, 9 am to 1 pm

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. Instructions for making the registration payment will be provided.



GENERAL SYNOD 2021

Since 1957, when the first "uniting" General Synod gathered in 1957 in Cleveland, Ohio, to the meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 2019, 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 !

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.

Thank You for Your Support!

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

Donate

Connect with us



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