



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 Spring Edition

April 15, 2021

Message from the Conference

PROPOSAL FOR HOPE FUND FOR INNOVATION, IMPACT AND NEW MINISTRY!

At the Annual Meeting next week, we will be talking about a proposal for the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ to consider establishing and raising money for a Hope fund to encourage innovation, societal impact and new ministry in our midst. As we near the end of this pandemic and look to the future of a post-pandemic world, our churches need help to imagine new ways to be the church in this new landscape. We live in the most unchurched state in the country, and we look to connect with those who don't go to church with the Good News of our faith. We have had experience with doing ministry in new ways during this Pandemic, so let us come together to invest in that! Our churches also need assurance that we as a Conference can look boldly into the future and see hope! We seek to have a major Conference initiative to raise the money for the fund.

The purpose of this initiative and the creation of the Fund would be two-fold. The first purpose is to help our churches and leaders in the Conference to see that there is hope for our future together. Throughout this COVID pandemic, we have seen many of our churches do innovative things with new technologies to touch people that they have never met in person. We have seen new ministries form among us to address societal issues, and the impact is being felt in our communities. Through the power of the Spirit in Jesus' name, we will continue to see current ministries innovate into new forms, and new ministries come into being. This Hope Fund would remind us that God is not done with us yet through lives that are transformed and a society that becomes more just.

The second purpose of this Fund is to obtain the financial resources to support innovation, societal impact and new ministry in our midst as a Conference. We would invite churches, individuals and organizations through grants to contribute while relying on God's grace and vision for the future. A gift to the Fund would be a foundational step towards helping our beloved Church thrive in the years to come.

The Board of Directors have approved the creation of this Fund pending a vote at a Conference Meeting, and so we will be introducing the idea of the Fund at next week's Annual Meeting. We will then seek to recruit a Fundraising team made up of gifted leaders from across the Conference, both clergy and lay. We will then invite the Conference as a whole to vote on the Hope Fund at the October Conference gathering, and if that is successful, to then commission the Fundraising team so that they will begin their efforts in earnest in the Fall. When the Fund has been at least partially capitalized in 2022, the Board will create a granting group of four members of the Conference and one staff member to establish how the money will be distributed. The HOPE Fund will not be an endowment fund, but will seek to distribute all the money

given within 10 years. It will continue to accept donations though into the future.

The Board has also approved the use of two small bequests given to the Conference for pilot Hope Fund grants which are being given to New Ministry Team pastors and their churches. This group of seven pastors have met with me for the past year and a half to think and pray about new ways to do ministry in our time. Each of their churches will receive a grant of \$2500 to use to share God's love with people who don't go to church in their community by building relationships that flow out of their mission. They will then share the result of their pilot grants at the 2022 Annual Meeting to spur the creativity of other churches so that they will then apply for Hope Fund grants.

Our mission as a Conference is to love God and our neighbor as ourselves. United in the Spirit and Christ's love, we seek as a Conference to welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all. May this Hope Fund help us live out this mission, to the glory of God!

Paul

ONLY ONE WEEK 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.

For more information on both of these exciting Conference Events, [click here!](#)

You can also [Register Here!](#)

[**Unofficial Schedule is Available for Download Here!!!**](#)

[**Documents Needed for Annual Meeting can be found 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!

GETTING THE COVID-19 VACCINE!!!

The Vermont Forward Plan ties reopening to specific vaccine milestones in the state. All Vermonters are encouraged to get the vaccine when it is their turn. At this time, Education, Health Care, Sports/Organized Sports and Youth Summer Camps will retain individualized guidance and not move to universal guidance.



[You can find more information here!](#)

[You can find an appointment time here!](#)



2021 Eastertide Service

This virtual worship service, "A Simple Service of Testimony and Song in Celebration of the Resurrection" is designed for use on April 11th, 2021. The service is led by members of the Council of Conference Ministers (CCM) and staff members of the national setting of the United Church of Christ (UCC).

[Find the Video Here!](#)

[Find the Service Bulletin Here!](#)

[Find the Read Only Service Here!](#)

In Our Prayers

Please hold Tom and Nancy Steffen in your prayers as they mourn the death of their son.

Tom is a retired pastor of Second Congregational church UCC in Bennington.



as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

So far my life hasn't felt much like a Sabbath. I've had to master the new skills of online teaching, learning to do classes by Zoom and feeling the ground shift in so many ways. But today for the first time, I feel the potential for this kind of Sabbath, or what Terry Tempest Williams calls a "planetary pause" that may enable us to do the kind of reflecting and recalibrating that Arundhati Roy has been talking about. As Terry said in a recent interview: "In the midst of deep suffering, I think there are these grace notes. If we can take this time for what it is, a planetary pause that I think ultimately can restore us to an equilibrium we haven't known." She goes on to reflect on what this "planetary pause" is asking of us: "It's how we choose to live every day of our lives...And if we are going to survive with the earth, I think it has to be deep, deep changes. And if I'm wanting the world to change, I have to look in the mirror and say, "How might I change myself?"

[Read more of Fred's reflection HERE](#)

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)

Session 2: Tools and Tech (29th)

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!](#)



OUTDOOR MINISTRIES SUMMER PROGRAM!

Are you 18yrs or older? Love the outdoors and spending time helping children/youth?

Watch this one! <https://youtu.be/gecZ0v3BGZk>

Camp will look a little different this year with less campers in a cabin and therefore more counselors are needed. The VT OM Team is looking for counselors for VT Takes a Hike to the Mtn or you can counsel another week. Counselors get a reduction in cost for their own child/youth to attend when you volunteer. No cost for counselors. You'll have the time of your life! The most fun you've had in a real long time and be exhausted every night to sleep deep, breathe in the fresh mountain air, not to mention worship on Chapel Rock on top of Pint Mtn. Click on 'volunteer' on their website for more information. *(College youth – this looks great on your resume!)*

Thinking about coming
to www.hortoncenter.org as a camper?
Watch this! <https://youtu.be/rLZm8fzCV2Y>

VT Takes a Hike to the Mtn
Deans: Laurie Chipman & Diane Tinkham
for those going into 5th – 8th in the fall
July 18-24, 2021



VT @ the Lake is taking a hiatus from the lake at Rock Point and hiking to the Mountain! Come join us up at Pine Mountain and unite with middle schoolers from the Green (VT) and White (NH) Mountains. God's spirit will be in all we do at camp this week as we hike, play, pray, sing, rock climb, do some arts and crafts, and discover our own courage through games, challenges, and much more!

Elementary (3rd-5th grade) and Senior High Camp also offered this same week. Siblings can go together to Horton Center. Different camps, but they will still see each other. Check out all the other camps at Horton Center this summer by clicking on their *Summer Schedule*.

[New York School of Ministry](#) [April & May 2021 Offerings!](#)

Thursday evenings, 6:30 – 8:30 PM, April 15, 22, 29, 2021
Leadership Theories for a Pandemic-Changing Church

Saturday, May 15, 2021, 9:00 AM – 1 PM
Speaking of God in the Depths of Suffering

Saturday, May 22, 2021, 9:00 AM – 12:15 PM
Working with Spiritual Struggles

You can learn more about these offerings [here!](#)

You can register for these courses [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](#)

Self-Care in a Pandemic



[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!

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!](#)



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

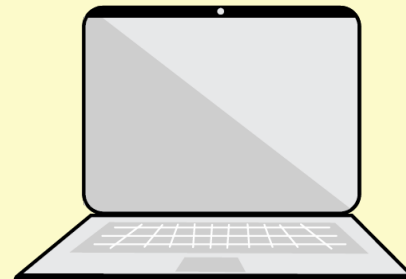
(This is the basic/initial boundary training and should be taken before engaging in other boundary training opportunities.)

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 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** !

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.

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