



# 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 22, 2021

## *Message from the Conference*

### *ANNUAL MEETING STARTS TOMORROW!!!*



## 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!](#)

## Annual Meeting Program !!!

The Annual Meeting Program is now available!

You can find it [HERE!!!!](#)

You can find all the other info you need [HERE!](#)

226th Annual Meeting



Vermont Conference  
United Church of Christ

April 23-24, 2021

Yes, there will be . . . . .

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

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

You will NOT want to miss Peacemakers Gathering!!

We have a terrific 4-themed program for you this year! Presenters from our churches in Bennington, Burlington, East Arlington, Londonderry, Newport, Norwich, Orleans, Randolph, Rutland, Thetford, Williston, Windsor, and Williston (whew!) will share what they've been doing in the areas of COVID response, migrant justice and racial justice. There will also be a tribute to the founder of Peacemakers Breakfast, the late Rev. John Nutting, which will close with a recording of John singing one of his many original songs, Lay Me Down in Lamoille County. Join us at 3:30 on Friday!

### **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!](#)

### **DISASTER RESPONSE WORK: HELP REBUILD PHILLY NEIGHBORHOOD**

In 2018 and again in 2019, quite a few VT UCC volunteer groups went to help rebuild Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. I am hoping to recruit more VT UCC mission teams for rebuilding help again.

I was recently called to re-up as a UCC Partner in Service in order to help with an urgent need in the Philly area, in the Eastwick neighborhood. At the beginning of the pandemic, this lower income area of Philadelphia was hit by Tropical Storm Isaias. Immediate assistance was given, but rebuilding has yet to happen due to Covid. We are now searching for volunteers to come and help rebuild this area (about an 8 hour drive).

We welcome volunteers for 2 or more days (including weekends). We are looking for teams of 2-5 members, 18 years and older, with a skilled team leader. Job assignments can be matched to your skill area. We do not have housing to offer due to Covid and so teams will need to find their own housing. Eastwick is near the Philly airport and therefore also close to many hotels and a direct train service to Eastwick. Eastwick is also an area of great interest with historic sites, a nature reserve and great hiking.

We welcome volunteers and, of course, donations.  
Please get in touch for more information:  
Judy Moore

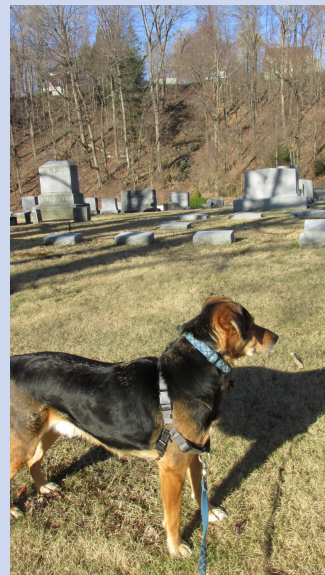
## EASTER VIGIL WITH THE VIRUS -2020

### An offering from Fred Taylor

Today is Easter, another sunny spring morning, and as I walk with Charlie, things just keep unfolding, with more to notice. A White-throated sparrow sings from a nearby tree, high in the branches, but I can barely see it. I'm wearing my mask, so I've left my glasses at home because they get all fogged up. I'd love to see the sparrow's tiny white throat as it sings away, but today I'll have to settle for the song.

I nudge Charlie toward the path that goes through the middle of the cemetery to get a closer look at the maples. We come to the big one with the most advanced flowers, where a few clusters have fallen to the ground. I pick one up for a closer look: it's like a mini-explosion of fireworks, with tiny flares shooting out in all directions, glorifying the sky for this Easter sunrise. Since there are no sunrise services this year, this celebration will have to do.

Charlie seems unusually preoccupied with the unseen scents that lie along thin shoots and old flower stalks left over from last year. His pauses give me a chance to pause, to reflect on all I've been seeing, hearing and feeling. It hits me that these morning walks with Charlie have been like mini-Sabbaths for me. The poet Lynn Ungar explores this idea that the pandemic has created a sort of "Sabbath" in her poem "Pandemic."



What if you thought of it  
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](mailto: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](mailto:Nickersonp@comcast.net)

Nickersoncoaching.com

8 Iverson Road, Beverly, MA.  
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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!](#)**



## A Prayer for Minneapolis

by Shari Prestemon

Loving, Servant God, we remember your journey on this blessed Holy Week. You rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, palms waving as you passed, voices shouting their hosannas. You wept over the city, grieving all they did not understand and refused to receive. You experienced the spectrum of emotion: joy, betrayal, brutality, and anguish. You bravely entered into spaces brimming with tensions and anger, doubts and fears. You found solace in prayer & in community with precious friends. You knew bitter pain and yet focused your unflinching gaze on the fulfillment of promises that beckoned beyond it.

You can read the rest of the prayer [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*

Thinking about coming  
to [www.hortoncenter.org](http://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 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> 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 (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> 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!](#)

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

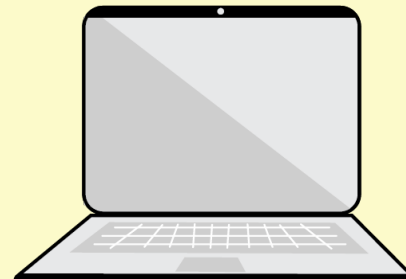
*(This is the basic/initial boundary training and should be taken before engaging in other boundary training opportunities.)*

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](mailto: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](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.**

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