



# 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**

**May 13, 2021**

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## *Message from the Conference*

Dear Beloved Community in the Vermont Conference,

As more people get vaccinated and as COVID infection numbers decline, there is more talk about whether and when we can re-open our sanctuaries for worship. I think the COVID information coming from health and government sources still has a lot of ambiguity about when and under what conditions it is OK to gather without masks. So, what to do.

- The safest option at this point is to continue offering virtual worship at least until September 1<sup>st</sup> when more information is available
- The next safest option is to meet outside for worship, maintaining social distance and with masks
- If your church is considering inside the sanctuary worship, here are some considerations:
  - Air flow: is there a consistent flow of air that exchanges the air in the space each hour
  - Is it possible to maintain proper social distancing and require masks
  - Singing is still considered a high risk activity, so either eliminate it or find the safest possible ways (with guest musicians well separated from the congregation, social distancing, masks, good air flow) for that to happen
  - Cleaning protocols before and after the service need to be followed
  - Spending no more that 20 minutes gathered together inside has the least chance of transmission
- You will need to discuss and agree on what you will require regarding vaccination.
  - Ask people at the door
  - A sign asking those not vaccinated to refrain from in person attendance
  - Require vaccination for all who wish to participate in the service
  - Not mentioning vaccination at all and instead trying to meet all other safety precautions

So, this is not a decision that I or the Conference can make for you. I think the best policies will come from honest communication and wrestling among your church leaders. Your decision matters and I know you will take time and care in making it. I pray God's presence, blessing and discernment for pastors and congregational leaders alike.

In peace and hope,

Lynn



## New News!!!



**NICKERSON  
COACHING**  
Congregations Moving Forward



Rev. Paul Nickerson

[Nickersonp@comcast.net](mailto: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!](#)**



## How to Contact Conference Staff

We are having some TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES with the email servers, so until further notice the only emails that are working at the conference are:

Conference Minister: Rev. Dr. Lynn Bujnak [llbvtc@gmail.com](mailto:llbvtc@gmail.com)  
Associate Conference Minister: Rev. Paul Sangree [sangreepucc@gmail.com](mailto:sangreepucc@gmail.com)  
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Ministries Coordinator: Rev. Jackie Lingelbach [vtconmincoor@gmail.com](mailto:vtconmincoor@gmail.com)  
Bookkeeper: Tanya Frazier [vtcfinanceucc@gmail.com](mailto:vtcfinanceucc@gmail.com)



## How can you help Williamstown United Federated Church?

Williamstown Federated Church lost everything in a fire last Monday night. While they were able to reopen in person worship last Sunday, it was in a different Church with limited supplies.

They lost all of their sanctuary things:  
Cross on the altar  
Paraments  
Altar Bible  
Sound system (speaker, wireless mike)  
Communion set

If a church has these to give, they should call Pastor Doug  
on his cell phone: 802-356-0578 or email: [dougc9927@gmail.com](mailto:dougc9927@gmail.com)

There is also a **Fire Donation Fund** at Bar Harbor Bank and Trust. Anyone can donate either anonymously or with recognition. Please tell the teller or note on your check that you are making a deposit to the United Federated Church of Williamstown Fire Donation Fund.

You can also mail your donation to:  
P.O. Box 438  
Williamstown, VT 05679

\*\*\*Thank you so much to the United Church of Chelsea for their generous donation of hymnals!!!\*\*\*

## Lunch Grants for your Summer Programs!!

The Department of Justice and Witness Ministries, through the Vermont Conference of the UCC, will again be giving grants for Summer Lunch operations. Please check with your local school district to find out what they already have planned. Please have your application in by June 10th. Applications can be mailed to Mary Lou DeCosta, 353 Prim Road, Colchester, VT 05446; or emailed to [colchsummerlunch@aol.com](mailto:colchsummerlunch@aol.com).



[Fill out an application HERE!](#)



# The Hybrid Congregation

(from Alban Weekly- to read more, press any link!)

One of the changes that the pandemic has brought to many congregations is that geographic proximity is no longer a primary factor in determining who participates in our congregational life. A [family-sized congregation](#) reports that former members who moved across the country years ago log on most every week to Sunday services. A [program-sized congregation](#) has had people participating in worship and Bible study from overseas week after week during the pandemic. A [corporate-sized congregation](#) is finding a deepened relationship with a global mission partner because they gather together regularly online -- something they could have done before the pandemic but didn't think to.

As I listened to each of these stories, what I heard from the leaders of these congregations is that they don't want to lose these gifts even as their buildings reopen and in-person activities resume in greater number. They see their future as congregations as hybrid, and they are excited about this prospect. They also know that this will challenge and change the way they have been together.

In this Weekly, we continue thinking about the future of hybrid congregations. First, my colleague Alaina Kleinbeck asks that, [as we move into this space, we rethink our past relationship with time for the sake of justice and transformation](#). John Wimberly, author of the new book *Managing Congregations in a Virtual Age*, asks us to [re-examine our understanding of productivity](#). Finally, David Brubaker reminds us [what won't change about congregations even as we adapt to a hybrid future](#).

## 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!](#)

[Are you in this photo?](#)



The above photo shows Rev. Max Webster, former Conference Minister standing in the doorway. If you recognize any of the seminarians surrounding him, please contact Rev. Susie Webster-Toleno [here!](#)

## How To Do Hybrid Church

A 3-week cohort exploring tips, tricks, and best practices for what it means to be a hybrid church.

Live sessions: May 12, 19, 26 from 3:00 - 4:30 PM ET  
All sessions will be recorded and available to watch on demand.

[Register here!](#)



### **The Racial Justice Task Force Needs You!!**

*"I joined this group because I've come to realize that all the issues of justice are interconnected, in the spirit of Traci Blackmon's keynote on Crossroads. My own passion is the environment, and you can't separate a healthy environment out from racial justice, since unhealthy environments have disproportionate impacts on communities of color, causing immense suffering. In the group, I appreciate the way we've explored many facets of activism around this issue, ranging from self-examination and book study, to political witness, to community collaborations, and as an activist myself, I've gained insight into the ways these different forms of racial justice advocacy all work together." - Fred*

You can learn more (including how to join!!!) [here!](#)

## Peacemaker's Pulpit, May 2021: Help Kids India



For centuries the hill people in South India's high verdant mountains lived in isolated villages surrounded by terraced fields. Then colonists discovered the refreshing climate and stunning beauty. They surveyed, bought, and appropriated land, built churches, schools, hospitals, and brought their skilled servants. Caste Hindu and Moslem shopkeepers monopolized production and established a cash economy.

Illiterate and Dalit ("Untouchable"), the hill people lacked the skills, status and opportunity to take part in the new order. They became paupers in their own land and their children grew stunted.

Village mothers approached Hilda Isaac, newly married and from the plains, where she'd grown up in a Lutheran orphanage. Dalit like them, and a college graduate, Hilda knew the little children were the best hope to improve matters.

Together, Hilda and the mothers started a crèche, or preschool. Safety first, but nutrition, health care, play, exercise, and early education followed. Local women were hired as teachers and helpers. The project has grown to five crèches serving 270 children, a community farm and health center, and employs 35-45 people. Hilda remains the director, a servant leader whose faith and love are the guiding principles of the entire project.

Donors to Help Kids India fund three of the preschools. We believe grassroots organizations are the best agents of change; we share reports, audits, news and visits. Crèche graduates are completing high school, trade school, and college. They are raising the health, literacy, and economic stability of their families and villages. The crèches are breaking the cycle of poverty.

Hilda says, "The low poverty children not respected. Only you get a good education, you get a good job, they giving the respect. Now low caste want a good education, changing the world, changing India. I dedicated my life, I love my Indian children. Everything God is planning."

If your church would like someone to come to speak about this program, please contact Catherine Kidder, West Newbury VT, 802 429-2632, [info@helpkidsindia.org](mailto:info@helpkidsindia.org) [helpkidsindia.org](http://helpkidsindia.org), a non-profit organization.

## A Study on Congregational Singing during Covid-19

"As of today (April 19th, 2021), we have some important updates on the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic and congregational singing. Many of you will be aware that a large number of public education organizations have been sponsoring a scientific study out of the University of Colorado Boulder and the University of Maryland. That study has just released another update on their findings and updated their recommendations."

You can find the rest of this article, the study, and the summarization [here!](#)



## Outdoor Ministry Camp

Register online for a week at Horton Center this summer!

[www.hortoncenter.org](http://www.hortoncenter.org)

Watch this! <https://youtu.be/rLZm8fzCV2Y>

Join us for... **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!*

We have 2 awesome counselors lined up so far!  
Pastor Ed Sunday-Winters (Greensboro Congregational) & Jeffrey  
Tuper-Giles (Barre Congregational)!

These are two fun guys who have a big heart and a love for God,  
youth & nature!

Are you 18yrs or older? Love the outdoors and spending time  
helping young youth? Watch this

one! <https://youtu.be/gecZ0v3BGZk> Then reach out to Laurie  
Chipman [lchipman@fccej.org](mailto:lchipman@fccej.org) Counselors get a reduction in cost  
for their own child/youth to attend a camp this summer. No cost for  
counselors. Volunteering will be the most fun you've had in a real

long time. You'll be exhausted every night and will sleep deep, breathing in the fresh  
mountain air, not to mention worship on Chapel Rock! Click on 'volunteer' on their website for  
more information. *(College youth – this looks great on your resume!)*



## **NEWS UPDATE from Horton Center**

**NOTE: We are ready to go for in-person camp this summer! However, if any camp session must be cancelled, you can get a full refund.**

**Check out the latest Camp COVID19 Info at: <https://hortoncenter.org/COVID>**

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE of changes:**

1. Our Spring Workdays Weekend will happen one week later than planned on the schedule. It will now be May 21-23. No registration needed but let us know if you're coming so we have enough food! No charge, donations welcome.
2. Open House will NOT be happening in-person after all, due to preparations for in-person camp sessions We will be doing a virtual Live Open House from camp June 19th so be on the lookout for how to attend from home!

**ALSO if you're 18 or older you could:**

- Be a Counselor for a week and change the lives of our young people at camp. Check out

the [video](#) to find out why "We Need You!"

· Be part of the Summer Staff! Get more info and details [Here!](#)

Churches: We have provided two 'Virtual Bulletin Inserts' ([Come to your camp](#) and [Come to your camp2](#)) for you to add to your church e-news letter, your Sunday bulletin, or your Sunday worship videos to help us get more campers to camp!

See you on the mountain.

As always you can contact Tim Hughes with any questions at: [thughes@nhucc.org](mailto:thughes@nhucc.org) or 603-545-9660.



## 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!)

### **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

802-299-8290

[\*\*isaiasrecoveryvolunteers@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:isaiasrecoveryvolunteers@gmail.com)

### **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 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!

### 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.



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