



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 20, 2021

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Message from the Conference

Have you ever wanted to go to General Synod? Just to experience it? It is the biannual meeting for the UCC, and always is an exciting time for our national Church to get together! In addition, it is General Synod that makes the important decisions for our denomination. Generally though, it is held in a place that involves a fair amount of travel from Vermont, and it demands the commitment of quite a bit of time, so if you are not an official delegate, it is hard to justify going. But this year is a different story! You can register for General Synod as a Visitor and be part of it.

General Synod will be held completely online, so there is no travel from Vermont involved. In addition, it is mostly in the evenings for 8 nights, from July 11th-18th, so you don't need to completely stop everything else you are doing. If you go to ucc.org to check out the agenda for Synod, you will find all kinds of exciting speakers and inspirational worship with great preachers planned. There are also so many great workshops and get togethers that you can be a part of. The theme of General Synod this year is "Rooted in Love", and the Scripture verse is Psalm 1:3a: "They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season."

Finally, there are all kinds of activities scheduled each afternoon and evening at Synod for youth and young adults. There are programs, home groups, young adult game night and youth escape room (how do I get to go to that?) And then there is a young adult project. So if you are a youth or young adult, or know of any youth or young adults in your church, please encourage them to check it out-it will be a fun way to connect with others of the same age from around the country!

Hopefully yours,

Paul

New News!!!



**NICKERSON
COACHING**
Congregations Moving Forward



Rev. Paul Nickerson
Nickersonp@comcast.net
Nickersoncoaching.com
8 Iverson Road, Beverly, MA.
01915
508-930-9327

LAST CHANCE TO SIGN UP FOR THE 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 can you help Williamstown United Federated Church?

Update from Pastor Doug Cameron:

"We have received so many items and donations from many different churches from in

state and out of state. From a piano to a pulpit bible to candle stick holders, communion sets, hymnals, altar, desk, Sunday school supplies and books, etc. etc. We at this time have all the items to conduct a church service. We are still of course taking donations to our fire fund."

The **Fire Donation Fund** can be found 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



WANTED: PART-TIME OFFICE COORDINATOR

Greensboro United Church of Christ is seeking a multi-skilled individual to manage the office of a small, progressive, socially engaged church.

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

In Our Prayers

Please add Marisa Laviola's brother, as well as former Vermont Conference Minister Hal Harrison to your prayers.



They are both experiencing health challenges.

Thank you.

PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

EVERYONE HAS A CALLING. OURS IS HELPING YOU.
WWW.PRCLI.ORG



TWO SPECIAL EVENTS!!

PRC will be partnering with Jason Moore of Midnight Oil and Convergence, formerly The Center for Progressive Renewal to bring you these two events.

Both/And: Maximizing Hybrid Worship Experiences For Online and In-Person

Audiences

Tuesday, June 8, 2021

2:00 - 3:30 PM Eastern

Leader: Jason Moore

As we begin to think about reopening our church buildings, we want to consider how we can create worship for two audiences at the same time: those who are in the pews, and those who are on their couches. How do we keep both audiences engaged so that neither one feels like they're spectators?

The Online Church Conference with Convergence

Bringing the future of the church into the present.

12 voices | 2 days | June 9-10, 2021

Join PRC's own Karen Ware Jackson

The internet is no longer a new idea for the church and it is essential to the future of our faith communities.

What's the difference between "church online" and "online church"?

As churches begin to return back to their sanctuaries, how can we carry our new practices and what we have learned forward and institutionalize them and weave them into the fabric of our ministry and church cultures?

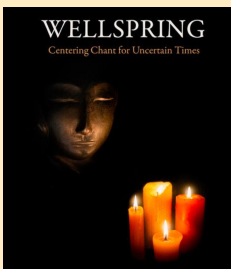
What if TikTok is the newest iteration of telling parables and faith formation could happen 15 seconds at a time?

What does it mean to YouTube your church?

How is social media replacing religious institutions and how can faith leaders capitalize on this reformation moment of transformation into a virtual reality?

[Learn more about both events here!](#)

[Register Here!](#)



WELLSPRING CHANTS are Published!

Kathy Wonson Eddy's collection of 25 chants has been published by Subito Music Corporation, just in time for when churches are making plans to gather in person!

You can order copies of WELLSPRING: Centering Chant for Uncertain Times for your church, choir, or for gifts at store.subitomusic.com (Type "Kathy Wonson Eddy" into the search bar.) The cost is \$13.95 each.

As you know, the chants may be heard on Kathy's website: kathywonsoneddy.com (click on "chant"), and these recordings may be used by churches for free.

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.



[Fill out an application HERE!](#)

Faiths4Vaccines National Summit

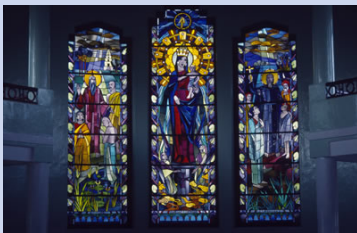


Join us at the National Summit for the largest multi-faith gathering to support equitable and far-reaching vaccine distribution in the United States. Faith leaders and faith-based organizations in attendance will receive training, resources and empowerment to engage their communities to ensure equitable vaccine access, combat hesitancy and potentially use their houses of worship as vaccination sites.

Faith leaders, faith communities, and medical professionals are leading efforts to respond, recover from the unprecedented health crises facing our nation and the world. Now, equipped with a life-saving vaccine, we have the chance to bring this devastating, and all the suffering it has caused, to an end.

Now is the time to partake in open and honest dialogue between faith leaders and county, state and national health officials to identify opportunities for faith-based institutions to further engage and support local communities to increase vaccination rates.

[Register 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](#).

A WILD WALK IN SPRING

By Fred Taylor



Once again it's a beautiful spring day, and I'm out with Charlie for our afternoon walk. I thought I'd go to Kilburn Pond, my favorite hike for such a beautiful day. But

when I get to the parking lot, the cars are lined up on the main road, at least 50 of them, so I'm sure the trails are going to be crammed with people. It's the first really beautiful spring day, and a Sunday afternoon, and everyone's gone stir crazy from being isolated at home because of the pandemic. But that's also why I don't want to take Charlie out on this trail – too many people to run into, and he just doesn't understand social distancing.

A friend recently mentioned the Horseshoe Road trail in Pisgah, and it's only another ten minutes up the road, so I decide to give it a try. At the parking lot there are maybe half a dozen cars at most, and several people are sunning themselves in lounge chairs in a field. So these trails will be almost empty.

We head down the main trail, encountering a woman with two young kids trotting along beside her. Then a couple comes by with a dog who wants to play, so Charlie and the dog get to run around a bunch, while the couple orients me to this new trail. They suggest the Lily Pond Trail if I have time for a short loop to get to a nice pond.

On we go with not a soul in sight, and I feel so grateful for this sense of solitude that I've so yearned for. It's hard to find a trail these days where you can just mosey along and not think about running into people. An opening appears in the woods up ahead, and we come to an abandoned beaver pond right beside the trail. We stop for a look and a sniff. I scan the expanse of open water and rough vegetation starting to grow in again, with clumps of blueberry and red leaves left over from last fall. A few young saplings grow up around the edges where the soil's begun to build up. And overhead, the maples have just begun to open their flower heads, those amazing miniature red explosions. Out here in the woods, they're several weeks behind the ones in the cemetery, so they're just popping out. Across the pond the trees hold a faint haze of green where the young leaves are just beginning to unfurl. This landscape feels just right for today: decay and decomposition in the abandoned pond, dead stumps sticking up out of the water with new green appearing around the edges. And overhead the promise of spring once again just beginning to appear. Today's world feels so decaying in so many ways: climate change, coronavirus, and our social patterns totally thrown into chaos. And yet here is the promise of spring emerging around the edges, even out of the midst of decay.

[Continue reading 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 26 from 3:00 - 4:30 PM ET

All sessions will be recorded and available to watch on demand.

[Register here!](#)



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!)



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 Taylor

Taylor

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



Outdoor Ministry Camp

Register online for a week at Horton Center this summer!

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 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!

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 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 or 603-545-9660.

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

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](#)

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!](#)

Self-Care in a Pandemic



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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](#).

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!](#)

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 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 !



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 lbvtc@gmail.com
Associate Conference Minister: Rev. Paul Sangree sangreepucc@gmail.com
Office Administrator: Elise Foster vermontconference@gmail.com
Ministries Coordinator: Rev. Jackie Lingelbach vtconmincoor@gmail.com
Bookkeeper: Tanya Frazier vtcfinanceucc@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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Connect with us



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