



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 Thanksgiving Edition

November 24, 2021

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Message from the Conference



Dear Friends,

In his letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul writes "*I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.*" (Philippians 1:3-6 NRSV).

On behalf of the staff of the Vermont Conference, we indeed give thanks and hold in prayer all our ministers, chaplains, churches, members, and friends. We are so grateful for you all. It is a joy and a privilege to share in ministry with you, especially as we continue to work diligently for the good of all—even through this pandemic.

Together we have many new challenges. Yet this has also been a year of hope and thanksgiving, especially for the vaccines that have brought new life and much-needed protection from this coronavirus.

We are thankful that vaccines help stop the spread and provide important protection against COVID-19. And as people of faith, we are reminded that there is another kind of vaccine that we can inject into our lives, a spiritual vaccine that can protect us against the fears, troubles, and difficulties of this often chaotic world. That vaccine is gratitude. As a congregationalist preacher of an earlier era, the Rev. John Henry Jowett,

once observed: "Gratitude is a vaccine, an antitoxin, and an antiseptic. This is a most searching and true diagnosis. Gratitude can be a vaccine that can prevent the invasion of a disgruntled attitude. As antitoxins prevent the disastrous effects of certain poisons and diseases, thanksgiving destroys the poison of fault-finding and grumbling. When trouble has smitten us, a spirit of thanksgiving is a soothing antiseptic."

In this moment, we welcome the "soothing antiseptic" of Thanksgiving. We rejoice in the healing power of gratitude celebrated in this season. And we offer our thankfulness for each of you!

God bless you all and have a safe and blessed Thanksgiving!



Latest News

COVID
SUPPORT VT
Promoting mental health and wellness for all

New Workshop!

**Skills For Psychological Recovery:
Secondary Trauma & Strengthening our Workforce**

Wednesday, December 1st, 3:00 - 5:00pm
with UCLA expert Melissa Brymer

Register Now



**WINDHAM COUNTY
VERMONT NAACP**

NAACP
Rutland Area Branch

naacprutland.org/gift-guide

The Racial Justice Task Force wanted to share this

Vermont [BIPOC Holiday Gift Guide](#) put together by the NAACP. These are all BIPOC owned businesses in Vermont. Feel free to use this as you plan your gift giving!!!

Peacemakers Pulpit

November 2021

Mary Brownlow

We are coming to the end of the Season After Pentecost, and I find myself thinking about the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit in our life and work. Specifically, I meditate on the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John, where Jesus promises his frightened and confused friends that they will not be abandoned. He gives us new names for the Holy Spirit: he speaks of the Paraclete, the ‘one who is called beside us’ to comfort, teach, advise and advocate. But we are not merely recipients of this gift. We learn to emulate these attributes in our caring for others. We are called to walk beside our neighbors when they are frightened and confused and grieving. We are called to “act out the very agenda of the Son of Man” as Walter **Brueggemann** writes, in “areas of life that are disordered and disadvantaged, and subject to violence, deception, and exploitation...that is where neighbors are to be found.” (from his October 13 blog). This means that whenever I volunteer at the local food shelf, I can remember the gift of the paraclete and stand beside the one who hungers. Whenever you are called to a place of pain and grief, you are called to comfort. Whenever you advocate for racial justice, the paraclete is with you. Wherever you teach others to care for the health of our fragile world, the spirit of truth echoes in your words. We are witnesses to the gift Christ gave to the disciples; we are witnesses to “areas of life that are disordered and disadvantaged.” With our presence, with our voices, with our prayers, the Holy Spirit comes near. The promise rings true: “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.” (John 14: 18) Thanks be to God.



The infographic features the title "How to Get Your Student Loans Forgiven" in a dark blue box. To the right, it lists sponsors: the United Church of Christ and the National Council of Churches. Below the sponsors is an illustration of a person in a blue shirt and orange pants carrying a large blue chain labeled "STUDENT LOAN \$". At the bottom, it specifies the date and time: "Friday, December 3rd | 2PM Eastern" and includes a "Click Here to Register" link.

BIG NEWS!!!

Religious Workers and Clergy now qualify for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program!! We have partnered with the National Council of Churches to sponsor a webinar on December 3rd at 2pmEST to

walk you through the process and answer any questions about how to get your student loans forgiven. The discussion will be led by Attorney Ashley Harrington, a senior official of the Federal Student Aid Office of the US Department of Education.

Please register at https://ucc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_UUuOriG4QGaeB-sl-m8iJQ. I have also attached an infographic that has a hyperlink to the registration as well.

Share this invitation with your networks, clergy, religious workers, commissioned pastors, parents, grandparents, etc. All that have student loan debt are welcome! #BiblicalDebtJubilee



Did you miss the Special Meeting of the Vermont Conference?

You can watch it here!

Vermont Interfaith Action *Transforming People and Communities*



Through a combination of participating in a Camp-In on the Statehouse steps, a Clergy Sign-On letter signed by 86 clergy across the state, and a Press Conference, we have won victories for our precariously housed neighbors.

We have been trying to get the Scott Administration to extend motel stays for unhoused Vermonters, using Federal funds.

Our Clergy Sign-On letter was delivered last Tuesday, November 9, to the Governor, and the press coverage can be seen [here](#).

The delivery also motivated questions from Stewart Ledbetter (WPTZ) and Peter Hirschfeld (VPR) at the Governor's COVID Press Conference on Tuesday last week.

So far we have won an extension through March 1, 2022 -- cause to celebrate!

However, VIA leaders in our Affordable Housing and Homelessness Organizing Committee will continue to press the Scott Administration until we ensure that:

- 1) all the FEMA money available to shelter the homeless is used by the state, which means extending assistance until April 1,
- 2) the administration develops a comprehensive, long-term plan to move people in need from temporary to permanent housing with supports for mental health and substance use disorder treatment, and
- 3) that the Governor provides leadership in the rapid development and construction of affordable housing so that no one reverts back to homelessness.

Please see this coverage of Monday's Press Conference:

[WCAX](#)

[WPTZ](#)

[Brattleboro Reformer](#)

And keep an eye out for a story by Kevin O'Connor soon to be published in VT Digger.

Thank you all so much for answering our Calls to Action to call the Governor, support the Camp-In, and sign the Clergy Letter! Your compassion and sense of justice are leading to important results.

[Advent and Christmas Resources!!!](#)

Practical Resources for Churches has put out a plethora of resources for [Advent and Christmas!](#)

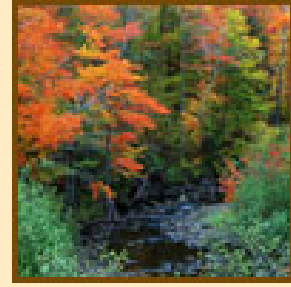
You can find them all [HERE!](#)



Advent Daily Prayer for Reflection Week 1 Revised
Common Lectionary Year C can be found [Here!](#)

Update from Fred Taylor, Environmental Justice Rep.

As we enter the dark times of November, with much news on the climate change front, I wanted to share these two resources that I think you'll find inspirational.



The first is a very moving speech that renowned naturalist/filmmaker David Attenborough gave at the first week of the COP 26 conference in Glasgow: [Sir David Attenborough address to world leaders at COP26 – speech in full - Bing video.](#)

The second is one of a series from Harvard Divinity School, with Terry Tempest Williams interviewing a series of specialists in the environmental field. *Next Monday, Nov. 15, at 7 PM*, she will be interviewing noted environmental writer Elizabeth Kolbert - the conversation between the two should be phenomenal. Note that Pre-registration is required to view this online interview. [Weather Reports | Harvard Divinity School \(HDS\)](#)

ATTENTION CLERGY

To: All Authorized Ministers (ordained, licensed, commissioned) with standing in the Vermont Conference, United Church of Christ

The 2021 Information Review is now available for your updates. The information review is a part of the covenantal responsibilities for all authorized clergy in the United Church of Christ and updating it helps the Conference and associations keep in contact with you and your ministerial needs.

[For documentation and more info click here](#)

Deadline Dec. 15th

AUTUMN BRONZE

By Fred Taylor

As I walk out the front door this morning, I'm met by a wall of burnished gold. The trees today breathe out a magnificent, brilliant sadness that floods my vision and my heart. Charlie walks along happily, wagging his tail and sniffing his way among the scents of the morning, oblivious to the sadness I sense in the landscape.

There's something about this autumn that's been especially brilliant *and* poignant. Perhaps it's the October warmth, the brilliant sunshine, courtesy of climate change. Perhaps the colors *are* more brilliant than ever – everyone seems to be saying it's been a spectacular fall. But then it often seems that way. Today under a grey drooping sky, these late fall colors seem especially intense. We're past the bright reds and golds of the maples now, into the oaks and beeches, plunging us into a melancholy sea of darkening bronze.

Last month, when the colors were at their peak, each tree in the cemetery had its own unique glow, so I wandered around taking one photo after another, trying to capture the rich colors and shapes of the trees. I took a photo of the tree that I was so entranced with on Good Friday and Easter. Now it was no longer a burst of miniature fireworks with blossoms heralding the coming of spring. Charlene commented that it was her favorite tree this fall, so I tried to capture it from several angles at different stages of the fall. First the leaves began to change up near the top. Then little by little

the colors moved down the tree, orange moving in where green had been, while the highest branches let go their leaves and became bare. I always feel a little sad when the leaves get to this point. I love the rich depth of the bronze color, but I ache to hold on to the warmth of summer and brace myself for the starkness of winter. Somehow, today I feel a more intense sadness, as if the flame of these trees is burning a path into my soul.

Terry Tempest Williams captures my mood perfectly in her recent, "Obituary for the Land." "It is time to grieve and mourn the dead and believe in the power of renewal."

[Read more here!](#)

STEWARDSHIP THEME MATERIALS 2021 "ROOTED IN LOVE"

[click here](#)

Looking for more Stewardship Resources: [click here](#)



Please Remember in Your Prayers

Please keep our *Conference Minister Lynn Bujnak*, her spouse, Peg and their family in prayers as Peg continues to recover from emergency surgery.

Our *Associate Conference Minister Paul Sangree's* mother-in-law has passed away. Please keep him and his family in your prayers at this time.

It is with deep condolences that we share with you that our bookkeeper, *Tanya Frazier* lost her Mother early last week. Please keep her and her family in your prayers.

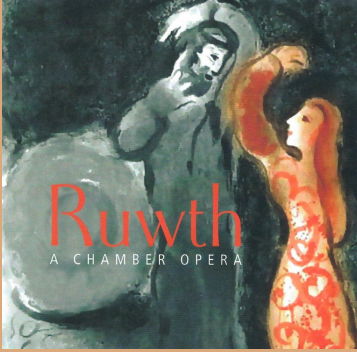
AROUND THE CONFERENCE

(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!)

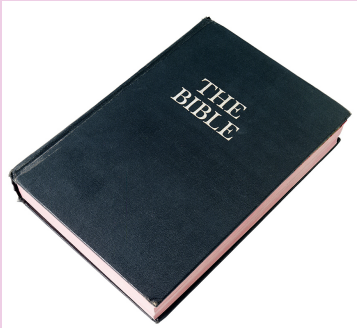
Live Re-Broadcast of Ruwth: A Chamber Opera by Lotta Suter and Rob Griffin

Please join us on Sunday afternoon November 14th at 4 pm for a Zoom re-broadcast of the premiere performance of Ruwth, a chamber opera with libretto by Lotta Suter and music by Rob Griffin. Premiered at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge MA in October 2014, Ruwth tells the biblical story of Ruth, Naomi and Boaz from the perspective of the community that must overcome



their mistrust of foreigners and learn to welcome strangers from another land. Lotta and Rob will host the re-broadcast of the video recording of the premiere performance, directed by Mark Latham with soloists Maria Ferrante, Jayne West and Donald Wilkinson. The 90-minute Zoom event, offered jointly with FCCB, is free and open to all. Please contact Rob and Lotta at griffinsuter@hotmail.com to register and get the Zoom link for the event. For more information on Ruwth, see the article by Lotta Suter in this Corner Chronicle.

Don't forget to click below in your email to view the entire newsletter



Windam Congregational Church offering Hymnals/Bibles to a church/churches:

19 New Century Hymnals + 2 Musician Hymnals
12 Pilgrim Hymnals + 1 Musician Hymnal
31 Chalice Hymnals + 2 Musician Hymnals
21 NRSV Bibles Regular Print
26 NRSV Bibles Small Print, Brand New
Contact Virginia Crittenden at 802-874-4049 or email at gcrit@hotmail.com

Farewell, Welcome and Blessings

Pastoral Transitions since the 2021 Vermont Conference Annual Meeting

[For the most up to date information click here](#)



SAVE THE DATE!



TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR ONA AND NOT-YET ONA CHURCHES

This webinar explores how and why congregations can become ONA—in ways that do not divide, but unite the church. Applying the basic ONA principles of “graceful engagement” and “covenant,” ONA 101 has helped hundreds of congregations successfully navigate through an ONA process.

REGISTER

TAKE THE ONA SURVEY! HOW DOES YOUR CHURCH COMPARE?

Complete this survey, and see how your congregation compares with other ONA churches! If you answer “NO” to some of the questions, don’t worry! Your honest answer just means there are exciting opportunities awaiting your church! Use our **Self-Evaluation Tool for ONA Churches** and other resources throughout our website to discover new ways to strengthen your ONA commitment! Our goal: a church that’s 100% Open and Affirming! [click here for survey](#)

FREE ONLINE TRAINING AND INFORMATION FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Church extends beyond any four walls. From human resources concerns to legal questions and property maintenance, Insurance Board offers a variety of resources to protect the church and its

ministries. [Click here](#) for interactive webcasts that address a wide variety of topics essential to keeping churches and ministries safe; these trainings are led by industry experts from Insurance Board and its partners, including our denominational partners.

[Copyright Concerns For Ministries](#)

During these challenging times, ministries rely heavily on the virtual environment and various electronic mediums to share the printed forms of inspiring poetry, quotes from prayer books and daily affirmations, as well as words from songs during worship and through other forms of ministry. As a result, some ministries have been shocked to discover they are actually in violation of copyright infringement; join us as Heather Kimmell General Counsel, United Church of Christ, offers valuable information on how to help your ministry avoid this situation.

[For pre-recorded video webinar click here](#)
[additional resource click here](#)

[VTCUCC CLASSIFIEDS](#)

[VT CONFERENCE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES](#)

Christian Education:

[Christian Education Coordinator- United Church of Hinesburg](#)

[Faith Formation Coordinator- Barre Congregational](#)

Administration & Finance:

[Office Coordinator- Greensboro UCC](#)

Music & Other Lay Ministries:

[Music Director- North Pomfret Congregational](#)

[Church Musician- Tunbridge Church](#)

[Music Director- First Congregational, Burlington](#)

[Music Director- Charlotte Congregational Church](#)

UCC | NEWS

[Signs, symbols abound at interfaith call for bold U.S. social programs](#)
[Join the Movement 'griot' will collect anti-racist stories from across the UCC](#)
[Report to the church from the United Church of Christ Board, October 2021](#)
[UCC will say goodbye to Church House and Amistad Chapel — online — on Dec. 4](#)

[For more news click here](#)
<https://frontline-faith.teachable.com/>

[How to Contact Vermont Conference Staff](#)

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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 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/>