



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 Winter Edition

December 9, 2021

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Message from the Conference



Dear Beloved Community in the Vermont Conference,

Along with many others I find this time of growing darkness difficult. It is dark when the dog wakes me to her hunger each morning. It is dark long before day's end. Over the years I have leaned in to Advent as a way of marking this time with the deep wonders of hope, peace, joy and love. In Advent God takes us by the hand and leads us through the darkness of days, of the world, of our lives towards the dawning Light of the World.

Advent calls us to the meeting place of hopes and fears, ours and the world's. Advent whispers to us to slow down, wait, watch, believe, yearn. In the darkness we are not alone. Perhaps the darkness is the birth of the gifts of Advent.

To help us on our journey, here is an Advent Prayer by Walter Brueggemann

In our secret yearnings
we wait for your coming,
and in our grinding despair
we doubt that you will.
And in this privileged place
we are surrounded by witnesses who yearn more than do we
and by those who despair more deeply than do we.
Look upon your church and its pastors
in this season of hope
which runs so quickly to fatigue
and in this season of yearning
which becomes so easily quarrelsome.

Give us the grace and the impatience
to wait for your coming to the bottom of our toes,
to the edges of our fingertips.
We do not want our several worlds to end.
Come in your power
and come in your weakness
in any case
and make all things new.
Amen.”

— **Walter Brueggemann, Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of
Walter Brueggemann**

Waiting in expectation,
Lynn

Latest News

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



Congregations and Covid: Ongoing Challenges

As part of the ongoing conversation we have been facilitating since the pandemic began, Faith in Action will host a discussion on Tuesday, December 14 at 4p ET/3p CT/2p MT/1p PT among faith leaders across our network who are grappling with the ongoing challenges presented by Covid-19 and its variants.

The 75-minute workshop, Congregations and Covid: Ongoing Challenges will focus on 1) the models congregations are using to encourage vaccinations and the protocols they are using to protect their communities; and 2) how clergy are managing the uncertainty created by the Omicron variant and how that might affect planning for 2022.

Register Here!



Certificate in faith formation, youth work now available

churchwide

by Hans Holznage! | published on Dec 6, 2021

Teachers and youth leaders in local churches of the United Church of Christ can now get certified.

Educators everywhere can now enroll in the **Faith Formation Leadership Training and Certification Program** offered by the UCC's **Southern New England Conference**.

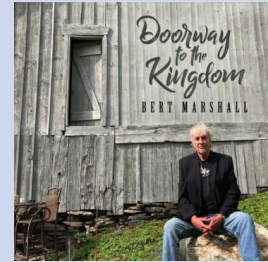
Students who completed the Faith Formation Leadership Training and Certification Program this fall pose for a Zoom picture with their instructors.

The program is "specifically for faith formation and youth ministry leaders with a progressive theology," said its administrator, **Debbie Gline-Allen**. She is the Conference's minister of faith formation and serves on the national board of the **Association of United Church Educators**. "We are not aware of any other program in the UCC with this focus," she said. AUCE endorses the program, and becoming an AUCE member is required for certification.

Read more here!

A Message from Bert Marshall

Greetings Vermont Friends! I've just released my new album - 8 new songs - and I'm trying to spread the word. You can sample song clips and find links to purchase it digitally at **bertmarshall.hearnow.com**. Or you can purchase the audio CD on Amazon. Just search Doorway to the Kingdom + Bert Marshall. Songs you'll like by someone you know! Blessings to all in this Season of Advent! Thank you!



Lakota People's
LAW PROJECT

The Canadian Standing Rock

You've witnessed our struggle at Standing Rock to stop the Dakota Access pipeline and the Anishinaabe resistance to the Line 3 pipeline. You've been a friend to us, and you've come to know many Indigenous water and land protectors fighting for our sacred lands and waterways. What you may not know is that, for years, **our Wet'suwet'en relatives have undertaken a similar struggle** in their own territory, to our north in what we now call Canada. They need our attention and support, too.

On Friday, **Royal Canadian Mounted Police raided an Indigenous-led blockade** with dogs and assault rifles. They arrested two journalists and at least 13 others at the frontlines, the latest in a series of arrests dating back to 2019. The Wet'suwet'en are doing all they can to stop construction of TransCanada's 670km Coastal GasLink pipeline, because a third of this pipeline would cross their homelands on its way to a facility in coastal Kitimat.

Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs have refused to give consent for the project, and, crucially, they have never signed a formal treaty with the provincial government or relinquished their land. Much like our #NoDAPL fight, this is both an environmental and a sovereignty issue; the Wet'suwet'en are also attempting to protect sensitive headwaters.

Find out how to help here!

RADIANCE IN THE DARK

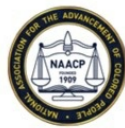
by Fred Taylor

Advent was approaching as I was driving to Putney Mountain. The hawk-watching season was close to the end, and I hoped for one more view of a migrating hawk. It's been such a busy fall with all these crazy arrangements for teaching online, that I've missed all the days when the numbers were high. I heard that they had an all-time record number of broad-winged hawks in one day, something like 6,000! And an all-time record for the year as well. So today at the end of the season, I was hoping for one more dramatic view. The night before it had snowed, the first snow of the fall, but by mid-afternoon, all the snow had melted and the skies had cleared, so I figured it was my last chance to see a hawk before the end of the season.



My heart was heavy on the drive up and with the approach of Advent, I was thinking a lot about the darkness of the year into which the birth of Jesus brings new light. Usually, I find myself relishing this time of darkness, as a sacred time of waiting, of being open to the emergence of the new into being. But this year it's been harder and harder to have faith in how that light might emerge in the darkness. News of environmental disasters kept rolling in –the wildfires in the West, intense rainstorms bringing flooding to places where floods weren't supposed to happen. The virus was continuing to spread, and with the Delta variant sweeping the country, and more and more divisiveness around masking and vaccinations, it just seemed like we were never going to get out of this mess.

[Finish reading here!](#)



**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 to 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 graphic features the title "How to Get Your Student Loans Forgiven" in white text on a dark blue background. To the right, it lists sponsors: "Sponsors: UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST" and "National Council of Churches". Below the sponsors is an illustration of a person in an orange suit 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

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!](#)

UCC ADVENT TOOLKIT!!



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.

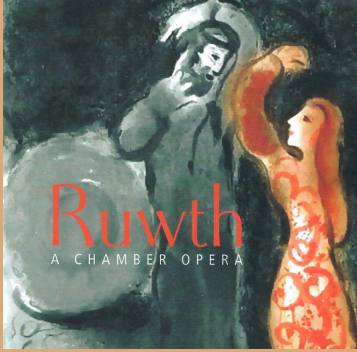
AROUND THE CONFERENCE

(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



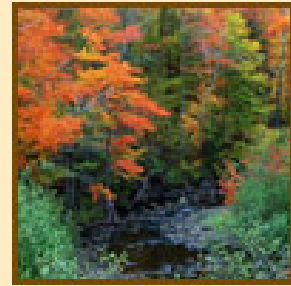
Griffin. Premiered at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge MA in October 2014, Ruwth tells the biblical story of Ruth, Naomi and Boaz from the perspective of the community that must overcome their mistrust of foreigners and learn to welcome strangers from another land. Lotta and Rob will host the re-broadcast 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.

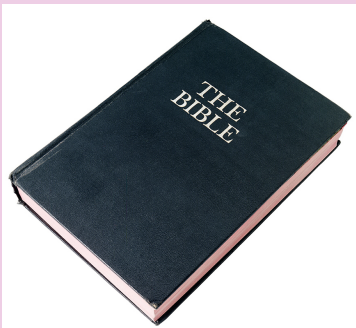
Don't forget to click below in your email to view the entire newsletter

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.](#)



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

STEWARDSHIP THEME MATERIALS 2021 "ROOTED IN LOVE"

[click here](#)

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



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](#)

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

Conference Minister: Rev. Dr. Lynn Bujnak llbvtc@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 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/>