



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 16, 2021

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Message from the Conference

We continue this week our Advent journey as a Conference. Recently, I was with the Southwest Association monthly Bible Study, and we were looking at the lectionary Scriptures for Dec. 19th. The first one we looked at was Psalm 80:1-7, in which the psalmist basically says that everything is terrible right now and that it is your fault God, and I'm afraid. The other Scripture we spent the most time on was Luke 1:39-55, where Mary in her Magnificat basically says that our God of love is turning things upside down in this world, and that is why I glorify God.

We then got into a discussion of fear and love, and how these two emotions seem to dominate our lives in so many ways. Can you think of a time in your life when you operated out of fear? Can you think of a time in your life when you operated out of love? I think all of us can do so for both categories. As we are all well aware, we are living in a time of fear in our world right now because of the Pandemic and many other factors, and yet we will preach again this Advent the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary, "Do not be afraid", a phrase that is repeated over and over again in the Bible.

I have been reading a book by Maya Angelou, and in it she quotes from Martin Luther King Jr., who said "We must take fear and by love, change it into hope." Is there an area of your life where you are operating out of fear right now? Is your church operating out of a sense of fear right now? Is there anyway that you, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can by love change it into hope?

Advent blessings,
Paul

Latest News

**The Conference Office will be closed
Friday, December 24th at noon through Tuesday,**

January 4th, 2022.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas!



Does your church have a
Christmas Pageant?

Is your church doing something
to help the wider community this
Christmas?

Does your church look gorgeous decorated for
Advent and Christmas?

We would LOVE to see it!

Please share photos or videos with us so we can
show the rest of the conference how your church
likes to celebrate the season!

[Email us here!](#)

Youth Ministry Conference!!!

On February 7-8th, the national setting will offer a virtual conference for 100 youth ministers and leaders to reimagine youth ministry, National Youth Event and other events for the future. Registration can be completed here: <https://cvent.me/Vy8PPK>



Additionally, we are asking anyone who has regular contact with youth in the United Church of Christ to complete a short survey to provide additional insight to the Faith INFO team and national setting. You may access the survey here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Youth_Min2022

Your responses and presence are greatly appreciated.
For questions or additional information please reach out to Rev. Trayce Potter at pottert@ucc.org.



Save the Date!!!

The Racial Justice Task Force met Dec. 9 and went over the results of the information gathered this fall from the Racial Justice Survey.

We will be meeting this spring every fourth Wednesday of the month from 5 pm -6 pm via zoom. Mark your calendars! If you are interested in joining the meeting and learning what is happening please email us to register. We invite you to join us in these ongoing efforts to combat racism and make

the world a more just place!

January 26th
February 23rd
March 23rd
April 27th
May 25th

PRC's January 2022 Webinars

All webinars are recorded. Click the title to register or read the description.

Lenten Resources from A Sanctified Art

Wednesday, January 12, 2022

2:00 - 2:30 PM

Leader - Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Learn more about Lenten Resources from A Sanctified

Art. <https://sanctifiedart.org/infographic-full-to-the-brim-lent-year-c>

Lisle Gwynn Garrity (she/her/hers) is a Pastorist (pastor + artist), retreat leader, and creative entrepreneur seeking to fill the church with more color, paint, mystery, and creativity. In the midst of a rapidly reforming church landscape, she is convinced that new models for ministry are emerging all over the place, we just have to be willing to discover and pursue them. She founded A Sanctified Art with the conviction that, in order to thrive, the church needs more creative expression and art-filled freedom.

We will be sharing your name and email with A Sanctified Art so that they can follow up with you.

Lenten Resources From A Thoughtful Christian

Tuesday, January 18, 2022

2:00 - 3:00 PM EST

Leader - **Katie Snyder and Michael Hilliard**

Explore resources and curricula for the 2022 Lenten season that will work for any size congregation. We will explore great group study options, free downloadable resources, Bible studies, other relevant books, and Lenten devotions that your congregation will find useful for Lent 2022. We are also offering a discount on our resources for those who attend the webinar.

Katie Snyder is a certified Christian educator working for the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation as their curriculum specialist and POINT Coordinator. Katie aspires to faithfully seek God while encouraging and empowering others to do the same.

Michael Hilliard is the Sales Manager for Westminster John Knox Press and Flyaway Books. When not talking about books, he enjoys backpacking, hiking, and camping (although many books have been read and talk about by the fire or on the trail over the years). Michael lives in Jeffersonville, Indiana with his wife, their two children, and their rescue dog, Ross.

Best Practices for Pastoral Search Committees

Thursday, January 20, 2022

7:00 - 8:00 PM EST

Leader - **Laura Stephens-Reed**

Join us for a great discussion on how pastoral search committees can find the right pastor for their congregation. We'll talk about topics like where to search, how to review materials, what questions to ask of yourselves and the candidates, and how to communicate with the candidates. We'll include some tips for small churches and part-time calls as well.

Rev. Laura Stephens-Reed believes in the power of the local congregation to change individuals and communities in the name of Christ. Her call is to increase the effectiveness of clergy and congregations by helping them harness the amplified opportunities and overcome the challenges presented by transitions. Laura attempts to be faithful to this call primarily through coaching clergy and congregations across the



ecumenical spectrum. She has been credentialed as a Professional Certified Coach through the International Coaching Federation and as a Certified Mentor Coach. She has also been trained as a Congregational Consultant and an Intentional Interim Minister by the Center for Congregational Health.

Caring for Frontline Workers

Thursday, January 27, 2022

7:00 - 8:00 PM EST

Leader - Harriet Wilkin

This webinar is for pastors and for laity who are involved with pastoral care, to help understand the challenges Front line workers, including First Responders have been experiencing not only through the pandemic, but in their everyday work life. This webinar has been designed to give helpful tips and resources for your toolbox. What is presented in this webinar may also help you provide pastoral care to military veterans.

Harriet Wilkin has two bachelor's degrees and a Master of Divinity degree. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration/ Management and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Critical Communications. In 2015 Harriet completed her Master of Divinity degree at Claremont School of Theology (<https://cst.edu/>).

Harriet's early days in ministry revolved around Christian program development for children, youth, and young adults. Her ministry work started as a volunteer in her local church, which then led to paid staff positions in churches. Since July of 2015, she has been appointed as a local pastor.

Harriet continues to be an advocate for People with Disabilities, Caregivers, First Responders, Veterans, and their families.

Harriet currently offers resources on her personal website:<https://thelighthouse-design-studio.mn.co/> . Join this online community to share resources and have conversations about church ministries.

Overwhelm Workshop

Thursday, February 10, 2022

2:00 - 3:15 PM EST

Leaders: Heidi Carrington Heath, Callie Swanlund, Laura Stephens-Reed

Do you feel buried under the weight of the the world? the church? the community struggles? the family demands? the near constant change and ever growing need? It's all too much.

We can help.

This is a workshop in three parts: the first 30 minutes we'll hear from three clergy coaches with simple practices to ease the burden. This section will be recorded and can be watched later (at 2X speed) if that's all your can fit in to your life right now. If you can invest a little more time, please plan to attend the full workshop. Each coach will lead a 45 breakout session for personal help and support. These will not be recorded.

Finally, if you are desperate for a deeper transformation, you'll have the opportunity to engage the topic in a coached cohort.

Do You Need Shelter?

If You Are Unhoused, You Likely Qualify For Motel Housing Right Now Through The March 1st!



Call 211 During After Hours & Weekends OR

Call Economic Services During Business Hours 8am-430pm 800 479 6151 Mon-Fri

**Note: you must check in with Economic Services On Next Business Day If You Enter Hotel Through 211

Do You Qualify?

These 3 Factors Qualify You

- ✓ Unhoused and without shelter with no where to go.
- ✓ Below 185% Of The Poverty Line.
- ✓ Have savings below \$2250

If you have any trouble navigating call our hotline 802 490 4931

You Likely Qualify Even If You Were Denied Before:

- Did you accept the \$2500 buy out? You Still Qualify
- Were you previously exited? You Still Qualify
- Were you previously denied? You still Qualify
- Do or do not have any disability? You Still Qualify
- Don't have children? You Still Qualify
- Don't have a previously qualifying condition? You Still Qualify

If You Need Help Navigating This OR If You Are Denied For Any Reason, Please Contact Us At 802 490 4931 or endhomelessnessvt@gmail.com

Seminary Sunday 3.0: "Seminary Snow-Sunday"

In the midst of pandemic, faith communities have tried new things, adapted, and learned about both the power and problems of using social media for worship. Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School has worked to share information in real time over the past two years, while offering opportunities and ideas for community engagement. One of these opportunities was "Seminary Sunday 2.0."

Seminary Sunday 2.0 was a pre-recorded service made available to churches in late January, 2021, which could be downloaded and broadcast by the church using the online platform of that congregation's choosing. Nearly 40 churches from around the nation participated in this offering, which is the highest participation rate we have on record for a Seminary Sunday event. The logistics and planning were made slightly easier because all of the churches participating were already meeting exclusively online due to the restrictions of social distancing.

This year, things are a little different...

[Read more 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**.

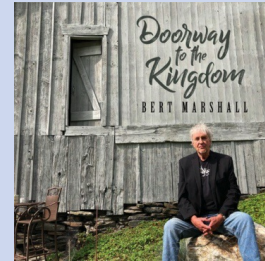
Students who completed the Faith Formation Leadership Training and Certification Program this fall pose for a Zoom picture with their instructors.

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!



**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!!!

[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



Peg and I want to thank you for your prayers and well wishes after her emergency surgery and long recuperation in both the hospital and then rehab. She is home now. She has a ways to go to get back her independence, but she is progressing a little each day. Again, please know we are very grateful to you! As I said more than once, "I feel the prayers."

Lynn

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!)

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

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.



How to Get Your Student Loans Forgiven

Sponsors:
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
National Council of Churches

STUDENT LOAN \$

Friday, December 3rd | 2PM Eastern
[Click Here to Register](#)

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



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.

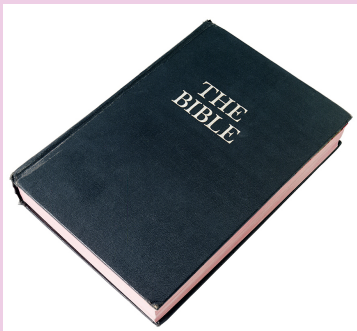
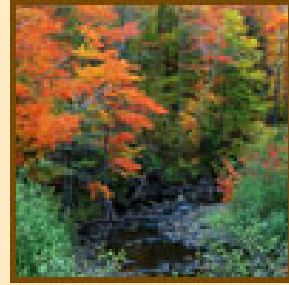
My heart was heavy on the drive up and with the approach of Advent, I was thinking a lot about the darkness of the year into which the birth of Jesus brings new light. Usually, I find myself relishing this time of darkness, as a sacred time of waiting, of being open to the emergence of the new into being. 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!](#)

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



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!](#)

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



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/>