

THE 219TH ANNUAL MEETING

of
The Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ
April 25 – 26 2014
at the Lake Morey Inn
Fairlee, VT

Rooted and Grounded in Love

PLENARY I: ABIDING IN CHRIST

Friday, April 25, 2014

10:30 – Opening Worship

Liz Sykas-Ringenberg, Annual Meeting Planning Committee member, welcomes the delegates and introduces us into worship.

10:55 – Introduction to Gregory Norbet

The Rev. Rona Kinsley, moderator welcomes the delegates present to the 219th Annual Meeting of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ. R. Kinsley introduces Gregory Norbet, our keynote speaker who will offer several devotional reflections during our time together, called “Going Deeper with Gregory Norbet.”

G. Norbet is greeted with a round of applause.

Going Deeper with Gregory Norbet

Who are you? Does it make a difference? What does it say to people who don't have the courage or wherewithal to walk into church? We have a calling to respond to that question – to look for inspiration and encouragement in our lives by being grounded and rooted in Christ, in love.

Abiding in Christ is a turning toward and also a turning from. It is to go deeper into what we know our lives to be. It is also an opportunity to change something; to let go of the things that take us from the truth we know ourselves to have and who we see ourselves to be in God's love.

Song #1 “Hosea”

So many of us experience the need to express thanks for “being saved” – saved from distress, ill health, discouragement, etc and we respond with gratitude. Psalm 116 expresses the essence of this gratitude – “I so love you my God.”

Song #13 “I So Love You – a Psalm of Thanksgiving, for Kathryn”

Who we have chosen to be – the effort of keeping on – has to do with a sense of a vision – not only envisioning, but having been given a vision – a vision rooted and grounded in love.

11:30 – Call to Order and Housekeeping Business

R. Kinsley officially calls the meeting to order with the banging of the gavel.

The call to order for sessions is the chant – “Be still and know that I am God.”

The Rev. Dr. Lynn Bujnak announces that we have a quorum present.

R. Kinsley explains that theme of this year's meeting has to do with a sense of fatigue over worrying about the decline of church membership and of being told we're doing it all wrong. So the idea arose of making this year's annual meeting a retreat. We know that Jesus balanced periods of public ministry with times alone. So we also need time. “I welcome all of you to what I hope will be a special time and that we will go from this place rested restored and renewed, fill with the hope and energies to the ministries to which God calls us.”

The Rev. Amy Pitton, chair of the Board of Directors of Vermont Conference greets the meeting and welcomes us. A. Pitton introduces the Board:

Rona Kinsley, Harold Drury, Debbie Ingram, Malcolm Chase, Wendy Farrell, Michael Ford, Chris Heintz, Anne Miller, Sherry Baer. A round of applause is offered in gratitude for all.

The Rev. Alan Parker, chair of the Annual Meeting Planning Committee, introduces the red carnation bearers – people who should know answers to any questions you may have. The red vests have been retired. (Round of applause). We had a terrific planning committee this year. They are:

Anne Vivian, Cara McFadden, Gail Compton, Jeanne Zammataro, Joane Hardy, Judy Waible, Liz Sykas-Ringenberg, Lynn Bujnak, Lynn Thomas, Martha Peck, Nancy McHugh, and Rona Kinsley. Round of applause is given for all.

L. Bujnak introduces the conference staff: Rev. Jim Thomas, Associate Conference Minister. Rev. Pam Lucas, Associate Conference Minister. Lynn Thomas, Administrative Assistant/Placement Secretary, Sybil McShane, Communications and Resource Coordinator. Warm applause is offered.

R. Kinsley thanks Susie Webster-Toleno for being the meeting's chaplain.

Speak out coordinator is Jeanne Zammataro. Registrars are Sybil McShane and Lynn Thomas.

Guests to our meeting are: Gregory Norbet, our “keynoter,” Dinnie Adamson from Hopkins Bookshop, Jeannette Sallie, missionary with the UCC. **It is moved and seconded to grant these visitors voice without vote. Approved unanimously.**

R. Kinsley thanks Erin and Melissa of the Lake Morey Staff for all of their assistance in setting up and managing the physical logistics of the meeting.

Document C – Definitions and procedures.

There is a motion to adopt Document C defining the rules of this Annual Meeting. The motion is seconded. There is no discussion. **The motion is approved unanimously.**

Document D – A Covenant for Dialogue by Dr. Jerry Handspicker.

There is a motion to adopt Document D outlining our expectations of behavior toward each other during the meeting. **The motion is seconded.** There is no further discussion. **The motion is approved unanimously.**

The body reads the agreement together.

Parliamentarian

R. Kinsley notes that we will abide by Robert's Rules of Order and that The Rev. Dick White has agreed to be our parliamentarian.

Scribes

The Revs. Mark Pitton and Peter Plagge have agreed to be scribes. **It is so moved, seconded and approved.**

2013 Minutes

There is a motion made to approve the minutes from the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Vermont Conference. Seconded. No discussion. **The minutes from the 2013 Annual Meeting are approved unanimously.**

Speak-outs

Speak-outs will be one minute opportunities at the beginning of each plenary to speak about anything on your mind. J. Zammataro will coordinate the speak-outs.

The business of the Plenary I concluded by the signing of the Doxology at 12:00.

PLENARY II: BUILDING A HABIT OF PRAYER

Friday, April 25, 2014

1:30 – Call to Order

Announcements

Carol Carolsen notes the presence of the Rev. Dr. Avery Post in our midst. She notes that we are privileged that he holds his standing in the Vermont Conference and a member of the Norwich Church. We celebrate and appreciate his steadfast leadership. Dr. Post will be celebrating his 90th birthday in July. The body offers a round of applause.

Speaks-outs:

1. David Vanderlinde-Abernathy: If you're planning on hiking, please wear sturdy shoes. Five or six need car keys so we can drive to the hike site.
2. Deb Adams: I bring greetings from the Rev. Loren McGrail in Palestine. She is our UCC missionary in Palestine. D. Adams presents carved wooden dolls wearing tribal dress representing those who were abused during the 1967 occupation. Come learn about Global Ministries.
3. Amy Pitton: Visit the Friends of the Vermont Conference display and contribute to Friends of the Vermont Conference. We're trying to raise \$30,000.
4. Jay Sprout: On May 1, there will be a march for health and dignity on the State House lawn.
5. Sandy Daley: I would like to welcome you to visit Hallelujah Farms. My husband and I welcome you for a personal retreat, for a church group retreat.

6. Charlie Purinton: I am compiling a list of telephones numbers to reach veterans services around state of Vermont. Our veterans need love home families and friends. I am blessed to have all four. Many do not.
7. Grace Cleary: Co-chair of the summer lunch program. God bless all of you that actually have programs that feed hungry children in the summer. There are grants available for you to help. Please get your application in by May 15th.

1:50 – Going Deeper with Gregory Norbet

Know this – there is a pearl of great price – the hidden self, where God abides. It is your faith – your inner child of wonder and delight, your wellspring of hospitality for a simple banquet of sharing and profound transformation. May you always honor your soul and nurture that place of being from which others drink deeply.

Prayer is really about relationship. It's a place of hospitality where we are both hosted and host.

To speak about prayer is a terrible thing, because its such a different thing at different times. It really is more a part of wanting ourselves to flower, to grow, to deepen, maybe to snip back some of the roots. How do we get to a place where we can be fed and feed ourselves with a great peace? I don't have answers for that but with singing some of the songs, we might reflect on that together.

We sing “Holy Spirit, Breath of God”

“Prayer is all about participating in the constantly creative energy of God.”

2:25 – Treasurer's Report – Hal Drury

The good news is that the conference is in good fiscal position. Applause.
The controls are in place, the books are impeccable and all processes are transparent.

The conference portfolio in 2013 of 36% tracked ahead of the S&P index.

The primary source of operating income is not our investments, but us through our giving to (Our Church's Wider Mission) OCWM. Your shared support of the conference is essential for the financial health and the work the conference does.

The Finance Committee with the Board of Directors have developed a prudent budget for your consideration. The budget expects to see OCWM grow by \$11,000. The Friends of the Vermont Conference budget is big, \$30,000, but we think it is attainable.

Thank you for your past, present and future support of this wonderful conference.

Budget Presentation – Jim Thomas

Review of 2013 – operating expenses and income are both under budget. Income less so which means we ended the year with a slight surplus, 65% of which, we sent on to the National Setting of the UCC in Cleveland.

Regarding OCWM – for the previous 4 years prior to 2013 we've had a decline of 25%. In 2013 we had a decline of only 1%. We project that the next few years will show growth.

J. Thomas thanks Dick White, chair of finance committee for putting together this budget.

If we achieved what we passed each year, our OCWM income stream would be \$1M instead of \$400,000.

The budget for 2015, Document E, expects continued modest recovery, but still spending much less than prior to the recession. Staff compensation is increased to allow for expected changes in costs of health care, but does not allow for a cost of living increase.

The budget continues our sharing ratio with the National Setting of the church that we retain 65% of OCWM and we send on 35%. So we bring to you a 2015 operating budget which projects income and expenses of \$686,632.

What do we get for the money we send to OCWM? This is a question I hear often. I'd like to suggest that that is not the right question. This is a mission. That mission looks, in part, like this:

- Disaster relief and support.
- Vermont Academy of Spiritual Training
- Resource Center
- Pastors' Convocation
- New pastors support groups
- Continuing Education for pastors
- Camp Agape
- Covenant Hills
- Camping Scholarships
- Vermont Congregational Home in Newbury
- Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council
- Summer Lunch Programs
- Youth events
- Stewardship assistance
- Church Vitality events
- Retreat leadership
- Pastoral support of pastors
- Vermont Conference staff
- Search and Call
- Helping pastors and churches in crisis
- Communications

Exciting new initiatives are on the horizon this year:

- A program with Partners for Sacred Places bringing strategic investment into churches
- Center for Progressive Renewal (CPR) – partnering with church to help bring to bear resources to “get going!”

35% of our OCWM money is forwarded on to our National Setting. The National Setting helps us:

- take a stand for something on a national and global level
- manage search and call

- provide disaster response

How can you help? You are evangelists. The only way churches learn these things is if you tell them. Be partners in education about OCWM and the conference. Please become a member of the friends of the Vermont Conference.

Document F is read by Jim Thomas. **Amy Pitton moves the acceptance of Document F. It is seconded by Mal Chase.**

Discussion on Document F is scheduled for Saturday with a vote scheduled on during Plenary V.

Questions:

Carrie Youngblood, from Bethany Church in Montpelier – I wonder about the health insurance for staff. How is that being done, after the ACA?

J. Thomas – The quick answer is that we have made no change. Because the insurance is acceptable according the new standards we've decided not to make a move from the pension board to the state plan at least for now.

Doug Carter, Danville Congregational Church – There is no cost of living for staff. Is this the first year we've not had a COL increase?

J. Thomas – Yes – it's the first year. For the last 5 or 6 years we did have a COL increase.

Robb Hamm, Newfane Congregational Church – Are there other methods of increasing remuneration for staff?

J. Thomas – Historically the mechanism by which compensation is increased varies and is approved by the board.

Russell Kulas, Grace Church in Rutland – It seems appropriate that for the next 24 hours we reflect on this and see if we might want to change this.

Alan Parker, Craftsbury UCC, when the planning committee decided to move AM ahead a month, we did not really think about the consequences for the planners. Well done.

Lori Chitman, First Church Essex Junction – Is the contribution to Covenant Hills a line item?

J. Thomas – Yes it is. We give about \$8K and that's very small. We do a little more than that through volunteers, but that line is our primary means and needs all the support we can give it.

L. Chipman -- In contrast the Methodist pays the salaries of the staff and contributes \$20k to their budget,

R. Kinsley – in advance of our discussion tomorrow, I hope you will re-familiarize yourself with these documents.

Break for workshops.

PLENARY III: THE SANCTUARY WITHIN

Friday, April 25, 2014

7:20 pm

Speak-outs:

1. Lise Sparrow, Guilford Community Church – a thank you and an homage to Hal Harrison. Last year we planted 10,000 trees in Kenya thanks to you help.
2. Jeffrey and Ashely Dodson, Covenant Hills – Greetings from Covenant Hills Camp. Personally invited to visit. Anyone interested in doing retreats at Coveannt Hills, talk to us. We want to revamp that part of the ministry. Covenant Hills July 12, 25th anniversary. Also making camp improvements this summer. We appreciate any donations. We really want to see some financial support from the UCC. Send your kids to camp.
3. Cleoplace Mukeba, First Congregational Church Burlington – “Animals have more value than women in the Congo.” We are supporting a girl in the Congo because the U.S. government is not helping. We need to know about the crisis in the Congo. Invite me to the church, and I'll give a presentation about what's happening in the Congo.
4. Lucy Samara – Cleoplace is the founder of the Vermont Ibutwa Initiative. Supporting women and children. We're off to a start and we'd love to visit your church.
5. Martha Perkins – Wondering how to make money for her chuch Martha's church made pies and sold them in a cart outside. We made \$6700!
6. Charlotte Gifford, Westminster West – speaking on behalf of my sister who has come up with a doodleography idea – not all prayer is about being completely still. Doodleography the art of process of exploration and spiritual practice by taking the pen and letting it speak.
www.doodle-ography.com
7. Mandy Lape-Freeburg, Windsor – my husband Caleb and son Bruce would love to come when your musicians are gone on vacation and provide music. About a \$100 for the Sunday. It's Caleb's summer job and he's in college, so please!

The meeting reconvenes with “Be Still Chant”

There is a motion to adopt the Printed Reports. Seconded.

Discussion:

Mark Mendez – Can you explain why there is no Department of Christian Education Report?

Lynn Thomas notes that one was not submitted.

Pam Lucas – the Christian Education department is on hiatus. There is a movement to development a faith formation task-force. We are looking at different ways to equip and empower our churches in more helpful ways of developing the faith of all ages. Approved that Rev. Lee Moore will chair that task-force.

The Committee Reports are approved unanimously.

Going Deeper with Gregory Norbet

The sanctuary within is part of what I've been speaking about. We connect with *being* as opposed to *doing*, we find life and spirit and power to do what we need to do, what we feel called to do by going into the sanctuary within. The sanctuary within is the place we have to go in and out of to be renewed, to hear to rest, to look and to see.

The Gospel writer Matthew urged us to be salt. But if salt loses its taste how shall its saltiness

be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out. You are a light . . . Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven.

We need to manifest these qualities of being salt and light. These qualities are our longing. We long for that place of being from which we can be fed and sustained, nourished consoled, hugged and loved and give fresh hope with a kind word or a wise word.

We sing “God is Light”

I would like to leave you with a word regarding being here and being hosted by the committee that helped to organize this. It was a wonderful experience. I'd like to share with you a sense of peace. Jesus was clear – we can have his peace wherever we are and whenever we want to run with the ball.

We sing “Peace.” The first song G. Norbet ever consciously wrote, dedicated to his mother.

8:15 – State of the Conference Address – Lynn Bujnak

Scripture reading (Mark 4) is offered by Jim Thomas and Pam Lucas.

The gathered body is invited to turn to their neighbor and discuss the passage.

Single phrase or single word thoughts are shared with the group:

- “Keep on sowing”
- How do we keep it fertile?
- More quality seed.
- Nourish the soil
- Don't be afraid of failure
- Be the soil
- Do not be afraid of change.
- Good soil may be in very unexpected places.
- Listen – is anybody listening?
- Have we not seen the fertile soil we already have?
- Patience
- Choose the right seed.

Lynn – “I love this parable. I marvel at the profligate nature of the sower. I'm talking about this parable because it's where we are. We are sowing seeds and trusting God for the increase. And I want to talk more specifically about what some of those are.”

“Jim Thomas and I were talking about these new initiatives with Partners for Sacred Spaces and the Center for Progressive Renewals and he described a postcard that he and his wife keep on their refrigerator: “Anyone can count the seeds in apple, but only God can count the apples in the seeds.”

“I think this is a way we can talk about the initiatives in the conference. We hope and trust that

more good will come out of these initiatives than we can imagine.”

We are as the Vermont Conference sowing a lot of seeds. We have what we need to thrive. Churches are doing things that are making a difference. It will be a leap of faith. It has to be. From Recalculating the way, we learned that it is not about bucks in bank and butts on benches and survival but about being faithful no matter what and doing what is needed in God's world.

“Regarding the recent event called “Recalculating the Way:

The point of the gathering was to emphasize that *we already have what we need*. The day featured four TED Talks two of whom are here today – Nancy McHugh of Waitsfield United Church, Marissa Laviola of First Congregational Church of Morrisville , UCC

Some points I took away from those presentations:

- Church growth entails risk. There is no way around that.
- Our primary purpose is to live out one's faith in mission. Not about dollars, but about being faithful.
- All of the initiatives that were described in the TED talks went out of the doors and into the community.
- Churches are churches when they are without walls.

I want to speak a bit about the two, exciting initiatives that our Board of Directors have started.

Strategic Investment with Partners for Sacred Places

Five Episcopal Churches and Five UCC churches are participating in this initiative. The churches involved in this program are not yet named.

The churches that are selected will get assistance with assessment of assets. The churches that do this work will agree to pass on their insights and new understandings.

Center for Progressive Renewal

It has several different components.

1. Next level
2. Affinity group
3. Yearly vitality event
4. Training and coaching in church planting
5. Developing a climate of church multiplication

This initiative will be looking at healthy congregations with strong pastoral leadership, a commitment to OCWM, and a desire to focus on growth.

The initiative will choose four “Next Level” churches per year for three years. There are criteria involved in the choosing: There has to be stable leadership, good relation between the pastor and lay leaders, have to have had some recent success in initiatives and a willingness to join with other churches to learn and grow together. Talk to us if you 'd like to be a part of this project.

1. Next Level – The first step is to take a good hard look at challenges, dreams, and visions and then set goals. Look at resources and finally come up with a plan. These groups will be visited

by CPR and have a coach for this process. Similar to the Strategic Investment program with Partners for Sacred Places, if you sign on with this, going to the next level will be hard work.

2. Affinity group – The idea behind the Affinity Group is for churches that have forty to 80 average attendance and who have similar missions/programs to link together to help and support each other in their work and ministry.

3. Church Vitality Event – This even is already planned for Saturday, October 18. We want lay and clergy to attend this conference. Michael Piazza from CPR will lead conference. We will hold yearly vitality events.

4. We are trying to “create a culture of new church cultivation.”

This seems strange to us, because we have quite a lot of churches already. But we don't have an expression of church that reaches the people who are never going to come into the doors of our classic new England Congregations. We've got a lot to learn from them about spiritual hunger and our responsibility to answer hunger and point the way to what gives us life and hope.

5. Task Force Formation

We're looking for 5-7 members with a passion for new ways of doing/being/expressing church.

I'm looking forward to journeying into the future to see what kinds of apples and how many God has in store for us.

We sing Johnny Appleseed to conclude – like a bunch of adults.

8:45 – Evening Worship.

PLENARY IV: EMMAUS AND OUR DISCIPLESHIP

Saturday April 26, 2014

Announcements

The Rev. Bert Marshall of church World Service, Dahler Hayes Cornerstone funds and Jen Perry from UCC Insurance Boards are all guests who arrived late on Friday, April 25.

9:10 – Speak-outs

- Deborah Adams and Sandra Daley, Disaster Response Ministries – Are you prepared for a disaster? I've discovered as I've looked around the state many are not. FEMA and Red Cross have created a shelter initiative and want churches willing to open 25 person shelter to join them for training. They will also provide, cots, water, etc.
- Sandy Daly – taking over as coordinator for disaster. We are looking for someone from each association to be a point person for information in a time of disaster. No committee work involved!
- Chris Heintz – Most of us worship in small congregations. Search process can be daunting, exhausting, depleting. Small group of us involved in transitional ministries have designed a process called “Leaning Forward Into the Kingdom of God.” This process is designed to help churches develop a narrative profile of the congregations hopes and visions. Includes 8 weeks of facilitated conversations. There will be a training day on June 5. If you're interested in being

- a transitional pastor talk to me, or Pam Lucas or Lynn Bujnak
- Bob Keller – global Ministries in our local churches – Support our global ministries and projects. Thanks for the 40 churches who are supporting projects around the world.
 - College Street – On October 26 we had a fire which destroyed and ruined much of our church. In following days and weeks we received help and support from around the conference and the state, we have felt God's presence with us. We have not withered, but instead been nourished and renewed by your ministries. For this we express our deepest gratitude and thanks. Round of applause.
 - Dialogue with Muslims – Dr. Ayub will be speaking at Norwich Congregational Church this Monday. There is no peace with out understanding. Native of South Lebanon. He's the professor Islam and Christian Muslim relations at Hartford Seminary. Please come. More information in latest e-kit.
 - Tom Hurst – New Church starts, and Morris Pike – Thank you for supporting OCWM and the programs that flow from it.
 - Jennifer Perry – UCC Insurance Board. Greetings form Insurance Board in Cleveland, OH. As part of our ministry we make many loss prevention insurances available to all churches. Abuse Control, loss control, and a number of webinars. Would love to talk to you about your church and if there's anything we can help you with.
 - Jeannette Sallie – Former missionary in Haiti. Haiti sees 85 % unemployment. There is almost no clean water or medical care. But the Haitians go to church and say “Praise God.” It is really an awesome experience to go to Haiti. Please remember them in your prayers. It's been now 4 years since the earthquake. But there is still great need and struggle. Jeanette Zammataro presents maple syrup to J. Sally.
 - Cathy Clark and Lucia Jackson – Run a better stewardship campaign. Do you need help with finances? How about planned giving? Does anyone know what OCWM means? If you need help, help is available from the Dept. of Stewardship.
 - Robert Boutwell, Healing Ministries. On the second Sunday of each month we have an ecumenical service of healing prayer. Great things are happening.

9:30 – R. Kinsey call to order with “Be Still” chant.

Going Deeper with Gregory Norbet

Someone asked me once, “What are you doing at the monastery? I answered, “We fall and we get up again.”

Have we started out for Emmaus from Good Friday – or are we still back in those days? How do we deal with discouragement and frustration in our congregations? “My friends know that I am with you always and with you to the end times.”

We are the disciples walking to Emmaus. I'd like to share some of that in song.

We sing “Mountains of my Soul.”

Trust – we all have trying experiences wherein we lose wellbeing, hope and suffer a feeling of being disconnected from people and I think we need to see again how we can walk our talk when the going gets tough. Together we can support each other on this walk, “inch, by inch.”

We sing, “As I have Loved You.”

“All I ask of you is to forever remember me as loving you.” This is a prayer of the heart that anyone can make. I say it very often. It's something we can do in the face of our struggles in the face of people with whom we have deeply grieved.

We sing and pray, “All I ask of You.”

We sing, “Adoramus”

10:15 – OCWM and 5 for 5 recognition

Jim Thomas – recognizing 5 for 5 churches. These are churches who have given to all five our the UCC special offerings (Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour of Sharing and OCWM0. They are:

- Second Congregational Church in Bennington
- Centre Congregational Church, Brattleboro
- First Congregational Church, West Brattleboro
- Charlotte Congregational Church
- Mallet's Bay Congregational Church
- United Church of Craftsbury
- Danville Congregational Church
- United Church of Dorset in E. Rubert
- First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
- The First Congregational Church of Fairhaven
- Greensboro United Church of Christ
- Second Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in Jeffersonville
- First Congregational Church of Lyndonville
- First Congregational Church of Morrisville
- New Haven Congregational Church
- First Congregational Church Newbury
- United Church of Northfield
- First Congregational Church of Randolph, Randolph Center
- Richmond Congregational Church
- Grace Congregational United Church of Christ, Rutland
- The Congregational Church of South Hero
- First Congregational Church of Springfield
- North Congregational Church of St. Johnsbury
- Waitsfield United Church of Christ
- Wells River Congregational Church
- West Dover Congregational Church

(That was our longest list of churches in many years!)

One of our goals is to increase OCWM giving by 1% a year hoping to reach a full tithe. (For Federated Churches, their goal is 5% instead of 10%.)

- Brandon Congregational Church
- Centre Congregational Church, Brattleboro
- United Church of Cabot
- Federated Church of East Arlington
- Northfield United Church
- First Congregational United Church of Christ, North Hyde Park
- First Congregational Church of Randolph, Randolph Center
- Richmond Congregational Church
- Westinster West Congregational Church
- Weybridge Congregational Church
- Congregational Church of Windham

Sandy Daly would like to offer an amendment regarding the Reports. She would like to add a CE Report.

2013 Christian Education Department Annual Report

Submitted by amendment to the 2013 Annual Reports at the Annual Meeting of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Having resigned mid-year, I assumed a report would be provided. This not being the case and believing a report recording the activity of the board to be important, I submit this brief report:

The goals of the department are fourfold:

- To strengthen and support the resource center
- To maintain our covenantal partnerships (NEAUCE dues and scholarships to conference and support of Community of Practice – a network of Christian Educators now in the Essex Junction area). To provide meaningful programs and activities for all ages (Developed questionnaires for local church educators, produced Lenten study resources, National Youth Event/Synod support and VAST of which the final graduating class will be this year. A new form of adult education is being explored for New England as “N. E. School of Ministry”.)
- To strengthen our commitment to Outdoor Ministry and Covenant Hills Christian Camp through National Outdoor Ministry Association dues (supporting Rev. Ryan Gackenheimer as our representative), supporting our partnership with the Episcopal Diocese for Camp Agape, supporting our partnership with the Methodists for Covenant Hills.

The greatest portion of our diminishing CE budget is committed to Covenant Hills (\$8000). The remainder supports scholarships to NEAUCE and NOMA, with a small portion for other programs. VAST has basically been self sustaining.

Three and one half years ago, I stepped in as chairperson. On request of the Board of Directors, we simplified our goals to the four stated above. Over these years several decisions were made by the Board regarding Christian Education.

- The Resource Center was removed from our budget and purview and given its own line item.
- The financial commitment to Covenant Hills was moved into our budget, making approximately ½ of our budget “non-discretionary.”
- It was decided the VAST program would be discontinued.

- No effective liaison was established between the Board of Directors and Christian Education Board.

In general the CE Board has been difficult to find association representatives for. It has been discouraging. I am passionate about our need for and call to “faith formation.” It is the very core of our mission. It's not working, It needs to change. The newly established task force needs your prayers and very real support. Please remember and support our local church educators who give so much of their time and love to this important ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Sandy Daly

It is moved and seconded to accept the CE report as presented by Sandy Daly. No discussion. Accepted as presented unanimously.

CLOSING PENARY IV: FILLED WITH THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

Friday April 26

1:00 pm

Speak-outs – see note 1

1. Fred Taylor – 411 Earth – This year we are sponsoring two projects: 1) green justice program from national office: www.greenjustice.org. 2) The other is a new program “Not Ordinary Times,” calling attention to the fact that these are not ordinary times: www.notordinarytimes.org
2. On Monday, the Vermont Brigade was at the epicenter of the Battle of the Wilderness They laid the foundation that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. later advanced. I'm asking that on Monday, May 5th at 4 pm that you ring your church bell and invite your whole town to ring with you.
3. Theresa Lever, I invite us to join us for trip to El Salvador, August 9 – 17. Nobody who's gone on one of these trips has ever regretted it. The trip costs \$100/day for everything plus airfare.
4. Abby Gackenheimer, Chaplin of Cooperative Christian Ministry at the University of Vermont. I want to say thank you to the UCC for stepping up and supporting the ministry. Thanks for those churches and individuals who have stepped up and made a donations from \$50 to \$800. The only safe, welcoming, inclusive place on campus that's Christian.
5. John Connor, tomorrow is holy humor Sunday. Three preachers that went to lunch. One said, I've had an awful problem with bats. Do you? Yes. I fumigated and still we have 1000's bats in the belfry. How about you? No, you don't have bats? What did you do? Answer: we had a special service and made them all members and haven't seen them since!
6. Daylor Hayes, Mission interpreter for the Cornerstone Fund (CF) for New England. I'm happy to be here and invite anyone to invest in the Cornerstone Fund. At general synod last year, the CF said they'd support two resolutions: 1) going green, and 2) affordable housing. It would be big news if a couple churches in Vermont started doing that. We have money to offer to such projects.
7. Tracy Weatherhog, Grace Congregational Church – You hard mention of Jen Wright a member of Grace Church and the founder of Heal: Raising our World Foundation. She has often been hear at Annual Meeting, but she is currently in Kenya. Please check out her initiative detailed on her Website (www.healraisingourworld.org) and Facebook. The current initiative aims to increase sponsorships for children through an organization called Bright Point by 30 children in 30 days in April. If you are interested in sponsoring a child, check it out. She is currently

building a school and trusting that the money will follow the mission she feels so powerful about.

8. J. Zammatoro – Remember we have hand carved Palestinian dolls for purchase. Proceeds to missionaries to the Palestinians.

1:15 – R. Kinsley calls the body back to order with the “Be Still” chant

Going Deeper with Gregory Norbet

For me, this is a time of fill up – of being filled and renewed. I'm more excited and enthusiastic for another day. I thank you for the sense of importance of your presence and for what you do and who you are.

The whole perspective of going deeper is not to stay stuck. There are times when keeping the status quo going is easier than taking a risk and losing. But the issue is that we may become frozen and wind up in a point in time when it's too late and we become bitter in the lack of choice to go deeper.

We need to look for ways to be transformed and to be transforming of others. We're Christ bearers. A signal that if you come this way, I'll make sure you get around this corner. That takes a lot of spirit .

We sing, “Spirit of God”

On Martin Luther King day, 2002 I was asked to speak honoring the courage, compassion and vision of a man who's life remains a challenge to us.

As teachers, we challenged to uncover the pearl that is within and the unfolds as we meet the challenge before us. Might ask how can I make a difference? Throughout my journey as a postulate of St. Benedict I have learned to spend a lot of time listening. It's about seeing from other perspectives.

Simply showing up is important. Doing something that embodies a spirit of generosity is often not easy – it takes us out of our comfort zones and comfort times. Prayer is about changing what ever is to self-adsorbed and uninterested in others and will help us us be attentive, to live the dream and share it enthusiastically. Then the wolf shall lie down with the sheep and the mountain lion with the goat.

What is your dream? There are halls in the heaven above that open only to the voice of song. So I leave you with the Lord's prayer in song.

We sing “The Lord's Prayer.”

1:45 – Votes on Nominating Committee and Ministerial Compensation Reports and Necrology

R. Kinsley calls into business mode again, but first recalls her first meeting Fr. Norbet – and how he was so gentle and open to her. She thanks him for his give to us, particularly at this time when his wife is so ill.

A moment of prayer is offered.

Document B – the Nominating Committee report – Lucy Samara

Our nominating Committee consists of Jean Andrews, Rob Noble, Skip Dickinson. We've felt really good about our process this year, and would like to thank everyone who has stood up to serve the conference.

S. Dickinson – My thanks to those willing to serve and those that are currently serving. **I move the acceptance of our Nominating Committee report. Seconded.**

R. Kingsley – Does anyone want to volunteer for any unfilled positions?
Grafton-Orange association represented to the Board of Directors.

No further discussion. **The motion is passed unanimously.** Round of applause.

Ministerial Compensation Committee Report – Jim Thomas

On behalf of the Ministerial Compensation Committee, David Andrews, David Durfee and Anne Frey I present the report of the ministerial compensation committee.

The Ministerial Compensation Committee Report is moved as presented. It is seconded.

Debbie Ingram – I want to thank the committee for their report. I would like to call your attention that the amount for guest preachers of \$150 is a suggested amount plus mileage. That is inconsistent around the conference not because of guidelines but because of the application of them.

The motion is approved unanimously.

Necrology – Pam Lucas and Lynn Bujnak

We remember those who have served in the VT conference who have died in this past year.

- The Rev. Dr. John Fuhrmeister, died October 19, 2013
- Rev. Russell Landolt, died August 8, 2013
- Rev. Dr. Roger Daum, died June 26, 2013
- Rev. Leroy Hastings, Jr., died June 6, 1921
- Rev. Donald Morgan, died January 28, 2014
- Rev. Dr. Wayne C. Olson, died July 19, 2013
- Rev. Dr. Gary Haase, died October 6, 2013

Remembering those who have died in the past year who have been active in the conference:

- Gerrit Kouwenhoven, chair of board of directors, died August 27, 2013
- Eleanor Longfellow, director of Actkinson Retreat Center, died October 23, 2013
- Sister Miriam Ward – long time teacher of Bible in the Vermont Academy of Spiritual Training. Died January 17, 2014
- Stanley James, conference properties committee, died November 25, 2013
- Judy Drury, wife of Hal and active in conference, died November 24, 2013
- Joan Dean, active with her husband David Dean, died February 20, 2014

We also remember the many who have died in the past year who were part of our local

congregations and church communities and even our own families.

L. Bujnak offers a prayer of thanksgiving.

2:00 – Voting on Budget and Financial Resolutions

These documents and resolutions were moved and seconded yesterday.

The floor is opened up for discussion.

Mark Mendez – First Congregations Church Essex Junction. A. Pitton's report detailed funds going to the two initiatives. Where are those funds coming from? Great programs. Just wondering where the money's coming from.

Jim Thomas – 1) Money for the Partners for Sacred Spaces Initiative will come from the Vermont Strengthen the Church fund and Make a Difference endowment fund. These are detailed in the financial reports that are published on the website each month. But we are using those funds for this effort. 2) The CPR funding is drawn from the unrestricted endowment with the expectation that this will be made back through events which will be charging admissions.

Peter Cook, First Congregational Church, Burlington. When was the last time the staff had a cost of living raise?

Jim Thomas – in each of the last six years the staff has had raises.

P. Cook – think we should be modeling that we need to keep up with the cost of living.

J. Thomas – we do recognize that. It's a bit more difficult to maintain pastor compensation when we don't do it ourselves. This year is a bit of anomaly and we don't expect it to maintain in the years ahead. I would also say, that we budget the money based on what we expect health care costs are going to be next year. That doesn't always work as we expect.

Lori Chipman – Board of Directors for Covenant Hills, First Cong Church Essex Junction. I would like to move to **amend the the budget in support of our continuing Outdoor Ministry at Covenant Hills by raising our current \$8,000 of giving to \$10,000 for 2015 and an increase of \$2,000 each year up to 2020.**

Jeffrey and Ashley Dodson – We support this! We create an intentional Christian setting that is growing and vital. We greatly appreciate your prayerful consideration increasing

C. Heintz – My daughter went to CH for six years straight. Her best friend now is someone she meant her first year at camp. That's important. But what's also important is that faith she received knowledge of and growth in was one of the most important things to carry her through these tough times she's had recently.

Jim Thomas – I am concerned that this is asking to separate things. If we pass this amendment we're making policy for five years into the future.

Debbie Ingram, member of Board of Directors – I'm sympathetic to supporting our youth ministries more. I am also a little hesitant in terms of the process we've followed to balance our budget. Many of you will remember that there was a time not long ago when our finances were in very bad shape.

We've finally gotten to a point where we are in much better financial state. And we're able to give \$800 more to national. It's not stratospheric. But it is progress.

I hesitate to hamstringing our financial committee and our Board of Directors. We really deliberate very carefully. And hesitate to go that far into the future.

Westminster West delegate – I wonder what would happen to this year's budget? It would have to be in the red? I can't vote for a budget in red.

Dick White – the motion on the floor is for the 2015 budget. To add something else (policy) as this is, is not germane to the budget and so not to the motion.

Jim Thomas – We used to pay our support to Covenant Hills from a special investment account which if we had continued, it would be completely gone. So we weaned ourselves from that.

My proposal would be not to change the budget, but to direct us to increase our total contribution to \$10,000 by using the endowment. This would not unbalance the budget, which we can't do, per your direction. \$2000 will not harm the endowment which is around \$38,000.

Doug Carter, Danville Congregational Church – I had wanted to speak in favor of this amendment, but you want to identify what specifically the line item would be.

Jim Thomas – the motion is to increase our giving, not to necessarily increase our budget.

Doug Carter – I raise a Point of Order: what to do with the amendment which does not use the language of budget?

Jim Thomas – Perhaps, but the budget includes the whole of the income and expenses and not just the line items.

D. White – We have two choices. The first and easiest is to withdraw the amendment and then just bring back the first part. Or we could vote down the amendment and bring back ideas in two parts.

Doug Carter – Once the amendment is on the table it no longer belongs to the group, but is the bodies motion.

R. Kinsley – what is the pleasure of the group that brought the amendment?

Laurie Chipman – **we would like to amend the amendment by putting a period after 2015. and striking the rest. Seconded.**

To increase our budget in support of our continuing Outdoor Ministry at Covenant Hills by raising our current \$8,000 of giving to \$10,000 for 2015. ~~and an increase of \$2,000 each year up to 2020.~~

Jim Flynn, Craftsbury United Church – I am bothered by an apparent conflict of interest. While it is exemplary to have the Executive Directors before us, I think represents a conflict of interest.

R. Kinsley – Asks if we are ready to vote: Yes.

The amendment to the amendment is to put a period after 2015 and striking everything that follows.

The motion of the amendment to the amendment carries. With one opposition.

Now we vote on the amended amendment. **Approved with two nays.**

2:30 – Document F passes unanimously.

J. Zammataro calls Gregory Norbet to come forward to standing ovation and singing of “Amen.”

She offers a gift box containing a symbol of crucifixion and resurrection – a glass cross.

G. Norbet – “Thank you very much; that speaks to my heart and to your heart.”

R. Kinsley – presents Jeanne Zammataro with the Vermont Conference UCC gavel. I hope your time is as interesting and fulfilling as my time was. J. Zammataro – I hope so too. I'm hoping to bang the gavel a little more, though.

A round of applause is offered for R. Kinsley's leadership.

J. Zammataro – We should offer a big hand to Alan Parker too because being a chair of a committee like this is very, very interesting. Many thanks, to everybody who deserves it.

The 219th Annual Meeting of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ is adjourned following our closing Worship Service.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Peter Plagge
Rev. Mark Pitton