



# Vermont Conference, UCC

## Electronic Keeping in Touch

EQUIPPING CONGREGATIONS FOR CHRIST'S  
MINISTRY AND MISSION TODAY AND TOMORROW

E-Kit

Jan. 18, 2017

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### Vermont Conference News

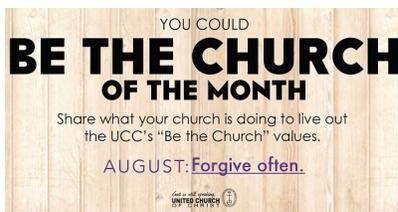
Lynn Bujnak will be preaching in Danville

Pam Lucas will be worshipping in Newport

Jim Thomas will be preaching in Springfield



### [UCC News and Updates](#)



[Click image to read about Be The Church](#)

UCC advocates to 'Be the Church' at Sister Marches around the country

Dear Friends,

So It's 2017. Now What?

It's a challenging time to 'be the church.' We are in the midst of a significant change about what being church means - not only how we 'do' it, but how we live it, share it, and pass it on.



On one side are those who say we need to return to our spiritual roots. Diana Butler Bass and others have demonstrated that congregations which are able to embrace ancient liturgies and practices can be healthy, vibrant communities of faith. Along with that, they change their focus from producing new members to sending out disciples. It's a model that embraces our past rather than discards it.

On another side is the emergent/progressive camp, which has a progressive vision for a church compatible with our beliefs and able to be successful in our culture by birthing new churches, training church leaders, and by strengthening and renewing existing congregations. Using new technology, coaching, and training entrepreneurial pastoral leadership, they are renewing and birthing new churches.

Others like Mike Piazza suggest that our vintage churches can be vital churches - not by trying to be something we are not, but by being who we are really well, including 52 transformative experiences every year on Sunday morning.

And there are more than three sides, of course. Every pundit with a book deal has a plan for renewal and growth of congregations. Most amusing to me are those from people who've never actually tried it, but have an eight point plan for success.

So, which answer is right for your congregation? All of them.

And none of them. Today more than ever what makes a congregation viable is contextual. It has much to do with your congregation's willingness to try something new, and the ways in which it is willing (or able) to stretch itself and find the place where your congregation's passion intersects with your community's needs. And, perhaps, even be willing

UCC ministries to explore MLK's dream in today's world

UCC advocates rallying for a 'just world' at Women's March in D.C.

Commentary: Following Yonder Star (to DC?)

UCC leaders inspired by Obama farewell message of hope, inclusivity

[More UCC news](#)



Click image for more information.



### Food for Thought

#### Focus Scripture Isaiah 49:1-7

**Parker J. Palmer, Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation, 20th century**

**"Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am."**

**Thomas Merton, 20th century**

**"Discovering vocation does not mean scrambling toward some prize just beyond my reach but accepting the treasure of true self I already possess. Vocation does not come from a voice 'out there' calling me to be something I am not. It comes from a voice 'in here' calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God."**

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 20th century**

**"Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."**

**Theodore Guerin, Journals and Letters of Mother Theodore Guerin, 20th century**

**"We are not called upon to do all the good that is possible, but only that which we can do."**

**Therese of Lisieux, 19th century**

**"[God] does not call those who are worthy,**

**to die and be born again. And plenty of prayer, discussion, contemplation, are needed before a way forward may be found.**

Looking through my files this week, I found a quote that prompted these musings (when I really should have been busy depositing contribution checks and closing out our fiscal year). I've lost track of the original author, but here it is:

***Perhaps God actually expects us to feed her sheep and preach the good news to her sheep rather than endlessly debate what we consider to be the best sheep food.***

The most significant impediment to finding the way forward is our own inertia and entropy. It's easiest to just keep on keeping on, trying not to notice that the only thing aging quicker than our buildings is our congregations themselves. I don't think our churches were listening when Neil Young said "It is better to burn out, than to fade away", because, on the average, a United Church of Christ congregation shutter its doors for the last time every other week.

So, have you made any resolutions as a congregation for 2017? Could this be the year you let go of the entrenched vision of church left over from the 1950's? Could this be the year you begin to remake yourselves for the 21st century?

Or, you can just delete another of 'those' missives from Jim and cozy back into that protective, comfortable old blanket that has fit so well for so long.

I'd love to help you begin a conversation about what's possible. Be in touch.

Peace,

Jim

Rev. Jim Thomas

Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship, Church Vitality, and Finance

## BE THE CHURCH

*Protect the environment.* Care for the poor.  
Embrace diversity. ~~Reject~~ racism. Forgive often.  
Love God. **Fight for the powerless.**  
Share earthly and spiritual resources. Enjoy this life.

### It's UCC Yearbook Time!

The United Church of Christ's annual Yearbook is the central reference point for the UCC for information about churches, ministers and other data the UCC uses to better understand the health of our denomination and identify trends as we all plan for the future.

The UCC Yearbook relies upon all UCC churches, associations and conferences to submit their statistical information at

but those whom [God] will."

**Catherine de Hueck Doherty, 20th century**  
"Faith walks simply, childlike, between the darkness of human life and the hope of what is to come."

**Annie Dillard, 21st century**  
"I think it would be well, and proper, and obedient, and pure, to grasp your one necessity and not let it go, to dangle from it limp wherever it takes you."

**Stephen King, 21st century**  
"If God gives you something you can do, why in God's name wouldn't you do it?"

**Unknown**  
"God doesn't call the qualified; God qualifies the called."

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Vigils for the Earth - the First 100 Hours

An opportunity to express our faith and our connection to the Earth that's being organized nationwide by a diverse range of groups: including [Interfaith Power and Light](#), Green Faith and the national UCC Council for Climate Justice.

During the first 100 hours of the new US administration, it's important for us as people of faith to witness to our love for the Earth, and our commitment to people, planet, and communities.

Around the country, people are organizing vigils - with diverse faith communities and people of good will - to show our care and commitment publicly. **A vigil is being organized for Brattleboro for Fri. Jan. 20, from 4-6 PM**, so if you're within range, we hope you'll attend. (see below for more info)

The web-site here has a number of resources as well as suggestions for organizing events. I especially recommend the "Sample Prayers and Statements," and "100 hour vigil resources from IPL."

<http://www.greenfaith.org/programs/environmental-justice/first-100-hours-vigils>

Since the time is short, and you may not be able to organize a vigil event in your community, here are several suggestions for ways we can join in this important witness:

- Include an acknowledgment of this witness in your worship on Sunday, Jan. 22 - the prayers and litanies should give you lots of ideas to work with.

the beginning of each year so the reference data is as accurate as possible. Using the UCC Data Hub, churches may upload their information directly for the Yearbook.

The Vermont Conference asks that every church in our Conference participate in the UCC Yearbook information submission effort. Each church should designate one person to be responsible for this effort and notify Jesse Davis at the Vermont Conference so he can be a resource to them. Jesse will be in contact with these designated people as the Yearbook process moves forward. The UCC Center for Analytics, Research and Data (CARD) has made resources available to take you step by step through the data upload process in the UCC Data Hub.

You can access the 2017 Yearbook Instructions and video tutorials at: [www.ucc.org/research\\_yearbook](http://www.ucc.org/research_yearbook)  
The deadline for uploading church information to the UCC Data Hub is March 8, 2017.

If you are the designated Yearbook person and have questions, please contact the Vermont Conference Ministries Coordinator Jesse Davis at [davisj@vtcucc.org](mailto:davisj@vtcucc.org) or 802-728-4999.

Thank you!

**Here are the Per Capita Rates for 2017**

| PER CAPITA RATES FOR 2017 |                  |               |                   |         |
|---------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------|
| Association #             | Association Name | Assoc. Amount | Conference Amount | Total   |
| 788                       | Addison          | \$0.00 *      | \$12.40           | \$12.40 |
| 792                       | Champlain        | \$1.10        | \$12.40           | \$13.50 |
| 796                       | Grafton-Orange   | \$0.50        | \$12.40           | \$12.90 |
| 800                       | Northeast        | \$1.00        | \$12.40           | \$13.40 |
| 804                       | Southwest        | \$1.00        | \$12.40           | \$13.40 |
| 808                       | Washington       | \$0.00 *      | \$12.40           | \$12.40 |
| 812                       | Windham Union    | \$0.25        | \$12.40           | \$12.65 |
| 816                       | Windsor-Orange   | \$1.00        | \$12.40           | \$13.40 |

\* Addison and Washington Associations collect Per Capita directly from their churches



The Vermont Conference is pleased to announce the Rev. Shawn Bracebridge has been called as Pastor and Teacher to the Dummerston Congregational Church, UCC. Rev. Bracebridge began his ministry with Dummerston on January 17th. Welcome to Vermont Shawn!

**Save the Date for Annual Meeting**

- Engage in prayerful attention to the needs of the Earth and all its peoples during this first 100 hours of the new presidency - and encourage your congregation to do so.
- Have an informal opportunity for members of your congregation to gather prayerfully some time during the weekend following the inauguration, to witness to our concern for the earth and all its peoples.

### Details about Brattleboro Vigil:

Interfaith Vigil for the Earth: Fri. Jan. 20, 4-6:15 PM. Part of a nationwide series of interfaith vigils for the Earth and its people on inauguration weekend. 4:00-5:00 PM, Wells Fountain (please bring values-based, not political signs).

5 PM: Candlelight March to Centre Congregational Church

5:15-6:15: Indoor vigil at Centre Congregational Church, with meditation, music and readings - bring your own reading expressing your care for the earth and/or your faith perspective.

Sponsored by the Brattleboro Area Interfaith Initiative and Post-Oil Solutions: Info: Fred at 387-2681 or Tim at 869-2141.

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Vermont Ecumenical Council

Invites you to

An Ecumenical Service for

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity:  
Reconciliation - The Love of Christ Compels Us  
(2 Corinthians 5:14-20)

Sunday January 22, 2017  
3:00 p.m.

St. Michael's College Chapel  
One Winooski Park  
Colchester, Vermont

Everyone is welcome

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed in the octave of the Christian feasts of St. Peter and St. Paul, January 18-25, in recognition of Jesus' hope expressed in the Gospel that the followers of Christ might all be one (John 17:21).

Observance of the Week is supported by The Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute, a ministry of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement.

The 222nd Annual Meeting of the Vermont Conference, UCC will take place on Friday and Saturday, April 28-29, 2017 at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, VT.



All members of the Vermont Conference -- church members, delegates, Members in Discernment and authorized ministers are heartily encouraged to attend!

**There is a group rate available at Lake Morey Resort.**

Make sure to tell their reservation agent that you are attending the Vermont Conference, UCC Annual Meeting to get the group rate of \$99 (\$107.91 inclusive). **Call Lake Morey Resort at 800-423-1211.**

### Information for Resolutions

The deadline for resolutions to be presented, discussed and voted upon at the Annual Meeting in April 2017 has passed. Information for the submittal of emergency resolutions and resolutions to be discussed, but not voted upon, at the April 2017 Annual Meeting:

1. Any emergency resolution should be submitted to the Board of Directors no later than April 21, 2017.
2. Resolutions to be presented at the 2017 Annual Meeting, but to be discussed and voted at the 2018 Annual meeting should be submitted by March 22, 2017.

In addition, there is a document which outlines the format in which the resolutions should be presented. Please contact Jesse Davis for all pertinent documents at [Davisj@vtcucc.org](mailto:Davisj@vtcucc.org)

### A Vermont Conference Continuing Education Offering

PASTORING CHALLENGING PARISHIONERS:  
A Mental and Relational Health Perspective

As Pastors, we love our parishioners, each and every one. But sometimes, there are those dear ones who challenge us: pastorally, relationally, in committee meetings, in relationships with other parishioners, and with staff. Sometimes the challenges are so great that we wish we had a model of understanding and a method for engaging in pastorally effective ways. This workshop is designed to give some conceptual models for understanding challenging folks from a mental and relational health perspective. Through small group discussion and role play, participants will have opportunities to discuss these models and to practice effective ways to engage.

February 22, 2017  
10:00am - 3:00pm

Bethany Church - Randolph, Vermont  
\$15.00 - Lunch included

[Click Here to Register](#)

The Vermont Ecumenical Council, a network of Christian cooperation, seeks to serve the common good through worship and prayer, works of care and mercy, and loving prophetic witness for peace, justice, and the integrity of creation.

Contact: [info@vecbs.org](mailto:info@vecbs.org)

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Join Our Vigil of Hope!

[VT Interfaith Power & Light](#) is holding a [Vigil of Hope on Inauguration Day, Friday, January 20, at 5 pm in Burlington at the top of Church Street in front of the Unitarian Universalist Church](#). We will stand together to show our resistance to the Trump Administration's climate denier cabinet and to hold in the light those in this country and around the world who are suffering as a result of global climate change. To learn more, contact [VTIPL](#).

[VTIPL Website](#)

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## Sunday School Coordinator

Williston Federated Church seeks a Sunday School Coordinator.

Plan and supervise Sunday School for children aged 3 years through Senior High. Recruit, train, and support teachers and other volunteers in Sunday School program. The Sunday School Coordinator will serve as a consistent and welcoming presence on Sunday mornings. This individual will coordinate and oversee our Christian Education Program and assist with Sunday School teaching when needed.

For a job description and to apply, Email [Office@steeple.org](mailto:Office@steeple.org) at the Williston Federated Church.

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You are invited to join the Vermont Conference UCC in Chandler Music Hall for Vermont Pride Theater's sixth annual winter benefit on Saturday January 28th: the first New England production of Topher Payne's prize-winning new play Perfect Arrangement. Proceeds from this staged reading will go to the civil rights work of GLBTQ Legal Advocates Defenders ([www.glad.org](http://www.glad.org)).

[More information here...](#)

## FACILITATOR

The Rev. Dr. Marisa Laviola is the Pastor of the First Congregational/Puffer UM Church in Morrisville. She holds a PhD. in psychology, and before her ordination eight years ago, was a clinical psychologist in hospital and private practice for more than 20 years. Her specialty areas included sequelae of severe childhood abuse in teens and adults, eating disorders, and women's mental health. She has also given papers and workshops on working with challenging clients in the therapy relationship, women and substance abuse; and is published in the areas of the sequelae of incest, and rethinking labels for severe personality disorders.

## The Sanctuary Movement and Legal Risks

At the request of several Conferences, the Office of General Counsel has prepared a memorandum regarding the legal risks for faith communities who are engaging in the sanctuary movement by providing shelter and other sanctuary services to undocumented immigrants. Please contact the Office of General Counsel if you have questions.

[Read Memorandum here...](#)

## New Hampshire School of Ministry to offer Pastoral Care Course

Beginning in February 2017, the Rev. Dr. David B. Reynolds, Executive Director of Pastoral Counseling Services in Manchester, NH will offer an online course entitled Pastoral Care: Creating Meaning with Individuals and Communities.

Drawing from Dr. Carrie Doehring's book, The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach, the course will provide students with an understanding of the practice of pastoral care in contemporary ministry settings.

The course will be 12 hours over a six-week period and will include a face-to-face class for 2-3 hours. To register for the course, please contact the Rev. Rebecca Maccini at [revrwm@tds.net](mailto:revrwm@tds.net).

## The Conference Resource Center

The following **VHS tapes** are available at no cost. [Email me](#) if you are interested in them and I will mail them out to you.

Here is this week's selection:

[Joseph Campbell and The Power of Myth \(6 tapes\)](#)

[Anthony Hopkins - Peter and Paul \(2 tapes\)](#)

[Jesus of Nazareth \(3 tapes\)](#)

[10 Commandments 1-10 \(5 tapes\)](#)

[The Jesus Experience \(4 tapes\)](#)

[The Story of Jacob's Dream \(1 tape\)](#)

[The story of Jacob and Esau \(1 tape\)](#)

[Bonhoeffer Agent of Grace \(1 tape\)](#)



Cotton Patch Gospel (1 tape)  
Hanged on a Twisted Cross (1 tape)  
PBS - From Jesus to Christ (4 tapes)  
Dateline - Jerusalem (2 tapes)



These are just a few of the large amount here at the Conference. If you are in the area and want to stop in and look to see what we have on VHS, please do.

## Resources from WorshipWell

Be sure to check out the worship resources available at:  
[worshipwell.church](http://worshipwell.church)



**Thank You for Reading**  
**An Open and Affirming Conference**  
[For the E-Kit Archive](#)

