



Vermont Conference, UCC Electronic Keeping in Touch

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

E-Kit

March 1, 2017

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Vermont Conference News

Lynn Bujnak will be worshipping at the Barre Congregational Church

Pam Lucas will be worshipping in Warren and attending a Search Committee meeting.

Jim Thomas will be worshipping at his home church, The Federated Church of Rochester

Dear VTCUCC:

Today is Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the season of Lent. Many of us will participate in the marking or imposition of ashes as a sign of our repentance and willingness to join Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, to the cross, and to the empty tomb.

I have been thinking about the ways we are "marked" as Christ's own. Certainly this happens in Baptism and in the renewal of Baptism. As I think about Ash Wednesday, I realize that this experience is another way we are literally marked as Christ's own. This is a sign of relationship, an acknowledgement of our common lot as creatures of made of the humus of earth, and born of our desire to be in closer relationship with the One who calls and claims us. It is not meant as a means to separate ourselves from others but rather as one way of claiming our vocation as disciples of Christ.

In this time of unrest where we seem to have if not lost at least misplaced our moral and ethical calling to care for those who are the most marginalized, to be stewards and caretakers of creation, to stand against violence, hatred and fear of those whose skin color or ethnicity or religion is different than our own, how are we recognized as Christ's



God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



[UCC News and Updates](#)

[Montana clergy produce TV programs to proclaim progressive Christian voice](#)

[Ash Wednesday message to meet people where they are](#)

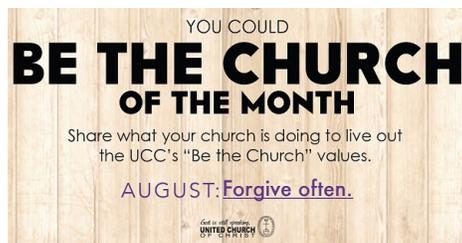
[Repairs underway at Berkeley UCC church damaged by fire](#)

[Standing Rock lawsuit, D.C. March continue movement against Dakota Access Pipeline](#)

[Former Pension Boards, United Church Funds CIO George Doty passes](#)

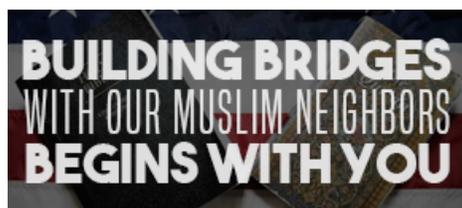
[LGBT supporters disturbed by move rescinding protections for transgender students](#)

[Commentary: Dismantle Racism: A Call to Action for Racial Justice](#)



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[More UCC news](#)



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[Food for Thought](#)

[Focus Scripture
Matthew 4:1-11](#)

disciples? Will others "know we are Christians by our love?"

After the resurrection, when Jesus appears to the disciples, they recognize Him by his wounds, by the marks on his hands and feet and side. While I no longer believe in the concept of substitutionary atonement (that God required Jesus' sacrificial death to save us from our sins) I do believe in those marks as a powerful sign of Christ's identification with us in our woundedness. Perhaps one of the ways we are recognized as Christ's own is when we are willing to embrace our own woundedness and identify with the wounds of God's people and God's creation.

However you mark this time of Lent may it be a holy season and a time for return, renewal and witness.

In peace,
Lynn

Annual Meeting Preacher & Keynoter

Two delegates from the Barre Congregational Church have written of their experience in attending the 2016 Annual Meeting at Lake Morey. In reading of their time at the Annual Meeting, it presents a wonderful sense of the activities that were ongoing last year...and a feeling of what could be experienced by others at this upcoming meeting.



Registration is now open!

[Click here for more information and to register](#)

Hi! We're Jeffrey Tuper-Giles and Hollie Friot - members of the Barre Congregational Church. This past spring, we were first-time attendees to the Vermont Conference, UCC annual meeting. As you may have seen, information is already out about the 2017 annual meeting, and we really hope to see you there. If you've never been to the Conference's annual meeting, but have wondered what it's like, we're here to tell you.

Henri J.M. Nouwen, 20th century

"Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection....When we have come to believe in the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity, and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions....Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the 'Beloved.' Being the Beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence."

Jonathan Martin, 21st century

"But that's one way we can identify the devil's voice: It always plays to our fears. It is the voice that tells us we must do something to prove who we are, to prove that we're worthy, to prove that we are who God has already declared us to be. When we know we are loved by God, we don't have to prove anything to anyone. There is nothing we can do to make ourselves more beloved than we are."

Billy Graham, 20th century

**"The devil doesn't need to invent any new temptations; the old ones work as well as they ever have."
and
"It is unnatural for Christianity to be popular."**

N.K. Jemisin, The Hundred Thousand Kingdoms, 21st century

**"We can never be gods, after all--but we can become something less than human with frightening ease."
Winston Churchill, 20th century
"One ought never to turn one's back on a threatened danger and try to run away from it. If you do that, you will double the danger. But if you meet it promptly and without flinching you will reduce the danger by half. Never run away from anything. Never!"**

First, we knew we were in for an engaging and enlivening time immediately upon walking to the registration tables at the beautiful Lake Morey Inn (800-423-1211, mention "Vermont Conference Annual Meeting"). We were greeted by a troupe of ministers and volunteers from the VT Conference and their smiles were contagious. After registration, you have time to walk around and read about the conference workshops - and trying to figure out how you can split yourself into two or three people to take them all, because they all seem so educational and exciting.

This year's keynote speaker was Bishop Dwayne Royster - from Living Water, UCC in Philadelphia, PA. To say that hearing him preach was powerful and inspiring is an understatement. His words, "What does the church have to say to those with their backs against the wall?" still ring in our ears. Our eyes were opened to the plight of race relations and social justice issues in ways that touched us deeply, and still has us thinking how our actions can impact those around us in meaningful ways.

2017's speaker is slated to be Rev. Emily C. Heath, of the Exeter, NH Congregational Church and author of *Glorify: Reclaiming the Heart of Progressive Christianity*. You may have also read Emily's work in the UCC's Still Speaking Daily Devotionals, the *Huffington Post's* Religion page or the *Christian Century*. Needless to say, we're already claiming our seats at the upcoming annual meeting!

In addition to hearing the keynote speaker and voting on annual meeting business, participants are encouraged to sign up for some of the many workshops offered over the weekend. We attended workshops on liturgical arts, faith formation and Rev. Molly Baskette's book *Real Good Church* - and several more were offered. We each came away from our workshops with new insight and valuable tools that we were able to bring back and discuss (and implement) at our church.

Perhaps among the most valuable aspects of the annual meeting overall was to worship and be in community with other people who belonged to UCC churches around the state. To sit face-to-face with our brothers and sisters in Christ and to discuss issues that face our churches and us as followers of Christ renewed our spirit and our call to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. We really cannot wait for the 2017 Annual Meeting. We hope we've given you an idea of what you can expect as an attendee. To be honest, there are many more interesting and exciting aspects that we haven't even gotten into - the music, the

Oswald Chambers, 20th century

"God never gives strength for tomorrow or for the next hour, but only for the strain of the minute."

C.S. Lewis, 20th century

"How little people know who think that holiness is dull....When one meets the real thing, it's irresistible."

Christopher Morley, 20th century

"The enemies of the truth are always awfully nice."

Bill Watterson, 21st century

"Calvin: Do you believe in the devil? You know, a supreme evil being dedicated to the temptation, corruption, and destruction of man? Hobbes: I'm not sure that man needs the help."

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"An Invitation from the Environmental Committee of the DOM."



To pastors and members of the Vermont UCC,

Make Lent an opportunity to enter into a spiritual discipline of fasting from carbon and reflecting on our stewardship of the Earth.

Over the past few years, thousands of people the world over have welcomed a day-by-day opportunity to fast from carbon as their Lenten discipline. Initiated by the UCC, people of every Christian perspective - and people who are not Christians - have benefited from this opportunity to become more conscious and conscientious in their daily lives.

[Read More...](#)

food (yum!), the exhibit booths, and other presentations! *You'll just have to come to the 222nd Vermont Conference Annual Meeting to see and experience it all. We hope to see you there!*

**Everyone -- delegates, authorized ministers, church members -- is welcome and invited to the 222nd Annual Meeting!**

[Click here for more information and to register](#)

## Final Week for UCC Yearbook!

The United Church of Christ's annual Yearbook upload period ends on March 8th!

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!

## Will you be a witness for justice right here in Vermont?

Your presence is needed (!) at the annual VLIAC day at the State House. For 45 years, the Vermont Conference has supported this organization that advocates for the needs of low-income Vermonters. With the recent changes in the national political climate and in Vermont's present economic state, programs that support our lowest income neighbors are at risk! Please join Betty Edson, Theresa Lever and other UCC justice advocates in Montpelier on March 17. Your physical presence alone will demonstrate support, and there will be opportunity (though no obligation) to voice your concerns as well. We will:  
\*\* be introduced as a group in the House chamber

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Two Great Opportunities!

Our conference is in need of a new **Open and Affirming Consultant** and a **Disaster Response Coordinator**. Training and support available for each position. If you wish to learn more, please contact me. Lynn bujnagl@vtcucc.org, 802-728-4999.

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### CABIN FEVER DINNER and CONCERT Saturday March 4

5:30-7pm Dinner \$10 adults/ \$5 children under 5 walk in/take out Pulled Pork and Chicken, Coleslaw, Macaroni and Cheese, Vegetarian Chili and Apple Crisp with Ice Cream

7:30pm  
Tiokasin Ghosthorse

[Read more.....](#)

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FREE ORGAN!

The Second Congregational Church in Londonderry has a Rodgers 'windless' (electric) organ that needs a home. All you have to do is come and pick it up! Also included are the two organ speakers. This is a double console organ that has served us well, standard peddles, etc. Questions and or interest can be directed to Rev. Laurie Krooss, LKROOSS@yahoo.com or 802-824-6453.

WANTED:

Glass communion cups. Second Congregational Church in Londonderry is in search of the small glass communion cups that your church may not use anymore....(Yes, of course we can buy them but first we thought that there may be some collecting dust in a church that has switched to plastic and we thought we would take them off your hands!) If you have some that you'd like to find a home for please call Rev. Laurie Krooss, LKROOSS@yahoo.com or 802-824-6453. Thank you!

** receive orientation and a legislative update from Karen Lafayette, VLIAC's legislative liaison

** attend hearings and committee meetings

** enjoy free lunch during a program that includes presentations by legislators and advocates for housing, food security, healthcare and more.

Plan to arrive at the State House by 9:20 and stay until lunch ends at 1:30. Follow this link for all details, a document you can print to distribute to others, and contact information for

[Details Here....](#)

Betty and Theresa.
Thank you!

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Stepping Forward Together: Advancing Equity and Cultural Competency to Improve Population Health  
by Vermont Care Partners

Join us for this timely and essential two day discussion about health care equity and the promotion of population health for Vermonters. The two days will be filled with national, regional and local experts sharing their knowledge and experiences about health care, diversity, culture and how to best support the health of Vermonters.

[More Information and Registration...](#)

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Peacemakers' Pulpit
Bethany Church, Randolph
Theresa Lever

. . . the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
St. John, Revelation 22.2, circa 100 CE

When the white eagle of the North is flying overhead
The browns, reds, and golds of Autumn lie in gutter, dead.
Remember then that Summer birds with wings of fire flying

Resources from WorshipWell

Be sure to check out the
worship resources
available at:
worshipwell.church



Came to witness Spring's new hope, born of
leaves decaying.
Just as new life will come from death, love
will come at leisure -
Love of love, love of life, and giving without
measure
Gives in return a wonderous yearn of a
promise almost seen;
Lives hand in hand and together will stand
on the threshold of a dream.

*Graeme Edge, "Threshold of a Dream,"
Moody Blues, 1969*

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An Open and Affirming Conference
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