



Vermont Conference, UCC Electronic Keeping in Touch

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

E-Kit

May 10, 2017

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Vermont Conference News

Jim Thomas will be leading worship and attending the search committee meeting at the Sharon Congregational Church

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



[UCC News and Updates](#)

Greetings!

Our Church Shouldn't Be Political!

At least, that's what I hear. One of the churches I am assisting in the search and call process, at a conversation about what they dreamed and hoped for in a new pastor said, "We want relevant sermons that speak to our daily lives - but we don't want a pastor who is political. That's not the church's place."

I pushed back a bit, wondering what they meant by that. And countered with the idea that the church has always been political - the history of the United Church of Christ (UCC) and its denominational forbearers is chock full of such examples. Reading the list of [UCC Firsts](#) on the denominational website is a pretty good primer on this. The Pilgrims landed on our shores to escape persecution and for religious freedom. Moreover, they organized churches using 'congregational' polity, a democratic, self-governing form of organization that became a model for the democratic government that would eventually form.

The idea of freedom of the press was birthed when the Congregationalists formed the first publishing house in the new world, [Pilgrim Press](#). Then there was the first stand against slavery. And acts of civil disobedience (the Boston Tea Party was inspired by thousands protesting unfair taxes at Old South Meeting House).

BE THE CHURCH

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

Commentary: Your gifts support
love and justice

Justice grant helps Alabama
church open safe space to LGBT
teens

Kansas City faith community
helps pass sales tax to fund
inner-city economic
development

UCC leaders caution executive
order won't be final word on
religious liberty

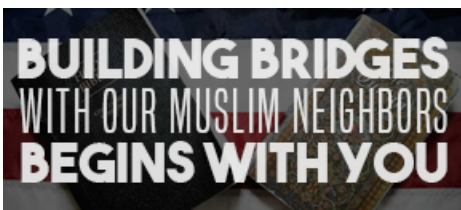
Reformed Churches' new UCC
affiliation expands ministry in
New York

Commentary: Do not deny care
to our neighbor

ACA replacement
'disheartening,' UCC advocates
ready to fight another day

Commentary: A Reluctant
Marcher

[More UCC news](#)



Click image for more information.



Food for Thought
John 14:1-14

If you've been connected to the UCC for a while, you're listing along with me. There was the ordination of the first African American pastor by a Protestant denomination. A Reformed church hiding the Liberty Bell under its floorboards to protect it from the British. Organizing to free the Amistad slaves, and later the formation of the American Missionary Association - the first anti-slavery society in the U.S. with multiracial leadership. Then there was the first theological school to admit women, and also the Social Gospel, which denounced injustice and exploitation of the poor.

In the 1950's, at the request of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, the UCC organized and won in Federal court a ruling that the airwaves are public, not private property. The decision led to a proliferation of people of color in television studios and newsrooms.

Following that, there was the ordination of the first openly gay pastor, support for marriage equality, emphatic response to the Love Canal disaster, and so much more.

And it's not just the UCC, of course. The people of God have always been called to speak truth to power, to bring injustice to light, to seek fairness and wholeness. See: Isaiah, Amos, Jeremiah, among others.

I hope I didn't exhaust you with all that. But I make no apologies for being a church engaged in political discourse. Being civically involved is part of our DNA. We don't take off our Christian cloak when we exit the sanctuary on Sunday morning. We are called to live as disciples all 168 hours of the week. That doesn't mean we are ever to be partisan, recent signing by our President to the contrary. We are called to participation but not to endorsements of persons or parties. We are called to speak to issues, not individuals.

As a church.

Everyone is of course entitled to their opinions, even your pastor, but that doesn't mean the pastor gets to, in robe and stole,

Ivy Baker Priest, 20th century

"The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be the beginning."

Gilda Radner, 20th century

"I wanted a perfect ending. Now I've learned, the hard way, that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next."

George Eliot, 19th century

"Only in the agony of parting do we look into the depths of love."

Søren Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard. 19th century

"The tyrant dies and his rule is over, the martyr dies and his rule begins."

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Return of the King, 20th century

"Your time may come. Do not be too sad, Sam. You cannot be always torn in two. You will have to be one and whole, for many years. You have so much to enjoy and to be, and to do."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 20th century

"This is the end--for me the beginning of life" (his last words to his fellow prisoners before his execution).

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**Join us for a webinar!**

Thursday, May 11, 2017 at 2 PM ET  
Creating Caring Communities:  
How Faith-Based Communities Can Engage Individuals and Families with Opioid Addiction  
With Presenter:  
J. Deanna Wilson, MD, MPH

endorse a candidate for office on behalf of, or representing, your congregation. And no one else gets to either.

I went on a bit of a rant, I confess. And when I was done, I asked if I had helped to clarify things a bit. "Oh, yes," was the response. "I understand. I suppose political is fine. But can we find someone who does it without being controversial?"  
<sigh>

Peace,  
Jim  
Rev. Jim Thomas  
ACM for Stewardship,  
Church Vitality and Finance

### Annual Meeting Wrap-up

Thank you to everyone who attended the 222nd Annual Meeting of the Vermont Conference, UCC! We were blessed to have wonderful worship, music and fellowship at the beautiful Lake Morey Resort.

If you missed any part of the Annual Meeting--or were unable to attend--we are posting various presentations on the Annual Meeting website at <http://vtcam2017.wordpress.com/presentations>.

Jeffrey Tuper-Giles, our new Vice Moderator, has written a reflection of his experience at this year's Annual Meeting. [You can read Jeffrey's reflection here.](#)

We hope to see you next year at the 223rd Annual Meeting!

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The Department of Mission thanks all those congregations and individuals who have contributed to the United Church of Christ's Neighbors in Need Programs over the years.

In the past, Neighbors in Need has funded at least two organizations in Vermont, the Dismas House in Burlington and Vermont Low Income Advocacy.

The Department would like to call to your attention changes that are being made in the NIN grant making process. From now on, all

[Register Now!](#)

In this time of the opioid epidemic entrapping so many of our colleagues and loved ones, this webinar will continue a discussion focusing on engaging clergy, other congregational ministers, lay leaders and concerned community members to provide a form of screening and brief intervention appropriate to the faith community's roles. This preliminary preparation process for congregations is often overlooked, and, as a result, faith communities fail to realize their full potential to stemming the tide of this epidemic and to support recovery. With this webinar, we hope to help you take the first steps to affecting transformational collaboration with your community, and we welcome your participation. A certificate for one NAADAC contact hour is available after successfully completing a short quiz.

A Great Opportunity

Our conference is in need of a Disaster Response Coordinator. There is training and support available for the position. If you wish to learn more, please contact me.

Lynn bujnakl@vtcucc.org,
802-728-4999.

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**Organist/Choir Director Needed!**

Application  
Email: [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org)

Job Description/Offer: First Church of Essex Junction, U.C.C. seeks PT Organist/Choir Director. Church is

grants will be made only to UCC churches or organizations. The maximum grant will increase from \$3,000 to \$5,000. Additionally, NIN will fund five Grass Top Grants up to \$10,000 for innovative ideas to advance justice in our communities.

The Department will like to encourage Vermont Conference churches to apply for grants that will further their justice ministries in their communities. If you have an especially innovative idea that would benefit from a larger grant, please consider applying for a Grass Top Grant. Deadlines will be in the fall. For more information, go to: [http://www.ucc.org/nin\\_grant-application](http://www.ucc.org/nin_grant-application)

Thanks.  
Jeanne Zammataro  
Vice-chair, DOM

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Alzheimers and Dementia

The AD church: The Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, at 1721 Maple St. (Route 14) in Hartford Village, hosts an interdenominational worship service, created for those living with Alzheimers or dementia and their caregivers/families.

It is held the first Sunday of every month, beginning at 1:30. It features a short message, traditional hymns, the Lord's Prayer, and Communion. The service is followed by refreshments and social time.

All are welcome. 802-295-9635.

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SUMMER LUNCH PROGRAM GRANTS

The Department of Mission is hoping UCC congregations are all currently preparing to help feed hungry children this summer by participating in a local summer lunch program or continuing or initiating your own. Schools are doing their best to help feed children during the school year with not only lunches

GLBTQ friendly. Job includes coord. music program, directing adult choirs, and playing organ & piano @ 2 services [beautifully refurbished 1928 Estey organ / Young Chang baby grand].

Email cover letter and resume to FCCEJmusicsearch@gmail.com or mail to FCCEJ Music Search, 1 Church Street, Essex Junction VT 05452.

Church office 802-878-5745.
Website: www.fccej.org
Company Name: First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
Company Website: www.fccej.org

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### **FREE ORGAN!**

The Second Congregational Church is 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](mailto:Rev.Laurie.Krooss), or 802-824-6453.

### **Resources from WorshipWell**

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



but breakfast, after school snacks and some are even providing an evening meal.

Just imagine the financial impact on a low income family when summer arrives. Children will be hungry. In 2010 approximately 28,000 children in Vermont received free and reduced price meals at school...only 6000 participated in summer lunch programs when school was no longer in session. We don't think these numbers have significantly changed. Please make it a goal to find the other 22,000 children and feed them.

The Vermont Conference strongly supports our churches' involvement in Summer Lunch programs. In 2016, 13 churches received grants for their summer lunch programs through the Vermont Conference Department of Mission Summer Lunch Grant Program.

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

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Clergy and retired clergy personal retreat & respite in the southern Green Mountains!

As part of a memorial to Rev. Paul & Dorothy Alberti (retired ELCA minister and wife and much beloved Associate members of Second Congregational Church in Londonderry) The Blue Gentian Lodge in Londonderry, VT, owned by Paul and Dorthy's son and daughter-in-law, are offering lodging at the Blue Gentian Lodge for \$25 per night (single or double occupancy) to clergy and retired clergy as a personal retreat & respite from April 17-May 25th.

For more information or questions please contact:

**Blue Gentian Lodge
Lisa Sicotte & Ken Alberti
289 Magic Mountain Access
Londonderry, VT 05148
www.bluegentian.com
BlueGentian@comcast.net
802-824-5908**



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