

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

Local Church Edition

Fundraising

With no one in our church, how do we continue with the Offering and having members continue with their pledges?

There are a number of online fundraising platforms out there. Some are geared better towards the for-profit world rather than the non-profit world and vice versa.

The Vermont Conference uses VANCO (<https://www.vancopayments.com/>) and we have been very happy with their pricing (<https://www.vancopayments.com/egiving/pricing>) and service level. VANCO will automatically deposit funds into your church's account.

PayPal (<https://www.paypal.com/us/non-profit/fundraising/fundraising-online>) is also an option. They offer pricing similar to VANCO and have a special non-profit rate. You have to offer proof of non-profit status to be eligible for their special rates. The United Church of Christ has a blanket 501(c)(3) status held by the National Setting which covers all Conferences, Associations and local churches. Please contact Jesse Davis (vtcoordinator2018@gmail.com) at the Vermont Conference office to receive a letter attesting to your church's eligibility.

Worshipping online

How do we conduct worship online with streaming services?

This is something many of our churches have never needed to consider; now it has become a necessity. Like fundraising, there are many different online meeting and streaming services. The most popular are YouTube, Facebook Live and ZOOM. Each of them varies in how interactive they are and in what they might cost. There is also the question, regardless of platform, of parishioner accessibility for online worship to begin with due in part to the level of online capacity in their area. Video and audio both take up a large bandwidth and slow connections will falter under the demand.

The Vermont Conference, and United Church of Christ nationally, have been using ZOOM (<https://zoom.us/>) for their online meetings and conferences for some time now. It is a full service meeting and webinar platform with full interaction capabilities for your congregation. Their offerings range from a free subscription for gatherings up to 40 minutes long to full webinars and large meetings for a subscription fee which varies depending upon what you are seeking. A single license to conduct gatherings with up to 100 attendees for unlimited duration is about \$150 per year. It is also possible to simultaneously broadcast your ZOOM gathering on Facebook and YouTube provided you have accounts with them.

Using music online

Can we play music during our worship online?

The short answer is: yes. **HOWEVER**, you must have a license or other written permission from the copyright holder to do so. If you fail to gain this permission or license, your church will be financially liable for breach of copyright. Even negotiated settlements of these types of cases cost thousands of dollars. Federal law (copyright falls under federal jurisdiction) provides for a minimum penalty in excess of \$20,000 for those found guilty of copyright infringement.

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

Local Church Edition

The Vermont Conference suggests two licensing sources depending upon the music you are using. For most hymnals, OneLicense.net (<https://onelicense.net/>) offers an expansive library of music for a variable fee depending on the number of songs and duration of the license.

For other religious music that isn't covered by OneLicense.net, you will need to get a special license from the copyright holder. One of the past Annual Meeting musicians, Peter Amidon, recommends (<https://www.easysonglicensing.com/>). For a flat fee plus percentage of final licensing fee, they will do the legwork to secure a license for a particular song. However, this process could take at least a couple weeks—and perhaps longer with the pandemic crisis—so plan ahead.

The bottom line is: If you don't have written permission to use music or words attributable to an author's published work, DON'T PRINT, STREAM, OR OTHERWISE USE IT!

Use of the church building by outside groups

We host recovery groups at the church. What should we tell them?

Recovery groups such as AA have not called on their members to stop meeting in-person. However, this is at the discretion of the host facility; i.e., the local church. AA has published guidance (https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/update-on-covid-19-coronavirus) regarding local group meetings including moving their meetings online if they wish to do so voluntarily or because their hosts have asked them not to meet at their facilities; i.e., the local church fellowship hall.

Each local church may make its own decision whether to continue hosting recovery and other regularly meeting groups. Keep in mind Governor Scott has prohibited gatherings in excess of 50 people and the White House strongly encourages not holding gatherings in excess of ten people.

Employees are being laid off or furloughed. How can we support them?

As part of his executive order declaring a state of emergency, Governor Scott relaxed eligibility requirements for unemployment insurance including the requirement to be actively looking for work while receiving benefits. People may seek eligibility for unemployment by filling out the application at (<https://appengine.egov.com/apps/vt/dol/unemploymentinsuranceclaim>).

What is the status of the Vermont Conference office?

The Conference office is closed to visitors and groups for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis. Staff will check their voicemail and are working from home via cell phone and email. You can contact the staff in the following ways:

- Lynn Bujnak: llbvtc@gmail.com; 802-728-4999 ext. 4# (office voicemail)
- Paul Sangree: sangreepucc@gmail.com; 802-728-4999 ext. 5# (office voicemail)
- Jesse Davis: vtcoordinator2018@gmail.com; 802-728-4999 ext. 0# (office voicemail)

These FAQ's will be updated as information and resources develop. Please also log on to the Vermont Conference COVID-19 website at: <http://www.vtcucc.org/covid-19/>

**COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions
Local Church Edition**

You are all in the prayers of your Conference staff...

Be safe. Be well. Take good care.