



**E-Kit**  
**May 6, 2020**

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## The Wilderness of COVID-19

One of my favorite psalms is Psalm 63. The title to this psalm says “A psalm of David, while he was out in the Judean wilderness.” I led a group from my church to visit Israel and Jerusalem about 20 years ago, and it was striking to see the difference between the city of Jerusalem and the Judean wilderness right outside the city. It was a desert as far as the eye can see, even to this day. Most commentators believe that David wrote the psalm when he was in that wilderness before he became King, and he was being hunted by King Saul because he was a threat to him, or when he was in the wilderness after he was overthrown by his son Absalom, who was hunting him because he was a threat to him.



And during these times of desperation when he is afraid for his life, David writes, “O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water” (vs. 1). David knows in the wilderness that all the usual things that he relies on are gone, and all that he has left is You, O God. He goes on to say that “I have seen you in the sanctuary and seen your power and glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands” (vs. 2-4). David cannot enter the sanctuary in the Temple in Jerusalem anymore, where he has seen God’s power and glory. That is not physically possible—he would be killed. But he knows that God’s love is better than life, and so this will not stop him from praising God as long as he lives, even in the wilderness.

We are in a time when we cannot physically enter the sanctuary of our church buildings either with the people of God. Instead, we are in the wilderness of COVID-19 and social distancing and people getting sick and dying. All the usual things that we rely on are gone, and ultimately all that we have left is You, O God. But today we remember as the congregations of the Vermont Conference that Your love is better than life, and we will choose to praise You as long as we live!

Prayerfully yours,  
Paul

**Required VT Occupational Safety & Health training for reopening workplaces**

**See the latest guidance and directives from State of Vermont**

**Answer the call and volunteer in response to COVID-19**

**COVID-19 FAQ's for churches**

**Resources curated by the Southern New England**

## COVID - 19 Information & Resources

Conference

Utilities and COVID-19: Help &  
information from VT Dept. of  
Public Utilities

### CARES Act: Churches Eligible for Payroll Relief ACT NOW!

Attached is the loan application and fact sheet from the SBA. If you have churches interested in applying for this loan, they need to apply NOW, as the available funds are expected to be exhausted quickly. The attached application should be submitted directly to a lender identified as a participating lender on the SBA's website ([sba.gov](https://www.sba.gov)), rather than seeking the application from the lender.

Application Form

Borrower factsheet

Unemployment compensation for church workers & the CARES Act

CARES Act information courtesy of the Southern New England Conference



*Your Conference staff  
working for you*

**The Vermont  
Conference office is  
closed, but we're  
still hard at work  
for you!**

You can reach any of the  
staff members by using the  
information below.

Be safe, be well, take  
good care...



*Sable likes the working  
from home concept*

### Vermont Conference COVID-19 office protocol

*The Vermont Conference office is closed  
for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis.*

Staff are able to check their voicemail  
and are available on email. **Please send  
all documents to staff by email only.**

Rev. Lynn Bujnak: 802-728-4999 ext. 4#

Email Conference Minister Lynn  
Bujnak

Email Associate Conference  
Minister Paul Sangree

Email Operations & Ministries  
Coordinator Jesse Davis

## Stewardship in the midst of COVID-19

Many people, ministers and church members, have been asking how to continue to support their local church budgets while everyone is social distancing and unable to gather together in worship. The short answer is - keep stewardship and the offering going!

Rev. Andrew Warner, Generosity Outreach Officer for the United Church of Christ offered a webinar and several resources last week. He has kindly shared them with us for members of the Vermont Conference to use.

[Fundraising webinar recording](#)

[Planned giving webinar](#)

[IRA qualified charitable contributions](#)

[Example quarterly letter to church members](#)

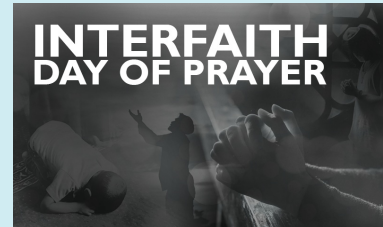
[National Study of Congregations Economic Practices \(NSCEP\) study](#)

[NSCEP self-assessment tool](#)

[Making the stimulus ask](#)

## Interfaith Day of Prayer

Join the United Church of Christ as we recognize Interfaith Day of Prayer, Thursday, May 7 with 24 hours of prayer. [Like or follow our Facebook page to participate](#) with ecumenical and interfaith partners and people of all faiths praying for wholeness and well-being during the pandemic.



As a church of extravagant welcome, the UCC invites friends to add prayers in many voices and languages on our Facebook channel beginning at 12:00 AM EDT Thursday and continuing throughout the day.

"Prayer is our spiritual currency as people of faith," said the Rev. Traci Blackmon. "It is our primary means of exchange with a God called by many names in covenant with people who differ in being but share one breath. On this National Day of Prayer it is as important as it has ever been to be reminded of our interconnectedness with one another and all of creation. We are deeply grateful for this diverse group of faith leaders, serving in varied spaces, who have agreed to lead us in prayer each hour in ways that connect our hearts, honor the holy and amplify our cries. May it be so."

We invite you to join us for this special Interfaith Day of Prayer event during these unsettling times.

## Per Capita rate for 2020

The Vermont Conference per capita rate has been established at \$13.00 per member. Association dues are *in addition* to the Conference per capita rate of \$13.00.

## Spiritual Direction

By popular request, a list of Spiritual Directors is now available. [Download the list here.](#)

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## Special Webinar for Church Vitality with Paul Nickerson

Dear friends,

Churches are experiencing great change during this crisis time. On Thursday, May 7th at 10:00 AM, there will be a webinar on: "Now What; Navigating Church Vitality in the New Normal". This will be a time to look at the best practices from churches around the country on:

- How to reach new people while we are sheltered
- Stewardship issues, both short-term and long-term
- Key issues moving forward around staffing, organization/structure, continued online efforts, clarity around central purpose, etc.

The future church is going to look different than our pre-coronavirus church. Come and learn how your church can adapt and plan for a fruitful future.

To register: Click on the link below. Once registered you will have the Webinar link for May 7th at 10:00 AM.

When: May 7, 2020 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Topic: Vermont Webinar

Register in advance for this webinar:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_7BhWNLRBskiiz1R8pNqaFQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_7BhWNLRBskiiz1R8pNqaFQ)

If you have any questions, [please contact me](#)

I look forward to our time together.

Blessings,  
Paul  
Nickerson Coaching

*This webinar has been set up, and promoted, by the Vermont Conference.  
Registration fee is required to join the webinar. Please email Paul Nickerson at [nickersonp@comcast.net](mailto:nickersonp@comcast.net) to register and pay the fee.*

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### Pastoral Transitions

- Rev. WendyJane Summers has been called as Pastor of Second Congregational Church of Hyde Park.
- Rev. Dr. Marisa Laviola has been called as Associate Conference Minister on Congregational Transitions and Empowerment for the Penn Central Conference. Her ministry begins June 1, 2020.
- Rev. Elliott Munn has been called as Pastor of the Congregational Church of Vergennes. His ministry begins later this month.

[Click here for full list of transitions](#)

### Prayers and Thanksgivings

Please hold health care workers and first responders in your prayers as they stand on the front lines responding to COVID-19.

Please hold Lava Mueller in your prayers as she mourns the passing of her mother.

Please hold Rev. Lucia Jackson in your prayers as she cares for her husband Michael Heaney who is healing from a health crisis.

## Useful Links

- [UCC Newsfeeds](#)
- [UCC Weekly Seeds](#)
- [2020 Tax preparation resources](#)
- [Pension Boards rate calculator](#)
- [UCC Yearbook](#)
- [Stewardship blog](#)

## Who should I contact for...?

- Conference Minister: Rev. Lynn Bujnak
  - [bujnakl@vtcucc.org](mailto:bujnakl@vtcucc.org)
- Assoc. Conference Minister: Rev. Paul Sangree
  - [sangreep@vtcucc.org](mailto:sangreep@vtcucc.org)
- Search & Call, operations, events: Jesse Davis
  - [vtcoordinator2018@gmail.com](mailto:vtcoordinator2018@gmail.com)
- Finance: Tanya Frazier
  - [vtcfinanceucc@gmail.com](mailto:vtcfinanceucc@gmail.com)
- E-Kit postings
  - [vermontconference@gmail.com](mailto:vermontconference@gmail.com)

## New Podcast Available

Rev. Josh Simon (First Congregational Church of Essex Junction) and Rev. Sally May (Malletts Bay UCC, Colchester) are proud to present the podcast *Faith in Vermont: Conversations with LGBTQ Religious and Spiritual Leaders*.

On this week's episode of Faith in Vermont: Conversations with LGBTQ Religious and Spiritual Leaders:

Cantor Steve Zeidenberg from Ohavi Zedek joins us for a conversation on being an LGBTQ cantor.

[Click here for the latest podcast](#)



**Our Faith, Our Vote, Our Voice: A call to the Church to be a place of civil dialogue that builds community**

[Our Faith, Our Vote resources](#)

## Racism in America symposiums



[Watch the videos of Racism in America series](#)

## Resources from the Vermont Conference website (click the buttons below)

Save the date! *Our Clergy Convocation this year will be Sept. 14th-16th at the Bishop Booth Conference Center in Burlington.* We will be talking about "How to stay Centered in a Time of Deep Change" with noted retreat leader and pastor Barbara Lemmel. Hope we can all gather by then, and that we will see you there.

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### Connect with us

