



The Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ



Purpose (from the Gospel of Matthew):

To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves

Vision:

United in Christ's love, a just world for all

Mission:

United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all

Weekly E-News Winter "

December 9, 2020



Message from the Conference

Dear Friends,

We are now squarely in the season of Advent, which is the beginning of the liturgical year. We all know Advent as a time of waiting, and traditionally in the Church, we are waiting for three things: the physical nativity in Bethlehem, the Second Coming of Christ, and the reception of Christ in the heart of the believer. Advent has been a time of penitence and fasting, as Christians fasted three times a week during much of the medieval period in Europe. But the Second Vatican Council differentiated the spirit of Advent from Lent, emphasizing Advent as a season of hope for Christ's coming now as a promise of his Second Coming.

The Advent wreath that so many of our churches use is a reminder of that promise of hope. Of course, we are not able to gather in our houses of worship right now to watch the candles of the wreath get lit. How many times I as a pastor watched nervously as children or adults went to light the candle on the wreath, hoping that they would not accidentally set the whole wreath on fire! So maybe it is not all bad that we are not doing it physically, but we still can rejoice in the four words that go with each candle of Advent-words of hope, peace, joy and love.

In a clergy group I was with recently, I asked everyone what their favorite Christmas carol or song was. Everyone shared some wonderful songs, both from the church and beyond. I said my favorite carol is "Away in the Manger." As a pastor, I would always make sure we sang that carol on Christmas Eve, and how I would look forward to when it was sung in the service! It truly was the moment that I could worship. I particularly always like the last line:

"Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven, to live with thee there."

Faithfully yours,
Paul

Mourning the loss of Pastor Sally May's Mother who was a beloved member of New Haven Congregational Church, UCC



Mary Lu "Page" Hatstat (89) passed away peacefully, early in the morning of December 15th with family by her side after a recent decline in her health. She wrote the following (with a few updates) several years ago. To read Mary Lu's obituary [click here](#).

Thank you Mary Lu for your many faithful years of service to the church! Our prayers are with her family and friends at this time.

Need Extra Support During the Pandemic?



During these difficult times, could you use some emotional support and a listening ear? Are you looking for connections to community resources during the pandemic?

COVID Support VT is a statewide program offering free and confidential emotional support and connections to resources for anyone needing help. They offer a wide range of supports on their [website](#).

If you or someone you know could use some support coping with the pandemic, reach out to COVID Support VT. Call 2-1-1- to reach a Support Counselor. You can also access their [self-care tips and resources flyer](#), [daily stress management plan](#) and their online [Weekly Wellness Groups](#).

Welcome Elise Foster to the Vermont Conference!

The Vermont Conference is pleased to announce that Elise Foster has joined the Conference staff as our part-time Office Administrator. She has spent the past 20 years either studying or working in the accounting field, however felt the call to do something that felt more fulfilling. She lives in Orange County with her husband, their three girls, and their three St. Bernards.

She looks forward to assisting the Vermont Conference with all office administrative duties and web based responsibilities. Elise can be reached by calling the Conference office Tues- Friday 9am - 2 pm or by emailing her at vermontconference@gmail.com

ADVENT AROUND THE CONFERENCE

Share with us what your church is doing this Advent and Christmas. Send us a picture or a story of what you are doing or seeing during this unprecedented time to celebrate the God With us! Send your news to vtconmincoor@gmail.com by Tuesday of each week.



United Church of Underhill
always had a 16 foot Christmas tree in the sanctuary. With no in-person services at the church this year they decided to move it outside in front of the church. They decided on a 21 foot tree with 2,200 white LED lights! They turned on the lights on the first Sunday in Advent with a full moon over the church.



Charlotte Congregational Church
Is offering a Spiral Walk for Advent



New Haven Congregational Church

The First Congregational Church of Manchester and GNAT-TV are pleased to offer “This Christmastide,” an hour-long television special, to the community.

While we are not able to gather together to celebrate Christmas this year, “This Christmastide” will feature music of the season performed by FCC's Chancel Choir and Tall Spire Ringers, joined by other area musicians and a special guest appearance by operatic soprano Anya Matanovic; Advent Candle lighting and readings, and FCC's beautifully decorated sanctuary to help us celebrate Christmas and bring us hope! For more information [click here](#).



United Church Community, UCC of St. Johnsbury is staying home while sharing in services virtually, but they have decorated the sanctuary and are sharing the advent candle lighting from the church. [click here for video of the candle lighting](#).

Nativity at Mallets Bay Congregational Church, UCC



Mallets Bay Congregational Church is sharing the Nativity that will be totally set up Christmas Eve with a progression of lights beginning on the first Sunday of Advent and increasing throughout the season. Attached is a PowerPoint with photos they took when they set it all up for filming by local cable TV station to air Christmas Eve. [Click here](#) to view all the pictures.

United Community Church of Morrisville

United Community Church of Morrisville rather than having their tree in the sanctuary this year, have placed it outside (donated by a local Christmas Tree farm), and are inviting the whole community to decorate the tree with their hopes, dreams, and prayers.



Williston Federated Church
to see their Virtual Christmas Pageant [click here](#)



Apart, but still a part. Williston Federated Church had to cancel the Williston Town Tree Lighting event this year, but we still made sure the Christmas tree would shine brightly in the town gazebo to bring hope during this Advent season!

Do You Have Any Extra Choir Robes?

Thank you to Second Do you have choir robes you would like to donate to a good home? We are looking for 30 robes (assorted sizes) to donate to a partner church in Congo. They would prefer 30 of the same color, but will consider assorted colors. Please contact Rev. Kevin Goldenbogen (Charlotte Congregational Church, UCC) at rev.kemg@gmail.com if you've got robes

Thank you to Second Congregational UCC of Jeffersonville and many others who have recently donated choir robes!



College Street Congregational Church

is freely sharing its collection of worship music videos to all UCC churches for use in online worship services

Collection is available at: [College Street Congregational Church Youtube Channel](#)
There you'll find dozens of favorite anthems, preludes and postludes (choral & instrumental) from a wide range of styles, periods and composers. ***Our only request is that let us know when you use them so that we can lift each other up in prayer worship - thankful for the gift of connections near and far.***

Special Christmas Sunday Music is being produced, too.
"For Unto Us a Child is Given" from Handel's Messiah.
For more information and to hear a sample recording, contact Matt Van Wagner at (603) 557-7504 or email matt.vanwagner@gmail.com

FREE HOLIDAY GIFT TO ALL!

The Old Meeting House Arts Ministry is offering a free holiday gift to the community in the form of a virtual performance of Stories for a Winter's Eve featuring Patti Casey, Pete Sutherland, Mark Nash and Kathryn Blume airing from Dec 19 – Jan 3. for more info click on the [press release](#).

SHARING WORSHIP AROUND THE VERMONT CONFERENCE

BEHOLD I DO A NEW THING!

In this new era of the way our churches are providing various worship services (via. email/phone, local tv channels, radio, and virtually online through social media). We are creating a list of the many alternative worship services to share among our conference members. Would you please send an email to vtconmincoor@gmail.com to let us know how people can reach your services during this time?

**Do you need help with getting your church services online?
Find resources and help here:**

[Click here for WorshipWell information and resources](#)

[Worship Resource Links for How to Live Stream- from the Southern New England Conference UCC](#)

[Free-Use, No-Licensing Music and Worship Materials here](#)

[Zoom Worship Laboratory Video Tutorial](#)

[How to prevent Zoom Bombing](#)

If you have additional resources to share please email the conference office at vtconmincoor@gmail.com

Council of Conference Ministers' [2nd Virtual Worship Service!](#)

You and your congregation are invited to the Council of Conference Ministers' second virtual worship service! The service is ready for use in full and in parts, but can be used at any time. It is centered around the Parable of the Talents.

[For more information and all the videos click here](#)

Christmas Fund 2020

"For Such a Time as This" Esther 4:14

The Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund Gifts assist United Church of Christ authorized ministers and lay church employees who are presently serving in ministry or have retired. Assistance



for retirees comes in the form of supplementation to small pensions or health benefit premiums as well as "Thank You" gift checks at Christmastime. Active and retired members may receive an emergency grant to assist with an unexpected and burdensome expense throughout the year. To learn more click here: ["For Such a Time as This."](#)

[DONATE HERE](#)



Beyond Belief: A Marcus Borg Retrospective

50% off for Vermont Conference Churches

Beyond Belief is a six session DVD study. The series contains favorite moments, core teachings and extensive never-before seen material of Marcus Borg from the LtQ archives plus commentary from Rev. Marianne Borg. A DVD copy will be in the Vermont Conference Office for churches to borrow. However if you would like to purchase the digital at a special 50% off rate [CLICK HERE](#) and use the coupon code: **vtcucc5**. This coupon code also applies to any of the Living the Questions DVD or Digital curriculum so act now.

SAVE THE DATE

"We now need to put as much effort into defining a just peace as we have done in the past in defining a just war."
-Dr. Robert V. Moss



The UCC Just Peace Committee is inviting you to the next quarterly Just Peace Webinar to take place on January 27 (7 p.m. ET/6 p.m. CT/5 p.m. MT/4 p.m. PT/2 p.m. HT)

Details and log-in instructions will be sent in the New Year, but please mark your calendars now and save the date.

Topic: Where do we go from here? How do we engage? What should be our Just Peace priorities in 2021 as individuals, congregations, Associations, Conferences and the National Setting. What might we expect from a Biden Administration and how does that influence our work? And, finally, let's talk and share ideas and plans.

University of Vermont
SAVE THE DATE
MLK CELEBRATION ANNOUNCEMENT

The Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Larner College of Medicine are excited to announce UVM's annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration. This year's keynote speaker is Leon McDougale, MD, MPH, 121st President of the National Medical Association. Dr. McDougale is the first African American to achieve the rank of Professor with tenure in The Ohio State University Department of Family and Community Medicine. He currently serves as the first Chief Diversity Officer for The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. Dr. McDougale's research focuses on diversity and inclusion and eliminating health disparities. He has been recognized nationally for clinical excellence as being among the top 10 percent of physicians for patient satisfaction and among the Best Doctors in America. Please save the date and join the UVM community for his keynote presentation, "Slave Health Deficit: The Journey to Health Parity," to be held on Wednesday, January 20, 2021 from 5:30-6:45 pm on Microsoft Teams.

Tickets are FREE and REQUIRED. eTickets are available now at go.uvm.edu/mlk2021. The URL to the live virtual celebration will be available closer to the event at uvm.edu/diversity/signature-events/mlk.

The keynote presentation is sponsored by President Suresh V. Garimella, the Larner College of Medicine, the Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and the Department of Student Life.

To request a disability-related accommodation, please contact Student Accessibility Services at (802) 656-7753 or access@uvm.edu.

**DISASTER
MINISTRIES**



UCC launches "Recovering Hope,"

Emotional Care in COVID-19

[click here for more info](#)

Protect Yourself and Others from Email Phishing Scams

[click here for more information](#)

Don't Forget!

Order your UCC Stewardship Theme materials.

Thank You for Your Support!

Our Churches Wider Mission Basic Support, Association Dues, and Friends of the Vermont Conference make this communication possible.

Donate

Due to the increasing COVID-19 pandemic, the Vermont Conference Office will be closed beginning Monday, November 23rd, 2020. Staff will continue to work remotely.

UPDATED CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATION

In light of: the growing number of Covid-19 infections in Vermont, increased hospitalizations, the onset of flu season, the potential spreading of the disease during holiday gatherings and the advice of our Governor and experts in infectious disease, we strongly urge that **worship not be held in person at least through the end of this year.**

[For more info click here](#)

COVID - 19 Information & Resources

COVID-19 resources from the UCC Insurance Boards

Clergy Support Zoom Meetings happen each week on Tuesdays 10:30-11:30
This week our own Kurt Shaffert, put some of our thoughts into a creative drawing. It helps to know we are all in this together, supporting one another. If you are new, retired, chaplain, interim or otherwise and would like to be a part of the clergy zoom meetings please send an e-mail to: vermontconference@gmail.com



Connect with us



visit our website at <http://www.vtcucc.org/>

