



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 23, 2020

Message from the Conference



Dear Beloved Community in the Vermont Conference,

This week I have found myself thinking about, of all things, treasure hunts. It was always great fun to put one together for our children, perhaps leading to a longed for gift. Sometimes it was a way to stave off "we're bored." The very best of them had clues that were challenging but not impossible to figure out, built excitement and progressively led to a wonderful hidden treasure.

So I have been thinking: Is Advent a type of treasure hunt and Christmas the hidden and joyous treasure? Each week of Advent has taken us to a clue: faith, hope, joy and love. Each gift unfolded in contemplation, worship and discussion groups leading us to know that each one was complex and partial. By now we know these gifts belong together as a recipe for living a life of faith. And yet, what of the treasure still to come?

With hearts wide open, we are about to experience anew the mystery and reality of Emmanuel: God with Us. God with us in our day to day joys and struggles. God with Us in the fear and loss and pain of this pandemic. God with us as so many struggle with loneliness, loss of employment, eviction, hunger. God with us so clearly that we know we need to be present where there is struggle, pressing need, and despair.

All the clues, all the signs, all the exploring lead to this great treasure: God with Us in all the days and ways of this life. God With Us! Thanks be to God.

Blessed Christmas to you all!

Lynn

A Very UCC Christmas: 2020!

Eleven digital hymns, a movie and a pageant of lessons and carols, produced by the national setting of the United Church of Christ, are now being made available to local churches for Advent and Christmas.

A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 2020



Brought to you by the National Setting of the United Church of Christ



Available now!- **2020 Christmas Message from the UCC Officers!**

Premiering Dec. 24th- **Lessons and Carols Service!**

Premiering Dec. 27th- **A Special Premiere of "A Very UCC Christmas: 2020"!**

For all of the digital hymns and additional content made available from the UCC for your Christmas Services, **[click here!](#)**

Important Reminder!

In this time of continuing stress, loss, and uncertainty, a reminder that your pastor has been with you through it all. As someone who works with pastors every day, I want you to know that many of them are exhausted from putting together some form of virtual worship each week, ministering to your congregation without face to face contact, and all of the strain that comes from every single task needed to be done differently. So, please remember to be kind to your pastor and encourage them to take care of themselves and make rest and renewal a priority.
- Lynn and Paul



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.

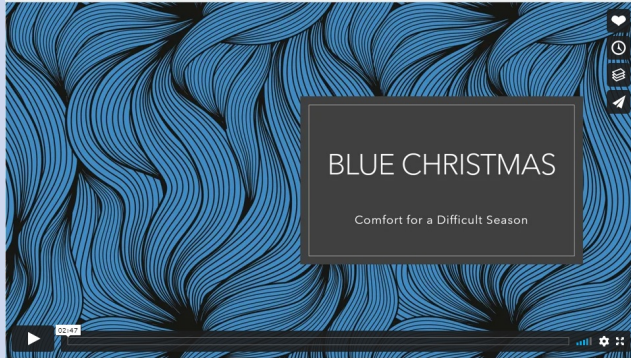
"For Unto Us a Child is Given" from Handel's Messiah.

For more information and to hear a sample recording,
contact Matt Van Wagner at (603) 557-7504 or email **matt.vanwagner@gmail.com**

Shout for Joy!

Mary Alice Amidon and Robin Davis
lead the Guilford (VT) Community

Church UCC Choir singing Peter and Mary Alice Amidon's arrangement "Shout for Joy" for the December 13th virtual Sunday morning service in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Find the entire video [here!](#)



Blue Christmas

Blue Christmas is a three minute meditation created by Rev. Leigh McCaffrey of the Barre Congregational Church- UCC. She has kindly made it available for anyone who may be feeling a little blue this Christmas. It can be found [here](#). Thank you so much, Rev. McCaffrey!

Lifting Rev. Tony Acheson in Prayer

Rev. Tony Acheson shared with us that he was diagnosed with thyroid cancer this December and had a small tumor removed. Tony shares, "My surgeon tells me that the tumor was quite small, that she believes she removed all of it, and that no further medical treatment is currently required. I'll have a specialized type of blood test mid-January, which would be able to—and she believes is likely to—confirm that no cancer cells remain. But we'll have to wait a bit to see how that one turns out. The recovery from the surgery itself has gone fine, and I've gotten most of my strength back in an encouraging way."

Tony who is now retired served as a pastor of Greensboro United Church of Christ in Greensboro, VT for many years.

May we lift him with ongoing prayers and healing energies at this time.

THE CONFERENCE OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED FROM DECEMBER 24, 2020 UNTIL WEDNESDAY JANUARY 2, 2021. YOU CAN STILL LEAVE MESSAGES, SEND EMAILS AND IF YOU FIND YOU NEED EMERGENCY SUPPORT, PLEASE CALL LYNN BUJNAK.

EVENTS AROUND THE CONFERENCE

(Please let us know what your Congregation is up to by sending an email to

VermontConference@gmail.com .

You may just see yourself or someone you love in the eKit or our Facebook page!)

Rev. Hal Harrison is turning 90!

Has was a member of the Conference staff for



many years and also served as a mentor and spiritual director to many people over the years. Hal's birthday is on **January 15th**. Please consider sending him a birthday card. Here is his address:
Rev. Hal Harrison
33 Christian Ave Apt 172
Concord, NH 03301

The United Community Church of St. Johnsbury was kind enough to share their **Christmas Pageant** with us! You can find it [here!](#) Thank you so much for allowing us to enjoy this with you!

Advent at Second Congregational Church, Hyde Park

Congregants wrapped boxes for the Christmas food baskets and the kids made birdseed ornaments for the tree!



The First Congregational Church of Manchester and GNAT-TV are pleased to offer "This Christmastide," an hour-long television special, to the community. "This Christmastide" will be aired on multiple dates at multiple times on multiple channels so everyone can enjoy it! [Find the information here!!!](#)



Get Excited for Drive-Inn Carols and Worship!

The Waitsfield UCC is holding a "Drive INN" Christmas Service of Lessons and Carols in the parking lot of the local movie theater, The Big Picture. The Big Pic, as folks call it, successfully used FM transmitters this summer and showed movies on a big screen. One of our young adults attended these shows and suggested we give it a try. People will stay in their cars with their covid-safe pods or families, and tune in to a song leader singing the carols - and will be able to sing along from the safety of their vehicles. Learn all about it [here!](#)

Note- this event will not be held if the weather is not cooperative.

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](#).

COVID-19 NEWS

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](#)

The Vermont Department of Health has provided new guidance specifically for Communities of Faith including holidays, services, and events. This includes (but is not limited to) precautions and actions for organizational leaders. It can be found [here](#).



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](#).



UCC launches "[Recovering Hope](#),"

Emotional Care in COVID-19

[click here for more info](#)

SAVE THE DATE!

Year-End Planning: Time to Update Your Church Membership Records!

As the end of 2020 draws near we offer some tips on getting your church records in order.

This week is a reminder to update your church membership lists. UCC Yearbook reporting is scheduled to open January 8, 2021, and it is important that your church report current and accurate membership information. For churches that are affiliated with more than one denomination, the membership number should only reflect members who identify themselves as UCC.

The membership number is used to determine the amount of dues that your church gives to your association and the Vermont Conference.

The numbers you report also help determine how many delegates the Vermont Conference can designate for General Synod, which is one of the essential ways your voice is heard on important issues.

Your church number includes the Vermont Conference number which is 82. Therefore, your complete church number (including zeroes) is 82xxxx

[Click here to find your church number \(listed by town\)](#)

[Click here for detailed Yearbook Instructions!](#)

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). More information can be found [here!](#)

"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



University of Vermont 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. For more information or how you can participate, click [here!](#)



Our Lady of the Angels Church will be hosting a **warm winter clothing distribution** January 14th and 15th for the White River Valley. Donations are still greatly appreciated! Learn more [here!](#)

RESOURCES FOR ONLINE MINISTRY!

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](#)

How to prevent Zoom Bombing

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



A huge thank you to Kurt Shaffert for another brilliant illustration inspired by the 12.22.2020 Vermont Conference weekly Clergy meeting via Zoom.

MISC. (But equally important!!!) NEWS!

New Deadline for eKit!

Any information you would like to have in the eKit must be received by the **Tuesday prior to the eKits release by noon** at the latest! Please send any and all information to Elise at VermontConferece@gmail.com.

She looks forward to hearing from you!

Earlier this winter, we asked if you had any extra **choir robes** to assist **Rev. Kevin Goldenbogen (Charlotte Congregational Church, UCC)** with his donation to a partner church in Congo. This goal has been met! We would like to thank everyone who lended a hand!



**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. More information can be found [here!](#)

Don't Forget!

Order your UCC [Stewardship Theme materials.](#)

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.

Thank You for Your Support!

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

Donate

Connect with us



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