



E-Kit August 19, 2020

DONATE

Back in May I wrote about COVID and returning to in person worship by saying “not yet.” As we near the end of August it is time to revisit that question.



Some of our churches are doing some form of in person worship. Some are holding services outdoors with social distancing and mask requirements and bring your own seat. Some are offering a phased return to the sanctuary with the following limitations: congregants must maintain at least 6 feet of social distancing and wear masks. Only as many people as will fit complying to these strictures are allowed. There is no in person coffee/fellowship time, no one can use the bathrooms (or some are using strict CDC recommended cleaning before and after each person who uses the bathroom). There is no singing or passing the peace. Congregants bring their own bread and juice for communion. Musical offerings are instrumental and the choir does not sing. One of our churches does have choral singing by using a plexiglass shield or “cage” around the singers and around their pastor.

I do want to say clearly, if your sanctuary is too small for social distancing guidelines and/or it lacks adequate ventilation it is highly inadvisable to return to in person worship.

For churches that are doing some form of online worship, the commitment seems to be to continue even if there is some limited form of in person worship happening as well. I remain concerned about the well being of pastors and congregants who are in that highest risk category. Also, I hope care will be taken for continuing to offer online worship to those who are shut-ins or busy families or who live outside of the area of your church.

The basic guidelines that remain as guideposts for these times are:

- 14 days of falling infection rates using a three day trailing average
- Hospitals not overwhelmed and at or over capacity
- Easy access to testing
- Adequate contact tracing

What about fundraisers that many of our churches count on to make their budget each year. Any fundraisers that bring crowds of people together are extremely risky and in violation of the COVID guidelines from the state. Some of our churches are converting dinners into take home meals. They take orders, package the food and then a masked and gloved person brings the food to a waiting car. This might also work with pie sales or even the transfer of online auction items.

Whatever your decision, please take the time to gather opinions and seek to discern the direction that is right for your congregation. I still believe it is best to err on the side of caution.

As we live into a new phase with the opening to partial opening of schools and colleges, we will need to wait to see how or if that affects infection rates in Vermont.

Yes, I am aware of the toll it takes continuing to follow precautions that keep us isolated from one another. We ache to see each other in person instead of on a

screen. We want to sing with the gathered community not by ourselves on “mute.” Remember, no matter where you are, no matter how frayed your nerves or deep your depression, gathered or scattered, God is with you. You are not alone. Thanks be to God!

In peace,
Lynn

Black Lives Matter

Summer Forum Series: Is There a Path to Racial Reconciliation?

After over 400-years of history and oppression toward people of color, is there a path to racial reconciliation? Join us as we explore this important question in a Virtual Forum Series, each Sunday at 9 AM beginning Sunday, July 19th. Our guest speakers will present a wide range of perspectives and knowledge to inspire our discussion.

This discussion series is presented by members and friends of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Jericho, United Church of Bakersfield and Fairfield, Waterville Union Church, and Second Congregational Church in Jeffersonville.

Facilitators: Pastor Arnold Thomas (Good Shepherd) and Pastor Devon Thomas (Jeffersonville, Waterville and Bakersfield).

Learn more and attend the forum series at: <https://jeffchurchvt.org/summer-forum-series/>

Read Fredrick Douglass' famous speech regarding the celebration of American independence

[Click here for the statement from the Vermont Conference staff, Board and ministers living and serving in Vermont](#)

Beginning conversations about race and white privilege

Has your church begun an education or reflection program about white privilege and systemic racism? If so, tell the Conference about what you are doing so we can highlight your program.

Contact the Conference at vermontconference@gmail.com to tell us about the programs you are doing and the journey you have begun.

- Old South Church in Windsor continues to hold weekly vigils on Wednesday evenings 6-6:30 followed by 30 minute discussions about local racial inequality issues.
- Mallets Bay Congregational Church has been holding a book study of *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* by James H. Cone.
- The United Church of Strafford helped launch a town-wide discussion forum about race and being an anti-racist.

- Newfane Congregational Church has been using the UCC curriculum for examining white privilege.

Say their names...

Each week, we will publish names of our sisters and brothers of the Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities who have been murdered by police and/or white supremacists.

Shantel Davis - 23, shot by NYPD officer who claimed she was attempting to escape.

Kenneth Johnson - 60, denied medical care in custody of Vermont Dept. of Corrections ([more information here](#))

Rekia Boyd - 22, shot in back of the head by off-duty Chicago police officer

Felix Kumi - 61, bystander shot by NYPD officer conducting sting operation.

The UCC and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

The American Missionary Association, a predecessor body of the United Church of Christ, was a visionary organization dedicated to education and racial equality. The AMA founded six college that continue to relate to the UCC Council for Higher Education. These schools are historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and are racially diverse, welcoming students from a wide range of races and ethnicities.

- Dillard University, New Orleans, LA; www.dillard.edu
- Fisk University, Nashville, TN; www.fisk.edu
- Huston-Tillotson University, Austin, TX; www.htu.edu
- LeMoyne-Owen College, Memphis, TN; www.loc.edu
- Talladega College, Talladega, AL; www.talladega.edu
- Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, MS; www.tougaloo.edu

Do you know of protests and rallies that are taking place?

Have you attended protests, vigils or rallies? Please let the Vermont Conference know about them so we can post them on our website and social media. Email them to Jesse at vermontconference@gmail.com

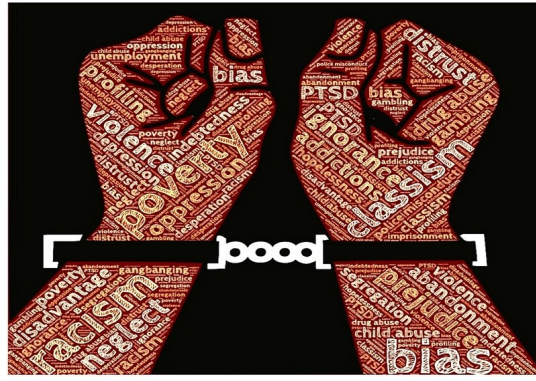
- Silent Vigil Against Racism. It has been happening every Sunday afternoon from 1:00 to 1:30 p.m. in Arlington on Route 7A in front of St. James' Episcopal Church that the Federated Church of East Arlington is participating in. Folks are asked to mask, are spaced 6 feet apart and encouraged to bring signs. All are welcome to join!



Racism in America symposiums

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](#)



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

Lay Training Event - Save the Date!

The Vermont Conference will be holding its first annual Lay Training Event on October 24th from 8:45 to noon. This will be held virtually on ZOOM.

Our training sessions will consider:

- Pastoral relations committees
- Youth programming development
- Racial justice in our churches and communities
- Stewardship in the pandemic era

Stay tuned for more information about our instructors and registration.

Reminder

Your local church needs your financial support more than ever. If you have been fortunate to still be employed please consider making regular gifts to your church. Your congregation is doing vital ministry through online or written worship opportunities, caring for one another, feeding hungry people and fighting for justice. Summer is always a slow time in terms of giving, but the church expenses stay steady.



Please also remember the Vermont Conference. We need the support of our congregations and friends so we can continue to resource pastors and congregations through these strange and important days.

Thank you so much!

Holding space for difficult conversations

How do we have difficult conversations - whether about race, finances or anything else - within our congregations and people with differing perspectives? College Street Congregational Church developed "Communication Guidelines to Strengthen Our Community" and have kindly shared it for other churches to consider. The Vermont Conference Annual Meeting also adopts "A Covenant for Dialog" at the beginning of each Annual Meeting. Please feel free to use these documents in your local church.

[Download College Street](#)

[Download Vermont Conference](#)

United Church of Christ
Church Building & Loan Fund
Present:

BUILDING CHURCH DIFFERENTLY

Partners in Building
2020 Web Seminar Series

Registration Opening Soon!

September 17th
"MAKE AN IMPACT"

September 24th
"LEAD WITH TECHNOLOGY"

October 1st
"TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES"

Three 90 minute power-packed webinars 2PM – 3:30PM EDT
\$25.00 total cost.

COVID - 19 Information & Resources

Are you holding services
according to CDC protocols?

COVID-19 resources from the UCC
Insurance Boards

Register for Clergy Convocation

Clergy Convocation

The Convocation Planning Team met last week and decided that we will not have our annual Pastor's Convocation in September live, but will do it online. We decided to do this because of the feedback from many of you, who said that having a time to gather together as Vermont Conference clergy online would be helpful during these challenging times. Barbara Lemmel, Methodist pastor, consultant and spiritual director will be our leader with the theme "How to stay Centered in a Time of Deep Change."

We will begin with a session on Monday night, Sept. 14th with worship and time led by Barb focused on this time that we are in. There will be time for games and hanging out via ZOOM later in the evening. We will gather again on Tuesday morning, Sept. 15th for a time of worship and a session by Barb focused on how we can stay centered, and she will be sharing with us spiritual practices and disciplines that we can do ourselves that afternoon. We will conclude Tuesday evening with a session of sharing in groups our experience, and a closing worship with Communion.

Convocation will only cost \$25 (no matter how many sessions you attend), and we hope many clergy can join us! A brochure about Convocation and a way to register are on the Conference website. At this time in our church's life, we especially need each other, so please set aside this time to be with others. It will be a memorable Convocation!

Curating services and sermons for pastor vacations

Would you be willing to share your sermons or services with others in the Conference, so that they might use them on a Sunday they want to take off? Let Jesse in the Conference office know if you would be willing to do that, and we will list all the churches in the Conference that encourage you to use sermons and services in Ekit. Then you can simply go to their website and use them with their permission. Thanks!

Kipah, Kufi, and Collar

As part of an interfaith effort at modeling peace, Rabbi Amy Small of Ohavi Zedek, Imam Islam Hassan of the Islamic Society of Vermont, and Pastor Ken White of College Street Congregational Church in Burlington have released a podcast called "Kipah, Kufi, and Collar". Each 30 minute segment starts with Amy, Islam, and Ken having a conversation about an everyday issue (week 1 is "how to deal with difficult people") and then interviewing a local figure about that same topic (week 1's guest is former Vermont Governor, U.S. Ambassador, professor and author Madeline Kunin). New episodes are available every Monday.

You can access it at kipahkufiandcollar.com or you can look for it on Spotify (<https://open.spotify.com/show/0MpaNQRVMA1claeP2y5Ot0>), iTunes (<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/kipah-kufi-collar/id1523653268>) or wherever you access podcasts.

Special Worship Service available

The Council of Conference Ministers invites you to worship with them on May 17th or any other Sunday in Eastertide depending on what works for your schedule. The materials - full video, video segments, bulletin, and read-only service - can be found on this calendar event: <https://ucctcm.org/event/worship-with-the-council-of-conference-ministers/>

We offer this service to join together in this time of pandemic. We hope this service will provide pastors with a much needed and deserved time off.

Blessings to you all!

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.

Per capita letters are being sent to churches now. Churches should receive their per capital letters during the final week of August.

Lancaster Seminary accepting Doctor of Ministry applicants

As a Seminary, we continue to adapt to the needs and realities of these times, as we prepare faith leaders for ministry in a complex and ever-changing world. [We are still accepting applications for the Doctor of Ministry.](#)

Due to COVID-19, our Doctor of Ministry will look a little different, but will still offer the same high-quality educational experience. For the upcoming semester, the one-week intensive has moved to a completely online format (through Zoom). Also, additional classes are scheduled periodically throughout the semester to maintain the cohort experience and ensure academic accountability. I would be happy to meet with anyone you know that might be interested in starting their Doctor of Ministry this Fall.

Spiritual Direction

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

[here.](#)

Pastoral Transitions

- Rev. Elisa Lucozzi has been called as Pastor of the Guilford Community Church. She will succeed Rev. Lise Sparrow who is retiring.
- Rev. Leigh McCaffrey has been called as Pastor of the Barre Congregational Church.
- Rev. Mark Wilson has been called as Pastor of Waitsfield United Church Christ. His ministry will begin in October.

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

Prayers and Thanksgivings

Please hold Rev. Margo Marrone in your prayers as she and her family mourn the sudden passing of her husband Tom Marrone.

Please hold our Black, Indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC) sisters and brothers murdered by police and white supremacists in your prayers. Say their names...

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

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

Outdoor Ministries News



VT Outdoor Ministry is in full swing this week as we gather on Zoom for our week of @ the Lake camp. We invite you all to like our Vermont Outdoor Ministry UCC Facebook page. Please click the link below and see the picture of the full team that we posted on our page. Your prayers are most appreciated as we go through this week of virtual camp, for the leader and the campers. We plan to continue to make post on this new Facebook page as we continue to move through this important ministry.

<https://www.facebook.com/Vermont-Outdoor-Ministry-UCC-115717706796007/?>

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

**Search & Call
Resources**

**Lay Ministry
Openings**

Visit our partners



**Worship
Well**

Original worship resources
for local churches...
because Sunday's coming.

[Website](#)



Church World Service

Adam Smedberg

Community &
Congregational
Engagement Specialist

[Email Adam](#)

PO Box 749
West Springfield, MA 01090
Phone: 413-279-4039
Skype: asmedbergcws
[Website](#)



INSURANCE BOARD
Partners in Protection

Local Agent
James Stewart
[Email James](#)

P.O. Box 9031
Springfield, MA 01102-9031
413-788-4531
[Website](#)

Connect with us

