


Conference Minister's Report

Rev. Lynn Bujnak

The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls the whole Church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ by witnessing to the Gospel in church and society.

(UCC Constitution and Bylaws)

Perhaps I should have begun my report with Rogers and Hammerstein instead of the Constitution and Bylaws! *Getting to know you, getting to know all about you!*  This is certainly what I have been attempting to do for the past ten months. I am becoming more familiar with the **geography** of Vermont:



The **churches** of the Vermont Conference UCC:



And the **people** of our conference:



I have been amazed by the ways I see our VTCUCC pastors, people and congregations "witnessing to the gospel in church and society." Whether through alive and vital worship, alternative worship offerings for seekers or those not able to attend on Sunday, feeding hungry children through the Summer Lunch Program and food shelves, working for justice by studying and making a public witness to protest the use of torture, rebuilding homes in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, making concrete *no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey you're welcome here* and in ways too numerous to name your witness is shining brightly!

Our conference witness has been strong as well. We continue to provide resources and consultation to the roughly one third of our churches searching for new pastoral leadership. The Departments of

our conference are providing key leadership in the areas of: mission, stewardship, church and ministry and Christian education. Our three committees that relate to the credentialing, nurture and support of clergy are finding ways to be more actively engaged with more clergy. Further, these committees are planning training events for mentors for: persons in discernment about a call to ministry, new pastors and licensed pastors.

What do I see as I look to our future? I see us strengthening our focus on equipping and nurturing leaders, both clergy and lay. I see a renewed commitment to actively involving our youth and young adults in ministry at the conference level and beyond. I see us continuing to commit time, resources and energy to issues of justice and sustainability while widening our understanding to include more parts of the world.

To be honest, I also see us struggling with deep challenges: finances, the ability of our churches to sustain full-time ministry, the need for more and better trained licensed pastors, making our connections a priority when it is so much easier to go it alone. We are now the Church in radically different times than those most of us grew up knowing and it is an act of courage to let go of the familiar, even risk failure and try new directions. So, perhaps most of all, we need to be deeply committed to prayer for and with one another and prayerfully seeking God's desire and direction for our common life and ministry.

Thank you for your warm welcome! I am both deeply thrilled and more than a bit awed to have the privilege of serving with you as your conference minister. May God continue to bless, challenge and guide us in our witness and life together.

Lynn