



Vermont Conference, UCC Keeping in Touch

EQUIPPING CONGREGATIONS FOR CHRIST'S
MINISTRY AND MISSION TODAY AND TOMORROW

E-Kit

July 26, 2017

Quick Links

[Our Website](#)

[Directory](#)

[Staff](#)

[Summer Camp](#)

In This Issue

[UCC News & Updates](#)

[Food for Thought](#)

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Vermont Conference News

Rev. Pam Lucas will be worshipping & meet with Interim Search Committee at The Old South Church in Windsor

Rev. Lynn Bujnak will be worshipping at the Barre Congregational Church

Greetings!

Stuff and Baggage

Summers, especially as I look out the window wistfully today, are both wonderful and short. I think the fact that summer is shorter here makes it all the more special. We each have to find our own way to partake in the awesomeness that is summer in New England. For Lynn and I,



that means kayaking our ponds and lakes, and camping. We just returned from two weeks of

vacation, camping on Lake Manchaug in Sutton Mass. Being outdoors and in or near the water recharges my batteries faster than any other method. A campfire at dusk, kayaking shortly after sunrise, or floating in the lake is my version of unplugging from the world (if only I could put down my smart phone).

When we got home this past weekend, we realized it was time to de-clutter the camper - much like we will need to do with the house before it goes on the market. Oh, the stuff we found! Emptying a compartment, I found a box full of stuff that had been placed in this trailer from its predecessor years ago - and hasn't been touched since. Guess we really needed that stuff.

And that got me to thinking. How much 'stuff' are our churches carrying around, taking up space and effort and time and resources and not

God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



[UCC News and Updates](#)

2017 Digital Stewardship Materials...[read more here!](#)

Faith Leaders For Health Care vow to stay, monitor potential Senate vote on ACA repeal

General Synod service project will help keep hundreds warm during Baltimore winter

UCC launches Adese Fellowship to mentor, help create enterprises with social and economic value

Commentary: Our State of Mass Incarceration

UCC clergy among Minnesota activists demanding justice following fatal shootings by police

UCC pastors stand with young woman from Africa as she's granted asylum in U.S.

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Click image for more information.



[Food for Thought](#)

Focus Reading:

Genesis 29:15-28 with Psalm 105:1-11, 45b or  
1 Kings 3:5-12 with Psalm 128 or  
Psalm 119:129-136  
Romans 8:26-39  
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

R.J. Palacio, *Wonder*, 21st century

"Courage. Kindness. Friendship. Character.

doing anything to further our ministries and mission? I suspect we all have some things, in one degree or another. For some of our congregations it might be the building itself - of a size which could support a worshipping community of 250 in which today's congregation of 20 seems almost lost. And what sort of a drag is supporting that building, and how does that baggage steal energy and resources away from mission and ministry?

Now it's quite possible that a congregation which today stands at 20 active participants can be revitalized into a worshipping community of 60 or 75. In fact, that's an important part of our vision for the future. But it's a lot less likely with the building hanging over their heads. And even with a successful rebirth - does the new congregation need a 200 year old building that's still three times as big as it needs to be?

You know what I long for? The day that we stop using the words church and building as synonyms. We can be church, we can do church, we can birth a church, we can renew a church - and none of those things requires a building. Our buildings are a tool - and if that tool feels more like baggage that you are dragging around - or is dragging you around - well, that's not a very useful tool. Ask yourself this: Is your building serving your mission and ministry or are you spending way too much time serving your building?

Here's some homework for you. Take a close look at your church's budget, and figure out how much of it supports your building, how much supports staff, and how much goes to mission and ministries. You might be surprised at how much you spend to support and maintain your building. Money that could ensure your pastor's compensation package meets Conference guidelines, or that your other staff earn a livable wage, or additional support you could give to your missions.

I know it's hard to separate our hearts from our heads when discussing our buildings. They have a hold on us that's difficult to look past. And that's the problem - they may well hold us in the past, and prevent some new thing that could happen in our midst.

These are the qualities that define us as human beings, and propel us, on occasion, to greatness."

**Abraham Lincoln, 19th century**

"I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to what light I have."

**C.S. Lewis, The Silver Chair, 20th century**

"Crying is all right in its way while it lasts. But you have to stop sooner or later, and then you still have to decide what to do."

**Socrates, 5th century b.c.e.**

"The greatest way to live with honor in this world is to be what we pretend to be."

**John Steinbeck, Travels with Charley: In Search of America, 20th century**

"We value virtue but do not discuss it. The honest bookkeeper, the faithful wife, the earnest scholar get little of our attention compared to the embezzler, the tramp, the cheat."

**Kate Chopin, The Awakening, 19th century**

"It was not despair, but it seemed to her as if life were passing by, leaving its promises broken and unfulfilled. Yet there were other days when she listened, was led on and deceived by fresh promises which her youth had held out to her."

**JosÈ N. Harris, 20th century**

"Waiting hurts. Forgetting hurts. But not knowing which decision to take can sometimes be the most painful..."

**Jennifer Donnelly, A Northern Light, 21st century**

"I know it is a bad thing to break a promise, but I think now that it is a worse thing to let a promise break you."

**Maria von Trapp, 20th century**

"It will be very interesting one day to follow the pattern of our life as it is spread out like a beautiful tapestry. As long as we live here we see only the

At a gathering of Conference staff to talk about church vitality and new church starts, I heard a startling thing: A majority of all new church starts have put language in their constitution that prohibits the ownership of a building. If they have a worshipping community of 50, they rent a space for 50. If they grow to 150, they move to a space which will hold that. If they later shrink, they can adjust again. How liberating. They know something we could stand to learn.

And it's not just our buildings that can hold us back. Sometimes it is a ministry piece that should have been celebrated and ended long ago that continues on because "We've always done it!" If your congregation struggles to find the people and resources to do some mission, perhaps it's not your mission anymore and it is time to let it go.

So, friends, hear my invitation. What stuff are you carrying around that it is time to put down or let go of?

Peace,

*Jim*

Rev. Jim Thomas  
ACM for Stewardship, Church Vitality,  
And Finance

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Complying with Fair Credit Reporting Act & Managing a Legal Background Screening Program

Trustworthy insights into current insurance concerns for churches: Background Check Compliance | Informing Congregation on Embezzlement | Armatus Training Updates | Why a Church Needs Insurance

[Read the newsletter here....](#)

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**Free Webinars!!**

reverse side of the weaving, and very often the pattern, with its threads running wildly, doesn't seem to make sense. Some day, however, we shall understand. In looking back over the years we can discover how a red thread goes through the pattern of our life: the Will of God."

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**This church is in the
Association we share with
New Hampshire Conference**

**The Meriden Congregational
Church**
(<http://www.meridenucc.org>),
A spiritually progressive, Open
& Affirming Congregation
within the Grafton-Orange-
Sullivan Association of the
United Church of Christ, is
searching for a Spiritual
Formation Coordinator for our
children and their families.
[Read more here.....](#)

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**VERMONT  
PRIDE  
THEATER AT CHANDLER**

Sponsored in part by the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ, Vermont Pride Theater presents on stage the concerns and issues of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Vermonters. The goal: to build understanding among them and their families and friends, and within the wider community. VPT's 7th Annual Theater Festival, Friday July 21 - Sunday July 30, presents Vermont premieres of two full-length plays and a full evening of LGBTQ shorts.

**All plays deal with mature themes and contain mature language.**

[Know Your Score! Abuse Prevention Self-Assessment](#)

[Keeping Ministries Safe: 5 Things Churches Can Do](#)

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Richmond Congregational Church is organizing a mission trip to build homes for low income families in Nosara, Costa Rica from February 24-March 5, 2018 (Chittenden East School Break). We are looking for people (high school aged and up through retired folks) to join the team! We will be partnering with Mercy Home Ministries to build the houses.
[Complete Information here.....](#)
[Video of previous trips...](#)
[Medical forms...](#)

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**Employment Opportunities**

(If you have a job listed, please try to remember to let me ([Charri](#)) know if it has been filled!)

Music Director  
Second Congregational Church, Hyde Park, VT  
We are an active and friendly congregation of people who love our church and our music. We are looking for an individual with a love of music, and a musical background, to lead our music program. We are blessed with a beautiful pipe organ, baby grand piano and vibrant choir. Our ideal Music Director would be proficient with, and enjoy playing the organ and piano, be able to sight read music and direct and grow our Choir and music program. Part time, paid position.

If this sounds interesting, we would love to talk with you about our program and what we can create together. Please email: Second Congregational Church [2congo@myfairpoint.net](mailto:2congo@myfairpoint.net)

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Organist/Choir Director Needed!

Application
Email:
welcome@fccej.org

Job Description/Offer: First Church of Essex Junction, U.C.C. seeks PT Organist/Choir

DC Cathro's screwball comedy Family Holiday, in which a young man returns to Montpelier for peaceful re-connection time with family and friends, but finds something else. Friday July 21 & Saturday July 29, 7:30 PM.

Out of the Closet, eight authors' varied takes on making and missing connections, looking for love in the right and wrong places, and struggling to find yourself in this world. Saturday July 22 & Sunday July 30, 7:30 PM.

Deborah Salem Smith's medical drama Love Alone, exploring the impact of an unexpected death during surgery on the deceased's family and a young physician involved. Sunday July 23 & Friday July 28, 7:30 PM.

Interaction between audiences and performers is a key component of Vermont Pride Theater's mission, Performances of the two full-length plays will be followed by talkbacks with performers and directors, and all performances will be followed by complimentary receptions to meet and greet them.

Adults: \$20 in advance, \$22 at the door; students, \$15 in advance, \$17 at the door; a 3-admission pass for \$50. Single tickets and the pass available online at www.chandler-arts.org, or Chandler's box office (802) 728-6464.

Additional sponsorship support is provided by the Gay & Lesbian Fund of Vermont and the Samara Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation. Media support is provided by Vermont Public Radio, The Point, and The Beat 105.7 FM.

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Director. Church is GLBTQ friendly. Job includes coord. music program, directing adult choirs, and playing organ & piano @ 2 services [beautifully refurbished 1928 Estey organ / Young Chang baby grand].

Email cover letter and resume to [FCCEJmusicsearch@gmail.com](mailto:FCCEJmusicsearch@gmail.com) or mail to FCCEJ Music Search, 1 Church Street, Essex Junction VT 05452.

Church office 802-878-5745.  
First Congregational Church of Essex Junction  
Website: [www.fccej.org](http://www.fccej.org)

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Music Director Needed!
Job Description/Offer: Charlotte Congregational Church, U.C.C. seeks PT Music Director.

Church is GLBTQ friendly. Job includes: Accompanying congregational singing, leading Thursday night rehearsals, conducting the adult choir for Sunday morning worship services at 10am and for other occasional services. Regular planning meetings with the senior and associate pastors are part of the position. Email: scookekitt@mac.com

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SEEKING DIRECTOR(S) OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION - The United Church of Underhill (a vital, diverse, and growing congregation in covenant and connection with the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church) is seeking a part-time Director of Christian Education. She/he will be responsible for developing, implementing and evaluating a comprehensive education plan, in conjunction with our Ministry in Christian Education and our pastor, for children, and youth. Our Sunday School enrollment is approximately 30 students. Candidates should be energetic, possess strong interpersonal, collaborative and communication skills, and have a deep Christian faith. We are also open to the possibility of two people sharing this 8 hour/week position. If interested, please email Janet Grant at: [grantferald@comcast.net](mailto:grantferald@comcast.net). The United Church of Underhill is located at 9 Park Street in Underhill, VT (approximately 15 miles



east of Burlington along Rt. 15). You can also find more information about us at

[unitedchurchofunderhill.com](http://unitedchurchofunderhill.com)

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CHURCH MUSICIAN Job Opening, Thetford Hill, VT
First Congregational Church of Thetford

Progressive, Open and Affirming UCC congregation seeks Choir Director/Accompanist to provide keyboard music (piano and/or Rieger organ) and direct our choir for Sunday services.

Come join with our community and create music in our beautiful, acoustically wonderful sanctuary.

Begin September 2017 More details at our website thetfordhillchurch.org .
office@thetfordhillchurch.org
or call 802-785-2915

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### Resources from WorshipWell

Be sure to check out the worship resources available at:  
[worshipwell.church](http://worshipwell.church)



**Thank You for Reading**  
**An Open and Affirming Conference**  
[For the E-Kit Archive](#)

