

## Vermont Conference UCC Profile

### ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER

DOES THE NAME VERMONT STIR VISIONS IN YOUR MIND:

*of stunning scenic beauty,  
strong communities in rural villages,  
vibrant small cities,  
people who are independent and caring, who cherish strong traditions,  
but welcome change when justice requires it,  
of white-steepled churches  
and committed disciples listening to a still-speaking God?*

*As you enjoy these idyllic images,*

DOES YOUR SENSE OF REALITY THEN SAY:

*“Yes, but there must also be areas of poverty and need among the people,  
and difficult challenges for the churches and Conference to which they belong?”*

DOES GOD CALL YOU:

*To be a person of prophetic vision, pastoral heart, and innovative leadership,  
to live among us and serve in such a setting,  
embracing change as new opportunities emerge  
to share the three great loves of God: for children, for neighbors, and for creation?  
Does your spirit respond with excitement to the challenges ahead?*

WE HOPE THAT YOU ANSWER “YES!”

*and you will apply as a candidate  
to become our new Associate Conference Minister.*

### About Our Conference

Vermont is a small, but connected state and our Conference reflects this. Collegiality is warm among our pastors, despite the many miles of back roads and hills that lie between towns. Our churches often serve as the visual and missional center of town life, serving free meals, hosting food shelves, rummage sales, and arts events. Drawing on our Congregational heritage, many churches still go by the name “Congregational,” while fully embracing their UCC identity. Not uncommonly, we are the only mainline Protestant church in a town. But Vermont has one of the lowest rates of church membership in the country, so our churches struggle with low attendance, aging membership and dwindling funds. This necessitates creative solutions to leadership and sometimes painful choices about viability. We are aware that the next decade will bring many changes, and there is anxiety, as well as hope that God is preparing new ways for us to serve and be faithful. Recently the Conference Board of Directors has undertaken a time of visioning and planning for the Conference. We look forward to the active participation of the person we call in this process.

Annual meetings are lively, creative, inspiring and fun! We like being together. The Vermont Conference mission statement is :To equip congregations for Christ's ministry and mission today and tomorrow. Our conference ministers regularly visit and preach in our churches and people know and respect them. There are 137 churches in our conference, of which 72 % have fewer than 100 members. There are signs of vitality across church size. Several of our churches are growing, many are engaging in bold outreach to and partnering with other nonprofit organizations to serve the needs of their communities. There is excitement in proclaiming ourselves a space where “no matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey you are welcome here.” There are eight Associations. Six of them have delegated ministerial oversight to a conference-wide committee. A large number of licensed and part-time ministers serve with faithfulness and skill in our churches.

### **Recent initiatives include the following:**

The Conference has worked with the Center for Progressive Renewal to assist several key congregations to identify and move to the "next level" in their mission and ministry. Clergy and lay leaders have participated in CPR-facilitated coaching groups.

Another group of our churches participated in a Lilly-funded pilot program of Partners in Sacred Places: "Strategic Investment in Sacred Places."

The Conference sponsors annual Vitality Events, which have been well-attended, with prominent keynote speakers, combined with TED Talk stories from local church leaders.

The Minister’s Convocation is also a cherished annual tradition, a 48 hour event, with a nationally-known speaker/lecturer, rich worship, and retreat time for ministers.

### **Gifts and Challenges of Vermont Life:**

Vermont is the second smallest state by population (625,000). While we are among the least racially and ethnically diverse, recent immigrant populations have been welcomed in Burlington and Rutland communities. These families and individuals contribute to robust Interfaith connections and enliven neighborhoods and schools, especially in Chittenden County.

Most towns are small, and big box stores are far away. Urban style night life is primarily confined to Burlington . The arts community is important and flourishing in many places across Vermont. Several colleges liven up the local scene. Economic diversity is spread throughout communities, rather than in neighborhoods segregated by social class. Winter weather can last from November to April. Meetings are not cancelled for a few inches of snow. Spring is short but glorious, summer is full of sunshine, bicycles, and music festivals; and autumn brings world-renowned foliage and lots of tourists.

Like many parts of our nation, Vermont is currently being challenged by an opioid epidemic that cuts across class and income groups. Other challenges include an aging population and the implications for local school funding and need for mergers.

People who thrive here enjoy the four seasons (five, if you count mud season), and find ways to get outside in all kinds of weather, or cozy up with friends at home. Skiing, snowshoeing, community choirs, maple syrup, hiking, volunteering, fishing, kayaking, crafts, and craft beer are among our delights. Many Vermonters have more than one job, since salaries are often low. Vermonters are resourceful and generous with their neighbors, and regardless of political leanings, passionate about the environment.

## **Associate Conference Minister Position Description**

The Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ is looking for a full-time Associate Conference Minister to share responsibilities with our full-time Conference Minister. The Associate Conference Minister will help carry out the ministry of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ by supporting, encouraging, and nourishing the life and ministry of local churches, pastors, and associations.

### **Areas of Responsibility**

1. The ACM will coordinate Search and Call, including the implementation and oversight of Search and Call consultants.
2. The ACM will provide direction to local churches in areas of congregational vitality, stewardship, and faith formation.
3. The ACM will preach regularly in our local churches.
4. The ACM will cultivate, nurture, and provide oversight of the students in the Vermont School of Ministry.

### **We seek an ordained Associate Conference Minister who**

is a person of faith;  
is a catalyst for change;  
is a creative problem solver;  
is a good listener;  
has strong relational skills;  
works well in a small-team environment;  
has proven organizational skills;  
has facility with technology, including online meeting platforms and social media.