



Vermont Interfaith Power & Light

A faith-based response to global warming



On Faith Climate Action Day, VTIPL members & friends met with Sen. Tim Ashe whose staff captured the moment.

Green Mountains, Blue Water

Earth Care News

March 2020 Happy World Water Day

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Faith Climate Action Day a Big Success!

*(Review by VTIPL Board Member and Faith Climate Action Day organizer
Richard Butz)*

On February 20, 2020, more than 50 members of Vermont Interfaith Power & Light, and Vermont Interfaith Action (VIA) spiritual communities gathered at the State House in Montpelier to meet with our lawmakers to urge them to support the Global Warming Solutions Act.

The day was an amazing experience beginning with policy briefings and tips on talking to our legislators led by Sen. Chris Pearson and Vermont Conservation Voters' Lauren Hierl. That was followed by a press conference, then group and one-on-one meetings with legislators including Chris Bray, Chair of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy, House Speaker Mitzi Johnson, and Senate President pro tempore Tim Ashe.

A highlight of the day was the press conference in the historic Cedar Creek Room where The Right Rev. Thomas Ely, Rev. Jane Dwinell, Rev. Daniel Cooperrider, Harris Webster (representing VIA), Rep. Sarah Copeland Hanzas, and UVM student Morgan Dreibelbis spoke from the perspectives of their traditions and their hearts. Morgan's comments, a member of the generation that will inherit the climate we're leaving behind, are now posted on our website. Other speakers' remarks will also be posted there soon.

The icing on the cake was the vote on the bill - the Global Warming Solutions Act. Expected to garner around 95 votes, the bill passed with the veto-proof majority of 105 - 37 and a voice vote on the second reading the next day. What a victory that we can share! We filled the capitol with our energy and it was noticed.

This is just the beginning. The bill must pass the Senate and then on to the governor. There are three more bills to follow if we put the entire suite

together, so expect more emails and calls to action as we work together to stand up for God's Creation. Together, we can do this! Special thanks to our co-sponsors VPIRG and Vermont Interfaith Action, as well as retired VTIPL Coordinator Betsy Hardy, new Coordinator Donna Roberts, VTIPL President Ron McGarvey, and Rev. Dick Hibbert for all their work to make this happen. (For more information, see this [VTDigger article](#).)

VTIPL Transition - Meet our New Coordinator

Hello! I'm Donna Roberts, VT Interfaith Power & Light's new Coordinator. It is an honor to be working in this capacity following the extraordinary contributions of retired Coordinator Betsy Hardy who held this position for 14 years. There's a lot to learn. Thanks in advance for your patience while I learn the ropes! Betsy will still participate in VTIPL programs, as her time permits.

Here's a bit about my background. My academic and professional work have involved environmental education, advocacy, activism, and TV/filmmaking. I recently taught courses in Social Justice & Sustainability and Restorative Environmental Justice at Chatham University (Rachel Carson's alma mater), in Pittsburgh, PA, my family's former home city. I've had the privilege to serve with non-profit boards and organizations from Montréal to São Paulo, Brazil, including ECOSanibel, which brought the values and principles of the Earth Charter Initiative to SW Florida and beyond. I hold an M.S. in Environmental Sciences and a B.A. in Journalism/Mass Communication. Last week, Champlain College presented my documentary, *Yemanjá: Wisdom from the African Heart of Brazil*, closing its Black History Month celebrations. Past productions include environmental programming in Canada and with a PBS affiliate, after an early career in broadcast news.

I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to VTIPL's critical mission while offering new perspectives to, as Thomas Berry said, the Great Work of our time. With this transition comes a **new VTIPL address**: P.O. Box 3095, Burlington, VT 05408. We will have a new phone number soon. VTIPL's [website](#) and [email address](#) remain the same.

Weybridge Church Aims Christian Lens at the Climate Crisis

We were thrilled to see the recent weekly edition of *Seven Days* featuring an article on the environmental focus of Weybridge Congregational Church. Congratulations to Rev. Daniel Cooperrider and his congregation for gaining this recognition for their vital work. [Read the article here.](#)

March 22 is World Water Day

World Water Day, a global celebration of the Earth's waters, provides a moment to reflect on the importance and value of clean, abundant water. VTIPL Board Member and outstanding water steward, Rev. Dr. Nancy Wright, of Ascension Lutheran Church, shares the following previously presented essay for our contemplation.

The Spiritual Essence of Water

No one yet knows the true origins of water, but a story might be something like this: The Big Bang, a possible way through which God created the world, created hydrogen; stellar evolution reformulated this element into oxygen, the two combining into the H₂O molecule. Then, in interstellar space, water and other substances over eons condensed and froze, coating planetesimals with ice, which may have collided with the planets, including Earth. In our solar system, water is or was present in each of the Sun's planets, with different fates. At least 60% of the adult human body is water.

But this is a scientific description of water, the elixir of life. Water is also spiritually significant in all the world's traditions. In the Islamic tradition, the purity of water reflects the soul's ability to purify itself in relation to God through prayer and meditation. In the Bible, Jesus movingly says to the Samaritan woman at the well: "If you knew who was asking you for water, you would ask him for living water. The water that I will give will become...a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." (John 4:13) Japanese people know that the soul recognizes itself when it beholds water, so Japanese will gaze for hours at a temple pond. St. Francis prayed, "Praise be you, O Lord, for sister water, who is very useful, humble, precious, and chaste."

Following St. Francis' description, we may say that water is humble, in taking different or varied forms (ice, steam, running water, mist, snow). Water, as the origin of life, contains all possibilities. It is precious, too; only 3 % of Earth's water is fresh, and much of that is frozen in ice. Water is chaste. Water reminds us that we live in a contained world, with boundaries; that we are not to pollute water, because there is always someone or some community living downstream. Further, Earth has always had a finite amount of water. It is vulnerable, as effects of climate change are revealed in water, causing water to disappear, host algae blooms, absorb toxins, and lose its ability to be living water, naturally home to myriad fish, crustaceans, amphibians, and plant life.

Several Ascension members continue working with ECHO and other groups in Creating a Culture of Clean Water focused on the Lake Champlain watershed. Connected with this work, I've talked with young adults about water and their relationship with the lake. They have movingly described how important swimming and just looking at the lake was to them in cleansing, renewing, transforming. So swimming was even like a baptism. Many of these youth don't find worship in church settings especially relevant to their lives. But water, especially the lake, keeps them spiritually sane and whole.

Are we kept spiritually sane and whole by joining people throughout the ages in recognizing water as the supreme life essence, even reverencing it as not only foundational to physical but also spiritual existence?

(Congregational watershed manuals are available for download and purchase, developed with VT IPL funding and created by Ascension Lutheran: [access the manual here](#))

Connecticut River Conservancy has planned activities this month to help us learn and connect with other waterkeepers including *Clean Water Cafes* and tours. Click here for information about events of [Connecticut River Conservancy](#).

Earth Day+50's Theme is Climate Action

April 22, 2020, marks the 50th birthday of Earth Day! It is hard to believe so much time has passed since the first Earth Day in 1970. The theme of this year's event is Climate Action. What could be more appropriate? From the Earth Day organization: "The enormous challenges — but also the vast opportunities — of acting on climate change have distinguished the issue as the most pressing topic for the 50th anniversary. Climate change represents the biggest challenge to the future of humanity and the life-support systems that make our world habitable."

There will surely be many activities to engage in around the state. If you have any fond Earth Day memories, feel free to share and we can feature a few in next month's newsletter. For information and inspiration, visit [The Earth Day website](#).

Save the Date for these Upcoming Events

April 17-26, 2020. National Interfaith Power & Light's *Faith Climate Action Week*. Pre-register to [reserve a copy](#) of the 2020 Faith Climate Action Week Kit.

April 18, 2020. *LEAP Energy Fair* Annual fair hosted by Waterbury LEAP (Local Energy Action Partnership) is on Sat., Apr. 18, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at Crossett Brook Middle School. The fair is free. Their [website](#) has more information.

VTIPL helps people of faith and conscience better understand the climate crisis and take action to care for Earth.

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(Photo: Candomblé devotees in Bahia, Brazil, after offering flowers to Yemanjá, Afro-Brazilian Mother deity of the world's waters. Photo by D. Roberts, 2013)



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