



Vermont Interfaith Power & Light  
A faith-based response to global warming

## Green Mountains, Blue Water

### Earth Care News July 2020

Let's do our best to create a just world for today's youth, tomorrow's leaders!



(Vermont Youth Conservation Corps members Olivia and Grace work on a hot summer day.)  
Photo courtesy Gerald Lee Hoffman

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**-VTIPL & Sierra Club partner on panel, *Building Hope Through Faith During the Racial, Health & Environment Crises***

**-UVM Divests from Fossil Fuels**

**-Update from Montpelier with Global Warming Solutions Act details**

**-Gubernatorial Candidate Forum on Social & Environmental Justice**

**-IPL Faith Climate Justice Voter Campaign & Guide**

**-News on Dakota Access, Keystone XL & Atlantic Coast Pipelines**

**-Upcoming events**

**-PBS film *Cooked: Survival by Zip Code***

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***Building Hope***

***through Faith***

***During the Racial,***

***Health and***

***Environmental***

***Crisis.*** VTIPL &

Vermont Sierra Club

co-sponsored a

recent community

conversation with

leaders of Vermont

faith communities

who shared thoughts

about our current

crises and how we can build hope to help solve these problems. The discussion featured: Reverend Arnold Thomas, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Jericho and past VTIPL Board member; Rabbi Jan Salzman of Congregation Ruach haMaqom in Burlington; and Reverend Jim Antal, Special Advisor on Climate Justice to the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, Norwich. Rev. Thomas urged us to “reclaim a sense of community that empowers the disempowered”, a lesson we can learn from the history of the Black church whose faithful became politically empowered by necessity given their oppression under slavery and subsequent agrarian policies. He said the state must pass the Reparations Bill (H478), and that society needs to ask for forgiveness of racism. Rabbi Jan said a "source of hope for her is that we are never stuck where we are " while reminding us that "every dollar is a vote". Rev. Antal noted that “previously siloed justice efforts are coming together”. He also cited “the exploitation of



*Photo courtesy Gerald Lee Hoffman 2020*

black people is the greatest extractive activity of all time”. There was reference to the groundbreaking 1987 study and UCC publication, *Toxic Waste and Race*, which laid bare issues of environmental justice decades ago in research from which the term “environmental racism” was coined. Watch the video recording [here](#). Access the free PDF of *Toxic Waste and Race at Twenty* [here](#).

### **UVM Divests from Fossil Fuels**

The University of Vermont’s Board of Trustees has voted to divest the University’s endowment of fossil fuel investments. UVM will immediately end new direct investment in fossil fuels, fully divest from public investments in fossil fuels by July 2023, and not renew pre-existing multi-year private investments, which it stopped acquiring in 2017. UVM says it will continue "investing in opportunities that focus on sustainability, climate change mitigation, and other Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues", and step up engagement with "managers of its commingled funds, asking that they factor financial risks of climate change into investment decision-making". UVM President Suresh Garimella said, “Divesting from fossil fuels is the right thing to do for the University of Vermont, given our history and longstanding commitment to sustainability efforts”.



### **Update from Montpelier**

*(contributed by VT IPL Board member Richard Butz)*

### **VT Signs Multi-state Agreement to Electrify Trucks and Buses**

Vermont joins 15 states and the District of Columbia in signing an agreement to electrify medium- and heavy- duty buses and trucks, calling for 100% of all sales of such vehicles to be zero emission vehicles by 2050. The timeline is significantly later than many of us would like. The transportation sector accounts for 44% of VT's total greenhouse gas emissions; medium- and heavy-duty vehicles make up 14% of the on-road sector total.

## **Global Climate Solutions Act Passes the Senate**

The bill was sent back to the House for final action on some minor changes and is expected to pass in August/September when the legislature returns. Because the bill passed both houses with more than a 2/3 majority, it is expected to survive any vetoes. Passage of the Transportation Climate Initiative, Electric Utility Efficiency and Act 250 reform are uncertain, though there is strong support for eventual passing.

## ***Achieving Justice with the Global Warming Solutions Act***

VT Sierra Club held a conversation on July 15 featuring Steve Crowley, VT Sierra Club, Lauren Oates, the Nature Conservancy, and Jenny Rushow, VT Law School.

### Goals:

- keep global temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius;
- reduce our carbon footprint 26% below 1990 level by 2025;
- reduce our carbon footprint 40% below 2005 level by 2030; and
- reduce it by 80% below 2005 level by 2050.

### Mechanism:

A Climate Council, comprised of 22 members, some appointed by the governor and some by the legislature, will develop rules to accomplish goals.

### Enforcement:

Citizens can bring action against the State if goals & timetables aren't met.

The House bill specified a \$1M budget over two years for staff. The Senate Finance Committee removed funding until the final budget is decided in Aug./Sept. as was the case with other bills. Lauren stated that VT is coming late to the game. We are the highest carbon dioxide emitter per capita in New England with our numbers increasing. The major culprit is transportation, as we use much imported hydro for electricity. Jenny said that while Vermont is late, the bill is informed by previous climate bills in CA and MA, and is a major improvement over those bills in its enforcement clause. The general consensus is that the bill is a good step forward. Though the audience expressed concern that it's not fast enough given the severity of the impending climate.

## **Pandemic Impact**

A legislator has commented that the state could be facing a 22% budget cut due to lost revenue, seriously impacting everything.

## **What Can We Do?**

Plan to contact your legislators and Governor Scott toward the end of August to let them know you want the Global Climate Solutions Act passed this Fall.

**A Gubernatorial Candidate Forum on Environmental and Social Justice** was held on June 17 co-sponsored by Vermont Sierra Club, 350VT, and Vermont Conservation Voters. In case you missed it, [view it here](#).

## **Faith Climate Justice Voter Campaign & Guide**

We are pleased to share national Interfaith Power and Light's Faith Climate Justice Voter Campaign information which is also on our VT IPL website. This is a non-partisan IPL-led campaign including several faith and climate partners focused on engaging and mobilizing faith voters in this election year to

communicate values of caring for Creation, and loving our neighbors through voting. "There are deep inequities and racial injustices in our communities and nation. This is a moment for fundamental change. We need leaders who share our values ... and are committed to ending structures of oppression, ending environmental injustices, and tackling climate change. We know how important our leaders are at every level of government. Let's take this moment of opportunity to make change and bring forth a world rooted in a bold, meaningful vision for justice and love."

[Access campaign.](#)

Pledge to be a Faith Climate Justice Voter and ask others to [take the pledge!](#)



## News on Dakota Access and Other Pipelines

In another blow to Keystone XL, the U.S. Supreme Court has rejected a bid by the Trump Administration to revive a key water crossing permit that would allow construction of Keystone XL through waterways. The Court declined a request from TC Energy and the Trump administration to allow Keystone XL to proceed. It also issued a partial stay of the district court's decision as it applies to other pipelines while a full appeal of the decision moves forward.

[Read more here.](#)

From the Lakota People's Law Project: "District Court Judge James Boasberg ordered the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) to be shut down within 30 days! In this momentous ruling, Judge Boasberg found that the Army Corps of Engineers failed to fully consider the environmental impacts of Energy Transfer's crude oil pipeline and that there were too many safety concerns to allow its continued operation." Read about the Lakota People's Law Project [campaign here.](#)

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline has been canceled, though critics say it's not enough. [Read article here.](#)

## Upcoming Events

-July 25 & 26, 2020: *Virtual Solar Fest*

While the pandemic prevents gathering in person this year, the spirit of SolarFest continues on its 25th anniversary! The event promises very timely presentations on the challenges and opportunities in community redevelopment, natural resource restoration, and climate adaptation.

[SolarFest.](#)

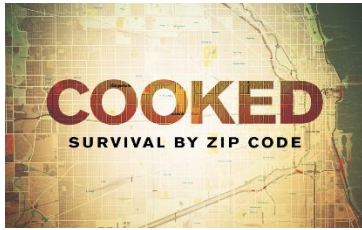
-July 30, 9 a.m. - 12 Noon: *Sustainable Preservation*

This Zoom session with top state experts focuses on reducing the energy costs and carbon footprint of non-profit or municipally-owned historic buildings. The event addresses resources with opportunities to ask questions. Presenters include the Preservation Trust of Vermont, Efficiency Vermont and NeighborWorks. [Register here.](#)

-August 5, 1 p.m.: *The Green New Deal and Reparations*

IPL Alabama is organizing a webinar addressing the Green New Deal and Reparations to explore their connections and how faith communities can advance just policies. The Green New Deal and Reparations are often discussed separately despite clear and compelling connections. The Green

New Deal Resolution proposed in Congress sought, "to promote justice and equity by stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression," while the demand for reparations compels society to address injustices of systemic racism, including environmental racism. The webinar will feature panelists: Congresswoman Barbara Lee; 350.org's North America Director Tamara Toles O'Laughlin; and the United Church of Christ's Economic Justice Minister Sekinah Hamlin. [Register here.](#)



**Stream film, *Cooked: Survival by Zip Code.***

This disturbing documentary about environmental justice in the U.S. is streaming for free after a recent PBS broadcast. It tells the story of the 1995 Chicago heatwave when 739 people died in one week, "most of them poor, elderly and African American." This "story about life, death, and the politics of crisis in an American city ... asks the question: Was this a one-time tragedy or an appalling trend?" [Access film here.](#)

[Donate Now](#)

We greatly appreciate your contributions to our ongoing work at the intersection of faith, climate, and justice.

