



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

## Green Mountains, Blue Water

### Earth Care News December

Happy Holidays! May Peace and Health be With You.



*(Photo courtesy Donna Roberts)*

- VTIPL Winter Series Begins with January Labor & Environment Event
- VTIPL Endorses America's Fair Share of Climate Action
- Arctic Report Card Update – Disturbing Transformation Well Underway
- The Dalai Lama Calls for Urgent Climate Action
- Local Solar Saved New Englanders \$1.1 billion
- Pastor Nancy Wright's Recent Sermon on Peace

- Black Voices in the Orthodox Church
- Spirituality in the Civil Rights Movement

### **Other Upcoming Events:**

12/13 The Hanukah Miracle: Metaphor & Imperative for Climate Activism

12/16 Mindfulness for Mental Health for Faith Practitioners

12/18 Paul Winter & the Consort *Everybody Under the Sun* Concert

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## **VTIPL Winter Virtual Events**

Following our successful fall *Climate Justice Series*, VTIPL is planning at least one virtual event per month to help keep our communities connected and engaged this winter.

### **Labor and Environment – Toward a Just Transition, January 14, 7 p.m.**

Our first virtual event in the new year begs the question: How can “green” people of faith and working people engage for a sustainable future for all? This conversation will feature David Van Deusen, President of Vermont State Labor Council AFL-CIO, moderator Professor Rebecca Gould of Middlebury College, also a VTIPL Board member, and an additional panelist to be confirmed. Since the beginning of the environmental movement, relationships with labor have often been tense due to concerns that environmental objectives threaten jobs. But it is increasingly evident – especially in light of events such as violent storms, wildfires, and flooding - that the dangers associated with climate change and environmental degradation are seriously threatening humanity and other species, motivating us to join forces to seek solutions. Organized labor recognizes that climate change threatens our economy and job security, and environmentalists understand that solutions must incorporate labor and equity concerns. Our event will discuss how faith

leaders and labor leaders can work together for a truly Just Transition.  
(Registration link to come.)



*Festival of Yemanjá as celebrated each February in Bahia, Brazil.  
Photo by Gerald Hoffman*

**February film &  
discussion,  
*Yemanja: Wisdom  
from the African  
Heart of Brazil***

During what is known as Black History Month in the U.S., VTIPL will host a screening and discussion of the documentary, *Yemanja: Wisdom*

*from the African Heart of Brazil*, about the Candomblé spiritual tradition, often referred to as the religion of nature, in Bahia, Brazil. Narrated by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker, the film was created by VTIPL Coordinator Donna Roberts and explores this Afro-indigenous traditional culture through the voices of distinguished elder women leaders of color. Following the screening, women spiritual leaders from our region will discuss the film's multiple themes including Candomblé practitioners' profound reverence for the natural world. Date, time, and registration link to come. [Film website and trailer.](#)

**March 22, World Water Day**

VTIPL is also planning an activity to coincide with World Water Day which is commemorated on March 22.

For information and links to events in our Climate Justice Series including: *A Creation Justice Conversation*, the *Kiss the Ground* film, and *Rooting Out Structural Racism in American Agriculture* please visit the [VTIPL website.](#)

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**VTIPL Endorses Call for Biden Administration to Adopt America’s Fair Share of Climate Action**

VTIPL has joined other IPLs in supporting an initiative that has calculated the United



States’ “fair share” of climate action and is calling on the new Biden Administration to incorporate this fair share in future plans. As a global problem, climate change requires a global solution, international cooperation, and solidarity on a scale that has rarely, if ever, been seen. Thankfully, an international climate justice movement has long campaigned for an approach to the crisis grounded in justice and solidarity. "This effort to quantify ‘The US Climate Fair Share’ is a collective effort by the US Climate Action Network (USCAN), which includes a range of organizations from state and locally focused grassroots groups to international NGOs, to center the dual challenges of global climate change and global inequality, and to ensure that US climate action is appropriately considered in this context. As the richest country the world has ever known (and also one of the world’s most starkly divided ones), and one that even now has vast influence on other countries, it is of utmost importance to people around the globe that a comprehensive US climate plan take into account the world outside our own borders.” VTIPL thanks North Carolina IPL for its recent webinar on the initiative and for inviting other IPL affiliates to join this movement. [Learn more about the U.S. Fair Share of Climate Action.](#)

**Arctic Report Card: Transformation to Warmer Region Well Underway**

NOAA’s 2020 Report Card on the Arctic region unsurprisingly is not good news. “The sustained transformation to a warmer, less frozen and biologically changed Arctic remains clear.” The Report Card’s Executive Summary states: “The Arctic Report Card (ARC) provides an annual update on the state of the Arctic’s climate and environment as well as highlights of Arctic science news of the past year. ARC2020 features...updates on a wide range of Arctic science topics, from the past year’s air temperatures and sea ice conditions to the latest in bowhead whale research. Taken as a whole, across a variety of disciplines and viewpoints, the story is unambiguous: the transformation of

the Arctic to a warmer, less frozen, and biologically changed region is well underway.”

[NOAA Arctic Report Card and video.](#)

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### **The Dalai Lama Calls for Urgent Climate Action**

In a new article in *The Guardian*, The Dalai Lama appeals to world leaders to take urgent action against climate change. As a call to action, he has

declared in a new book that if Buddha returned to this world, “Buddha would be green”. The Buddhist leader warned that global warming may reach such a level that “rivers will dry” and that, eventually, “Tibet will become like Afghanistan” with terrible consequences for at least a billion people dependent on water from the plateau “at the roof of the world”. The 85-year-old Dalai Lama says his contribution to fighting climate change is education and promoting compassion, as well as oneness, among Earth's population. “We see too much emphasis on my nation, my religion, their religion. That really is causing all these problems due to different religions and different nations are fighting. So now we really need oneness.” Amen!

[Read full article.](#)

### **Local Solar Saved New Englanders \$1.1 Billion**

A Synapse Energy Economics study elaborates on newly available data demonstrating “the enormous benefit of local solar power to everyone in New England.” From 2014 to 2019, small-scale solar in New England saved utilities and their customers more than \$1.1 billion in wholesale electricity costs. Notably, these savings were enjoyed not only by people with solar, but also by everyone with an electric bill. [Read the full report.](#)



### **Pastor Nancy Wright's Recent Sermon on Peace**

During this holy season when many of us are focused on creating a more peaceful world for all despite the many difficulties of the past year, VT IPL Vice-President The Rev. Dr. Nancy Wright of Ascension Lutheran Church presented this inspiring Advent sermon we'd like to share. She speaks about peace - part of God's salvation, God's presence - and the extraordinary work of peacemaker Father Elias Chacour, also the subject of a chapter, "I am Palestinian, Arab, Christian and Israeli", in the book, *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2007). Pr. Nancy's sermon begins, "First, what is peace in the Bible, and why is peace seen as part of God's hope for the world? Second, what are the conditions that lead to peace, and how can peacemakers help people to achieve peace? Peace is spoken about throughout the Bible; in the Hebrew scriptures, the word peace comes from the Hebrew shalom, which means harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, welfare and tranquility. From ancient times, it has always been used as a greeting: 'may you be well, whole or complete'." [Read the sermon transcript.](#) [View a video of the sermon.](#)

## Other Upcoming Events

### **-Dec. 13, 6 p.m. *The Hanukah Miracle: A Metaphor & Imperative for Climate Activism***

An evening with Rabbinic Pastor De Herman. We'll light that night's Hanukah candles, and then be 'enlightened'. *The Hanukah Miracle: Climate Activism as a Metaphor & Imperative for Healing our Planet* will elaborate on climate change as a moral challenge demanding an urgent response. "De serves on the steering committee of the Jewish Earth Alliance, a grassroots network of communities engaging Jews in the policy process at the federal level." The talk will also include guidance to write letters to your members of Congress.

[For more information.](#) Zoom address: 430 538 0786 Password: Ruach

### **-Dec. 16, 1 p.m. Interfaith Center of NY, *Mindfulness for Mental Health for Faith Practitioners***

The on-going impact of the pandemic is straining mental health many people more likely to experience depression, anxiety, insomnia, physical and chronic pain. Drawing on the most scientifically researched mindfulness program in the world, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), the virtual event promises to provide participants with basic mindfulness tools. This event aims to support faith communities' mental wellbeing and contemplative practices, offer avenues to relate differently to stress and the opportunity to cultivate resilience and emotional intelligence. The event is facilitated by Ananta, an ordained member of the Triratna Buddhist Order and a qualified MBSR instructor, with over 25 years of experience. [More information and registration.](#)

### **-Dec. 18, 7 p.m. Paul Winter *Everybody Under the Sun***

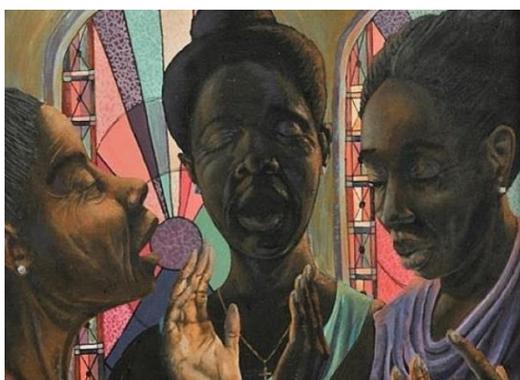
Every December since 1980, seven-time Grammy-winner Paul Winter and his colleagues have celebrated the Winter Solstice at New



York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine with a feast of music and dance from

the diversity of cultures and creatures of the world. The winter solstice, with the rebirth of the sun, offers a time for healing and hope, a time to celebrate community and relatedness, and a time to honor the diversity and the unity of this great cornucopia of life on Earth. With their beloved cathedral forum closed for events during the pandemic, Paul Winter and the Consort extend the invitation, wherever you are in the world, to join a video celebration, *Everybody Under the Sun*. The video premieres on-demand on December 18, at 7 p.m. ET and remains available through Spring 2021. [Learn more and access concert tickets.](#)

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### **Black Voices in the Orthodox Church**

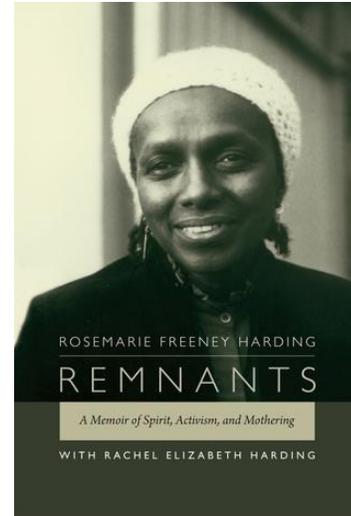
A recent article in *Jacob's Well* (the magazine of the Orthodox Church in America) explains how Black Americans make up a small percentage of Orthodox Christians in the U.S. Fr. Matthew Brown writes, “Considering how difficult it is

for someone from our American culture to convert to the Orthodox faith, it makes the stories of the seven Black individuals rather amazing. Orthodoxy, from the outside looking in, can seem foreign, complicated, and confusing. But perhaps Black Americans are better positioned than any ethnic group in this country to traverse the convert’s journey. They are a people experienced in being ‘the stranger’”. This special issue which features interviews with Black Orthodox Americans was “noteworthy both for the diversity of its interviewees and for the commonality among the stories. There were men and women of different ages, some descendants of American slaves, others recent African immigrants or of Afro-Latino backgrounds. They spoke English, Spanish, and French. Some came from Catholic backgrounds, and others from Pentecostal or traditional Black churches. Yet, threads of shared experience ran through them all.”

[Read the article.](#)

## Spirituality in the Civil Rights Movement

The Center for Action and Contemplation recently published an excerpt from the wonderful book, *Remnants: A Memoir of Spirit, Activism, and Mothering*, by Rosemarie Freeney Harding with Rachel Elizabeth Harding (Duke University Press, 2015). As the article states, “The deeply spiritual foundation of the Civil Rights movement is often underemphasized. The movement that sought political and legal equality for Black Americans was grounded in faith. The devout Christian commitment of virtually all its leaders, from Martin Luther King, Jr. to Fannie Lou Hamer to John Lewis, inspired them to work for the dignity and equality of all.” In the book excerpt, Rosemarie Freeney Harding (1930–2004), wife of late Civil Rights leader Vincent Harding, recalled the spiritual energy of the movement. “One of the most exciting things for me about being in the freedom movement was discovering other people who were compelled by the Spirit at the heart of our organizing work, and who were also interested in the mysticism that can be nurtured in social justice activism. We experienced something extraordinary in the freedom movement, something that hinted at a tremendous potential for love and community and transformation that exists here in this scarred, spectacular country. For many of us, that ‘something’ touched us in the deepest part of our selves and challenged us in ways both personal and political.” Co-author Dr. Rachel Harding is Assoc. Professor of Indigenous Spiritual Traditions at the University of Colorado, Denver, and an *Ebomi* in the Terreiro do Cobre Candomblé community in Salvador, Brazil. [Read the article.](#) [Find the book.](#)



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## All Souls Interfaith Seeks Music Director

All Souls Interfaith Gathering, an inclusive spiritual community in Shelburne, VT, seeks to hire a part-time music director “to create and weave music into its services and to help strengthen spiritual connections. The ideal candidate will play a broad range of musical instruments and styles from interfaith and

spiritual traditions, lead and coordinate a chorus, and encourage community connections through music.” Interested applicants should send resumes and [letters of inquiry here.](#)

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VTIPL will soon be sending out year-end appeals for financial contributions. Please look for these in your postal mail. We are extremely grateful for your support of our ongoing work at the intersection of faith, climate, and justice.

Thank you and Happy Holidays!

[Donate Now](#)

