



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

Green Mountains, Blue Water

Earth Care News March

Happy Women's History Month & World Water Day



Photo courtesy Donna Roberts.

- VTIPL's Black History Month Event a Success!
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Photo courtesy Gerald Lee Hoffman

VTIPL's Black History Month Event a Success!

Nearly 60 friends gathered for our recent virtual event to view and discuss the film *Yemanjá: Wisdom from the African Heart of Brazil*. Narrated by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker, the film explores the Afro-indigenous spiritual tradition of Candomblé in

Bahia, Brazil, often called the religion of nature. Unique in traditional African religions, many of the most revered Candomblé communities are led by elder Afro-Brazilian women. The film's director, VTIPL Coordinator Donna Roberts, introduced the film offering background on the project's evolution from her first trip to Brazil in 1997 for the Rio+5 Forum on Sustainability.

After the screening, we were joined by panelists: The Rt. Rev. Dr. Shannon MacVean-Brown, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont; The Rev. Dr. Nancy Wright of Ascension Lutheran Church; and The Rev. Rachel Field of Mission Farm/St. Thomas and Grace Church. An unexpected guest was lawyer and professor of Africana Studies at University of North Carolina, Dr. Danielle Boaz, an expert in religious intolerance and violence in Brazil which she prefers to call religious racism. Dr. Boaz has worked on intolerance against African Diasporic religions for over a decade, focusing recently on Brazil because, "things have gotten so bad there." Most of the violence takes place in Rio vs. Bahia where the film was made, but where it also exists. Bishop Shannon pondered a connection between intolerance/violence targeting Candomblé practitioners and the fact that many of the houses of worship are women-led. Pr. Nancy commented on the connections and common plight of women and nature, as cited by ecofeminists, especially in a patriarchal country such as Brazil where the Amazon is increasingly deforested with little to no government protection. Rev. Rachel spoke of her interest in how to become more indigenous to a place; she was particularly inspired by the plant knowledge demonstrated by one woman in the film.

When asked how we can support work to transform the horrific situation of violence against practitioners of traditional African religions, Dr. Boaz said, “the most important thing to do is to raise awareness about what is happening. The Brazilian government needs to feel the pressure to do something about this violence. So far, there is not enough outrage from outside Brazil....” She believes this film provides “a powerful opportunity to help”.



An article by Dr. Boaz on religious intolerance in Brazil will be published this summer in the *Journal of Africana Religions*. Her new book, *Banning Black Gods*, will be out next month. [Dr. Boaz's website on Religious Racism](#).

If you missed our event and would like to access the film, *Yemanjá: Wisdom from the African Heart of Brazil*, it is available OnDemand or DVD and can be ordered via the [film website](#). More resources about Candomblé can be found in the story on [VTIPL's website about the event](#).



IPL Faith Climate Action Week, *Kiss the Ground*
During Earth Month, IPL asks congregations to take action to protect our climate as part of Faith Climate Action Week (FCAW). The

theme of this year's campaign, *Cultivating Connections: Food, Faith, and Climate*, is a chance to examine how food systems contribute to injustice and climate change, and how our faith calls us to respond through practical solutions. Dig into discussions with your congregations on connections among our faith, food practices, climate change, and environmental justice. Make it a focus of Earth Day worship services. Use suggested actions in our organizer's kit:

- Sacred Ground Guide* - learn how healthy soil helps solve the climate crisis and supports food justice
- Garden Blessing Ceremony
- Postcards to the Sec. of Agriculture with pre-addressed envelopes
- Shoppers' wallet guide identifying food grown in healthy soil
- Links to a nationwide Climate Prayer and other worship resources
- Climate change facts

Order a printed kit for \$24. (Digital version coming.) [Organizer's Kit.](#)

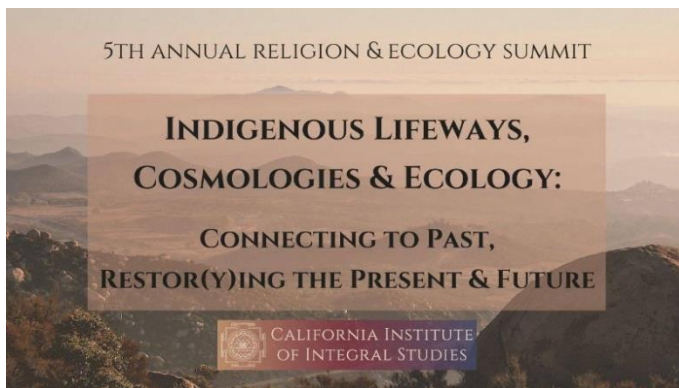
The featured film for this year is *Kiss the Ground* which VT IPL featured last in last fall's Climate Justice Series with Mission Farm. The film has been called, "the most important film you'll ever watch." Screen the film during Faith Climate Action Week. *Kiss the Ground* shows how regenerating the world's soils has the potential to rapidly stabilize Earth's climate, restore lost ecosystems, and create abundant food supplies. IPL will offer the film free for online home viewing from April 10-26; on April 21, IPL hosts a webinar with the filmmakers. You can also buy a DVD and host an event using a screening kit with faith-based discussion prompts. (Follow COVID-safe regulations for in-person screenings.) View the trailer and buy a DVD in the [Film kit. Faith Climate Action Week website.](#)



VNRC Climate Action Works Webinar

VNRC announces its Climate Action Works Webinar Series. The first program takes place March 10 at 6:30 p.m. with special guest Kiah Morris, Movement Politics Director of Rights and Democracy (RAD and moderator Ben Edgerly Walsh, VPIRG's

Climate and Energy Program Director. They will discuss what equity means in the context of the climate movement, and how Vermont can ensure a transition to a clean energy economy while uplifting all Vermonters and creating just outcomes. Programs in the series highlight the work of the Climate Council now developing plans to meet mandates of Vermont's Global Warming Solutions Act. [Register.](#)

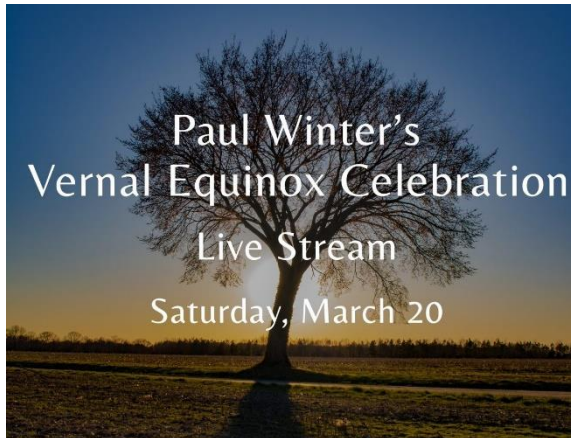


5th Annual Religion & Ecology Summit

The Annual Religion & Ecology Summit takes place online March 15-19. This year's theme is *Indigenous Lifeways, Cosmologies & Ecology: Connecting to Past, Restor(y)ing Present &*

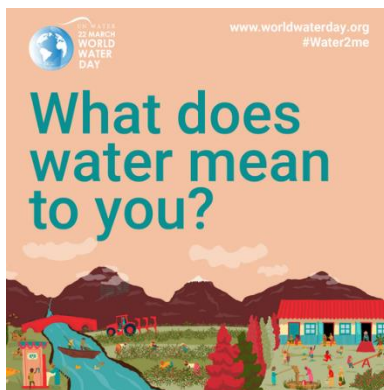
Future. Hosted by the Ecology, Spirituality, and Religion Program at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), the Summit features the following speakers: Gregg Castro, Melissa K. Nelson, Chairman Val Lopez, Beth Rose Middleton Manning, Tatjana Kochetkova, John Clammer, Chantal Noa Forbes, Dina Gilio-Whitaker, Natasha Deganello Giraudie, Michael "Pom" Preston, Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, and Elizabeth Allison. Carl Anthony and Paloma Pavel will receive the Thomas Berry Award honoring their work

with Breakthrough Communities which builds just, sustainable communities through multi-racial leadership development, strategic communications, and education. [Register here.](#)



Paul Winter's Vernal Equinox Concert

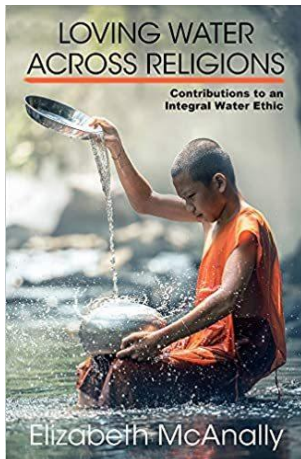
On the first Day of Spring, Sat., March 20, at 12 Noon, join Paul Winter and Henriue Eisenmann for a concert celebrating the transition from winter to spring. This Equinox offers renewal and energy as the sun continues its return, and the Earth rouses from her slumber. [Learn more.](#)



World Water Day March 22. Valuing Water

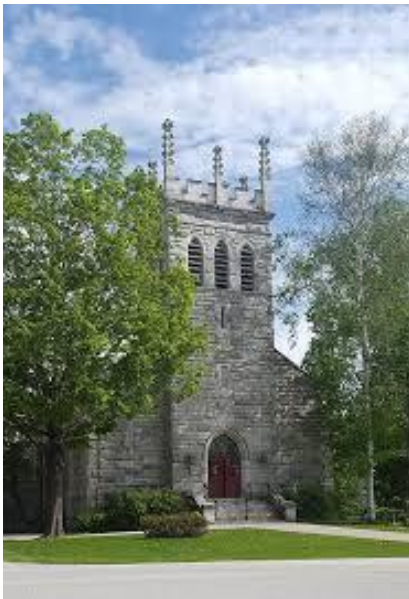
The theme of 2021 World Water Day is valuing water. The official World Water Day will be celebrated online this year. The aim is to raise awareness of the global water crisis with a focus on supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030. The value of water is much more than its price. Water

has enormous and complex value for our households, food, culture, health, education, economics, and the integrity of our natural world. If we overlook any of these values, we risk mismanaging this finite, irreplaceable resource. Without a comprehensive understanding of water's true, multi-dimensional value, we will be unable to safeguard this vital resource for the benefit of everyone. The United Nations World Water Development Report will be released on March 22. [World Water Day website.](#)



Loving Water Across Religions Book

Water is a sacred source of life and needs attention, according to Elizabeth McAnally, author of this academically rigorous, spiritually rich approach to the myriad global issues related to water. McAnally draws from Christianity's sacramental consciousness of baptism, loving service of the Yamuna River in Hinduism, and the compassionate wisdom of the bodhisattva to develop an integral approach to water ethics. Available via online booksellers.



VTIPL Energy Grants Help Churches

One way VTIPL helps congregations actively address the climate crisis and its threat to Creation is through the Katy Gerke Memorial Program (KGMP). While VTIPL is actively soliciting funding to be able to offer grants to all faith/spiritual communities, the KGMP offers matching grants to Christian congregations for energy audits, and energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in Vermont and 12 New Hampshire towns. Details and applications for the KGMP are on VTIPL's [website](#).

The United Church of Dorset & East Rupert is a great example of a congregation that's benefited from the Katy Gerke Memorial Program. Founded in 1784, the United Church of Dorset & East Rupert, thanks largely to its Green Team, is taking steps to care "for members and their grandchildren through its commitment to reducing carbon emissions". Originally heated with locally-cut wood, the Church at some point switched to fuel oil. Recognizing the negative effects of burning fossil fuel, the Green

Team prompted the congregation to: replace an oil-fired water heater with an energy-efficient heat pump water heater; install cold-climate heat pumps for administrative rooms and the sanctuary, simultaneously, installing programmable thermostats. As a result, the Church reduced its heating fuel use by about 50%. Although their electricity use has almost tripled, it is all clean, renewable solar-generated. Read more about the Church's eco-efforts on the [VTIPL website](#).

Upcoming

Religious Communities & Planetary Crisis Webinar, April 8

Connecticut IPL, Interreligious Eco-Justice Network, and the Hartford Seminary are presenting the webinar, *Religious Communities and the Planetary Crisis*, on Thurs., April 8 at 7:00 p.m. featuring Rev. Jim Antal (Special Advisor on Climate for the UCC), Rabbi Warren Stone (Central Conference of American Rabbis), Sevim Kalyoncu (Dir. Green Muslims), and Hari Venkatachalam (Sidhana: Coalition of Progressive Hindus.) Speakers examine the climate crisis from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu perspectives. Open to all. [Register](#).

Mission Farm - Gardening as Spiritual Practicum, April 24

Mission Farm, in Killington, VT, invites everyone to a hands-on 10 a.m.-1 p.m. class with Lisa McCrory of Earthwise Farm & Forest. The class focuses on practical processes for listening to the land, responding and learning about the energies present in a landscape, and creating a holistic land management plan. Whether one has a patio garden or 500 acres, participants will leave with a sense of how to be present with the land that sustains us. [Learn more](#).



Women's History Month Film Suggestions

-*Taking Root – The Vision of Wangari Maathai* is the dramatic story of Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Wangari Maathai whose tree-planting campaign, known as The Green Belt Movement, led hundreds of Kenyan women to plant millions of trees for fuel, shade, and food, restoring the previously deforested land. This women's movement became a national movement to safeguard the environment, protect human rights, and defend democracy. Maathai was an Earth Charter ambassador! [More on the film and Maathai's story.](#)



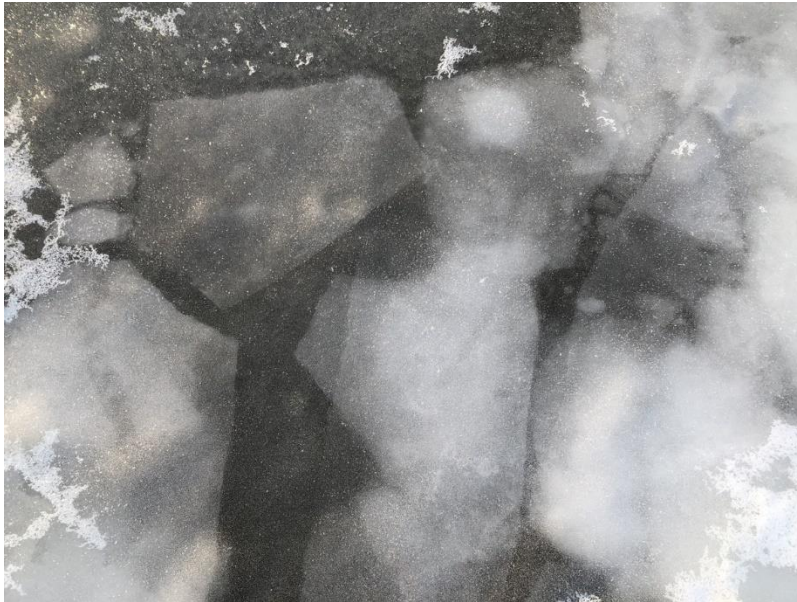
-*Dolores* is a portrait of activist/icon Dolores Huerta, among the least known, yet most important activists in U.S. history who led the fight for racial and labor justice, founding the first American farmworkers union with Cesar Chavez. Make time to learn about Dolores Huerta for Women's History Month. PBS Independent Lens documentary available with PBS Passport in VT. [See trailer.](#)

VTIPL Board Membership Open

Vermont Interfaith Power & Light is seeking Board members who have a passion for effecting climate change and understand the connection of faith to Earth stewardship. We're also interested in new Board members with website design skills. More information about our organization and Board is on our [website](#). Please share with others!

Thank you so much for your interest in and support of our work!

[Donate Now](#)



"Shapes of Ice" photo courtesy Gerald Lee Hoffman



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