



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

## Green Mountains, Blue Water



*Photo by Chelsea Steinauer-Scudder*

### In This Issue:

Dear VTIPL Community,

As Spring slowly emerges across the state, we are sharing some ways of reflecting on and engaging with caring for Creation, whether through direct action, responsible investing, advocacy, or engaged community conversation.

Wishing you abundance and renewed energy in this new season,

The Team at VTIPL

## Read on for:

- Environmentally Responsible Investing: Webinar Recording
  - VTIPL Spring Book Club! *The Book of Nature*
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## Webinar Recording: Environmentally Responsible Investing

**"If it's a sin to wreck creation, then it's a sin to profit from wrecking creation."**

We had a wonderful conversation last week with climate activist and public theologian, Rev Jim Antal, and financial planner Craig Walker of Greenvest.

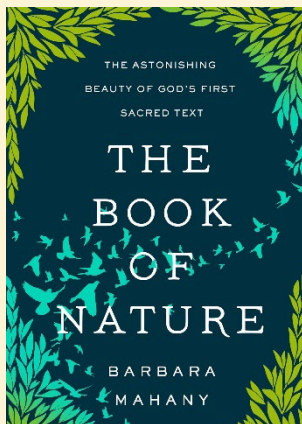
Watch the recording to learn about the faith and environmental values that inform responsible investing, practical steps for how to do so, and some great questions from the audience.

**[WATCH THE RECORDING HERE.](#)**

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**Jim Antal** is a denominational leader, climate activist, author and public theologian. He serves as Special Advisor on Climate Justice to the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. An environmental activist since the first Earth Day, he has preached on the climate crisis since 1988.

**Craig Walker** is a socially responsible Financial Advisor at Greenvest. He is a lifelong Vermonter, deep environmentalist, and social organizer with various VT groups. He is dedicated to helping clients achieve both their financial and social goals, particularly young professionals and employee's retirement plans.



### VTIPL April Book Club: The Book of Nature

**April 21st, April 28th & May 5th at 7:00pm,  
on ZOOM**

Our next book club book will be *The Book of Nature: The Astonishing Beauty of God's First Sacred Text* by Barbara Mahany. **As spring emerges, join us for a vibrant community conversation, celebrating all that can be "read" in the natural world!**

**[REGISTER HERE.](#)**

“Throughout millennia and across the monotheistic religions, the natural was often revered as a sacred text. By the Middle Ages, this text was given a name, 'The Book of Nature,' the first, best entry point for encounter with the divine. The very act of 'reading' the world, of focusing our attention on each twinkling star and unfurling blossom, humbles us and draws us into sacred encounter.

As we grapple to make sense of today's tumultuous world, one where nature is at once a damaged and damaging source of disaster, as well as a place of refuge and retreat, we are called again to examine how generously it awaits our attention and devotion, standing ready to be read by all.”

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## **The Time is Now: Spring Input Sessions on Vermont's Climate Action Plan**

**Don't miss your chance to weigh in on the forthcoming update to Vermont's 2025 Climate Action Plan!** Voice your climate priorities through diverse engagement activities. Choose from in-person options around the state or virtual events. **Climate Councilors will listen, and then consider public input when revising the Plan** (due July 1, 2025).

**If you plan on attending one of these meetings, please email [chelsea@vtipl.org](mailto:chelsea@vtipl.org): we'll send you some helpful talking points, a link to a special informational meeting, and mail you a VT IPL sticker!**

*Meeting dates and locations are listed below. Please consider attending one of these critical listening sessions!*

**You can find more information about this update and all of the sessions [HERE](#).**



## **STOP THE PIPELINE, Letter to Governors**

**This is an excerpt from a letter that VT IPL signed onto, imploring the Governors of CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI and VT to stop efforts to revive interstate pipeline projects.**

"On February 14, 2025, after signing an executive order establishing the National Energy Dominance Council, President Trump called for building a pipeline that had been blocked by New York State. Secretary Burgum, who chairs the council, confirmed it was the Constitution Pipeline. The President claims that everyone wants this pipeline, it could be built in less than a year, and it would substantially lower energy costs in New York and New England. Secretary Wright has subsequently said there are other stalled pipelines that should be built.

These false claims are a serious threat to state sovereignty, jeopardizing our natural resources, water quality, and climate goals. The undersigned organizations ask you, as the leaders of our States, to stand united with

each other and with us, to protect our hard-fought victories against the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and to focus on fulfilling our climate goals.

There is no reason to go back. Today, more people than ever are awake, engaged, and resolved to stand up against the tyranny of greed. We have real solutions, and we are implementing them.

Northeastern states have clean energy transition goals and mandates to be proud of. Our stance against the buildout of gas infrastructure, after all we have achieved, is non-negotiable."



### **Opportunities to Mobilize & Advocate for Democracy and Creation Care!**

We cannot afford to go backwards on climate action and progress. A faith-based dedication to caring for Creation means, in part, strengthening and supporting the democratic systems that keep our policies, actions, and climate commitments moving forward. Below are several ways to get involved with upcoming actions.

#### **HANDS OFF Mobilization event on April 5th in Montpelier:**

Across the country, people are coming out to send a message to the world that we do not consent to the destruction of our government and

our economy. We are marching, rallying, and protesting to demand a stop the chaos and build an opposition movement.

A core principle behind all Hands Off! events is a commitment to nonviolent action. We expect all participants to seek to de-escalate any potential confrontation with those who disagree with our values.

[More information HERE.](#)

**THIRD ACT Vermont**, founded by Bill McKibben, is part of a nationwide community of elders united to help end the climate crisis and strengthen our democracy. They bring the experience, skills, time, resources, and passion to make a difference. THIRD ACT Vermont engages in ongoing efforts to empower communities, support climate progress, and embody democratic principles.

[Learn more and get involved HERE.](#)



"Let us remember that our actions today will shape the world our children inherit."

**Read Rev. Dr. Don Chatfield's press conference remarks from Faith Climate Action Day.**

Dear friends, esteemed members of our diverse faith communities, and leaders of Vermont. Today we gather, not as separate entities defined by our different beliefs, but as a unified force driven by our shared commitment to protect and preserve the planet we all call home. Climate change is not an issue that discriminates between religions; it affects all living beings and the natural world we are part of.

From the sacred teachings of Hinduism, which remind us to revere the Earth as our mother, to the Christian call to be stewards of God's creation, and the Islamic principle of being custodians of the Earth, every faith tradition carries a powerful message about our responsibility to care for the environment. Yet, despite our varied theological backgrounds, we face a common existential challenge: climate change. It is a threat that transcends borders, faiths, and cultures.

It is a call to action that requires the collective effort of humanity, transcending the boundaries that traditionally divide us. Science tells us that our climate is changing at an unprecedented rate, causing devastating impacts such as extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and loss of biodiversity. Our moral and ethical frameworks urge us to act swiftly and decisively to counter this crisis. But words alone are not enough. We must demand legislative action to address climate change.

We must advocate for policies that reduce carbon emissions, protect natural habitats, and promote sustainable practices. This morning, our singing rang out in the halls of the Vermont State House, calling for change that is not only necessary but also just and equitable.

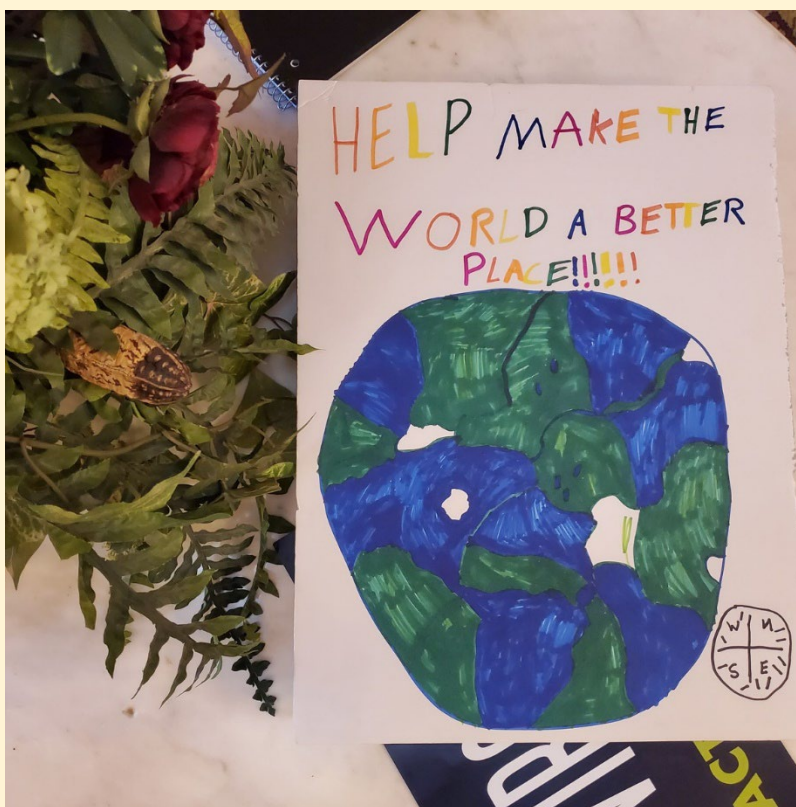
Legislative action is crucial because it provides a framework for large-scale change. It ensures that efforts to combat climate change are consistent, comprehensive, and enforceable. It also holds industries and individuals accountable, ensuring that the burden of action does not fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable among us.

Today we urge state leaders not to roll back critical environmental legislation already approved in Vermont. To do so would be an enormous mistake. We understand that some claim these actions are “too expensive,” but we note that inaction will ultimately lead to higher costs related to severe weather events as the climate continues to change.

In this interfaith alliance, we have the power to influence change. We have the capacity to inspire our communities, mobilize support, and

push for the policies that will safeguard our planet for future generations. By working together, we can create a groundswell of support that politicians cannot ignore. Let us remember that our actions today will shape the world our children inherit. Let us be guided by the wisdom of our faiths and the urgency of our times. Let us unite in our common goal to protect the Earth, our shared home. Thank you, and may our collective efforts lead us toward a sustainable and harmonious future with love for the Earth and all its inhabitants.

*Rev. Don Chatfield, All Souls Interfaith Gathering (Shelburne)*



*Photo by Chelsea Steinauer-Scudder*

*From our friends at VPIRG, here's a thorough update of where we stand on climate policy halfway through the legislative session:*

## **CLIMATE & CLEAN ENERGY**

In the last five years, Vermont has enacted several landmark policies that put us on track to reduce climate pollution, help Vermonters transition to cleaner, more affordable energy, and hold large climate polluters accountable for the damage they've caused in our state—most notably through the Global Warming Solutions Act, last year's overhaul of Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard, and the Climate Superfund Act. But we knew that the fossil fuel industry and their allies in the legislature would try to undo much of this progress this year.

Thus far, Vermonters have stepped up to rebuff these attempts – writing to their legislators in large numbers to urge them to hold firm on climate action and flooding the State House phone lines both to turn back a legislative maneuver by Senate Republicans to bypass the committee process and bring anti-climate legislation to the Senate floor, and to speak out against a climate rollback bill (H.289) being pushed by Gov. Phil Scott.

We expect more attempts to undermine our climate progress in the second half of the session and will continue to keep you updated on what you can do to make sure that doesn't happen.

Meanwhile, we've been successful in advocating for climate solutions that'll save Vermonters money and help us hit our climate requirements. Notably, a bill (S.65) advanced out of the Senate Natural Resources & Energy committee last week that would refocus the work of Vermont's efficiency utilities (most notably Efficiency Vermont) to prioritize reducing climate pollution and energy burdens – especially for low- and moderate-income Vermonters.

Beyond that, we're pushing hard to ensure that there are sufficient resources in the budget for implementation of the Climate Superfund Act. We've also been advocating for better funding (our currently woefully underfunded) public transit in the state, and for new funding for Vermont's low- and moderate-income EV incentives, which ran dry late last year after a surge in interest.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & ZERO WASTE**

One major environmental health priority met the crossover deadline as last week, as the House voted overwhelmingly to outlaw the use of toxic

PFAS “forever” chemicals in dental floss, cleaning products, and fluorine-treated containers.

The VPIRG-supported bill (H.238) builds on earlier legislation adopted in Vermont that addressed PFAS in personal care products, menstrual products, textiles, cookware, rugs and carpets, artificial turf, ski wax, and more.

We also saw legislation introduced on important zero waste priorities of ours, notably, legislation to modernize Vermont’s popular Bottle Bill program and legislation to tackle the problem of plastic pollution—the overwhelming amount of it and the increasingly toxic nature of it. Neither of these bills met the crossover deadline, but we still to plan to make progress on them this session.

## **DEMOCRACY**

The number one priority in our Democracy Program continues to be our effort to give Vermonters more voice and more choice with Ranked Choice Voting – specifically implementing RCV for presidential primaries in 2028. While bills containing this important pro-voter reform did not make the crossover deadline, we do see opportunities for ways to possibly make progress on this, this year. We’ll be in touch with ways you can help make that happen going forward.

A VPIRG-supported bill that deals with the problem of AI-Deep Fakes in political advertising by requiring the disclosure of such “synthetic” media was advanced out of the Senate Government Operations Committee before crossover.

## **CONSUMER PROTECTION & PUBLIC HEALTH**

It is a good news/bad news situation on VPIRG’s top consumer protection priority this session: the effort to enact a comprehensive consumer data privacy law. The good news: a comprehensive consumer privacy bill (S.71) did advance out of the Senate Institutions Committee before the crossover deadline. The bad news: before advancing the bill, the committee replaced the strong data privacy language in S.71 with much less consumer-protective language. Nevertheless, we’re grateful the Senate has taken up this issue and understand that—with the urgency of the crossover deadline upon them—they are passing a version of the bill that will be met with less resistance by industry, with the knowledge that the House will continue to work on it. We’ll advocate for the House to

bolster the protections in the bill and give Vermonters meaningful control over their personal information.

The Senate Health & Welfare Committee has also advanced VPIRG-supported legislation that would use \$1 million in one-time funds to eliminate \$100 million worth of medical debt for Vermonters. The bill (S.27) would also prohibit medical debt from being included on Vermonters' credit reports. The bill is based on a proposal put forward by Vermont Treasurer Mike Pieciak and has thus far been met with overwhelming support in the legislature.

Finally – other VPIRG consumer priorities did not meet the crossover deadline, but we are hopeful they will get hearings in the second half of the session – most notably

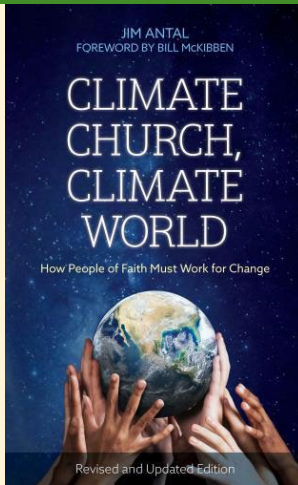
legislation tied to VPIRG's new Safe & Healthy Food Campaign. Those bills would ban toxic additives, synthetic dyes, and begin to regulate the ultra-processed foods that are making us sick. Look for more about this burgeoning campaign in the weeks ahead.

So, it's fair to say we've been busy as ever this legislative session. There's a lot more to come, and with your help we will continue to protect the progress we've made *and* move forward with public interest solutions that make our state an even better place to live.

Thank you for all you do,

Paul Burns, Executive Director

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## Book Recommendation: Climate Church, Climate World

Rev Jim Antal's book *Climate Church, Climate World* contends that climate change is the greatest moral challenge humanity has ever faced.

Hunger, refugees, poverty, inequality, deadly viruses, war—climate change multiplies all forms of global social injustice. Environmental advocate Rev. Jim Antal calls on the church to meet this moral challenge, to embrace a new vocation so that future generations might live in harmony

with God's creation.

## Ensuring the Future of ENERGY STAR

**VTIPL signed on to a letter urging EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin and key committee leaders in Congress to fully fund ENERGY STAR in the upcoming fiscal year, in anticipation of potentially debilitating proposed cuts to the ENERGY STAR program at EPA.**

Here is an excerpt from the letter:

*"ENERGY STAR is among the most successful public-private partnerships in U.S. history. It is a voluntary program with more than 30 years of success driving energy efficiency innovation across economic sectors, from labeled consumer products to buildings and manufacturing plants. It consistently delivers a tremendous return on taxpayer investment: Its current annual budget of approximately \$32 million represents less than 1% of EPA's spending yet saves American households more than \$40 billion annually on energy bills. For every dollar the federal government spends on the program, consumers save \$350."*

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## CANCELLED: LEAP Energy Fair

Unfortunately, due to flooding, this year's LEAP energy fair in Waterbury has been cancelled.



## Be a VTipl Congregational Liaison!

Are there key people in your congregation who are concerned about caring for the planet?

VTipl can work directly with you and your congregation or faith community to **offer programs**, help you **create and sustain a Green Team**, work with you on **climate action grants**, and more!

Please reach out to [chelsea@vtipl.org](mailto:chelsea@vtipl.org) to learn more!

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## VTipl Climate Action Grants

Our Climate Action Grants provide **matching grants** to faith and spiritual communities in Vermont! These grants can enable your faith and spiritual community to: obtain energy audits, implement energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy projects, and more!

Learn more [here](#).

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If you would like to receive a **print copy of our newsletter** in the mail, please contact [chelsea@vtipl.org](mailto:chelsea@vtipl.org).

If you would like to be on the mailing list for our **Volunteer Task Force**, please email [chelsea@vtipl.org](mailto:chelsea@vtipl.org)

[Donate Now](#)

*Thank you for supporting Vermont Interfaith Power & Light. We are grateful to collaborate with you on behalf of the human community and all of Creation.*



