

VTIPL ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Climate change in Vermont and beyond calls on us as spiritual leaders and people of faith to reaffirm our commitment to caring for our shared home.

Vermont Interfaith Power & Light empowers and inspires individuals and communities of faith to act, advocate, and care for our sacred Earth.



**A Faith-Based Organization Taking Action
on Climate Change**

A REPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY

Highlights of 2025

DEAR COMMUNITY:



Ron McGarvey
President, VT IPL

*(Pictured here with his family;
Ron is on the left.)*

Dear VT IPL Community,

Thank you for your support and your actions to address our climate crisis. 2025 has been a difficult year, but despite Federal and State attempts to repeal and to reverse climate legislation, you and VT IPL have continued to live our faith through our actions to address the climate crisis.

Our Faith Climate Action Day in Montpelier, our educational webinars, our eco-spiritual events, and our Climate Action Grants have enabled VT IPL to continue its role as a catalyst for a faith-based response to climate change.

Looking ahead, we will continue to advocate for and defend effective climate legislation and policies; sponsor events that bring our communities together to experience the power of Caring for Creation; and support, through our Climate Action Grants, your efforts to reduce your carbon emissions through energy efficient climate actions.

We want your continuing support and participation in these on-going activities and we welcome your input and ideas. Feel free to contact me at: RMCGAR864@aol.com to share how VT IPL can help your faith community address our climate crisis.

Ron McGarvey
President, Vermont Interfaith Power & Light



**Chelsea Steinauer-
Scudder**

VT IPL
**Communications &
Programs Director**

Dear VT IPL Community,

Today the morning sun fell onto the mountains, illuminating wide swaths of bare-branched, silver trees as last night's storm dissipated, letting the light through.

So much of the news on the ecological front this year has been disheartening and discouraging. But I have found both heart and courage in our work with faith communities across the state who are stepping up, pitching in, and raising their voices for the Earth and Creation. Just over a year-and-a-half into my role at VT IPL, I've been continually impressed by the passion, commitment, and resolve I see in congregational leadership, in Green Team activism, in our climate action grant applicants, in those standing side-by-side with us at the Statehouse in February, and more. I'm honored to be doing this work by your side.

I was pleased to step into a new role at VT IPL this fall, as Communications & Programs Director. As I take on more responsibility and leadership with the organization, I'm excited to find ways to deepen my engagement with and connection to you in the coming year. If you have ideas for collaborations or conversations, my door is always open. Please email me at: chelsea@vtipl.org. And thank you!!

Blessings,

Chelsea
Communications & Programs Director, VT IPL

VTIPL BOARD & STAFF

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The Rev. Richard Hibbert

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Chelsea Steinauer-Scudder, *Communications & Programs Director*

Contact Us:

Email: info@vtipl.org

Email: chelsea@vtipl.org

Mail: P.O.Box 3095, Burlington, VT 05408


Connect:

Website: vtipl.org

Instagram: [@vermontipl](https://www.instagram.com/vermontipl)

Facebook: Vermont Interfaith Power & Light

Sign up for our newsletter on our website!

A photograph of a dirt path in a lush forest, framed by a large, arched structure made of many thin, light-colored sticks or vines. The path leads into the distance, surrounded by dense green foliage and trees. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**“Thriving is
possible only if
you have
nurtured strong
bonds with your
community.”**

Robin Wall Kimmerer
The Serviceberry

Remembering Harris Webster

"Our world needs to be enlightened by the truth that humanity needs to create a Sustainable Age in which humankind successfully heals our Earth from its higher temperatures ... so our Earth can foster the life, not the death, of living beings."

- Harris Webster for VTDigger

In June, we lost a dear friend and longtime voice of VT IPL, Harris Webster. Harris was a trusted, dedicated, and stalwart member of the VT IPL community and Board of Directors for many years.

His prolific writings, unwavering advocacy, vivid curiosity, avid reading practice, and clear voice enriched all of the communities he was a part of, including ours.

In honor of Harris, VT IPL renamed the "Ellie Cressey Webster Memorial Fund," named for Harris's late wife, to the "Ellie & Harris Webster Memorial Fund." These generous funds make possible some of the work that Harris and Ellie were most passionate about: Climate Action Grants for faith communities, which reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in response to a sacred and moral obligation to do everything we can to reduce our contribution to the climate crisis and to inspire and mobilize others to follow our example.




eco-spirituality

We operate from the core tenet that the climate crisis is, at heart, a spiritual crisis, brought on by our perceived separation from the Earth and Creation.

This separation has direct impacts on ecological, social, and racial justice. Our eco-spiritual work seeks to heal this separation by inviting people of faith into a holistic understanding of ourselves as fundamentally interconnected into the sacred web of life, and therefore called to work for a healed, just, and vibrant world: for all beings and the living world of which we are a part.

While this focus broadly imbues all of our work, it also directly guides much of our programming. We offer a wide range of events and resources to faith communities that are intended to spark reflection, dialogue, and action within faith communities around caring for Creation, honoring the Earth as sacred, and advocating for the environment. From statewide gatherings, congregational conversations, and watershed stewardship workshops, to sermons, film screenings, book clubs, and more, we work to equip faith communities with actionable knowledge and a robust spiritual foundation for caring for the Earth.



A photograph of a person with short grey hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and blue trousers, standing with their back to the camera on a dirt path in a forest. Their hands are clasped behind their back. To the left of the person is a wooden post with a small wooden box attached to it. Above the person, two wooden signs are hanging from a blue horizontal pole. The top sign reads "ASCENSION WOODS" and the bottom sign reads "MEDITATION TRAIL". The forest is dense with green foliage and trees. The ground is covered with brown pine needles and some green plants.

“And into
the forest I
go, to lose
my mind
and find my
soul.”

John Muir

Caring for Creation: Outside & In

How do people of faith actively engage this time of unraveling and uncertainty with open hearts, fierce spirits, and enduring care?

In September, we brought together faith communities across the state for a half-day gathering at Ascension Lutheran Church in South Burlington to celebrate Creation and to renew our commitment to advocating for and defending our shared Earth.

Featuring a forest bathing session with Rev. Nancy Wright (Pastor for Creation Care New England Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Certified Forest Therapy Guide), an eco-spirituality and Creation care workshop, a guided dialogue for Green Teams and Earth advocates, and lunch, this event was an opportunity to come together in a spirit of mutual care and support.

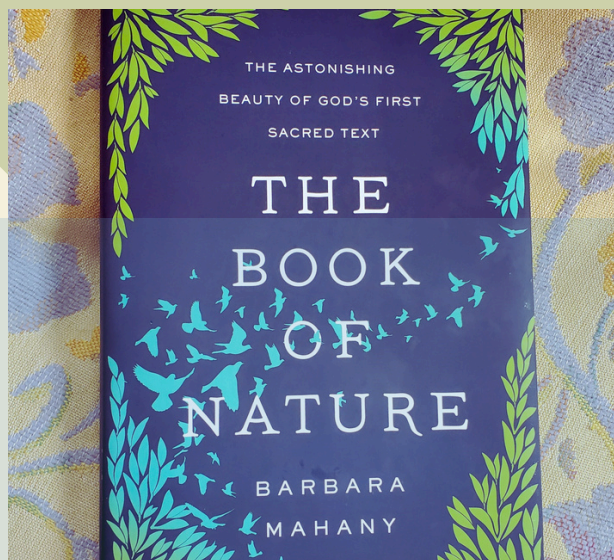


Based on the Japanese practice of Shinrin-yoku, forest bathing has wholistic health benefits: mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. A walk in the woods in a group with a guide offers inspiration, energy, and a sense of well-being.



**Stay tuned for another
“Gathering for
Creation” in
Brattleboro in 2026!**

VTIPL'S INTERFAITH BOOK CLUB



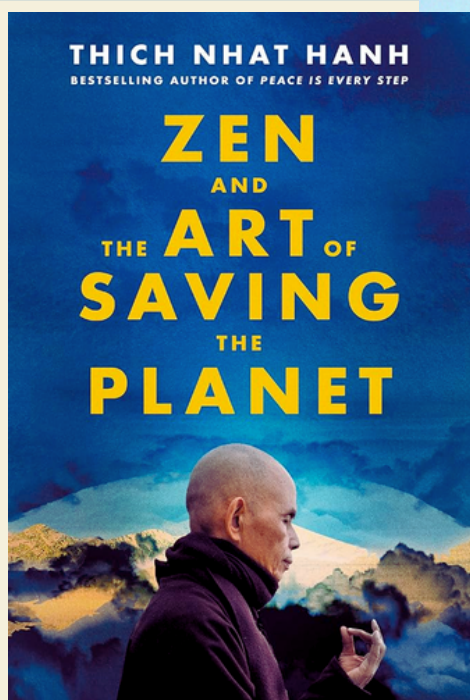
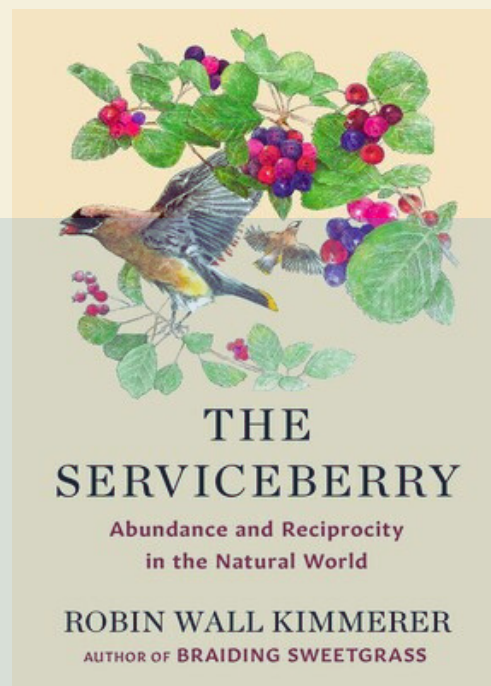
"Mine is the God of sunrise and nightfall, the breath behind birdsong and breeze in the oaks."

Barbara Mahany

**This year,
our book
club read
and
discussed
four
incredible
books!**

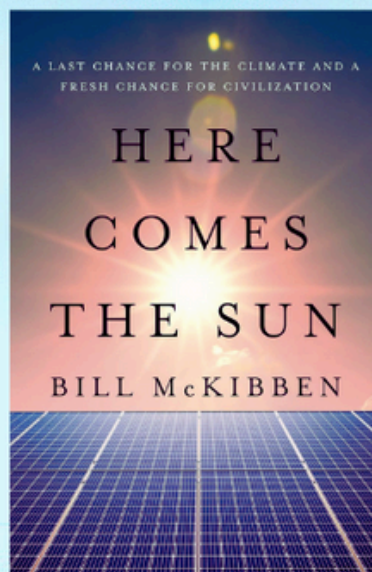
"When an economic system actively destroys what we love, isn't it time for a different system?"

Robin Wall Kimmerer



"We need a lot of patience. We need time... to cultivate a collective energy of mindfulness, peace, happiness, and compassion...Your community is your refuge."

Thich Nhat Hanh



"In a world where almost everything seems to be going wrong, this is the one big thing suddenly going right. I am willing to fight for it, and I hope you will be, too."

Bill McKibben

Our book club meets quarterly over Zoom. For more information visit: vtipl.org

A photograph of children at a climate action protest. One child in the foreground holds a sign that says "Vermont Kids Take Climate Action!". Another child holds a sign that says "Faith 4 CREATION". The background shows other children and signs, including one that says "ACTION IN VT!".

advocacy

As a faith-based, non-partisan organization we stand for the values of a healthy planet and a sustainable future.

We advocate for policies that forward environmental, social, and racial justice initiatives, and that seek to restore, protect, and prioritize our sacred Earth and Creation. We fight for the integrity of our Democratic institutions and values as the pillars of a just society and we cooperate and partner with organizations across the state that are working to ensure equitable, peaceful, and healthy communities in Vermont.

Our signature advocacy event is Faith Climate Action Day, held annually in February, in which leaders of Vermont's faith and conservation communities come together to meet with our legislators and make our collective voices heard.

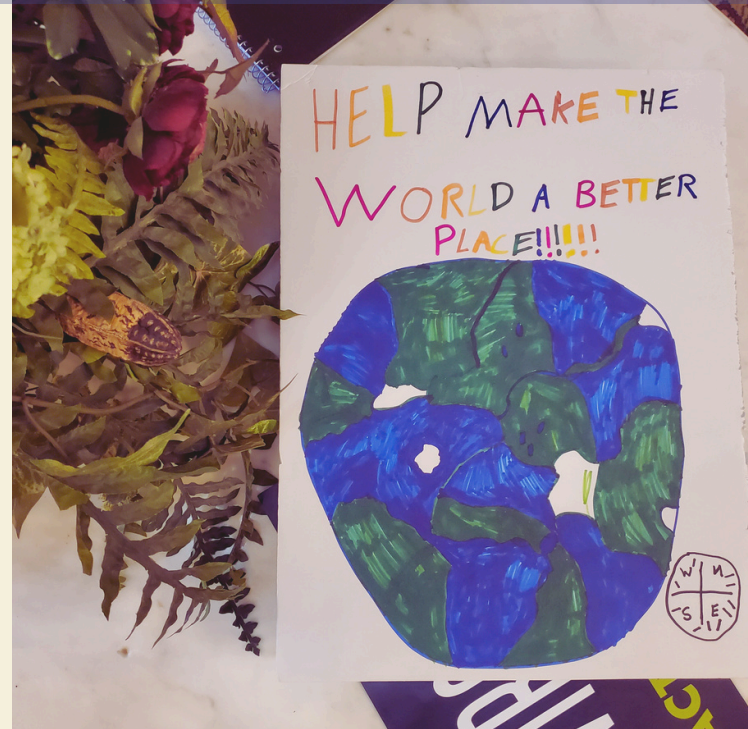


FAITH CLIMATE ACTION DAY 2025

Every February, we partner with conservation organizations and faith communities across the state to come together and raise our voices for a sustainable future.

This year, we partnered with VPIRG, 350VT, VCV, VNRC, and VIA. Over the course of the day, we participated in a training on lobbying from VPIRG and VNRC. Rev. Richard Hibbert then led us in song—"For the Beauty of the Meadows"—as we walked to the Cedar Creek Room for a press conference.

Over the course of the afternoon, we sat down with Senators Phil Baruth and Ruth Hardy, Representatives Amy Sheldon and Dara Torre, Lt Governor John Rogers, and others to **voice the urgency of holding course on climate action in Vermont and urging state leaders not to roll back critical environmental legislation.**



"In this interfaith alliance, we have the power to influence change. 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."

Rev. Don Chatfield

All Souls Interfaith Gathering

Join us for FCAD 2026!

In addition to Faith Climate Action Day, members of VTIPL engaged in several other advocacy actions this year:

VTIPL is an active member of the ACTOnClimate Coalition, meeting and coordinating on a regular basis with leading Vermont environmental groups to advocate for a just and sustainable future for all Vermonters. Actions include supporting legislation, showing up at the statehouse, writing letters to the editor, and working to keep our congregations updated regarding climate policy.

Each year, we update our advocacy “Principles” and submit them to Vermont Conservation Voters (VCV) as they update their “Vermont Common Agenda,” a blueprint for legislative advocacy in the upcoming legislative session. The principles also focus our advocacy in general, serving as a template for conversations with our legislators and congregations.

Given that the Climate Action Plan requires the Climate Council to review and update the plan every four years, in April 2025, the fourth year of the plan, hearings were held around the state. VTIPL approved talking points and members testified at those hearings where our comments were positively acknowledged.

On November 1, several board members attended the Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network’s (VECAN) annual gathering at Lake Morey to network and to hear Bill McKibben introduce his book *Here Comes the Sun*.



climate action

Climate change in Vermont and beyond calls on us as spiritual leaders and people of faith to reaffirm our commitment to caring for our shared home and recognize that:

- the Earth is a precious gift;
- global climate change is a moral challenge which is disrupting the natural balance;
- we live our faith through our actions; and
- there is no peace or justice without a healthy, thriving planet.



Environmentally Responsible Investing: a VTIPL Webinar

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

– Rev. Jim Antal

In late March, we had a wonderful conversation with climate activist and public theologian, Rev. Jim Antal, and financial planner Craig Walker of Greenvest. We heard about the faith and environmental values that inform responsible investing, the history of the divestment movement within faith communities in the United States, and practical steps for how to invest responsibly.



CRAIG WALKER IS A SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL ADVISOR AT GREENVEST. HE IS A LIFELONG VERMONT, DEEP ENVIRONMENTALIST, AND SOCIAL ORGANIZER WITH VARIOUS VT GROUPS. HE IS DEDICATED TO HELPING CLIENTS ACHIEVE BOTH THEIR FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL GOALS.



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.

What socially responsible investing can accomplish

Vermont Interfaith Power and Light hosts an hour-long webinar led by two experts



April 2, 2025 Mike Ferguson Presbyterian News Service

"Two experts in socially responsible investing led a webinar last week for [Vermont Interfaith Power and Light](#), looking at ways individuals, congregations and other institutions seek to care for Creation by directing where their investments, bank accounts and credit cards are held. Webinar presenters were Craig Walker, a socially responsible financial advisor with [Greenvest](#) and a lifelong Vermonter, and the [Rev. Jim Antal](#), a pastor in the United Church of Christ, climate activist and author.

Socially responsible investing is also known as sustainable investing; ESG, for Environment, Social and Governance; impact investing; values-based investing; and green investing. Walker prefers the term socially responsible investing. Advisors in that line of work "take your values, the issues that matter to you, and try to harmonize that with where your investments are placed," Walker said.

"It's also about what socially responsible investors can do collectively as a force for social change and good," such as [helping to end Apartheid](#) in South Africa in 1994. "That's collective action at work," Walker said."

**An article about our webinar was featured in the
Presbyterian News Service**

Climate Action Grants

We offer matching grants to faith communities who are seeking to lower the carbon footprint of their buildings and structures, empowering people to take action in their houses of worship and increase the use of renewable energy.

We are proud to have funded numerous energy efficiency projects in a half dozen houses of worship across Vermont in 2025. From installing heat pumps, LED lighting, electric vehicle charging stations, solar panels, and more, we are working alongside faith communities every day to ensure a greener Vermont.

These grants are made possible through two restricted funds, which we administer with deep gratitude to several generous donors.



2025 Grant Highlights



Ascension Lutheran Church, South Burlington

- A matching grant to install four Level 2 Electric Vehicle charging stations in the church parking lot, saving an estimated 8.9 tons of CO2 annually

St Steven's Episcopal Church, Middlebury

- A matching grant for blower door testing, an energy audit, and modeling of the church's heating system

Church of Christ, Montpelier

- A matching grant for an energy efficiency project that included weatherization, insulation, heat pumps, and a solar system

St Michael's Episcopal Church, Brattleboro

- A matching grant for the installation of heat pumps for heating the Undercroft and Sanctuary

United Church of Dorset and East Rupert

- A matching grant for the installation of a heat pump and water heater in the Pastor's house

St. Catherine of Siena, Shelburne

- A grant supporting the installation of a 25KW solar array on the church building



Thank you for helping us make this a great year!

**We're wishing you peace, health, and light in
2026 and beyond.**

— The VTIPL Team

