



The Spirit at First January 2017

Your Pastor Ponders.....

The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction is turning 150 years old in 2017 and we are going to celebrate! There is an active and creative ad hoc 150th Anniversary Committee planning the festivities. Each quarter there will be some special event that highlights our history in some way. On February 12th, we will be worshipping like they did 150 years ago or at least tell you how they did! In May, we will be building a float to share this great milestone with the wider community. In August, we will have a historical drama to learn some of the events that led to our church being established. And finally on Saturday November 4th and 5th, we will welcome The Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, the President of the entire United Church of Christ to a festive dinner and then worship the following morning. There will be accolades from civic leaders. We will thank the churches that helped our founding. And we will re-dedicate ourselves to the vibrant and exciting ministry of our church as we look to the future with hope.

In addition to these quarterly events, each month we will publish an historical article in the *Essex Reporter* and display great old pictures of our past throughout the church building.

Churches all too often get caught up with the anxiety of running a church organization in this day and age. Or we spend all of our time taking care of others and wringing our hands over the injustices of our world. Sometimes, we get caught up in the theological winds that are blowing in from the mysterious presence of the Divine and forget all about living in the present. We often forget to highlight all the good First Church has done and give thanks for the past and the many people whose investment in time, talent and money have brought us this far.

Well, in 2017 we are going to spend some time celebrating our church and her long standing witness in the Essex community for the last 150 years. If you have good old stories or pictures, please let the 150th Anniversary Committee know about it. The committee members are Beth Volker, Tom James, Mark Mendes and our church historian Ann Gray.

Looking forward to celebrating with you, I am
Yours in Christ, Rev. Mark

SPECIAL SUNDAYS & OFFERINGS

Communion will be handed out to the congregation on January 1st at both services.

January 8th, Special Contemplative / Meditative Service

Each month since September we have planned a special worship service on the Second Sunday of each month: September – Rally Day, October – Peace, November – Social Justice, and December – Friendship. The worship services at each service has been structured differently so that we might learn some spiritual lesson with fresh eyes. Each time, there have been people that have said that we should do the special ritual every week! That is a great compliment, albeit a bit unrealistic....This month we are going to have a meditative or contemplative service. There will be a little more quiet time to reflect and some structured prayer time. The music will be a bit different as well. Be sure to come and bring a friend and check out a new type of service that has the potential of drawing you closer to God.

January 8th, 7:00 pm ~ Healing Service (Rescheduled from December)

After the busy rush of the Christmas season, we enter into the season of Epiphany – a season which highlights some of the highpoints of Christ’s life and ministry. Jesus displayed God’s power through healing; in his ministry, Jesus’ healing touch brought sight, wholeness, freedom from disease and hope to people who had been downtrodden, broken and lost. Everyone is invited to bring their wounds and anguish to church for a healing service. Rev. Mark and Devon along with the Deacons will offer specific prayers and offer the laying on of hands for anyone that wants to ask for God’s healing. All are welcome.

Congregational Meeting



January 29th ~ Annual Meeting Sunday ~ One Service @ 10am

The heart of free-church traditions including those with congregational polity is the Annual Meeting. We were protesters and broke away from churches that were more hierarchal in nature. The reformers saw the abuses that came with absolute power and structured their church in ways to mitigate those power structures hoping that God’s Holy Spirit might be made manifest by every single person in a worshipping community.

Today, we celebrate this rich history within our Congregational Church by being governed by a meeting where every member has one voice and vote. To make the meeting as inviting and unifying as possible, we will have one service that day at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will occur at 11:15 a.m. and the warning/invitation for the meeting is at the end of this newsletter. There will be child care available.

DEACON’S CORNER

The Deacons are looking forward to the many opportunities, as described elsewhere in this newsletter, for building on our faith during this season of Epiphany! We have upcoming special services (Contemplative/Meditative on January 8, a Healing Service that evening as well @ 7pm and Jazz Sunday on February 12); we have the opportunity at Annual Meeting (after our single 10am service on January 29th) to chart the Church’s future direction through our shared decision-making; and on January 9th we have the Food Pantry commencing its new, additional food distribution services to the community. An active church such as ours presents so many opportunities to be involved.

The Deacons extend a heartfelt invitation to you to find and explore those opportunities that best suit your schedules and interests!

January 8th, 11:30 am ~ New Member Class Offered

There are great programs for all ages here at First Church. We reach out into the community and concretely live out Christ’s command to take care of those less fortunate. We honor and celebrate our children & youth. Our staff is all incredibly good at what they do and are always open to new ideas. Worship is vibrant, varied and always challenging our members to take their faith to the next level. We offer care and compassion to those who are struggling within the community with prayers, food if needed and tender hugs to get through the day. No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey you are welcome in this place and welcome to become a member. On Sunday January 8th there will be a New Member Class offered for anyone who would like to discover more about our church and/or join. If you will need child care, please let the church office know so that we can make arrangements, 878-5745.



Laurie's Lens

As I sit down to write this article, final preparations are being done for our Christmas pageant and I am feeling very much in the 'hurry up and go' season that December can bring upon us. So many things to do from shopping, cooking, wrapping presents, parties and the number of deadlines that keep approaching as the end of another year comes to a close. I am constantly reminding myself to stop, take a breath, and breathe in the breath of God...take a little time each day to reflect and just be. I hope you are doing the same.

We all love a celebration! And whose birthday is by far one of the most fun to celebrate ... Jesus! Join the fun on January 1st as we have a birthday party for Jesus and talk about the magi and their gifts that they gave to Jesus as well as what we can give to Jesus. Epiphany doesn't arrive until Friday, January 6th ... so we will be celebrating a little early this year with the kids at regular service time during second service. We will journey as the magi did and then celebrate with special snacks and games. We don't know if Mary & Joseph would have had a birthday party for Jesus, but we'd like to think that there was some kind of celebration as they all told the stories of how he came into this world and all the special people that came to visit ...angels, shepherds and visitors of all kinds ...including magi from the East.

Many more celebrations will happen in the reminder of our Faith Formation 2016-17 calendar for our children, youth and families ... so I invite you to mark your calendars and participate as much as you can as this will help you to get to know others in our church family and make new friends. As always, if you would like to be more connected and volunteer to help, be in touch and I will be happy to help you find a place where you can feel the love and support our children and youth.

Below are a few dates to help you get started...

- January 8th** ~ The Baptism of Christ & Junior Youth Group
- Thursday, January 12th** ~ Faith Formation Family Dish Share/Potluck from 5:45 to 7pm
- January 29th** ~ Ask the Pastor Sunday ~ 10am worship
(followed by our Annual Meeting with childcare provided by the youth – looking for helpers)
- February 19th** ~ Children, Youth & Outdoor Ministry Sunday
- March 12th** ~ Pretzel Sunday
- March 12th to April 9th** ~ Sunday School Lenten Rotation
- April 13th** ~ Maundy Thursday Service
- April 16th** ~ Easter Sunday
- May 14th** ~ Mother's Day & Graduation Sunday
- June 4st** ~ Pentecost Sunday & Ice Cream Social ~ 9:30am service
- July 30th –August 4th** ~ our UCC Camp week at Rock Point
(see camping article with information to sign up)
- August 7-11th** ~ Vacation Bible Camp
- September 10th** ~ Rally Day

Having so much fun walking my faith journey with you all!

Laurie, Christian Education Director

ASSOCIATE MINISTER THOUGHTS

As always, we have a lot going on this holiday season. And we here on staff are cranking away to make sure we can end the year with services and events that will center our community on the message of Christ, and to go into the world as advocates of God's love for all. As we enter into Advent and the Christmas season I feel that it is important that we remember our neighbors and that we take the opportunity to stand united with people of different social classes, ethnicities and religions. To that end, instead of looking back in this letter I would like to look forward while still summing up what I have been doing the past month.

Our Youth Groups are currently working hard to put together this year's Christmas pageant, which I am positive will be extremely entertaining. Pageant rehearsals are fun, but what I find more valuable is the time spent at play, where the youth can engage the narrative and think about how the message of the pageant relates to the world and their lives, which is pretty cool in my opinion?

Confirmation continues to be an opportunity to engage with our young people, teaching them about, but also learning from them, how to better engage with our denominational tradition as well as our understanding of Christ and his message. I have to admit, before facilitating this confirmation class I had never considered why Noah would name his son Ham if he could not eat pork. But it is questions like this that challenge us and bring new understanding to the faith. All of our confirmands this year have already proven to be inspired theologians; just don't tell them I said that.

Looking into the future I hope that what we are doing this month in youth group and confirmation will help our youth to prepare for some of the social issues we plan on focusing on starting in January. Both Erica and I have enjoyed these warming-up months to have fun, but going into the future we hope to focus on topics that will have more impact, such as refugee migration, woman's suffrage, issues concerning poverty in the community and social justice. Of course, we will still have fun, but we hope to engage our young people in mind as well as spirit and that will be our focus going into the future.

Adult education continues to be a blessing. Not only are the Wednesday Night searchers and Sermon Talk-Backs doing well, we are starting to get a larger turnout for the Friday morning breakfasts, which is interesting because we have to get up SUPER early for that! But I feel that here at First Church Essex, there is an inquisitive spirit that draws us all together. We want to learn and grow in Christ and with our community. Our sermon focus on the women of the Jesus' ancestry has been especially fruitful in inspiring discussion among these groups, and I feel that is a gift. The focus on the role of women in our tradition has helped me to focus in on an element of scripture that I feel I and many others are guilty of often overlooking - the important role women assume in the Bible. This is a gift this community has given me. I hope that we will be able to continue having these types of discussions and that the congregation will continue to enthusiastically seek truth from the spirit and the word of Christ.

To that end, it is would be good to note that in January we will begin a new Bible study. I am working on the details of it as I write this, but this will be a transition from At Table, which was fun, but I did not feel was meeting the goals I set for it. However, my approach to programming is not to dump an idea that does not work. I feel At Table was a good idea that needed revisions to be practical. I want to give our congregants

the opportunity to learn about the gospel, so that we, the ministers, Mark and I, do not put you in the position where you need to take everything that we say at face value because we said it. When we read scripture to you at service and preach sermons for you, we should be engaging you in discussion, not dictating to you through a speech. The people attending At Table asked for something more intensive and Bible focused than the discussions we were having over dinner. So if a Bible study is what you want, I will give that to you. I plan on starting our Bible study in January, and it will likely meet at least two times a month. I will give you further details as I develop the curriculum.

So, that was a lot. I think the thing to take from this is that our community is vibrant and strong. We have the potential to be a compelling voice representing Christ's message of love going into the next year and I think there will be a real need for that going into the future. My hope for the future is rooted in the hope Christ gives me and humanity; that hope I find reflected in all of you.

May God's love shine upon you and illuminate your spirit through this holiday season, this coming year and the entirety of your life. God bless you all.

Devon Lee Thomas: Bridge Associate Pastor

MUSIC



Well, it doesn't seem possible, 2016 is coming to an end. But there are wonderful things in store for First Church.

December 18th is the date for our Christmas pageant. This will be for both the 8:30 and 10:15 services. This is always a fun and wonderful service.

Christmas Eve has something for everyone...the 5:00 service promises to be fun and very lively. You never know who is going to show up! Perfect service for children of all ages. Ed Guild will be at the organ for all those carols you love to sing. The cherubs and young people's choir will also be singing for you.

The 9:00 service is filled with music. Many carols will be sung and Heavenly Harmony, MAF and the Sanctuary choir will all be there, with Bill Bickford once again singing O Holy Night.

F@F will play and sing for the 11:00 candlelight service. This service also includes communion.

On Christmas Day there will be one service, later than normal, starting at 3:00. Once again, lots of singing.

Looking forward to 2017 and what it will bring.....Catherine

HOSPITALITY

The Hospitality Committee hopes you are enjoying your time of fellowship at the coffee hours. We are looking for people who would like to help with those hours - it's a fun time and best of all, you get to learn the secrets of the Bunn Coffee Maker *and* the dishwasher! Please contact Judy McCullen if you can help with some of our coffee hours. And please thank Dan McMaster for bringing in all those wonderful donuts for us to enjoy!!

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES



Music Time During Faith Formation

Cherubs ~ Our Preschool & Kindergarteners gathering in the youth lounge with the junior and senior high youth as their mentors to sing a song during the first few minutes before moving on to their class. Kim Hamilton is their music leader.

Joyful Noise ~ Our 1st through 6th graders gather in the Marvin Lounge for their music time of songs with motions before moving onto class time. Jessica Moos is music leader.



Faith Formation Sunday School Calendar

Preschool – 6th Grade

January 1st ~ Communion Sunday ~ Spiritual Friends

January 8th, 15th, 22nd ~ Faith Formation Class time

January 29th ~ Ask the Pastor Sunday – be thinking of a question to ask Pastor Mark
Faith Formation Class time for Preschool – 2nd grade



Lego Donations Needed for New Curriculum!

Looking for Lego donations for a couple of our Sunday School Faith Formation classes. If you have Legos that you are willing to part with, please be in touch with Laurie. Thank you!

Junior Youth @ FCCEJ

January 8th ~ 11:30-1:30pm ~ Mission Focus

This Youth Group meets ONCE a month at this same time.





Faith Formation Sunday School Offering 2016

Your 2016 offering is going to... **King Street Center** **Total is now up to \$ 783.64**

Continue to remember to bring your Sunday School offering each week and use an envelope in the pews for your money so that you know it will be put towards the Sunday School offering and not be confused with regular offering for the church. \$1 a week can go a long way!

December 25th is the last Sunday your offering will be going to King Street Center.

We will be starting a whole new year on January 1st and will vote on where your offering for 2017 is going on Children & Youth Sunday in February.

Fellowship & Refreshments in the Gym on Classroom Sundays



We invite parents to make their way slowly to the Gym after our second service and enjoy refreshments and fellowship time before picking up your child(ren) at 11:30am, when class time is over. We would love food donations and they can be dropped off on the 'Gym refreshments' marked trays on the counter in the main kitchen.

January 8, 15 & 22 ~ Faith Formation Class time

Classroom Helpers Sign-up sheets are in the Gym on the green table for parents and volunteers to help us meet our Safe Conduct two volunteers for each classroom. Please connect with Laurie with questions.

All our First Church Youth Programs are parent supported!

1 to 3 parents/volunteers are needed at every youth group gathering!

Bulletin boards with Youth Group information can be found in the lower staff hallway. *Sign up to volunteer, drive for outings and/or bring a meal. All youth, parents and volunteers ~ see a staff person to update and fill out paper work for your youth and yourselves to help out. We do conduct a background check for people working with our youth, so come on in and fill out the paperwork.*



Please mark your calendars for our upcoming events!



Faith Formation Sunday School Calendar

7th – 12th Grade

January 1st ~ Communion Sunday ~ Youth Usher & Greet

January 8th, 15th & 22nd ~ Faith Formation Class Time

January 29th ~ Ask the Pastor Sunday – be thinking of a question to ask Pastor Mark

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/51999696273/>

dthomas@fccej.org

egarvey@fccej.org



Acolytes

Acolytes are those who carry the taper and bring the light of Christ into the Sanctuary at the beginning of worship to remind us that God is with us. Acolytes also will carry the light out at the end of worship to remind us that God continues to be with us wherever we go. This is a great way for you to participate in worship. You can acolyte solo or with another friend or parent. Check the sign up calendar on the bulletin board as you walk up to worship and sign up for a future day also.

Ring the Bell

All children and their families are welcome to sign up and ring the church bell 15 minutes before worship begins, at either 8:15am or 10am. Check the sign up calendar on the bulletin board in the downstairs hallway by the Acolyte signup sheet. On the signup sheet it will tell you which rope to pull and how many times to ring the bell.



SAVE THE DATES

Praise-a-Palooza : Soup and Songs of Praise

FCCEJ and Finally @ First are thrilled to again be hosting this fun evening for all ages! Mark your calendars for Saturday night, February 18th and join us at 5:30pm for a Soup Dinner followed at 6:30pm by an evening of praise music by local worship bands. Join us in welcoming bands from area churches and our own Finally @ First. A free will offering will be taken. Hope to see you all there!



Cabin Fever Calcutta

Save the date of March 11, 2017 for the 3rd annual Cabin Fever Calcutta. Early Bird tickets will be available between December 15th and January 15th. Those who renew ball numbers before January 15th will be entered into an Early Bird drawing for a \$100 prize.

Vacation Bible Camp 2017

August 7-11

Hero Central: *Discover Youth Strength in God!*

Monday – Friday from 9am to 11:45am

Station leaders, group leaders, youth assistants and snack servers . . . VB Camp is a week of energy and excitement seeing God’s Love in Action! If you have not experienced the church coming alive during camp week, plan to stop by and join us!

Groups: You & Me (toddler & parent/grandparent), Preschool (three & fours - potty trained) Kindergarten & First Grade, Second & Third Grade, Fourth & Fifth Grade

Stations: Discovery, Bible Story, Crafts, Music/Snack, Games

Youth Assistants: Sixth Grade and up

College Students & Adults: Group & Station Leaders



Summer Outdoor Ministry Camps for 2017-Vermont UCC



The Vermont UCC Outdoor Ministry Team is hosting one week of summer camp in Vermont for UCC kids and youth at Rock Point Camp in Burlington, VT.

July 30th – August 4th for youth going into 5th - 8th grade

To registration for this camp go to Horton Center website.



The VT UCC OM Team is recruiting volunteer counselors for this camp! Interested? Contact us!



Here are two other weeks we encourage you to look to Horton Center, Gorham, NH

July 9th – 15th for 7th – 9th graders @ Horton Center Camp

July 17th – 24th for 4th – 6th graders @ Horton Center Camp

Visit them to see the full listing of camps at www.hortoncenter.org

VT UCC Outdoor Ministry Team

Laurie Chipman (First Congregational Essex Junction), Leslie Desrosiers (College Street), Nancy Fowler (Barre Congregational), Laura Labrie (College Street), Dave McGowan (Waterbury Congregational), Kurt Shaffer (Interim at Warren Congregational), Jim Thomas (VT UCC Conference staff)

Do you have an interest in Outdoor Ministry ... you too can join the VT UCC OM Team!

STEWARDSHIP

Happy New Year from Stewardship! Our committee would like to thank ALL who pledged to the successful 2017 Stewardship Campaign. If your pledge card is still sitting on the dining room table, it is never 'too late' to send it in! Drop it off at the church office in an envelope marked for Pat Seaver, or contact Pat herself and do it over the phone! Pat's contact info: vtri2@aol.com or 802-879-4445. Your thoughtful generosity to 'give back to the Lord' allows this church to continue its good works in the community and in the wider world. FYI: The 2017 pledge envelopes are available 'now'. If you ordered envelopes and haven't picked them up yet, contact Pat Seaver or Jen in the office to get them. You may notice the very first envelope in the box is for an 'Initial Offering'. This is to help defray the cost of ordering envelopes. Any amount given will be much appreciated. Thanks, Your Stewardship Committee



FELLOWSHIP & LEARNING

JOY (Just Older Youth)

This group for the over 55 crowd (both men and women) will meet the first Thursday of each month at 12 noon in the Marvin Lounge. Bring your lunch and we will eat together and then have a program or just do something fun. If you have any questions about the group or need a ride please call the office. **Thursday, January 5:** Join us for fun and games. Bring your lunch and a favorite game to share. We'll also brainstorm ideas for our 2017 programs.



Essex Eats Out Community Dinners Continue...

1st Friday of Every Month ~ January 6th
Come - Help – Eat www.essexeatsoout.org

Noontime Book Group

The Noontime Book Group will meet on **January 19th** at 12:00pm



Pastor's Coffee & Discussion Group

Join the Pastors, every Friday morning at 8:00am @ Martone's
Come on over and have coffee and a treat with Mark & Devon to ask all those questions you never get a chance to ask during worship or Sermon Talk Back!



First Church Bridge Club

Did you know that First Church has some very good bridge players? Did you know that we also have people that love to play and talk with friends as they play bridge?

Do you know that First Church has their very own bridge club! And our players run the gamut of skill and conversational level! If you like to play bridge and have some fun doing so with folks from our very own church, then come out on the third

Friday of every month which is January 20th from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m.
The winner takes home one of Rev. Mark's homemade jam! See you there.



Mondays -Yoga Classes are Going STRONG!

Summer classes were such a hit that Jonah Moos will be continuing a beginning Yoga class but has switched to Mondays, from 5:30-6:45pm in the Fellowship Hall. Jonah is a professor at St. Michael's College and a member here at FCCEJ and he is taking a teacher training course in Yoga and would like to share his skills with you. Join us!



Women's Spirituality Group

The Women's Spirituality Group will meet in Marvin Lounge at 9:30 am on the third Saturday of each month. All women of the church are invited to join us for interesting programs and wonderful fellowship.

For any of the trips away from the church we will meet at church and carpool to the sites. **Saturday, January 21:** Please join us for the comedy "Heaven Can Wait" the film adaptation of Harry Segall's play about a Los Angeles Rams quarterback, accidentally taken away from his body by an overanxious angel before he was meant to die, returns to life in the body of a recently murdered millionaire. We'll enjoy snacks as we watch this hilarious 1978 remake with Warren Beatty.



Ladies Crafting Night Out

Do you knit, crochet or do any other crafty projects that you would like to do in fellowship with others? Join us in the Marvin Lounge the 4th Monday of each month at 7pm, **January 23rd** this month, for a time of common crafting. All are welcome!

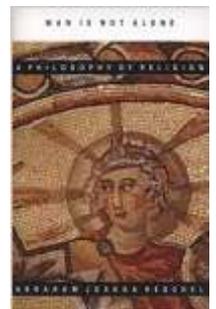
Tuesday Morning Sermon Talkbacks, 8:30 – 10am

Each Tuesday morning 15-20+ people meet over coffee and goodies to discuss what went on that week in worship. We expand upon the sermon and explore the things that preaching just cannot get at in twenty minutes. We explore any and every subject that might properly come forward -although we try to leave politics out of it! We laugh, challenge, eat, share our stories and support one another in our life journeys. It is a good group that you would be very welcome to attend.



Wednesday Night Searchers, 7-9pm in Marvin Lounge

After December 14th we will not meet again until January 4th, when we will be resuming after the holidays with our Dinner and Movie Night Out and then moving on to our next book, "Man Is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion" by Abraham Joshua Heschel from January 11th – February 15th. We have the books available in the office if you would like to pick one up and get an early jump on the reading. Come and bring a friend.



MISSIONS MOMENT & OPPORTUNITIES

Missions Moment



On Sunday November 13, 2016, Rev. Mark led FCCEJ on a celebration of social justice – organizing numerous activities to emphasize the importance of social justice in the life of the UCC. All over the sanctuary walls were small pieces of paper suggesting opportunities to practice social justice in our community (volunteer, donate \$, write an advocacy letter, support a neighbor, etc.). During the sermon, everyone was asked to rise from their seats, peruse the wall offerings, and select one or two of the suggestions to take

home. Immediately after the service, one group of volunteers lined up at tables in Fellowship Hall and made bag lunches in assembly-line fashion (sandwich, chips, cookies and a juice). A second group of volunteers put together ‘meal

planning’ bags of food for Jump (each bag contained rice, beans, tomato sauce and pasta). The group created over 50 lunches and over 50 meal bags for Jump. While this was going on, a group of children and adults created signs with social justice

themes on placards, and then marched to Five Corners to wave at passing motorists. This happened after both services that morning. Last, Mark (and Margaret), Nancy

Milne and Peter Schmalz drove into downtown Burlington and delivered the food (JUMP delivery to First Congregational Church in Burlington; sandwiches to homeless people at the COTS Daystation, Turning Point, and Steps to End Domestic Violence, and a group outside the church). It was an exciting and exhilarating day of social justice activities.



Jamaica Mission Team 2017

In July 2017, just six months from now, an intergenerational team from FCCEJ will be embarking on a ten day Mission Trip to Golden Grove, Jamaica, West Indies. To support this mission, the team conducts two major fundraisers. The first is a Stock Sale that is happening currently and the second is the Cabin Fever Calcutta on March 11, 2017. The Jamaica Bound Team is selling Stock in support of the July 2017 mission trip. Anyone purchasing Stock will be invited to a luncheon of delicious Jamaica food when the team will discuss their experiences on this trip. Stock shares can be purchased from any team member and will be available in Fellowship Hall

until Christmas after both services at a cost of \$25 per share. Team members are Betsy Weischedel, Cameron Starkey, Carolyn Rushford, Christine Czarny, David Dewey, Mark Mendes, Meaghan Frank, Nicole Frank, Sharon Dettenrieder and Zack LeClair. Thank you for your support!



Winter Clothing Drive for Food Pantry Clients

Mission Possible thanks everyone who donated coats and other warm clothing to our Winter Drive. Everyone was very thankful for all the new coats! Please check in the 'FCCEJ By The Numbers' section at the end of this Newsletter to see how many coats were donated and where we were able to distribute them to!

Got Coats?



Mission Possible!



Reach out... Make a difference... Connect with others... Learn something new
"Mission Possible!" is the joint committee (Missions and Christian Education) that plans opportunities for people to put their faith in action. Our goal is to provide hands-on volunteer experiences for all ages, to bring members of our congregation together for mission outreach, and to connect service to learning – about different populations and community needs, and about the many nonprofit organizations that are there to help. For more information about Mission Possible! and how to be part of the planning team or to volunteer, please contact Andrea Sharp at andrea.sharp@gmail.com.

Baking for The Vermont Respite House in January

Once again, Mission Possible is baking treats for the Vermont Respite House in January. The Vermont Respite House is a facility that provides supportive end of life care for residents in a home-away-from-home setting at its new location 3113 Roosevelt Highway, Rte. 7 in Colchester. We would like to deliver 6 dozen treats on Sunday January 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th. People prefer to bake at home and deliver them to the Respite House or bring them to church for me to deliver. There is a poster on the bulletin board in the hallway between the front door and the Fellowship Hall with slots to sign up for a week to provide treats. For further information, please contact Gail Babinger at gail@babinger.net. Thank you.



Dismas House

Please consider serving dinner at the Winooski Dismas House. Our volunteers provide dinner for 10-15 residents and staff there, enjoying great food and fellowship. FCCEJ has signed up for the fourth Wednesday in each month on an ongoing basis; **we are looking for volunteers for January 25th**. Please contact Dan Fortier (danny.fortier@gmail.com) or Peter Schmalz (pnschmalz@comcast.net) if interested. There is also a sign-up sheet in the hallway entering Fellowship Hall. The

Dismas House organization describes its purpose as follows: "We continue our mission of reconciling prisoners with society and society with prisoners. With your continued support, we are working locally to serve former prisoners in their difficult transition from prison to the community, assuring harmony in their lives and greater public safety." We need four (4) people to volunteer for each date (space is limited so that the residents and guests have a meaningful dinner experience. Our FCCEJ group will decide the menu to feed 16-20 people (which includes the FCCEJ cooks), and then purchase and prepare the food (typically includes the main course as well as vegetables or salad – dessert is optional). The Dismas House provides beverages, condiments, set-up and clean-up. There is no age limit on who can volunteer, and you can donate part of the meal even if you are not able to attend. Many people from our community have volunteered and it is a fun, rewarding mission!



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



Heavenly Food Pantry Needs Donations

We are in need of regular size jars of jelly and/or jam, cans of tuna fish, boxes of cereal and containers of fruit juice to restock our Food Pantry shelves. The January Food Pantries will be on Monday evening, **January 9th** from 5:30-7:30 and Thursday afternoon, **January 26th** from 2-6pm.

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Needs You!

The Thrift Shop is looking for people interested in helping out. If you are available for daytime hours on Tuesdays and Wednesdays or afternoon/evening hours on Thursdays for a two-three hour shift and if you enjoy meeting people and sorting and selling clothing, the shop could use your help! They are also looking for people who can help in the area of finance/bookkeeping, scheduling and communication/social media. If any of these areas interest you and you want to help out, give the church office a call. There is a lot of talent in the congregation, and this is a great way to use that talent to help a mission of the Church!



Volunteer & Support our Faith Formation Programs

Your continued support to our Faith Formation programs is greatly appreciated! If you have been with us for 6 months or more we encourage you to pray about being involved in one of the below ways and get to know our children and youth here at First Church and help them on their faith journey, as well as yours.

Please be in touch with Laurie.

Class Leaders & Helpers *Be a part of a team that helps to lead a class or be a set of extra helping hands during class. Laurie sends out weekly emails with curriculum lesson and outline. All classes need 2 volunteers each Sunday to help fulfil our Safe Conduct Guidelines.*

First Sundays Spiritual Friends *Help bridge the generations in our large church family and be a Spiritual Friend and join the Preschool up through 4th graders after Children's Message on the 2nd floor for a time of sharing with Faith Talks.*

Multi-Age Activity Sundays *Volunteer to help when all the ages come together to build community and enjoy a time of fellowship.*

Youth Group Volunteers *Be a helper and attend the Junior Youth, JH or SH Youth group gatherings. You can also sign up and provide a meal for them.*

Nursery Volunteers for 2nd Service *Be a friendly face to welcome our littlest among us and their parents as you spend time with them and get to know them in our Nursery.*

Our Nursery



We are seeking a Nursery staff person for our 8:30am and 10:15am worship services. If you know of someone who is interested in the position (8:15 to 11:45am) or is willing to be a backup sub in the Nursery staff person when they are away or sick, please be in touch with Pastor Mark or Laurie. Our Nursery is one of the first places that our little ones feel the love of God and learn that the church is a safe place to be. We also are looking for volunteers to help during our 10:15am service as we could have many little ones in the Nursery during this service.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY



January Birthdays

1st Paulette Frisbie, Nicholas Rushford; **2nd** Bryn Youlen; **4th** Donna Dulaney, Jackie Fortier, Arthur Winslow; **5th** Carol Mahany; **6th** Keenan Mittl; **10th** Jen Celia, Jeff Nowell, Sara Sinkewicz, Beth Terry; **11th** Steven Donley, Alex Dooley; **14th** Angela Tiersch; **15th** Ed Guild, Wayne Hall, Elaine Helmstutler; **16th** Patrick Nee; **18th** Harold Bergeron; **20th** Taylor Dorn, Carolyn Harris; **21st** Ed Dean, Matthew Kellogg; **24th** Penny Williams; **25th** Cathy Shearer, Allison Vansteensburg; **26th** Ingrid Gilliam, Charlotte Stoneback; **29th** Kevin McCullen; **31st** Shanice Bell

Thank You's



Dear Rev. Mendes, Joanne Irwin, and the congregation of First Congregational Church of Essex Junction, What a wonderful surprise it was to find 50 food bags delivered from your church this week! It often happens that when JUMP's shelves are barer than we would like, a congregation like yours delivers the food bags that will help the next group of clients get by for a few more days. We are so grateful for your ongoing support of JUMP and for your first time delivering our much needed food bags. Bless you for your generosity! If you are willing to continue providing food bags for JUMP, I will send you a reminder next June with the latest food bag list. With much gratitude, Betsy Emerson, JUMP Food Bag Coordinator

Dear Church, My goodness. Another birthday another rose, and a note from Mary Richer, our Administrative Assistant Emeritus. Yes, I am still skiing. Blessed to be healthy. Peace, Russ Kinaman

Dear First Church Essex, Thank you SO very much for all of the food boxes from Hannafords. We really appreciate your generosity! This will enable us to help the many families of the Lake Region Parish. Thank you again, Rev. Evelyn Coupe, Barton United Church



I am writing to thank each of you who put a smile on a child's face or a feeling of joy in the hearts of their parents through our Giving Tree mission. Also to Bayada Hospice & TD Bank who helped us this year as well. This year we provided gifts to 63 children from ages three months to 17. They all live in the Village or Town of Essex. When parents are first contacted about gifts for their children or when they pick the gifts up before Christmas, they often express how difficult it is for them to find the words to adequately thank the members of our congregation for the generosity shown to their children. It is a reason for us to celebrate the spirit of giving at First Church. Blessings, Elaine Raymond

2016 Christmas Pageant: Many thanks to all those who helped the youth with this year's pageant ... Myrna Doney with costumes, Rick Dooley with music, and all of you who came to help at rehearsals and on Pageant Sunday itself. The youth had a fun time bringing the story of Jesus' birth to all of you. Please thank them again the next time you see them and if you are looking for some of this great youthful energy yourself, just volunteer to come join us at any of our youth group gathering and we'll see that some of it rubs off on you!

FCCEJ By The Numbers

220 coats you donated for the Annual Coat Drive!

190 coats distributed to the Heavenly Food Pantry families

10 coats taken to the Dismas House in Winooski

20 coats given to the annual Sweetwaters Thanksgiving meal & coat distribution



FCCEJ Stop on the EJ Train Hop

Many thanks to those of you who came helped support our stop on the train hop. We had about 45 people stop by. For our first year and being it little further out, we thought we did well. A special thank you to those who donated their train sets for the kids to play with – Sue Conti, Jennifer Dooley and Mark Mendes and to our volunteers for the evening - Linda Bogardus and Cathy LaPierre. We had a fun evening meeting

our community. Please mark your calendars for next year.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ESSEX JUNCTION

WARNING FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, January 29, 2017 11:15 a.m.

To the members of the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction,

GREETINGS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST:

The Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction will be held in the Sanctuary of the Church, at 11:15 a.m. on Sunday, January 29, 2017 to take action upon the articles below.

ARTICLE I: To hear and act upon the report of the Church Officers, Committees and Recognized Groups of the Church.

ARTICLE II: To elect all Church Officers and Committee members required by the By-Laws of the Church and others as may be necessary.

ARTICLE III: To act and vote upon the proposed budget for 2017.

ARTICLE IV: Shall the members authorize the Finance Committee in conjunction with the Church Council President to borrow money and sign notes pledging the credit of the Church, if needed, to meet the current expenses of the Church?

ARTICLE V: To transact any other business which may properly be brought before this Annual Meeting.

On behalf of the Church

Andrea Sharp, Church Clerk

First Congregational Church of EJ
1 CHURCH STREET
ESSEX JCT, VT 05452
Phone: 802-878-5745
Fax: 802-872-8236
Email: welcome@fccej.org
www.fccej.org

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BURLINGTON, VT 05401

PERMIT #598

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

Please help us clean up our mailing list! If you no longer wish to receive our newsletter, or would like to receive it electronically instead, simply:

- E-mail an “unsubscribe” message to welcome@fccej.org , OR
- Phone us at 802-878-5745, OR
- Mail this page back to us at the address above

Inside...

Senior Pastor’s Message
Special Sundays & Offerings for January
Deacon’s Corner
Laurie’s Lens
Associate Minister Thoughts
Music
Hospitality

Children, Youth & Families
Save The Dates
Stewardship
Fellowship & Learning
Missions Moment & Opportunities
Volunteer Opportunities
Our Church Family
Annual Meeting Warning