



# The Spirit at First May 2017

A Message to Ponder....

*The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction, United Church of Christ, is an Open and Affirming congregation, embracing diversity and affirming the dignity and worth of every person, because we are all created by a loving God. We seek to live Christ's call for compassion, justice, healing and wholeness in life. Therefore, we welcome into our community persons of every race, gender, age, sexual orientation, faith background, nationality, ethnicity, marital status, mental and physical ability, economic and social position, gender identity and expression, level of education and family structure. We invite all to share in the life, leadership, ordained ministry, lay ministry, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, fellowship, blessings, and joys of our congregation as we seek to grow together in faith and love.*

April 29, 2012

When I was a youth, I was heavy and teased by my peers in school. It was very hurtful and did damage to my psyche, damage that I continue to work through and come to grips with forty years later. I still identify as a "fatboy" within my own understanding of who I am. However, within my family and at my home church, I was loved, accepted and seen as a precious child of God. Even at a young age, ministers and lay leaders within my church could see gifts in abundance and a minister is waiting. That vision came to fruition and for twenty seven years I have responded to their love with service to Christ's church. Their witness and love transformed my pain in my early years into a life-long ministry of reaching out to include folks who have been neglected, ostracized and kept out of the full life of the church: classic cross [goodness out of pain] theology.

As a youth, I always tried to include those around the edges that did not feel comfortable engaging the wider group. At summer camp, I always tried to focus on groups that were neglected in society. I remember early experiences of watching Corrie ten Boom's movie, *The Hiding Place* or going to hear Caesar Chavez talk about grape boycotts or bible studies about the raging local battles between Anita Bryant and the GLBT community in Coconut Grove Florida. Then, I experienced great condemnation first at the hands of religious conservatives at Auburn University and then again by religious liberals at Andover Newton Theological School outside of Boston. These experiences and many more, combined with what I was learning in seminary, and reinforced by what I determined was the movement of the Holy Spirit has led me to a theology of radical hospitality.....a divine love that actually holds all people as precious and unique. This one foundational belief so integrated in who I am, is the core of my theology and life.

And it is thrilling that I can live out this belief as your pastor. And not only live it out but be affirmed for leading you and standing up for it in the public! Five years ago on April 29, 2012, we as a congregation voted 97 to 3 to become an Open and Affirming congregation within the United Church of Christ and that vote has led us into the future in such positive ways that it both shapes and humbles me.

As we move into the future, let us continue to include our GLBTQ brothers and sisters, let us continue to reach out to people of other faiths, let us continue to help build a better society with local organizations with no faith stance, let us continue to see God's movement in all politicians and political organizations, let us continue to reach out to everyone regardless of who they are recognizing that everyone is a precious child of God and loved.

Thrilled to be able to minister with all of you as we live out what I believe to be Christ's calling, I am yours in His name,

Rev. Mark

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# SPECIAL SUNDAYS & OFFERINGS

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## **May 7<sup>th</sup> ~ Communion**

1<sup>st</sup> Service: Elements passed out to congregation

2<sup>nd</sup> Service: Congregation comes forward to receive elements

## **May 7<sup>th</sup> ~ Church Wide Spring Clean-Up**

Dress in your work clothes for church and come ready for our annual Spring Clean-up. There is always lots of varied tasks. We rake and trim, we cut and mow, we prepare the gardens and plant.....and while we do so, we laugh and joke, we sweat and give our muscles a workout, we get to know each other and have fun. So come prepared to help on Sunday May 7<sup>th</sup> after the second service. Our Trustees lead us and at the end of the day, our grounds look GREAT!

## **May 14<sup>th</sup> ~ Jazz Sunday**

On the Second Sunday of each month, we have organized a specially planned service that will attract our members and maybe even some community members whose interest has been piqued. In May, we will be having our third annual Jazz Sunday, a Sunday that celebrates Jazz Music and gets you off your feet to give praise and glory to God. We are thrilled to have our own Finally at First leading the music since they have been incredible in the past in rocking the place. They perform at both services amidst all the regular aspects of worship that we have come to expect. This is a great Sunday to bring a friend!

## **May 19<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> ~ Confirmation Retreat**

We have a great group of confirmands this year who have been studying every week since late September. They have studied the bible, God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, prayer, the church, the United Church of Christ and our church. On May 19<sup>th</sup>, they have an overnight retreat where they will complete their work and decide whether to be confirmed or not. The Evans have graciously donated their camp on Lake Carmi again and in the midst of all this work, we will have some fun and eat well. Our confirmands will be confirmed on June 4<sup>th</sup> at both services so be sure to put that date on your calendars. If you see a confirmand, be sure to tell them congratulations on a job well done!

## **May 21<sup>st</sup> ~ Graduation/ Faith Formation Recognition Sunday**

Each year we relish lifting up the names of our graduates as we wish them well for the future. Parents celebrate their young adults accomplishments, past Sunday School Teachers remember when they were young, church folk reminisce about how they watched them grow up. Together we share in the celebrations! Each year we share a current picture and another of when they were young as well as hear news of future plans. Then we have a litany of blessing as we ask for God's blessings upon them. Be sure to come and be a part of this great ritual.

## **May 28<sup>th</sup> ~ Jamaican Mission Trip Team Dedication**

We have a team of nine people going to Jamaica this summer to spread some of Christ's love by helping create a garden in a school that will help feed the children who attend AND volunteer at a clinic to support the health of folks without adequate medical care. Our team of older youth and adults will be in Jamaica from July 11<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup>. On Sunday May 28<sup>th</sup> at both services our TEAM will be dedicated on behalf of our church and for Christ's work. Be sure to come and support them on this vital ministry.

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## ASSOCIATE MINISTER THOUGHTS

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I hope and pray all of you here at the First Congregational Church of Essex have had a happy and hope-filled Easter. It is during this time of year that I like to allow myself the luxury to relax, enjoy the life I have and tell myself that everything will be all right because, in many ways, the Easter Season is for Christians just that, an affirmation that no matter how hard things may get, Christ defeated death. Christ took the worst the world could offer and kept on going. Easter is for us a time to let that hope that Jesus gave us settle in our souls. It is a time where we can say with full certainty that love will prevail and that everything will be alright. It is an encouraging message and I hope you were all able to feel something like that over the week of Easter, and I pray that feeling can stick with you, at least through the Easter season, if not all the days of your lives.

Along those lines, I reflect upon this last month with the hope that Christ gave us. Starting with the youth, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to our Sunday Easter breakfast. People have told me that “it was good” or “not bad at all,” and I take that to heart as a WIN. Between all of our youth who contributed their pancake flipping and egg scrambling skills, as well as our parent helpers, we managed to raise Five hundred and ten dollars in donations for the youth group. I would also like to profusely thank Alison and Carl Wermer for helping with the cleanup that was the messiest part of the morning for sure.

The week before Easter the youth also took a trip up to Smuggs and had a day of fun in the snow. I find myself wondering what it is that will attract more of this congregation’s youth to the group. Ultimately, what I am told is that what makes youth group interesting is having people to hang out with. This says in my mind that the bigger the youth group the more fun we have! So, if that is the case, and you or your kids have some time to make it to a youth event and are looking for fun youth to hang out with, know that you are very much welcome to liven up the party. Also, if any of you have any ideas as to what would make a good youth event or what might grab you or your children’s attention, let me or Erica know. People are a complex puzzle and I don’t mind people dropping me a few hints to figure them out. I strongly feel that community is what makes church happen, and it really is my hope that we can have our youth group be a part of the church that brings people together with the undying love and friendship we were shown through Christ.

As for General Ministry here at FCCEJ, I have to say I have been delighted with our Wednesday afternoon Bible study. We recently finished our first segment, “Rocking the Credo,” and have entered into our final four-part series, “We are not alone,” which will explore how we can find God in the world and in our lives. I feel, as a young starry-eyed minister to be, that the Church really is here to share the love! One way we do that is by allowing people access to the scriptures and the way in which the Church has interpreted them through the years. Rocking the Credo was really intended to be an introduction to how we engage the Bible. I hope to help you all learn about ways in which the Church has historically applied the teaching in the Bible. So again, if this is something that interests you, feel free to stop by. We meet every other Wednesday at noon.

I will also add as a last caveat that with our AP search approaching its next phase, if there are things you wish to see continue at the church, like Bible study, let the powers that be know so that they can continue them with the new associate.

With that said, I pray you all have a wonderful Easter season and a wonderful month to come

Devon Lee Thomas, Bridge Associate Pastor



## Laurie's Lens

Many hands make light work...and it's so true. Many hands are needed to help this church, especially of our size, keep our programs going and faith alive and strong for our children and youth. As I write this article. May is almost a week away! VT UCC Conference Annual meeting will happen next week and then on May 2-4 I head off to NH for my Continuing Education at NEAUCE. Too early to start recruiting volunteers to fill all our program needs for 2017-18? Never. Let me remind you of the many opportunities and ways one can get involved and lend support so that our programs are vibrant and filled with energy to welcome new families and invite all to come be a part of our community of faith. We continue to work hard to see that our classes have extra helping hands, especially preschool through 4<sup>th</sup> grade, which helps us fulfill our Safe Conduct guidelines for our children, youth and our volunteers. We believe it's important to follow Jesus' example of taking time to get to know each other and build community...whether it's in class time or a large group activity, across the generations or with our older youth on down to our preschoolers. Many opportunities to support First Church kids and youth:

- Nursery – join our staff person and be a friendly face to the parents and the littlest ones among us during first service or second. We strive for a two to one ratio in the Nursery.
- Spiritual Friends – join Laurie on the First Sundays of the month on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and we'll have great conversations with the kids. Read a story, have snack, Godly Play time with playdough mats, Faith Talk circle conversations, etc. A little bit of everything happens on this day and everyone returns to worship for communion.
- Faith Formation Class Leaders & Helpers – be a leader or helper in one of our classes from preschool up through senior high youth. Weekly emails go out keeping you connected and sending you plans for the classes on Sunday mornings. All items are gathered for you.
- Multi-Age Activity helpers – preschool up through senior high are together for a time of fellowship across the ages for on these days...for group building activities ... parachute time, games, mission opportunities and enjoying being with each other.
- Youth Group helpers – come be present with a youth! Still a youth at heart...join a group and or bring a meal. Every time youth gather we are always looking for adults to help.

If these statements hold true for YOU ... then First Church needs YOU!

- I have been attending and have been a part of FCCEJ for at least 6 months
- I would like our children and youth at church to continue to grow in their faith
- I know it's OK to not have all the answers, but a willingness to learn and help the children and youth learn and grow in their faith
- I feel that FCCEJ Faith Formation programs are a vital part of this church and I am willing to support it with my time and talents

Remember ...Faith is not taught, Faith it caught! Join the fun and help others catch the Spirit! Please spend some time in prayer about where you are feeling called to step up in 2017-18.

Blessings & Peace,

Laurie, Christian Education Director

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# MUSIC

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It is with a heavy heart that I write my last entry in the FCCEJ Church Newsletter.

I've been playing for 48 years now in eight wonderful, but different churches. I can honestly say FCCEJ has been my absolute favorite. The loving church community, friendly faces and family atmosphere has brought me happiness and joy.

What a pleasure to work with so many talented people. Thank you to Rick Dooley, Bill Bickford, Carolyn Harris, Kim Hamilton and Jessica Moos, for the fine direction and beautiful music they have performed over the years.

The Sanctuary Choir and Heavenly Harmony, what can I say, you are my family. We have shared so many wonderful memories over the years and I thank you for your friendships, laughter, celebrations, and most of all your beautiful voices.

Thank you to Jen, Laurie, Devon, and especially Mark. The church is run like a fine oiled machine, with all of you at the helm. Amazing people to work with.

And to the congregation, thank you for the love, support and appreciation you have shown myself and my family over the years.

God bless.....Catherine



## **April 30th ~ Joe Levesque Big Band Concert ~ 3 pm**

The Joe Levesque Big Band will perform a concert in the FCCEJ Sanctuary on Sunday, April 30th at 3:00 pm. The concert is open to the public and a free will donation will be accepted at the door to benefit the church music program. Joe's Big Band is a 17-piece ensemble of accomplished musicians from throughout Northwestern Vermont who share a passion for performing the diverse styles of big band music from the Swing Era to the present. Brian Chipman is a member of the trumpet section and Neil Hutcheon will be sitting in on trombone.

FCCEJ hosts the band's rehearsals every other Monday night in the fellowship hall. Rehearsals are open to anyone who would like to come and listen, or even dance! Rehearsal dates and times are listed in the church calendar.

Like Joe's Big Band on Facebook. The band's website is <http://www.joelevesquebigband.com>

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## DEACON'S CORNER

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During this Lenten Season, Pastor Mark invited Rabbi Small, Gov. Douglas, and Imam Hassan to preach from our pulpit. By all accounts their messages were well received and appreciated. I hope you had a chance to attend those services. In addition, the calendars of the Governor and Imam were such that each was able to join the folks at Sermon Talk Back for deeper discussion and reflection.

While all three spoke meaningfully about their faiths, one particular service stood out for me.....the second service of communion on April 2. At the communion table stood Pastor Mark, Devon, and Imam Hassan. An impressive site. And then all three proceeded into the congregation. The Imam served communion to those in the balcony. I must tell you that for me personally, and as a Deacon, it was a very moving and powerful moment. Here was a Muslim serving communion to Christians. I think I can safely say this has never occurred in the 150 years of our church's history. And what better time for that to happen considering the religious divide a very few are trying to create. Pastor Mark tells us that ALL are welcome at this church's communion table. Well, at that service he fully demonstrated that commitment.

By inviting local religious leaders from the Judaism and Islamic faiths as well as an ex-governor who is a member of our own denomination, our pastor used this Lenten season to build faith bridges. Thank you, Pastor Mark.

.....Michael Bottamini, Deacon

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## STEWARDSHIP

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Please note this list of the 'Special Offerings' for those who do not have envelopes as a reminder:

**May 14**, Per Capita; **June 4**, Strengthen the Church; **Sept 10**, Seminary Sunday;

**Oct 1**, Neighbors in Need; **Nov 19**, Food Pantry; **Dec 17**, Christmas Fund

### Coming up.....

**Hannaford Gift Card Sales** – 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays after both services.

5% of the value of the card comes back to the Church.

Hard to think of spring planting right now, but we will once again sell **Claussen's Gift Cards until May 7th**. Thank you to Maureen McKenzie for coordinating this program!

**Volunteers Needed! Just a few minutes of your time....**Would you help the Stewardship Committee sell Hannaford Gift Cards? Volunteers are needed to help sell cards on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays. If interested, contact Kathy Finnie at [kfinnievt@gmail.com](mailto:kfinnievt@gmail.com) and we'll find a date that works for you!

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# CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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## Fellowship Meal

### **Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup> ~ Faith Formation Family Dish Share**

Come join the fun and fellowship from 5:45-7pm at this monthly potluck supper! Bring the family or just yourself and a dish to share. Organized to help our families with children to meet others here at First Church.

Enjoy a great meal and a group building activity.

### **May 21<sup>st</sup> ~ Graduation Sunday**

On May 21st we will celebrate Graduation Sunday. We seek to honor all of our graduates from: high school, college, graduate school, specialty programs. Please get the name of your grad, school, program, and degree to the office, [welcomed@fccej.org](mailto:welcomed@fccej.org) by Sunday May 14th. We invite you to share 2 pictures with us, one of your grad when young and a current photo, perhaps in their school garb. We will include both of the pictures in a slide show during worship on the 21st. Help us celebrate our graduates!



### **Meditation Room**

Open and available until mid-June ....Climb the stairs to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and find a restful place to just be and connect with God. At the top of the stairs from the office side, ready for you to relax and be with your God. This room is self-guided and open for all, anytime you are here at church. There is a basket by the door for you to put your items in that will help you disconnect from the world...cell phone, keys, etc.



### **Music Time During Faith Formation**

**Cherubs** ~ Our Preschool & Kindergarteners gather in the Youth Lounge, sometimes our junior and senior high youth join them 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 their music leader.

### **Faith Formation Sunday School Calendar**

#### **Preschool – 6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

*April 30<sup>th</sup> ~ Multi-Age Activity Day*

*May 7<sup>nd</sup> ~ Communion Sunday ~ Spiritual Friends*

*May 14<sup>th</sup> ~ Mother's Day & Jazz Sunday ~ All in Worship ~ activity for kids*

*May 21<sup>st</sup> ~ Graduation & Volunteer Recognition Sunday ~ Class Time*

*May 28<sup>th</sup> ~ Multi-Age Activity Day*

*June 4<sup>th</sup> ~ Pentecost & Confirmation Sunday & Ice Cream Social*



## Faith Formation Sunday School Offering 2017

You will be hearing more about the *Humane Society of Chittenden County* who relies completely on outside donations to stay open and help give pets a home.

**Your 2017 Total is now up to \$605.39**

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!

***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 and/or bring a meal. All youth, parents and volunteers ~ see a staff person to update and fill out paper work. We do conduct background checks for people working with our youth, so come on in and fill out paperwork. Please mark your calendars for our upcoming events! Save the dates and join the fun!*

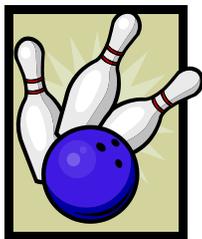
### Junior Youth @ FCCEJ

Our 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> graders meet ONCE a month at this same time.

Looking for a couple volunteer parents and a meal. See Laurie.

**May 7<sup>th</sup>** ~ 11:30-1:30pm ~ Mission Focus ~ Lunch ~ Fellowship

**Saturday, May 20<sup>th</sup>** at 2pm~~ 6<sup>th</sup> graders MOVE UP - *Mark your calendars!*



### 6<sup>th</sup> Grade MOVE UP & Jr. High Bowling Trip\*\*\*Saturday, May 20<sup>th</sup>

Call Out Meeting for all 6<sup>th</sup> grade youth and Parents

To the Jr. High Youth Group!

The 6<sup>th</sup> graders and parents are welcomed into the Jr. High Youth Group with a meeting at 2pm. Jr. High Youth arrive at 2:45 and at 3:00 we leave for the bowling alley. The bowling lanes are ours from 3:30-4:30 to bowl as much as we can in that hour. We will return to First Church around 5pm. You are of course welcome to bring your friends for the fun and information of Jr. High Youth Group. RSVP to Laurie or Erica or Devon.

### June 1<sup>st</sup> (Thursday evening) ~ Year End Youth Party @ Pastor Mark's

Calling all 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade youth! Pastor Mark is hosting our year end party at his house right here in the Junction (9 King's Court). Come at 5:30pm, bring your parents, a potluck dish to share and we'll have hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill. There will be games, food and great fellowship!

We need a head count for the grill, so please RSVP.



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# SAVE THE DATES

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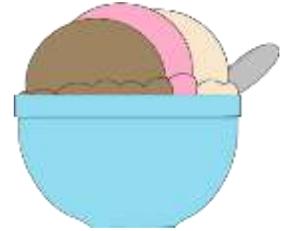
## **May 21<sup>st</sup> ~ Faith Formation Volunteer Recognition**

If you have volunteered as a class leader, class helper, Spiritual Friend, Multi-Age Activity helper or leader ...we hope you will join us during Worship so that we can thank you for all your time and energy this year.

## **June 4<sup>st</sup> ~ Pentecost Sunday & Ice Cream Social**

### **One Service at 9am begins**

Join us on this special Sunday to help us celebrate Pentecost and our confirmands! Ice cream and many toppings will be available for our fellowship time after our 9am worship service.



## **Vacation Bible Camp 2017**

August 7-11, Monday – Friday from 9am to 11:45am

***Hero Central: Discover Your Strength in God!***

VB Camp is a week of energy and excitement of seeing God's Love in Action! All are encouraged to join up and be a part of this fun week!



### ***Register TODAY!***

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

**Station Leaders are getting ready:** *Bible Drama*~Barb Smith; *Crafts*~Jenny Bourn/Sara Kellogg; *Discovery*~Trista Acebo; *Games*~Jessica Moos; *Music*~Laura C-F *Snack*:Judy Allen & Ginny Coe

**Recruiting for Group Leaders:** Youth (sixth grade or older), Young Adults/College, Adults

### **VB Camp Wish List**

Paper towel rolls (55 total), Small glass jars with lids (pimento/babyfood/etc... 55 total)

Battery tea lights (55 total), Baking soda—1 container, white vinegar—small container  
unscented natural liquid soap - small container, liquid water colors or food coloring

5 large raw baking potato, table or ice cream salt, 5 medicine droppers or pipettes (at least five)

Baby carrots (5lbs), Ranch dressing (3/24oz), Pineapple chunks (6/14oz cans), Strawberries (4 quarts)

Pretzel sticks (2/20oz bags), Grapes (3 lbs), Cheese cubes (6/16oz), O's cereal (1 lg gluten free), Raisins/Craisins (1/16oz, Pretzel pieces (gluten free)— any shape (1/32 oz package), Apples (40), Bag of Mini Chocolate Chips, Fruit by the foot (6 packages/12 ct), Vanilla frosting tubes (2), Vanilla Yogurt (2 lg. containers), Ice cream cones – either waffle or plain (70), Pirate Booty Popcorn (2 large bags), Veggie Sticks (2 large bags), banana bread – no nuts (6 loaves), Snack size resealable baggies (3 boxes), Clear, squat, 9 oz. plastic cups (300), Napkins (400), Small paper plates (200)



## UCC Outdoor Ministry Camps

Summer is one day closer, and now you can register for your best week of the summer! Horton Center registration is now open, take a look at the schedule, as there is a session for everyone. With thanks to our Outdoor Mission Group and volunteer Deans, we are offering favorite sessions such as Grandparent & Grandchild, Family & Friends Weekend, Middler Camp, and others. Women's

Weekend will be offered with an extra day due to popular demand. Our new offerings include a Family 4th of July half week, Leader in Training, Archery Camp, and Senior High Hike Week. We can't wait to branch out and connect Christ with you this summer at Horton Center!

[www.hortoncenter.org](http://www.hortoncenter.org)

Attend Horton Center camp with Laurie Chipman in Gorham, NH. *Laurie is counseling this week!*

**July 9<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> for 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> graders**

## Vermont Outdoor Ministry Week



Enjoy a fun week at Rock Point Camp in Burlington, VT!

Swimming, hiking, canoeing, service project in Burlington, food, games and much more!

**July 30<sup>th</sup> – August 4<sup>th</sup> for youth going into 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

*Laura Labrie (College Street UCC) and Dave McGowan (Waterbury UCC) will be our Deans and lead this week of camp! Laurie Chipman will be stopping by and checking in throughout the week.*

To register for this camp go to Horton Center website. [www.hortoncenter.org](http://www.hortoncenter.org)

Scholarship Funds are available! See Laurie or Pastor Mark

VT UCC OM Team is recruiting volunteer counselors (18 yrs & older), a waterfront lifeguard and a registered nurse for this camp! Questions? See Laurie!



*Laurie will be counseling at Horton Center for Middler week ~ July 9<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup>*

**September 10<sup>th</sup> ~ Rally Day ~ Back to Two Worship Services**

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# FELLOWSHIP & LEARNING

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## Six Week Bible Study Series ~ ROCKING THE CREDO!!!

Continuing every other week (5/10, 5/24). This series is meant to give people the opportunity to build up their own theology, so, perhaps you think of yourself as a Trinitarian, or perhaps you call yourself a Unitarian, but you don't really know why.

Maybe you think that the creation story is the most important part of the bible, or perhaps you don't think that Christians need to know the "Old Testament" or Hebrew scriptures, at all. Well this bible study is meant to challenge you on those assertions and it is meant to give you all the introductory information you need to come to an educated conclusion as to why those beliefs may be important to you and are important in the Christian tradition.

## JOY (Just Older Youth)



A group for the over 55 crowd (both men & women) meets 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 do something fun. If you have any questions about the group or need a ride please call the office. **Thursday, May 4:** Please join us at noon with your lunch for an interesting and informative program by Max Seaton (Rotary) as he shares his 29 years of teaching in Egypt. We'll learn about the people, culture and politics.



## Essex Eats Out Community Dinners Continue...

1<sup>st</sup> Friday of Every Month ~ May 5th

Come - Help - Eat [www.essexeatsout.org](http://www.essexeatsout.org)

## Noontime Book Group



The Noontime Book Group will meet in the Marvin Lounge on **May 18th** at 12:00pm. Bring a bag lunch and join us on May 18th at noon in the Marvin Lounge for what promises to be a very enlightening discussion.



## Coffee Clatter

Every Friday at 8:05 a.m., Rev Mendes and Devon welcome everyone to come and talk about any subject you would like. We talk politics, camping, travel, church life, community issues...any and everything that comes up. Last week we had a lengthy discussion about what percentage of time the clergy should spend being prophetic or pastoral or as the church's administrator. We meet for one hour, join us for some friendship, fun and support.

## The Community of Bridge

Love to play bridge? Well, there are a lot of folks at First Church who do and they get together every month to play for a few hours: every 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday from 1:30 – 4:00. In May that is **Friday, May 19<sup>th</sup>**. There are always some delectable snacks,



free coffee and good conversation. All skill levels play and are welcome as we laugh and enjoy each other's company. Join us! The winner takes home one of Rev. Mark's delicious jams.....yum.



### **Mondays -Yoga Classes are Going STRONG!**

Jonah Moos hosts a beginning Yoga class from 5:30-6:45pm in the Fellowship Hall (and the Gym on Food Pantry second Monday). Jonah is a professor at St. Michael's College and a member here at FCCEJ and he is taking a teaching course in Yoga and would like to share his skills with you.

### **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 unless otherwise advertised. All women of the church are invited to join us for interesting programs and wonderful fellowship. **Saturday, May 20, meet at 9am:** Lilac Festival at Shelburne Museum and lunch. We'll meet at church and carpool. There is transportation around the museum if the walk is too much. We'll enjoy lunch in the Museum cafeteria or bring your own.

### **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, **May 22nd** this month, for a time of common crafting. All are welcome!



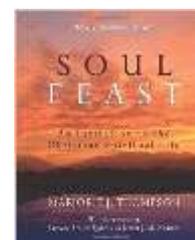
### **Tuesday Morning Sermon Talkbacks, 8:30 – 10am**

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**

May 3<sup>rd</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> – UCC Curriculum on “White Privilege: Let's Talk”



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## MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

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### **Mission Leadership Opportunities Available**

The Mission Committee hears reports, coordinates special initiatives, distributes money to local organizations and oversees a wide variety of Mission oriented ministries at First Church. With mission at the heart of Christ's call to love our neighbor, this ministry is vitally important in keeping our focus as Christ's followers. The Mission Committee is seeking two individuals to help the church oversee two vitally important ministries within the church. If you are interested, please let Rev. Mark or Sandy Tallman know. The two positions are....

**Mission Possible Coordinator:** Mission Possible started from a partnership between the Christian Education and Mission Committees. Together they came up with concrete ways that the church, especially our young families and children could learn about the faith by volunteering to help others. The two committees partnered with various social service agencies and arranged for times to volunteer: Dismas House, Respite House, Vermont Food Bank, etc. The Coordinator checks in with the volunteers who lead each initiative with the social service agencies to make sure everything is working fine. They step in to help as needed. This position requires minimal phone time, a periodic report to the Missions Committee and a willingness to step in to help if there is a problem in one of the partnerships. It is honestly not a lot of time.

**Dismas House Coordinator:** Dismas House is one of the social service agencies that we partnered with through the Mission Possible Initiative. Dismas House helps those released from prison to transition to society through housing, counselling and interpersonal skills. Our part of the program is simply to provide a meal on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of every month for about 15 people and then deliver the meal and eat with the residents. The residents are incredibly grateful! This position would solicit volunteers from the church who would like to help cook the meals and deliver them. Talking to people on Sunday morning or having a sign up sheet or placing the opportunity on the Facebook page would most likely provide enough volunteers.



### **2017 Jamaica Mission**

2017 Team: Mark Mendes, Dave Dewey, Christine Czarny, Sharon Dettenrieder, Cameron Starkey, Nicole Frank, Carolyn Rushford, Lori Weischedel, and Lauren Boerger.

The Jamaica Mission team is getting excited about our trip July 11-20<sup>th</sup>! We are continuing to coordinate with the Rotary Clubs of Essex Junction and Morant Bay, Jamaica to launch the garden project at White Horses Infant and Primary School in St.

Thomas Parish, Jamaica. The school has grown from under 75 students to over 300 in the past three years under the leadership of a new principal, Mr. Lanceford Grant. Many of the children arrive at school hungry. The garden we will build and plant will contribute food to the school canteen, teach children agriculture skills, and in the future hopefully provide a source of income to the school by sending extra food to the market.

During the months of May and June, the FCCEJ congregation will have the opportunity to donate goods to be delivered by the team to the school and medical community. We will be collecting the following much needed items:

Children's toothbrushes, Travel size toothpaste tubes, Pencils, 4x4 Bandages, Medical tape

Your gifts will be greatly appreciated!! Look for the large green bucket in the fellowship hall to deposit your donations. Thank-you!

## 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](mailto:andrea.sharp@gmail.com).

## 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 May 24<sup>th</sup>**. Please contact Dan Fortier ([danny.fortier@gmail.com](mailto:danny.fortier@gmail.com)) or Peter Schmalz ([pnschmalz@comcast.net](mailto: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!

## Visit to the Vermont Foodbank April 8, 2017

Sixteen volunteers from FCCEJ met at 5:45am in the church parking lot to carpool to the VT Foodbank in Barre, Vermont on a recent blustery Saturday. For four busy hours, they sorted and packed frozen meat, oranges and personal items to be distributed to food shelves throughout the state of Vermont. We were proud to be



informed that our group set a **RECORD** for the most frozen meat sorted at the Foodbank, packing 8,224 pounds! This



work created **14,336 meals** for hungry Vermonters!

We hope you'll join us next time for this fun and important activity!



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# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

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## 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 February Food Pantries will be on Monday evening, **May 8<sup>th</sup>**, 5:30-7:30 and Thursday afternoon, **May 25<sup>th</sup>**, 2-6pm. We are all set for EGG CARTONS so please hold onto them for now.

## Don't Forget the Red Tent



The Red Tent Project has become even more important as we enter a period where funds for women's health and marginalized immigrant groups may be significantly cut back. Donating woman's hygiene products to JUMP, which serves some of our most vulnerable neighbors, is one positive way we can show that we will continue to support those who will be facing increasingly difficult times. Look for the Red Tent in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday mornings during the next few weeks as we renew our commitment to help in this way. Women's hygiene products may be placed in it on Sunday morning or at any time during the week in the Marvin Lounge. . Let's make the Red Tent overflow to show our continued love and support for all women.

## Acolytes



NEW schedule was just put up...it needs your names! Sign up and be an Acolyte who carries the taper and brings 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. See the calendar on the bulletin board as you walk up to worship and sign up for a future day also.

## Ring the Bell

NEW schedule is up and ready for kids/families to ring the church bell 15 minutes before worship begins, at either 8:15am or 10am for May and starting June 4<sup>th</sup> @ 8:45am. Check the sign up calendar on the bulletin board in the downstairs hallway by the Acolyte signup sheet. Instructions are on the signup sheet.



## Our Nursery



Our paid staff of Allie Harris or Kathryn Locke will welcome your little ones on Sunday mornings to our Nursery. Volunteers and parents are welcomed and encouraged to sign up on the schedule on the table outside the Nursery to help us with our child ratio (2 children to 1 adult) and keep us on track with our Safe Conduct Guidelines. If you would like to be added to the email volunteer list, please let Laurie know. Our Nursery is one of the first places that our little ones and their parents feel the love of God and learn that the church is a safe place to be.

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## OUR CHURCH FAMILY

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**Special Offering for the Month of May: May 14<sup>th</sup>: Per Capita-\$13.50/member**



**It's almost time to build our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Memorial Day Parade WINNING float...  
(and quilt squares are due on June 1<sup>st</sup>!)**

...and we need YOUR help! Frank & Barb Smith are heading up this important endeavor and at a recent 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary committee meeting Frank unveiled his drawings for what the float will look like. It's going to be AMAZING!! The parade takes place on Saturday, May 27<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.

Please plan to join us ~ as individuals, couples or entire families ~ on Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup> (starting at 9:00 a.m.) and/or on Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup> (starting at 1:00 p.m.) to start and likely finish float construction. An indoor location is being sought where we can do the building, and we'll announce that as soon as it is confirmed. Please bring any painting supplies (brushes, rollers, paint pans, etc.) you may have, and dress accordingly. It will be great fun!

One quick reminder...if you are planning to make a square for our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary quilt, they are due in the church office by June 1<sup>st</sup>. They need to be 10 ½ inches square unfinished. If you have any questions about this, please contact Elaine Raymond [ebaymond@gmail.com](mailto:ebaymond@gmail.com) Thank you!



### **May Birthdays**

1<sup>st</sup> Sena Meilleur, Collin Parker, James Pettingill, Steve Sharp 2<sup>nd</sup> Steve Mittl, Jane Schneider  
3<sup>rd</sup> Donald Foss, Anna Giannuzzi, Lester Nutting, Jackson Parker, Jean Tucker 4<sup>th</sup> Jacob Hoy 5<sup>th</sup>  
Hannah Danis, Don Gray 6<sup>th</sup> Grace Parks, Madeline Reed, Carolyn Rushford 7<sup>th</sup> Nathaniel Brennan,  
Laura Cunningham-Firkey 8<sup>th</sup> Anna Kinney, Cooper Spaulding, Kinlee Spaulding, Owen Waligory 9<sup>th</sup>  
Rose Drost, Marsha Duell 10<sup>th</sup> Mike Bottamini, Allie Harris, Kelvey Spaulding 11<sup>th</sup> Chris Baker,  
Jennifer Hoy, Jackie Parks, Anniella Pettingill 13<sup>th</sup> Aki Aboukhalil, Alec Mayville 14<sup>th</sup> Jordan  
Calhoun, Rich Higgins, Alex John 17<sup>th</sup> Roman Bearman, Eric Smith 18<sup>th</sup> Eliza Lynch  
19<sup>th</sup> Wayne Beebe, Sarah Bigelow, Danielle Pinders 20<sup>th</sup> Betsy Cieplicki, Kyle Ehler-Vock, Marlene  
Frank, David Hoy 21<sup>st</sup> Lori Weischedel 22<sup>nd</sup> Graham Robinson 24<sup>th</sup> Arlene Bickford, Logan Harris,  
Becky Relyea, Joanna Taatjes 25<sup>th</sup> Maryann Carlson, Mary Richer, Susan Wood 26<sup>th</sup> Orion Stapleton,  
Mary Anne Warren 27<sup>th</sup> Dan Bashaw, Brian Evans 28<sup>th</sup> Nicolas Bearman 29<sup>th</sup> Maureen McKenzie, Leo  
Wermer 30<sup>th</sup> Tom James 31<sup>st</sup> Amanda Palmer, Alyssa Pettingill



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