

## **FCCEJ CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF SERVICE TO GOD AND COMMUNITY**

### **150 Years of Service to our Country and to our Military Men and Women**

In 1861, when the Vermont governor issued the call for volunteers to enlist in the Union Army, Bryon Stevens offered a \$100 gratuity to the first volunteer from Essex. Edgar Beach enlisted in May 1861 and received the \$100. In 1867, just six years later, both of these men were signers of the FCCEJ constitution. Several other men signing the FCCEJ constitution had close connections to the Civil War, including Steven Decatur Teachout whose nephew, Hannibal, enlisted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, Vermont Sharpshooters in August 1862 and died of disease in September 1863. Hannibal is buried in Alexandria, Virginia.

The Rev Elliott Foster was called to FCCEJ as its pastor in 1915 serving until 1917 when he resigned to enter the United States Army as a Captain in the Sanitary Corps. Dr. David Marvin, president of FCCEJ for 36 years, also saw service in World War I.

Harold Bergeron, former assistant treasurer and finance committee chair of FCCEJ and oldest living veteran in the State of Vermont, was presented the French Legion of Honor medal by the French government in November 2014 for his service in World War II. This medal is the highest military honor awarded by the French government.

The Rev Earl Vincent (FCCEJ pastor from 1945 to 1950) had two sons in the military. His son, Richard, was a member of the United States Army during the Korean Conflict, and his son, Raymond, served in the Vermont National Guard.

FCCEJ sons and daughters have continued to serve their country from the Vietnam War to the present. Current church members are serving as active duty military and/or in the Vermont National Guard and have been deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq.

On the home front, FCCEJ collected items for care packages to be sent to their members serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, and there is every reason to believe that this activity also took place in the more distant wars. Although there is no documentation of FCCEJ's involvement in scrap metal drives and rolling of bandage by women's groups during the World Wars, these were common activities; and it can be speculated that FCCEJ did her part.

At the request of the Essex Memorial Day Parade Committee, FCCEJ has since 1993 hosted the Memorial Service held the Friday night of the Memorial Day weekend. The *Men at First* provide the music including performing the song of the military branch in which that year's parade grand marshal served.

FCCEJ clergy organized a multid denominational service on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 to honor our military and first responders. The service was open to the public and was held in the church's sanctuary.

And, in keeping with the age-old tradition of ringing of church bells at the end of a war, FCCEJ's bells were rung when the last United States troops left Iraq.

By Ann Gray