



## The Spirit at First September 2017

Pastoral Ponderings.....

While on vacation, it seems as if the world has taken quite a spin. There has been thirty significant reality shaking stories that have come out of Washington DC, multiple international terrorist events, geopolitical brinkmanship that is hurtling our world toward nuclear engagement or at least the threat of fire and fury and if you can believe it – Neo Nazi's have reignited long standing racial divisions within our country that many of us assumed [wrongly it seems] had moved beyond such Neanderthal thinking.

Despite our physical distance from such realities, it seems as if that darkness filters its way up into these green hills and silver waters to stain our idyllic lifestyle with division, animosity and even hatred. With that dark milieu lurking beneath each surface, our local issues often take on an intensity and anger far beyond their local significance. So many families have divisions that keep them apart. Civility in the public arena is simply lost. Friendships are more and more determined on how you think instead of common interests and community spirit. Meetings at schools, towns, boards, housing associations, sporting associations, religious communities, hospitals and the workplace become landmines where explosions keep the meaningful work of each from occurring in a peaceful and productive setting.

Society and all of us suffer from such pestilence. Organizations that once flourished to build up communities and strengthen the ties that bind us are struggling to stay afloat. Churches and social service agencies are among those whose numbers have declined so greatly.

It seems oddly ironic that at the exact time when the values and principals of these organizations are greatly needed, people move away from them. It seems odd that when loving your neighbor, standing up for justice, telling the truth, treating all people with dignity, helping the poor, disenfranchised and powerless could change what everyone determines are troubled times that people slowly journey away. In this day and age, it seems like teaching our children these values is of the utmost importance. In these days of hopelessness and discouragement, it seems like teaching about light and hope would be a draw. In these days of incivility, demonization and scapegoating it seems like a little love thy enemy might be the breath of fresh air that will enliven our hearts and world. When everyone is so focused on their own needs and wants, it seems like highlighting a power that is beyond all of us might be a welcome refrain from the incessant lurch toward consumerism, greed and self-absorption.

Back from vacation with two weeks before the fall season begins, it seems to me that the opportunities for ministry are ripe! There is no time in my 30 years of ministry where the church and her message is more needed. Essex Junction and our world requires all of us to express God's love in ways that will change the paradigm that is threatening our very way of life. All of us need to sit in God's presence to reflect and re-dedicate ourselves to a future that is grounded in God's justice and Christ's sacrificial love. What better gift can we give to our children, our community and our world.

I encourage all of you to seriously reflect on these things and I hope to see you in church in September as we seek to make the world a better place.

Fearful and excited to be on this journey with you, I am  
Yours in Christ, Rev. Mark

---

---

# SPECIAL SUNDAYS & OFFERINGS

---

---

## September 3<sup>rd</sup> ~ One Service @ 9am

Communion will be shared on September 3<sup>rd</sup> by passing the elements out to the Congregation

## September 10<sup>th</sup> ~ Back to 8:30 & 10:15 am ~ Welcome Back Sunday

On September 10<sup>th</sup>, we welcome everyone to come back to church. Programs are just getting underway or planned. Our Faith Formation Program will begin with children seeing their rooms and Faith Formation leaders learning names and welcoming our kids into an environment where they can learn about God and the values of love, justice and community. After the second worship service or around 11:15. There will be a grand picnic for everyone with burgers and dogs and all the fixings. There will be a **BOUNCY HOUSE**, music and games on the lawn. Come and see old friends and meet new ones.

## Confirmation Call Out

Confirmation will be offered to anyone entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade or older this year. In the past, we have used a two-year cycle but with the number of kids as possible confirmands, we have decided to offer a class this year and not wait. The Confirmation Kick Off will be Sunday evening September 24<sup>th</sup> from 5-6:30. We will have pizza together and learn about the details of Confirmation. Parents and their 9<sup>th</sup> graders and up are both asked to attend this orientation to learn and fill out the required paperwork. If you are an adult and would like to be confirmed and participate in the class, there is room for one to two people to join. If you are interested either as a young adult or an older person, please express your interest in attending to Rev. Mark at [mmendes@fcej.org](mailto:mmendes@fcej.org). Looking forward to a great year!

## Search Committee Updates

The **Associate Pastor Search Committee** has been very busy this summer. Our Church Profile / Resume is available nationwide. There has been some interest expressed by a number of people and the committee is in the process of looking at individual minister's profiles/resumes and interviewing those who seem to fit our needs. Naturally, all specific names and candidates are confidential and we ask for your understanding of the confidentiality and for your prayers as we seek to find the right person.

The **Organist / Choir Director Search Committee** has reviewed a number resumes and interviewed a number of candidates. We continue to receive resumes and interview candidates as they express interest in our position. We are pleased to say that Marie Johnson will continue to play the organ and lead our choir during the interim time.

---

---

## ASSOCIATE MINISTER THOUGHTS

---

---

Blessings to all you fine folk of FCCEJ! Welcome back from vacation and congratulations on getting through the summer of 2017. It's time to Rev things up! (Bad pun, sorry) Summer is over and with fall comes a new year here at the First Church in Essex. We have an entire year of things planned for you all, and I will try my VERY BEST to compress those plans into a readable newsletter update for you.

We have had a very low key summer compared to last year, which is not a bad thing at all because I think this time has allowed us breathing room to consider the course we wish to chart for our congregation over the New Year. I have had more fun than I have a right to giving sermons this summer, and I feel that this congregation has once again challenged me and provided me with the space needed to polish my abilities in ministry. But now that summer is over, we will be returning back to a normal worship schedule and, as usual, we will celebrate in style on Welcome Back Sunday which will be on September 10<sup>th</sup> this year.

On a ministerial side, we should all keep the McMaster family in our hearts and prayers. Dan is in hospice, and his family is doing all they can to make him comfortable. They could use loving support, and I know our congregation has more than enough love to share and help them through this very rough time. Our prayers are with them.

Our bi-weekly Bible fellowship will be starting up again **Thursday September 21** we are re-appropriating the name **At Table** for it, because let's face it, that sounds better than Bible Study. We are also changing the time it meets to **9 – 10am**. All are welcome to join us as we build a better understanding of our holy scripture and acquire the knowhow needed to argue about every little detail with Mark and me.

I also have a new event for all of you which I am SUPER excited about. Working together with the United Methodist Church of Jericho and Good Shepard Lutheran Church, we are organizing an ecumenical **Faith on Tap**. This will be starting on **Friday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6pm** at the Jericho Tavern.

The point of doing a Faith on Tap is simple: meet up with other people of faith in a friendly environment.

On to youth – and YES, we will be doing paintball again this year, I had people asking me about that all summer, because it was really fun! Our youth group will continue meeting every other week. Currently, Erica and I are putting together a full calendar of this year's events, which should make it easier for all our parents to plan things out. We will be continuing with the fun events but we also plan to include more mission activities into the mix this year, so we will be keeping everyone busy. Also, the Christian Education Committee has asked if our youth would be willing to help out on Welcome Back Sunday we have a lot of activities planned and could use some energetic leaders!

So those are the goings on that are going on in the near future. I pray that this newsletter finds you all safe and well, I pray that your summers were full of blessings, and I pray that together this fall will be another blessing to add to the list.

Devon Lee Thomas: Bridge Associate Minister



## Laurie's Lens

Welcome Back Sunday is September 10<sup>th</sup> and I am looking forward to seeing you all as we come together at First Church to celebrate the beginning of our Fall Faith Formation program! As I write this we have having one of our hot and humid days of summer and I know you all are finds great ways to cool off and enjoy these last days before school starts. On this day will have fun games to play (ways for all us to connect again) and of course a great picnic sponsored by the Christian Education team (hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, watermelon). There will be a potluck dessert table, so please bring a finger friendly dessert to share. Pray for good weather so we can be out on the lawn after second service. After children's message, all the children and youth will be playing games and doing team building exercise to help us all reconnect. During the picnic, there will be more games out on the lawn as well as the Bouncy House.

Something that we are focusing on this year is striving to have the children and youth more visible in our worship, reminding us every Sunday how loved they here and how important it is to us that they are among us here at FCCEJ. The Cherubs & Joyful Noise will sing once a month, those who are 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and up will carry in the light of Christ as acolytes and this year we are planning for our youth to read scripture or present a dramatic reading one Sunday a month. This may be our 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>, Junior high, Senior high youth or a combination of.

New this year will be our volunteer greeters who will help greet parents and kids as they depart worship helping them on their way to their class/groups. This will be a big help to me as I lead the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade class, spending more time with this age group and helping to grown the program for this age group.

On Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup> the kids and youth will have their first class/group time. On special Sundays throughout the year we will also have our Multi-Age Activity days to help bring class/groups together and build our wider faith community of ages. Most Sundays the kids will start off with music time, led by Kim and Jessica, then move on to their classes/groups. On Communion Sundays, our Spiritual Friends (adults who are not leading class/group times) who will gather with the preschool up through 4<sup>th</sup> graders and build an even wider community across generations with story time and an activity before returning to worship to share in Holy Communion with their families. Also on these first Sundays, 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders will help greet and usher for our 10:15am worship.

We are building our team of faith formation volunteers (which includes two leaders for each class/group) and if you are feeling called to help with any of the above or be a second hand with a class/group or in our Nursery with Kathryn, our staff person, please be in touch. Faith Formation at church is where you gain your skills and keep connected to God...building your support system to help you celebrate the good times and give you foundation to help you through the tough times. We all want this for our kids, right?! So join me in making church a priority in your life and for your family. Come join the fun at FCCEJ and connect with God!

Blessing & Love, Laurie, Christian Education Director

### **Faith Formation Classes for 2016-17**

Preschool, Kindergarten, First & Second Grade, Third & Fourth Grade, Fifth & Sixth Grade  
Junior High (7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade), Senior High (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade)

**We are recruiting volunteers for all our programs. See more information in the Volunteer section.  
We'd love to hear from you! Contact Laurie**

---

---

## DEACON'S CORNER

---

---

### The "call" for Diaconate

I grew up in Bristol, Virginia with family and friends deeply rooted in religion. Life in the Bible belt fostered more than Sunday morning worship attendance. Sunday school preceded worship, and youth group followed worship later in the day and let's not forget Wednesday night supper. My father was a Deacon at the church and my mother taught Sunday school and sang in the choir. Every meal was offered up in prayer. God was an everyday presence in my home and community. Once I married and had children it was important to me to raise our children in faith and in church. We joined FCCEJ about 27 years ago. I did not attend church every Sunday, I taught some Sunday school, I ran a summer program for children one year, I pledge, I volunteer here and there. Much to my surprise I got "the call". The voice on the other end said I had been nominated for Diaconate. I was honored but surprised someone had noticed me. I am passionate about God, but rarely reveal that to others. Did I let my light shine somehow? I accepted, but I was not sure I was suitable to be responsible for the spiritual life of the church, preparing and administering the sacraments, planning special worship services, visiting members, recruiting new members, assisting in the orientation and reception of new members, AND filling in at the pulpit if required. I need much improvement of biblical knowledge and as a result feared I would not have the right answer if I were asked a question. What if I had to pray aloud? What if I came across as spiritually stupid? The past three years have been most rewarding. I have grown in my knowledge of the church. I have grown spiritually and yes I have had to pray aloud. When I took the call for Diaconate, I was excited to tell my mother. She is 91 and has dedicated her life to sharing about, and understanding, God. A member of Central Presbyterian Church for over 75 years. She responded to me saying, "I was never asked to be a Deacon". Bam, her comment revealed a broken link in her Christian life. Nobody ever knew she would have been honored, no one ever noticed her Christian devotion. We have four positions for Deacon available for next year. I don't want anyone to attend this church and feel unnoticed, not receive a call. We likely have many members that would love to serve our church as Deacon. Rally Day is coming in September, let us know if you would like to serve our church in this way. Give me a call, everyone is included, anyone can serve. Your love for God is all you need. Submitted by Anne Harris

---

---

## MUSIC

---

---

### Musical Offerings and Thank You's

A BIG thank you to each of the talented and dedicated musicians who volunteered to provide special music for summer Sundays. The Sanctuary Choir and Finally at First appreciate the support.

Here is the remainder of the summer schedule:

August 27 Mindy & Bill Bickford, September 3 Henry Wu

Enjoy the summer music! Marie Johnson, Interim Organist

---

---

## STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

---

---

Greetings from the Stewardship Committee! It is our sincere hope that everyone is enjoying their summer and getting refreshed for the upcoming program year!

This is a quick reminder about the upcoming special collection on Sunday **September 10th** for 'Seminary Sunday'. The money collected on this date helps to fund a scholarship at Andover-Newton Theological School. As you may have read, church attendance across the USA in general...and in Vermont in particular... is down. In a cascading effect, students entering seminary across the USA is down, narrowing the pool of applicants available to all UCC churches in search of leadership.

It is a sign of hope for the future that even as we currently search for a recent seminary graduate to serve us as an Associate Pastor, we try to contribute what we can to assist those future seminarians considering a calling to the church.

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

**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!

---

---

## CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

---

---



### Music Time During Faith Formation

*Music time will resume on September 17th*

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

*September 3<sup>th</sup>* ~ Summer Faith Formation *continues*

Self- led Activity Bin in Fellowship Hall available

Kids bring a parent to FH and watch the service while you spend time being creative.

*September 10<sup>th</sup>* ~Welcome Back Sunday Fun & Games ~ Fall Faith Formation Program Begins

Hot Dogs & Hamburgers Picnic by the CE Committee on the lawn after worship

Music by Finally @ First and a Dessert Potluck table

*September 17<sup>th</sup>* ~ Class time

*September 24<sup>th</sup>* ~ Class time

*October 1<sup>st</sup>* ~ First Sunday Spiritual Friends with Preschool – 4<sup>th</sup> grade

5<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade in worship as ushers & greeters

## Faith Formation Sunday School Offering 2017



*Humane Society of Chittenden County* relies completely on outside donations to stay open and help give pets a home in the weeks and months to come.

**Your 2017 Total is now up to \$735.59**

Remember to bring your Sunday School offering each week. Faith Formation Sunday School envelopes are in the pews and on the bench in the Narthex with our worship items. Please use them, especially during the summer months of June – August, so your offering is not confused with the regular church offering and will go towards our total mission giving to the Humane Society.

## Third Thursday Family Dish Share

*September 21<sup>st</sup> from 5:45-7pm*

Join us on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month for a great family dish share supper, fellowship and a chance to meet others here at First Church that you may not know and reconnect with old friends. Everyone at First Church is welcome! Bring a dish to share...anything really. Come be a part of this wonderful faith community and connect with God through Christian fellowship and a meal!



***All our First Church Youth Programs are Parent Supported!***

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

Youth Group bulletin boards can be found in the staff hallway.  
Sign up to volunteer your time and/or bring a meal.

Please walk by and sign up or be in touch with one of the staff. Thank you!  
All youth and volunteers need to have updated paper work on file each year.

Please be sure to mark your calendar for our upcoming events and Save the Dates!

### Youth Reminders

- Find ways to volunteer in the community or here at church – many things await you!
    - Help a neighbor or a friend
  - Bring your offering with you for 9am worship and put it in the ‘color me’ envelopes - support the Humane Society of Chittenden County
    - Find ways and places to connect with your God & have Spirit time
- Welcome Back Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup>** ~ 10:15am worship with fun activities for all! Help lead lawn games with the younger children after worship during the picnic on the lawn

**Junior & Senior High Youth Group Call Out BBQ, Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup> ~ 5pm**

### Junior Youth @ FCCEJ

*Our 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> graders meet ONCE a month from 11:30-1:30pm*  
*Mission Focus ~ Meal ~ Fellowship/Games*  
*Mark your calendars!*



**September 17<sup>th</sup> ~ 11:30am – 12:15pm ~ JYG Call Out**

Parents meet in the Youth Lounge on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> graders gather in youth room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
**October 1<sup>st</sup> ~ Junior Youth Group ~ 11:30-1:30pm**

---

---

## SAVE THE DATES

---

---

**September 10<sup>th</sup> ~ Welcome Back Sunday** ~ back to two worship services ~ Fun for all!

**September 17<sup>th</sup> ~ Junior Youth (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> graders & Parents) Call Out**  
**JH & SH Youth Kick Off BBQ (@ Rev Marks, 5pm)**

**September 21<sup>st</sup> ~ Third Thursday Dish Share** (potluck) ~ 5:45-7pm ~ Fun for all!  
Bring a dish to share and we'll have the rest!

**September 24<sup>th</sup> ~ Confirmation Call Out**

**October 8<sup>th</sup> ~ Blessing of the Animals**

**October 19<sup>th</sup> ~ Third Thursday Dish Share** (potluck) ~ 5:45-7pm

## **Friday, October 20<sup>th</sup> ~ 150<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary Celebration Dinner**

@ the Champlain Valley Fairgrounds

5:30 p.m. Social Hour, 6:30 p.m. Dinner, 7:30 p.m. Program

Cost: \$45 per person – this includes building rental, set up and take down, and meal ~ hand-carved baked ham, stuffed chicken breast, roasted red potatoes, fresh-steamed green beans, tossed salad, rolls & butter, celebratory cake, coffee & tea. In addition, there will be a cash bar. Church members will have no responsibilities other than to come and enjoy themselves.

Tickets can be purchased on Sundays after Labor Day following both services. Or, you can mail a check, payable to FCCEJ with the notation “150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration” in the memo line, to First Congo Church of Essex Junction, Attn: 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, 1 Church Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452. Tickets purchased by mail will be held for pick up on the night of the event. Anyone purchasing by mail who wants their ticket(s) ahead of the event, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your check. **Deadline for purchase of tickets: Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>**

## **October 29<sup>th</sup> ~ Bible Sunday**

---

---

# FELLOWSHIP & LEARNING

---

---



### **Essex Eats Out Community Dinners Continue...**

1<sup>st</sup> Friday of Every Month ~ September 1<sup>st</sup>

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

### **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. Please join us with your lunch. **Thursday, September 7:** Please join us for an Ask the Pastor program at noon in Marvin Lounge. Pastor Mark will join us for questions and conversation. We hope to see you there with your lunch and lots of questions.

### **Coffee Clatter @ Martone's**



Every Friday at 8:05 a.m., Rev Mark 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. 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. This month the date is **Friday, September 15<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 Rev. Mark's delicious jam...yum.



## Yoga @ First is BACK next week with TWO CLASSES!



Jonah is back from his summer adventures and Monday class will start again on August 28th PLUS he is adding a Thursday class starting on August 31st. Both classes will meet in the gym from 5:30-6:45. All levels from beginner to experienced are absolutely welcome. You can bring your own mat or borrow one of Jonah's. Classes are free but donations are gratefully accepted for FCCEJ. Welcome Back Jonah!

## 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, September 16:** Please join us to share your summer adventures and family fun. Bring a picture or two!

## Noontime Book Group

The Noontime Book Group meets on the third Thursday of every month in the Marvin Lounge to discuss interesting and thought provoking books that we have chosen to read. Our discussions are lively, and full of ideas and the fellowship of good friends is a blessing indeed. We've read a wide variety of books and love to explore many genres. We welcome anyone who loves to read. Even if you haven't had time to read the book we've chosen for a particular month, you are always welcome and will probably enjoy the discussion. Friends are always welcome too.



Please plan to join us on **Thursday September 21** at noon in the Marvin Lounge where we will discuss a collection of short stories by Francesca Marciano called "**The Other Language**". The New York Times described the stories in this book as "smart, funny, elegant and poignant by turns, that explore the power of change -- in relationships, geographies and across cultures-- to reveal unexpected aspects of ourselves". Bring a brown bag lunch and join us for good friends, intelligent conversation and a relaxing hour or so.

## Third Thursday Family Dish Share

*September 21<sup>st</sup> from 5:45-7pm*



Join us on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month for a great family dish share supper, fellowship and a chance to meet others here at First Church that you may not know and reconnect with old friends. Everyone as First Church is welcome! Bring a dish to share...anything really. Come be a part of this wonderful faith community and connect with God through Christian fellowship and a meal!

## Faith On Tap

**On Friday 9/22 6pm at the Jericho Tavern** FCCEJ will be participating in our first ever inter-church Faith On Tap with United Methodist Church of Jericho, Essex Methodist Church and Good Shepard Lutheran Church and you are all invited to join us!!! This is an opportunity to get to know other people of faith from two different religious traditions in a safe and friendly environment where together we can practice the time honored Christian tradition of getting together over a beer, or a non-alcoholic beverage, depending on your taste. Help us build bridges and more importantly build friendships as these four congregations meet together on a Friday night. This event will be bi-weekly so if you cannot make it the first night know there will be others. Hope to see you there!!

## 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, **September 25<sup>th</sup>** 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

The Wednesday Night Searchers will meet to plan for the year on **Wednesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>**. As we do every year, everyone is welcome to come and bring a book or an idea about what we should be exploring as we seek to deepen our faith and widen our minds to better understand the many facets of the Divine. Everyone gets one vote, so come and be a part of this great group of spiritual searchers.



---

# MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

---

## Successful Jamaica Mission Trip!

In July, the FCCEJ Intergenerational Jamaica Mission team traveled to Morant Bay in St. Thomas, Jamaica. We partnered with White Horses Primary School Staff, local community members and parents, the Morant Bay Rotary Club, a Peace Corps volunteer and the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) in Jamaica to successfully build a 30,000 square foot vegetable garden! This included installing 800 feet of chain link fence, an irrigation system, and planting 1250 seedlings. This garden will help to feed roughly 400 students as well as raise money for the school. In addition, we were able to support the school with school supplies and scholarships to cover the cost of books or uniforms so that six children can attend school in the fall. We also delivered medical supplies to the local clinic.

This project would not have been possible without the generous and enthusiastic support of our FCCEJ congregation, our FCCEJ Mission Committee, the Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop, our Stockholders, Calcutta patrons, and the Essex Rotary Club. Thank-you so much for your support!!

We look forward to telling you more about the trip and sharing photos in the coming months! Here are a few thoughts from the team:



“One of the aspects of this trip that I particularly enjoyed was the partnership that we formed with the Jamaicans who have a vested interest in this garden project. Without their knowledge and help, we never would have been able to accomplish the fencing and planting.

Working as a team on this collaborative project that will make a difference in the lives of so many children was very rewarding.”

“An exciting and memorable adventure! Great people, great work done and beautiful memories made”.

-I Love

### **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 September 27th**. 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!



---

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

---



### Heavenly Food Pantry Needs Donations

We are in need of regular size jars of jelly and/or jam, boxes of cereal and containers of fruit juice to restock our Food Pantry shelves.

The September Food Pantries will be on Monday evening, **September 11<sup>th</sup>**, 5:30-7:30 and Thursday afternoon, **September 28<sup>th</sup>**, 2-6pm.

We are all set for EGG CARTONS so please hold onto them for now.

### Volunteer for 2017-18 Faith Formation Programs

*Many ways to support First Church children and youth...Contact Laurie!*

Can you say YES to these statements?

- I have been attending FCCEJ for at least 6 months
- I would like FCCEJ children and youth to continue to grow in their Faith
- I have a willingness to learn and help them, knowing I don't need to have all the answers
- FCCEJ Faith Formation programs are a vital part of our ministry
- I will support this ministry with my time and talents

Thank you for saying YES! Where would you like to be involved? Contact Laurie to sign up!

- 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.

### **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**

Are you in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade or older?

NEW schedule was just put up! It NEEDS your name on it!



We would love to have you participate in worship and bring the light of Christ into the Sanctuary, light the candles on the altar and then at the end of worship carry the light out ...reminding us that God is with us wherever we are. It's fun to acolyte with another person, so find a friend and sign up on the board downstairs in the hallway and participate in worship.

### **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. Stop by 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 staff person, Kathryn Locke, will welcome your little ones on Sunday mornings to our Nursery. All parents are asked to sign their child(ren) in and out of the Nursery. Parents and Volunteers are welcome to sign up on the Nursery Schedule on the table outside the door 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.

---

---

## OUR CHURCH FAMILY

---

---

### September's Special Offering is September 10<sup>th</sup> for Seminary Sunday

#### 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations ~ NOTE New Dates

The 150th anniversary year-end celebration has changed from what was originally announced. We have been hearing from many members that they wanted to attend the dinner celebration – too many for the Garden Barn at the Lang Farm to hold. So, our year-end celebration has expanded to two events – John Dorhauer, President of the United Church of Christ, will still be here to preach on Sunday, Nov. 5 with receptions after each service. And, our dinner celebration has been moved to the Champlain Valley Fair on Friday, October 20. They have room to accommodate all who wish to attend. See the article above in the 'Save The Date' section to read about tickets and specifics for that night.

Celebrating  
**150**  
YEARS



#### Stock Donated

If you have recently donated stock to the church, please contact Pat Seaver, Financial Secretary at [vtri2@aol.com](mailto:vtri2@aol.com) or 879-4445

#### September Birthdays

**1<sup>st</sup>** Dave Eaton, Katie Milne; **2<sup>nd</sup>** Kevin Guild; **3<sup>rd</sup>** Melody Frank, Marion Schneider, Allen Timmons, Eric Watt; **4<sup>th</sup>** Tom Dettre, Gary Galbraith, Elaine Raymond; **6<sup>th</sup>** Ethan Koch, Graham Sicalowski; **7<sup>th</sup>** David Antone, Ken Hopper, Marie Watt; **8<sup>th</sup>** Phil Bourn, Austin Harris, Dillan Leach; **9<sup>th</sup>** Riley Williams; **10<sup>th</sup>** Andrea Sharp; **11<sup>th</sup>** Nicholas Mendes; **12<sup>th</sup>** Mindy Bero, Kevin Hamilton, Sean Timmons; **13<sup>th</sup>** Judy Roy; **14<sup>th</sup>** Josephine Abakah, Sophie Bashaw, Ann Gray; **15<sup>th</sup>** Bill Bickford Jr.; **17<sup>th</sup>** Aimee Koch, Bob Vincent; **19<sup>th</sup>** Ian Brennan, Julie Leach; **20<sup>th</sup>** Maureen Evans, Charles McGeary; **21<sup>st</sup>** Erica Garvey, Mary Beth Richards; **22<sup>nd</sup>** Olivia Dusharm, Helen O'Neil; **23<sup>rd</sup>** Muriel Nutting, Tristan Stein; **24<sup>th</sup>** Hazel Billheimer, Merrill Cate, Jeremy Pinders, James Rushford; **25<sup>th</sup>** Bruce Parker; **26<sup>th</sup>** Julie Edwards, Alma Wilson; **27<sup>th</sup>** Kathy Galbraith; **28<sup>th</sup>** Nancy Hall; **29<sup>th</sup>** Heather Stein; **30<sup>th</sup>** Jenny Bourn, Keadyn Gackenheimer

## New Homes

Doris Farnsworth (25 Shore Road, Milton VT 05468) and Marge Shepard (250 Manley Road, Milton VT 05468) have both recently moved out of Essex and into more appropriate living arrangements and they would LOVE to hear from their friends here at First Church. If you have a free minute to send them a note, please note the new addresses above!



## Thank You's

Dear Church Family, Thank you so much for my beautiful yellow rose. It is such a nice birthday gift, and it is really appreciated! My best to all. Fondly, Louise Kolvoord



To First Church ~ What a nice surprise on Saturday morning ~ a beautiful yellow rose arrived at our door! Hard not to believe another year has rolled by, but the lovely rose sure reminded me. Thank you all so much ~ Marilyn Vincent

Dear Church Family: Another year – another yellow rose! I also want to thank all the “Sneaky Petes” for making my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday so special. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you! Norma Edwards

Dear Church Family: I thank my church family for the beautiful yellow rose delivered to me on my 91<sup>st</sup> birthday! Sincerely, Jackie Knapp

Dear First Church Family, Thank you so much for my lovely yellow rose. Gestures like this brightened my day! Sylvia Nyhagen

## Vermont Outdoor Ministry

Many thanks for supporting kids attending camp this summer and keeping OM in VT alive and well. There are still activities on the Horton Center website in NH, if you would like to get involved. [www.hortoncenter.org](http://www.hortoncenter.org)



Blessings and watch for the Outdoor Ministry bulletin boards at church!

Interested in what all happened at Rock Point week ...ask Erik Frivoll! He had a great time!



## **Vacation Bible Camp 2017 ~ Hero Central: Discover Your Strength in God!**

Many thanks to all our volunteers! Station Leaders, helpers, group leaders, youth, campers and to all of you who donated items or gave a donation.

We had a wonderful week and campers and volunteers are still talking about it!

See the group on Welcome Back Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, when they share a song from our camp week.



**First Congregational Church of EJ**  
**1 CHURCH STREET**  
**ESSEX JCT, VT 05452**  
**Phone: 802-878-5745**  
**Fax: 802-872-8236**  
**Email: [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org)**  
**[www.fccej.org](http://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](mailto:welcome@fccej.org) , OR
- Phone us at 802-878-5745, OR
- Mail this page back to us at the address above

**Inside...**  
**Pastoral Ponderings**  
**Special Sundays & Offerings for September**  
**Associate Minister Thoughts**  
**Laurie’s Lens**  
**Deacon’s Corner**  
**Music**

**Stewardship Moment**  
**Children, Youth & Families**  
**Save The Dates**  
**Fellowship & Learning**  
**Mission Opportunities**  
**Volunteer Opportunities**  
**Our Church Family**