

The Spirit at First October 2017



Your Pastor Ponders.....

A recent article from the Washington Post by Michael Frost should help deepen our faith and help to understand the religious foment that hangs like a millstone around the neck of modern Christianity. He speaks about two religious men from the NFL who express their religious ideas differently, with each exhibiting long standing and orthodox ways of understanding our faith. The two players are Colin Kaepernick and Tim Tebow. In the article he says

It seems to me that Tim Tebow and Colin Kaepernick represent the two very different forms that American Christianity has come to. And not just in the United States. In many parts of the world it feels as though the church is separating into two versions, one that values personal piety, gentleness, respect for cultural mores, and an emphasis on moral issues like abortion and homosexuality, and another that values social justice, community development, racial reconciliation, and political activism.

One version is kneeling in private prayer. The other is kneeling in public protest.

One is concerned with private sins like abortion.

The other is concerned with public sins like racial discrimination.

One preaches a gospel of personal salvation.

The other preaches a gospel of political and social transformation.

If you experience religion at family functions like I do or conversations with friends, then this divide will seem obvious; some see it in terms of liberal and conservative or evangelical and progressive. But all of us have seen the divide personally in our families, churches, denominations and the wider world. One could even apply this division in geopolitical terms in the divide between fundamentalists and modernist viewpoints. It is a cancer that promotes destructive division where Christ seeks reconciling unity.

Much of the theological work we have studied over the last five years has been a part of a shift away from this thinking. Wise church leaders and theologians of late have been stressing praxis over doctrine, working together to love our neighbor over being right.

Frost in his article rightly speaks that a healthy faith involves both personal piety AND social justice, a healthy relationship with Jesus AND with our fellow human beings. We pray for guidance in how to live our lives. When we are right with God, then acts of mercy and love toward our fellow creatures flow naturally. A healthy faith is not one or the other but both and.... my theology professor, Gabe Fackre, stressed that our faith needs to live into all four marks of the early church: communal worship, study, fellowship and outreach. Our personal lives and our church should embody all four components of the faith in order to fulfill Christ's demands upon our time, talent and treasure.

As we enter into a divided world and church, may Frost's article and these two faithful NFL Christians lead us into a deeper understanding of the faith. I encourage you to read the full article from September 24th by Michael Frost entitled, "Colin Kaepernick vs. Tim Tebow: A Tale of Two Christians on their knees.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/09/24/colin-kaepernick-vs-tim-tebow-a-tale-of-two-christianities-on-its-knees/?utm_term=.84e8097c53ba

God's blessings and Guidance be with you all. As always, I am yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark

SPECIAL SUNDAYS & OFFERINGS

Communion on October 1st ~ 1st: Pass Elements Out; 2nd: Come Up for Elements

500 Years ago on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted his 95 thesis and started the Protestant Reformation. This October, we will celebrate the gifts and history of this momentous event and see how it still shapes our lives and church today.

October 1st ~ Erin Reardon Preaching

We are blessed to have Erin Reardon preaching with us on October 1st. Erin, the daughter of Suzanne and Tom Reardon, grew up in our church and is in the process of being ordained. Erin is now doing ministry in Massachusetts. Come and see how well one of our own has grown into the ministry and continue to support her as her journey in Christ continues.

October 8th ~ Peace Sunday & Blessing of the Animals

We continue our SPECIAL SECOND SUNDAY series this year with a PEACE SUNDAY. These services will emphasize peace and look for ways to bring peace into our lives both personally and in the wider world. We will welcome The Vineyard Nepali Church that meets in our sanctuary every Saturday and end at the Peace Pole with prayers for a more peaceful world. After each service, we will also BLESS the ANIMALS, symbolizing the proposition that peace is for the entire planet and all creatures.

October 22nd ~ Celebration Sunday

When Martin Luther posted his 95 thesis, he did not make a lot of friends. The mother church did not appreciate the division he planted within the church and over the course of time, churches that broke away from the Roman Catholic Church no longer received its financial blessings. There was no money available when emergencies arrived or when famine struck an area. Each breakaway church had to fend for themselves and support their own clergy, outreach programs and church building. Today, as a totally autonomous entity, the only funds we have to support our building, staff and outreach ministry comes from our members. On October 22, 2017, we will be celebrating this independence and responsibility by bringing our yearly gift estimates [pledges] up to the altar with enthusiasm of spirit, optimism for our church's future and pride of all our community does to make this corner of God's kingdom a little better.

October 29th ~ Reformation/Bible Sunday

One of the great outcomes of the movement of the spirit in the Protestant Reformation is Luther's, "*Sola Scriptura*" belief or the primary authority of scripture when interpreting the faith for the people. Protestants go to the bible when issues of life come up. We do not seek traditions to give us the answer. In Sunday School, we do not teach doctrines and traditions, but bible stories. We do this so that each person can work out their own salvation. The minister does not grant it or even get in the way of one's relationship to God. On October 29 we will embody this philosophy of faith by giving away bible to all third graders and anyone else older who does not have one. Come and see this ancient rite of the church!

ASSOCIATE MINISTER THOUGHTS

Summer is OVER!! And what a summer it was, such a wonderful summer that it does not seem to want to end . . . But even if that is the case, it is time for the church to enter into its fall schedule. We welcomed you back with our Welcome Back Sunday, and you are all most welcome here. And we called out our youth with our Call Out Party, and what a party that was. I was so pleased to see youth, who are both returning friends and new friends, gathered all together by Mark's fire pit. The bugs were not too nasty and the s'mores were delicious!

So, what have I been up to and where are we going? On the pastoral side, last month we restarted our At Table Bible Fellowship. We had a rousing discussion on the challenges of forgiveness and living into God's vision for humanity – It was a deep conversation and know that the WHOLE congregation is welcome to attend. At Table meets at 9:30 am every other Thursday. From the time of this letter, the next time we meet will be October 5th.

Last month we also had our FIRST EVER Faith on Tap at the Jericho Café and Tavern. Again, as of the time that this letter, we have not actually had it yet and so, I predict it will be AMAZING! But both of these programs are programs that have been introduced to the church with the hope of giving you all a different and interesting way of engaging your faiths. With At Table I hope to share the history and background of the texts we read on Sunday, so that you all do not need to take Mark and my word that what we say on Sunday is what GOD says you should do.

Faith on Tap, along a different vein, is an opportunity to expand our bonds of Christian fellowship beyond the confines of our community here in Essex. It is unique in that it is an interdenominational event where we and members from the Essex Center Methodist Church, the United Methodist Church of Jericho and Good Shepard Lutheran Church meet at the tavern, have a drink and some food and . . . talk . . . It is a very casual thing in a very casual environment, and again, you are all welcome to attend, our next one will be on Friday, October 6th @ 6pm.

We have an active year planned for our youth. We have a full year of events planned for Youth Group, but this year we also plan to mix what we do in Youth Group with Faith Formation. Many of our youth have now been through Confirmation, or will be attending Confirmation this year, which means we now have some young new members who have a lot of power to contribute to and change the way in which we do things here at FCCEJ. To that end, Erica and I would like to ask all of our youth for HELP! We have a lot of things that you can do as members of the church. Sr. High youth can help with children's Faith Formation, and all youth can help the deacons and the ministers in planning service or leading service; and if they want to, they could even . . . dare I say it? . . . Give a sermon! But there are a lot of activities that go on during a Sunday, and we would like to use Faith Formation as a means to encourage our young members to be a part of the church. If you are interested in this, you can hit up either me or Erica for this year's full Faith Formation Calendar, as well as this year's full Youth Group Calendar.

May God bless you all and keep you well over the month of October!

Devon Lee Thomas: Bridge Associate Minister



Laurie's Lens

I was handed a book called 'Their Name is Today' by Johann Christoph Arnold from the leaders at CPEC here across from my office. It speaks to all of us who care deeply about nurturing the next generation and want them to be happy, healthy and whole... whether a parent, educator, etc. This book confirmed for me our areas of Faith Formation here at First Church and how we've transitioned our programs and organized them. As church life continues to change and grow to the future the CE committees and I have organized our faith formation time to be one that continues to move with the times. Its organization of time is one that allows our kids to be kids and gives them time to play and get to know one another. Time to be without electronics...time to engage with others in dialog and continue to learn how to interact. Some churches are using video segments in their classes and I have continued to encourage us to stay away from them in our younger classes and instead build our time around community and time spent with each other as Jesus did. Our own curriculum for preschool and kindergarteners, that is being written in house with some wonderful volunteer hands, engages them with play time and Godly Play dough time that allows them to continue the dialog about the story they are learning about. We are even carrying this forward to our older kids and using Legos to rebuild the story and encourage dialog and conversations about what we are learning to continue. Kids are being given the time, what little we have each Sunday, to put the story in their own words and grow in the understanding of it and how they can apply it to today.

Intergenerational connections is an area I am hoping we continue to improve upon. Our First Sundays when all are in worship will help us live into this more as will 3rd Thursday potluck suppers and all other events that bring us all together and allow for fellowship to grow and us all to get to know each other. The bigger the church the more opportunities are needed for attendees to be engaged and get connected. Small churches tend to do this part of ministry well. Since last month's newsletter the staff and the deacons have worked some on this.

First Sundays ~ our children and youth will have opportunity to help lead worship, do readings, help usher, etc. Our Spiritual Friends will still happen but just with our preschool and kindergarteners. *Senior Youth* ~ are being encouraged to help in our younger classes, shadow a deacon and live into participating in the life of the church. *Mission Sundays* ~ will be on the calendar once a month and engage the children and youth in a hands-on project of mission during Faith Formation time.

As I write this I am a week away from attending a Faith Formation Symposium in CT for three days. We will be talking about families, generations, relationships, changes taking place in the world of education, just to mention a few. I'm really looking forward to hearing John Roberto speak again (He was our key-note speaker a few years ago at our New England Assoc. of United Church Educators). I'm sure I will come back with more ideas for us to try and implement.

Blessed & grateful to be in ministry with you all! Laurie, Christian Education Director

Faith Formation Leaders for 2017-18

Preschool – Jenny Bourn, Trista Acebo *Kindergarten* - Sue Conti

First & Second Grade – Cathy Lapierre (til Nov), Alison VanSteensburg

Third & Fourth Grade – Erna Deutsch, Lisa Clark *Fifth & Sixth Grade* – Laurie Chipman

Junior & Senior High (7th - 12th grade) – Erica Garvey, Devon Thomas

We would love to add a few more names to our list. If you have interest in helping lead a class, please be in touch with Laurie, Pastor Mark or a member of the CE team.

DEACON'S CORNER

Welcoming cooler days, somewhat chilly evenings, crisp apples, falling leaves and the always changing colors on the mountains; we have returned to two services on Sundays, a bit more traditional in style at 8:30 am, while more contemporary in style at 10:15 am.

In response to Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma, our church will be providing a group check to the national UCC in support of hurricane relief. If you would like to participate please make your check out to FCCEJ and write hurricane relief on the memo lane. We have received two matching gifts! The missions committee has graciously agreed to match the first \$500 of donations while an anonymous donor has kindly agreed to match the next \$500. Thanks to all who participate.

On Sunday, October 8, 2017 we will celebrate Peace Sunday. It is an occasion for each of us as individuals and as members of our faith community to center ourselves and reflect on all that is good! To look at ourselves and identify what we can do to make a difference in the turbulent world around us. It is an opportunity to reclaim a sense of peace with in ourselves, our congregation and our world. In turn, shining our light and reflecting it upon others.

In peace,

Betsy Weischedel

MUSIC

The Choir is Back!

Welcome back to the sopranos, altos, tenors and basses of the Sanctuary Choir! They won't always be singing in the choir loft so look for them in various places. Have you noticed our newest soprano? Welcome to Ellen Polanshek. New song birds are always welcome so bring yourself and your voice to a rehearsal any Thursday night at 7pm. We'll supply the music and you will go home humming the tunes!

Marie Johnson, Interim Organist

Currier Hand Bell Choir Needs YOU!!

We are so blessed to have a magnificent multi-octave hand bell set here at FCCEJ. However, they can't ring themselves. Think of ringing hand bells as a team sport. We all work together to make beautiful music. No one person is more important than another (except for our wonderful Director, Carolyn Harris. Can't play without her!). You don't need to have a music background at all. Just a sense of rhythm.

We rehearse on Wednesday nights at 6:30. Please feel free to drop by to try it out or watch a rehearsal.

We'll give you an easy bell to start. 😊

Our first practice of the season was Wednesday, September 20, 6:30 PM and you can join at any time!

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT



While the temperatures (at least this week!) don't feel like fall, your Stewardship Committee has been busy preparing for our fall Stewardship Campaign! We look forward to talking with you in October about making a pledge to support the work of our Church. Your contribution is an expression of your deep commitment to the Church, and we hope you will respond in as generous a way as possible to honor that commitment and to celebrate our Church's 150th Anniversary!

Our Church budget is prepared with great care, but it is not about dollars. It's about ministry and mission, people and program, and all that we are able to do with your support..

If you have never pledged before, we hope you will consider pledging this year. You can pledge any amount you feel you can give, and if your financial situation changes during 2018, you can always alter the amount of your pledge. **The amount of your financial contribution to the Church is confidential** -- the only person who knows the amount that people pledge and contribute is the Church's Financial Secretary, Pat Seaver. And she honors that confidentiality!

You should have already received a notice about the campaign either via email or letter. We will be distributing the pledge letters to those attending the Sunday, October 1st & 8th services. If you are unable to attend, we will mail them to you.

We hope you will join with other congregation members and bring your completed pledge card to Church on Sunday, October 22 for Stewardship Sunday. If you will not be at Church that day, you can also mail in your pledge card, drop it off at the Church or email Pat Seaver at vttri2@aol.com. Even if you are unable to pledge, please note that on the pledge form and return it to the Church. Your Stewardship Committee will be calling those who don't return their pledge form after October 22. Did you misplace or want another pledge card? You can find it on our website at <http://www.fccej.org/v5/2018-stewardship-drive-pledge-card/>

Thank you for the many ways you support our Church and its mission, and know that it can make a real difference in the world in God's name.

Your Stewardship Committee

Please note this list of the 'Special Offerings' for those who do not have envelopes as a reminder:
Oct 1, Neighbors in Need; **Nov 19**, Food Pantry; **Dec 17**, Christmas Fund

Coming up.....

Hannaford Gift Card Sales – 1st and 3rd 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 1st and 3rd Sundays. If interested, contact Kathy Finnie at 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 – 6th Grade

October 1st ~ Intergenerational Worship ~ children & youth participating in worship
Preschool & Kindergarteners have time with Spiritual Friends and return for Communion

October 8th ~ Music & Class time (Senior High youth helpers)

October 15th ~ Music & Class time

October 22nd ~ Mission Sunday ~ all ages together working on a project

October 29th ~ Bible Sunday ~ Music & Class time



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 \$781.67

\$1 a week can go a LONG way!

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 so your offering is not confused with the regular church offering and it will go towards our giving to the Humane Society.

Third Thursday Family Dish Share

October 21st from 5:45-7pm

Join us on the 3rd 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 is welcome! Bring a dish to share...anything really. Need to arrive a little late? Not a problem! Come be a part of this wonderful faith community and connect with God through Christian fellowship and a meal!





***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

Help a neighbor or a friend

Bring your offering with you to worship and put it in the youth envelopes -
support the Humane Society of Chittenden County

Find ways and places to connect with your God & have Spirit time

Junior Youth @ FCCEJ

Our 5th & 6th graders meet ONCE a month from 11:30-1:30pm

Mission Focus ~ Meal ~ Fellowship/Games

Mark your calendars!

October 1st ~ Group Building Games ~ Food ~ Mission Activity

November 5th ~ next Junior Youth



Jr and Sr High Youth Group October

October 1st ~ Multi-Age Hike Day: Meet at base of Mt. Philo at 12:30pm or church at 12pm, pack a lunch or snack to eat together at the top. All ages welcome and dogs too!

October 21st ~ Emmons Island Haunted Trail: Meet at church at 5:45pm Bring \$10 or 7 canned goods.

October 29th ~ Halloween Party and Luncheon: immediately after second service. Costumes strongly encouraged, but not required. Set up will happen during Faith Formation time. Anyone who can come in earlier to help set up that morning would also be appreciated.

October 5th ~ Confirmation

Confirmation begins in earnest on Thursday October 5th. We will meet most Thursdays throughout the year from 7:30-9pm in the Marvin Lounge to learn about the faith and explore what our own personal value systems are all about. Everyone is welcome, whether you attended the Sept 24th event or not.

FIVE CORNERS CHRISTMAS CRAFT FEST



Another exciting year for our holiday event, as Holy Family, St. James Episcopal, Essex Junction Senior Center and First Congregational Church will celebrate the season together Saturday, November 11th from 9am-3pm!

Each organization will again give a punch card to the first 150 visitors at their location. Cards that have been punched by all four locations will be entered into a drawing for one of four AMAZING Gift Baskets!

The Craft Fest Committee has many opportunities for members of our church to get involved with this event. Starting on **October 15th until November 6th**, the committee will have sign up sheets after services for making donations or signing up to volunteer.

Last year we raised almost \$10,000 for FCCEJ, let's try to surpass that goal for 2017!

Sweet Shoppe and Bakery - This year we are looking for unique items such as gluten free options, donuts, whoopie pies, peanut brittle, homemade candy, gingerbread, chocolate covered pretzels, small cakes, maple fudge, sugar cookies and pies. Please package your items in small quantities ready to sell, labeled with nut and/or gluten ingredients. Drop off Fri 11/10 or Sat morning in the Nursery.

Nearly New – When you are cleaning out your basement, closet, under your bed, bureau drawers, kitchen cupboards please think of us! We are accepting items in Marvin Lounge **NOW**. *Suggestions include books, linens, kitchen items, frames, toys, craft items, decorations, pillows, pictures, etc. New this year, we will be having a separate room for jewelry, purses and accessories.*

Silent Auction: We are looking for such items as: hosting a dinner, a day of golf, homemade pies, stay at a summer cottage, hand-made wall hanging, professional photograph, theatre tickets or sporting event tickets. All donations are tax-deductible and we're happy to mention the name of the donor if they choose. All items can be dropped off in the Office. Contact Phyllis Willey 878-1693 willeykrewe@gmail.com

Heavenly Spirit Café: We will again be serving a delicious lunch of homemade soups, macaroni and cheese, and Chili. Don't worry Chicken and Biscuits will be served. We will again be asking for food and drink donations. **Don't Forget: you can order take out for Dinner. Drop off Fri, 11/10 until 6pm.**

Craft Tables: Right now we have just **TWO** spots available. If you are interested, please contact Ann Gray at 878-4088. The cost for church members is \$20. **All crafters will be set up in Fellowship Hall and will receive a \$5 voucher for lunch.**

Note to our crafters: we have Save the Date Cards that can be given out at other shows. Pick them up at our sign up table.

Greeters: We especially need volunteers to help all our wonderful shoppers navigate our church. Please consider signing up for a 2 hour shift. Greeters will have the opportunity to purchase their own Church Apron at a discount this year.

Decorating: Need decorators of any age to help in the Marvin Lounge, Hallways and Fellowship Hall **We will be decorating Sun. Nov 5th, 12-2pm and all afternoon Fri. Nov 10th.** Consider making some green and red chain garland to hang throughout the church.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact
Linda Bogardus at 872-8972 lbogardus@myfairpoint.net.

Thank you to everyone for your support from Linda Bogardus, Ann Gray, Cathie Goodheart, Cathy Shearer, Diana Higgins, Elaine Raymond, Mary Gratton, Phyllis Willey and Val Gabert.

SAVE THE DATES

Friday, October 20th ~ 150th Anniversary Celebration Dinner

@ the Champlain Valley Fairgrounds 5:30 p.m. Social Hour, 6:30 p.m. Dinner, 7:30 p.m. Program \$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, cake, coffee & tea. There will be a cash bar. **Tickets can be purchased until Fri, Oct 13th** after services or you can mail a check, payable to FCCEJ with the notation “150th Tickets” in the memo line, to FCCEJ, Attn: 150th Anniversary Committee, 1 Church Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452. Tickets purchased by mail will be held for pick up unless you enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

October 29th ~ Bible Sunday

3rd grade and up will receive a Bible of their own during worship on this Sunday. Please be in touch with Laurie or Pastor Mark if you don't have your own Bible.



November 5th ~ Celebrating our 150th Year ~ United Church of Christ President

It is a great honor to welcome the Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer to our worship service on November 5th. Rev. Dorhauer is the president of our denomination and travels throughout the world representing the United Church of Christ and supporting the many ministries that make up our wider church. He is coming to Vermont just to celebrate our 150th Anniversary and will be preaching & helping to officiate at communion at both services on Nov. 5th. Be sure to come and pack our church as we welcome him and also come to hear John's word of hope and challenge as together we seek to follow Christ in this oft times crazy world. This would be a great day to invite someone whom you haven't seen in a while!

November 19th ~ Third *Sunday* Dish Share & Advent Event/Decorating

11:30 to 1pm ~ Fun for all! Bring a dish to share and we'll have the rest! Due to Food Pantry on the 3rd Thursday this month, we are combining the 3rd Thursday Potluck and the Advent Event. So join us on the 3rd Sunday in November! We go back to the 3rd Thursday in December.



November 26th ~ Christmas Pageant Rehearsals

Rehearsals will start in the evenings for Jr & Sr High youth. More to come in the November newsletter.

FELLOWSHIP & LEARNING



Essex Eats Out Community Dinners Continue...

1st Friday of Every Month ~ October 6th

Come - Help – Eat 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. **Please join us at noon on October 5 in Marvin Lounge:** Max Levy will share his experience as part of a Red Cross team that was helping hurricane victims in Houston. He will share photos and give us a picture of the continuing struggles with recovery.

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!

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 3rd Friday from 1:30 – 4:00. This month the date is **Friday, October 20th**. 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 with TWO CLASSES!



Jonah is back from his summer adventures and classes have started up again on Monday PLUS he has added a Thursday class as well. 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. **Please join us at 9:30 on Saturday, October 21 in Marvin Lounge :** Reverend Sally May will return to FCCEJ to share her journey of faith and her path to ministry.

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.

We will meet on October 19th at noon in the Marvin Lounge. This month we are reading "The Water is Wide: a Memoir" by Pat Conroy. For years a few families have lived proudly from the sea on a little island on the South Carolina coast. Now waste from industry threatens their very existence, forcing them to find a new way of life or perish. They will learn nothing without someone to teach them, and their school has no teacher. This is Pat Conroy's extraordinary drama based on his own experience when he spent a year of his life on the island and the story of the new life it gave him. Join us as we discuss this story and share ideas, friendship and lunch!

Third Thursday Family Dish Share

October 19th from 5:45-7pm



Join us on the 3rd 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 is welcome! Bring a dish to share...anything really. Need to arrive a little late? Not a problem! Come be a part of this wonderful faith community and connect with God through Christian fellowship and a meal!



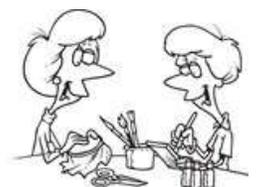
Faith On Tap

On Fridays, Oct. 6th and 20th, 6 pm at the Jericho Tavern FCCEJ will be continuing our 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 one, come the next time!

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, **October 23rd** 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

We are back to our regular time of 7-9pm. Join us as we embark on our first book, the 2017 Vermont Reads, “Brown Girl Dreaming” by Jacqueline Woodson. We will read the book and then Ms Woodson will be speaking at Burlington High School on October 23rd 6-8 pm and we will attend that presentation.

We have copies of the book in the office, stop by and get one!

MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

Missions Moment



In the past three weeks, there have been numerous devastating natural disasters, primarily in parts of the United States well south of us. The Missions Committee has matched up to \$500.00 for donations to the UCC Emergency USA Fund in the wake of these disasters. With FCCEJ’s collection for this fund at approximately \$2430.00 and still growing, and with the addition of an additional \$500.00 matching donation from an anonymous donor, currently we will be sending a check for \$3430 and that is sure to rise. We should be very proud of our congregation and our commitment to helping those in need in a variety of disastrous situations.

The following is an excerpt from the UCC Emergency USA Fund page:

Each year in the United States hundreds of natural disasters occur. And each year in the United States resettling refugees and new immigrants face large-scale emergencies. Some natural disasters are large enough to make the news, but often dozens of smaller natural disasters escape media attention. The Emergency USA Fund allows UCC Disaster Ministries to respond to both large and small natural and human-caused disasters in all U.S. states and territories. This Emergency USA Fund also enables the United Church of Christ to be even more deeply involved in refugee and immigrant emergencies within the United States.

Un-designated giving allows the United Church of Christ to respond where resources are needed most.

100% of funds to the United Church of Christ designated for U.S. disaster relief are used for disaster relief and rehabilitation programming within the United States. 100% of funds to the United Church of Christ for U.S. refugee resettlement/immigration emergencies are used for providing humanitarian assistance in these situations within the United States.

FCCEJ Volunteer Trip to the Vermont Food Bank in Barre!

A great chance for volunteer work for the holidays! You are invited to volunteer on **Saturday, December 2, 2017 from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm** for a food sort-a-thon at the Vermont Food Bank in Barre, Vermont. This year, we have signed up for 12 slots, aged 14+. This is a popular volunteer activity at First Church because volunteers report that they enjoy getting so much volunteering done in a short period of time.

This volunteer activity is a fast paced sort-a-thon where we fill boxes with food for senior citizens, although we occasionally help with other activities. Those who choose to carpool will meet at First Church at 6:45 AM and return by about 1:00 pm. The Food Bank provides coffee and snacks during the break.

We hope you'll help Vermonters in need! Email Cynthia Kelley ckelley222@gmail.com, and I will send you the sign up link and more details on this activity. If you have questions, see me at church or call me at 879-2822.

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.

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 October 25th**. Please contact Peter Schmalz (pnschmalz@comcast.net) if interested. There is also a sign-up sheet in the hallway entering Fellowship Hall. The Dismas House organization describes its purpose as follows: “We continue our mission of reconciling prisoners with society and society with prisoners. With your continued support, we are working locally to serve former prisoners in their difficult transition from prison to the community, assuring harmony in their lives and greater public safety.” We need four (4) people to volunteer for each date (space is limited so that the residents and guests have a meaningful dinner experience. Our FCCEJ group will decide the menu to feed 16-20 people (which includes the FCCEJ cooks), and then purchase and prepare the food (typically includes the main course as well as vegetables or salad – dessert is optional). The Dismas House provides beverages, condiments, set-up and clean-up. There is no age limit on who can volunteer, and you can donate part of the meal even if you are not able to attend. Many people from our community have volunteered and it is a fun, rewarding mission!



Jamaica Mission Project – Creating a Partnership and Making Friends

Creating a school garden that will help feed 400 children was incredibly rewarding. Being able to fund scholarships for uniforms and books so that six children can attend school was also incredibly rewarding. Donating much appreciated medical supplies, garden tools, and school supplies was rewarding. But I'd like to highlight another aspect of the trip that I think is most meaningful to all of the team members. We worked side by side each day with local Jamaican people who became our friends. We worked long hard days together, ate lunch together, laughed together and shared the deep satisfaction of creating this garden together. We continue to communicate and strengthen these relationships. I'd like to introduce you to a few of them through the eyes of our team members Dave Dewey and Sharon Dettenrieder:

From our first introductions at the school, I met Mr. Pusey, whom I was told was Whitehorses' School Resource Officer. He looks like a cop, stands like a cop, and acts like a cop. We got along well together. For all of our workdays we pulled fence, tied cable, hung barbed wire, dug holes, buried irrigation pipes, and made a few store runs for supplies. Even though I was unable to understand much of what he said on the first try due his heavy use of their native 'slang' language Patois, we were able to muddle through several conversations. Since our trip we've spoken on the phone, and he is trying to make a trip north to VT. We chat regularly through Facebook, and he updates me on the progress of the farm. As a cop, we speak the same language and had many stories to share. -Dave Dewey



Through Rotary International, I met Claudia Sewell in 2016, and we began talking about the possibility of developing a partnership to undertake a joint project in Jamaica. Claudia is definitely a mover and shaker in her community, and was critically important to the success of the Garden Project. She was able to have the land plowed at no cost and also made the connection to RADA (Rural Agricultural Development Authority) who supplied all the seedlings at no cost. Everyday she joined us to work in the garden. – Sharon Dettenrieder

Another interesting connection we were able to make involved Kryszy Steckler, another Vermonter, who is serving in Jamaica as a Peace Corps Volunteer. One of Kryszy's responsibilities is to work with the school and to develop a curriculum around Farm to Table that involves students working in the garden. Since Shelburne Farms' mission is to educate for a sustainable future, we were able to facilitate a connection between the two parties, and now Shelburne Farms is sharing their educational resources with the school in Jamaica. – Sharon Dettenrieder



I look forward to introducing you to more of these amazing partners in the months to come, and hopefully one or two of them will visit! Blessings, Carolyn Rushford

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



Composting

Did you know that the church has been composting for over a year? Our Junior Youth talked about being good stewards of the earth and since we have a food pantry it would only make sense that we compost also. We have a few families on the list to collect the compost in the kitchens, especially on Food Pantry days. If you compost at home and would be willing to check our containers when you are here or be added to the compost email group, please let Laurie know. Thank you!

Heavenly Food Pantry Needs Donations

We are in need of baked beans, tuna fish and canned fruit to restock our Food Pantry shelves.

The September Food Pantries will be on Monday evening, **October 9th**, 5:30-7:30 and Thursday afternoon, **October 26th**, 2-6pm.

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



Volunteer for 2017-18 Faith Formation Programs

There are many ways to support First Church children and youth...Contact Laurie!

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 2nd 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 & 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.
- *Mission Sunday Helpers* – preschool up through senior high are together for a time of fellowship across the ages for on these days...for group building activities as they work on a mission project.

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 3rd 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. New to this? See Laurie. 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

Parents ~ we ask that you be mindful of our Safe Conduct Guidelines and help us keep to our child ratio (2 children to 1 adult). Please stay in the Nursery with your child if you see that our ratio will be off. If you would like to help in the Nursery on a consistent basis, please be in touch with Nursery staff or Laurie. 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. Thank you for your help.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

October's Special Offering is October 1st for Neighbors In Need

Sunday, October 1st, 9:30am – 12 pm ~ Open House at Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop



The staff of the newly renovated Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop housed in the Sawyer House across the parking lot would like to invite the members of the congregation to celebrate with us after each service to see our beautiful new space and the lovely clothes, linens and occasional item for home décor and jewelry. Apple cider and cookies will be served. Fall is here and we have outfitted the shop in a selection of colorful and warm autumn clothing. Please come over to see the bright and cheerful space we call the Thrift Shop.

Christmas Wreath Sales to Benefit the Jamaica Trip 2019

Starting Sunday, October 1st until October 31st, the Jamaica Committee will be taking orders for handcrafted balsam wreaths, centerpieces and gift certificates from Victory Gardens in Jericho. Wreaths are \$25 with \$8 going to the Jamaica Trip 2019. Wreaths will be delivered to First Church on November 26th. The centerpieces will be sold until November 19th with delivery to First Church on December 10th & 17th. Please help support our 2019 Mission Trip to Jamaica!



Sunday, October 22nd ~ RiteAid Flu Shot Clinic

Rite Aid Pharmacy will be on hand from 8 am to 12 pm giving flu shots. Bring your Insurance and/or Medicaid card and they can handle your billing, flu shot and get you on your way!

Stock Donated

If you have recently donated stock to the church, please contact Pat Seaver, Financial Secretary at vttri2@aol.com or 879-4445



Hospitality

The Hospitality Committee provides coffee, tea and snacks after each service. We are currently in need of some additional people that can help after one service a couple times per month. Please contact Jackie Parks at 802-324-9206 or kevjacmag@comcast.net, if interested. Training provided!



Address Change

Marge Shepard's address in last month's newsletter was incorrect. Her new address is 90 Kingsbury Crossing, Milton, VT 05468 and her phone number is 893-2784.

First Congregational Church of EJ
1 CHURCH STREET
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Phone: 802-878-5745
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