

The Spirit at First November 2017



Your Minister's Musings.....

Journeying through Vermont as your minister, one question people ask is what distinguishes us as a Christian denomination. The one answer that often comes to mind is our congregational form of church governance. So many religious traditions have a hierarchical system of governing their organizations. Our congregational polity makes it difficult to tell someone what our church believes since there is such a great range of beliefs within our family of faith. It is hard to explain to people who are used to a clear structure of authority, how we Congregationalists balance pastoral leadership and congregational authority. When folks ask who my boss is, I either say a Jewish carpenter or 500 individuals, depending on my mood and the questioner. We have a unique and powerful system of church governance which is neither easy to understand nor smooth in its delivery. But at its best, it yields an empowered congregation who takes seriously their call to live faithful lives and their commitment to a community grounded in mutual love and respect.

In a day and age when civility seems lost in almost every setting, living and working together in a respectful way to build Christ's kingdom of love might be seen as vital a gospel call as anything else. What better evangelism could there possibly be?

Our congregationalism has been busy of late in the sphere of pastoral calling, something that many Christian denominations do not experience. Bishops do not place candidates here but we determine whom we hire; perhaps the most important right of any religious organization. After Ryan left in January 2016, our congregation voted to continue a two clergy model instead of a programmatic model. Afterwards, Church Council appointed an Associate Pastor Search Committee who first created a *church profile*, then reviewed candidate profiles, interviewed and listened to two distinct candidates and then chose one to present to Council. Last Sunday, Church Council accepted the AP Search Committee's report and called for a Special Congregational Meeting for Sunday November 19th after the second service.

The candidate, Josh Simon, will candidate that entire weekend by meeting people in various settings and then preaching / leading worship. At the meeting afterwards, the members of the church will vote to accept Josh or not. That decision will be final and we will hopefully have an Associate Pastor to partner with us to spread Christ's message of love. The process, the candidate's biography and the warrant for the special meeting to vote on Josh's candidacy will be mailed out to all our members and friends this week.

I would strongly encourage you to come and meet Josh and claim one of the key distinguishing features of our church: the right and privilege to vote for your spiritual leaders. As we celebrate our 150 years and the Protestant Reformation's 500 years, let us honor the high price many paid for this right and come to vote. I will see you there.

Special thanks to the members of the AP Search Committee: Joanne Irwin [co-chair], Myrna Doney [co-chair] Nicole and Marlene Frank, Eva and Laura Cunningham-Firkey, Josh Sharp, Carl Houghton, Lisa Clark, Laurie Chipman and myself.

Looking forward to seeing you there and finally hiring a new Associate Pastor.

In Christ, Rev. Mark

SPECIAL SUNDAYS IN NOVEMBER

Communion on November 5th ~ Both Services Pass Elements Out

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

As we conclude our year of celebrating our 150th anniversary, it is a great and distinct pleasure to have the President of the United Church of Christ preaching at both services. The Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer will join us throughout the worship service. The leader of the VT Conference of the United Church of Christ, Rev. Dr. Lynn Bujnak will also be joining us in worship as will our very own **Rev. Ryan Gackenheimer**. It will be a service to remember. Bring a friend or a member who has not been here for a while.....

November 12th ~ Social Justice Sunday

Each Second Sunday, Rev. Mark and the Deacons have determined to continue last year's effort to build some excitement and try to attract some interest from the community by creating a specially formed worship service. In November, the special theme will be Social Justice. The service will focus on social justice and conclude with hands on activities for all ages to participate in so that we can actually live into Christ's call to love our neighbor. So we will package beans, rice and other staples and deliver them to JUMP. We will make sandwiches and lunches to distribute to the hungry and homeless in Burlington. We will also create signs to raise at the 5-Corners to share our concern for a better world. We will work on all the projects after each service. Come and make your own sign; come and help feed the poor; come and help welcome the stranger to our country.

November 19th ~ Josh Simon's Candidating Sermon

After nearly two years of work, the Associate Pastor Search Committee has selected a candidate to be our next Associate Pastor. A diverse committee of members unanimously selected Josh Simon to come and help lead us into the future. The AP Search Committee will introduce him to the church and ask for you to vote to affirm him as our AP. The key activity of this corporate interview will be Josh's preaching and worship leadership. Come and see what he has to say and then after the worship service, come and vote.

November 26th ~ Devon & Erica's Farewell

If the vote affirms Josh Simon as our next Associate Pastor, then we will need to say good-bye to Devon and Erica who have done excellent ministry among us. Devon served as both the Acting Part Time Associate and Co-Youth Leader while Erica served as Co-Youth Leader. They kept youth group going during the interim time and developed deep and abiding relationships to many who appreciated their skill, dedication and many gifts. We wish them well in their various callings. Both Devon and Erica will continue to be members within our church; Devon as a Member in Discernment as he seeks ordination within the UCC and Erica will continue to be a vital and integral member of the Deacons.

December 3rd ~ First Sunday of Advent ~ Advent Daily Reflections/Devotionals

Advent calendars and devotions for all ages will be available for you beginning November 19th as you walk through the Advent season. Please take one and help prepare yourself for the birth of Christ and set a few moments aside every day to be at one with God. Also on this day is our Advent Decorating Event that will be held after our second service, beginning with a potluck luncheon.

ASSOCIATE MINISTER THOUGHTS

Blessings to you, our congregation at the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction and I hope you are all enjoying this unusually warm fall! I feel that this last month has been one of preparation. As we celebrate our 150th anniversary and explore new pathways to enter into relationship with God and with our brothers and sisters in this world, I feel that it is a good thing to be ready and that thing we must always prepare for is change.

Mark and I have spent the last month reflecting on the changes of the reformation because that was a radical period in history to which people addressed the way in which their church lives reflected their real lives. In like manner we should strive to look upon our own lives and see how they are reflected back at us in church. We are a congregation of thinkers and doers; how then should that be depicted in the ways in which we hold service, or the events, missions and functions of our congregation? We are a congregation of hope filled dreamers; so how then should our community strive to see those dreams realized in the word? We are a congregation of calculating pragmatists; so then how should we address the realities life throws at us? All of these things are what make our congregation strong and they do so because we are willing to keep our minds open and come together as different people united by a community rooted in Christ's love.

This last month we have rebooted our At Table bible fellowship, it has received a small turn out but I would like to continue offering it and to keep inviting you all to attend because I do believe, like the reformers before us, that we all have a right to interact with and build a deeper understanding of the bible and its history. Mark and I should never be your only go to stop for an understanding of how God may choose to speak to you; however both Mark and I should always strive to be a resource at your disposal to help you enter into those heavenly conversations. The next At Table will be Wednesday November 1st at 10:30am. Engaging with the bible is, still, only one way in which we live out our faith.

Our Faith on Tap Friday meetings have been doing AMAZINGLY well! We had thirteen people at the last meeting and it was an entirely different group then before. We have been getting people from both Good Shepard Lutheran Church and our own as well as people from the community of Essex, Williston and Jericho who have heard of Faith on Tap and are interested in meeting other people of faith. This type of fellowship is another way in which we engage with God, by breaking down walls and boundaries that form our own personal bubbles and getting out and meeting someone new. Faith on Tap will be held on the second Friday of the month from now on, November 10th, 6:00pm at McGillicuddy's here in Essex.

Lastly, Erica and I have been pulling together our youth mission trip which will be occurring in April during the school break. We will be working with the Fuller Center for Housing and traveling down to Houston, Texas to help with the recovery efforts there. The youth group will be throwing several fundraising events between now and April to help fund the trip, still, we can assure you that anyone who wishes to go will be covered. This will be a mission trip for youth who are 16 and older, that is a requirement that the Fuller Center insists on for safety reasons and we will also need adult chaperones to volunteer and you do not need to be a parent to chaperone.

So there are big things in the wind for this congregation and as always I and the staff are looking for new ways in which we can help all of you, our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ and engage in the life of love that Jesus calls us to. Whatever change may come to this congregation, know that it is our differences as well as the love we share for one another that makes us strong. I encourage you all to listen to new ideas and to try new things. You just may find a little bit of Jesus in it!

Peace and Love be with you all!

Devon Lee Thomas: Bridge Associate Minister



Laurie's Lens

I would like to encourage you this year to create a space in your home... a place to go where you can focus on connecting with God. We make a space for a Christmas tree in our homes each year...so what about a spiritual place. Advent comes to use in the darkest time of the year when we crave light and warmth the most. So, bring in the warmth and make it cozy, a place where you lay your Bible, place a candle or two, a small finger sand table, a place where you play music ... then add your Advent daily devotional/reflection. If you live a house with others, make it a place where everyone in your home feels welcomed to come and sit in silence, child friendly...to sit with others or by yourself...to have a family conversation about God or to read about God and ask questions...to be still and listen for God. Maybe you already have such a place. If you do, I invite you to change it up a bit and maybe add some different elements to your space. If your house is small and you are questioning how you can do this...be creative and put these elements on a tray that sits in one place and yet can be moved to different areas of your home. The goal is to have a space that becomes a part of your daily routine...a space you visit every day...by yourself, in small groups or with your whole family.

Setting aside personal time to read scripture or a daily reflection is a way we continue to connect with God and have our own personal worship time for growing deeper in our understanding of God and our relationship with our God. This is just as important as community worship with others in church or at camp. Faith is not taught ... Faith is caught. Being in community with others comes in other ways besides worship...Sermon Talkback, fellowship suppers, Hands-On Mission Projects...just to name a few. Another way to catch faith is my being a mentor and spending quality time with another person one on one, helping them along their spiritual journey. As I write this article I am beginning to recruit youth and adults who will partner up and be a mentor with a child (one they are not related to) and be a Bible partner reading a few verses from the Bible each week together, here at church or during the week sometime. On Reformation Sunday, October 29th, we handed out Bibles to children in third grade and up who didn't have a Bible of their own. I would love to find a mentor for all our children ...meet each other on November 5th and then read together weekly up to December 17th when we will celebrate our time together with a potluck lunch after our 10:15am worship service. If you are willing to share God's love, helping others grow, opening yourself up to grow and be a bible partner, please connect with me.

God comes to us new each year in the form of a baby...growing in us, surprising us, reaching out to hug us, love us and brighten our lives in unexpected ways. So this Advent let us find new and creative ways to open ourselves and let God in ...create your special place to welcome God in your life and in the lives of those around you...taking time to breathe away the day to day pressures and stress. Give yourselves five minutes a day to be still and listen, read and reflect. You may find it turns into 10 or 20 and let us be good models of faith for our own children and the children we meet. May you continue to feel God's presence in your life... every minute...every day. For we can never get enough.

Blessing and Peace, Laurie *Christian Education Director*

Faith Formation Leaders for 2017-18

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

First & Second Grade – Cathy Lapierre (until 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

As most of you know, during 2017 our church has been celebrating 150 years in the greater Essex community. The Essex Reporter has been publishing monthly articles about various roles our church has played and continues to play within the greater Essex community.

At the church and within the community we have celebrated with an “old-timey” replica service, complete with costumes. We entered a float in the Memorial Day parade, which won the prize for “most creative” float. Members of our Historical Committee performed skits as part of the Essex Community Historical Society’s 2017 Tales and Treasures series, and we just had our 150th Anniversary Celebration Dinner at the Champlain Valley Fairgrounds. We have truly been provided opportunities this year to demonstrate our extravagant welcome! “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome in this place.” Thank you to everyone who made all these activities happen, and particularly to those on the 150th Anniversary Committee. A job well done by all!

On Sunday, November 5th we will continue celebrating our 150th anniversary with a Celebratory Worship Service. We are honored to have Reverend John Dorhauer, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, preach and help with officiating at communion at both services that day. Reverend Dorhauer travels throughout the world representing the UCC and supporting the many ministries that make up our wider church family. He is passionate about justice and throughout his ministry has embodied the UCC vision to create “A Just World for All”. Under his leadership the UCC has adopted a new Purpose, Mission and Vision Statement centering on seeking justice for everyone, and highlighting the UCCs core values of extravagant welcome, continuing testament and changing lives. His sermon should provide challenges and hope. I don’t think you will want to miss it.

In peace,

Betsy Weischedel

MUSIC



Save The Date ~ 16th Annual Festival of Choirs!

On Saturday, December 2nd at 6pm the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints located on 73 Essex Way, Essex Junction, VT 05452 will be hosting the 16th annual Festival of Choirs. The Festival of Choirs features several local church choirs, including Finally @ First, Heavenly Harmony and the Men at First, in an interfaith, musical performance. All are invited to attend this free event so that we may have the opportunity to come together as a community to usher in the spirit of Christmas.

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES



Music Time During Faith Formation

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

November 5th ~ Holy Communion Sunday ~ Spiritual Friends ~ Intergenerational Worship

November 12th ~ Faith Formation Class time

November 19th ~ Faith Formation Class time

November 26th ~ Hands-On Mission Project Sunday – All Ages

Hands-On Mission Project Sundays



On October 22nd, during our Faith Formation time, the kids and youth got an overview of our Heavenly Food Pantry by Judy Allen and Jane Schneider. Many thanks to our adult volunteers – Maryann Carlson and Gail Babinger, as well as the junior and senior high youth who joined us. They all got to see the food pantry cupboards in the Fellowship Hall, hear what the room looks like on food pantry days, where to drop off items, make a HFP magnet, and hand out bags to families after worship of suggested items to donate.

On November 26th we are planning to learn about Church World Service and help put together hygiene kits that will be delivered to the CWS drop off site at Waterbury UCC.

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 \$887.71

\$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 SUNDAY Family Dish Share ~ Decorate the Sanctuary ~ Advent Event

November 19th from 11:30-1

Join us this month on the 3rd SUNDAY of the month for a great family dish share luncheon, 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 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.

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!

Reminder to stay active and be engaged!

- 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

November 26th & Dec. 3rd ~ Christmas Pageant Rehearsals Begin ~ 6-8pm



The Jr. & Sr. High youth will be reading through the pageant on November 26th from 6pm to 8pm and parts will be decided on. Please mark your calendars and come join us! If you can't make November 26th, please share with Laurie your interest in a speaking part (small or big) or help behind the scenes and be in touch with her. Adult volunteers are needed to help assist with set, costumes and running of lines at all rehearsals.

On December 10th – rehearsal is from 11:30 – 2:00pm
(preschool – 6th join in for the first 20 minutes to learn their part)

Saturday, December 16th – dress rehearsal - TBA

Pageant Sunday will be on December 17th during both services - all youth arrive at 7:45am

Potluck lunch to follow after the 10:15am service

Junior Youth @ FCCEJ

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

Mission Focus ~ Meal ~ Fellowship/Games

Mark your calendars!

November 5th ~ Group Building Games ~ Food ~ Mission Activity

December 3rd ~ next Junior Youth



FIVE CORNERS CHRISTMAS CRAFT FEST

Saturday, November 11th, 9am-3pm

To make this event a success for First Church, we could really use your help with the following:

Nearly New - Consider donating your gentle used items to the fest! We will be accepting donations in Marvin Lounge. We'd love all other kinds of donations including books, jewelry, housewares, puzzles, frames, lamps, holiday items, craft items and toys.

Sweet Shoppe— Best sellers are all kind of fudge, jams, whoopee pies, undecorated sugar cookies, gingerbread cookies, small breads and sauces. **We especially want pies of any kind.** Items can be dropped at the church from 9 am to 5 pm on Friday Nov 10th in the Nursery.

Silent Auction – We are seeking intriguing donations for the Auction. Some ideas are:

- Donating Tickets to a theater, arts or sporting event
- Giving golf/tennis lessons
- Baking a cookie/pie/cake/bread of the month,
- Making a homemade dinner
- Sewing/babysitting/cleaning/yard work

We can pick up donated items, make gift certificates for you, give tax receipts, and more. All items can be dropped off at the Church office.

Heavenly Spirit Café: Please assist by making homemade soups, macaroni and cheese, and chili. Also, consider donating a case of water, soda or paper products. Please make sure the donations are marked craft fest when left in the kitchen. You will have opportunity to sign up for takeout.

Decorators: Volunteers are needed Sunday Nov 5th from noon to 2 pm to decorate Marvin Lounge and our upstairs hallways. We'll need help again on Friday Nov 10th 2 pm to 4 pm to decorate Fellowship Hall. We will be putting up a tree which needs to be decorating. Join us anytime.

Shoppers: Please come with friends and family. It's a great place to have lunch and do Christmas shopping.

Setup/Cleanup: We need help with setting up table Friday morning and cleanup on Saturday afternoon. The committee will have signup sheets after first service and second service for making a donation or signing up to volunteer at one of our amazing areas. We are asking all the volunteers to park in the doctor's office across the street from the church. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Linda Bogardus at 872-8972 or lbogardus@myfairpoint.net.

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

SAVE THE DATES



November 26th ~ Christmas Pageant Rehearsals

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

December 17th ~ Christmas Pageant ~ Both Services

Potluck lunch to follow after the 10:15am service.

3rd Thursday Dish Share/Potluck for December has been moved to Sunday, 12/17 due to Food Pantry.

December 8th ~ EJRP Train Hop

Essex Junction Recreation & Parks Train Hop is on December 8th from 6-8pm this year. This is our second year participating as one of the stops in the downtown Essex Junction and celebrating our community connections. Are you free that night? We are looking for volunteers to be greeters, donate snacks or pop popcorn, set up our kid train sets, etc. Interested in helping in any way ...please see Laurie. The tree lighting is at the 5 Corners at 6:15pm and you can meet Santa at the Teen Center.



FELLOWSHIP & LEARNING



Essex Eats Out Community Dinners Continue...

1st Friday of Every Month ~ November 3rd

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. If you have any questions about the group or need a ride please call the office. Please join us Thursday, November 2 at noon in Marvin Lounge. Our program this month is presented by Holly Lemieux a lawyer who will discuss Estate Planning and Elder Law. On her website (plantogetherlaw.com) Holly shares her philosophy: "Whether we are talking about our needs as we age, making provisions for individuals with a disability or discussing an estate plan, I strive to treat all clients with respect and make sure they understand their options." Bring your lunch and your questions as we explore issues important to our senior status.



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, November 17th**. 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 Now Offers TWO WEEKLY 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.

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 Saturday, November 18 at 9:30 in Marvin Lounge. We will share something that has changed our life. It could be a person, event, being at the right place at the right time, etc. There are endless possibilities to this simple question. Please come and share your thoughts or story with this smart, caring and supportive group of women.

Noontime Book Group

Noontime Book Group will meet at 12:00 in the Marvin Lounge on November 9th. Please note that we will gather on the 2nd Thursday this month because of a conflict with the usual third Thursday for Food Pantry this month. Bring a brown bag lunch and join us for a discussion of "Counting by 7's" by Holly Sloan. This novel is the story of a gifted girl who is taken in by her friend's Vietnamese refugee family after her adoptive parents are killed in an accident. As they try to stay ahead of social services, Willow tries to figure out social norms of regular family life. While she considers herself just an observer, she is actually a catalyst for change, bringing together unsuspecting people and changing their lives forever. Her journey of rebuilding ties that unite people as a family is one that will stay in readers' hearts long after they finish the book. Sounds like a book full of interesting twists!



Faith On Tap



On Friday, November 10th at McGillicuddy's in Essex Jct, 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 monthly 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, **November 27th** for a time of common crafting. All are welcome!



Tuesday Morning Sermon Talkbacks, 8:30 – 10am

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



Wednesday Night Searchers, 7-9pm in Marvin Lounge

After a great presentation by Jacqueline Woodson, author of “Brown Girl Dreaming”, we have moved on to our next book which is “Grounded” by Diana Butler Bass. There are copies available in the office.

Join us for fellowship and great discussion!



Third Thursday Dish Share ~ moves to ~ Third Sunday in November

Sunday, November 19th ~ following 2nd service ~ 11:30am to 1pm

Due to the Heavenly Food Pantry being on the 16th, we are combining our Third Thursday potluck supper for November with our Advent Decorating Event. Two great fun events all together! All are asked to bring a dish to share on Sunday the 19th and join CE and the Deacons for a time of fellowship and lunch following the 2nd service in the Fellowship Hall. We will then continue our time together decorating the Sanctuary and making three pieces of a nativity set.

Family Nativity Sets



Starting November 5th, the nativity set and sign up will be in Fellowship Hall. Sign up for the year nativity set you would like to make or email Laurie so we have the right amount of materials on hand. This craft is fun for all ages! You will end up with a nativity set that you can keep adding on to for you own kids, grandkids, or pass it along as a great gift. Each year's set of figures is listed

below. If this is your first year with us, sign up for year 1 so you leave with the first three pieces of the nativity. If this is your second year or more, sign up for the numbered year you wish to make.

Year 1 ~ Mary, Joseph & Baby Jesus

Year 2 ~ Angel, Donkey & Sheep

Year 3 ~ King, cow, Shepherd

Year 4 ~ 2 Kings & a sheep

Year 5 ~ 3 camels

MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

Missions Moment

The Missions Committee put up a challenge in September to the congregation to donate to the UCC Emergency Relief Fund and that the committee would match those donations up to \$500.00. The total donations amount including the matching funds and donations from two anonymous donors totaled \$5500.00! What a wonderful gift to be sending to the many people directly and devastatingly affected by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria and by the wildfires in CA. Our congregation should be very proud.



The UCC has an extensive website with much information on the specifics of what they are doing in each of the locations directly affected by the hurricanes and wildfires. We encourage anyone to take the time to read the varying and intense work they are performing in all the affected locations. There is also information on how to volunteer to help if anyone desires to do so.

To find the information go to the following website:
www.ucc.org/disaster_ucc_response_to_2017_hurricanes

Reverend Mark informed the Missions Committee at our last meeting on October 17th that donations that are made to this fund are 100% used for disaster relief. No salaries are paid or other administrative fees paid out of the donations.

Thank you to all who donated to help others in our country. We appreciate you!

Got Coats?



Winter Clothing Drive – Donations by November 12th for Nov. Food Pantry

Our Winter Clothing Drive is currently underway including coats, snowsuits, snowpants, hats, mittens, scarves, and boots for adults and kids. We will be distributing the clothing to folks who will be coming to the Food Pantry on November 16th, as well as to the men who live at the Dismas House in Burlington. We would also request that the clothing be clean and in good repair. We would like to receive your donations by Nov 12th, so that we have time to organize them prior to pantry day. Please drop donations in the box in the hallway of the administrative offices marked 'Winter Clothing Drive'. Please contact Sue Conti at sueconti@comcast.net if you have any questions. Thank you so much for your support of this program and helping our neighbors in need.

Giving Tree

Christmas is approaching and once again the members of this church will have the opportunity to provide gifts to some children in need from our community. The Giving Tree will be set up just before Thanksgiving in the narthex with gift tags for about 50 children. Each child receives three tags – two for articles of clothing and one for a toy, book or gift card. There is always great anticipation around the Giving Tree and we hope you will join us again in making this Christmas a season of hope and love for so many of the children in need in Essex.



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 cynthiak222@gmail.com for the sign up link and more details or questions on this activity.

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 November 22nd**. 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!



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, cereal and canned fruit to restock our Food Pantry shelves.

The November Food Pantries will be on Monday evening, **November 13th**, 5:30-7:30 and Thursday afternoon, **November 16th**, 2-6pm.

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



Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Can Use Fall/Winter Donations

Regular Hours: 10am-3pm Tues & Wed, 4-8pm Thurs

Also open: November 4th, 11th & 24th, 9am-12pm

Fall/Winter Donations can be dropped off at the Shop anytime.

Faith Formation Class Leaders for 2017-18

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

First & Second Grade –Alison VanSteensburg, _____

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

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



Volunteer for 2017-18 Faith Formation Programs

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.

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.

Here are a few more ways you can get involved....

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 on this day and everyone returns to worship for Communion.

Hands-On Mission Sunday Helpers – preschool up through senior high are together for a time of mission hands-on project where all get to work together and hear about a mission that we support.

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.



Ushering & Greeting for Worship Services

Our committee is writing to inform the congregation of a problem in getting people to usher and greet. Lining up volunteers to usher and greet has become a big challenge. We make multiple phone calls and emails with no responses. Several members of our committee have found this situation so difficult that they have left the committee. This message is to inform you and ask for your help by volunteering to usher and greet. You can sign up on sign up genesis. (Jen, please insert correct link) make a note in the friendship book or contact me Ann Marie Sullivan 879-6044 or ambs6155@comcast.net. One possibility is to change the usher and greeting process and have people step up just before a service to hand out bulletins or have self service and people pick up one's own bulletin from a table as they enter. Thank you for your consideration.

Acolytes



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

Ring the Bell

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



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.

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

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

PERMIT #598

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

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

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

Inside...

Minister’s Musings
Special Sundays in November
Associate Minister Thoughts
Laurie’s Lens
Deacon’s Corner
Music
Stewardship Moment

Children, Youth & Families
Five Corners Christmas Craft Fest
Save The Dates
Fellowship & Learning
Mission Opportunities
Volunteer Opportunities
Our Church Family