

The Spirit at First January 2018



The Pastor's Ponderings.....

As we look to the new year, I have been reflecting a bit on this past year. What a year it has been! After some dedicated and focused work, the Associate Pastor Search Committee hired Rev. Josh Simon, who has entered our community by storm and feels not only called but absolutely thrilled to be here! We are also on the verge of hiring a new Organist / Choir Director! Last year also saw Governor Jim Douglas, Rabbi Amy Small and Imam Islam Hassan preaching during Lent. Another great event of this last year was the 150th Anniversary Celebration. There were monthly newsletter articles, an historical worship service with great costumes and a time accurate message, an award winning Memorial Day Float, an historical drama, a great dinner with memories and presentations and we ended our celebration with the president of the United Church of Christ, Rev. John Dorhauer, preaching a sermon appreciating our many ministries of justice and challenging us to continue to do good works with courage and hope.

This past year has witnessed to me that our past and present ministries have been vibrant and healthy and have been an integral part of making the Essex community a good place to live and raise a family. Our staff is strong and extremely committed. Our volunteers are many, talented and effective in getting things done. Our mission outreach continues to grow and change lives and the wider community for the better. We have had balanced budgets for years and are extremely sound financially. We have a positive reputation in the community and are respected by civic leaders and community members alike. Our programs and social groups are nearly too numerous to list and we probably welcome more groups into our building than any other building in town. We are an extremely healthy church.....

.....except for one thing. Our physical plant needs serious work. From parking lots to sanctuary windows, from run down bathrooms to a lack of insulation, from roofs that need replacing to a kitchen caught in the middle of an upgrade, from asbestos floor tiles to cracked walls and a patchwork of paint colors, from a useless sign that few notice to non-accessible bathrooms, from organ repair to a needed furnace in the Sawyer House.....our physical plant and grounds need some love and care. Thus, our need for a Capital Campaign.

The "*Our Home, Our Future, Our Time*" Campaign will begin in earnest in January. We have a goal of \$750,000 and a stretch goal of one million dollars. There will be presentations and cottage meetings in January so everyone can see the details of the projects and their associated costs. Then at the Annual Meeting, we will vote to move forward with the campaign or not. These buildings are our spiritual home and we need to give them some attention. In doing so, our ministry will be extremely enhanced as we shift so much effort and money from constant deferred maintenance to programs and outreach. When these many projects are completed, our future will be securely bright. It is our time to take care of our church. And I would encourage all of you to take some time and throw in a little prayer and think about what you might be able to offer to the "*Our Home, Our Future, Our Time*" Campaign. All pledges can come in over a three year period. Most studies in the wider church show a church can raise three times their annual giving and with our giving right at \$ 330,000, I am convinced we can achieve our goals and strengthen our church for ministry into the future.

As your pastor, I am completely in favor of the campaign and its advisors. With Kaki McGeary and Dave Johnson leading our incredible team and with the help of Full Harvest Fundraising, I am thrilled to finally be taking on the biggest challenge of my time here at First Church. May God continue to bless us as we look to the next 150 years with hope and pride.

Proud to be serving in this time and place, I am as always, yours in Christ,

Mark

SPECIAL SUNDAYS IN JANUARY

Communion on January 7th

1st Service passed out

2nd Service come up

January 14th ~ Mendes Pulpit Exchange

Early in Rev. Mark's ministry, his wife filled in as a guest preacher on Father's Day Sunday for a couple of years....to rave reviews. Rev. Karen Mendes is an American Baptist Ordained Clergy who currently serves as the Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Burlington. After coordinating schedules, the two Reverends' Mendes have received a go ahead from their respective Deacons to participate in a pulpit exchange. So on January 14th, Rev. Karen Mendes will preach here at 1st Congregational Church of Essex Junction and Rev. Mark Mendes will preach at the 1st Baptist Church of Burlington.

Everyone in both churches is welcome to attend either church.

January 28th, 10am ~ Ask The Pastor/Annual Meeting Sunday

There will only be **ONE SERVICE** on January 28th due to our church's Annual Meeting. Our congregation's governing body is the entire membership of the church when they come together to meet.

Duly called meetings where specific subjects to be discussed are listed beforehand become the final decision maker of our church. Some meetings run smoothly and easily while others are wrought with turmoil and conflict. All the committees, officers and staff report what they have done during the year as well as all of our financial information. Hoping to achieve the highest turnout, Church Council combines the two services and meets immediately afterwards. So make your plans to attend the one service and the meeting afterwards.....congregational duty demands it! The service on Jan. 28th starts at 10:00 a.m. and the meeting will start at 11:15 a.m.

January 28th, 11:15am ~ Annual Meeting

Church Council has not approved the final Annual Meeting Warrant but we want to invite everyone to attend this year's Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 28th at 11:15 a.m. During the meeting, we will attend to the normal business: accept committee/officer and staff reports, vote for the budget, and vote for the slate of new officers and committee members. We will also be voting on whether to move forward with the Capital Campaign. As we attend to business, we will also attend to community life by remembering our members who have died in 2017 and honoring the anniversaries of our members and a special plaque for two 50 year members. Child care will be provided.

Everyone can attend and speak but only members can vote.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR NEWS

After one month into my new called position as your associate pastor, I am settling in quite well. My office is painted. I've been ordained. And with the end of Advent and Christmas, now the deep dive into my ministry can really begin.

Laurie, Mark, and I have agreed to rearrange the youth ministry groups. Before 2017, there were 5th and 6th grade known as the Junior Youth, 7-8th known as the Junior High Youth, and 9-12th known as Senior High Youth. This past January 2017, the Junior High and Senior High Youth groups were combined. Again, we have implemented a new youth ministry group age range. Starting January 2018, **5th-8th grade will meet as Junior Youth Group**, and **9th-12th grade will meet as High School Youth Group**. Laurie and I will co-lead the 5th-8th grade, and I will lead the 9th-12th grade with other adult leaders. We appreciate that to a certain extent demarcating youth group through a prism of age is arbitrary. Some eighth graders could fully participate in conversation with high school aged students while some eighth graders would have difficulties. We acknowledge this, **so we want to allow eighth graders in conversation with their parents to choose one of the two youth groups: 5th-8th grade or 9th-12th grade** to participate fully in.

I still need parents or other adults to help with youth ministry. At each of the youth ministry events, I need at least one other person to help. If you are interested in helping with the High School Youth Group, email me at jsimon@fccej.org.

Our **FIRST BIG High School Youth Group** event is January 12th-13th. This will be a High School Youth Group Lock-in Kick-off with Pastor Josh. All high school youth, 9th-12th, are invited to attend. Arrive to the church at 7pm on Friday, Jan 12th and leave 9am on Saturday, Jan 13th. Please, wear clothes comfortable for painting. For part of our time, we will paint the Youth Lounge.

I have decided to cancel going to Houston for disaster relief. There were not enough participants for a mission trip. I am working on organizing a trip to New York City for four days. On Sunday, January 14 between the 8:30 and 10:15 services, I will host an organizing/informational meeting. I have selected a wonderful organization in New York City for us to partner with, the Youth Service Opportunities Project (YSOP). YSOP is a Quaker based mission program. One of their main objectives is to give young people the skills necessary to transform their communities and to inspire young people to civically engaged. I think it will be a great trip. I hope many youth will participate.

Lastly, **January 19, 20, and 21** I am organizing a parsonage painting party. The parsonage needs to be painted before much needed new carpet is installed. We are going to paint and eat snacks, so I need painters and/or snack providers. Sign-up sheet next to my office (blue office). Thanks! I am excited to move into the parsonage. After I have moved into it, I plan on having a house warming party, and I plan to host some dinner parties there, so I can get to know you all better.

Blessings, Josh



Laurie's Lens

What a fun Christmas Pageant! Our youth and children did a wonderful job! I hope you were able to be with us, but if not...I encourage you to go to our Facebook page and see some of the great pictures that were taken by those in attendance. It was one of my favorite pageants and I hope one of yours too. I'm so proud of our youth! I hope they had as much fun as I did. They gave of their time and energy, coming together, building new and old friendships to share this story of the birth of Christ. Realizing that even though we hear and read this story every year, there are still parts of the story we either don't remember, don't know or were never recorded and written down in the Bible. All this really allows us to wonder and ask questions every year. Who was actually present when Jesus was born? How come it took those magi so long to reach Jesus? What slowed them down? Some of our youth were so nice and flexible that they switched parts, subbed in for someone, agreed to take on a different role and helped each other with lines. We have some talented youth! Many thanks to the adults who helped, in so many ways, make this pageant possible and to Pastor Josh for narrating. As we move into 2018, youth programming will be making a few slight changes. One of them being that Pastor Josh and I will co-lead the Junior Youth Group that will have all the 5th through 8th graders together, combining our two youngest youth groups into one and helping us build a stronger program (more details in Josh's article).

Are you taking the time to read your daily Advent devotions? If your December has been anything like mine...this feeling of a list that keeps growing and may never stop...I am finding that taking the time to read them is helping me in this busy season. I might even be burning more candles than usual as well as taking in more deep breaths, finding ways to slow myself down, feeling the presence and warmth of our God as well as the love all around me. This all has me really feeling connected to the magi this year...in my house they are far in the east, making a long journey that takes way longer than all the other visitors as we wait for Epiphany... as if to cry out like children, 'are we ever going to get there?!' The magi travel safely, taking their time as they make their way to Jesus, Mary and Joseph. I can so relate ...maybe you can too. In this busy season, it is good to give ourselves some time and ways to feel and share the love of Jesus, the love that is in our hearts... knowing no matter the road we take or where we are on our faith journey. .. we are cared for and loved by an all loving God.

The month of December marks the arrival of our new Associate Pastor, Josh Simon, and the beginning of a new chapter in our youth programming. While meetings for one search committee end for me, another is just beginning. I feel blessed to have been asked to serve on the search committee for our next Associate Conference Minister for the VT Conference. I will bring to the table my love for CE, Youth Ministry and Outdoor Ministry as well as having just served on our Associate Pastor Search committee.

Lastly, please mark your calendars for all the special days coming in 2018 that can be found in the Save the Date section of this newsletter. Come, join the fun us as we build community, celebrate our church, make new friends and reconnect with old friends.

Having a wonderful time walking my faith journey with all of you!

Laurie, *Christian Education Director*

DEACON'S CORNER

Looking in a mirror and simultaneously holding another one beside your face, you will see multiple reflections of yourself receding into the background. In a way that's how we look into this church's past of multiple generations and many years gone by – 150 years to be exact.

In the future how will we appear to those of that era who likewise gaze into that mirror? Hopefully in a very positive light if this past year's activities are any indication. We often talk about our individual faith journeys. In 2017 collectively all of us were swept along that spiritual path of faith by our anniversary's events. It all began with banners proudly proclaiming our 150th being displayed on the front of the church and in the sanctuary. We observed Lent with a program that invited a past governor, a rabbi, and a Muslim to sermonize from our pulpit. The Imam representing the local Islamic Center served communion to our Christian congregation which most likely had never occurred in any UCC churches in America. In the Memorial Day Parade we received an award for the float which carried a large replica of our church. As the float moved slowly down Lincoln St, our pastor "preached" from its pulpit much to the delight of the onlookers. In October a well-attended celebratory 150th Anniversary dinner at the Champlain Valley Exposition featured congratulatory letters, words by parishioners extolling the important role of this church in their lives, and an acknowledgement of the accomplishments of those who preceded us. On a weekend in November the president of the national UCC spent time with parishioners and delivered a well-received sermon of faith, hope, and outreach. Our church continued to feed the hungry, to cloth those in need, to open our doors to a myriad of area groups, and to travel to another land to create a garden so the impoverished can become more self-sufficient. And our strong education, music, and mission programs continued to build on their solid foundations.

In 2017 this church lived out our Open and Affirming declaration and our credence that "no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome in this place" and I might add "loved" as Jesus commanded. These words are reflected in our church membership which is more diverse than ever before. We are committed to the Nepalese Church as its members hold their weekly worship services in our sanctuary and at times join us in our services. Finally, our own staff reflects an ever widening diversity with women in key positions, the first African-American to serve this church in a pastorate position (bridge part-time associate pastor), and the first openly gay male unanimously being called as our next full time associate pastor.

We as a congregation need to pause, reflect, and take pride in where we are in our 150th year. But we can't rest on our laurels for there is still much to do.....there always will be. Jesus not only wants us to follow but also to lead. In 2018 our church leadership will implore us all to recognize that this place we call FCCEJ is "Our Home, Our Future, Our Time". We will have an opportunity to hear about and vote on a Capital Campaign to address a number of items that need attention and will help us in ministering to our members and the larger community in the years ahead.

May our Lord's grace and love embrace you in 2018.

Michael Bottamini, Co-Chair, Deacons

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN NEWS



Capital Campaign Information Meetings

Sunday January 7th and 14th @ 9:45 and 11:30 (after both services)

Wednesday January 10 @ 6pm *Childcare will be provided*

January 28: Annual Meeting (campaign vote)

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from your Campaign Steering Committee! 2018 promises to be an exciting and transformational year for our church as we consider whether to move forward with a large Capital Campaign, and as we begin to learn more about how this campaign might help us more fully realize our our vision of being a welcoming church, accepting and serving all in the spirit of Christ.

Over the past month during each worship service, we have been hearing about what “Our Home, Our Future, Our Time” means to some of the folks on the Campaign Steering Committee. We know that each of YOU has your own story to tell about what our church means to you and your family.

We hope you will join us for one of the upcoming Capital Campaign Information Meetings to learn all about the proposed capital projects and budget. A preliminary list of proposed projects was developed by our Trustees, with lots of input from Church Council, committees, and the congregation during a feasibility study last fall. Our church has been working with John Alden and his architectural firm Scott & Partners to develop more detailed plans and cost estimates.

We look forward to sharing this information at the January meetings, and hearing your feedback. And we hope you will all attend the Annual Meeting on January 28 to vote on the Capital Campaign!

Dave Johnson & Kaki McGearry, Campaign Co-Chairs

HOSPITALITY



We Need YOU!

The hospitality committee is seeking people who are willing to support their work by setting up, serving and cleaning up the coffee and snacks after each service at least once per month. Please contact Jackie Parks, Hospitality Chair, if you can help out with a Sunday coffee time. kevjacmag@comcast.net

MUSIC

***SAVE THE DATE* ~ Praise-a-Palooza : Soup and Songs of Praise**

FCCEJ and Finally @ First are thrilled to again be hosting this fun evening for all ages! Mark your calendars for Saturday night, February 17th and join us at 5:30pm for a Soup Dinner followed at 6:30pm by an evening of praise music by local worship bands. Join us in welcoming bands from area churches and our very own Finally @ First. A free will offering will be taken. Hope to see you all there!



SAVE THE DATES

January 7th ~ The Baptism of Christ / Spiritual Friends / Intergenerational Worship

Thursday, January 18th ~ Third Thursday Potluck Dish Share 5:45 to 7pm

January 21st ~ Mission Sunday ~ all ages activity

January 28th ~ Ask the Pastor Sunday Worship/Annual Meeting ~ 10am worship/11:15am meeting

Thursday, February 15th ~ Third Thursday Potluck Dish Share 5:45 to 7pm

February 17th ~ Praise-A-Palooza/Soup & Songs of Praise 5:30-7:30pm

February 25th ~ Mission Sunday ~ all ages activity

March 10th ~ Jamaica Bound Calcutta

March 11th ~ Pretzel Sunday

Thursday, March 15th ~ Third Thursday Potluck Dish Share 5:45 to 7pm

March 25th ~ Palm Sunday

April 1st ~ Easter Sunday

May 14th ~ Mother's Day & Jazz Sunday

May 20th ~ Pentecost Sunday & Confirmation Sunday

June 3rd ~ 9:30am service ~ Ice Cream Social

July 29th –August 3rd ~ UCC Camp week 'HC goes to VT' at Rock Point

August 6-10th ~ Vacation Bible Camp

September 9th ~ Welcome Back Sunday ~ two services begin



Vermont Outdoor Ministry

2018 Camp brochures for our UCC camps in NH (Horton Ctr) and CT (Silver Lake) will be arriving soon. Watch for them to arrive at church!

www.hortoncenter.org or www.silverlakeect.org

Are you 18yrs or older by July? Do you like working with junior youth? Looking for community service? You too could have a fun week with room and board counseling campers during the 2018 summer! See Laurie for questions or more information.

Camp Scholarships are always accepted! Support Outdoor Ministries with a donation to our FCCEJ Camp Scholarship fund or to the VT UCC OM Scholarship Fund. Help send kids to camp for a week. M is like VB Camp only all day and over night, allowing kids and youth to grow in their faith, make friends and grow in so many ways whether on the shore of Lake Champlain at Rock Point (discription below) or to on the top of Pine Mountain at Horton Center in NH or at Silver Lake in CT.

Horton Center Comes to VT – Middler

July 29 – August 3

Entering Grades 5-8 in the Fall

\$420

Come be a part of a great community of friends at Rock Point, Horton Center style, while we explore along the shores of Lake Champlain. God's beauty will be all around us as we swim, paddle board, hike through the many nature trails, have evening campfires and s'mores, sing, worship, play games and enjoy the amazing sunsets. Rock Point is located in Burlington on the site of the Episcopal Conference Center.

STEWARDSHIP

As I write this during the crazy-busy week before Christmas, it is nice to stop to reflect upon our Church and all the wonderful people who make our worship and role in the community possible – YOU! You make our Church what it is. A place to worship, a place to learn about the scriptures, a place of friendship, kindness and acceptance. A place to help the less fortunate. A place to share joys and tears. A place of love and safety.

Thank you for pledging to the 2018 Stewardship Campaign! Your contributions will keep our Church strong, helping it meet the needs of our Congregation and our community.

The beginning of the year is a popular time for personal reassessment. Somehow, when we take down the old calendar and tack up the new, we sense an opportunity to make a fresh start. Let us pray that this new year is a time of grace and wisdom for those of us who seek to recommit our lives to our family, our Church, and our God.

On behalf of your Stewardship Committee, we hope you had a joyous Christmas holiday season, and look forward to 2018 with hope, enthusiasm and gratitude.

Kathy Finnie, Stewardship Committee Chair

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES



Music Time During Faith Formation

Cherubs ~ Our Preschool & Kindergarteners gather in the Youth Lounge to sing a song during the first few minutes before moving on to their class. Jenny Bourn has assumed the music leader position for this group.

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

December 31st ~ Epiphany Sunday ~ Come Celebrate the arrival of the Magi

January 7th ~ Holy Communion Sunday ~ Spiritual Friends ~ Intergenerational Worship

January 14th ~ Faith Formation Class time

January 21st ~ Hands On Mission Sunday

January 28th ~ one morning service at 10am ~ Faith Formation Class time for Preschool – 2nd grade
3rd – 8th in worship for Ask the Pastor Sunday (*start thinking of your question*)
Junior Youth (5-8th) help lead child care for the children during Annual Meeting.



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 all those who are in 3rd grade or above 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 on Sunday and maybe sign up for a future day also. See Laurie if you have questions.

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 next to the Acolyte sheet. Instructions are at the top of the sheet as to which rope to pull and how many times to ring the bell.



A Nursery Reminder to All



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 our 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.



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 \$1146.61

On January 21st you will be voting for your 2018 Offering Choice on our Hands On Mission Sunday! Join us!



Keep remembering to bring your offering

\$1 a week can go a long way! Bring your Faith Formation Sunday School offering each week and use the envelopes in the pews. It is really important to use these when you put your offering in the collection plate during the worship service. This way our counters know where you want your giving to go.



All our First Church Youth Programs are Parent Supported!

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

Youth Group bulletin boards can be found in the staff hallway.

Junior Youth by Laurie's office / High School Youth by Josh's office

Reminder to stay active and be engaged!

*Help a neighbor or a friend

*Bring your offering with you for worship ~ put it in the plate as general offering or use the 'color me' envelopes and support the Faith Formation offering choice for 2018

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

*Mark your calendars for upcoming events!

Junior Youth @ FCCEJ

5th - 8th graders meet TWICE a month from 11:30-1:30pm

Faith & Mission Focus ~ Meal ~ Fellowship/Games

Parents sign up for meals and to volunteer is on the JY board

January 7th ~ Group Building Games

January 21st ~ Tour the Parsonage & More

January 28th ~ Childcare for Annual Meeting

Help lead games and a fun time for the younger kids during annual meeting.

High School Youth @ FCCEJ

Let's Begin Anew

January 12th & 13th ~ Grand Kick-Off Lock-In

7pm Friday to 9am Saturday

January 21st ~ Paint the Parsonage ~ 5-7pm

January 28th ~ Annual Meeting following second service

All youth encouraged to attend ~ Youth who have been confirmed are voting members!

January 4th ~ Confirmation Class Resumes

During the first half of the year, the Confirmation class explored the bible in general and then some of the early key stories that shape our faith. We looked at the Creation Story, then the Fall, then the Exodus Story – the foundational story of the Old Testament. Our young confirmands and one of our young adults who wanted to go through confirmation are one of the most outstanding classes ever, digging deep and understanding the faith in both mature and nuanced ways.

Classes will start again on Thursday, January 4th from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

FELLOWSHIP & LEARNING



Essex Eats Out Community Dinners Continue...

1st Friday of Every Month ~ January 5th

Come - Help – Eat www.essexeatsoout.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. **Thursday, January 4th** at noon: Please join us with your lunch for games and planning programs for 2018. We will meet at noon in the Marvin Lounge. We've had some great programs for 2017 so bring your ideas so 2018 can be as fun and interesting.



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, January 19th**. 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!

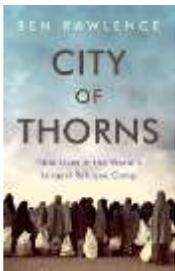
Jonah is offering two classes this winter on Monday PLUS he has added a Thursday class as well.

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. **Saturday, January 20th** at 9:30am: We hope you can join us for a discussion of the #MeToo movement (Organized as a result of the sexual harassment disclosures). Come and listen, discuss and share your thoughts and experiences with this important and timely issue.

Noontime Book Group



The Noontime Book Group will meet in the Marvin Lounge at noon on Thursday, January 18th. This month we have decided to read City of Thorns: Nine Lives in the World's Largest Refugee Camp by Ben

Rawlence. The author spent four years witnessing the strange and limbo-like Dadaab Refugee camp in the inhospitable desert of northern Kenya. In this book he interweaves the stories of nine people he got to know. Among them are a former child soldier, an indomitable youth leader, a young girl who is determined to get an education, and a person who scrapes together a living pushing a wheelbarrow, but dreams of being rich one day. He shows what life is like in the camp and tries to sketch the political forces that keep refugees trapped there.

Ladies Crafting Night Out



Do you knit, crochet or do any other crafty projects that you would like to do in fellowship with others? Join us in the Marvin Lounge the 4th Monday of each month at 7pm, **January 22nd** 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 will resume Searchers on January 3rd and our new book is “Roger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul-Church, State, and the Birth of Liberty” by John M. Barry.

There are copies available in the office. Join us for fellowship and great discussion!

MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

Missions Moment

The Missions Committee has finished up its distribution of money for 2017. Our final amounts were distributed as follows:

\$1000.00 to RAINN (**see below**)**

\$100.00 to Pastor Dan Raut of the Nepali Church to purchase gas cards for himself which will enable him to continue to provide transportation to his church members as many of them do not drive

\$250.00-money for bags for JUMP

**RAINN is an organization the Missions Committee has given money to in the past. This year, in light of the events surrounding sexual assault and sexual harassment recently, we decided to donate again.

As a reminder, “RAINN is the nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization and was named one of “America’s 100 Best Charities” by Worth magazine. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800-656-HOPE or online at online.rainn.org) in partnership with more than 1,000 local sexual assault service providers across the country and operates the DoD Safe Helpline for the Department of Defense. RAINN also carries out programs to prevent sexual violence, help victims, and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.”



Vermont Interfaith Action

Transforming People and Communities

January 16th ~ Join Us To Learn About VT Interfaith Action Agency

On January 16th at 7:00 pm in the Marvin Lounge the Missions Committee will be hosting Debbie Ingram of the Vermont Interfaith Action Agency. She will be educating us on what this Agency does and how we may begin to play a part or parts in the Agency’s work. The Missions Committee would like to invite any church members interested in Social Justice to join us to hear what Debbie has to tell us.

We look forward to seeing many of you there.

Thank you From the Giving Tree!

Again this Christmas season, the many families who received gifts for their children through the Giving Tree program have expressed so often how very grateful they are for the generosity of our congregation. One mother stated that our gifts mean that her children would wake up on Christmas morning with their voices filled with excitement and joy. Another stated that our gifts would be the only ones that her child would receive. It can be difficult for us to imagine what it must be like to struggle to celebrate the spirit of giving at Christmas. Thank you to each of you for bringing joy to so many during this season of Christ's birth.



3rd Annual Jamaica Calcutta Fundraiser

The Jamaica Committee is pleased to announce the 4th annual Calcutta to be held at the Catamount Country Club in Williston on Saturday, March 10, 2017. Mark your calendars to save the date! Cocktails will begin at 5:30 PM with dinner at 6:30 PM. Jamie Polli will begin the Calcutta at 7:30 PM. Early bird ticket sales began on December 1st. **All tickets purchased by January 15th**

will be entered into the drawing for a \$100 cash prize. If you purchased a ticket last year, you will have received a letter in early December inviting you to reserve last year's ball number. Everyone is welcome to buy tickets early. To purchase tickets, stop by the Jamaica table in the fellowship hall beginning December 10th or contact Sharon Dettenrieder at 802-871-5308 or dettenriedeS@hartwick.edu. Tickets cost \$125 each and include dinner for two and the chance to win the grand prize of \$1000 and other prizes awarded throughout the evening. Checks should be made out to "FCCEJ" with "Jamaica" in the memo line. Hope to see you there!

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 January 24th**. Please contact Peter Schmalz (pnschmalz@comcast.net) if interested. There is also a sign-up sheet in the hallway entering Fellowship Hall. 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 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 rewarding mission!



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



Paint the Parsonage Weekend

January 19th, 20th & 21st come and help paint the parsonage. Easy painting as this will be before the carpets are replaced! Snacks & Drinks to share, sign-up next to Josh's office.

Heavenly Food Pantry Needs Donations

Next Food Pantry days are Monday, January 8th, 5:30-7:30pm
and Thursday, January 25th, 2-6pm

We are in need of baked beans, tuna fish, cereal, jam & jelly and
canned fruit to restock our cabinets.



In Need of Long Red Toboggan Sleds to Borrow For our clients to bring their Food Pantry bags home in the winter-the shopping carts don't work well!



Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Can Use Fall/Winter Donations

Regular Hours: 10am-3pm Tues & Wed, 4-8pm Thurs, 9am-12pm 1st Saturday
Winter Donations can be dropped off at the Shop anytime.
Winter Potluck, January 15th, 6pm Marvin Lounge

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 Josh, Pastor Mark or a member of the CE team.



Faith Formation Class Leaders & Helpers – be a leader or helper in our 1st & 2nd grade classroom. Weekly emails are sent out to leaders as we plan for class peer time during on Sunday mornings. All items are gathered for you.

Spiritual Friends – join Laurie on the First Sundays of the month on the 2nd floor and we'll have great conversations with our preschool and kindergarteners. 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.

Childcare for Annual Meeting

Join the Junior Youth and help them with games, craft and snacks with the younger children during Annual meeting on January 28th following the second service. See Pastor Josh or Laurie for more information.

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 ask the congregation for help in getting people to usher and greet. Lining up volunteers to usher and greet has become more of a challenge. Phone calls and emails sometimes get no responses. You can choose a date to sign up at <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0e4fae2daafe3-ushergreeter> make a note in the friendship book or contact Ann Marie Sullivan 879-6044 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 where people pick up their own bulletins from a table as they enter. Thank you for your help!

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

January's Special Offering is January 28th for the Endowment

Please pick up your offering envelopes in Fellowship Hall if you requested them for your pledge



2018 Flower Chart is UP!

In the hallway out of Fellowship Hall, choose a date to remember loved ones or honor a special date in your family! \$34 for the flowers and you can take them or leave them for us to find someone who needs some love!



January Birthdays

1st Paulette Frisbie, Nicholas Rushford; 3rd Teddy Owens 4th Donna Dulaney, Arthur Winslow; 9th Natalie Whitfield 10th Jen Celia, Jeff Nowell, Sara Sinkewicz, Beth Terry; 11th Steven Donley, Alex Dooley; 15th Ed Guild, Wayne Hall, Elaine Helmstutler; 18th Harold Bergeron; 19th Molly Mannarino; 20th Carolyn Harris; 21st Ed Dean, Matthew Kellogg; 24th Penny Williams; 25th Cathy Shearer, Allison Vansteensburg; 26th Ingrid Gilliam, Charlotte Stoneback; 29th Kevin McCullen; 31st Nolan Boerger

Fall 150th Newsletter FCCEJ Trivia Answers

We couldn't resist one last trivia question – Rev. Joshua Simon is our ninth Associate Pastor.

Can you name the other eight (two of them were interims)?

Rev. Jean Reidel (1980-1984), Rev. Ross Putnam (1984-1991), Rev. Kyle Roggenbuck (1991-1994), Rev. Heike Werner (1994-2000), Rev. Tim Leconey (2000-2005), Rev. Sandy Daly – interim (2005-2008) Rev. Ryan Gackenheimer (2008-2016), Rev. Devon Thomas – interim (2016-2017)



Christmas Pageant Thank You

Many thanks to all those who helped in any way to help make this pageant happen... from those behind the scenes to those wearing costumes and saying lines. The pageant is one of my favorite times in the life of the church! Your energy feeds me and keeps my spirit alive! Blessings, Laurie



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