

# The Spirit at First February 2018



## The Pastor's Ponderings.....

It seems hard to believe that the Season of Lent begins on Wednesday February 14<sup>th</sup>! Lent is a penitential season where we deepen our relationship with God. When I was young, that process stressed giving up worldly pleasures in order to draw closer to heavenly pleasures – leave the worldly behind for God. People gave up alcohol, food, caffeine, sugar, chocolate, intimacy and the like so that they could focus their attention on God. As our particular form of Christianity has matured, spiritual leaders realized that instead of giving up behaviors that draw us away from God, one could take on new behaviors that deepen our relationship with God and align us more with Christ's teaching of love and forgiveness – a focus on the positive instead of the negative.

In my spiritual life, I have learned that doing both can be helpful. So here are some suggestions

### Things to Give Up

1. Unhealthy foods: sugar, starch, desserts, processed food, caffeine, sugary drinks, candy, chocolate, specialty coffees to go, potato chips
2. Addictive Behaviors: alcohol, coffee, gambling, marijuana, prescription drugs, excessive sugar, your choice.
3. Overworking, over scheduling, over playing, over anything
4. Television, cable, internet surfing, Facebook, YOUR PHONE, i-pod/pads
5. Gossip, mean spirited conversation, political discussions, off color humor, criticisms of another

### Things to Take On

1. Healthy food: more vegetables, more fruits, less or no meat, cook own meals
2. Drink more water and intentionally breathe more deeply
3. Spend more time with your family, friends and people you love.
4. Write one letter a day: offer greetings, seek forgiveness, re-connect.
5. Read, play, get outside, exercise, laugh, use your mind in a new way
6. Pray, journal, read bible, fast once a week, be quiet and listen for God, go to church more often, invite a church friend and their family over to dinner.
7. Seek justice: write a letter to congress, learn more about a subject that is weighing heavily on your heart, join a protest, visit one of our Congressman, donate money to a worthy cause, volunteer at some social service agency
8. Help someone with anything! Secretly do something for another...and never tell them!
9. List three things you are grateful for each day and post them on the fridge.
10. Talk to Rev. Mark or Rev. Josh about a spiritual issue that has gotten in your way of living a healthy, meaningful life.

When you give something up, then use the money or time you would normally use doing the unhealthy behavior on something good. Donate the money you would normally spend on alcohol or junk food to a favorite cause. Volunteer the time you would have used on some wasted thing on some activity more healthy for you and your soul. And whether you choose to give something up or take something on or both, remember the key is to focus that change in behavior on God and use the change to focus on God and/or the good.

Journeying with you in Lent, I am yours in Christ, Rev. Mark

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# SPECIAL SERVICES & EVENTS IN FEBRUARY

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## **February 4<sup>th</sup>, Both Services ~ Communion Sunday**

Communion will be handed out to everyone in their pews

## **February 11<sup>th</sup>, After Both Services ~ Renew Your Wedding Vows**

After each service on February 11<sup>th</sup>, the Sunday closest to Valentine's Day, we will offer anyone who would like to renew your commitment to your partner to stay in the sanctuary after church and renew your vows. The service is no more than five minutes but you re-state your promises, hear an appropriate scripture, accept a prayer on behalf of your love, and seal the renewal with a kiss. Each couple will also receive a gift to remember the special day. Come as you are or dress up a bit, get your hair done and wear a corsage. All proceedings are of course free!

## **February 14<sup>th</sup>, 7pm~ Ash Wednesday**

Lent starts early this year and it always starts with Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday is when we acknowledge that we are a creature like all others, created by God and precious, perhaps unique, but still a creature. God created us. This year, the Ash Wednesday service will be a little different so I encourage everyone to attend and draw on this ancient ritual to bring depth and meaning to your life.

## **February 18<sup>th</sup> ~ Outdoor Ministry Special Offering**

See Laurie's Lens for more information

## **February 21<sup>st</sup>, 7-8:30pm ~ Sermon Talkback TWO!**

Upon my arrival at First Congo EJ, the Christian Education Committee requested that I immediately provide some adult educational experiences. Kids had plenty but there is a clamor from our adults to learn about the bible and faith. The next week, we had a Tuesday Morning Sermon Talkback group that has ranged anywhere from 10 to 35 people every week. We analyzed last week's service and sermon and anything else that people wanted to bring up...and they did! We have coffee and a snack if we are lucky and debate issues of the day, events in the life of our church, and sometimes local issues that affect us all. We try to avoid politics and always offer help and support to anyone going through a particularly difficult time in their lives.

Since then, there has regularly been murmuring about the possibility of offering a SERMON TALKBACK IN THE EVENING. How often have I heard that people wished they could come and talk about such and such a point but they had to work. Regularly, people have asked for an evening Sermon Talkback.

WELL HERE IT COMES! Starting on February 21<sup>st</sup>, from 7-8:30, there will be a second evening Sermon Talkback group led by either Rev. Mark or Rev. Josh. Once people come, we will determine if folks want a snack or not. There will be a pot of decaf ready to go. Come by yourself or bring a friend and together we will unpack the sermon and explore anything we want.

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## ASSOCIATE PASTOR NEWS

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The parsonage is painted. Thank you to everyone who either painted or provided snacks for us. I do not plan on painting walls again for a very, very long time. (There will be an open house/house warming party at some point in March.) One of the great joys of being a pastor is the chance to live in a parsonage. Not many churches in the United Church of Christ still have their parsonage, so I'm very grateful to live in First Church's parsonage, where many pastors before me have lived. I'm also glad to become a member of the Essex Junction community. My parents and grandmother are coming from Wisconsin to move the rest of my stuff here the first weekend in February. They will worship with us on Sunday, February 4<sup>th</sup>. I am excited to see them and for you all to meet them.

January 12-13<sup>th</sup> we hosted the High School Lock-In. We had plenty of fun talking about our favorite TV shows while painting the Youth Lounge blue and purple—some might call it pink rather than purple, but it is supposed to be a purple. **In February, High School Youth Group will meet at the church on February 11<sup>th</sup> at 5pm. In addition to fun and games, we will learn about Jamaica and the church's mission trip there in 2019! February 18<sup>th</sup>, we will be playing laser tag.**

**Penguin Plunge is at the beginning of the month: February 3<sup>rd</sup>.** Join me and others from First Congregational as we plunge into the frigid cold weather, or as young millennials like to call it, a cold shower. Gather at Burlington Waterfront Park shortly before Noon. Money raised from the event will go to the Special Olympics of Vermont.

Youth Mission Trip to New York City is June 17<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>. **Youth (7<sup>th</sup> grade and up) are welcome to join us!** We will take the train to New York City. While we are in New York City, the Youth Services Opportunities Project (YSOP) will have us work with various organizations throughout the city. YSOP is dedicated to helping young people become engaged citizens and empower them to become problem solvers. Most of our time will be spent feeding and working on projects for New Yorkers who are homeless and who are hungry. There will be plenty of time for us to explore New York City. Cost of the trip \$150 (financial assistance is available, just ask me). **The deadline to sign-up is February 28<sup>th</sup>, along with 50% of the total cost.**

Lastly, **young adults (young adults at heart) are invited to dinner at the parsonage on Friday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7pm.** Young adults who have children are welcome to bring them along. I will provide the meal. Please, email me if you intend to attend.

Blessings, Josh



## Laurie's Lens

As we begin the season of Lent which starts with Ash Wednesday, February 14<sup>th</sup> this year and last for 40 days, my time moves into planning our Lenten programs along with Pretzel Sunday. Lent is followed by the period of 50 days of Eastertide, or the season of Easter, ending on Pentecost Sunday. Easter moves around each year due to its date being determined by the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the first day of Spring or the March equinox. Therefore, the date of Easter can be anywhere between March 22 and April 25<sup>th</sup>. Once you determine the day of Easter, you then count backwards on the calendar 40 days, not counting Sundays, to arrive on Ash Wednesday.

I have found the season of Lent much more meaningful when I take on something new or add a forgotten task back into my life, much more so than giving something up. When I think of Jesus' time on earth and all the stories of his life with the disciples, he took on a lot and his burdens were many. This Lent I plan to write notes, send cards and be more intentional about connecting with people in my life, especially those I have lost touch with or do not see very often. I hope you too will find a way to spread the love of Christ to others, be an active disciple, reach out to those in need, volunteer where and when you can, watch for the love of God in people and be open to the Spirit moving...however and wherever it chooses. Try reaching beyond your comfort zone...Outdoor Ministry camps can do all that...helping you learn and grow, no matter your age. Campers arrive, some new and some who have been before, to a trained volunteer counseling team with great dean leaders who have planned a full week of sharing the love of Christ with others, being helpful, promoting peace and compassion for one another, living out the golden rule in a fun learning environment...God's outdoor playground. Campers work together in teams, worship, sing and play as they find the love of God in many places and people. During the week of UCC 'Horton Center goes to VT' at Rock Point camp, they also do mission work in the Burlington community. Last year they made a meal at Ronald McDonald House and served a meal at the Salvation Army. Attending church and faith formation helps you gather and build your faith foundation and relationship with God, but it's just one hour a week or three if you are old enough for youth group. That's only 52 hours per year at the most, and another 36 or so if they attend youth group and plus 50-60 hours for confirmation class. When you think how many hours there are in a year, this is very little. What you do as a family can help these numbers, but what else does a faith community offer? Weeks of camp! Whether it be Vacation Bible Camp that packs in 12-15 hours in a week or Outdoor Ministry camps that do even more with 12-15 hour days for a full week. A strong foundation of faith is what everyone needs. It helps us handle all the ups and downs of life and our children and youth are no exception. Help them dive deeper and stay more connected to their God who is always walking beside them. Register your son or daughter for camp or give a donation.

On February 18<sup>th</sup> there will be a Special offering for VT Outdoor Ministry and our UCC camping program. Half of the money collected will go to help fund the VT UCC program week at Rock Point with scholarships for youth to attend throughout the whole state and the other half will help youth from this church attend that week or another week at a UCC camp. Did you attend a camp? Maybe you have sent your child/youth to a camp? I hope you will consider an OM camp this year for your child or youth. There are many to choose from. Stop by the Outdoor Ministry board in the downstairs Narthex by the glass doors! If you have attending a UCC camp, please send me a few sentences about your experience. I would love to share them on the board!

Blessing to you on your faith journey as we walk together with God!

Laurie, *Christian Education Director*

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## DEACON'S CORNER

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When I sat down to write this bit for the newsletter I had a lot of ideas on topics I could write about. I knew I had to pick one. So being that it's February I went with love. We need more of it in this world.

Love is not Lost...

Love is not lost if given away

It's a message received by others each day.

Bringing comfort to a despairing heart

Instilling joy where only sadness had a part.

Love can give hope to one who has none

Replacing dread and fear, giving peace to some

Fulfilling its purpose, it enriches each life

Putting an end to warring and strife.

Where there is love,

there is no room for hate

True Love is unable to discriminate.

With love in your heart

to meet each day.

Guess what happens

when you give it away?

It returns to you

with wings, unbound

Love is never lost...

If it's truly found....By Lori Giannuzzi

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## MUSIC

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### **February 10<sup>th</sup> ~ 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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!



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# CAPITAL CAMPAIGN NEWS

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On Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup> at the Annual Meeting, our congregation will come together to consider, among other things, whether to move forward with a Capital Campaign. We are asking the congregation to approve a Capital Campaign goal of \$822,000 to raise the funds needed for key renovations and improvements that will maintain and preserve our beautiful, historic facilities, make our home more welcoming and accessible, and further our efforts to expand ministry and outreach.

In January, more than 80 people attended a series of Informational Meetings to learn more about all of the proposed Capital Campaign projects. The response was very positive, and we received lots of great questions, suggestions and feedback. All of these comments have been shared with the architects, the Campaign Building Team (which is comprised of Trustee members) and the full Campaign Steering Committee so that we can incorporate them into project plans wherever possible.

In case you weren't able to attend one of the Informational Meetings, we mailed copies of the materials to everyone along with the Annual Meeting notice. You can also find information on our website at [www.fccej.org](http://www.fccej.org), and we invite you to look around the church for the "arrows" pointing to all of the proposed projects...almost everywhere you look, you will find something in our church that will benefit from this Capital Campaign!

The proposed projects for this Capital Campaign include asphalt roof replacement and slate roof repairs, sanctuary restoration, organ repairs, window preservation and replacement, parking lot improvements, a new vestibule entry and ADA compliant bathroom near Fellowship Hall, a new ADA bathroom in the Marvin Lounge, repairs to heating and insulation in the administrative wing, and the completion of the kitchen renovation. The total projected cost of these projects, including contingency and project management, is \$822,000. We have also set a "Stretch Goal" of \$1.09 million to fund other accessibility, safety, efficiency and maintenance projects if we are able to exceed our initial goal. A complete list of the proposed projects can be found on our website at [www.fccej.org](http://www.fccej.org).

If approved on the 28<sup>th</sup>, the Campaign will begin almost immediately and run through early June. Project construction would begin as early as next August. If you have any questions, please reach out to one of the Steering Committee members wearing an "Our Home, Our Future, Our Time" button.

We urge you to attend the Annual Meeting so you can participate in this important vote about the future of this place we all love and call *Our Home*.

With many thanks on behalf of the Capital Campaign Steering Committee,

Kaki McGeary & Dave Johnson, Co-Chairs

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## SAVE THE DATES

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*February 10<sup>th</sup>* ~ Praise-A-Palooza/Soup & Songs of Praise 5:30-7:30pm

*Thursday, February 15<sup>th</sup>* ~ Third Thursday Potluck Dish Share 5:45 to 7pm

*February 25<sup>th</sup>* ~ Mission Sunday ~ all ages activity

*March 10<sup>th</sup>* ~ Jamaica Bound Calcutta

*March 11<sup>th</sup>* ~ Pretzel Sunday ~ Adult Kitchen volunteers needed to mix dough and bake

*Thursday, March 15<sup>th</sup>* ~ Third Thursday Potluck Dish Share 5:45 to 7pm

*March 25<sup>th</sup>* ~ Palm Sunday

*April 1<sup>st</sup>* ~ Easter Sunday

*May 14<sup>th</sup>* ~ Mother's Day & Jazz Sunday

*May 20<sup>th</sup>* ~ Pentecost & Confirmation Sunday

*June 3<sup>rd</sup>* ~ ONE 9:30am service ~ Ice Cream Social

*July 29<sup>th</sup> –August 3<sup>rd</sup>* ~ UCC Camp week 'HC goes to VT' at Rock Point

*August 6-10<sup>th</sup>* ~ Vacation Bible Camp ~ *Volunteer recruitment has begun* ~ Youth & Adults

*September 9<sup>th</sup>* ~ Welcome Back Sunday ~ two services begin

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## STEWARDSHIP

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### **Automatic Bill Payment – It's Easy!**

Everyone is so busy, and if you're like me, you're looking for ways to simplify your life! Automatic bill payment – for my mortgage, utilities, phone, credit card, and to my Church – has made my financial life a lot easier and less stressful! No need to remember to grab the checkbook as I'm running out the door to Church!

No need to feel guilty when a busy schedule has made my attendance at Church more infrequent while the expenses of the Church continue. And no need to worry about making up for missed contributions. How does it work? Contact your bank. I signed up for it online. I designated the date, amount and provided the Church's contact information. Every month, the bank sends the Church a check for our contribution. It's just as easy as that, and it's FREE!

### **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](mailto:kfinnievt@gmail.com) or 802-734-9688 and we'll find a date that works for you. Thank you!

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# CAMP

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## Vermont Outdoor Ministry

Have you seen the new Outdoor Ministry bulletin board by the main church glass entry way? Stop by on your way up to the Sanctuary and see the fun t-shirt and paints you could win and take to camp with you this summer! The 2018 Silver Lake Camp brochure has arrived and Horton Center's will soon be here. Sign up and register for a week of summer fun and have your name put in a drawing here at FCCEJ to win a shirt or sweat pants. You could be the lucky winner! We have 7 \$100 Scholarships here at FCCEJ to help you attend a week of camp this summer. If you are going into 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the fall, why not attend a week at Rock Point Camp from July 29<sup>th</sup> - August 3<sup>rd</sup> and paddle board on Lake Champlain and do community service in Burlington, along with many other fun activities. Register for this camp on the Horton Center website below. Registration for the 2018 summer is open on both camp websites below.  
[www.hortoncenter.org](http://www.hortoncenter.org) or [www.silverlakeect.org](http://www.silverlakeect.org)

## Be a Volunteer Counselor for a Week of Camp

Are you 18yrs or older by July? Do you like working with junior youth? Looking for community service or something really good to put on your resumé? You too could have a fun week with free room and board counseling campers during the 2018 summer! Think of it... no cooking or laundry for a week, just great fun in God's outdoors! Especially recruiting for Rock Point week. See Laurie for more information.

## VT UCC Outdoor Ministries Scholarship Funds

Give a donation to our FCCEJ Camp Scholarship fund or to the VT UCC OM Scholarship Fund by putting a check in the offering plate. Please write one down one of these scholarship funds in the memo line. Help send kids to camp for a week, whether from our church or across our great state of VT. OM is like VB Camp only all day and over night, allowing kids and youth to grow in their faith, making friends and spreading their wings in a fun, safe and Spirit filled atmosphere...whether on the shores of Lake Champlain at Rock Point or to on the top of Pine Mountain at Horton Center, NH or at Silver Lake, CT.

*Our Vermont OM Week at Rock Point Camp*

## Horton Center Goes to Vermont ~ 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 in Burlington on the site of the Episcopal Conference Center.



## Vacation Bible Camp 2018

August 6-10

**Rolling River Rampage: Experience the Ride of a Lifetime with God!**

*Monday – Friday from 9am to 11:45am*

VB Camp is a week of energy and excitement of seeing God’s Love in Action!

All are encouraged to join up and be a part of this fun week!

**Calling all KIDS ~~ Registration is now OPEN!**

**Groups:** You & Me (toddler & parent/grandparent)

Preschool (three & fours - potty trained) up through those entering 5<sup>th</sup> grade in the fall.

**Now Recruiting for ...**

**Station Leader:** Bible Drama ~ Crafts ~ Discovery ~ Games ~ Music ~ Snack

**Helpers:** Youth (entering sixth grade & up), College Students/ Adults of all ages!

See Laurie for more information and to sign up!

## 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 – 6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**February 4<sup>th</sup>** ~ Holy Communion Sunday ~ Spiritual Friends ~ Intergenerational Worship

*Children & youth are encouraged to sign up to be a reader in worship.*

**February 11<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>** ~ Faith Formation Class time

**February 25<sup>th</sup>** ~ Hands On Mission Sunday



### 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 for 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.

## 2017 Faith Formation Sunday School Offering

Congratulations on your offering for the Humane Society of Chittenden County! **Your 2017 total was \$1509.12**



A check will be going to the *Humane Society of Chittenden County* that relies completely on outside donations to stay open and helps give pets a home while waiting for their new homes. We will celebrate your donation to them soon. Stay tuned.

*On January 21<sup>st</sup> you voted for where your 2018 Offering will go. The 3 Choices were...*

**Jamaica Children** – Scholarship money for school uniforms and books for children.

**JUMP – Joint Urban Ministry Project** – Helping local families with basic needs for groceries, transportation (gas cards), utilities, etc.

**OMCS – Outdoor Ministry Camp Scholarship** – Support local kids to attend our UCC camp week of camp at Rock Point in Burlington this July.

*Vote totals were: Jamaica Children ...114; OMCS ...56; JUMP ...54*

## 2018 Faith Formation Offering ~ Jamaica Children

*Keep remembering to bring your Offering!*

\$1 a week can go a long way! Just think what you spend a \$1 on. If every child and youth contributed a \$1 a week we could raise over \$2000 to help Jamaica kids have uniforms and books so they can go to school and learn to read and write. Bring your Faith Formation Sunday School offering each week and use the envelopes in the pews so your money goes to the Jamaica Children. It is really important to use these envelopes, especially on Sundays when you put your offering in the collection plate during worship.





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**

5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> graders meet TWICE a month from 11:30-1:30pm

Faith & Mission Focus ~ Meal ~ Fellowship/Games

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

**January 28<sup>th</sup>** ~ Help with Childcare for Annual Meeting in Fellowship Hall

*Healthy Snack Potluck table*

**February 4<sup>th</sup>** ~ Sub Sunday & Fun Youth time

**February 18<sup>th</sup>** ~ Fun Youth time

### **High School Youth @ FCCEJ**

Let's Begin Anew

**January 28<sup>th</sup>** ~ Annual Meeting following second service

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

**February 11<sup>th</sup>, 5pm** ~ Fun and games, learn about 2019 Jamaica Mission Trip

**February 18<sup>th</sup>** ~ Laser Tag

### **Youth Mission Trip to New York City**

Sunday, June 17<sup>th</sup>- Friday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>

Youth (7<sup>th</sup> grade and up) will spend four days serving various communities throughout the city, feeding those who are homeless and other projects. We'll work with the Youth Services Opportunities Project, an organization focused on helping young people realize they have the power to change their communities. We will also have fun exploring New York City. \$150 per youth (financial assistance available, just ask Pastor Josh) 50% deposit is due February 28<sup>th</sup>

Questions? Talk to Pastor Josh



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# FELLOWSHIP & LEARNING

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## Essex Eats Out Community Dinners Continue...

1<sup>st</sup> Friday of Every Month ~ February 2<sup>nd</sup>

Come - Help – Eat [www.essexeatsoout.org](http://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, February 1:** Please join us with your lunch at noon in the Marvin Lounge to learn about HomeShare VT. We have a speaker coming from the organization to tell us about their organization and how it works. On their website they state: “HomeShare Vermont is all about people helping each other.” (<https://www.homesharevermont.org>) Come and listen and learn about this important program open to all Vermonters.

## The Community of Bridge

Love to play bridge? Well, there are a lot of folks at First Church who do and they get together every month to play for a few hours: every 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday from 1:30 – 4:00. This month the date is **Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup>**. There are always some delectable snacks, free coffee and good conversation. All skill levels play and are welcome as we laugh and enjoy each other’s company. Join us! The winner takes home Rev. Mark’s delicious jam...yum.



## Yoga @ First Now Offers TWO WEEKLY CLASSES!

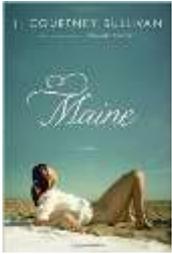


Jonah is offering two classes this winter on Monday PLUS he has added a Thursday class as well.

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, February 17:** Please join us at 9:30 in the Marvin Lounge for a continuation of our January discussion about sexual harassment and bringing about systemic changes at home, in the workplace and in our communities. We would like to extend an invitation to any of our mothers in the church to come and share with us how they are raising their children to be strong and respectful of all human beings.



### Noontime Book Group

The Noontime Book Group will meet in the Marvin Lounge at noon on **Thursday, February 15<sup>th</sup>**. This month we will be reading Maine by J.

Courtney Sullivan. This book explores the dynamics of four women with nothing in common except that they are related by family ties. It

explores in both humorous and sad ways the issues of sibling rivalry, alcoholism, social climbing, and religious guilt along with the often irrational love that keeps bringing them back to Maine every summer. Bring a bag lunch and join us for friendship, conversation and a good discussion of a fun book that we can all relate to.



### Coffee Clatter @ Martone's

Every Friday at 8:05 a.m., Revs Mark and Josh 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!



Coffee Fellowship

### 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, **February 26<sup>th</sup>** for a time of common crafting. All are welcome!



### Tuesday Morning Sermon Talkbacks, 8:30 – 10am

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



### Sermon Talkback TWO, 7-8:30pm

Starting on February 21<sup>st</sup>, from 7-8:30, there will be a second evening Sermon Talkback group led by either Rev. Mark or Rev. Josh. Once people come, we will determine if folks want a snack or not. There will be a pot of decaf ready to go. Come by yourself or bring a friend and together we will unpack the sermon and explore anything we want. For more on this, see Pastor Mark's article in 'Special Services & Events in February'



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# MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

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## Missions Moment

The Missions Committee is pleased to announce that Ed Steele has volunteered to be the newest Dismas House coordinator for First Congregational Church of Essex Junction! Thank you, Ed! Ed will be looking for volunteers (former and new) to help prepare a meal on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month (February 28<sup>th</sup> & March 28<sup>th</sup> coming up!). The meal should be able to feed approximately 12 people and the parts of the meal to be provided can be divided up amongst each month's volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Ed at (802) 871-5897 or at [edwardmsteele@msn.com](mailto:edwardmsteele@msn.com). Thank you!

*“The mission of Dismas of Vermont, Inc. is to reconcile former prisoners with society and society with former prisoners. Community is fundamentally about relationship and it is precisely the relationship between the person who has committed a crime and their community that is broken, first by the real harm done by the crime committed and subsequently by the alienation that results from incarceration. In reconciliation, wholeness is restored to the former prisoner and to society.*

*If we hold people accountable for their actions as a matter of justice, then reconciliation is a completion of that justice. For a former prisoner to be reconciled to their community that person needs to overcome the sense of alienation –that sense of being an outsider and unwanted and they must become participating members of their community, they must be returned to full citizenship with all its responsibilities and rights.”*

## 4th Annual Jamaica Calcutta Fundraiser



The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Cabin Fever Calcutta to benefit the Jamaica Mission program is fast approaching! The Calcutta will be held at the Catamount Country Club in Williston on Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup>! Cocktails will begin at 5:30 PM with dinner at 6:30 PM. Jamie Polli will begin the Calcutta at 7:30 PM. This is a great way to get out mid-winter for a fun and social evening with friends!

Tickets are on sale now. Stop by the Jamaica table in the Fellowship Hall on Sundays or contact Sharon Dettenrieder at 871-5308 or [dettenriedes@hartwick.edu](mailto:dettenriedes@hartwick.edu). Tickets cost \$125 each and include dinner for two and the chance to win the grand prize of \$1000. You do not need to be present to win the grand prize. Door prizes will be awarded throughout the evening to those in attendance. Checks should be made out to “FCCEJ” with “Jamaica” in the memo line. We will have the popular “wine pull” event, and will be raffling a tablet! Proceeds from the Calcutta will go toward our next Jamaica mission, in July 2019. If you are interested in joining the 2019 Team, please stop by the table or contact Carolyn Rushford at 878-9593 ([cjrushford@comcast.net](mailto:cjrushford@comcast.net)) or Sharon Dettenrieder (contact info above). We will be speaking with youth in the Confirmation Class and Youth group in the next month to share more information about the program. Adults and youth who will be 16 or older by July 2019 are invited to apply.

Hope to see you at the Calcutta!

## Dismas House

Across the state of Vermont there are four Dismas Houses tasked with providing shelter and support to men and women making the difficult transition from incarceration to new lives. First Church's connection is with the Dismas House in Winooski. For several years now, we have once a month been serving a dinner on the 4th Wednesday of the month to the residents of the House in Winooski. Living there is a professional manager along with 10 to 15 people who have been released from prison after serving their prison terms. Our service to Dismas House comes from our belief that all of us are imperfect human beings, but that we all have the potential to be better people, and that that potential can be best realized with the support of others. Our participation in this program helps to lessen the feelings of estrangement that people released from prison are often burdened with. Those of us who have been to Dismas House have found the people to be friendly. They appreciate our help. In some instances, their appreciation is effusive.



**We are currently looking for volunteers for February 28<sup>th</sup> & March 28<sup>th</sup>.** Please contact Ed Steele at 871-5897 or [edwardmsteele@msn.com](mailto:edwardmsteele@msn.com) if interested or with any questions. 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 12-16 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, great for retired folks on down and you can donate part of the meal even if you are not able to attend.

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## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

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### Heavenly Food Pantry Needs Donations

Next Food Pantry days are Monday, February 12th, 5:30-7:30pm  
and Thursday, February 22nd, 2-6pm

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



### Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Accepting Winter Donations

Regular Hours: 10am-3pm Tues & Wed, 4-8pm Thurs, 9am-12pm 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday

#### **Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Winter Update**

Saturday Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> Open 9 am to 1 pm.- *new closing time*

Saturday Feb 17<sup>th</sup> from 9 am to 1:00 pm for the 50% off sale

Saturday March 3<sup>rd</sup> Open 9 am to 1 pm

Feb 3 to March 20<sup>th</sup> – All Winter Clothing 50% off- Plenty of winter sweater, hats, coats & pants available  
March 20 to April 13<sup>th</sup> - \$2 bag sale including Nearly New Items.  
Shop is accepting Winter Clothes Until March 20<sup>th</sup>.

Starting April 1<sup>st</sup> we will only accept Spring and Summer clothes. For further info or would like to volunteer, please let contact Linda Bogardus at [lbogardus@myfairpoint.net](mailto:lbogardus@myfairpoint.net). We especially looking for volunteers to work additional Saturdays during the month.

### **Volunteer for 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.

*Spiritual Friends* – join Laurie on the First Sundays of the month on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and we'll have great conversations with 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.



### **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](mailto: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!

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# OUR CHURCH FAMILY

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## February's Special Offering is February 18<sup>th</sup> for Outdoor Ministry

### February Birthdays

1<sup>st</sup> Barb Blanchette, 2<sup>nd</sup> Clint Russell, Tyler Warren, 4<sup>th</sup> Ethan Benton, Jo Haines 6<sup>th</sup> Kathy Finnie, 8<sup>th</sup> Maggie Parks, 9<sup>th</sup> Jason Field, Ethan Goedken 12<sup>th</sup> Anna Charland, Peter Gray, 14<sup>th</sup> Mark Benton, Abigail Evans, Nancy Parker, 15<sup>th</sup> Cindy Longwell, Rachel Wood, 16<sup>th</sup> Emily Ehler, Allen Potter, 17<sup>th</sup> Sharon Beebe, Joy Raut 19<sup>th</sup> Betty Garrapy, John Mauger, George Paul, 20<sup>th</sup> Elijah Edwards, Kaydence Johnson, Sullivan Martin, 22<sup>nd</sup> Molly Bourn, Duke Ehler, Sue Holden, John Kinney, Mason Smith, 24<sup>th</sup> Cheryl Ahokas, Sharon Dettenrieder 25<sup>th</sup> Robert Davis, Bob Kent, 26<sup>th</sup> Val Gabert, Matt McGear, 27<sup>th</sup> Braeden Koch



### February 1st ~ Barb Blanchette TURNS 90!!!

Her family would love for us to 'shower' Barb with beautiful Happy Birthday cards! Please send them to: Pillbury Manor, The Gazebo 1530 Williston Road So. Burlington VT 05403

### Thank You's

Dear Giving Tree, Once again, thank you so much for your generous gifts to the children at Summit Street and Fleming schools. Thanks for spreading love and fun! Happy Holidays to all. Warm wishes, Kathleen Ready, School Nurse



Dear FCCEJ Members, Thank you so much for helping to support so many of our families this holidays season. It means so much to us and our EES families. We hope you all have a wonderful holiday season! Warmest wishes, Essex Elementary Student Support Team



Thank you to Rev. Karen Mendes for a wonderful Sermon on Martin Luther King weekend!



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- Phone us at 802-878-5745, OR
- Mail this page back to us at the address above

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