



The Spirit at First March 2018

And He shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Isaiah 2:4

The events of yet another murdering spree at a Florida High School leaving 17 innocent people dead, mostly young, has left me numb. At Tuesday Morning Sermon Talkback, someone caught me saying, “well the next time this happens we will need to” and observed how sad the state of affairs is to so easily assume that there will be another murderous spree in a couple of months. Indeed! Of course, all of us from the Junction remember how our own High School was lock downed just a couple of months ago with rumors of violence and bomb threats swirling through the technological air: Karen and I worrying madly for the safety of our own son.

As your spiritual leader, it seems obvious to state that God wants humanity to live in peace. The prophets cried out for the warring madness to cease and envisioned a life where instruments of war would not be needed and instead turned into instruments of farming. Both the beginning in the garden and the ending in the city portray peace and harmony among a diverse group of peoples and creatures. Paul demands that as far as it is within our power, we should live in peace with our neighbors. And Jesus, the Man who most closely reflects the nature of God, demands that we not only love our neighbors as ourselves, but that we love our enemies.

In my humble opinion, there is no way to read scripture critically and not know in your heart of hearts that the violent madness that has gripped our country must stop. From Columbine to Connecticut, from Las Vegas to Florida.our innocent children are being slaughtered like lambs because of the society we have created. From movie theaters to concerts, from schools to nightclubs, everyone is exposed to the threat of violence and even death. Some have become apathetically hopeless, others are empowered to speak up and demand change, many are numb from the constant barrage of mayhem while others cry inconsolably with Rachel.

I rarely venture into the political realm in my role as spiritual teacher since I have been judged so harshly by both sides of the political and religious spectrum, and because I try to encourage people to work out their own faithful response to God in their own lives. After all, we are Congregationalists! However, with so many children dying and with no end in sight, I feel called to speak out. I naturally worry about my own children, but my heart grieves so deeply for the parents who have lost children and for the unknown children who will continue to die.

Clearly, we can see God’s love for all children in Jesus’ extravagant welcome to the kids who clamored into his lap. You should also know that Jesus expresses his harshest punishment for those who harm innocent children. Clearly, the Holy Spirit wants Christ’s faith community to use every resource we can muster to help save our children.

The answers are multifaceted and many, but there is obviously legislation and initiatives that will begin to reign in the financial stranglehold that the NRA has on our Congress. And not to be too myopic, Vermont needs some commonsense legislation to tighten the laws about gun registration and the ability to easily purchase assault guns in our own state. What is absolutely maddening is that a majority of NRA members agree with enacting commonsense legislation to curb the senseless violence that has gripped our cities, schools and community gathering places.

I do not know all the answers, but I know we as a nation need to [repent] move in another direction. Perhaps the most effective place to start is with our own legislators [addresses to follow] and United States Congressmen. Perhaps having uncomfortable conversations with family, friends, neighbors and fellow church members would begin to raise the awareness as well: for too long we have ducked for cover and kept silent about the forces of sin that negatively impact our lives.

Let us, as followers of our Lord, begin to stand up for a little more peace and a little less weaponry. In doing so, we will become part of a long line of spiritual leaders and prophets that are striving to make the world a more peaceful and loving place. We will also be following Jesus Christ in his guiding principle of love. Looking forward, with quite a bit of trepidation, to engaging you all in these discussions, I am

Yours in Christ, Rev. Mark

SPECIAL SERVICES & EVENTS IN MARCH

March 4th, Both Services ~ Communion Sunday

Communion will be handed out to everyone in their pews at both services.

March 11th, Both Services ~ Quaker Style Worship

In the heart of Lent this year, the Deacons and Pastoral Staff will be offering everyone a glimpse into a Quaker Style Worship Service. There will still be some elements of our worship service but there will also be a significant amount of silence in order to leave room for reflection and inspiration. Come ready to experience another Christian tradition that has been meaningful and enlightening to hundreds of thousands of Christians. Come ready to not have a sermon but listen to anyone moved by the scripture to share their inspired insight.

Come, ready to let the Holy Spirit move in and among us.

March 18th, Both Services ~ Ordaining Our Deacons

At Annual Meeting, the congregation voted in a slate of officers and committee members to help run the church. Each committee has a different role and various tasks associated with that role. The oldest committee established in the church is that of the Deacons, attested to in the Pastoral Letters in our Bible. The Deacons were responsible for helping the Apostles take care of the people and maintain order in the church. Due to the long-standing nature of the role and the importance attested to in scripture, we have taken the time to symbolize the power entrusted to the Deacons by the congregation by ordaining them at public worship. We will pray over and lay hands upon them, authorizing them to conduct the affairs of their role within the church. Their authority, granted to them by the congregation will be ritually given to them. Come and witness this ancient tradition and if you feel so called, stand with them and lay your hands of authorization upon them.

March 18th, 7pm ~ Healing Service

Scripture witnesses to Christ's power to heal people. The gift of healing was granted to Christ's disciples as they went out into the countryside to carry out his message and then again after his death. In every time and age, the gift of healing has been freely given to the people of God. Jesus tells us to pray for healing and so we do. On March 18th @ 7:00 p.m., the ordained staff with the support of the Deacons will offer a healing service for anyone interested in having prayers spoken over you for healing. There is no one writhing on the floor with a loud evangelist asking for Satan to come out of you and be healed. Rather, we as New England Congregationalists will simply invite you forward to sit in a chair or kneel at our kneeling bench and tell us what you want us to pray for, then we do so in the name of Jesus and with the power of the Holy Spirit. The rest is up to God. It is a quiet, meaningful service with candle light, music and hope. All are invited.

March 29th, 6pm ~ Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday is the day when we remember that Jesus took on the religious authorities and won. The people honored him as a great prophet and Messiah much to the chagrin of the Jewish leaders. He met with the disciples in an upper room full of positive energy and dreams of the future; finally their movement was mainstream and had the potential of changing the temple and world. Jesus met with them to celebrate the power of God displayed at Passover and to share an intimate meal of friends. On Maundy Thursday, we will step into this heady yet positive atmosphere and focus on their celebration and dreams for the future. We will also see how their energy and dreams continue to be ours. We will meet downstairs in Fellowship Hall for dessert and conversation from 7-8:00 p.m. Come and experience this ancient, yet new interpretation of one of Christianity's sacred rituals.

March 30th, 7pm ~ Good Friday

Good Friday is the time when we remember Christ's suffering and death. This has been remembered in many different ways over the years depending on the culture and theological perspective. Like other Lenten practices, there has been a movement away from sacrifice and the negative toward a more positive understanding. So instead of the blood of sacrifice making us right with God, many have focused on how God's sacrificial love for humanity was offered so that our lives would be better or how Jesus on the cross teaches us another model of power and its use. Part of this shift came about as the meaning and power of blood animal sacrifice decreased to the point of meaninglessness; more and more people even find the old blood language to drive them away from God or at the very least the Good Friday service. This year, we will not focus on the blood but rather the depth of God's sacrificial love and how Jesus models how to claim power in this world differently. With everything going on in our nation and world, Christ's model is deeply needed more now than ever. Come experience Good Friday in a new and different, yet powerful way. Watch for more information about our third annual Good Friday-Easter Sunrise Vigil in the bulletin as it draws closer.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR NEWS

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" from the book of Isaiah, the prophet. We enter the month of March remembering the 17 students and teachers who were murdered by a former student. The response from the surviving students responded, "enough is enough." I believe deeply that God saw the tragedy and asked, "Whom shall I send?" God received an answer: the young people in Florida responded, "**HERE WE ARE.**" Young people in this nation are crying out. They want an end to mass shootings. I want them to know that I hear them and that I will assist them. Their response to surviving a mass shooting is remarkable. Their response does not provide a simple solution. Their response provides a multifaceted approach. They know that we need to examine everything from the root causes of violence and how to prevent gun violence by making it more difficult for someone to commit mass murder with one weapon: all sensible solutions need to be examined. If you are interested in learning more on what you can do, come, talk to me.

When I despair about the world, I am reminded that I pastor people of all ages, especially youth. It is my mission as a pastor to help provide young people with the skills and resources necessary to be empowered. I also want to make sure parents have the resources to help their youth address any number of issues. On **Thursday, March 15th at 5:45pm, please attend the Third Thursday Potluck.** We will discuss restorative justice practices to conflict resolution. Our conversation will provide us an introduction into how we can teach and practice peaceful conflict resolution.

Easter breakfast is April 1. Easter breakfast is a fundraiser for your mission trip to New York City. We'll need volunteers from 6am until 12pm to prepare the breakfast. Sign-up begins Sunday, March 11th in Fellowship Hall. High School Youth Group meets **Sunday, March 4th and Sunday, March 18th.** More details in my weekly emails.

Thanks, Josh



Laurie's Lens

Have you ever seen a pretzel that has lost its shape or is broken? We too can be like a pretzel and our prayer life and connection to God can feel like it needs some help, be reshaped and made whole again. The simple shape of the pretzel, arms folded in prayer, can help us remember to take the time to pray and talk to God and Jesus. The three holes in the pretzel were said to represent the Trinity: God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Pretzel Sunday will arrive on March 11th, the third Sunday in Lent this year, and the church will smell of fresh baked pretzels. In Faith Formation the children and youth will talk about the history of the pretzel, its shape and why they are one of the symbols for Lent. During faith formation time we will roll up our sleeves and roll out a few pretzels before they move on for peer class time where the youth will deliver fresh pretzels for snack time.

The children are hearing the stories of God's love and stories of Jesus during Lent as we approach Easter. There are 40 days in Lent, not counting Sundays and there are many symbols that we see during the Lenten season also... palms, donkey, cup and bread, praying hands, crown of thorns, cross, the tomb, stones and a sunrise. On Palm Sunday, March 25th, they will 'walk through' Holy Week during our peer class time and remember the events from Jesus entering Jerusalem to the last supper and all his never-ending love for us.

According to the Bible, Jesus' death and resurrection occurred around the time of the Jewish Passover, which was celebrated on the first full moon following the vernal equinox. For Christians, today, Easter Sunday falls on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox (or the first day of spring). If the first full moon occurs on the equinox, Easter is the following Sunday. So ... Easter Sunday can fall anywhere between March 22 and April 25th. Once you know when Easter Sunday is...you count back 40 days, not including Sundays, and you will arrive on Ash Wednesday.

What better time than Lent to reconnect with others in our faith community. If you have not ventured out for a 3rd Thursday Potluck Dish Share, I would like to invite you to join us on March 15th. Let's all take some time and get reacquainted with each other. Maybe you've wanted to have more time on a Sunday morning to chat, but it never works out. The parking lot door will be open at 5:30pm, fellowship time will begin at 5:45pm and by 6pm we will have picked a Grace to bless our food that we will say together. We will then enjoy the wonderful food that everyone has brought and chat about a certain topic of interest or just let the conversations go where the Spirit moves. Crayons are always on the tables for all to have fun doodling while we eat.

I hope you enjoy your walk through Lent, remembering to stop, pray and reconnect with those around you.

Blessed to be in ministry with you!

Laurie, *Christian Education Director*

DEACON'S CORNER

Our church has a community unlike one I have seen in other churches (not that I have been to too many others apart from ours). Every Sunday is a time for members and visitors alike to visit before and after service as they catch up on the prior/upcoming week. We're able to join together on our spiritual journey as we discover new things from the scriptures and sermons. Some people tend to only spend time in their faith on Sundays, but our church has so many different meetings and gatherings that occur at church.

Working at Martone's Market, I am able to witness the spiritual community of our church spread outside of the brick walls. Sometimes the group consists of only four people, on others it can take over two full tables! I may not be able to hear what topics are discussed each week, but I watch how they interact with the other coffee groups that meet at the Market in the morning. The group doesn't just talk amongst themselves, but they are jovial with others and even ask others to join in on the conversation. I even witnessed a regular customer bring in the Essex Reporter from the day when only part of the article about our church was missing and ask where the rest of it was! Of course Mark had something to say about it-haha. It makes me happy that I am part of a church with such a strong community of faith at church and in the community.

Trista Acebo-Deacon

MUSIC



March 25th, 4pm ~ SLU's Laurentian Singers feat. FCCEJ's Ian Brennan

SLU's Laurentian Singers will end their spring break tour to New York City and Boston with a **free concert** beginning at 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 25 here at FCCEJ. Senior Laurentian Singer Ian Brennan is from Essex Junction and his family are members here at FCCEJ.

The Laurentian Singers, a select coed choir of 25 undergraduate singers, celebrates its 70th anniversary this year, continuing a tradition of choral excellence at St. Lawrence University. The group has won wide acclaim since its founding in 1946, and, in addition to their many performances on campus and in the community, the ensemble has toured extensively. In recent years, they have performed in New Orleans, Trinidad and Tobago, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, France, New York, Boston and Central Europe, singing for enthusiastic, packed audiences and meeting with other choirs. Their wide-ranging repertoire, drawn from the music of many styles and countries, reflects the spirit of the liberal arts experience at St. Lawrence. The Laurentian Singers includes undergraduate students who represent a wide variety of academic majors and interests.

April 15th, 3pm ~ Joe Levesque Big Band Concert

The Joe Levesque Big Band will perform a concert in the FCCEJ Sanctuary on Sunday, April 15th at 3:00 pm. The concert is open to the public and a free will donation will be accepted at the door to benefit the church music program. Refreshments will be served in the fellowship hall during intermission. Joe's Big Band is a 17-piece ensemble of accomplished musicians from throughout Northwestern Vermont who share a passion for performing the diverse styles of big band music from the Swing Era to the present. Brian Chipman is a member of the trumpet section and band personnel manager. FCCEJ hosts the band's rehearsals every other Monday night in the fellowship hall. Rehearsals are open to anyone who would like to come and listen, or even dance! Rehearsal dates and times are listed in the church calendar. Like Joe's Big Band on Facebook!



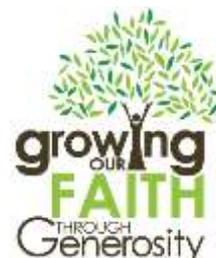
STEWARDSHIP

Special Offerings: March-One Great Hour of Sharing, April-Pastor's Fund, May-Per Capita, June-Strengthen The Church, September-Seminary Sunday, October-Neighbors in Need, November-Food Pantry, December-Christmas Fund

Question: How does the Capital Campaign affect my annual stewardship pledge this year?

Answer: It doesn't affect it at all.

Think of your pledge to our annual stewardship campaign as similar to your ongoing household expenses, whereas a pledge to a Capital Campaign is more like a special project or occasion. In your household budgeting you have routine expenses for essentials like food and electricity, as well as life enhancing personal needs, which might include things like music lessons, traveling or perhaps a gym membership. In contrast, a pledge to a Capital Campaign is something we might stretch for, as we would for a kitchen renovation, new garage or a very special vacation. It is celebrated as an out-of-the-ordinary opportunity that we are willing to go above and beyond to make happen. As we approach our Capital Campaign, keep in mind that all of our Church's ongoing programs and operating needs continue to depend on your support. And we thank you for it!



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 or 802-734-9688 and we'll find a date that works for you. Thank you!

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN NEWS



Our Home, Our Future, Our Time – The Campaign Begins!

We recently held a training for our first group of “Campaign Ambassadors” – volunteers who will visit with members of the congregation to share stories about Our Home, talk about the Campaign, and answer questions before confidential pledges are made. These visits are vital because one of the most important goals for this Campaign is to help people feel even more connected to our church and one another.

One member said, “I just had my visit, and it was such a positive experience. It gave me a chance to talk to another church member I didn’t really know very well, and I was able to share my feelings about the church and why this Campaign is so important to me.”

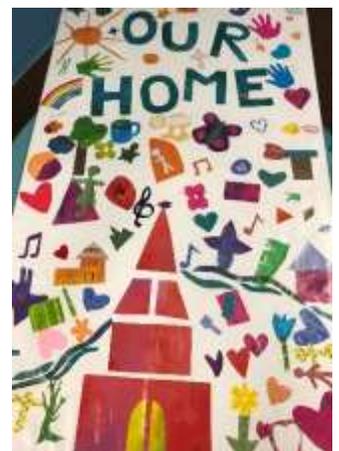
Eventually, everyone in the church will have an opportunity for a group or individual visit with a Campaign Ambassador. Don’t worry if you haven’t been contacted yet; the Campaign is just beginning. It will take us some time to reach everyone, but we will!

The majority of visits will take place after our next big milestone: **an All-Church Campaign Kick-Off Celebration on Sunday, April 8 (after a single 10:15 service)!** Put the date on your calendars for what is sure to be an exciting and fun event where we will have yummy food, activities for all ages, and a special announcement to update everyone about our progress! You won’t want to miss this. Stay tuned for more details.

More Ambassadors will be needed to visit members in the second phase of the Campaign after the Kick-Off. **If you are interested in volunteering, there is a second training session scheduled for Saturday, April 7.** Also needed are volunteers for the Kick-Off Celebration on April 8 and the thank-you celebration in June. Please contact Co-Chairs Dave Johnson or Kaki McGeary if you would like to get involved or learn more. For more information, visit the Capital Campaign page on our website at www.fccej.org and follow us on Facebook!



On Sun, Feb 18th, children and adults of all ages created a multi-generational art project to celebrate the theme of our Capital Campaign. People cut out shapes to represent something meaningful to them about “Our Home” or how they experience God’s love in this place. From the very literal to the abstract, everything from people, sunshine, rainbows, stars, crosses, flowers, music notes, a turtle, a river, a panda and hearts appeared! Every individual piece was cut and glued onto a canvas to create a beautiful shared collage! Even the tiniest hands were able to help glue shapes into place. This special work of art will hang in a special place in our church...can you find it?



SAVE THE DATES

April 1st ~ Easter Sunday

April 8th ~ All-Church Capital Campaign Kick-Off Celebration – after single 10:15 a.m. service

April 15th ~ Joe’s Big Band Concert, 3pm

May 14th ~ Mother’s Day

May 20th ~ Pentecost & Confirmation Sunday

June 3rd ~ Begin ONE 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 ~ Volunteer recruitment has begun ~ Youth & Adults

September 9th ~ Welcome Back Sunday ~ two services resume

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Nursery

Please help us welcome our new staff person to our Nursery, Adrienne Hurst. She is currently a senior at the University of Vermont in the Early Childhood Special Education Program. She grew up in Milton, Vermont and currently lives in Burlington. She enjoys snowboarding, swimming and spending time with her family. She is looking forward to meeting everyone and being a part of this faith community!



We also welcome Manu Shrestha, is a regular volunteer in our Nursery. Manu is from Nepal and is living with the Mendes Family. She is currently enrolled at CCV taking pre-nursing courses.

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.

Music Time During Faith Formation

Cherubs ~ Our Preschool & Kindergarteners gather in the Youth Lounge to sing during the first few minutes before moving on to their class. Jenny Bourn 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 – 8th Grade

March 4th ~ Holy Communion Sunday ~ Spiritual Friends ~ Intergenerational Worship
Children & youth are encouraged to sign up to be a reader in worship. Connect with Pastor Mark, Pastor Josh or Laurie on the Sunday before or during the week leading up to the 1st Sunday of the month.

March 11th ~ Pretzel Sunday ~ Peer class time

March 18th ~ Hands On Mission Sunday

March 25th ~ Palm Sunday ~ Peer class time

April 1st ~ Easter Sunday ~ all in worship

April 8th ~ Peer class time



2018 Faith Formation Offering ~ Jamaica Children ~ Uniforms & Books

Current Giving Total is \$163.36

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 Jamaica Children-Uniforms & Books! *Find ways & places to connect with your God & have Spirit time *Mark your calendar 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 on the JY board.

March 11th ~ Called to Care Easter basket craft & More

March 25th ~ Fun Game Time

High School Youth @ FCCEJ

Let's Begin Anew

March 4th ~ 5pm Youth Group meets at Spare Time in Colchester for Bowling Fun!

March 18th ~ 5pm ~ Meet at church, wear clothes to get dirty, we will start to grow vegetables for our new church garden



Youth Mission Trip to New York City

Sunday, June 17th- Friday, June 22nd

Youth (7th 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 28th Questions? Talk to Pastor Josh



CAMP

Vermont Outdoor Ministry Camps ~ Brochures are HERE!



Have you seen the new Outdoor Ministry bulletin board by the main church glass entryway? 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 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 5th - 8th grade in the fall, why not attend a week at Rock Point Camp from July 29th - August 3rd 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 or www.silverlakeect.org

Our Vermont OM Week at Rock Point Camp

July 29-August 3 ~ Horton Center Goes to Vermont ~ Middler

\$420, Entering Grades 5-8 in the Fall

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.

VT UCC Outdoor Ministries (OM) 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 (write in the memo line:camp scholarship fund). Help send kids to camp for a week, whether from our church or across our great state of VT. OM is a chance for kids to dive deeper than one can at VB Camp. They can live and breathe it for a full

week, sleeping in cabins, spending time in God's outdoors and getting more in touch with who they are and truly seeing that they are not alone. OM gives them a chance to grow in their faith, make friends and spread their wings in a fun, safe and Spirit filled atmosphere...whether on the shores of Lake Champlain at Rock Point or on the top of Pine Mountain at Horton Center in NH or beside Silver Lake in CT.





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 resumè? 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.

August 6-10 ~ Vacation Bible Camp 2018

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 5th 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!



FELLOWSHIP & LEARNING



Essex Eats Out Community Dinners Continue...

1st Friday of Every Month ~ March 2nd

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. **Thursday, March 1:** Please join us with your lunch at noon in the Marvin Lounge to listen to Dr John Earls DPT, from Transitions Physical Therapy. He will be sharing a new philosophy of physical therapy and will answer our questions. Bring your lunch and enjoy an interesting program and new learning.



March 4th, 5pm ~ First Sunday Supper of 2018!

Instead of hibernating, venture out to a fellow member's home for a potluck supper. Sign up as a host house or an attendee and we will schedule the rest. If you need a ride, or are willing to drive someone to supper, let us know that too. Your host will contact you the week of the supper to let you know the address and what you can bring. Add your name to the sheet that will be passed around during both services or write Sunday Supper next to your name in the Friendship book. If you'd like to host, add an H; if you need a ride, add an R; and if you can drive someone, add a D. Questions?

Call Lauren Starkey at 578-7505.



March 11th ~ Pretzel Sunday ~ Mark Your Calendars!

During the Lenten season, we have a special Sunday when our church smells of pretzels! Your CE team sponsors this great Sunday each year and pretzels are baked fresh and ready for all to enjoy at both our fellowship times after each of our worship services. This cannot happen without all the wonderful volunteers

who sign up for donations and/or a shift in the kitchen. High School youth on up through adults are encouraged to sign up and help fill the four shifts ~ 7:30am to 9:30am (mix up dough...divide, roll & bake some pretzels); 9:15am- 10:30am (watch the ovens); 10:30-11:30am (help kids roll pretzels, bake & watch ovens); 11:30am – to end of fellowship time (cleanup crew). See Laurie for questions and to sign up! The children and youth will start their time in Fellowship Hall rolling pretzels before they move off to peer class time, talk about the history of the pretzel and have pretzels delivered to them by the youth.

Third Thursday Dish Share

Thursday, March 15th from 5:45 to 7pm Everyone is welcome! Bring the family! Bring a friend! Come make new friends and reconnect with old friends at our monthly potluck supper! Bring a dish to share! Enjoy eating out with others and a great meal as we build community! Read Pastor Josh's message for our discussion topic. *Next Dish Share will be April 19th*



The Community of Bridge

On the third Friday of every month from 1:30-4pm, a group of FCCEJ members & friends gather to have a little fun playing bridge. This month the date is **Friday, March 16th**. It is an open group and competition takes the back seat of enjoying each other's company and having fun. We usually also get some home baked cookies and coffee to boot. And on top of all of that, the winner gets a jar of Rev. Mark's famous jam and bragging rights for a month. Come and bring a friend.

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, March 17:** Please join us at 9:30 in the Marvin Lounge, we need many hands to make Easter cards and put the Easter baskets together for our Called to Care friends. Andrea Sharp will help us create these unique Easter cards. Come be a part of this caring mission.



Thursday, March 15th, Noontime Book Group

This month we will be reading *One Thousand White Women* by Jim Ferguson. The premise of this novel is that 1000 white women were sent out to the West as brides for Cheyenne men in an attempt to bring the races together and to help the Indians learn the white culture. Poor women, orphans, women from insane asylums were sent on the adventure of a lifetime to marry husbands they had never met. The author has painted such an accurate picture of the old West that many people have believed it is a true story. Come join us with a brown bag lunch for some good fellowship and a lively discussion.



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!

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, **March 26th** for a time of common crafting. All are welcome!



Tuesday Morning Sermon Talkback, 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

The first program offered by Rev. Mendes when he started working here ten years ago was Sermon Talkback. Christian Education wanted something to start immediately because people were hungry to learn and talk about the faith. From that first Tuesday morning until today, questions of depth and inquiry flew. Sometimes, we debated the finer points of the sermon or one of the elements within the previous week's worship service. Sometimes, we put all business aside and spoke about an issue of the day on everyone's mind. Sometimes we spent time supporting someone going through a difficult time in their life. And sometimes, we spoke about a subject that had nothing at all to do with the sermon. Through all the disagreements, laughter and serious theological soul searching, we have made friends and become closer as a community within the church. Every Wed during Lent; 2/21, 2/28, 3/7, 3/14 & 3/21 from 7-8:30pm we will hold a second Sermon Talkback Group for those of you unable to make it to the morning group. Who knows what we will talk about but everyone is welcome to come and express themselves as they see fit and together we will have some fun and explore life and faith.



MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

4th Annual Jamaica Calcutta Fundraiser



The 4th 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, 2017. 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! To

purchase tickets, stop by the Jamaica table in the fellowship hall on Sundays 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. 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 laptop! Proceeds from the Calcutta will go toward our next Jamaica mission, July 2019.

Missions Moment

The Missions Committee decided long ago to not help individuals, but rather to support organizations and/or causes, such as emergency relief.

As a result of this decision, The Pastor's Fund Discretionary Account was developed and is used for a number of items, with the primary purpose being to help people in the community who are in need. People

will often call or actually walk in off the street to ask for help with power, electric, water, food, phone, gas, housing costs, etc. Reverend

Mendes will make a determination about the request on the spot and either help the person or not. Some of the guidelines he uses in making

that determination are whether they live in the area, is it an emergency request, are there other sources they can be drawing from, etc. Rev Mendes never gives cash and primarily helps people with emergency food and fuel. Every so often, he helps folks that fall outside of the normal categories. For example, one Christmas Eve a couple came in with a newborn and asked if there was a possibility of putting them up for a night or two. They were sincere and their story seemed honest, so on Christmas Eve, Reverend Mendes paid to have a young couple with a newborn stay at a local motel. He rarely gives money for emergency housing since it is an endless bill. He usually prefers to help people struggling to get through a difficult patch in their lives. He supports members and non-members of the church. He will also support someone from the church who is participating in an event, such as a ride-a-thon, walk or run that supports a good cause. The money that supports these gifts comes from personal gifts people give directly to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund and from the two special collections taken during the year: on Easter Sunday and at half of the Christmas Eve services.

First Congregational Church Income and Expense Statement PASTOR'S FUND 02 - Checking Account January 2017 - December 2017		
		2017
INCOME		
Transfer from Pastor Fund	4000	
	4001	\$1,092.00
Min. Pastor Fund income	4052	402.00
TOTAL INCOME		2,496.00
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE		
Emergency Utility	5400	8946.34
Emergency Fuel	5400	611.17
Memberships	5408	190.00
Bank Charge	5420	78.00
Subtotal Administrative Expense	5400	1,334.51
TOTAL EXPENSES		1,334.51
EXCESS INCOME/EXPENSES		\$1161.49

Dismas House

Across the state of Vermont there are four Dismas Houses that provide shelter and support to men and women making the difficult transition from incarceration to new lives. FCCEJ's mission 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 Winooski house. Living there is a professional manager along with 10 to 15 people who have been released 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. The residents are staff are extremely friendly and appreciative of our help. **We are currently looking for volunteers for March 28th & April 25th**. Please contact Ed Steele at 871-5897 or edwardmsteele@msn.com if interested or with any questions. A sign-up sheet is in the hallway exiting Fellowship Hall. We need four 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.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



Heavenly Food Pantry Needs Donations

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

We are in need of baked beans, tuna fish, cereal, jam & jelly and canned fruit to restock our cabinets. We are again **ALL set** with Egg Cartons-thank you SO much!

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Accepting Winter Donations

Regular Hours: 10am-3pm Tues & Wed, 4-8pm Thurs, 9am-1pm 1st Saturday

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Winter Update

Saturday March 3rd Open 9 am to 1 pm.- *new closing time*

now until March 20th – As the winter season begins to fade and temperatures begin to moderate, ALL items including white elephant are 50% off. Stay tuned for the upcoming bag sale in March. We will be accepting Spring and Summer items at that time. We are also looking for volunteers, even to be on a sub list! Contact Linda Bogardus at lbogardus@myfairpoint.net with questions.



Join the 2019 Jamaica Mission Team!

- Want to make a difference in an impoverished area of the world?
 - Curious to learn about another culture?
- Excited to work with other church members and global partners?
 - Willing and able to work hard in the heat?
 - Feeling adventurous about trying new cuisine?

If so, we'd love to have you join the next Jamaica Mission team! The next trip will be in July 2019. Although that seems a long way off, we are currently accepting applications for youth and adult members and hope to have the team put together by May/June 2018. The team will then have a year for team building, fundraising, trip planning, and gathering supplies. This is an intergenerational trip. Youth must be 16 years of age or older as of July 2019. Applications are due by May 1, 2018 and can be turned in to Sharon, Carolyn, or to Jen in the church office. Please note that the application needs to be notarized, as you are giving permission for medical treatment if necessary. Jen Dooley is a notary and would be happy to notarize the form for you.



An informational meeting will be held on Sunday March 18th in the Marvin Lounge following the congregational meeting to vote on the bylaws (after the second service). If you're interested in the trip and would like to learn more about it, please join us!

For information and applications, contact Sharon Dettnerieder at 802-871-5308 or dettneriedeS@hartwick.edu or Carolyn Rushford at 878-9593 or cjrushford@comcast.net.

March 18th ~ Hands On Mission Sunday

Church World Service Hygiene Kits

It's time to gather more items and complete our hygiene kits that we started in the fall. The CWS drop off location closed for the winter and will open back up in April. Below are the items that are needed to finish the kits. Please sign up and help give to complete the kits and

lend a hand this Lenten season. You can sign up in Fellowship Hall on Sundays at the purple table or email Laurie. On March 18th the kids will put these remaining hygiene kits together. If you would like to help on this day, please let Laurie know. **We need: 45 wide tooth combs, 44 bath size bars of soap individual wrapped, 34 fingernail/toenail clippers, 31 tooth brushes individually wrapped**



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE



Volunteer ~ Counselor at Camp

Are you 18yrs or older by July? Do you like working with junior youth? Looking for community service or something great to put on your resumè? Graduating High School, in college or out, 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.



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 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.



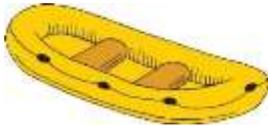


August 6-10 ~ Vacation Bible Camp
Rolling River Rampage: *Experience the Ride of a Lifetime with God!*
Monday – Friday from 9am to 11:45am



Now Recruiting for ...

Station Leaders: Bible Drama ~ Crafts ~ Discovery ~ Games ~ Snack Helpers
Youth (entering sixth grade & up), College Students/ Adults of all ages!



Be a group leader, serve snacks, take pictures and much more!
 Contact Laurie for more information and to sign up!

Watch for our VB Camp Wish List coming in the April Newsletter!

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

March Birthdays

2nd Dave Johnson 3rd Bart Frisbie, Dorothy Knox, Cameron Starkey, Beth Volker, Violet Wright
 4th Bruce Blackman, Ethan Gibbs, Izzy Owens, Sarah Tallman 5th Carol Hutcheon 6th Bill Bickford,
 Donna Burnett, Sam Dooley, David Leach, Makaylah Moos, Beth Warren 7th Norm Faunce
 8th Parker Bero, Jen Dooley, Neil Hutcheon, Abigail Lyman, Betty Marthaler 9th Molly Birmingham,
 Nicholas Phillippo, Amanda Sinkewicz 10th Lisa Clark, Renee Stapleton 11th Liam John, Mally Powell
 12th Ryan Gackenheimer, Josh Sharp 13th Lucca Montelongo 16th Jeremy Brennan 17th Faith Truax
 18th Kinue Aboukhalil, Siobhan Pettingill 19th Cathie Goodheart, Charlie Kremer, Tyler Vock
 20th Robert Field, Isaac Lyman 21st Toni Taylor 24th Emmerson Stapleton 25th Caitlin Wark
 26th Bill Jones, Sean Palmer 27th Tom Shearer 28th Cornelia Abakah, Maisie Baker, Robert Deal
 29th John Wermer 31st Eva Cunningham-Firkey

Thank You's

Dear Church Family, Thank you so much for the lovely yellow rose that was delivered on Sunday.
 Very nice and thoughtful. Jo Haines

Dear First Church, thank you for lending your Church for Don's (Goff) Service of Remembrance. Your generosity permitted us to see him out in a manner fitting his many years of service in the ministry. He would, I think, have wanted me to extend his thanks as well. Sincerely, Norma Waske



Lent Began on February 14th ~ Ash Wednesday

Learn about the season of Lent and help count down the 40 days of Lent.
 Our *Lent in a Bag* family devotions are back again this year. If you didn't pick yours up yet, stop by the office or the purple table in Fellowship Hall on Sunday mornings to collect yours, courtesy of our Junior Youth. More Lenten devotions are also on the table. All are encouraged to set aside some time to walk closer with God during Lent.

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- Mail this page back to us at the address above

Inside...

Pastor’s Ponderings
Special Services & Events in March
Associate Pastor News
Laurie’s Lens
Deacon’s Corner
Music
Stewardship
Capital Campaign News

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