



The Spirit at First April 2018

Ponderings from your Pastor.....

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:21

In 2008, I arrived at First Church with enthusiasm and hope. The interview process was extensive and the committee diverse and challenging. Despite a 45 minute candidating sermon, we came together and the congregational vote was unanimous. I have never regretted the choice to become your Senior Pastor and bringing my family to Vermont. At one of my first Trustee meetings, it was mentioned that we needed to embark on a capital campaign to repair our facilities and attend to deferred maintenance issues that had plagued the church for way too long. However, we were in the midst of one of the worse economic downturns since the Great Depression. So we put it off, again and again, year after year. Slowly though through good church lay leadership, the need remained on the agenda and the discussion of timing continued to receive attention. Church presidents Maureen McKenzie, Todd Kelley, Beth Warren, Kevin Dorn, Brenda Dawson and now Carl Wermer kept the urgency of need and thought alive until last year when we finally embarked on a capital campaign.

Each president's leadership along with the consecutive Trustee Committee's support laid the foundation for the campaign which we now find ourselves within. Thank God for the incredibly good lay leadership within our church! One of the first steps toward making the campaign a reality was to form a Capital Campaign Exploratory Committee. This committee interviewed companies to help determine our readiness for a capital campaign, accepted a project list long established over the years by the Trustees for just such a campaign, and set a tentative goal based on the projects. Council then hired Full Harvest Fundraising to conduct a feasibility study where 10 % of our church members were interviewed. The feedback from those interviews was taken into account as priorities were shifted and clarity added to some of the projects. Last Spring, Council hired Full Harvest Fundraising to lead us through the planning and implementation of a campaign. Based upon Full Harvest's recommendations, Council established a new Capital Campaign Steering Committee in October 2017. The newly formed Steering Committee immediately started working and Council approved the hiring of architect John Alden to assist in the development of detailed project proposals and cost estimates. The project list was further refined based upon this input and a few new projects were identified. A new campaign goal (including a stretch goal) was proposed and then approved by Council. The Steering Committee established the *Our Home, Our Future, Our Time* theme, set up congregational opportunities for information sharing and feedback. And then, at our Annual Meeting on January 28th, the congregation unanimously said to move forward.

At this point, the process began in earnest. As in all capital campaigns, brochures, letters and graphs to explain every aspect of the campaign were created. The Steering Committee established a timeline to conduct the campaign in two phases. The first phase involved training a group of volunteers to become "campaign visitors" so that they could reach out to current and past church leaders to ask for their pledges first. The results of this "quiet phase" of the campaign will be shared at a big public Kick-Off Celebration on April 8th. Then the second phase of the campaign will begin, and the rest of the congregation and public will be invited to give through visits, small group gatherings and invitational letters. It is a well-established process and I have been a part of two other campaigns that operated in exact same way.

It is always hoped that the first phase will raise a significant portion of the goal. When that occurs, the energy and excitement and sense of possibility generated by that success often inspires the second group to take us over the top, and everyone celebrates the faith and generosity so clearly expressed in the gifts. Each group and step of the process is vital to the success of the campaign. I would dare say that the last group that takes us over the top is the most important key to success. Gifts big and small appear at that time and when everyone participates and gives what they can, then together we can make it.

We are nearing the end of the quiet phase and there is a big Kick Off Celebration planned for April 8th to initiate the last phase of giving. You do not want to miss it!!! Thank you to all of you who have offered a pledge or are considering doing so. As the giving circle expands to include everyone, I would earnestly ask all of you to prayerfully consider your pledge and give what you can for I am firmly convinced that the health and strength of our church's witness in our community is ever needed in these days. I cannot imagine needing less food for the hungry or less hope for the discouraged or fewer healthy values offered to our children or a less vibrant and healthy ministry to our members. I imagine in the future that the need for our church to inspire and support our members and wider community will only and inevitably increase.

A successful Capital Campaign will help accomplish this ever vital task. I invite you to join a movement that has been building in our church since my arrival in 2008. Join the chorus of voices and volunteers that have invested hundreds of hours over the years and heartfelt commitment to the cause of our church. Allow your love for God and this church to move your heart to give joyously. Honored to be a part of this process with you, I am

Yours in Christ, Rev. Mark

SPECIAL SERVICES & EVENTS IN APRIL

April 1st, Both Services ~ Communion Sunday (Easter)

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

April 1st ~ Easter Sunday Celebration

The one event that secured the future of Jesus' movement was his resurrection: s u r p r i s e! With all the theological calisthenics modern Christians do to hedge their bets with the believability of the resurrection, it is still *the* defining moment in Christ's existence. It is also the one event at the heart of the early church and the movement that sprang up around Jesus. It has always been and remains the one event that draws people to the pews and offers them hope beyond all hope. Our church will celebrate Easter on April 1st, both services, 8:30 & 10:15 a.m. There will also be a 6:30 a.m. ecumenical sunrise service over by Holy

Family's Gazebo, after which time, our church will provide a great Easter breakfast for anyone who comes to celebrate. There will be great music, a short sermon and communion. So be sure to come and bring a friend – they want to be invited!

April 8th ~ Our Home, Our Future, Our Time Capital Campaign Kickoff!

ONE SERVICE @ 10:15

There will be a mighty inaugural celebration for the *Our Home, Our Future, Our Time Capital Campaign* starting with one service on Sunday April 8th at 10:15 a.m. There will be special food carts, all sorts of games and balloon animals for the kids by Big Blue Trunk, and then the Capital Campaign Committee will put up the thermometer and proclaim the amount pledged to date from the early gifts. This amount, which has been very closely guarded, will then serve as a challenge to the rest of the congregation to join them in reaching for our stretch goal. It will be a momentous day and one you will not want to miss. So come, bring the kids and your neighbors, enjoy the day, the goal, the vision, the food and the fun.

April 15th ~ Champlain Association Pulpit Exchange

Our church is a member of the Champlain Association, a group of United Church of Christ churches in the area that stretch from Burlington to Jeffersonville, from St Albans to Charlotte. This ecclesiastical body has been at the heart of wider church activities, mutual support / encouragement and theological discipline and pastoral placement for a very long time. Although much of the original responsibilities have been transferred to the Vermont Association of Churches [Vermont Conference of the UCC], those in the Champlain Association still get together for mutual support and encouragement. One way we continue to deepen the ties that bind us together is to have the clergy in the Champlain Association to swap pulpits. We will do so on April 15, 2018 at both services. Rev. Russell Duncan from the St. Albans Church and Rev. Paul Ayer from the Williston Federated Church will be preaching here at the 8:30 and 10:15 a.m. services respectively. Rev. Mendes will be at Mallett's Bay Congregational Church and Rev. Simon will be preaching at the Richmond UCC Church. Come here and enjoy some new preachers or go with Mark or Josh and experience them in a different setting. Either way, we will deepen our bonds to our fellow UCC'ers in the area. Have fun!

DEACON'S CORNER

The Deacons hope that you all are enjoying the Lenten season, as this edition of the church newsletter coincides with the arrival of Holy Week. We hope that you participate in the special services available at FCCEJ. Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and ultimately Easter, each fulfill a unique aspect of our faith journey, and each service is special in its own way. As Mark discussed at our March Deacons' meeting, Congregational/UCC churches have taken different approaches to these services over the years, particularly on Good Friday (when some emphasize somber messages of sadness, while others focus on uplifting feelings of divine accomplishment).

My Lenten journey each year is accompanied by a simple gift that my grandfather, Rev. Alfred Schmalz, left behind for us – a collection of Lenten meditations – one for each day in Lent. His closing prayer on Good Friday is,

“Lord God, let the sorrow of this day, cleanse me of my sin and make it once again possible for me to start my life afresh, in new disciplined devotion.”

In that vein, I wish everyone this season a worship experience that is appropriately somber, cleansing and spiritually refreshing!

Peter Schmalz-Deacon

ASSOCIATE PASTOR NEWS

Did God give me Crohn's Disease?

When I was 18 years old, I experienced gut wrenching pain. I was keeled over, barely able to walk. My mother drove me to the hospital. It was Friday morning. At first, the doctors thought I was experiencing an appendicitis. The scan that I went through showed that that was not the case. The doctors did not know what was wrong. I was admitted to the hospital, restricted to water. Eventually they realized since I was experiencing pain in the gut that I needed to undergo a colonoscopy; however, the gastroenterologist would not be in the hospital until Monday. After the procedure, I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease. I was given antibiotics and prednisone to relieve the inflammation. I spent seven days in the hospital. A week prior I had weighed about 130, seven days later I weighed 120. That was eleven years ago. Crohn's disease is an autoimmune disorder that can occur anywhere in the digestive track. It's an inflammatory disease. In other words, my immune system attacks, inflaming, the space between the small and large intestine. Thankfully, I have not had a single surgery yet. Often many people who are diagnosed with Crohn's disease the first time do so because they need to have surgery to remove part of their intestine. I'm lucky. I haven't had that. For most of the last eleven years, I have not had much intestinal pain. Though, I have experienced some, and I would say that I have experienced a bit more in the last year. I now undergo a colonoscopy once a year. Not that you wanted to know how often I have colonoscopies, but back to "Did God give me Crohn's disease? I would say, no. The more likely answer is that a combination of things led to me having Crohn's disease. They might be: overly prescribed antibiotics for ear infections when I was an infant; a poor diet; stress; and maybe, genetics. But where is God in my intestinal pain? God is with me in the moments when my gut feels icky, reminding me of God's love and care for me, despite the conditions that gave me Crohn's disease. God is also with me in my meaning making. Meaning making goes beyond saying $2 + 2 = 4$. Meaning making says, I have 4, now how does this inform my life, how do I make sense of it. For me, having Crohn's disease has heightened my empathy for others. It has allowed me to see that others suffer too, and they sometimes need someone to know intimately the kind of suffering they are experiencing. Crohn's disease has also made me more passionate about the need for others to have access to health care. In other words, God is with me, and God is with others, and God reminds us to be with each other, especially in moments of pain and suffering. And I thank God for that!

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. You can still Sign-up to help.

Young Adult group meets again Friday, April 13th, 7-9pm. Please, RSVP with me.

High School Youth Group is Sunday, April 15, 5pm and Sunday, April 29th, 5pm.

Thanks, Josh



Laurie's Lens

A lifelong faith ... isn't that what we pray for?! For us, for our loved ones and especially for our children and our grandchildren.

Church has changed over the years. Our children and youth programs have changed and continue to change with the times. Their titles have changed from Church School to Sunday School to Faith Formation. Notice that school is no longer in the title. Our format has shifted to building relationships and having the kids and youth more involved in the learning and discussions that we have...free to ask questions while still giving them the opportunity to learn and grow in their faith. Church used to be the place where everyone gathered to study, memorize scripture and be tested. But our society has changed and with it the church has been changing because of it. Technology and society has played a key role and with the internet and all the gadgets we have...so much available to us at our fingertips. You can use a Bible app or a Bible website to look up scripture. Families' structures are different. In the majority of families both parents are working, they see their children less during the week and weekends are a time to catch up as a family and reconnect. We have many more opportunities available to us, so much we can do on our weekends, that church is now in competition for time. Stores are open on Sundays when they never used to be. Sport teams have practices or even games on Sundays when they never used to. Many grandparents don't live in the same town or even the same state as their grandkids, so families are traveling more than they used to keep their family close. So many fun things to go and do on a Sunday. You all know this. We as a church are now seeing families less often than we used to. Even in the eight years that I've been with you all here at First Church we've seen this become even more evident. Families that once used to attend every week or a few times a month are now attending once a month or sometimes seasonally, depending on the season and if the sport or activity their child is in is over.

The church continues to be here to help and offers programs, information, experiences, relationship building and faith development. We just need to continue to adjust what we offer and what fits the needs of our families. The National Study on Youth and Religion has found that 'the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescence is their parents. However, many parents feel inadequate to take on this role of being their child's primary teacher of the faith.' Our society has shifted this away from the church to the parents. So this leads me to ask... what can First Church do for you? What are we not offering now that we could offer? What do you as a parent need to help you be the best religious and spiritual social influence for your child? What should we continue, what should we change? What do you need to help you in building a lifelong faith for your child? Please, share your thoughts with me.

As this church moves into the next 150 years, I pray we may continue to find new ways to enliven our programs so that all parents and grandparents of today feel supported as they live out their life of faith ...continue their journey with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit...help share this love with their children and grandchildren...keeping their faith alive so that they can support the future generations as they grow every hour of every day...getting to know and grow in, a love that is like no other.

Serving our God and walking with you on this journey.

Peace & Blessings, Laurie, Christian Education Director

MUSIC



THANK YOU to St. Mike's Sleepless Knights (FCCEJ's Nate Dooley) & SLU's Laurentian Singers (FCCEJ's Ian Brennan)

The Music Committee was thrilled to host these two collegiate music groups on Sunday, March 25th! It is so exciting to have our young adults bring their musical talents back to share with all of us! Read down for another concert happening this month with Joe's Big Band!



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: April-Pastor's Fund, May-Per Capita, June-Strengthen The Church, Sept.-Seminary Sunday, Oct.-Neighbors in Need, Nov.-Food Pantry, Dec.-Christmas Fund

Tax Return Tells You How Generous You Really Are

Before you file your tax return away for the year, you might want to take a minute to determine what percentage you are giving away. Jesus told us, "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more." (Luke 12:48)



Your tax return tells you not only how much income God has entrusted to you last year, but also what portion you gave away. Simply take your total charitable contribution and divide it by your total gross income. Move the decimal point over two places. This is the percentage you gave away last year. Are you pleased with that number? If not, make plans now to improve your giving in 2018!

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



Leaving A Larger Legacy: *How YOU Can Make a Greater Impact with your Capital Campaign Pledge!*

True or False?...The largest pledges in a capital campaign come from the wealthiest donors.

False! In fact, the larger pledges often come from people with a high level of commitment and a one-time opportunity to donate a resource that feels significant to them, perhaps the largest gift they've ever made. Here are some real-life examples from recent church-related capital campaigns:

- One of the largest pledges in a \$2 million campaign for a church camp in Maine came from a 91-year-old retired teacher with no history of large gifts – a man who lived in modest circumstances. His pledge was instrumental in completing the campaign and in inspiring others to top the goal. When asked what inspired his pledge, he said that his wife had recently died and he felt moved to keep her memory alive through a gift that would provide resources for young people. Where did the dollars come from? From savings they had set aside in case *he* predeceased *her*. As he spoke of his gift, he shared how good it felt to remember her this way.
- A church capital campaign volunteer and his wife were in the process of retiring and planning how much money they might need to live on. At the same time, they wanted to make as large a commitment as they could to support their church's restoration project. They consulted a financial adviser who informed the man that because he was over age 70 ½, he was subject to Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) rules. The advisor explained that he could distribute otherwise taxable traditional and Roth IRA amounts **directly** to his church, and thereby eliminate the Federal income tax liability on the distribution.
- A younger couple received a gift of stock from a grandparent as a wedding present 20 years ago, and the stock grew in value. Knowing that they wanted to support the church's Capital Campaign, the couple spoke with their financial advisor who told them they could donate the stock to the church without having to pay any capital gains tax: the church would receive the full current market value of the stock, and the couple could take that full value as a tax deduction.
- A man who lived in *very* modest circumstances wanted to give something to help the church's campaign. He owned one key asset: a woodlot. He cut and sold his wood and gave one of the larger pledges to the campaign with the proceeds!
- A member of one church came forward with a question: though she herself had little in assets or income, she was a descendant of a well-known illustrator and painter. Could she donate a small painting to the campaign? In the end, she sold the painting through an art auctioneer and donated the proceeds to the campaign providing a gift that was worth many times what she thought she could give!
- And finally, a church member told the leaders of her church that she had already put a bequest to the church in her estate plan for after she died. Knowing that a bequest couldn't be counted toward her pledge to the upcoming capital campaign, she decided to liquidate the assets that would have gone to the bequest. This way the campaign could use the money now, and she would still be here to enjoy the fruits of her gift!

There are so many ways to fund a gift or pledge that you may not even have considered. While the church in no way recommends any particular course of action – that is up to you, your family, and your financial advisers – we would like to share a few of the ways you might consider:

- Donate stock with capital gains
- Distribute taxable traditional & Roth IRA amounts directly to the church. Qualified charitable distributions count as a distribution for purposes of the Required Minimum Distribution rules, and are not subject to income tax.
- Donate a piece of marketable personal property (with value to be established by third party appraisal)
- Donate marketable real estate – a summer camp no longer used by the family, a plot of land no longer needed
- Talk with a tax specialist about what balance of income and tax planning can best help your retirement plans – and how a generous pledge to the church's campaign can help!

- Certain “In-kind” donations from businesses – usually materials required for the building project – can be helpful. Many projects have specified lists of construction items that can be donated in bulk. Check with your campaign Trustees to see what items are needed!

Yes, there are many ways to consider a pledge or gift that is larger than you may have dreamed! Where there’s a strong desire to give, the means often reveal themselves. Talk with your family and financial advisor to find out what might be possible for you!

SAVE THE DATES

May 13th ~ Mother’s Day

May 20th ~ Pentecost, Jazz Sunday & Confirmation during services; New Member’s Class @ 11:30am

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

July 29th –August 3rd ~ UCC Camp week ‘HC goes to VT’ at Rock Point (more info in Camp section)

August 6-10th ~ Vacation Bible Camp ~ Join the Volunteer team ~ Youth & Adults ~ Come join the Fun!

September 9th ~ Welcome Back Sunday ~ two services resume

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES



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

April 1st ~ Easter Sunday ~ all in worship

Craft Activity in Fellowship Hall ~ Easter Breakfast served from 7am to 10:15am

April 8th & 15th ~ Peer class time

April 22nd ~ Hands On Mission Sunday

April 29th ~ Peer class time

May 6th ~ 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.



2018 Faith Formation Offering ~ Jamaica Children ~ Uniforms & Books

Current Giving Total is \$197.36

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 & books so they can go to school and learn to read and write. Bring your offering each week & don't forget to use the children's envelopes in the pews so our counters know your money goes to the Jamaica Children.



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 ~ 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.

April 8th ~ Join Pastor Josh & Laurie for a Fun Time

High School Youth Group @ FCCEJ

Sunday, April 15th ~ 5pm and Sunday, April 29th ~ 5pm.

Youth Mission Trip to New York City

Sunday, June 17th - Friday, June 22nd

Our NYC Mission Trip Team! Ashley & Ryan Clark, Caitlin & Charlie McGeary, Katie Bruyns, Eva Cunningham-Firkey, Walker Stapleton, Emma Parker, Makayla Moos, Nicholas Mendes, Courtney Frank, and Aliyah Watt. Chaperones are Lisa Clark, Jonah Moos and Pastor Josh.



Our Nursery

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. Adrienne (staff person) and Manu (volunteer) will greet you when you arrive. If you would like to help in the Nursery on a Sunday, please be in touch with our Nursery staff or Laurie.

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. Thank you for your help.



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 and paddle board on Lake Champlain have fun doing community service in Burlington, and 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

Help a kid or youth go to an Outdoor Ministry camp for a week, whether from our church or across our great state of Vermont. Outdoor Ministry is a chance for kids to dive deeper than at VB Camp. They can live and breathe the outdoors 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, 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 in NH or beside Silver Lake in CT. Give a donation that will support our VT UCC OM Program by putting a check in the offering plate (write in the memo line...camp scholarship fund).



August 6th -10th, M-F 9-11:45am ~ Vacation Bible Camp 2018

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

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 ~ Discovery ~ Games

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 ~ April 6th

Come - Help – Eat www.essexeatsoout.org

JOY (Just Older Youth)



A group for the over 55 crowd (both men & women) meets the first Thursday of each month at 12 noon in the Marvin Lounge. If you have any questions about the group or need a ride please call the office. Please join us **Thursday, April 5th**, our guest speaker will be Susanna Weller. She is the Restorative Justice Panel Coordinator who covers Essex. The Essex Community Justice Center envisions safe, expansive and resilient communities in which the response to conflict and crime is restorative and healing, enhances community and reduces further harms. Check out the Community Justice Center's website: <http://essexcjc.org/>. Bring your lunch and be part of the discussion about this important community resource.



Third Thursday Dish Share

Thursday, April 19th 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 May 17th*



Capital Campaign Kick-Off

Sunday, April 8th

Fellowship Hall
11:15 a.m. - 1 p.m.
(after single service at 10:15 a.m.)

A Celebration for All Ages!

Food • Scavenger Hunt • Photo Booth
Kid's Entertainment by Big Blue Trunk
"Hard Hat" Tours • Fellowship • Fun!

Our Home, Our Future Our Time



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 **April 20th**. 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.

Faith on Tap

Meeting People in Meeting Places outside the Church

Come join us for food and drinks at McGillicuddy's Five Corners, 4 Pearl St, Essex Jct

Friday, April 20th, from 6:00-8:00 pm



Discussion Topic: As we create artificially intelligent machines in our own image and likeness, are we ethically and morally responsible to consider their needs?

Yoga @ First Now Offers TWO WEEKLY CLASSES!

Jonah is offering two classes now, 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, April 21** in the Marvin Lounge to learn about Let's Grow Kids VT.

Our speaker will be Shayla Zammuto, Regional Field Manager for Let's Grow Kids, an important movement here in Vermont with the "goal to gain public support for increased, sustainable investment that gives each child the chance to reach their full potential." <http://www.letsgrowkids.org/>.

Their focus is on the need for more high-quality, affordable child care in Vermont. Come and find out how you can better support our children, families and community through the Let's Grow Kids campaign.



Thursday, April 19th, Noontime Book Group

This month we will be reading *Everything Happens For a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved* by Kate Bowler. This memoir on living while actively dying is a powerful and thought provoking read. Join us with a brown bag lunch for some good fellowship and meaningful 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!



NEW DAY & TIME ~ Ladies Crafting Night Out

Do you knit, crochet or do any other crafty projects that you would like to do in fellowship with others? Join us in the Marvin Lounge the 4th Wednesday of each month at **2-4pm, April 25th** 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.

Wednesday Night Sermon Talkback TWO, 7:30 - 9:00pm

During Lent, we have offered the opportunity for a second Sermon Talkback group for those folks who cannot make the Tuesday morning group. The numbers have been building during Lent to the point that we have decided to continue the group through the end of May or early June. We meet from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. every Wednesday night and reflect on the previous week's sermon and or worship service. We sometimes go off topic when the need arises! Everyone is welcome to come and add their two cents to the discussion. Some friends and couples have found that it is a great night out to have a meal out in the junction and then walk back for the sermon Talkback. Hope to see you soon!



MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

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. 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 Dismas. Living there is a professional manager along with 10-15 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 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, April 9th, 5:30-7:30pm
and Thursday, April 26th, 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!

Vacation Bible Camp Art Project

During the week of VBC we will be doing an art project using recyclable caps that connects with our Rolling River Rampage theme. Did you know that no cap smaller than 2 inches in diameter can be recycled in our area? And if you leave it on the container, the container will be rejected when it goes through the sorting process. Let's put these caps to good use with an art project during our week of VB Camp. Keep your eyes open for caps this size and you'll be surprised how many of these you can collect and bring them to church before VB Camp starts on August 6th. We'll put them to good use and make something really cool. Thanks for your help!



Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Accepting Spring Donations

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

Open Saturday April 7th from 9 am to 1 pm

Shop is now accepting Spring/Summer clothing and Nearly New Items. Please use our new drop box for donations. Volunteers Needed for Thursday evening Shift from 4 pm to 6 pm. If you have a friend or relative who might be interested, Please contact Elaine Raymond at ebraymond@gmail.com.

Join the 2019 Jamaica Mission Team!

If you like adventure, hard work, good community, and learning about other cultures, consider joining the next Jamaica Team!

- Next Trip is July 2019
- **Applications are due May 1, 2018**
- Youth must be 16 years of age or older as of July 2019

Although July 2019 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. Applications can be turned in to Sharon Dettenrieder, Carolyn Rushford, or to Jen Dooley in the church office. Please note that the application needs to be notarized, as you are giving permission for medical treatment if necessary. Jen is a notary and would be happy to notarize the form for you. For information and applications, contact Sharon Dettenrieder at 871-5308 or dettenriedeS@hartwick.edu or Carolyn Rushford at 878-9593 or cjrushford@comcast.net.





Foster Grandparent & RSVP Programs at United Way of Northwest VT

Are you 55+?

Foster
Grandparents

In need of adult volunteers for our RSVP and Foster Grandparent Programs! We connect individuals with various volunteer opportunities at schools and non -profit organizations throughout Northwest Vermont. RSVP Read to Me volunteers serve 1-2 hours a day, 1-2 times a week in preschool settings. RSVP School Buddies volunteers work 1-2 hours a day, 1-2 times a week, supporting elementary aged school children who need extra assistance in one or more academic areas. Foster Grandparents work in early education settings helping children who need extra support with early literacy and math. Foster Grandparent Volunteers work a minimum of 15 hours per week. They receive a small non-taxable hourly stipend, a free daily meal at site when available, and more! Whether you enjoy working with children, seniors, or animals, we'll do everything we can to find a meaningful volunteer opportunity for you! Interested in learning more about RSVP or Foster Grandparents? Danielle Williams will be joining us on April 29th to talk with us about these programs and answer any questions you have!



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.



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, all return for communion. ***Hands On Mission Sunday Helpers*** – Preschool - Senior High are together for a 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 ~ 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 info and to sign up!



Please Turn the Page for Our VBCamp Wish List...

VB Camp Wish List! 40 ~ 2 Liter Clear Soda Bottles with labels removed; 3 rolls of Blue Duck Tape

Large light weight blue tarp; 3 Concrete pillar tubes 24"-36" long

Looking to borrow: 8 Artificial Christmas Trees (different sizes); Collapsible camping chairs

Plastic canoe/raft paddles; Small Inflatable Raft

Snack Station: Snack size ziploc baggies (3 boxes), Small paper plates (200)



OUR CHURCH FAMILY



April 22nd ~ Special Congregational Meeting to Vote on Bylaw Changes

Look for the Warning in the mail at the beginning of April and posted in the church & bulletins.

April Birthdays

1st Emily Dorn, Carla Messier 2nd Lynn Coddington 3rd Lib Cilley, Cheryl Savage 4th Hillary Danis, Claire Deal 5th Kevin Dorn, Addison Kasmarek, June Silverman, Mike Sullivan 6th Bryan Hewitt, Daryl Koch 7th Kayleigh Ehler-Vock, Katherine Grenon, Caitlin McGeary 8th Sandra Baker, Kim Hamilton, Lilo Kinaman, Steve Vock 9th Suzanne Foss, Nova Louise Grenon, Ricky Stoneback 10th Paul Calhoun, Peg Coolidge, Jerry Nadeau 11th Jan Hopper 13th Linnea Willey 14th Ashley Clark, Pat Seaver 15th Jan Metzelaar 16th Constance Johnson, Barbara Mudget-Russell 18th Fatoma Afadzi, Lyn Beliveau, Ginny Coe, Nancy Hayes 19th Betty Adams, Liam Astore, Vanessa Parker 20th Linus Goedken 22nd Jack Poratti 23rd Anna Baker, Malcolm Paulsen 24th Steven Mitchell 25th Ciaran Brennan, Rob Poratti 26th Grant Cieplicki, Dick Harris, Carl Wermer 27th Deb Alden, Davin Pettingill 28th Adam Brooks, Myrna Doney 29th Jennifer Bashaw, Hannah Wahl 30th Ryan Clark

Go Eat @ Quality Bake Shop

Our Hospitality Committee has been trying to create a friendly atmosphere where conversation and food go hand in hand during the time before and after our Sunday morning worship services. With a simple request, one of the members of the Hospitality Committee received a tremendous gift from Quality Bake Shop in Essex Junction; they will be offering us their day old goodies every Sunday morning!!!

Looks like we will all be gaining a little weight! So go in and eat there and let's throw some business their way. They are a great old landmark business and have really good food. And when you are eating, let them know why you are eating at their fine establishment and thank them!



Thank You's



Many thanks to all the volunteers who were in the kitchen really early in the morning, mixing up the dough, rolling the first pretzels, baking and cleaning up the kitchen. It was a fun fellowship time and SO many people at the first service enjoyed fresh pretzels. We also had a great team of volunteers, kids and youth rolling pretzels, delivering snack, baking and cleaning up. You all know who you are. This day could never have happened without all of you. Thanks for all you many hands and for a really fun day of fellowship with pretzels! Blessings, Laurie

On March 18th we finished putting together the CWS Hygiene Kits ending up with a total of 60 that are soon off to Waterbury Congregational, the CWS pick up site.



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

Many thanks for all the donations of nail clippers, hand towels, tooth brushes, wash clothes, combs, tooth brushes, and soap. Thanks to Hannafords for their donation of 31 toothbrushes. Our Missions Team has been helping on our Hands On Mission Sundays with the kids and are having a great time getting to know the young ones among us. If you would like to lend a hand on these days, please contact a member of our Missions team or Laurie.



Many thanks for the long stemmed yellow rose. It lasted 2 weeks and I enjoyed it. Betty Garrapy

Dear FCCEJ, Thank you so much! It is with sincere gratitude that we acknowledge your recent gift of \$1,509.12 to the Humane Society of Chittenden County. As you may know, we receive no government funding and are not associated with a national organization, so all of the work that we do is made possible by generous donors such as you. Your gift will allow more than 1,000 dogs, cats and small animals to get the care they need to find new, loving homes. Last year we found homes for 1,057 companion animals, and this year we are on track to place even more! Your gift will help us get there. We so greatly appreciate your support! Sincerely,
Terry Pomerleau, Development Manager



Cabin Fever Calcutta

On a snowy March evening, the Catamount Country Club hosted our 4th annual Cabin Fever Calcutta. We are indeed grateful to each of you who supported this fund raising event with your ticket purchase as well as all of the bakers who donated cupcakes frosted in the Jamaican colors of green, yellow and black. It was a delightful evening of fellowship and entertainment, all in support of our international, intergenerational mission team. Many hands worked diligently to make the evening a success. The Calcutta Committee has been working since last fall soliciting the wonderful prizes that were awarded, selling tickets and making all the arrangements. On the day of the event, additional volunteers included our decorating crew, our wine aficionado, our audio guy, and family members of previous trip participants who assisted in various ways. Thanks to each of you who helped to create an enjoyable evening.



Claussen's Gift Cards

A perfect Mother's Day gift or a treat for your own garden! Sign up in Fellowship Hall after services starting on **APRIL 8th** to purchase a \$30 gift card, \$5 from the sale of each card will go to the Church. Pick up after services Sunday May 13th or during the next week in the office. You can also order gift cards by contacting Maureen at maureen.mckenzie@ge.com



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