



The Spirit at First May 2018

A Pastor's Ponderings.....

Everything changes permanently. How boring if it wouldn't. Klaus Schulze

We have a lot of transitions going on in our world these days.....

Personally, we have welcomed a young Nepali woman into our home as she attends college; Nicholas is beginning to imagine college and Margaret a new school; and as Karen and I age, there are changes that naturally take place. All of these transitions and more have positive and negative aspects to them. When we are young, it is hard to imagine life changing because we have never known anything else, but as we age, we begin to understand that life is change and nothing we can do diminishes that reality. The question then becomes how well we deal with change; do we fight transitions tooth and nail or do we embrace the changes, adapting to life and circumstances as we go...maybe even welcoming changes as a way to experience the fullness and richness of life, like the quote from Klaus Schulze above.

Institutions, like individuals, change constantly; our church is no different. The last week of April will see us celebrating Marie and Denise's music ministry as they step down from their official roles. Carol Spradling will then take the reins of our Music Program and create changes. This summer as generosity is transformed into concrete projects, our buildings and grounds will be altered: new roofs, parking lots, new ADA bathrooms to start. Our graduates, many of whom we have observed growing up in our midst, will venture into new worlds and their entire beings will change with employment, geographic relocations and new relationships. Again, there will be pluses and minuses to the perceptions occurring with our new music or our updated facilities or when our graduates comes back for the first time and see their old world with new eyes.

The church both micro and macro, many thoughtful scholars surmise, is in the midst of a dynamic and much overdue paradigm shift. Theology, praxis, Christology, ecclesiology, faith formation, doctrine, Christian ethics, interfaith interactions: these are all drastically changing from even when I first started ministry, which although it seems a lifetime ago is only a blink of an eye in church history. The future is unknown. Folks fearful of change are trying to re-claim the past and return to the fundamentals, which of course is a battle that is doomed to failure for even if those traditional elements are claimed, our reality is so drastically altered that integrating those old paradigms would be differently manifested in today's new world. Seeing the shift as a part of life to understand, claim and work with and through seems much healthier and faithful to me. It speaks of God's ongoing revelation and creativity. It speaks of our continuing partnership with an actual Living Presence. It speaks of God journeying with us into the unknown future.

It seems as if our culture is in the midst of a great paradigm shift as well. Old institutions supported by everyone for generations are no longer trusted or even effective in dealing with the new reality. Younger folks, incredulously, are not thinking and reasoning like we older folks do! National borders no longer contain wars and populations. Technology is changing so fast corporations no longer even need to orchestrate planned obsolescence. Economics, family structures, gender roles, educational philosophies, systems of justice, national and international politics.....all seems to be in flux.

And like any change, there will be both positive and negative outcomes generated depending on our predispositions, experiences, culture and outlook. As one who interacts with people and ideas for a living, it is not hard to imagine how very difficult this is to incorporate these changes into our psyche and patterns of living, especially for old geezers like me.....

But life has always brought changes. The key is how we accept them. Let us as a community of faith and as followers of the greatest change agent of all time, embrace these changes and seek to live into them with integrity to Christ's message of love, God's relentless concern for justice and the Holy Spirit's unfolding command to live into the fullness of community.

Honored to be living into the changes right here in Essex Junction with all of you, I am as always,

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Mark

SPECIAL SERVICES & EVENTS IN MAY

May 6th, Both Services ~ Communion

1st Service: Pass Out
2nd Service: Come Forward

May 20th ~ Confirmation & Jazz Sunday

We have a great group of young adults who have been studying the bible, theology, ethics and church life for a year. We have laughed and cried together; talked about inclusive language and GLBTQ rights. We have studied the creation and fall, the exodus and the prophetic tradition. We have unpacked Jesus, Paul and the growth of the church. We have visited a synagogue and a number of different Christian churches. These great young adults have slowly learned the fundamentals of the faith and are ready to take over their parent's responsibility for their own spirituality. On Confirmation Sunday, they will declare their decision and help lead the two worship services. If that wasn't enough, we are also going to be blessed with great Jazz music by our very own Finally @ First. **This will be a Sunday you do not want to miss!!!** Come and hear the gospel from another perspective. Come and lay your hands upon the kids you taught in our Faith Formation Classes. Come and see parents proud of their kids. Come and hear great music. Come and see how the faith is going to be carried on into the next generation.

May 20th, 11:30am ~ New Member's Class Offered

Have you been attending First Congo and feel comfortable here? Do you appreciate a theology of inclusion where Christ's love is the focus instead of judgement and rigidity? Do you like all the mission projects and ways that First Church actually makes society a better place in which to live? Have you been participating in one of the many small groups that provide education, companionship and fun? Have you liked Rev. Mark's sermons and the new energy and excitement that Rev. Josh brings to our community? Are you excited about belonging to the church who is dedicated to making the future a bright place with well-maintained facilities and grounds? Do you love the many programs for our children and youth? Do you want to learn more about our denomination, the United Church of Christ? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then come to the New Member's Class. We will provide lunch and talk for a couple of hours about what membership means. If you need childcare for the occasion, please let Jen know in the office, 878-5745. Come, and become a member of our active and vibrant church.

May 25th, 7pm ~ Memorial Day Service

Each year, First Congregational Church partners with the Memorial Day Planning Committee and the VFW to create a worship service that kicks off Essex Junction's Memorial Day Remembrances. Rev. Steve Garvey helped create this event many years ago and it has continued under Rev. Mark's ministry. During the service, we honor the Parade Marshals and hear their military service stories. We also listen to some great music by our very own Men @

First and hope to have the chorus from the High School join us as well. We remember those who have lost their lives for our freedom and then we silently march to the 5 Corners for a brief ceremony of remembrance and the singing of God Bless America. We usually have a number of the clergy from the community participate and everyone is welcome to attend.

May 27th ~ Graduation Sunday

We have always had a strong children and youth ministry and each year it is fun to remember those who are graduating from High School, College, Graduate School or Technical School. We honor all ages and all stages of graduates!!! We honor them with a Graduation Litany as well as a slide show where we highlight a picture of the graduate as a child and then as a graduate. There are always oohs and aahs and laughter as we remember the many experiences where we have observed them over the years. We encourage everyone with a graduate to send two pictures to Pastor Josh jsimon@fccej.org who will be putting the slide show together. This is another Sunday you do not want to miss!

DEACON'S CORNER

When I was asked to serve as a Deacon, my first step was to research what it means to be a Deacon (I am an English teacher after all). There are several explanations, but my favorite was that the Greek word it comes from, *diákonos*, literally means "through the dust", referring to the dust raised by the busy servant or messenger. I love the idea of being a servant for our congregation, to find our way to God "through the dust." This past month, there has been some great dust rising at First Congo. From the busy services and special events during Easter week, to the Capital Campaign, to our new Musical Director, there are so many great things happening here!

On Easter Sunday, I was lucky enough to be in the kitchen to help make and serve the Easter breakfast. Our kitchen was filled with church members of all ages, everyone looking to be of service in some small way. From young children, to experienced and older adults, people found tasks that needed to be done. They checked in with each other, "Do you think the bacon is done yet?" "Do we need to refill the coffee maker?" and shared information, "Make sure to use parchment paper in the oven." "This frying pan is the best one to cook the eggs in" There was a wide variety of dishes that people prepared at home, and there were at least three shifts of groups moving in and out of the kitchen, and somehow, tasks that were started by one group were finished by another, and in the end, the congregation was fed and there was a beautiful feeling of communion, in and out of the kitchen.

That same spirit of cooperation could be seen at the Capital Campaign Kick-off. With great planning from the campaign committee, we all joined in Fellowship Hall, excited to learn more about the changes and improvements to be made as a result of the campaign, but most excited to see the big reveal, to find out how close we were to meeting our goal. I confess to feeling a bit nervous, standing in the back of the hall, waiting for the curtain to be lifted. How remarkable it was to see that we are already over 75% of the way to meeting our goal! What a testament it is to our congregation that everyone is pulling together to make our home a better place for the next 150 years!

There's a great story about a monk who is standing outside the meditation hall making a lot of noise rubbing a stone with a tile. His student comes out and asks him, "Master, what are you doing?" He replies, "I am polishing this stone until it becomes a mirror." Now, it may seem impossible to polish a stone so smooth that it can act as a mirror, and I'm not sure a tile is the best tool for the job. I like to think, though, that through the effort (and the dust!) we can get a little closer to God. One of my favorite weekly activities is getting to Yoga class early so I can clean the floor before teaching class. There's a meditative stillness to serving the greater community and it is so clear that everyone here at our church understands this beauty.

On behalf of the Deacons, I wish you good luck in polishing your stone.

Jonah Moos

ASSOCIATE PASTOR NEWS

Since February 14th, young people across our country have spoken up and have demanded their political leaders listen to them. I have been delighted to see them raise up their voices. Part of my calling to ministry is to help all people become empowered to be disciples of Jesus. In my role here as an associate pastor, I am especially focused on helping young people express themselves within the church and within society. I want to foster within them a sense of their own agency. That is, their own ability to shape and influence people with their ideas and actions. How have I tried to do this work? I try to show up. This is a good lesson to have for anyone who wants to do any type of work to make a better society: You must show up, even when thousands of other people might show up, too. Every person adds value to a cause. On Thursday, March 15th, hundreds of students from Essex High School walked out of class. I showed up. I had a sign printed that says, "This Pastor Supports You!" I stood in the freezing rain next to the track and field bleachers. I held my sign as students walked past and walked onto the bleachers. I resisted the urge to shout out to the young people from our church, for fear of embarrassing them.

The next basic thing is to create spaces or to bring youth to spaces that are for young people to express themselves. From my point of view, young people need less instructions on what to do and need more support from adults. I went to two organizing meetings of the March for Our Lives. I was not an organizer. I was a supporter of the young people who were organizing the event. I tried to be encouraging and to provide input from my own experiences when I felt it would be helpful. As part of my youth ministry position here, I'm glad adults came to support the young people who organized March for Our Lives and to support our First Congregational youth who attended the event. On Saturday, March 24th, the day before Palm Sunday, over 20 people from First Congregational, a cross section of ages from toddler to senior adult, attended the March for Our Lives rally in Montpelier. We gathered with 2500 plus Vermonters on the state grounds, demanding and requesting our state legislators and governor act on reducing violence perpetrated with a gun, especially high capacity semi-automatic weapons. In summary, the basics are showing up and providing space for young people to express themselves. It is at least a start.

Memorial Day Parade is Saturday, May 26th. The parade starts at 10am. If you are interested in walking with First Congregational please, let me know.

Graduation Sunday is May 27th. If you are a graduating high school senior, undergrad, or grad student, please send me a baby pic and a recent picture of you (graduation pic). Email these items to me at jsimon@fccej.org.

High School Youth Group is May 6th, 5-7pm at the church.

Thanks, Josh



Laurie's Lens

All day today I've been trying to stay focused on my tasks at hand and check off my to-do list before a week's vacation. Time sure does fly by! Oh, if we just had a few more hours in the day. I find that I'm always needing to check my calendar to see if I'm already booked for something. Do you feel the same way? If so, then my question to you is ... when was the last time you just sat still and listened to all that's around you? Did you have to schedule it onto your calendar? Blocking off time and just say ... I'm doing this for me! I say to myself, I'm doing this for me and for God. For I believe God likes to know that we are taking the time to just sit and be open to God. We all need time to decompress, look at all that's around us, take time in nature and take in all that God created for us to enjoy.

I have been getting over a sinus infection that has dragged on and slowed me down over the last 3 weeks. I've even used some of my sick days...something I haven't done in years. I've had time to just sit, wrapped in a blanket with my heat pack on my head and just be still. Trying to rest my head, neck, shoulders and just chill. I've even been doing some deep breathing exercises, trying to open-up my sinuses. Whether you are sick and feeling under the weather or you are stressed with a long to do list or something else...where do you turn? What helps you unwind and just let go? How do you destress yourself when life has you overloaded or upset? Do you have someone to go to and talk it out with? Do you have a place that you go? In the world we live in with all the stresses around us, it's important that we know our places and keep connected to the people we feel comfortable talking to. Parents, this is so important to kids and youth today. Have you had this conversation with your kids? Do you know what their stress buttons are? Do you know how they destress and relax the world away? These stress relievers change as we get older and our interests change and shift. I encourage you to keep having an open dialog with your kids, family, spouse. Everyone should be aware of how others unwind and destress. Everyone needs people looking out for them so that we can help others do their best to just let go. God can help. Pastors can help. Friends can help. Parents can help. Siblings can help. If we continue to bring to mind that saying ... what would Jesus do? Jesus retreated to the garden to pray, hang out with friends and disciples, went out into the wilderness, went up the mountain, traveled spending time with all kinds of different people, was upset at times and even let out his frustrations and turned over some tables.

Summer is coming and many of us schedule family vacations, trips, outdoor projects, camping, gardening and any way we can to enjoy the long warm days of summer. If you are looking for a retreat away to really focus on God and the outdoors, reconnect and put your cell phone a side...I hope you all will look at attending a week of outdoor ministry camp. There is something for all ages. Need to check it out first? Go visit on their open house day. Horton Center in Gorham, NH is June 9th. You can even call them and set up a time to visit, you'll be glad you did. Help to keep our UCC weeks of camp alive and well, feeding our souls and helping us to stay connected with our God, ourselves and those around us. Meet some new friends, take time to just sit, be one with creation and listen for that still small voice to speak to them. A week of camp can really change your life, deepen your connection to God and be an experience you'll never forget...you'll end up wanting more. I started out going to family camp as a kid, then went on a confirmation retreat in junior high, then with my youth group. After college, getting married and having kids... I finally returned to camp and took my whole family. Fifteen years later, I keep going back for more!

Blessed to be doing ministry with you!

Laurie, Christian Education Director

MUSIC

Celebrating The Music Ministry of Marie Johnson & Denise Keating

It has been a long transition but we are finally welcoming our new Organist and Choir Director! Before we do, let us extend our grateful and heartfelt appreciation to Marie Johnson and Denise Keating. Marie, yet again, came to our church's rescue by serving as its interim organist and choir director. Every time we

have asked, she has graciously and simply been willing to serve and keep our choir performing wonderfully beautiful music. She does so without pretense or drama. To ease her workload, Marie asked Denise Keating, a new addition to the choir, to work with her in selecting the music and directing the choir. Denise willingly agreed to help Marie and to fill in for Bill Bickford Jr who had been helping to direct the choir until heading south for the winter. On Sunday April 29th, we will formally thank Marie, Denise and Bill for the ways in which they kept the music program alive and well during the interim time. Be sure to come and wish them well as they transition back to their spots in the Sanctuary Choir.

Our New Organist/Choir Director, Carol Spradling Starts May 1st!

After an extensive search and multiple candidates, the Music Director Search Committee proposed Carol Spradling to be our next Organist / Choir Director. The interview process included meeting the Music Committee, leading the full Sanctuary Choir for one of their practices, and getting to know the various Music Directors and church staff. At each stage, each group offered positive support for the Search Committee's choice. Thus, Church Council, supported the proposal and hired Carol to be our next Organist / Choir Director. Since she was busy with work obligations and commitments, she could not start until May 1st.....which is now here. Carol will come in and settle into her office, then lead choir practice, then be in worship at both services for the first time on May 6th. Be sure to come and meet the newest member of our staff and hear some great music.



Spring is just about here and it is time again for the Montpelier Community Gospel Choir to fill your spirits with the joy of gospel music with their upcoming concerts. This spring the choir will welcome special guest artist Lloyd Dugger. The first concert will be in Barre on Saturday, May 5th, 7pm at First Presbyterian Church, 19 South Seminary Street, Barre, VT This first Barre concert is a benefit, with all proceeds going to the Good Samaritan Haven in Barre. The second concert will be in Montpelier on Sunday, May 6th, 7pm at Bethany United Church of Christ, 115 Main Street, Montpelier VT. Suggested donation for both concerts - \$10/\$25 for families. There will be a free reception and silent auction to follow the Montpelier concert. Also consider joining **The Small Choir** for one of their two concerts on **April 22nd** at 4pm in Jericho, **May 19th** at 7pm in East Montpelier See full concert details at www.vtgospel.com/concerts and on our Facebook page. www.facebook.com/vtgospel

STEWARDSHIP

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

Per Capita Dues

In the next few days, all members of FCCEJ should receive a letter in the mail for our annual Per Capita campaign. Each year we are assessed dues based on the number of members listed on our membership data. Each year we ask members to contribute their share of the Per Capita. It is an acknowledgement that membership has costs as well as benefits. This year our church's Per Capita fee is \$13.76. Please consider rounding up your share or paying an additional payment for someone else. Per Capita Sunday is May 13th, which is also Mother's Day. You may also mail it in or put it in an envelope marked 'Per Capita' any Sunday you are in worship. Thank you!

percapita

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: Kick-Off Recap, Visits & Project News!

On Sunday, April 8th, our congregation came together to officially kick off the **Our Home, Our Future, Our Time Capital Campaign**. God's love was all around us as we talked, laughed, ate, took funny pictures, watched children play and celebrated this exciting time in the life our church. The Campaign Steering Committee was thrilled to announce that we have raised \$650,000 of our \$822,000 goal...79 percent! And the number keeps growing!

Now is the opportunity for the rest of the congregation to take the Campaign over the top...to reach our \$822,000 goal AND "fill the heart" to reach our \$1.09 million stretch goal. Together, with God's love and grace, we can do this!



Special thanks to Cathy Shearer and her team of volunteers for making the kick-off so much fun – Myrna Doney, Phyllis Willey, Beth Warren, Betsy Weischedel, Sue Conti, Jim Glatz, Rob & Maureen Evans, Alison Wermer, Tom Shearer, Kaki McGeary, Dave Johnson, Josh Simon & Mark Mendes. Thank you Lester Nutting for making our beautiful thermometer, and to John Burnett for helping with the install. For the latest updates about the Campaign's progress, be sure to visit the Capital Campaign page on our website at www.fcej.org (there is a Capital Campaign tab at the top, far right). Special thanks to Andrea Sharp for her excellent work on the website and to Lauren Starkey for her skilled editorial pen.

May we visit with you? One of the most important goals for this Campaign is to help people feel even more connected to our church and one another...after all, this is **Our Home!** Everyone in the church will have an opportunity for a group or

individual visit with one of our trained “Campaign Visitors,” people who have volunteered to meet with folks to talk about the Church, listen to stories about what it means to our members, and answer any questions about the Campaign before confidential pledges are made. *We want you to know that the home visit is NOT about asking for specific amounts of money – that is for you to decide and the details of your pledge are confidential.* We believe you will enjoy getting to know someone better (or making a new friend), while you learn more about this important step we are taking together in the life of our Church. We hope you will say YES to a visit! Please contact Maureen Evans if you have questions or would like to schedule a visit.

Project News...Window & Plaster Restoration Report Complete! A few months ago, historic architecture specialist Sally Fishburn came to our church to assess our historic sanctuary windows and plaster walls, and to make recommendations about how to best repair them. This work was funded in part by a grant from the Preservation Trust of Vermont. A full copy of her informative report can be found on our website – look under Capital Campaign/Projects. Based upon her review, Sally recommends that the church restore/refurbish the windows, rather than replacing them with new windows. First, our windows are very unique in their design and because they are made of wood from old growth trees. This old growth wood is very rare in modern times, and it has the benefit of being extremely rot resistant. With proper care and a little routine maintenance, our windows (once restored) should last another 100 years! AND, Sally’s report noted that the refurbished windows and new storm windows will not only be more beautiful, but they will be more energy efficient (even slightly more energy efficient than new windows!). Her cost estimates for completing this work fall in line with what our architect John Alden had estimated, which was more great news. The timeline for starting work on the windows and plaster has not been established yet. The Steering Committee and Trustees are working together to first determine if some historic preservation grant funds might be available. We will keep you posted as we learn more!

As always, if you have any questions, please reach out to Co-Chairs Dave Johnson or Kaki McGeary.

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

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.

May 13th ~ All in worship to celebrate Mothers

Activity in Fellowship Hall for young ones

May 20th ~ Pentecost ~ Confirmation Sunday ~ Jazz Sunday

Peer class time for Preschool – 2nd grade ~ older ages in worship~ Confirmands lead worship

May 27th ~ Hands-On Mission Sunday



2018 Faith Formation Offering ~ Jamaica Children ~ Uniforms & Books

Current Giving Total is \$378.17

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.

May 6th & 20th ~ Join the fun as we make decorations & set pieces for VB Camp!

High School Youth Group @ FCCEJ

Sunday, May 6th ~ 5-7pm

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, our staff person, will greet you when you arrive. Manu may be here as well. If you would like to help in the Nursery on a Sunday, please sign up with Adrienne or connect with Laurie.



Parents ~ please be mindful of our Safe Conduct Guidelines and help us keep to our child ratio (2 children to 1 adult). Volunteer to stay in

the Nursery with your child if you see that extra hands will be needed. Thank you for your help.

SAVE THE DATES

May 13th ~ Mother's Day

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

May 27th ~ Graduation Sunday

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

June 9th ~ Open House at Horton Center in Gorham, NH

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

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! Need scholarship money 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

You can always give to our Camp Scholarship fund and help send kids to Outdoor Ministry camp for a week... at our Vermont week at Rock Point camp, Horton Center camp in NH, Silver Lake in CT or even Pilgrim Lodge in ME. Outdoor Ministry camps give kids a chance to dive deeper than one can at VB



Camp or even on Sunday mornings at church. Kids and youth 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 everyone 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. Many camps for all ages! Give a donation that will support our VT UCC OM Program and putting a check in the offering plate (write in the memo line...camp scholarship fund or camping program).



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 ~ May 4th

Come - Help - Eat www.essexeatsout.org

JOY (Just Older Youth)

A group for the over 55 crowd (both men & women) meets the first Thursday of each month at 12 noon in the Marvin Lounge. If you have any questions about the group or need a ride please call the office. Please join us **Thursday, May 3rd** for a discussion with Rachel from Age Well. She will educate us about advocacy support available to seniors either in senior facilities or at home. Bring your lunch and join the discussion of this relevant and important topic.



Third Thursday Dish Share

Thursday, May 17th from 5:45 to 7pm

Last one before September

The whole church 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!



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 **May 18th**. 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, May 18th, from 6:00-8:00 pm

Stay Tuned to the Bulletin for May's Discussion Topic



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. Join us **Saturday, May 19th** at 9:30 in Marvin Lounge to enjoy a few of Carol Burnett's classic sketches from her TV show and to share who the strong women are that have influenced your life.



NEW DAY Wednesday, May 16th, Noontime Book Group

The Noontime Book Group has changed its meeting day. We will now be meeting on the **third Wednesday** of each month at noon in the Marvin Lounge. In May we will be reading and discussing *The Abstinence Teacher* by Tom Perrotta. It's a novel that uses satire and humor to explore some of the conflict between liberalism and conservatism in modern suburbia. Ruth is an experienced sex education teacher whose school board is forcing her to teach only abstinence in her classes. Tim is a born again Christian who finds himself turning back to his old ways of drug addiction. The story emerges as their lives intertwine. Please join us at noon with a bag lunch on Wed. May 18 for some interesting discussion and good fellowship.

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, May 28th** 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

Missions Moment

One of the Missions Committee's goals this year is to strengthen our relationship with the members of the Nepali Church that worships each Saturday in our sanctuary. Most weeks they meet after their service to enjoy lunch together in Fellowship Hall. In April a new initiative was started to give English as a Second Language classes to members of their church. Presently we have three teachers, Jonah Moos, Jane Schneider and Joanne Irwin, who are working with a small number of folks twice a week. Over the next few months we hope they will feel more a part of our community as they learn more English and begin to understand more of our customs. We will venture out into town to develop the skills they need to shop, do basic banking, communicate with their children's schools and enjoy the Vermont summer. We hope all of our members will try to get to know these folks better. Watch for opportunities to share some fellowship with these very friendly neighbors.

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 and staff are extremely friendly and appreciative of our help. **We are currently looking for volunteers for May 23rd**. 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.



May 13th ~ Foster Grandparents Wanted

We have invited the United Way to come and educate all of us on the benefits of volunteering to be a Foster Grandparent. Danielle Williams, the Coordinator of Volunteer Recruitment for the RSVP / Foster Grandparent Program will come and speak briefly at each worship service and then be prepared to answer questions at

Fellowship Hour for anyone interested in learning more and or volunteering for the program. The program matches up Foster Grandparents and local kids who do not have grandparents but could use one. It helps both the youngsters as well as those volunteering with great benefits. Ms. Williams will be here on May 13th at both services. Come and speak to her if you are interested.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

April 15th - May 6th ~ Bottle Drive for the Capital Campaign



This year as a confirmation class we have become a lot more connected to our church. We would like to do our part to contribute to the capital campaign. A bottle drive will be held April 15-May 6. There will be labeled bins at the church where your cans and bottles can be donated. If you are unable to bring in your cans & bottles, there will be a table where you can sign-up to have us come pick them up. Thank you for your support and donating your returnables so that we can help the church reach its campaign goal.

Craft Fest News ~ Help Needed!

The Craft Fest in 2017 made almost \$7,000 for the Church which is wonderful news. A large portion of this profit comes from the Silent Auction. This has become a favorite with all our customers. Both Diana Higgins and Phyllis Willey have decided to resign from being the key organizers of the Silent Auction. We are now looking for 2 people who are willing to organize the auction. Both Diana and Phyllis are willing to help their successors and will be available the day of the event to assist. Please contact Linda at lbogardus@myfairpoint.net if you are interested or have



any questions. It would be very sad if the auction wasn't a part of this special event.

Heavenly Food Pantry Needs Donations



Next Food Pantry days are Monday, May 14th, 5:30-7:30pm and Thursday, May 24th, 2-6pm We are in need of baked beans, tuna fish, toothpaste, jam & jelly and canned fruit to restock our cabinets. We could use some Egg Cartons!

Vacation Bible Camp Art Project

During the week of VBC we will be doing an art project using recyclable caps that will connect with our Rolling River Rampage theme. Are you one who thinks that the caps from your milk jug, juice container and other small caps are recyclable? Think again. No cap smaller than 2 inches in diameter can be recycled in our area. So if you leave it on the container when you put it in the recycling bin, the container will be rejected when it goes through the sorting process. Let's put these caps to good use! Start now and collect your caps for VB Camp. You'll be surprised how many of these you can collect by July. Bring them to church by Sunday, August 6th and we'll use them for a cool art project. Watch for the colored VB Camp bin in Fellowship Hall. Thanks for your help!



Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop News

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

Mark your Calendar – Saturday Open Hours

Saturday, May 5th 9 am to 1 pm

Saturday, June 2nd 9 am to 1 pm

Saturday, July 7th 9 am to 1 pm

Saturday, July 21st 9 am to 2 pm Porch Sale



We are looking for a tarp or tent covering to use for the Porch Sale. Please contact Linda Bogardus at lbogardus@myfairpoint.net if you have something that can be borrowed. We will be collecting Nearly New items for the Porch Sale starting now until July. Please use our drop off container. Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop is also looking for more volunteers. Customers keep asking for the shop to be open more Saturdays. Right now we don't have anyone who can assist on a regular basis for another Saturday. If anyone is interested in helping on the 3rd Saturday of Each month to open the shop, please let Elaine know at ebaymond@gmail.com We are also looking for accessories such as jewelry, scarfs, hats, and purses. Please see if your closet has some items which can be donated.



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! Looking for one more male counselor & a nurse (RN) for the week at Rock Point, 7/29-8/3. Think of it... no cooking or laundry for a week, just great fun in God's outdoors! See Laurie for more information.



Jamaica Mission Program – Join the 2019 Team!!

If you like adventure, hard work, good community, and learning about other cultures, consider joining the next Jamaica Team! In July 2019, we will once again travel to St. Thomas, Jamaica, the most impoverished parish on the island. We will work with our local Jamaican partners on a community-identified project.



- **Applications are due May 1, 2018**
- Youth must be 16 years of age or older as of July 2019
- **First team meeting will be in June, 2018** (time and date TBD)

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.



August 6-10 ~ Vacation Bible Camp Rolling River

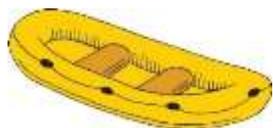
Rampage: Experience the Ride of a Lifetime with God!

Monday – Friday from 9am to 11:45am

Now Recruiting for ... Station Leaders: Bible Drama ~ 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!



VB Camp Wish List: 40 ~ 2 Liter Clear Soda Bottles with labels removed, 3 rolls of Blue & 3 rolls of Yellow Duck Tape, 2 Concrete pillar tubes 24" long, 1 light weight Yellow tarp

Looking to borrow: 8 Artificial Christmas Trees (different sizes), Collapsible camping chairs, Plastic canoe/raft paddles, Small Inflatable Raft

Snack Station: 2 -16oz bags of Large Pretzel Rods, 1 small bag of Large Pretzel Rods Gluten Free, 1 - 14oz pkg of pull apart Twizzlers (Red), 2 bags or boxes of Fish Shaped Pretzel Crackers, 1 large box of Rainbow Goldfish, 7 boxes of Graham crackers, 1 box gluten free Graham crackers, 1 - 12oz package of Chocolate Chips, 1 - 16 oz bag of Small Pretzel Sticks, 200 sturdy party Toothpicks, 12 to 15 - 12oz Chocolate bars, 50 BBQ Skewers, 400 - 10oz recyclable plastic cups, 150 small paper dinner plates, Snack size Ziploc baggies (3 boxes), Small snack size paper plates (200)

OUR CHURCH FAMILY



May 13th ~ Per Capita Offering, \$13.76/member

May Birthdays

1st Sena Meilleur, Collin Parker, James Pettingill, Steve Sharp 2nd Steve Mittl, Jane Schneider
3rd Donald Foss, Anna Giannuzzi, Lester Nutting, Jackson Parker, Jean Tucker 4th Jacob Hoy
5th Don Gray 6th Grace Parks, Carolyn Rushford 7th Nathaniel Brennan, Laura Cunningham-Firkey
8th Anna Kinney, Cooper Spaulding, Kinlee Spaulding 9th Rose Drost, Marsha Duell, Lia Wolinsky
10th Mike Bottamini, Allie Harris, Kelvey Spaulding 11th Chris Baker, Jennifer Hoy, Denise Keating,
Gretchen Owens, Jackie Parks, Anniella Pettingill 13th Aki Aboukhalil, Eric Lindholm, Alec Mayville
14th Jordan Calhoun, Rich Higgins, Alex John 17th Roman Bearman, Eric Smith 18th Eliza Lynch
19th Wayne Beebe 20th Betsy Cieplicki, Kyle Ehler-Vock, Marlene Frank, David Hoy 21st Lori
Weischedel 22nd Mindy Mannarino 24th Arlene Bickford, Logan Harris, Becky Relyea 25th Maryann
Carlson, Mary Richer, Susan Wood 26th Orion Stapleton, Mary Anne Warren 27th Dan Bashaw, Brian
Evans 28th Nicolas Bearman 29th Maureen McKenzie, Leo Wermer 30th Tom James 31st Amanda
Palmer, Alyssa Pettingill

Thank You's

Dear Friends, thank you for the beautiful yellow rose. It has opened up and it brightens up the corner. I really appreciated it. Sincerely, Elizabeth Cilley

Dear Church Friends, Thank you for the very beautiful yellow rose that arrived for my birthday.

Pat Seaver



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!



May 27th ~ Graduation Sunday

If you have a graduate from high school, college, technical school or any other program, we want to celebrate them! Send Pastor Josh a baby pic, a grad/recent pic and also their plans if they have them. His email is jsimon@fcej.org. If you need help scanning pics in, bring them to Jen in the office and she can do it for you! Come and bring your grad on May 27th, both services to celebrate!

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