



From the Minister's desk.....

The Spirit at First February 2019

We just had a big snow storm this past weekend and Karen and I hosted a “Storm Party” for some of our neighbors and friends that live close. I provided a pot of chili and everyone brought some goodies to share. We ended up playing a game and getting to know each other in the warmth of our home and neighborly friendship, while the bitter cold storm surged outside. While the world took a beating, our hearts drew courage from the camaraderie so that we might better face the storm.

Church saw numbers drastically reduced that storm weekend, but we stayed open for those who felt safe to come and we had two wonderful services that served to beef us up for the rest of the day. Everyone who made it that blizzardy morning felt a special sense of community for having made the effort. As I reflected on the experience of a port amidst the storm, I thought it a poignant reminder of Christ's Church. There are times when our calling to follow Jesus calls us to rail against culture and the values it ensues with every fiber of our being. There are times when our faith has ingratiated itself so much within the culture that it is hard to extricate Christ's message. But there are also times when Jesus calls us to journey outside of our culture and leave it behind as we seek to simply connect with the joy and peace of relating to the divine. Throughout history, there have been times when the church has been called to focus on one way of relating to culture over another. Likewise, there are some churches and or denominations that are particularly good at focusing on one aspect of our relationship to Christ over another. Naturally, the same is true for individual followers of Christ; some love the social justice and railing against it, some integrating Christianity into the mores and milieu of our times is the cat's meow, while others simply pray and find peace through meditation.

The Church [denominations, churches, members] is at its best when it is able to balance all three of these ways of relating to culture. As followers of Jesus, we should indeed be railing against the sins of the corporate world and the way power is exercised by a small minority of the world population; there are plenty of ways we personally participate in the degradation of our world. But as followers of Christ, we should also be adapting to and drawing from the wider culture so that the scope and reach of the gospel message might continue to influence our society but also so we might learn and grow into a deeper understanding of God's work in the world. Lastly, as people of faith, we as a church and individuals should be deepening our relationship to God through spiritual practices that have absolutely nothing to do with what going on in the world today. With beauty and elegance, I have learned that each nurtured the other in a dance that is truly transformative.

Our church should be engaged in all three. All of us should be engaged in all three. My guess is that when Laurie comes back from her studies of what churches are healthy and attracting new members, she will tell us that the vibrant churches are engaged in all of the various ways Jesus [church] engaged with the wider culture.

Looking forward to doing just that with all of you, I remain

Yours in Christ,

Mark

SPECIAL SERVICES & EVENTS IN FEBRUARY

Communion in February

Both services the elements will be passed out



February 2nd ~ Saturday 5:00 pm NOT 4:30pm Special Service

For the special service in February, we will be adapting it a bit to combine and celebrate the Praise-a-Palooza occurring at our church on the same date and time. The service will not begin at 4:30 but will begin at 5:00 p.m. and will include a soup & bread meal. So come at 5:00 p.m. and experience worship around a table while you eat!

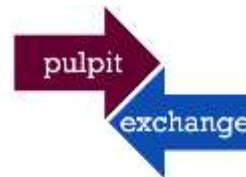


February 10th ~ Wedding Renewal Service

On the Sunday closest to Valentine's Day, immediately after each service, Revs Mark and Josh will renew wedding vows for any couples that would like to. It will begin as soon as our clergy do the normal meet and greet in the Narthex after the service and last about 15 minutes. So bring your partner and renew your love and commitment to each other.

February 17th ~ Karen Mendes Pulpit Exchange

As many of you know, Rev. Mark's wife Karen is an ordained American Baptist minister and serves the 1st Baptist Church of Burlington. The Deacons have voted to invite the "other" Rev. Mendes to the pulpit in an exchange. Karen has preached a number of times at FCCEJ to much acclaim. While Rev. Karen Mendes is preaching here, Rev. Mark will be preaching at 1st Baptist Church Burlington @ 9:45am



SAVE THE DATES

March 17th ~ Pretzel Sunday

April 21st ~ Easter



August 5-9th, 2019 ~ Vacation Bible Camp 2019

To Mars and Beyond: Explore Where God's Power Can Take You!

Monday – Friday from 9am – 11:45am

Recruiting for: Music ~ Snack ~ Discovery ~ Games ~ Bible Drama Leaders

ASSOCIATE PASTOR NEWS

I admire people who live their lives for positive change. As much as Jesus has inspired me to follow him, change makers like Martin Luther King Jr, Ella Baker, Bayard Rustin, Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez and many more have encouraged me to be a change maker. Change makers are, at their best, when they help empower others to take the reins of their lives. I do not mean this in a self-help sort of way; I mean that people understand and believe in their own power to change their communities for the better and for more people.



Christianity has had changemakers in its ranks since the time of Christ. Jesus called us to be disciples. Discipleship at its essence is about changing people's lives for the better. Jesus sent his disciples out to heal and to preach that the Kingdom of God is coming. Whether you believe in literal healings or not, to heal is an act of changing someone's life for the better. Healing is an example of someone feeling spiritually/physically made whole, and in being made whole can be a contributing member of society. There is more to healing than that, but for now, it is an example of how Jesus sent his disciples out to be changemakers.

Changemakers today function differently. When Jesus was alive, there was a standing army, a Roman puppet king; there wasn't a congress or parliament, democracy was not the norm. The only way to let the rulers of the land know that the people despised their poverty and support for aristocrats was through revolt. And there were many revolts, Jesus perhaps knowing that revolts would lead to more death of his people while not actually removing the oppressors lived an alternative change making. His way gave life to his followers. He empowered them to heal. He empowered them to build their own communities and in turn have a sense of purpose.

Change makers are sometimes known but most are unknown. They are the people who dedicate their lives to make the lives of other people better. There are other types of change makers like scientist, doctors, and nurses. There are also others who are changemakers but work typical 9-5, shift work, and when not at work, they find some time to be a change maker. Change makers often are known to be activist, demonstrating against an injustice, yet there are change makers who volunteer to attend local legislative meetings, organize food pantries, serve lunches to homebound people, and in other ways. It is in that spirit that I encourage all of us to be changemakers, no matter how big or small. Changemaking empowers us and it helps strength our own communities.

High School Youth Group ~ Change Makers: Making Change Series

Sunday, February 3rd, 5-7pm meet in the youth lounge for another interactive experience on being change makers. We'll discuss a service project we want to work on as a group. All ideas are welcome, and we'll decide together what we want to focus on. We'll also spend time playing games and eating.

We're bringing back Holy Spirit Cafe on Sunday, February 17th. Holy Spirit Café brings together high school students and adults from our church to have conversations on the hot topics of faith and life. Let's talk about music. I'll bring some songs that I like. I want you to bring songs that you like. We'll talk about how music (no matter the words, even curse words) speak to our faith and life.

Sunday, February 17th, 11:30am-1:30pm. After church, we'll watch Selma, and food, of course. ☺



Laurie's Lens

It's time to start thinking about summer camps! If you are a parent of kids and/or youth you are probably already starting thi to make your summer plans! UCC camp brochures are in the mail now and should be arriving at church soon. If you attended camp the last couple of years you should have received a camp brochure in the mail (those who attend our VT UCC camp at Rock Point receive a brochure for Horton Center Camp in NH). Watch for our brochures to show up on the blue resource table in Fellowship Hall on Sunday mornings or posted on the Outdoor Ministry board at the bottom of the Narthex stairs by the glass entry doors. You'll see pictures there of our VT UCC week at Rock Point in Burlington.

Overnight camps are great! Parents get some time to regroup while their son or daughter is away for a week and the camper gets to spread their wings and grow. They will grow in so many different ways ...with other campers, get closer to God/Jesus and as a person. Parents did you know that if you child attends faith formation programs on a Sunday every week all year they would put in 52 towards growing their faith. When they reach youth group age you could add 30 or so more hours to this, but you still don't reach the same amount as if you attend a week of overnight camp from Sunday afternoon to Friday night or Saturday morning. Attending camp gives you at least 120 hours. That's why camp can be so transforming. But, picking a church camp or God camp is different from others camps you can go to because you can build on your faith so much in the coarse of a week and really connect deeper with God. God is with us at camp all the time and comes up in conversation all the time. God is in our 'givens' of how we act at camp and interact with each other, our do's and don't ... good lessons for life. So whether it's singing a Grace before meal time, reading a scripture verse or story and talking about it along with an activity during faith discovery time or hiking a trail and talking about what God made that is all around us...church camp can change lives!

At Horton Center camp in NH you have the beautiful views of Mt. Washington when you hike up to Pinkham Ledge and sleep out under the stars or of Mt. Madison when you stand outside the dinning hall. You can also hike up to Chapel rock for worship and take in the view there as well as go rock climbing, caving, swimming in the river, ropes coarse and enjoy a Agape meal and talent night. At Rock Point during our UCC camp week called @ *the Lake* you can swim at Fred's beach (north end of North Beach), canoe or swim at Eagle Bay, go paddle boarding on Lake Champlain, take part in a community service project in Burlington. Please consider joining me for a week at Horton Center in July or attend our UCC camp in VT.

You can meet many people who found their 'calling' at outdoor ministry camp. Many of us just can't stop going. It's in our blood. I went to camp as a kids with my family for church camp and went later in my teens for confirmation camp. I made my way back to church camp after I had kids and then starting taking them to camp when they reached the overnight camping age and then started volunteer directing/deaning a week of camp. I have volunteer directed for 10 years and have counseled for 3 additional years. Camp is in my blood. Many of us in ministry careers can say we found our calling at camp. Our connection to God grew and

More information can be found later in this newsletter in our 'camp section'. I am on the team and recruiting campers, counselors, daytime volunteers, lifeguards and a nurse. If you like VB Camp, you're going to love outdoor ministry.

Blessing & Peace from the road, Laurie Chipman Christian Education Director

DEACON'S CORNER

Happy New Year everyone!

The deacons are responsible for the spiritual welfare of the church. We are tasked with promoting a welcoming community, accepting and serving all in the spirit of Christ. As is noted in the bulletin each Sunday, and on our website, "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome in this place." We would like to cultivate a friendly community where everyone knows your name.

As deacons, we know so many of you, but we do not know everyone and we do not always remember everyone's name. We would like to know your name. I am terrible at remembering names, though I do remember faces. I am appreciative when people wear their nametags at the Sunday services, and I know I do not always wear my nametag!!! I would like to encourage everyone to wear their nametag at the Sunday services, and I will be making a conscious effort to remember my nametag moving forward. Please join me!

If you don't like the style or ease of use of our nametags you can look forward to updates in the not too distant future. If you do not have a nametag please let Jen or a deacon know, and we will have one made for you.

Thanks loads,

Betsy

MUSIC

Praise-A-Palooza

Praise-a-Palooza is coming! Please join us for a great evening of soup, fellowship and music! **Saturday, February 2nd**, at FCCEJ. Because this overlaps with the FCCEJ Saturday evening service, we are going to combine the two! We'll start at 5:00 with a fellowship service and soup dinner in Fellowship Hall, and then proceed upstairs to the Sanctuary for some great praise music by Got Grace! (Grace Methodist Church), Malletts Bay Congregational Church UCC, Smokey Newfield Project, and Finally @ First (FCCEJ). Come join the fun with soup, song and praise! Admission is free, although there will be a good will offering at the door.



Music for February

February 2, 5pm ~ combo Saturday special service in Fellowship Hall with Praise-A-Palooza, a praise music festival of great music and fellowship, see above for details
February 3 ~ Communion Sunday with Sanctuary Choir (both services)
February 10 and 17 ~ Sanctuary Choir at first service; Finally @ First at second service
February 24 ~ Marie Johnson, organist & Denise Keating, choir director 1st service, F @ F at 2nd service
March 2, 4:30pm ~ Saturday Special Service with quiet music
March 3 ~ Communion Sunday with Sanctuary Choir (both services)
March 6 ~ Ash Wednesday, beginning of Lent

As I write this we are snowed in with Winter Storm Harper, and my new rescue dog, who's from sunny South Carolina, is giving me serious side-eye about the mounds of frozen stuff she's having to trod through.

Having a "snow day" immediately takes me back to the times standing around our Norelco radio, waiting for the agonizingly long list of school closings to get to the "W" for my school. And then - magically - SNOW DAY! The double joy of no school, combined with piles of fresh white snow to make forts out of. But as an adult (and being not of the type who ties sticks to my feet and deliberately falls forward down mountains :), I too often find myself seeing snowy days as a hassle to be endured, rather than a joy to be celebrated.

So this morning, when I got up to find a foot of snow in my driveway and on every road I could see, I couldn't make it to service. I went outside, and I had a snow day. I listened to the snow. Not one other sound, even in the distance. Yep - on this Sunday, I let nature be the music. And though I couldn't be in church, God found me anyway, in my warm boots, tasting fresh snow as it fell.

Music at First Church is in a bit of a lull between the busy seasons of Christmas and Easter, but Sanctuary Choir and Finally @ First will be leading musical worship throughout snow season, and then it's March, with Lent beginning on March 6.

A CALL TO SING: This year plans have be moving forward for an Easter/Pentecost cantata, for choir, orchestra, guitars, keyboards, and many solo voices. We are hoping that folks in the community whose schedules may not allow you to sing with the choir on a weekly basis might be interested in singing for this limited engagement. The music is both wonderful and challenging; based on the ancient chant "Veni Creator Spiritus" and the hymn tune "All Creatures Of Our God And King". All singers 16+ are welcome, and we could involve singers as young as 13 if parents are able to participate along with youth. We need your talent and your voices! Please reach out to Carol at cspradling@fccej.org for schedule and details.



Also seeking instrumental soloists (of all ages) who would like to play prelude music at our worship services! See above paragraph for my email address. We ideally hope that whoever plays the prelude music would be able to play both services on a particular Sunday, but that can be flexible.

On behalf of all of the amazing musical groups at First Church

Carol

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES



Music Time During Faith Formation

Cherubs ~ Preschool - 2nd grade gather in the Kindergarten room on Sundays to sing with Jenny Bourn before moving on to their peer group locations.

Joyful Noise ~ 3rd - 8th graders gather in the Marvin Lounge for songs and music with Jessica Moos before moving on to their peer group locations.

Faith Formation Sunday School Calendar

Preschool – 8th Grade

February 3rd ~ 1st Sunday Spiritual Friends with Preschool & Kindergarteners

Communion Sunday ~ Intergenerational Worship

February 10th & 17th ~ Music & Peer Group time

February 24th ~ Hands On Mission Sunday ~ Tour our Thrift Shop

Stop by and pick up a copy of our yellow 2018-19 Faith Formation Family Calendar.

You can find them in the office hallway and outside the Nursery on Sunday mornings.



Acolytes

Acolytes carry the light of Christ into the Sanctuary at the beginning of worship to remind us that God is with us. At the end of worship they carry the light out to remind us that God continues to be with us wherever we go. This is a great way for all those who are in 3rd grade or older to participate in worship. You can acolyte solo or with another friend or parent. Signup sheet is located on the bulletin board before you walk up the steps to worship. Please contact Laurie for more info lchipman@fccej.org

Ring the Bell

Looking for children and families to ring the church bell 15 minutes before worship begins. Signup sheet is located on the bulletin board before you walk up the steps to worship (beside the Acolyte signup). Instructions are at the top of the sheet as to which rope to pull and how many times to ring the bell. We love to hear our church bell ring before worship!



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. Parents ~ please be mindful of our Safe Conduct Guidelines and help us be good stewards of our child ratio (2 children to 1 adult). Please volunteer to stay in the Nursery with your child if you see that extra hands will be needed.

Thank you for your help.





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

Junior Youth @ FCCEJ

5th - 8th graders gather TWICE a month Faith & Mission Focus with Fellowship/Games
 Parents please stop by and sign up to help provide a meal or snack. Thank you! Mark your calendars!

February 3rd ~ 11:30am – 1:30pm ~ provide a meal

3rd ~ 10:15am Help Greet/Usher/Read Scripture

17th ~ 3pm – 4:30pm ~ provide a snack

Reminder to stay active and be engaged!

Help a neighbor or a friend, Earning money – Divide it to 3 Ways

Save (in the bank) ~ Give to the Church/donate ~ Yourself (spend or save)

Bring your Faith Formation Offering with you on Sunday

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

High School Youth Group ~ Change Makers: Making Change Series

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2018 Faith Formation Offering ~ Jamaica Children ~ Uniforms & Books

2018 Total is \$778.67

Voting for 2019 Offering will happen in February

Keep remembering to bring your Offering!

\$1 a week can go a long way! Just think about what you spend \$1 on! Bring your offering each week & don't forget to use the children's envelopes in the pews so our counters know where your money goes.



SUMMER CAMPS



2019 VT UCC Outdoor Ministry Camp

@ The Lake on July 28th ~ August 2nd

Deans: *Pastor Susan McKnight, Pastor Ed Sunday-Winters*

Any interest in being a part of this great camp in 2019? See Laurie
Daytime Volunteers ~ Full time overnight Counselors ~ Lifeguards
Registration is now OPEN online at <http://www.hortoncenter.org/>



Horton Center UCC Camp in Gorham, NH on Pine Mtn.

GOD's CO-STARS, July 14th ~ 20th

For campers going into 6th – 8th grade; Dean ~ *Laurie Chipman*
Laurie is recruiting counselor for this camp! Come be a part of her team!

NE UCC Outdoor Ministry Camps

Brochures will be coming out in January for the following camps. We will have copies here at church, but you can also find them online. Check out their websites below. Registration happened online.

Horton Center Camp in Gorham, NH <http://www.hortoncenter.org/>
Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon, CT <https://www.silverlakeect.org/>
Pilgrim Lodge Camp in West Gardiner, ME <https://www.pilgrimlodge.org/>

College Students & Young Adults

Volunteering at camp is a great thing to add to your resume! Whether it's VT or NH.
See Laurie for more information lchipman@fcej.org.



Vacation Bible Camp

TO MARS and BEYOND: *Exploring Where God's Power Can Take You!*

August 5-9th from 9am to 11:45am

Recruitment for our summer Vacation Bible Camp in August has begun and registration forms are out! Please mark your calendars and sign up to help before, during or behind the scenes for VB Camp week. We are recruiting station leaders for our craft, discovery (science), snack, games, and music stations as well as an opening and closing assembly leader, puppeteer and group leaders. We are also looking for youth helpers, those going into 6th grade and older as well as young adults. If you haven't been a part of this fun week, please consider it. We use the full space of the church welcome in the community of children, youth and parents while having lots of fun learning, growing and celebrating our faith each morning.



STEWARDSHIP

Automatic Bill Payment – It's Easy!

Everyone is so busy, and if you're like me, you're looking for ways to simplify your life! Automatic bill payment – for my mortgage, utilities, phone, credit card, and to my Church – has made my financial life a lot easier and less stressful! No need to remember to grab the checkbook as I'm running out the door to Church, late as usual! No need to feel guilty when a busy summer schedule has made my attendance at Church more infrequent while the expenses of the Church continue. And no need to worry about making up for missed contributions. How does it work? Contact your bank. I signed up for it online. I designated the date, amount and provided the Church's contact information. Every month, the bank sends the Church a check for our contribution. It's just as easy as that, and it's FREE!

Volunteers Needed! Just a few minutes of your time.... Would you help the Stewardship Committee sell Hannaford Gift Cards? Volunteers are needed to help sell cards on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. If interested, contact Kathy at kfinnievt@gmail.com or 734-9688 and we'll find a date that works for you. Thank you!

2019 Special Offerings: February-Outdoor Ministry, March-One Great Hour of Sharing, April-Pastor's Fund, May-Per Capita, June-Strengthen The Church, September-Seminary Sunday

Outdoor Ministry Special Offering in February

Help kids and youth from local churches attend our VT UCC OM week @ the Lake with your donations. Money that comes in will be split 50/50 and go to the VT OM Scholarship Fund and the VT UCC OM Program. By supporting you are helping kids dive deeper than one can get at VB Camp or on Sunday mornings. Kids and youth get to dive in for a full week, 24/7 ... grow in their faith, make friends, spread their wings in a fun and Spirit filled atmosphere. You can also have donations stay here at FCCEJ for our camp scholarship fund, please put in the memo 'VTUCC OM' or 'FCCEJ Camp Scholarship'.

FELLOWSHIP & LEARNING

Wednesday Night Searchers, 7pm



Each week, a group of folks get together to explore the faith. We do so through books, movies, discussions with members from other religious traditions, TED Talks and anything else we want to do. During February, we will continue reading the book, *Simply Jesus* by N.T. Wright. Whether you love Jesus and call him Lord and Savior or struggle with his divinity, you are welcome to come and discuss those issues with a supportive and loving group of people. Books are still available in Jen's office or on a Sunday morning from Mark or Josh.

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. Fight those February BLUES by joining us **Thursday, February 7th** at noon in the Marvin Lounge. We invite you to bring a favorite dice, card or board game to be enjoyed by all. Our rousing game of PIT, a Word Puzzle game and the Right Left Center dice game brought us much laughter and JOY Please join us with your lunch and we will help you fight a cold Vermont winter.



Essex Eats Out Community Dinners Continue...

1st Friday of Every Month ~ February 1st
Come - Help – Eat www.essexeatsoout.org

3rd Thursday Potluck Series

The 3rd Thursday potluck this month will be on February 21st from 5:45 to 7pm. Supper will begin by 6pm and our program will start around 6:30pm or before. Join us! All ages welcome!



No February Meeting ~ Bereavement Support Group

On the 2nd Thursday of every month, Sharon Dettenrieder and Rev. Mark gather with others in need of reflecting and dealing with the death of a loved one. Losing someone you love remains with you throughout your life and shapes who you are, how you think and the ways in which you interact with others. This group creates a safe space where you can confidentially share your loss and be supported with well tried coping mechanisms. It is not a therapy group but rather an opportunity to share your story and hear others share theirs as together we figure out how we can all move forward on grief's journey. We will meet next from **7-8:30 on March 14th**. All are welcome to attend.



The Community of Bridge

Do you like to play bridge? Do you like to eat cookies and have some fun with other like minded card players? If so, then come and play bridge at church on the 3rd Friday of every month, **February 15th from 1:30 – 4:00**. We try to get in three rounds and the winner gets one of Rev. Mendes' famous jams. And you are welcome to 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
February 15th from 6:00-8:00 pm





Yoga @ First!

Jonah Moos is offering class on **Tuesdays** at 5:30-6:45pm in the Fellowship Hall. 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. All women of the church are invited to join us for interesting programs and wonderful fellowship. Join us **Saturday, February 16** with Sally May from the Malletts Bay UCC church. She will lead us in a discussion of Racism in Vermont. Hopefully some of the women from Sally's church will also join us. Sally recommends that we listen to the podcast of racism in Vermont that she and Josh produced with an interview of Rev. Dr. Lise Sparrow and Rev. Dr. Arnold

Thomas. <https://faithinvermont.podbean.com/e/dismantling-racism-in-vermont/> Also the following link is excellent with regard to what is happening in VT (or rather not happening) and the AG not bringing charges for harassment towards Kiah Morris https://soundcloud.com/haasinstitute/john-powell-on-distinguishing-free-speech-from-injurious-speech?fbclid=IwAR3K87_koYxAqzGLxgUQ69n-FQ_y2AXRGcVTpcgot-EGmM3GTg_mKIFnaqw

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!



Wednesday, February 20th, Noontime Book Group

The Noontime Book Group will meet at 12:00 on Wednesday, February 20th. Please join us for friendship, lunch and wonderful sharing and fellowship. Contact Joanne Irwin jirwin1000@aol.com for information on the February book that we are reading.



Ladies Crafting Time 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, February 27th** 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.



MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

Missions Moment

The Missions Committee wrapped up our 2018 year with our final disbursement of funds. These decisions are made with much valuable conversation and input and are not taken lightly. Below is a summary of our contributions for this past year:

February: Called to Care Easter Baskets, \$150; Jamaica Mission Trip, \$2100

March: Jamaica Mission Trip, \$1500; JUMP gas cards, \$500; Hannaford cards-Nepali Church, \$100; Gas cards-Nepali Church, \$100

May: Essex CHIPS-healthy snacks, \$350; ESL teaching supplies-Joanne Irwin, \$100

June: RAINN, \$500; House with a Heart, \$500

August: Registration-VIA convention, \$36;

September: UCC Disaster, \$500; VT Interfaith Action, \$100; UVM Co-op Christian Ministry, \$500

December: ShelterBox USA, \$500; Migrant Justice, \$500; UCC Disaster Relief, \$464

ShelterBox USA is an organization that the Missions Committee had not donated to before and we were very impressed by what they do. Here is their Mission: “Every year, millions of families around the world are made homeless because of humanitarian crises and natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis and floods. ShelterBox is an international, nonprofit organization that responds immediately, by providing humanitarian relief in the form of supplies that bring hope, independence and a sense of normalcy to the most vulnerable people.

Dismas House ~ Your Good Deed Will be Much Appreciated

Across Vermont there are four Dismas Houses that provide shelter and support for men and women who have served prison terms and are making the transition from life in prison to life outside. For several years now, on the fourth Wednesday of each month, three First Congregational Church members have been preparing dinner for the residents and staff of the Dismas House in Winooski. Attending the meal are typically ten residents, two paid staff members (a Director and Associate Director who work at

Dismas House during weekdays), and the three members of the Church who have prepared the food.

Our participation in this program is of great value in lessening the feelings of estrangement that burden many who have served prison terms. The residents and staff are friendly and appreciative of our help. The dinner we take consists of an entrée, salad, and dessert. We bring enough food to feed 15 people and stay to enjoy the meal with the Dismas House residents and staff.

If you would like to volunteer for the Church’s Dismas House Mission, take a look at the sign-up sheet that’s on the bulletin board in the hall leading to the social hall.

Questions? Please contact Ed Steele, the current facilitator for the Dismas House Mission. His contact information is: (802) 871-5897 or edwardmsteele@msn.com





5th Annual Jamaica Cabin Fever Calcutta

The Jamaica Committee is pleased to announce the 5th annual Cabin Fever Calcutta to be held at the Catamount Country Club in Williston on Saturday, March 9th. Cocktails will begin at 5:00 PM with dinner at 6:00 PM. Jamie Polli, our MC, will begin the Calcutta at 7:00 PM.

This is a fun night out with lots of great prizes in addition to the grand prize of \$1000! We will also be holding the popular wine pull, a raffle for an overnight stay/dinner at three great area hotels;

Courtyard Marriott/Bleu Restaurant, Hotel Vermont/Juniper and The

Essex/Junction and also a raffle for a tablet or similar electronic device.



Tickets cost \$125 each and include dinner for two and the chance to win the grand prize of \$1000 and other prizes awarded throughout the evening. Checks should be made out to "FCCEJ" with "Jamaica" in the memo line. Tickets may be purchased in any of the following ways:

- Call 878-5745 or mail your form/request to FCCEJ
- Stop by the Jamaica table in Fellowship Hall on Sunday mornings
- Contact Sharon Dettenrieder at 871-5308, dettenriedes@hartwick.edu
- See a Jamaica Team member



Hope to see you there!

2019 Team Members: Mark & Nicholas Mendes, Rick & Sam Dooley, Caitlin & Kaki McGeary, Christine Czarny, Dave Dewey, Nolan Boerger, Emma Parker, Peter & Zachary Schmalz, Aliyah Watt, Carolyn Rushford and Sharon Dettenrieder

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Calling All Bakers!

Looking To Show Off Your Baker's Hat? Hospitality is looking for some help in showing off your mad baking skills! If you would like to help provide a goodie for any Sunday Fellowship Time, contact Jim Glatz 802-503-5076 glatzjim@gmail.com



Heavenly Food Pantry

Next Heavenly Food Pantry days are Monday, February 11th, 5:30-7:30pm
and Thursday, February 28th, 2-6pm

We are in need of fruit juice, boxed mac n' cheese and sample size toothpaste tubes. They are perfect to give out with a toothbrush. Please ask your dentist the next time you have your teeth cleaned if they would donate a case!





Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop News

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

Mark these dates on your Calendar

Open Saturdays Feb 2nd & 16th 9 am to 1 pm

The shop is looking for donations of men & women's winter coats & boots, winter hats/gloves, and women's winter shirts. Donations are taken any time in our drop off box.



March 17th ~ Pretzel Sunday

During the Lenten season, we have a special Sunday when our church smells of pretzels! Your CE team sponsors this great Sunday each year and pretzels are baked fresh and ready for all to enjoy at both our fellowship times after each of our worship services. Yes, we even have some gluten free pretzels. This great morning needs wonderful adult volunteers, like yourself, who will donate items or take a shift in the kitchen to mix and roll out pretzels, help bake or help with clean up. We hope you mark your calendars for this fun day in Lent! The children and youth will start their time in Fellowship Hall rolling pretzels before they move off to peer class time, talk about the history of the pretzel and have with the youth when they come and deliver pretzels to each group.

Adult volunteer shift times are: 7:30am to 9:30am (mix up dough, roll pretzels & bake); 9:15am-10:30am (bake & set up tables); 10:30-11:30am (bake); 11:30am-12noon (help Hospitality with clean up). See Laurie for questions and to sign up! Watch for sign up sheets in February or connect with Laurie.

Volunteer for 2018-19 Faith Formation Programs

Many ways to support First Church children and youth...Contact Laurie!

Nursery – join our staff person and be a friendly face to the parents and the littlest ones among us during first service or second. We strive for a 2:1 ratio in the Nursery.

Spiritual Friends – join Laurie on the 1st Sunday of the month and we'll have great conversations with the kids. Read a story, have snack, play dough time and return for communion.

Peer Group Leaders & Helpers – support one of our groups from preK- 8th grade. Weekly email to help keep you connected with plans for groups and special Sundays. All items are gathered for you.

Hands-On Mission Sunday Helpers – preschool up through youth are together for a time of fellowship across the ages for on these days with a mission focus and group building activities.

Youth Group Helpers – Still a youth at heart? Want to get reconnected with youth today? Join a group and or help with food. Every time youth gather we are always looking for adults to help.



Usher/Greeter Volunteers Needed

Winter & spring dates are up on the Sign Up Genius-please volunteer!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0e4fcae2daafe3-ushergreeter>

Thank You From Essex Eats Out

EEO at FCCEJ is alive and well. This past year we served an average of 57 meals each month with a high of 77 in December. We had a consistent volunteer pool of 14 per month. We couldn't have done any of this without your generous contributions to the meals. Over the last three years people have enjoyed homemade food from 58 FCCEJ supporters. EEO is an

important mission to our community because it addresses food insecurity in Essex and supports camaraderie between families. Thank you for all you do for EEO. We look forward to another successful year with the full support of our FCCEJ family.



OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Bottle/Can Drive



The Boy Scouts have made a bin for can collection. Right now, the bin is located near the door by the kitchen. Please, drop your cans/bottle there. Thank you for all your donations! Please make sure that you only put in the cans & bottles that are redeemable, not just recyclable

2019 Altar Flowers

The chart for altar flowers is up in the hallway leading out of Fellowship Hall. The donation is \$34/Sunday and you can write your name and also who or what event you would like remembered/honored. Contact Jen with any questions welcome@fccej.org



February Birthdays

1st Barb Blanchette, 2nd Clint Russell, Tyler Warren 4th Ethan Benton, Jo Haines 6th Kathy Finnie, 8th Maggie Parks, 9th Jason Field, Ethan Goedken 12th Anna Charland, Peter Gray, 14th Mark Benton, Abigail Evans, Nancy Parker, 15th Cindy Longwell, Rachel Wood, 16th Emily Ehler, Allen Potter 17th Sharon Beebe, Joy Raut 19th Betty Garrapy, John Mauger, George Paul, 20th Elijah Edwards, Kaydence Laflam, Sullivan Martin 22nd Molly Bourn, Duke Ehler, Sue Holden, John Kinney, Mason Smith, 24th Cheryl Ahokas, Sharon Dettenrieder 25th Robert Davis, Bob Kent, 26th Val Gabert, Matt McGear, 27th Braeden Koch 28th Mae Dewey, Connie Marshall



Thank you so much for all the hard work that you and the community at the First Congregational Church put forth this year. Our families and us are in awe at your kindness and generosity. We all can't begin to thank you enough. Thank you all so much and have a wonderful holiday season. Sincerely, Caitlin & the Essex Elementary Student Support Team

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Our Home, Our Future, Our Time...

We are making progress! On behalf of the Capital Campaign Steering Committee, we have several exciting project updates to share with you.



The plans for the new vestibule and ADA bathroom near Fellowship Hall have been finalized, and the Trustees are in the process of getting bids from potential contractors. The plan is to begin work on the vestibule and bathroom by April 1, followed by work on the parking lot/site improvements in June. A General Contractor will be hired to oversee this complex and multi-faceted project. We will not be able to use the parking lot entrance while this work takes place, however the Trustees will be working on some new signage and temporary entrance accommodations to minimize the disruption. Stay tuned for more details as we get closer to construction.

The other major work to be completed in 2019 is the Sanctuary Restoration Project, which includes the refurbishing of our historic windows and wooden blinds, plaster repair and a fresh coat of paint throughout the sanctuary (even the pews!). The sanctuary restoration was the number one priority identified by the congregation through our feasibility study, and doing this work will restore and preserve the beauty of **Our Home** for years to come. There will be an opportunity for the congregation to give input into a new sanctuary paint color once we have awarded a contract for the restoration work and we have a better sense of how long that project will take. We have applied for a Historic Preservation Grant to help cover some of our expenses. Grant decisions will be made in early December. Based on the report from historic architect specialist Sally Fishburn, we anticipate that the sanctuary will be open throughout these renovations. We will keep you updated if that changes. For more information about the window and plaster renovation project, Sally Fishburn's full report is available on our website under Capital Campaign Projects.

Last but not least, initial organ repair and maintenance work will take place in spring 2019, either before or after Easter and a contractor has been selected to replace the parsonage parking lot with pavers, which will also occur in the spring.

Thank you all for continuing to support the **Our Home, Our Future, Our Time Capital Campaign**. Our pledge total stands at \$935,616. We appreciate all of the pledge payments made so far, and all of the early pledge payments. As a result, we do not anticipate needing bridge loan financing to complete the projects above. We continue to accept new gifts for the campaign to help us "fill our heart" and reach our \$1.02 million stretch goal. If you would like more information about the Capital Campaign, please contact US.

Kaki McGearry and Dave Johnson, Co-Chairs

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