



The Spirit at First April 2019

Pondering with the Pastor.....

After the death of 50 people in New Zealand, I was heartbroken and so very tired of the carnage and ongoing murder of innocent people expressing their God given right to worship and praise the Creator of the Universe. Muslims, Christians and Jews worshipping God in their sacred spaces have been brutally killed by white nationalist as they prayed, studied the bible and came together in community. Mad white men have indiscriminately killed without compassion. And so, again, I sent flowers to the Islamic center of Vermont, our Muslim friends, and wrote a note to their congregation offering our condolences, love and support. It saddened me that as I sat in my office preparing to write a sermon that despite supporting our Muslim friends and our Jewish friends mourning the Pennsylvanian tragedy before that, I did not have a personal relationship with them.

Flowers and letters once a year in the midst of tragedy does not suffice for a relationship. So I shaped my sermon about the possibility of deepening our ties to our Muslim and Jewish acquaintances so that we might one day actually be friends; a friendship grounded in actual knowledge and experience of one another. And so I proposed, in the name of Jesus who broke down the barriers between people and encouraged people to love even their perceived enemies, for our church to begin a new initiative to regularly visit other religious traditions that we are woefully ignorant about AND those conservative Christian traditions in whom we struggle to find common ground. My proposal included having a group of five people visit places of worship on a monthly basis to establish a relationship with another tradition by bringing greetings from our church, learning about their traditions / rituals and by simply engaging with individuals of another faith or tradition.

So on the third Friday of the month we will have two groups of five going to visit Temple Sinai in South Burlington and the Islamic Center of Vermont in Colchester. And on the second Sunday of the month we will have one group of five going to visit Christ Memorial Church. When I passed out the clipboard asking folks if they wanted to participate, we had a plethora of folks wanting to participate: WOW! Unfortunately having more than five would be too many and I think for consistency and the possibility of deepening relationships, the team should be the same people each month. Unfortunately, that means that not everyone who signed up will be able to attend. However, it is my hope that this interaction will lead to shared events among these communities of faith and in the future all of us will be able to participate in those events: dinners, bible studies, mission projects, etc.

Due to Easter and other religious sacred dates, I thought it would be best to start in May. I will be sending out an e-mail shortly to those of you who signed up to see who can make this schedule and commitment to what I believe is a vital aspect of our faith in God and our passion for breaking down barriers and creating a healthier society. When you get my email, please consider your participation with prayer.

Looking forward to continuing to live into Christ's command to love with all of you, I am

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Mark

ASSOCIATE PASTOR NEWS

“The Kingdom of God is justice and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” Taizé Lyrics

I have been deeply impacted by your love, grace, and support for me during this heightened stage of my Crohn’s Disease. Spending nearly a full week in the hospital was alleviated by reading your Facebook comments, phone calls, visits, and knowing that I am loved. I am appreciative for the help in providing meals for me at home. You have shown me the love of God in a tangible way.

Crohn’s Disease (CD) can cause inflammation in the digestive system, usually in the small intestine and colon. You might be aware of CD from friends or family member or, even, the millions of commercials for new, good medicines like Entyvio or Stelara (this is not a paid ad ☺). It affects about 700,000 people in the USA. As of today, there is no known cure for CD; it might be years or decades before a cure exists (I hope years). We don’t know yet what exactly causes CD. We know how it works, but not the exact cause. Those who live with CD can experience intense pain from inflammation in the intestinal area. The inflammation in the intestinal area sometimes heals on its own and sometimes it needs medicines to reduce the inflammation and hopefully put the inflammation into remission. Medications can keep the inflammation in remission, but inflammation can still occur even on the medicines. Up to 80% of patients with CD will need to have surgery to remove part of their intestinal tract. Since there is a finite length of intestines, surgery is avoided as much as possible.

I need to have surgery. I was first diagnosed with CD in February 2007 (12 years ago) during a six-day hospitalization. For most of the last twelve years, I did not notice many symptoms. Three years ago, I had one major flare up that left me lying in bed all day in pain. Ever since then I often have been able to feel and hear food move from my small to large intestine, with increasing noise and annoyance to me. This indicates that there is part of my small intestines that after years of inflammation, healing, and scar tissue no longer is flexible enough for food to pass through without notice. This January, I was hospitalized for CD for the first time since ’07 and then again this March for a partial small bowel obstruction. I have about 5 inches of my small intestine that needs to be removed (though, it’s called elective); otherwise, there’s a risk that I will have another obstruction, leading to another hospitalization. I hope the surgery will take place within the next few months, preferably sooner. Having “elective” surgery should help ensure a better recovery time and lead to better long-term relief. The local surgeon is highly recommended. I am confident in his care, but surgery on internal organs has its risks and causes me some anxiety. I am largely being propped up via prednisone (which can also cause some anxiety) to keep any inflammation at bay until the surgery.

At this stage, I need your prayers and support. You are welcome to ask me how I am doing. There might be days when you see me at church, going strong, and then there might be a day when I am not. I will try to listen to my body and rest when I need it. I want to be your associate pastor for many, many years, and I want to stay in ministry for decades. I am always grateful for when someone ask me how I am doing. Please forgive me if my answer is long or short. But know that it touches my heart.

It is never too early to plan for National Youth Event (NYE)! **NYE 2020 is July 22-25th @ Purdue University.** Every four years the United Church of Christ hosts youth from all over the country to build relationships with other UCC’ers, grow in their faith practices, and worship God. NYE has workshops,

direct service projects, and engaging and inspiring worship. We'll hear from dynamic preachers like Pastor Traci Blackman, the Executive Minister of Justice & Local Church Ministries. Mark your calendars for July 22-25th, 2020!

Starting now our fundraising efforts will go towards attending the NYE. Our first fundraising effort, **Easter Breakfast is April 21st**. We need help with milk, fruits, eggs, baked goods, breakfast meats, and other items. On Saturday, April 20th, 3pm, we'll need some volunteers to help setup Fellowship Hall. On Easter Sunday, April 21, we'll need volunteers to help cook and serve breakfast, from 6am-10:15am and then clean up. You can sign-up to help on Sunday mornings in Fellowship Hall.

High School Youth Group

April 14th, 5-7pm, **Arcade Games and Food at Spare Time Colchester.**

Need a ride? Let Pastor Josh know.

SPECIAL SERVICES & EVENTS IN APRIL

Communion ~ April 7th

Both Services: Pass Elements Out to People

Saturday, April 6th ~ 4:30pm Special Service



On the first Saturday of each month we worship in a non-traditional way in Fellowship Hall. The service is interactive both in prayer participation and in the give and take of scriptural reflection [sermon]. We also share an informal time of communion with the bread & juice as well as each other's company. Come dressed comfortably and bring a friend for this new informal spiritual initiative. All are welcome.

Wednesdays, March 27th, April 3rd, 10th & 17th

Lenten Morning Services, 7am

What better way of starting the day than by focusing on the power and presence of our God? Each Wednesday morning during Lent we gather to pray and deepen our spirituality through sacrament, song and scripture. The service is quiet and reflective. And for those of you on the way to work, we end by 7:30 sharp. Come center yourselves as we prepare for Easter.

April 7th ~ Rev. Devon Thomas' Installation, 3pm

It is with great joy and a sense of pride that we extend to all the members of the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction an invitation to participate in Devon's installation. Installation is when a duly called and authorized minister is officially recognized by everyone as the minister of a particular church.

Devon was a Member in Discernment at our church AND a staff member during the interim period between Ryan and Josh. We all watched him grow into a fine young pastor and he is now serving three UCC Churches in the furthest reaches of the Champlain Association. His installation service will be at the Waterville Union Church, 37 Church Street. The Champlain Assoc meeting will begin at 2pm if anyone is interested in attending that meeting. Rev. Arnold Thomas will be giving the installation prayer and Rev. Mark will be preaching. Should be fun. Everyone is encouraged to come and support Devon!

Thursday, April 18th ~ Maundy Thursday ~ 6pm

Lent and Easter are sacred times for Christians for those seasons highlight the very heart of our faith. The cross and the crown are both vital roles of Christ and both help us to understand the mystery and power of the faith. The first service to begin to explore these themes is the Maundy Thursday service. Maundy come from the Latin "*mandatum*" which means mandate and connotes Jesus' command to his disciples at the Last Supper when he commanded them to wash each other's feet as well as to continue to share with each other the bread and juice. We remember the Last Supper and the events that made up the last night of Christ's life in which he was free to be with his disciples. We will share a simple meal of bread and soup as well as communion; all while having a conversation about Jesus and his ministry. The meal and the commemoration will be held in Fellowship Hall and last about an hour. All are welcome.

Friday, April 19th ~ Good Friday ~ 7pm

Good Friday is one of the most sacred days for Christians because it highlights Christ's model of leadership and use of power, his pathway to a deeper spirituality and his counter intuitive victory over the powers and principalities of this world. Through service and sacrifice he was able to overcome the evil and destructive forces that bind all humanity to a miserable life without meaning and joy. On Good Friday, we explore these themes and lift up Christ's way to a healthier and more fulfilling life. As you might imagine, it is not all balloons and laughter but sometimes the deeper aspects of faith require a thoughtfulness that explores areas of our lives that we do not often think about. So come on Good Friday and begin to grasp why the Christian Church has called the day of Christ's death good!? All are welcome.

Easter Services

Sunrise

As in past years, we will join our Catholic brothers and sisters and fellow community members for an ecumenical Easter Sunrise Service at 6:00 a.m. on April 21st at Holy Family Catholic Church by the gazebo, which is behind the church building. The service lasts no more than 30 minutes and includes prayers, a brief service and the classic Easter proclamation. Immediately after, everyone is invited to have breakfast together in our Fellowship Hall.

Other Easter Services

Our regularly scheduled Sunday services will continue to be observed for Easter. We will celebrate Christ's resurrection on Sunday April 21st at 8:30 and 10:15 a.m.

April 28th ~ 7th Anniversary Celebration of Becoming Open and Affirming

After a year of study and reflection, the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction voted 97-3 to become an Open and Affirming Congregation on April 29, 2012, seven years ago. This vote was the culmination of a long process of discussions and votes that first opened our church to civil unions under Rev. Steve Garvey's leadership. There were many voices of significance without that journey and many leaders of the church that guided us to the point of affirming our GLBTQ brothers and sisters. The final statement widened the inclusion to offer a wholehearted welcome to folks who have traditionally been left out of the church or disenfranchised within the church. Copies of the original statement and the journey will be available for reference. Come and re-affirm our stance and continue to shape our future as a church that welcomes all people.

LAURIE'S LENS



Lent ~ a season of prayer, reflection, meditation, spiritual renewal, time spent centering ourselves towards God, time with friends and family, and being aware of our temptations.

All of these are present in the stories that we hear of Jesus on the six Sundays of Lent that lead us to Easter Sunday. We walk through Lent with images of Jesus and his ministry and are reminded of all that he endured in his life, his last week in Jerusalem that we call Holy Week and his final hours. Jesus prayed. He spent time reflecting on what had happened on his journeys. He traveled with his disciples and friends, making more friends as we moved from town to town. He went to temple. He worshiped. He spent time by himself, in small groups and in large crowds. He celebrated life. He spent 40 days in the wilderness, was tempted and yet kept his faith. He questioned God and asked many times ...why? All these great stories of Jesus and his days of ministry keep me grounded. How many times have you heard the stories? I like to think there is a goal of hearing these stories so many times we lose track of how many times we have heard them. They need to become familiar so that every passing year as we grow in our faith, these stories continue to come to life and their meaning grows deeper and deeper. We grow, we change, and if we keep attending church and don't stray too far our journey of faith will continue to be enriched for we are not ment to walk this journey alone. God, Jesus and Holy Spirit are always with us but so is our community and family of faith. The people we meet here at church and we know those who we can talk to about Jesus and not be judged, but be supported. Faith communities play a huge role in giving us the space and time to question, to learn and to grow as true disciples.

As I traveled around visiting other UCC churches, talking with their staff, having conversations with Jennifer from Middlebury as we reflected on all we heard, seeing some of these churches in action on a Sunday morning ...one could see and feel the drive, the call, the love of ministry that we all shared. It was so good to be in community with them, learning from each other and talking of how we all shine our beacon of love and light for the families that grace our doors. Every child needs a place where they can grow in their faith, know they are loved with a community of their peers who love God, where they are not judged, where they can continue to build a relationship with God, Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit. As I walk through these days of Lent and keep up with our busy calendar, I am putting together my notes from my three trips and a presentation that I will give to our Christian Education team and to Council. Dates are not fully set yet. I'm sure there will be a time set for all who want to hear about my travels and what I learn to come to. I will keep you posted. Thank you for all your support for me and the programs here at First and to many of you who stepped up in my absence and led, helped and gave of your time. You all are what makes this place of worship that we all call home so special.

As we arrive on Easter, April 21st, and celebrate our risen Lord, let us be reminded of all our gifts and talents that we have to share. Let us know hold on to them, but give them freely and willingly. Let us also give to those less fortunate, support those in need and remembering to be a humble and loving servant, like Jesus. Let us walk the walk and be a witness for all our children and youth to see and hear of what we say and how we say it. And as we move forward with the renovations to our church, let us give thanks for all the hard work hands and many hours of planning that will give new life to these walls and rooms. I don't know about you, but I am really looking forward to shouting that word we have hidden during Lent

Blessed to be in ministry with you all, Laurie Chipman, Christian Education Director

DEACON'S CORNER

Greetings, everyone – and Happy April! We are soon approaching the start of construction on the various Capital Campaign projects, which is very exciting, but will also involve some disruption. With the construction of the new vestibule/entrance (and bathroom) at the parking lot entrance, the Deacons want to remind everyone of the need to use alternative entrances to the Church during that project. For those who use the elevator to reach the Sanctuary, we suggest using the rear doorway to the kitchen, on the Church Street side of the building. Although moving through the kitchen is sometimes awkward, using the rear kitchen door will allow you to safely reach the elevator, and avoid the stairs in the front of the building, as well as those near the church offices. Therefore you may want to try and park on the Church Street side, or park in the parking lot and use the sidewalk around the front of the building to reach the kitchen rear door. We will post additional handicap parking signage to make it easier to park near the front door, and will also have a wheel chair available near that entrance. We sincerely appreciate everyone's patience during this time, and ask that you let us know if there is anything we can do to assist you!

Sincerely, Peter Schmalz, Co-Chair, Deacons

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN PROJECTS & UPDATE



Our Home, Our Future, Our Time Capital Campaign Update

The snow is beginning to melt away, which means that spring is just around the corner and OUR HOME is going to be under construction soon! A number of projects are slated for this spring....

The Organ! The organ cleaning, repair and maintenance project will begin in May.

The Vestibule! On or around April 1, the existing parking lot entrance/vestibule will be demolished and work to remove the oil tank will begin. Once the oil tank is out, then the construction phase for the new two-story entry AND the new ADA bathroom can finally begin! We anticipate that this phase of the project will be completed by the end of June.

The Parking Lot! Once the new vestibule exterior work is nearing completion, site work will begin to tear up the old parking lot, re-grade the area, and add new electrical conduits for better lighting. The hope is to have the first layer of asphalt on the parking lot by the end of August and before Rally Day.

Non-Historic Windows! Remaining non-historic windows will be replaced throughout the church in March/April.

Sanctuary Paint Colors – Color Option Survey on Sunday April 14 (Palm Sunday)! We are in the process of getting bids to restore the historic windows and repair the plaster in the sanctuary. This work *could* begin as early this summer, so it is time to decide on paint colors. Everything in the sanctuary will get a fresh coat of paint eventually, including the pews. Color options were recommended by color expert Betsey Dempsey, owner of Color Concepts in Shelburne. Betsey spent time in our sanctuary and came up with two top recommendations for the congregation to choose between. Both palettes include historic

neutral colors that are welcoming, peaceful, bright and timeless. If you haven't already, check out the samples and color concept boards in the sanctuary. We will have a Color Option Survey on Sunday April 14th (Palm Sunday).

LOGISTICS DURING CONSTRUCTION (watch for signs to be posted)....

****Temporary Accessible Entrance:** Use Church Street Parking & Back Kitchen Entry (by the choir loft stairs). Signs will direct you through the kitchen and around to the elevator if you need to use the elevator.

****General Entrance –** Please use the front entrance (facing Rt. 15) or the Church Street/Office entrance.

****Parking -** please leave spaces in front of Church on Church Street for those who need to be closer to the building. Drop-offs are encouraged. If our parking lot is not available, please use the overflow lot located at the Doctor's offices across Church Street. Stay tuned for more detailed information and posted signs as we get closer to breaking ground! Thank you in advance for your patience during construction.

Fundraising Update

The Capital Campaign total has reached \$955,049, thanks to some funding from last year's endowment distribution that was designated for the Capital Campaign AND the transfer of some unspent maintenance money from last year that was transferred to the church's capital reserve fund. The top priority in our stretch goal was to set aside \$25,000 for a maintenance reserve, so both of these transfers help us achieve that goal! And, this will free up even more of the pledges received to be used for projects. We have received \$604,149 of our pledge total to date. This is nothing short of AMAZING! Thank you to everyone for keeping up with campaign pledge payments!

Questions? Please contact co-chairs Kaki McGeary or Dave Johnson.

MUSIC

April 28th ~ Joe Levesque Big Band Concert, 3pm

The Joe Levesque Big Band will perform a concert in the FCCEJ Sanctuary on Sunday, April 28th at 3:00 pm. The concert is open to the public and a free will offering will be accepted at the door to benefit the church music program. Joe's Big Band is a 17-piece ensemble of accomplished musicians from throughout

Northwestern Vermont who share a passion for performing the diverse styles of big band music from the Swing Era to the present. Brian Chipman is a member of the trumpet section and Carol Spradling will be sitting in on piano and vocals. FCCEJ hosts the band's rehearsals on Monday nights in the fellowship hall. Rehearsals are open to anyone who would like to come and listen, or even dance! Rehearsal dates and times are listed in the church calendar.

Like Joe's Big Band on Facebook to stay informed of other performance dates and venues!



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

April 7th ~ 1st Sunday Spiritual Friends with Preschool & Kindergarteners

Communion Sunday ~ Intergenerational Worship

April 14th ~ Palm Sunday ~ Music & Peer Group time

April 21st ~ Easter Sunday ~ Intergenerational Worship

April 28th ~ Hands On Mission Sunday ~ CWS Hygiene Kits

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.



April 28th ~ Hands On Mission Sunday during Faith Formation

Church World Service Hygiene Kits

It's time to gather items for hygiene kits. As CWS says, '*In the face of natural disasters, violence, or grinding poverty, hygiene kits can mean the difference between sickness and health for struggling families.*' Lent is a great time to help reach out and give. Sign ups will be in Fellowship Hall in early April or you can email Laurie if you would like to help that day or with drop off. On April 28th the children and youth will put together the kits during their faith formation time. Our goal is to get them all put together on this day and ready to have them dropped off at the Waterbury UCC church, 4/30-5/3. Each kit has the following: *Standard sized Band-Aids, Wide tooth combs only, Fingernail clippers, individually wrapped bath size bars of soap, individually wrapped toothbrushes, Hand towel, Washcloth*



Acolytes, 3rd – 8th Grades

On Sunday, March 10th, this age group talked about what it means to carrying the light of Christ in and out on Sunday mornings for our worship services. Each month this group will talk about acolyting. If you have a child or youth this age who is interested in helping in worship by acolyting, please help them sign up. There is a sign up sheet on the bulletin board that you pass by on your way up to worship. It is always fun to acolyte with another person and older youth (& the ushers) can help the younger kids.

Ring the Bell

Do you hear the church bell ring? Volunteers do this every Sunday morning 15 minutes before worship begins. Families, children, youth, anyone. Signup sheet is located on the bulletin board before you walk up the steps to worship (in the downstairs hallway). Instructions are at the top of the signup sheet as to which rope to pull and how many times to ring the bell.





Sunday Nursery Room, 8:15 -11:30 am

Our Nursery staff and volunteers will meet you and help you get settled in on Sunday mornings. Feel free to stay with you little one and hear the worship service by way of a speaker or step out into Fellowship Hall and watch the service on the screen. We want you to feel comfortable here.

Children are welcome in worship and throughout our space. We do ask you to be aware of our Safe Conduct Guidelines and help us to be good stewards of our child ratio (2 children to 1 adult) and volunteer to stay if you are needed. Thank you for your cooperations.

All our First Church Youth Programs are Parent Supported!

1 to 2 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; snacks & meals provided by parents ~ sign up on the bulletin board

Mark your calendars!

April 7th ~ 10:15am worship-help Greet/Usher/Read Scripture; JYG ~ 11:30am – 1:30pm ~ meal needed

April 21st ~ Easter Breakfast ~ Sign up for a shift ~ 6am to 11am; Enjoy your school vacation!

May 5th ~ 10:15am worship-help Greet/Usher/Read Scripture; JYG ~ 11:30am – 1:30pm ~ meal needed

May 19th ~ JYG ~ 3 - 4:30pm ~ snack needed

Reminder to stay active and be engaged!

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

Earning money – Divide it 3 Ways- Save ~ Give to the Church/donate ~ Yourself (spend or save)

Bring Offering with you on Sundays; Help a neighbor or a friend

High School Youth Group

April 14th, 5-7pm, **Arcade Games and Food at Spare Time Colchester.**

Need a ride? Let Pastor Josh know.

2019 Faith Formation Offering ~ Spectrum Youth & Family Services

2019 Total is \$77.15

Learn more about this great organization. *Remembering to bring your offering each week!*

\$1 a week can go a long way! Just think what you spend a \$1 on. Use the envelopes in the

pews so your money goes to Spectrum and it will not be confused with the regular offering for the church.



SUMMER CAMPS

Vacation Bible Camp

TO MARS and BEYOND: *Exploring Where God's Power Can Take You!* August 5-9th from 9am to 11:45am

Registration forms are out! Sign up today and mark your calendars!

You & Me Toddlers (attend with parent/adult)

Preschool – 5th grade (grade you are going into in the fall)

Youth Helpers (6th grade and up); Adult helpers

All are welcome!



Registrations for Outdoor Ministry Camps Online

Check out the OM News Board by the Main Church Entrance Glass Doorway

Camp brochures are posted on the board, 3 age levels offered each week

Horton Center Camp, NH <http://www.hortoncenter.org/> Silver Lake, CT <https://www.silverlakeect.org/>



VT UCC Outdoor Ministry @ The Lake ~ July 28th – Aug 2nd

For Campers going into 5th – 8th grade in the fall of 2019

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



FCCEJ Former Participants ...

2016 Counselors ~ Ethan Benton, Kate Tallman 2017 camper ~ Erik Frivoll

2018 camper ~ Isabelle Owens 2018 volunteers ~ Jonah & Jessica Moos, Pastor Josh, Laurie Chipman

Volunteer for this fun UCC week at Rock Point! Help keep OM camping alive and well in VT!

Daytime Volunteers ~ Full time overnight Counselors ~ Lifeguards 18 years+

Contact Laurie for more information.



God's Co-Stars; July 14th - 20th

For campers going into 6th – 8th grade; Dean ~ Laurie Chipman

Laurie is recruiting counselors for this camp! Join her team!

2 other camps happening at HC during this week. One for 3rd – 5th grader and another for 9th – 12th



College Students & Young Adults

Volunteering at camp is a great thing to add to your resume!

Contact Laurie for more information lchipman@fccej.org.

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. Watch the bulletin to see what we will be exploring next for the month of April.

JOY (Just Older Youth), Meets @ 11:30 This Month



A group for the over 55 crowd (both men & women) meets the first Thursday of each month usually at 12 noon in the Marvin Lounge. **Join us on Thursday, April 4 at 11:30** in Marvin Lounge to watch the movie Green Book starring Viggo Mortensen and Mahershalla Ali. This film was inspired by a true friendship that transcended race, class and the 1962 Mason-Dixon Line. An Italian-American bouncer and an African-American pianist confront racism and danger while taking a road trip through the Deep South in 1962. Bring your lunch and join us a half hour earlier due to the 2 hour movie.



Essex Eats Out Community Dinners Continue...

1st Friday of Every Month ~ April 5th

Come - Help - Eat www.essexeatsout.org

3rd Thursday Potluck Series

Join us for Maundy Thursday meal & worship on **April 18th**! All ages welcome!

Potluck Series will return on May 16th, 5:45-7pm



The Community of Bridge



Each month, people who like to play bridge gather in the Marvin Lounge to enjoy each other's company and a game of skill and luck. A couple of our members provide some very good snacks and Rev. Mark provides a jar of his jam to the winner. There are all types of skill levels and conventions practiced and we help each other as we go so that we can all learn and better our skills. So come and learn, have some fun, and play some bridge on Friday **April 19th**, Good Friday from 1:30 – 4:00 p.m. You are more than welcome to bring a friend.

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. **Please join us on April 20 at 9:30 in Marvin Lounge** to hear about Linda Lou Parker's trip to Spain and Amsterdam. It's a great time to be thinking of our summer plans and perhaps either of these trips might be just the thing you were looking for!



Coffee Clatter @ Martone's

This may seem like a foolish question, but if you like to talk and drink coffee, then come down to Martone's every Friday morning from 8-9 for an open conversation. Rev. Mark and/or Josh are there every week and we talk about everything from camping to politics, from deep theological questions to silly jokes, from village life to great vacation spots, from business deals to the best restaurants in town. We laugh, get serious and support each other. Everyone is invited to come to Martone's in the Village center at 8:00 a.m. every week.

Wednesday, April 17th, Noontime Book Group

For April we are reading *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver. *The Poisonwood Bible* is a story told by the wife and four daughters of Nathan Price, a fierce, evangelical Baptist who takes his family and mission to the Belgian Congo in 1959. They carry with them everything they believe they will need from home, but soon find that all of it—from garden seeds to Scripture—is calamitously transformed on African soil. What follows is a suspenseful epic of one family's tragic undoing and remarkable reconstruction over the course of three decades in postcolonial Africa. Bring your bag lunch and join us for some good conversation.



Crafty 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, April 24th** 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.



STEWARDSHIP

Tax Return Tells You How Generous You Really Are

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

Your tax return tells you not only how much income God has entrusted to you last year, but also what portion you gave away. Simply take your total charitable contribution and divide it by your total gross income. Move the decimal point over two places. This is the percentage you gave away last year. Are you pleased with that number? If not, make plans now to improve your giving in 2019!

2019 Special Offerings: April-Pastor's Fund, May-Per Capita, June-Strengthen The Church, Sept-Seminary Sunday, Oct-Neighbors In Need, Nov-Food Pantry, Dec-Christmas Fund

MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

Jamaica Mission Trip Update

Our team is very excited and getting ready for our service trip to Jamaica, June 22 – July 1st, 2019. We will once again be working with the White Horses Primary and Infant School in St. Thomas and with the Morant Bay Rotary Club. In 2017, we built a 30,000 square foot garden at the White Horses school. This summer we will take on a number of projects:

- We will be doing some maintenance work in the garden and planting or reaping crops.
- We will be building a playground for the preschool section of the school. In addition to providing a safe play area, this will allow them to become officially registered with the government, which will then provide them with additional governmental support.
- Finally, we will spend one day helping the Rotary Club with their Feeding Program. They will cook and we will help package and deliver food to previously identified people in need in the community. This will give us an opportunity to get out into some rural areas and meet families.

If time allows, we may be helping to build a simple and durable outdoor classroom for use when weather permits. The number of children attending this school has grown significantly in recent years and space is tight. We are also looking forward to interacting with the children at the school and playing some sports with them. Their netball team won the district championship in January and they would like to teach our youth how to play!

In May we will be collecting supplies for the school. We're currently in communication with the principal and will put out a list of needed items soon. As always, thank-you so much for your support of this program. This experience has a significant lasting impact on our team members and our work and our presence is deeply appreciated by our Jamaican partners.



Team members are 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.

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

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, April 8th, 5:30-7:30pm and Thursday, April 25th, 2-6pm. We are in need of fruit juice, tomato soup, spaghetti sauce 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! We had a really nice visit from the CTE

Cosmetology Students who have been giving free manicures and haircuts to clients who bring in donations for our Heavenly Food Pantry. Well done CTE!



Sunday Nursery Volunteers, 8:15-11:30am

Volunteer to stay in the Nursery with Jennifer or Manu. Some Sundays we are looking for a second person to help hold to our Safe Conduct Guidelines.

Interested? Please stop by and talk with the person on duty in the Nursery or connect with Laurie. We know you'll have fun playing with the youngest among us!



Usher/Greeter Volunteers Needed

Spring dates are up on the Sign Up Genius-please volunteer!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0e4facae2daafe3-ushergreeter>

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop News

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

Mark these dates on your Calendar

Open Saturdays April 6th & 20th 9 am to 1 pm

Come and check out the new Spring and Summer Fashions

Nearly New includes lots of new items and Easter decorations

Check out our new renovated bathroom, it's beautiful!

Looking for jewelry, dishes, towels, spring and summer clothes. Drop off anytime in the donation bucket.



Be a Camp Counselor!

Share your love of God & the outdoors!

Counsel youth on the shores of Lake Champlain for @ **THE LAKE**,

July 28th ~ August 2nd for Campers going into 5th – 8th grade.

OR Join Laurie at Horton Center and counsel for **GOD's CO-STARs**, July 14th ~ 20th for campers going into 6th – 8th grade. Bring your energy and love of kids to this rewarding role. Parents get a discount for their child to attend a camp if you volunteer. See Laurie for more details on both.



Volunteers for Vacation Bible Camp

TO MARS and BEYOND:

Exploring Where God's Power Can Take You!

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



We are looking for many helpers for our fun week in August. Behind the scenes with decoration planning and all the way through our week of camp and after to help organize afterwards.

Our leadership team (so far) is: Bible Drama ~ Allison VanSteensburg; Crafts ~ Jenny Bourn; Snacks ~ Judy Allen & Ginny Coe; **Recruiting for: Decorating Assistant, Discovery/Science Leader, Game Leader, Music Leader, Photographer, Group Leaders, Decorators, Photographer, Youth Helpers (6th grade and older).** Decorating assistant and decorators are needed way before camp week and work behind the scenes. Contact Laurie for more information.

VB Camp Wish List ~ Donations Are Greatly Appreciated!

Bible Drama: 5 battery operated LED String Lights (clear or white); 1 Tan Paper Table Cloth, 10 rolls of Black Landscape Fabric Discover/Science: 1 box of Baking Soda; 1 box of Alka-Seltzer antacid tablets; 1 large 32oz bottle of White Vinegar; 12 oz container of Gold Glitter; 12 empty 35mm Film Canisters; 4 Children's size Safety Goggles or Glasses Snacks: 300 Paper plates (luncheon size); 1 box of Cheerios (plain - large); 1 box of Graham Crackers; 2 bags Pirate Bootie; 1 box Hannaford Magic Star cereal; 3 bags of Pretzel sticks (small ones); 2 bags of Pretzel Twists (small ones); 1 container of Cheese Balls (Costco); 1 box of Raisins; 1 small container of Craisins; 500 white plastic small recyclable cups (Costco)

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Easter Flowers



It's that time again, here are the 2019 flower offerings from Maplehurst Florist. Please put your order in the offering, mail to the office or email Jen at welcome@fccej.org to order and let her know who you would like to remember/honor in the Easter Bulletins. Also, please remember to take your plants with you after Easter to enjoy, plant or give to someone who would enjoy the cheer! Please order by April 14th.

Palm Buds - \$3.95

Single Easter Lily - \$15.00, Double Easter Lily (2 bulbs) - \$30.00

Large Easter Lily (3 bulbs) - \$35.00; Hydrangea or Large Azalea - \$25.00

Tulips, Hyacinths, or Daffodils 7" Container - \$15.00 , 8" Container - \$20.00

6" Rieger Begonia or 8" Bulb Garden - \$20.00

NEEDED-Old T-Shirts

We are trying to discourage the distribution of plastic grocery bags at our Heavenly Food Pantry by making and distributing reusable tshirt bags. If you have old tshirts that you can donate to be repurposed into a bag, please put them in the box in Fellowship Hall. If you would like to help with this project, please contact LindaLou Parker at vttechie@yahoo.com 999-0998



May 16th ~ Life Line Screening

Life Line Screening, a leading provider of community-based preventive health screenings will be at our church on Thursday, May 16th. Ultrasound screenings to Identify risk factors for Cardiovascular disease include; **Carotid Artery** (plaque buildup-a leading cause of stroke), **Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm** (an enlargement or weak area in the main blood vessel that carries blood from the heart to the rest of the body), **Peripheral Arterial Disease** (hardening of the arteries in the legs), a **Heart Rhythm Screening** (an EKG to detect Atrial Fibrillation-irregular heartbeat) and an **Osteoporosis Risk Assessment** for men and women. Being proactive about your health by knowing your risks helps you and your doctor address problems early. Register online TODAY at www.lifelinescreening.com/communitycircle and receive your "Community Circle" discount and your Preferred Appointment!



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

We still have **eight dates** open for 2019, 6/23, 7/7, 7/21, 7/28, 8/25, 10/20, 10/27 & 11/17. 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



April Birthdays

1st Carla Messier 2nd Lynn Coddington 3rd Lib Cilley, Cheryl Savage 4th Hillary Danis, Claire Deal 5th Kevin Dorn, Addison Kasmarek, June Silverman, Mike Sullivan 6th Daryl Koch 7th Kayleigh Ehler-Vock, Katherine Grenon, Caitlin McGear 8th Kim Hamilton, Lilo Kinaman, Steve Vock 9th Suzanne Foss, Nova Grenon, Ricky Stoneback 10th Paul Calhoun, Peg Coolidge 11th Jan Hopper 12th Blakely Noel 14th Genevieve King, Pat Seaver 15th Ashley Clark, Raven Gregory 16th Constance Johnson, Barbara Mudgett-Russell 18th Fatoma Afadzi, Lyn Beliveau, Ginny Coe, Nancy Hayes 19th Betty Adams, Vanessa Parker, Jack Roy 20th Linus Goedken 22nd Jack Poratti 23rd Anna Baker, Malcolm Paulsen 24th Steven Mitchell 25th Ciaran Brennan, Rob Poratti 26th Dick Harris, Carl Wermer 27th Deb Alden, Davin Pettingill 28th Adam Brooks, Myrna Doney 29th Jennifer Bashaw 30th Ryan Clark



The Jamaica 2019 team would like to thank everyone who attended or supported our 5th annual Cabin Fever Calcutta. This was our most successful Calcutta yet! It was a wonderful evening of fellowship and entertainment, all in support of our intergenerational international service program. The grand prize winners were Mark Mendes and Justin King. Special thanks to John Workman and Evan Stainman for their generosity in bidding on 2 hours of labor from the team. They are donating our hours to work for COTS in some capacity this spring. Mark your calendars now for March 7, 2020 for the Calcutta in support of the 2021 team. We hope to see you there!



Dear Church Family, Thank you so much for sending the lovely yellow rose on my birthday! Betty Garrapy



Many thanks to all the wonderful helping hands that made Pretzel Sunday run so smoothly this year! Blessings! You all were great! A special thanks to all of you who dropped off the donation of supplies items so that they were all here and ready for us at 7:30am on Sunday morning. All those in attendance enjoyed and helped to consumed over 400 pretzels!



Thank you all for your continued support for Vermont Conference OM camping program. We raised \$390 to support the scholarship fund that assists youth in attending this camp.

Donations can still be made. Write your check to FCCEJ and write in the memo line 'VT UCC OM'. If you wish your offering to stay here to support our youth attending camp, please put 'FCCEJ Camp Scholarship' on the memo line. See Laurie for more information.

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

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