

September 2019



# SPIRIT@FIRST

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**First Congregational Church**  
1 Church Street  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
USA

## Pastoral Ponderings

*By Rev. Mark Mendes*

Normally the life of a church in summertime Vermont is relatively quiet: numbers plunge a bit, committees take the summer off, staff cut back their hours and or vacation and the normal flow of life slows down to the speed of the easy Suwannee River not the Snake River where white water rafters fly through the crashing rapids. However, this summer at First Congo was way more like the Snake River. We wished Jen Dooley well as she left for greener pastures and welcomed Doug Ovitt to the position. We also said goodbye to our long time renter and friend Karen from CPEC who retired after decades of caring for community children as they prepared for school. And shortly, we will be welcoming in another Child Care Center that will fill a crucial need in the wider Essex community. Our Church Council has been very conscious of choosing this path forward as a ministry to the wider Essex Community. And at the beginning of summer Rev. Josh Simon had surgery and has spent the summer getting back to full health.

Normally, that would be enough for an exciting summer but that is just the start. We also ventured into the Capital Campaign projects in earnest. After many

weeks of not being able to park in our own parking lot [headache for everyone], it is a joy to say that even as I write they are stripping the parking lot and should allow folks in on Monday...not Sunday one more week! But by September 1st the vestibule will be done with its new handicapped bathroom next to fellowship hall and the new deacon's closet right next to the sanctuary. During the summer, they completed putting new windows in throughout the church and another company is working on re-storing our big sanctuary windows to their former beauty and workability. All the asbestos has been removed from the pre-school area and the new floors will be in by the end of August and after that our new child care center. Our parsonage also received a new driveway, one of the best ones in the city I'd venture, but it is magnificent. And Laurie and her team have been painting and upgrading our Faith Formation Space with a new large group area where kids will go right after they leave worship and a newly refurbished youth room on the 3rd floor: new paint, carpet and even some new furniture. And on top of that our new sign has been designed and ordered and will be installed in the near future along with some new work on our grounds out front. And on top of all the disruption and chaos going on, Laurie and her

VB Camp volunteers attracted the largest number of attendees ever!!!

I'm tired just writing all of these down. Our church needs a break from our breakneck paced summer. And there have been some people that have nearly lived here getting all of these projects completed. Kevin Meilleur and his crew of Trustees [Phil Bourn, John Burnett, Megan Bartlett, Dave Antone, Cathy Shearer] had direct oversight of every single projects with all the accompanying decisions, changes and upgrades that naturally happen in projects like this. Kaki Mac Geary has been tireless in coordinating the projects and making sure that what was originally planned in the capital campaign was coming to fruition. John and Donna Burnett used more tape and painted more walls and installed more air conditioners than anyone I have ever seen. A common site was John walking in with his tool caddy jammed packed with resources needed for the projects of the day. There were so many people here working that I am leaving out huge swaths of good will and generous hearts.....Thank you all. And let us also acknowledge that it is only the generosity of all those givers to the capital campaign that has made all of this work happen.

Now let's get to enjoying the new place and seek ways to live into the positive changes that have occurred over the summer.

Looking forward to seeing you in September, I am...

*Yours in Christ,*  
Rev. Mark

## Associate Pastor News

*By Rev. Josh Simon*

I recently posted a sign in my office: "Christianity is a way of life, not just a belief system." The statement emphasizes practice rather than belief. That doesn't mean beliefs don't matter. They do. It highlights the importance of how I live as a Christian. It embraces Jesus Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Golden Rule, of course, could be misused. That's why we also look at this rule within the lens of the Jesus commandment to love God and to Love neighbor as self. It's also why we remember Paul's words in Romans 12: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all."

You might remember the phrase, What Would Jesus Do? It was shortened to WWJD? There were even wristbands for it. You might remember it from the 90s. It originated in 1896 when a Congregational minister, Charles Sheldon, in Kansas wrote a book, *In His Step: What Would Jesus Do?* Christians in a town pledge to only do things after first asking, What Would Jesus Do? The book and phrase comes from movement in Christianity in the late and early 1900s called, the Social Gospel. The Social Gospel

movement infused the teachings of Jesus into daily life and the ways we interact with each other as a human family. In the 90s, the phrase became quite popular in Christianity after a Reformed minister discussed it with her youth group and convinced them to wear shirts with the phrase. Its how when most people hear WWJD; they know instantly what it means. Of course, the answer to WWJD can be different for people. But it's an interesting way to think about how to practice Christianity as a way of life. Part of our goal as we begin another faith formation year is to help our young people practice their Christianity outside of our church. We hope that it helps them become good citizens of the world.

We've had a busy summer with construction projects and Broadway Musical Sundays and Spirituality Group and making sandwiches with our youth to distribute to people who are homeless and Vacation Bible Camp. We have an exciting September ahead of us. September 8th is 9 am worship and then everyone and anyone are invited to walk with us in the Pride Parade in Burlington. Welcome Back Sunday is September 15th, back to our two services, with a cook out and games after the second service. And then, Kick-off Sunday is September 22nd for Junior Youth 11:30 pm and High School Youth Groups!

## 2019-20 Faith Formation Recruitment & Programs

There are many opportunities to volunteer and support First Church's children & youth!

**Nursery** – Be a friendly face to the parents and the littlest ones among us during first (8:15am) or second (10:30am) service. We strive to follow our Safe Conduct guidelines for a 2:1 ratio in the Nursery. Assist Jennifer

**Spiritual Friends** – (1st Sundays of the month on the 2nd floor.) Read a story, have snack and great conversations with PreK & Kindergarten children. Then a little Godly playdough time before returning to worship for communion.

**Peer Group Leaders & Helpers** – (PreK to 8<sup>th</sup> Grade; meet twice a month during second service.) You receive a weekly email with the lesson and activity. All items are gathered for you. You don't need to feel like you have all the answers. Leader and helpers learn right alongside the children and youth. It's OK for all to ask questions.

**Hands-On Mission Sunday Helpers** – (PreK to 8<sup>th</sup> grade) Join together for a time to build community while doing a mission activity. Last year's events: shirt baskets for our Easter breakfast tables, Church World Service Hygiene Kits, sorting donations for JUMP, Thrift Store tour, Vacation Bible Camp decorations, planting seeds for Earth Day...just to name a few.

**Youth Group Helpers** – (Junior youth [5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>] or High School youth [9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>]). Be an adult helper and get to know our youth.

**Music Time during Faith Formation** (Cherubs, Preschool, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Joyful Noise, 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) Music time will be happening at the end of our faith formation time on Sunday mornings starting on September 22nd. Parents are asked to please greet others in Fellowship Hall and then come sign your children out from Cherubs at 11:30am.

## Laurie's Lens

*By Laurie Chipman*

### Faith Formation Recruitment

Recruitment is still in full swing for our vibrant 2019-20 faith formation programs. There are many ways to help our programs, whether it be with our youngest ones in the Nursery or our junior youth. High school youth are also encouraged to help with our faith formation programs on Sunday mornings. Pastor Josh and I would like to have more of our high school youth helping with our programs. This is great way to gather community services hours for high school, on your college applications and on your resume. Speak with Pastor Josh or myself and we can find the right group and age level that fits best fits you. You'll be helping us build relationships with the children in the program as well as growing your own faith. So, whether you are in high school, college or an adult of any age, please connect with one of us by email, phone or in person. You will save us a phone call.

### Our Nursery

Jennifer 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 help us hold to our

Safe Conduct Guidelines of our child ratio (two children per adult) and volunteer to stay in the Nursery if needed. Thank you for your cooperation.

### Vacation Bible Camp: Stellar Performance!

We had a wonderful group this year at our "Mission to Mars" camp! We lost power on Day One. ("Houston, we have a problem!") It takes a village to make a program like this happen and many thanks go out to all who volunteered, helped behind the scenes and donated. You all were fantastic! There were 53 camper kids this year along with 5 camper parents, 17 adult volunteers and 10 youth volunteers. Our biggest year so far! A total of 30 families were on our list and 10 of these families were community families from other churches or who do not attend and a couple were looking for a church. Over 85 people walked through our halls, saw all our construction going on and had a wonderful time learning about God, each other and repeating Ephesians 3:20 'Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by God's power at work within us.'

### Youth Ministry

Stay active and lend a helping hand! Help a neighbor or a friend. Find ways and places to connect with your God & have Spiritual time ~ praying in color, etc. Help Greet/Usher/Read Scripture during 10:15am worship. We also need acolytes

## Vacation Bible Camp Rollcall



**AV/Photographer:** Doug Olufsen **Bible Drama:** Allison VanSteensburg **Crafts:** Jenny Bourn **Discovery/Science:** Justin King **Games:** Laurie Chipman **Music Leaders:** Beth Volker, Carol Spradling, Doug Olufsen; **Snacks:** Judy Allen & Ginny Coe; **Puppeteer:** Erik Frivoll; **Group Leaders:** Amanda Palmer, Ron Faux, Paula Sargent, Donna Burnett, Kaki McGeary, Judy Roy, Pastor Josh; **Station Helpers:** Gail Babinger, Mary Anne Warren; **Youth Helpers:** Anna Kinney, Erik Frivoll, Sam & Mae Dewey, Braeden Koch, Charlie McGeary, Olivia Babinger, Wyatt Mayhue, Ryann Giummo, Henry Sorrell; **Volunteer Decorators:** Allison VanSteensburg, Justin King, Jenny Bourn, Jessica Moos, Alex & Cornelia Afadzi, Genevieve King, Isa Owens, Charlie & Kaki McGeary, Braeden Koch, Anna Kinney, Nancy Milne, Doug Olufsen, Judy Allen, Donna & John Burnett, Erik Frivoll & friend Tommy, Betty Adams, Ryann Giummo & Pastor Josh.

(2016 Counselors): Ethan Benton, Kate Tallman

There is still more camping at our two UCC sites closest to us. Horton Center Camp in NH @ <http://www.hortoncenter.org/> Silver Lake Conference Center in CT @ <https://www.silverlakeect.org/>

*Blessed to be  
in ministry with you all,  
Laurie Chipman, CE Director*

## Carol's Corner

*By Carol Spradling*

**What a Musical Crop this summer!** I just got done with a fantastic few days of Vacation Bible Camp, teaching songs and dances to our campers, who will be singing one of the songs at worship on September 15 (Welcome Back Sunday). You'll love their song "Safe in Your Arms". We might even get you up dancing!

Another musical part of my week was a rehearsal with the Bell Choir, for Mrs. Nancy Hunt's funeral service. Nancy was a long time member of the Bell Choir, and her family requested that the Bells perform. So it was time to get the bells ringing again. Under the capable direction of Carolyn Harris and Laura Marthaler, the sound was truly heavenly! Look for the Bells to ring regularly throughout

and bell ringers. To volunteer, sign-up on the sheets in the hallway between the Narthex and Fellowship Hall. Additionally, we need parents to volunteer! All our First Church Youth Programs are Parent Supported. 1- 2 parent-volunteers are needed at each youth group gathering.

### Faith Formation Offering

If you a) earn an allowance or b) have a job, then practice dividing your money three ways: 1) Save (in the bank), 2) Give to the church/offering, 3) Donate to a charitable organization or those in need. We are currently accepting offers for Spectrum Youth & Family Services.

Remember, even \$1 a week can go a long way! So bring your offering each week for Spectrum. Just think what you spend a \$1 on each week. Are you willing to give that amount to help a youth at Spectrum? Use the Bible story envelopes in the pews

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

### VT UCC Outdoor Ministry Camp



Many thanks for your support of OM here in Vermont! 14 campers & 15 volunteers (deans, counselors, daytime volunteers & program support). FCCEJ Participants: VT OM Team Chair: Laurie Chipman; (2019 camper) Erik Frivoll; (2019 Chaplain) Pastor Ron Faux; (2018 camper) Isabelle Owens; (2018 daytime volunteers): Jonah & Jessica Moos, Pastor Josh; (2017 camper): Erik Frivoll;

### \*\*\*IMPORTANT SURVEY\*\*\*

PLEASE, take 5-15 minutes to fill it out and give your feedback to help Laurie and Pastor Josh plan Youth Ministry and Faith Formation programs here at First Church. <https://survey.zohopublic.com/zs/CRCNsL>



the year at select worship services. This is my ministry this year: to have the bells ring. They're too beautiful to just sit in their fancy suitcases.

The pipe organ is currently undergoing restoration of its Trumpet and Reed banks - those are the really "bright" sounds used for melodic solos. Without those stops, the organ still sounds wonderful and has been a joy to play and practice (now that temperatures have lowered enough to allow any humans to be up in the choir loft). I can't wait to play the whole instrument once it's pieced back together and tuned up shiny and new! Musically, it's been an adventurous summer. Josh and I put our heads together and selected what I think was a very fine slate of musicals and guest stars for July. We heard from Fiddler on the Roof (Judy Larrabee, Jim Coates, Doug Olufsen, and yours truly)... Annie (6th grader Tessa Nowell), La Cage Aux Folles (ECP grad Munro Shearer and Pastor Josh himself!), and, of course, the incredible sounds of Heavenly Harmony singing "Let It Go" from Frozen. For August, we've got talented folks from the Sanctuary Choir: Beth Volker, Bill and Cindy Bickford, Amanda Palmer. Labor Day will feature Judy Larrabee and Doug Olufsen.

Our Men at First have been busy rehearsing all summer, with Bill Bickford Jr. as capable captain of the ship. They were asked to sing as special guests for worship

services at churches in Grand Isle and Mallets Bay. They will finish their "tour" right here at home, as our final musical guests of the summer, on September 8. You won't want to miss church that morning!

Our praise band, Finally @ First, is rehearsing on August 14th, and Sanctuary Choir's first rehearsal is September 5th. Bell Choir begins on September 4. Welcome Back Sunday will feature Sanctuary Choir at first service, and F@F - along with our Vacation Bible campers - at second service.

Throughout the 2019-20 season, we will be enjoying the music of the Sanctuary Choir, Finally @ First, Men At First, Heavenly Harmony, Joyful Noise, Cherubs, and the Bell Choir, along with featured vocal and instrumental soloists.

This is the PERFECT time to join a musical group and share your talent with this incredibly kind, fun-loving group of folks at First Church. The Sanctuary Choirs (all three of them) rehearse Thursday nights (no experience necessary!). Praise band meets on Wednesday nights (if interested, talk to Rick Dooley). Our Bells rehearse on Wednesday nights as well - and as complex as the bell music sounds, you don't need any experience (we'll train you!).

I hope you have a wonderful rest of your

summer, and please do stop by the piano and say hi after church - I'm still meeting folks and it's my favorite part of Sunday mornings.

*Soli Deo gloria - Glory to God!*  
Carol Spradling, Music Director

## Capital Campaign

*By Kaki McGeary*

Your Capital Campaign dollars, our Trustees and many volunteers have been hard at work this summer! If you haven't been to church in a while, you will notice some exciting changes in and around Our Home when you return! You can also check our progress and see pictures on the Capital Campaign/Projects page at [www.fccej.org](http://www.fccej.org). Here are the highlights:

### New Vestibule Addition & ADA Bathroom – The exterior





of the new two-story addition an accessible bathroom near Fellowship Hall is nearly complete, and we anticipate having a finished bathroom and second story storage area by early September.

**Parking Lot** – Contractors dug up the entire parking lot to address drainage problems and divert water away from our foundation. Layer of asphalt down by the end of August!

**New Sign** – We said goodbye to our old brick sign, and a new sign will be installed sometime in late September/early October. The memorial garden bed that surrounded the old sign will be redesigned to feature low-maintenance shrubs, the Peace Pole and a bench or two for quiet reflection. The Campaign hired landscape architect Silvia Jope, Old World Garden Designs, to help with the design and make other recommendations to create a welcoming, cohesive landscape plan for the church.

**Sanctuary Windows & Shutters** – The historic windows and shutters in the sanctuary have been removed and are being completely restored and

repainted by specialists off-site. Stay tuned for more details about when to expect them to be back in place.

### **Sanctuary Plaster Repair & Painting**

– Due to the plaster specialist's availability, the sanctuary plaster repair and painting

project is scheduled for January-February 2020. The sanctuary's plaster ceiling is in worse shape than initially thought, so the entire ceiling will be removed and a new plaster ceiling installed in its place. Believe it or not, this is the most cost effective option! But it does mean that our sanctuary will be "closed" for about 2 months while this work takes place. The result will be a beautiful plaster ceiling that should last at least another 100 years. We are working on plans for alternate worship space (likely in Fellowship Hall) for that short period of time. As this experience literally draws us closer together, our prayer is that we may grow closer in spirit too.

**Organ Repair & Cleaning** – In late July, work began to repair and clean our organ so that our beloved music ministries may continue to flourish.

**New Flooring in Pre-School Wing** – In early August, an environmental specialist sealed off the preschool wing of the building to remove asbestos tile in that area. Although this was a stretch goal project, we had a window of opportunity when no

### **Ready. Set. Go! The 2020 Stewardship Drive is Coming!**

It's important to remember that it is your annual pledge that keeps our doors open, funds our programs, pays our staff, and allows us to serve God through activities in our church, our community and the wider world. Your support has a positive impact and makes our Good Work possible! The campaign will run from *September 29 to October 20*. Please help our work continue by making a pledge.

### **Update Your Contact Info**

One small favor, please. In order to facilitate the campaign, it would be most helpful if the church office has your most up-to-date contact information, including mailing address, email address and best phone number at which to reach you. Contact the Church Administrator, Doug Ovitt, to provide this updated information.

Phone: (802) 878-5745

Email: [welcome@fceej.org](mailto:welcome@fceej.org)

Stay tuned for additional details...

*Yours in Christ,*  
Your Stewardship Committee

Bill Keithcart, Shannon McCullen,  
Jessica Moos, and Beth Volker

people would be using the space due to the change of ownership of CPEC (preschool). New flooring will be installed in mid-August, just in time for the new preschool/nursery to open. Huge thanks to the volunteers who helped move all of the preschool supplies/furniture into and out of storage! We still plan to remove/replace the remaining asbestos tiles in administrative wing in a future phase of work.

**Non-Historic Window Replacement** – This spring, we completed the replacement of non-historic windows. Stop by one of the Sunday School classrooms on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor to see how beautiful they look – and how easily they open and close! Several of the Sunday School spaces and youth rooms have fresh coats of paint, thanks to Laurie and her crew of volunteer painters.

**Church Safety** – We applied for a Department of Homeland Security Grant to install keyless locks on our doorways and a controlled-access/visitor-management system to allow us greater control over access to our building, especially during the week and outside normal business hours. We also requested funds to install interior locks on all classroom doors, and add better lighting on the exterior of the church. We should hear about funding decisions sometime in August.

We think that about covers it! The Capital Campaign Steering Committee will meet in early September to take a look at the big picture of project spending, the work that remains, and what to tackle next. We have raised \$955,494 as of July 31, 2019. We still have a little ways to go to reach our stretch goal of \$1.09 million. We are very grateful for everyone's continued patience while we are "under construction." We also appreciate everyone's timely (and in many cases early!) pledge payments. This has allowed us to

move forward on ALL of the above projects without bridge loan financing!

*Yours in faith & friendship,*  
Kaki McGeary & Dave Johnson,  
Capital Campaign Co-Chairs

## 2019 Jamaica Service Project

*By Pete Schmalz*

For several years, my son Zach and I watched FCCEJ send groups of people to work in Jamaica, and then listen to their compelling stories afterwards. Each time we'd say to each other, "We should do that!" With Zach turning 16 last year, we knew that we had to seize the opportunity. And so it was, after about 18 months of planning, meeting as a group, fundraising, and studying the Jamaican history/culture, we boarded the plane early in the morning on June 23rd with 13 others from the FCCEJ community (along with many bags of building supplies and donations), ready to contribute our energy and Christian compassion on an international mission adventure. We arrived in Kingston, Jamaica that evening, getting a taste of the heat, humidity, and local cuisine. We met our bus driver Melvin, Sharon's longtime acquaintance, who would graciously shepherd us around all week (and put in long hours beside us on the worksite). We then drove into the night, along the long, winding coastal road to the towns of Lyssons and Port Morant, the sites of our school/project and

### Mission Moments @ FCCEJ

**JUMP:** "The Joint Urban Ministry Project would like to thank you for Mission Donation of \$500 to help make a difference for families struggling and whose lives are impacted by poverty."  
Wanda Hines, JUMP Director

**VIA:** "Thank you for your \$500 donation to Vermont Interfaith Action! These funds will go to improve Vermonters' food security, increase the supply of affordable housing, enhance parent and youth engagement in Burlington and Winooski schools, alleviate homelessness in Chittenden and Washington counties, expand our organization to [other] Vermont counties, and improve conditions for workers, such as raising the minimum wage and initiating a family medical leave insurance program!"  
Debbie Ingram, Executive Director

**COTS:** "The Committee on Temporary Shelter thanks you for your \$500 donation! With your help, COTS serves ~2,400 people (including more than 750 children) through shelter, outreach, prevention services, and transitional & permanent housing. With the help of our Day station program's volunteers, we serve a hot lunch 365 days a year to single adults. Our goal, however, is to reach children and parents in financial crisis before they need shelter. Your donation funds long-term solutions toward ending homelessness."  
Becky Holt, COTS Director

**Red Cross:** "Dear Friends, on behalf of all of us at American Red Cross of New Hampshire & Vermont, I'd like to thank you for your extraordinary support as an honored member of the Clara Barton Society. It means everything to survivors of severe storms, home fires, or other life-altering emergencies. Your giving provides meals, snacks, comfort, care, and relief—just when your neighbors need it most."

Maria Devlin, CEO

our lodging. Over the next 9 days, we would work shoulder-to-shoulder, sweating in the

searing heat, clearing the grounds, digging the foundation, and constructing a beautiful playhouse (with climbing wall, water table, and stairway) that we believe is strong enough to endure a hurricane. We'd add a see-saw ("teeter-totter"), revitalize an existing swing-set, and generally spruce up the grounds. We'd bond and play with the wonderful teachers, local helpers, and precious school children. I was amazed at the determination and resilience of our group, working under demanding conditions, all day long, sometimes several hours longer than planned. The end result is an inspiring playground that the school and its children will cherish, and for which all of us on the team - and FCCEJ as a whole - can be very proud. Our week concluded with a day assisting several local organizations distributing fresh-cooked meals to over 100 homeless and destitute people throughout the region. The poverty was shocking and heartbreaking, but we expressed our compassion to them, proud and grateful that FCCEJ sponsored all the food that was provided that day. Beyond these physical accomplishments, we also grew together as a team. Everyone contributed sincere efforts and ideas. Together we prayed and shared every meal, laughed and cried, learned about the joys and complexities of Jamaican society, negotiated, compromised (with each other, and with our local partners), and set aside our self-interest for the greater good of the mission. We

had the pleasure of attending a local church and mingling with its congregation. We visited Kingston for a tour of the Bob Marley Museum and dinner/dessert at popular local spots. We shopped in local markets, and experienced thrills jumping off waterfalls. In all that we did, we faithfully represented our country, our community, and our church. The trip was not without complications and challenges – first, the initial construction plans fell apart over some misunderstandings with our local partner, and Rev. Mark had to quickly (and quite impressively) develop a playground project from scratch (getting input from several experienced builders from FCCEJ). Then, on Day 1, the Delta Airlines counter was not able to efficiently check us in, and our trip leaders (Sharon and Carolyn) had their seats taken away at the very last minute! Fortunately they were able to meet us in Atlanta, but they had to first connect through New York, so we had to navigate through our complicated baggage check process into the international terminal without them. Sharon also ran into challenges getting money transfers to pay for building supplies and other expenses, as the local bank threw her some last-minute paperwork "curveballs". In addition, she and Carolyn had to quickly locate and hire some local workers to help move the two large piles of gravel and sand that had been unexpectedly dumped in the middle of the playground

(another misunderstanding). We also had to negotiate project decisions with our local helpers – all of whom had very strong opinions about construction methods (watching Kaki and Nicholas use their mediation skills on our behalf was most memorable!). In the end, it was an experience I will never forget. I've thought about the people of Jamaica, the places visited, and our work together, every day since returning. I am so pleased that I was able to do this together with my son, and with everyone in the group. Everyone's hard work and effort was so impressive to me, particularly the work of our FCCEJ youth. It's made me appreciate all that we have here in our community and congregation. I am so thankful for all of the support and financial contributions from FCCEJ that make this bi-annual trip possible. I am especially grateful for Sharon's and Carolyn's tireless efforts in planning the trip, helping prepare us throughout the year in getting to know Jamaica and each other, leading such a memorable trip, and getting us all home safely. I would highly recommend this to anyone thinking about going next time – it's an experience you will treasure.

## UCC Missionaries from Puerto Rico

The Vermont Conference Disaster Response Committee has invited Lydia Velasquez and Angel Cepeda to Vermont from September 21 through 29th. The groups from Vermont churches



who have traveled to Puerto Rico already know Lydia and Angel. Lydia is the contact person who organizes and supports the still critically necessary volunteer work from Hurricane Maria. Angel is the driver who meets people at the airport and takes them to the work site and to the Hostel where they stay while also providing whatever support the groups need. They are also officers in the United Evangelical Church of Puerto Rico, a Denomination with a close connection to the UCC. We are partners in Service to the people of Puerto Rico.

On Tuesday morning from 8:30-10am, First Church has invited them to come to Sermon Talkback and share their story and give us a first-hand account of what life is like in Puerto Rico after the hurricane. There will be plenty of time to ask questions and see the many ways that the UCC is helping and the various ways all of us can contribute. There will be an informal Free Will offering to contribute to the cause but no one is under any obligation to give.

# Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

## Volunteers Needed!

The Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop is looking for volunteers to work all shifts at the shop, Tuesday-Thursday and occasionally Saturday. If you have never worked there before, the staff is most happy to show you the ropes of manning the shop. The

activities such as running the cash register are quite easy. It's a fun, rewarding place with contact with the staff as well as the many community members who come in to shop. Our mission is to support local groups such as JUMP and COTS as they serve their clientele. Please join us if the thrift shop is someplace you've been hoping to work. Please, contact Cindy Cheney (cynthia.j.vt@gmail.com) for more information.

## Heavenly Cents Thrift Store Hours & Events

10am-3pm, Tues & Wed; 4-8pm Thurs; 1st & 3rd Sat, 9am-1pm  
Now accepting clothing donations for fall and winter. Also, we would love holiday decorations donations.

50% off entire shop from August 24th to September 7th

## Heavenly Cents Food Pantry

Monthly on 1<sup>st</sup> Monday @ 5:30-7:30pm; and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday @ 2-6pm. ID + proof of residency (e.g. utility bill) required for all recipients. Please, do not arrive more than 30min early.

# Heavenly Food Pantry

## Volunteers Needed!

Yes, we definitely need more people to help on actual pantry days to do the varied tasks on those days, but we're also looking to fill other jobs often overlooked by many. We're looking for folks who might like shorter commitments. The Pantry needs people who could pick up food at Hannaford's, which

provides substantial donations to the pantry. The food would then be delivered to the church for storage. At times, deliveries of food also need to be taken to places like Whitcomb Woods or the senior Lang Farm residences. We need people who might enjoy helping to clean up after the pantries are held on the second Monday of the month (5:30 to 7:30) and the fourth Thursday (2 to 6). Leftover food needs to be gathered up and put away as well as tables and chairs. Tables get washed as well as some food bins. Toilet paper needs to be picked up at Costco. Needed are folks to accept the food from food drives as it is delivered to the church. Expired food needs to be delivered to the Emergency Food Shelf in Burlington every month. Helping Hand boxes from Hannaford's need to be picked up one evening a week in October and November and delivered to the church. Another job would entail meeting the food bank truck at University Mall once a month to pick up fresh vegetables. As you can see, the jobs associated with the Food Pantry are many and varied. The Food Pantry enjoys an enthusiastic and fun-loving group of volunteers. We'd love to welcome you into our missions community. Please contact Anita Guild (anitalguild@gmail.com)

## Boy Scouts Bottle Drive

The Boy Scouts have made a bin for can collection. Currently, the bin is located near the Church Street office entrance. Please make sure that you only put in the cans & bottles that are redeemable, not just recyclable.

or Valerie Gabert  
(val.gabert@gmail.com) if you  
would like to volunteer.

## Fellowship & Learning @ First

### Yoga @ First

*Mondays, 5:30pm-6:45pm*

Jonah Moos, FCCEJ member, is offering a free yoga class in our Gymnasium! Jonah collects donations on behalf of our Church. All levels from beginner to experienced are absolutely welcome. You can bring your own mat or borrow one of Jonah's.

### Sermon Talkback Tuesdays

*Tuesdays, 8:30-10am*

Gather with us in the Marvin Lounge for coffee, baked goods, and a lively discussion of the sermon (and other topics!) delivered on Sunday. Join us for the conversation, the goodies, the camaraderie, or all of the above!

### Wednesday Night Searchers

*Wednesdays @ 7pm*

Each week, a group of folks get together in the Marvin Lounge 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. Books are in the office or with Mark on Sunday.

### JOY (Just Older Youth)

*1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of Each Month @ Noon*

If you are 55+ please consider joining this active church group. We strive to present programs

that foster learning, fun, or service. Our first meeting is Thursday, September 5 at noon in the Marvin Lounge. We are planning a Potluck lunch with our own Bob Vincent and Ann Gray. Listen to stories of FCCEJ's history. Bob has been a member the longest (His father was the minister in Bob's youth) and Ann is our church's historian. Don't miss this engaging presentation.

### Bridge Club

*Thursday, September 19<sup>th</sup> @ 1:30-4pm*

Join us in the Marvin Lounge. Bring snacks and drinks to share. Friends are welcome, too! Join Pastor Mendes in our Marvin Lounge for a rousing game and a chance to win some of his world-famous jam!

### Coffee Clatter

*Fridays @ 8am*

Martone's in Essex Junction This may seem like a foolish question, but if you like to talk and drink coffee, then come down to Martone's for open conversation. Rev. Mark and/or Josh are there every week and 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!

### Women's Spirituality Group

*3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of Every Month, 9:30am*

All women of the church are invited to be a part of this vibrant group. In the hopes of expanding our group we will begin our year with conversation around what should be the groups purpose, and how can we interest more of our church women to be a part of this supportive group. Our programs will address personal growth, community outreach and having fun. Please consider joining us for conversation and goodies. (Bring your ideas for a possible name change.) Next group meets on **Saturday, September 21:** Fellowship, Coffee & Conversation (we'll provide light food).

## Save the D@te!

### Interfaith PRIDE Service

*Thursday, September 5<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm*  
UVM Interfaith Center @ 400 South Prospect St. Burlington, VT

Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising! In 1969, a diverse group of people banded together to proclaim their power and stand their ground at the Stonewall Inn. Gather with Vermont's greater LGBTQIA and ally communities to remember, celebrate, and empower our dignity and liberation.

### Essex Eats Out

*Friday, September 6<sup>th</sup> @ 5:30-6:30pm*

This ongoing service project offers free, community-wide dinners open to all (with a special invitation to the needy & lonely) every Friday night throughout the Essex area. Donations (to help subsidize the cost of these meals)

### Christmas Craft Fest Volunteers

We know that the holidays are far away, but we like to get ahead of things. To make this event success, your assistance with the following would be greatly appreciated:

**Nearly New** - We will be accepting donations in Marvin Lounge Starting October 6th. The following is a quick list of best sellers: Books, Holiday items especially Christmas, Frames, Games, and Accessories (e.g. scarves, purses and jewelry); Dishes, Craft Items

**Silent Auction** – We really need donations from church members to make this a success. The following are suggestions: Donating Tickets to a theater, arts or sporting event; Giving golf/tennis lessons Baking a cookie/pie/cake/bread of the month; Making a homemade dinner; Sewing/babysitting/cleaning/yard work; Homemade items such as sweater, quilt, table runner; Original Artwork; Gift Certificate to your favorite store;

**Crafters** – we have several tables open for the craft area.

Interested persons may contact Ann Gray @ 878-4088. Church members' cost is \$20. The committee will have signup sheets after first & second services for making a donation. Or, you may sign up to volunteer at one of our amazing areas starting *October 19th*.

**If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Linda Bogardus @ 872-8972 or email ([lbogardus@myfairpoint.net](mailto:lbogardus@myfairpoint.net))**

are solicited but not required of all dinner patrons. FCCEJ hosts Essex Eats Out on the first Friday of each month.

### Vermont PRIDE

*Sunday, September 8<sup>th</sup>*

*Parade @ 12:30pm, Church Street;*

*Festival @ 1pm, Battery Park*

Sponsored by the Vermont UCC Conference to celebrate and support Vermont's LGBTQ+ community, as well as educating and bridging people to create interpersonal and community alliances. For more details, visit <https://pridevt.org/>

### Welcome Back Sunday

*Sunday, September 15<sup>th</sup>*

We are back to two services at 8:30am & 10:15am. Remember: Everyone is welcome to come up front to receive Communion! Come and check out the myriad of renovations. There will of course be the Bouncy House for the kids to play in as well as some snacks to eat as usual. We will play games have fellowship hour outside and find out what we have in store for the year at our Faith Formation Program. It will be a day you will not want to miss!!! A Christian Ed-sponsored picnic (they will provide hamburgers, hotdogs, chips, watermelon) following our 10:15am service. Please bring a finger food dessert for our potluck dessert table.

### Run or Walk for JUMP

*September 21st at 10:00 am*

*Register @ 9am*

The event includes an open 5K Run, a 1K Run for kids under 14, and a 1K Walk at North Beach

(60 Institute Rd) in Burlington with "FREE PARKING". This welcoming, flat course offers beautiful views of Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks. Participants can run or walk and fundraise, fundraise only, or just run or walk. This is a fun event for the whole family with many raffle prizes and refreshments!

## Editor@First

*By Doug Ovitt*

### Your Words. My Task. Our Newsletter.

Very rarely do I make a public appearance, written or otherwise. I prefer being the proverbial Wizard of Oz, toiling behind the curtain so that you can enjoy the spiritual gifts of our Church's ministry. After all, this is your newsletter to enjoy both as a reader and contributor. Everyone is welcome to submit content.

My fervent wish is to maintain the integrity of your *voice*. Thus, I do not edit phrasing (even typos) as I assume that your word choices are purposeful. So, when you're reading a piece, you may find yourself reading it *in that writer's voice*, warts and all!

### Thank You

The word "thank" appears in this newsletter fifteen times (including this paragraph's headline!) Here is another 'one' from me. To the innumerable well-wishers; to my co-workers whose enthusiasm for the Good News and Greater Works stokes the fire in my heart; to my office's faithful volunteers

(especially the Newsletter ladies who physically cobbled together the very print-out in your hand!); to every committee member, church-goer, and stray heart who has entered my office: you've helped me plunge an axe deep into the icy and steep slope of this job's learning curve. I'll keep climbing because y'all make it worth the while.

*Ex Animo,*  
Doug Ovitt, M.Ed.  
Church Administrator

## Someone Special is Turning 90!

*By Danny McCaffrey*

My name is Danny McCaffrey, and my grandfather, Robert Vincent of Essex Junction, will be celebrating his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday next month (September 17<sup>th</sup>.) In his 90 years, he's managed to meet a fair amount of people; and as a family, we would love for you to be part of this occasion. To help celebrate, my mom (Lynn) and I are reaching out to family and friends to help with his surprise. We would like to surprise him with 90 letters, including one from YOU! His birthday is right around the corner. We'd appreciate your letters by *Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup>*. As far as what you may write, I think 90 is such a milestone! That's a lot of memories. I know he is a great storyteller, so you could write reminiscently! Please, submit your letters to my email ([crew\\_mccaffrey@comcast.net](mailto:crew_mccaffrey@comcast.net)) with the subject line "Papa's Birthday

Letter"; or snail-mail it to: Danny McCaffrey, 8 Glenwood Drive, Essex, VT 05452

### September Birthd@ys

GUILD, Kevin	09/02
MENDES, Karen	09/02
FRANK, Melody	09/03
SCHNEIDER, Marion	09/03
DETTRE, Tom	09/04
GALBRAITH, Gary	09/04
RAYMOND, Elaine	09/04
KOCH, Ethan	09/06
ANTONE, David	09/07
HOPPER, Ken	09/07
BOURN, Phil	09/08
HARRIS, Austin	09/08
LEACH, Dillan	09/08
SHARP, Andrea	09/10
MENDES, Nicholas	09/11
BERO, Mindy	09/12
HAMILTON, Kevin	09/12
ROY, Judy	09/13
GRAY, Ann	09/14
BICKFORD Jr., Bill	09/15
KOCH, Aimee	09/17
VINCENT, Bob	09/17
BISHARD, Carol	09/18
BRENNAN, Ian	09/19
LEACH, Julie	09/19
EVANS, Maureen	09/20
MCGEARY, Charles	09/20
GARVEY, Erica	09/21
O'NEIL, Helen	09/22
NUTTING, Muriel	09/23
STEIN, Tristan	09/23
WATT, Craig	09/23
CATE, Merrill	09/24
RUSHFORD, James	09/24
PARKER, Bruce	09/25
EDWARDS, Julie	09/26
WILSON, Alma	09/26
GALBRAITH, Kathy	09/27
GUZIAK, Emily	09/28
HALL, Nancy	09/28
STEIN, Heather	09/29
BOURN, Jenny	09/30
GACKENHEIMER, Keadyn	09/30

### Our 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Rose Club Thanks You!

"Dear Church Family: Very belated thanks for my beautiful yellow rose. It brightened up the entire condo. I appreciate your thoughtfulness so much. Best Wishes, Louise Kolvoord."

"Receiving the beautiful yellow rose on my 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday meant so much. Thanks to my church family! Jackie Knapp"

"Thank you for the yellow birthday rose. Its beauty provided much joy for several days. Grace Jones"

"Dear Church Family, What a lovely yellow rose. Arrived at our door on the morning of my birthday! It was just a bud beginning to open, and we have watched it daily as it opened. Thank you ~ Marilyn Vincent"

"Dear Church Family, The yellow is lovely! It's one of the best parts of growing older. Thank you so very much! Sylvia Nyhagen."

# September 2019

September 2019							October 2019						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12	13	14			6	7	8	9	10
15	16	17	18	19	20	21			13	14	15	16	17
22	23	24	25	26	27	28			20	21	22	23	24
29	30								27	28	29	30	31

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Sep 1</b> 9:00am Summer Worship Service (Sanctuary) 11:30am Music Committee (Choir Loft) 1:00pm Brown Bag 6:00pm Cub Scout Leader	<b>2</b> 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Food Pantry Stocking (Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Yoga @ First 5:30pm Group Victory	<b>3</b> 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Finance 7:00pm Church Council	<b>4</b> 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Finally@First 6:00pm Boy Scouts-PLC 6:30pm Bell Choir, 7:00pm Boy Scouts	<b>5</b> 8:30am Essex Art League (FH) 12:00pm JOY (ML) 12:00pm Brown Bag 3:00pm Easterseals (Third 6:00pm Music@First	<b>6</b> 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Essex Eats Out (Prep Time) (Kitchen & Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Essex Eats Out Community Dinner (FH)	<b>7</b> 9:00am Thrift Store Open 9:00am Nepali Community Worship 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 4:30pm Worship Service
<b>8</b> Vermont PRIDE (Burlington, VT) 9:00am Worship Service 10:30am Craft Fest, 1:00pm Brown Bag 2:30pm Erica Garvey's	<b>9</b> 12:00pm Brown Bag 1:30pm Food Pantry 4:00pm Food Pantry (FH) 5:30pm Yoga @ First 5:30pm Group Victory 6:30pm Joe's Big Band	<b>10</b> 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:00pm Deacons (ML)	<b>11</b> 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Finally@First 6:30pm Bell Choir, 7:00pm Wednesday Night 7:00pm Boy Scouts	<b>12</b> 8:00am Jamaica Bound Calcutta Committee 12:00pm Brown Bag 3:00pm Easterseals (Third 6:00pm Music@First 7:00pm Essex Eats Out	<b>13</b> 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:30pm Grange (FH)	<b>14</b> 9:00am Nepali Community Worship (Sanctuary) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)
<b>15</b> 8:30am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 10:15am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)	<b>16</b> 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Food Pantry Stocking (Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Yoga @ First 5:30pm Group Victory	<b>17</b> 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:00pm Missions Committee (ML)	<b>18</b> 8:00am Food Shelf 12:00pm Book Discussion 12:00pm Brown Bag 5:30pm Finally@First 6:30pm Bell Choir, 7:00pm Wednesday Night	<b>19</b> 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 3:00pm Easterseals (Third Floor) 6:00pm Music@First 6:30pm Tiger Den #9	<b>20</b> 8:00am NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Bridge Club (Marvin Lounge)	<b>21</b> 8:30am SAT Boot Camp (Fellowship Hall) 9:00am Nepali Women's 12:30pm Crafting Event 1:00pm Brown Bag
<b>22</b> 8:30am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 10:15am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)	<b>23</b> 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Food Pantry 5:30pm Yoga @ First 5:30pm Group Victory 6:30pm Joe's Big Band	<b>24</b> 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:00pm Stewardship 7:00pm Trustees (ML)	<b>25</b> 12:00pm Brown Bag 2:00pm Crafty Time Out 5:30pm Finally@First 6:30pm Bell Choir, 7:00pm Wednesday Night 7:00pm Boy Scouts	<b>26</b> 8:30am Food Pantry (FH) 9:00am NEWSLETTER VOLUNTEERS (ML) 12:00pm Brown Bag 3:00pm Easterseals (Third 6:00pm Music@First	<b>27</b> 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:30pm Grange (FH)	<b>28</b> 9:00am Nepali Community Worship (Sanctuary) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)
<b>29</b> 8:30am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 10:15am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)	<b>30</b> 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Food Pantry Stocking (Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Yoga @ First 5:30pm Group Victory	<b>Oct 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>



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- Mail this page back to us at the address above