

DECEMBER 2019



SPIRIT@FIRST

monthly newsletter

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A Pastor's Ponderings

During my first Christmas as a pastor, I learned very quickly how the Christmas season is fraught with emotion. My life had been fairly sheltered so I tended to see Christmas as a joyous holiday where people sing carols, you receive presents and you celebrate the gift of family. As a young pastor, my overly optimistic emotional outlook was mitigated by the pain that so many people brought with them to the Christmas Eve services. So very many parishioners shed tears during the hymns as memories of loved ones long gone come flooding back into their consciousness. Parents mourned children who died tragically or died before seeing the light of day due to complications or circumstances beyond their control. Widow and widowers who sit alone but remember their spouses who had sat next to them for years, in the same pew, first with and then without their children. People sitting with disease on their mind or poor health that threatens to disrupt their health and lifestyle. Busy parents on the cusp of financial ruin and yet spend too much on gifts and food so that for just once during the year they might see their kids celebrate freely. Worrying family members or

their addicted loved ones who feel the weight of life slipping into darkness. For some reason, I have learned that the Christmas season brings out both hope and anguish, often at the same time. I find it ironic that it is the one time people swarm to and fill the church to the brim. Why would one want to come to a place where there will be such a mixture of sentiment, a veritable roller coaster of emotion?

And with the state of the world and our country, it only adds to the fray. I always struggle with the Isaiah text that says that the descendent of David will come into the world and be the Prince of Peace and that his authority will grow and there will be endless peace and justice for the oppressed. Well, I struggle because Jesus has come but I do not always see his kingdom of life, peace and justice growing; And I do not see Jesus claiming an ever increasing authority in the world. There are movements of justice, strides toward freedom, periods when the resources of the world are more fairly distributed and moments when the love he preached about is so palpable that my eyes tear up and my heart swells. But like Christmas Eve in church, there is quite a mixture of good and evil, justice and injustice, love and hate in this world.

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Then I read the story again and see that our reality is no different from when Jesus was born in the manger. There was family tension and shame associated with Christ's birth. They were poor and Mary's Magnificat rails eloquently about the rich being brought low and the lowly being lifted up. The wise men bring gifts and shepherds hear the angels sing of glory but Herod seeks his death and young mothers weep desperate tears of anguish. The multitude flock to Jesus and his words but the religious authorities and well positioned patrons detest his challenge and put him down. There is death....and life anew.

As we enter this sacred and well beaten season, I wonder if it might be so because of the mixture, for it is true to life. We all bring joys and anguish with us wherever we journey. We all celebrate life and mourn those we miss every day. In one moment, we can see glory and experience the ecstasies of life and the next journey through the valley of the shadow of death.

Perhaps the allure of the season is that in the midst of such drudgery and degradation, we are able to rise above and be joyful, hopeful and loving. Despite being self-centered, we can put other people first as we find the right gifts and donate to folks in need of a hand up. We be anxious about all sorts of various goings on in our world but there comes a time to be at peace and enjoy this life that God has given us so freely. The Good News is that humanity has always been able to overcome

obstacles and make it to a better day. Every generation decries the next not taking care of the business of the world and yet here we are trying to figure out how to move forward. The message of the Christ Child is that God empowers, inspires and guides us forward bit by bit, once child at a time, one step forward at a time.

Come, join me this holiday season as we all pledge to follow that star...

I am yours in Christ,
Rev. Mark

Associate Pastor News

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel. That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Child of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel. O Come, O Come, Emmanuel is one of my favorite Advent hymns. Emmanuel means God with us. In times of despair before Jesus was born, the people found comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah promising for Emmanuel, God with us, to walk among the people. They waited for someone who would walk among them and remove the evil that plagued the land of Israel, the occupying force of the Roman Empire. Jesus didn't destroy the occupying force and violence still plagues the world. Sometimes we do not receive exactly what we had hoped for instead we received the presence of God manifested in Jesus. We spend Advent waiting for Jesus to be born. This year we hear the story leading to his birth according to the Gospel of

Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew focuses on Joseph and the visions he had with angels. Joseph is a young man. He is engaged to Mary. He learns that she is pregnant. He's about to end his engagement with her when an angel visited him in a dream telling him that Mary's pregnancy is from the Holy Spirit and he will be known as Emmanuel, God with us. God walked among the poor, the hopeless, the oppressed, those who were trying to find meaning in their lives, and more. God the Son walked among us. He taught us his ways and he showed us his power to heal through his miracles. He experienced the pain and joy human beings feel. He celebrated at a wedding, broke bread and fishes with thousands, cried over Jerusalem and its people, and was brutalized. We spend Advent waiting for God's presence by singing songs like O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, Keep Awake, Be Always Ready, and Comfort, Comfort O My People. I invite you to spend Advent as if we lived in world where Jesus is not yet born and allow for the waiting, the expectation of his birth to grow week after week. Then when Christmas arrives, we sing with joy for the birth of Jesus, the return of God's presence.

Josh Simon
Associate Pastor

Junior and High School Youth Group will be dedicated to Christmas Pageant rehearsal. Please, see pages 5 & 9 for more details.

Laurie’s Lens



As I write this article I am pulling together items for our Advent Decorating Event that will happen this Sunday, November 24th, sponsored by CE and the Deacons. It’s a time to gather with old friends and new friends and make nativity set pieces (for your family or as a gift) and decorate the Sanctuary for the seasons of Advent and Christmas. This year Advent, the beginning of a new year on the church calendar, starts on December 1st. There are four Sundays in Advent that lead us Christmas and our Advent wreath that we light during worship will help us count down the Sundays, but also remind us that God gave us the gift of hope, peace, joy and love.

With each New Year comes change and this year will be no different. It will start with our Spiritual Friend program on the first Sundays which has been for our PreK and Kindergarten children as we know their little bodies have a hard time sitting still in worship for the full hour. This program is designed to build relationships across the generations through a story and activity. We will be opening up to those up through 2nd grade starting on December 1st so that if your child needs a few minutes to move around a bit they too can feel welcome to join in the program. I would like to thank parents for their feedback on this program and add that this program is optional. We do not want to discourage any of our children who would like to stay in

worship. All are welcome in this place. Our Spiritual Friends program is around 20 minutes in length and all will return to worship for communion.

Our youth program shifts gears slightly with pageant rehearsals beginning on November 24th for all our youth 5th – 12th grade (see our youth ministry section for more information). This is one week early this year since Thanksgiving is late on the calendar. It seems very different to start rehearsals before Thanksgiving, however it reminds me of all the many things we have to be thankful for...friends, family, youth, children, love, hope and so many blessings. This gives us are normal three rehearsals before Pageant Sunday which is on December 15th this year (not counting our dress rehearsal on Saturday the 14th). We are bringing back a pageant from a few years ago with some new energy and we know you will enjoy it. Children in fourth grade on down to PreK will have their rehearsal on Sunday, December 8th following our second service from 11:30am to noon. At this time they will hear the parts that are available for them. We also look forward to hearing our Cherubs and Joyful Noise music groups sing on Pageant Sunday. We can use a few more adult helpers for rehearsals and on this special Sunday. Please be in touch and let me know which days’ work for you.

December 1st is also the deadline that Pastor Josh and I have set up for all youth (ages 12 to 20) to sign up who are

interested in going on the UCC National Youth Event Trip to Purdue University, July 20-26, 2020. We’d love to take a bunch of youth with us! We need a solid five to make this trip happen. Please be in touch with us if you are thinking at all about going or have questions.

May you all have a wonderful Thanksgiving...counting your blessings and thanking your God for all that you have. Let us all look forward to another new year in the church with the start of this Advent season. Let our spirit be open to new things, be engaging and connect with others around us, stay open to new possibilities, and be a witness to the good, hopeful, positive things that our awesome God of love, light and warmth has waiting for us.

Hope, Peace, Joy & Love,
Laurie Chipman
Christian Education Director

**Our Home, Our Future,
Our Time...**
Capital Campaign Update

Advent is a time of waiting and preparation for the coming of Jesus, a time to make room in our hearts for Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. This year, as we enter the season of Advent, we are also awaiting and preparing for several wonderful Capital Campaign projects!

Sanctuary Restoration Project
The *Sanctuary Restoration Project* will begin right after Christmas! Starting on December

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29, worship services will be held in Fellowship Hall. The entire plaster ceiling must be totally removed and replaced. The ceiling will be done first and then it must cure for several weeks, during which time the walls will be patched. Once that is done, painting can begin! The entire project should take about 2 months, assuming no major hiccups.

Our goal is to be back in the sanctuary **BEFORE PALM SUNDAY**, if not before. Our staff and several committees are working on plans to make this temporary move as seamless and comfortable as possible. We ask for prayers that we move through this time of transition and mess with patience, kindness, grace and humor, and that this experience might draw us closer together as one body of Christ. This is a once-every-hundred year's type of project! We cannot wait to share this beautiful transformation with everyone during Holy Week 2020.

Sanctuary Windows

We eagerly await the return of our historic windows/shutters in the sanctuary. We **HOPE** they will be back by the end of November.

Security Grant / Outdoor Lighting

We got the grant! We received a federal grant of \$47,809 for improving security and safety at our church. This grant award includes \$10,000 for new parking lot lights! Also included are funds to add locks to all of our

classroom doors and a new "controlled access system" (keyless locks, video cameras at our two main entrances). Now we are just waiting on paperwork. :) Once we have it, we will install the new lighting in the parking lot! The other projects will take a bit longer to implement, so stay tuned for details. In the meantime, we are hoping to have lights for the steeple, church sign and thrift shop sign re-installed soon.

Pledge Payment Reminder

Your continued pledge payments are vital to our efforts! As we continue to work on major projects, we are drawing down our available cash balance. While we have not needed a bridge loan yet, we will likely need one to do the Sanctuary Restoration.

BYLAWS UPDATES

The congregation will vote on proposed updates to our existing Bylaws at the Annual Meeting in **January 2020**. Copies of the Bylaws, with these updates included and highlighted, will be available in Church in December. Meeting(s) will be scheduled to allow members to ask any questions they have about the changes and a summary sheet describing some of the more significant ones will be provided. Meeting dates will be shared via announcements at Church and in the bulletin.

Carl Wermer
Chair, Bylaw Committee

Early pledge payments are always welcome and appreciated. Your pledge balance for 2019 can be found on your fall pledge statement. If you have questions about your pledge status, please contact Dan Petherbridge, Campaign Treasurer.

New "SPRUCE UP" Team at FCCEJ

FCCEJ created a new "Spruce Up Team" to help take care of our shared spaces so that they stay organized and look their best. We have many spaces that everyone uses, but no one group is responsible for maintaining hallways, the Marvin Lounge, the foyer, the Kitchen, Fellowship Hall, to name a few. The team's goal is collaborate across all the committees to make **OUR HOME** as welcoming, organized and beautiful as possible.



When Laurie visited other churches last winter, she discovered that some of them have "spruce up" teams to notice when things are getting a little messy, run down or broken, as well as to recommend small improvements – a different trash can here, a new piece of artwork there... We thought we could give this a try here at FCCEJ!

The Spruce Up Team will coordinate and recruit volunteers to do de-cluttering projects, special cleaning projects, small painting projects and other small cosmetic improvements throughout the church. The team will be a part of Trustees, and the

team will reach out to various stakeholders in the church to make sure efforts are coordinated.

Perhaps you have already noticed some “tidy up” and “spruce up” projects that have already taken place – new paint in the hallways on the second and third floor, new paint in the foyer, a major clean-out of the kitchen, and a leaning/reorganization in the Marvin Lounge Library. Special thanks to the Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop for purchasing the new microwave for in the kitchen!

Current members of the Spruce Up Team are Jim Glatz, Kaki McGeary and Laurie Chipman. We are looking for 1-2 more people to join the team. The time commitment is small. If you are interested, please let one of us know and we would love to connect with you.

Kaki McGeary & Dave Johnson
*Capital Campaign Committee
Co-Chairs*

Youth Ministry

All our First Church Youth Programs are Parent Supported!

Junior Youth Calendar

5th - 8th graders

Faith & Mission Focus with Fellowship/Games

Meal donations and snacks for youth times are appreciated!

shorturl.at/tBEPZ

Mark your calendars & join the FUN!

Pageant Rehearsal Schedule (for JY & HS Youth)

December 1st ~ 5 to 7pm

Sunday morning ~ Help

Greet/Usher/Read

Scripture during 10:15am worship

8th ~ 11:30 to 2pm

Saturday, 14th ~ 3pm to 6pm

15th ~ Pageant Sunday – all arrive at 7:30am

Have a wonderful holiday with family & friends.

January 5th ~ JY time ~

11:30am to 1:30pm

Sunday morning ~ Help

Greet/Usher/Read

Scripture during 10:15am worship

January 17th ~ JY

Overnight ~ 6pm to 9am

Pageant Rehearsal Helpers

If you enjoy the pageant here at First our youth could use your help. Starting on November 24th from 5-7pm (see schedule in youth section) we need adult helpers to assist with learning lines, collecting props, organizing costumes and helping set up scenery. Please speak with Pastor Josh or Laurie. Thank you!

UCC NYE trip to Purdue University

July 20-26, 2020

Full cost is \$650 per person.

Youth pay \$250.

Fundraiser coming in 2020.

More information can be found

on the web link below. It will be a great trip that will include a bus ride, service projects, worship, music and much more! Sign up by December 1st with Pastor Josh or Laurie.

<http://www.uccpages.org/nye2020/>

Stay active and lend a helping hand!

Help a neighbor or a friend

If you earn an allowance?

Have a job? Practice dividing your money 3 ways ~

Save (in a bank) ~ Give to the

church/offering ~ You

(spend/save/give to an

organization)

Find ways and places to

connect with your God &

have spiritual time ~ a walk

in the woods, quiet time

without an electronic device

in your hands and maybe

praying in color, etc.

@ the Lake UCC Camp at Rock Point

For those going into 5th – 8th grade in the fall of 2020

Sunday, July 26 at 2pm to

Friday, July 31st at 4pm.

Recruiting now for counselors,

lifeguards, CIT’s and a nurse.

Faith Formation

Peer Group Leaders

Preschool ~ Paula Sargent, Makaylah Moos, Kaki & Caitlin McGeary, Marlene & Courtney Frank

Kindergarten ~ Jenny Bourn & Laura Marthaler

First & Second Grade ~ Sue Conti & Lisa Clark

Third & Fourth Grade ~ Barb Smith & Allison VanSteensburg

Fifth ~Eighth Grade ~ Pastor Josh & Laurie

Faith Formation Calendar

PreK – 8th grade

December 1st ~ (on 1st Sundays of the month) Intergenerational Worship

PreK – 2nd grade who are looking for more movement can join the Spiritual Friends for a story time and activity. All will return for communion.

8th ~ Peer Group Time

15th ~ Pageant Sunday at both worship services

22nd ~ Intergenerational Worship – Carol sing

29th ~ Intergenerational Worship in Fellowship Hall

January 5th ~ (1st Sundays): Intergenerational Worship & Spiritual Friends

Faith Formation Music Time

Cherubs ~ Preschool-2nd grade

Joyful Noise ~ 3rd-8th grade

Music time takes place on peer group Sundays. Children and youth then move to peer groups until 11:30am. On these days we encourage parents to move from worship to coffee hour and then up to collect the children. All PreK through 2nd grade need to be signed out by an authorized person. Older children will be excused at 11:30am. Parents can update their list of authorized persons by emailing Laurie.

Our Nursery

Sunday morning Nursery hours are 8:15am to 11:30am

Kelsey Carpenter, our Nursery staff worker, will help you and your little one get settled into our Nursery.

Feel free to stop by on your way up to worship. Parents/guardians should feel comfortable staying with their little one or return to worship. Services can be heard from the Nursery room by way of a speaker. You can also 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. Please help us hold to our Safe Conduct Guidelines of a ratio of 2 infants (under 2 years) to 1 adult and volunteer to stay in the Nursery if needed. Thank you for your cooperation.

HS Juniors & Seniors who are interested can also be a helper to the Nursery staff worker. Contact Laurie for an interview and you can be our paid second hands in the Nursery.

Acolytes

Every Sunday we carry in the light of Christ and light the worship candles. Then during our sung benediction we carry out the light of Christ to remind us all that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are with us everywhere we go, not just here at church. Ushers are asked to help and assist the acolytes by lighting the taper, then walking with them if they are new to acolyting or would

like a partner. Older children or youth are also encourage to be acolytes. Families who are ushering or greeting can acolyte. Please check the signup sheet on the bulletin board down it the hallway on your way up to worship to see if someone has already signed up. Thank you.

Ring the Bell

All children and their families are welcome to ring the church bell 15 minutes before each worship service. Signup sheet is located on the bulletin board before you walk up the steps to worship (beside the Acolyte signup). Please check this first to see if someone has already signed up to ring the bell. Instructions are at the top of the sheet as to which rope to pull and how many times to ring the bell. It's fun to ring the church bell ring!

Pageant Rehearsal for all Ages!

Sunday, December 8th at 11:30am
Preschool – 4th grade are encouraged to attend the first 20-30 minutes of pageant rehearsal and sign up to be an angel, shepherd, or to take a part and follow the youth and learn their part. Rehearsal continues for youth until 2pm.

December 16th ~ Christmas Pageant Sunday during both our worship services. Youth arrive at 7:30am.

2019 Faith Formation Offering

Spectrum Youth & Family Services

Current Total: **\$538.82** (as of 11/17)

Remember just a \$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? PLEASE 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.

Missions

Dismas House

“Your Good Deed Will be Much Appreciated”

[Republished from the November 2019 SPIRIT@FIRST Issue]

What is Dismas House? 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 folks who attend our Church have been preparing dinner for the residents and staff of the Dismas House in Winooski. One of us prepares an entrée, another a salad, and a third a dessert. The three of us usually stay to enjoy the meal with the Dismas House residents and staff. They are friendly and appreciative of our help. By participating in the program, we help to lessen the feelings of estrangement that burden folks who have served prison terms.

Want to volunteer? If you have never been to Dismas House and would like to volunteer, at least one person from the Church who has already been to Dismas House will be going there on the Wednesday you sign up for. There is a sign-up sheet that’s on the bulletin board in the hall leading to the Church’s social hall.

How many? Attending the meal are typically ten residents, two paid staff members (a Director and Associate Director who work there during weekdays), and the

three of us from the Church who have prepared the food.

Questions? Please contact Ed Steele, the current facilitator for the Dismas House Mission.

His contact information is: (802) 871-5897 or edwardmsteele@msn.com

The Giving Tree

The Giving Tree will be setup in the Narthex

complete with tags. This year, for those folks who enjoy getting all the gifts for one child, there will be 15 sets of tags bundled together with red ribbons. Please, as you take a tag or tags, remember to sign the sheet available by the tree to indicate which tag(s) you have taken. Thank you so much for all that you do to make Christmas a merry one for these kids.



Hours: Tuesdays & Wednesdays 10am-3pm; Thursdays 4pm-8pm. and 1st & 3rd Saturday, 9am-1pm.

Donations: We need donations for winter coats, winter boots, hats, scarfs & sweaters for both men and women.

Volunteers: Needed now for Thursday shifts. The shifts are 4pm to 6pm and 6pm to 8pm. Please, contact Elaine Raymond @ 879-7350 or ebraymond@gmail.com

Thanks again for such a successful day,

Cindy Cheney



Fellowship & Learning

First Church aims to pique your interest in God & community with these programs:

Yoga @ First

Mondays, 5:30pm-6:45pm

Jonah Moos 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!

The Searchers Invite Dr.

Kathy Fox to Speak

Wednesday Dec. 11, 2019

The Wednesday Night searchers will be hosting Dr. Kathy Fox from UVM to speak about why our society should be strongly encouraging our prison population to get a college education. Dr. Fox is from the Sociology Department of UVM and has spoken extensively on the subject and clearly spells out how spending money educating prisoners saves money in the long run and creates a stronger society. Dr. Fox also speaks about how educating our prisoners fulfills a spiritual role of their lives. Her presentation and Q&A has been very well received. We will be meeting on Wednesday Dec 11th from 7-8:30 p.m. The public is invited so feel free to invite a friend.

JOY (Just Older Youth)

Thursday, December 5th @ Noon

If you are 55+ please consider joining this active church group. JOY meets at noon on the first Thursday of the month. We strive to present programs that foster learning, fun, or service. Our very own Reverend Mark Mendes will

be joining us. Share your thoughts and bring those questions you've been eager to ask. Don't forget your lunch.

Bridge Holiday Party!

Friday, December 20th @ 1:30pm

Once a month several folk find the Marvin Lounge and play Bridge. The highlight is trying to win the pastor's jam. One person suggested that maybe the person with the lowest score be awarded the jam. Of course cookies, M&M's and coffee always make the snack table. The players that come have heard that others are interested, but don't know how to play. Some of our players are willing to teach others as well as mentor / partner with the less experienced players. All players are welcome and table talk is permitted!

Another idea is if you enjoy comradery and might enjoy playing cards there are other card games that are easier to learn / master (e.g.: 500, cribbage, euchre, gin, pinochle, whist, hearts). So some folks could be playing and or learning bridge while others play and or learn another game. The bottom line is the group would love to add to our numbers and maybe offer this opportunity to learn some good games.

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

3rd Saturday of each month @

9:30am. Next meeting: Saturday,

December 21st

All women of the church are invited to be a part of this vibrant group. Our programs will address personal growth, community outreach and having fun.

Please consider joining us in the Marvin Lounge. Our very own Elaine Helmstutler will be our Artist in Residence. In her words, "Think you can't draw? You're wrong! Come to WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY to learn the basics of seeing and drawing."

Essex Eats Out

Friday, December 6th @ 5:30pm

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

Noontime Book Group

(3rd Monday of each Month)

Monday, December 16th @

11:30am

In December, we will meet at Joanne Irwin's house. As has become our tradition we will each choose a short Christmas story to share with the group. It could be an old favorite, a children's story or a new one that you've just found this year. There are many available online if you Google "Holiday Short Stories." We will share a pot luck lunch. Please let Joanne know what you would like to bring so we don't end up with a dozen desserts and no main course!



Save the D@tes!

This is a list of upcoming events at our church and wider faith community:

Communion on December 1st



1st Service: Elements Passed out
2nd Service: People come forward

Saturday Sanctuary

Saturday, December 7th @ 4:30pm

Our alternative Saturday afternoon worship service continues on December 7th. We gather in Fellowship Hall at 4:30 and discuss the scripture and figure out how it applies to our lives. We pray for each other and light candles for those we mention. Then we have a time of fellowship and or communion with each other as we break bread AND enjoy some goodies to eat. We would love to have you come join us.

1st Annual Holiday Pet Remembrance Service

Sunday, December 8th @ 4pm

Our animal friends are integral members of our families and teach us about love, loyalty and compassion. They ease our anxieties, draw us into loving relationships and are always there for us when we need a soothing purr or exuberant home welcome. John Workman at A.W Rich Funeral Home approached the church last month to see if we would like to co-sponsor a Pet Remembrance Service and we wholeheartedly agreed. So on Sunday December 8th at 4:00 p.m. we will gather to remember our pets who have died. There will be music, scripture a brief message and a reception. John has also created a way to receive a Christmas Ornament with your pet's picture in it to bring home; simply send him a picture via the computer to service@awrfh.com and there will be an ornament for you to retrieve at the service.

Insight into Our Country's Prison Problem

Wednesday, December 11th @ 7pm

As recently as March 2015, the United States, with only 5% of the world's population, had 25% of the world's prison population. Gain insight into ways to solve the problem when Professor of Sociology and Associate Dean of Students at the University of Vermont Dr. Katherine Fox will give a richly illustrated program entitled "Why Educate Prisoners? And Why the Liberal Arts?" The program will last about one hour, including time to ask questions and get answers. All are welcome.

Program time and date:

The program will take place in our church's Marvin Lounge.

Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 15th @ Both Services

This time honored classic is a chance to hear the birth of Jesus from the perspective of our children. They get dressed up and dramatize the story at the heart of our faith. Over the generations, it is a joy to remember the various interpretations and presentations from our kids. There is always plenty of joy as we laugh, cry and remember that God came to us in the form of a child. This is a great Sunday to bring a friend and know that there are plenty of folks who live all around you that are looking for a place to go and celebrate the season.

A Healing Service

Sunday, December 15th @ 7pm

The Christmas season often brings a mixture of profound joy and a deep sense of grief: joy at the wonder in our youngster's eyes and sadness that those we dearly love who are far away or no longer with us. Emotions are more poignant all around with struggles in relationships, addictions, depression and financial worries taking on even more meaning. Our church would like to offer you a quiet hour where you can focus your attention on our need for hope and healing. The service will start at 7:00 p.m. and everyone is welcome.

Carols & Bells

Sunday, December 22nd

One Service @ 10am

If getting out on Christmas Eve is difficult due to driving conditions or family plans, then be sure to come to the Service on Dec. 22nd where we will sing many of the great old carols, and hear a number of Currier bell Choir anthems and of course listen to the Christmas story once again. There will only be one service at 10 a.m. on Dec 22nd, so come and enjoy the Carols and Bells.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

Tuesday, December 24th

5:00 p.m. Family Centered Service w/ Biblical Characters Telling the Story
 9:00 p.m. A Service of Lessons and Carols and Lots of Music
 11:00 p.m. A Quieter Service with Communion

Worship in Fellowship Hall

Sunday, December 29th

The day after Christmas the workers putting up the scaffolding in the sanctuary for the plasterer will begin. Therefore, we will be worshipping in Fellowship Hall starting on December 29th and we will continue to have two services until they complete their work, sometime before Easter we hope and pray. How glorious it will be to worship in a newly refurbished sanctuary on that glorious day.

6th Annual Jamaica Cabin Fever Calcutta

Early Bird

Tickets on Sale

December 21st



The Jamaica Committee is pleased to announce the 6th annual Cabin Fever Calcutta to be held at the Catamount Country Club in Williston on Saturday, March 7, 2020. This is a fun night out with lots of great prizes in addition to the grand prize of \$1000! Tickets cost

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\$125 each and include dinner for two and the chance to win the grand prize of \$1000 and other prizes awarded throughout the evening.

Early Bird ticket sales will begin in December! All tickets purchased before January 15, 2020 will be entered into the Early Bird drawing for a \$100 cash prize, drawn at the Calcutta. If you purchased a ball last year, you will receive a letter in the mail in early December with a form to purchase tickets. Anyone interested in purchasing an Early Bird ticket can also contact Sharon Dettenrieder at dettenriedes@hartwick.edu or 802-871-5308 OR see us at the table in the Fellowship Hall on Sundays beginning December 8.

FCCEJ Confirmation Class

Thursdays @ 7:30-9pm, Marvin Lounge

Confirmation is an intentional time in a person's life, usually a young person, to learn more about Christianity, the Bible, faith, etc. During this time, they start to intentionally form what they believe and how they want to engage society. The confirmands attend other faith tradition's worship services, participate in community service projects, and participate in some capacity at church whether if it's through helping with faith formation, reading in worship, etc. It ends with confirmation Sunday when confirmands who want to join the church publicly do so. Anyone in 8th grade or above is welcome to join the Confirmation class. It is a one-year program. Confirmation class will take place most Thursdays, 7:30-9pm, between now and May 31st on Confirmation Sunday.

Heavenly Food Pantry



The Food Pantry is open to residents of Essex Junction, Essex Town, and Westford. Clients will need an ID for each member of the household and a utility bill to prove their residence. Clients may only visit the Pantry once per calendar month.

Dates & Hours

2nd Monday (December 9th)
@ 5:30pm-7:30pm
3rd Thursday (December 19th)
@ 2pm-6pm
**** NOT on 4th Thursday due to Christmas holiday ****

Volunteers Needed!

We're looking for people to help on Pantry days. But, we also need volunteers on other days to assist with a myriad of tasks. Short commitments are OK. Enthusiasm and a fun-loving attitude is desired. We'd love to welcome you into our Missions community. Please, contact Anita Guild (anitaguild@gmail.com) for more details.

December Birthdays!	
LARRABEE POMAINVILLE, Judy	12/04
OLUFSEN, Douglas	12/04
GUILD, Anita	12/05
BARTLETT, Irving	12/06
IRWIN, Joanne	12/06
HELMSTUTLER, Tom	12/07
KINAMAN, Russ	12/08
PLOOF, Cohen	12/10
PORATTI, Alex	12/10
WINSLOW, Mary	12/10
FIRKEY, Pete	12/11
FRANK, Tom	12/12
FIELD, Kathryn	12/13
HOLLAND, Deb	12/14
PARKER, Emma	12/14
GRENON, Frank	12/15
HOFFMAN, Brian	12/15
SCHMALZ, Zachary	12/15
SHEARER, Munroe	12/16
BESSETT-MAUGER, Wyatt	12/18
JOHN, Monica	12/19
PARKER, Linda Lou	12/20
DEWEY, David	12/21
EHLER-VOCK, Donna	12/22
STEIN, Terry	12/25
GILLIAM, Ben	12/27
WATT, Deb	12/28
ADAMS, Bill	12/29
DEWEY, Christine	12/29
PALMER, Elijah	12/29
TALLMAN, Kurt	12/30
ABAKAH, Angela	12/31
GOEDKEN, Carley	12/31
PORATTI, Samantha	12/31

REQUEST TO CHURCHES



The Disaster Response Committee of the Vermont Conference was created to be a part of the recovery process following disasters. A significant role for local churches is that of creating lists of volunteers from among members. The volunteers would be called upon to provide clean up to homes and land; to make meals for families without electricity. Perhaps also, to babysit children while parents deal with re-organizing their lives and homes.

Recently, following the torrential rain and high winds, a number of homes in Franklin and Lamoille County were damaged and/or basements flooded. The Williston UCC basement was also flooded. The response by the State Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) has been to seek assistance from the Religious Community. It has been slow in coming because we do not have that volunteer base in place. Any who would like to be on a volunteer list are welcome. Please send Rick Cochran, the coordinator an e-mail at vtvoadpresident@gmail.com or to vtcarrs@gmail.com. Or call Adrienne at 391-7777

Meanwhile, one of our association churches is in need. Can you folks help? Paul Eyer needs us.

We Committee members, Barbara Purinton, Peter Plagge and myself are happy to assist churches in creating the lists and also in recruiting new members for our committee.

We are also developing a working relationship with the Episcopal Diocese Disaster Response Committee.

Adrienne Carr
802 391 7777
802 863 6184

MINISTRY DIRECTORY

Church Staff

Senior Pastor: *Rev. Mark Mendes* [mmendes@fccej.org]
Associate Pastor: *Rev. Josh Simon* [jsimon@fccej.org]
Music Director: *Carol Spradling* [cspradling@fccej.org]
Christian Education Director: *Laurie Chipman* [lchipman@fccej.org]
Church Administrator: *Doug Ovitt* [welcome@fccej.org]

Music Ministry

Cherub Music: *Jenny Bourn* [jennybourn4@gmail.com]
& *Laura Marthaler* [Laura.marthaler@gmail.com]
Currier Bell Choir Director: *Carolyn Harris* [899-6759]
Finally @ First Director: *Rick Dooley* [rickdooley5@gmail.com]
Joyful Noise: *Jessica Moos* [jessicamoosvermont@gmail.com]
Men At First Director: *Bill Bickford, Jr.* [bill.bickford@aol.com]
Sanctuary Choir/Heavenly Harmony Director: *Carol Spradling*
[cspradling@fccej.org]

Committee / Church Officer Contacts

President, Chair Human Resources Committee: *Carl Wermer* [879-7650]
Vice President, Chair Finance & Pastoral Relations: *Maureen Evans* [879-7517]
Treasurer & Historian: *Ann Gray* [878-4088]
Asst. Treasurer: *Dan Petherbridge* [879-0261]
Financial Secretary: *Pat Seaver* [879-4445]
Clerk: *Alison Wermer* [879-7650]
Christian Education: *Jenny Bourn* [802-309-7441]
Communications: *Andrea Sharp* [879-0580] or *Judy McCullen* [878-9794]
Deacons: *Betsy Weischedel* [922-2094], *Peter Schmalz* [202-297-3625]
Hospitality: *Jim Glatz* [503-5076]
Missions: *Joanne Irwin* [878-2528], *Ed Steele* [871-5897]
Music: *Denise Keating* [345-8900]
Nominating: *Barb Smith* [878-6866]
Stewardship: *Jessica Moos* [399-8068]
Trustees: *Kevin Meilleur* [238-4041]
Ushering: *Jessica Moos* [399-8068]

Recognized Groups at First Church

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop [879-6552] *Sue Wood* suewood@myfairpoint.net
Heavenly Food Pantry Contact: *Valerie Gabert* [879-0109]
Called To Care Contact: *Beth Volker* [238-2713]
Nepali Christian Community Contact: *Dan Raut* [310-4371]
Craft Fest Committee Contact: *Linda Bogardus* [lbogardus@myfairpoint.net]

December 2019

FCCEJ Monthly Calendar

December 2019							January 2020						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	5	6	7	1	2	3	4
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30	31	

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Dec 1 8:30am Worship Service 10:15am Worship Service 11:30am Music Committee (Choir) 12:00pm Sanctuary Choir, 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 1:30pm Heavenly Harmony, 5:00pm Pageant Rehearsal 6:00pm Cub Scout Leader Meeting	2 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 1:30pm Food Pantry Stocking 5:30pm Yoga @ First (2nd Floor) 5:30pm Group Victory (Marvin) 5:45pm Girl Scouts (3rd Floor) 6:30pm Joe's Big Band (Fellowship) 6:30pm Thrift Shop Meeting 7:00pm BSA Troop 624 (Third)	3 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Finance Committee (Marvin Lounge) 7:00pm Church Council (Marvin Lounge)	4 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:00pm FCCEJ Staff Meeting (Marvin Lounge) 5:30pm Finally@First (Fellowship) 6:00pm BSA PLC (Third Floor) 6:30pm Handbell Choir (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Boy Scouts (Fellowship)	5 8:30am Essex Art League 12:00pm JOY (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 3:00pm Easterseals (Third Floor) 6:00pm Music@First (Sanctuary) 6:00pm Cub Scouts Pack 630 7:30pm Confirmation (Marvin) 8:15pm Music @ First (Fellowship)	6 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Essex Eats Out (Prep Time) (Kitchen & FH) 5:30pm Essex Eats Out Community Dinner (Fellowship Hall & Kitchen)	7 9:00am Thrift Store Open 9:00am Nepali Community Worship (Sanctuary & Fellowship Hall) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 4:30pm Worship Service (Sanctuary)
8 12:30am Sanctuary Choir, 8:30am Worship Service 10:15am Worship Service 12:00pm Sanctuary Choir, 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 1:30pm Heavenly Harmony, 5:00pm Pageant Rehearsal 6:00pm Venture Crew (Marvin)	9 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Food Pantry Stocking 4:00pm Food Pantry (FH & Fellowship) 5:30pm Food Pantry (Fellowship) 5:30pm Yoga @ First (2nd Floor) 5:30pm Group Victory (Marvin) 7:00pm BSA Troop 624 (Third)	10 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:00pm Deacons (Marvin Lounge)	11 11:00am Champlain Clergy Luncheon (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 3:30pm Heavenly Food Pantry 5:30pm Finally@First (Fellowship) 6:30pm Handbell Choir (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Boy Scouts (Fellowship)	12 8:00am Jamaica Bound Calcutta 9:00am Jamaica Leadership Team 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 3:00pm Easterseals (Third Floor) 6:00pm Music@First (Sanctuary) 6:30pm Lion Den #10 (Third Floor) 7:30pm Confirmation (Marvin) 8:15pm Music @ First (Fellowship)	13 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 6:30pm Grange (Fellowship Hall)	14 9:00am Nepali Community Worship (Sanctuary & Fellowship Hall) 11:00am Patty Bergeron (Sanctuary) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 3:00pm Pageant Rehearsal 6:00pm Patty Bergeron (Sanctuary)
15 8:30am Pageant! (Sanctuary) 8:30am Worship Service 10:15am Pageant! (Sanctuary) 10:15am Worship Service 12:00pm Sanctuary Choir, 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 1:30pm Heavenly Harmony, 7:00pm Healing Service (Sanctuary)	16 11:30am Noontime Book Group 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 1:30pm Food Pantry Stocking 5:30pm Yoga @ First (2nd Floor) 5:30pm Group Victory (Marvin) 5:45pm Girl Scouts (3rd Floor) 6:30pm Joe's Big Band (Fellowship) 6:30pm Scouting Alumni and	17 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:00pm Missions Committee (Marvin Lounge)	18 8:00am Food Shelf Delivery (Fellowship Hall) 9:00am Giving Tree, Disbursement 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 1:00pm FCCEJ Staff Meeting (3rd Floor) 5:30pm Finally@First (Fellowship) 6:30pm Handbell Choir (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Boy Scouts (Fellowship)	19 8:30am Food Pantry (Fellowship) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Marvin) 3:00pm Easterseals (Third Floor) 6:00pm Music@First (Sanctuary) 6:30pm Tiger Den #9 (Third Floor) 7:30pm Confirmation (Marvin) 8:15pm Music @ First (Fellowship) 8:30pm Men @ First (Fellowship)	20 9:00am Hiawatha School, Food Donation Dropoffs (Fellowship) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Bridge Club (Marvin Lounge) 4:00pm Burlington Amateur Radio Club (Fellowship Hall)	21 9:00am Nepali Community Worship (Sanctuary & Fellowship Hall) 9:30am Women's Spirituality (Marvin Lounge) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)
22 10:00am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 11:30am Caroling! 11:30am Craft Fest Planning (Marvin Lounge) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 6:00pm Venture Crew (Marvin)	23 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Food Pantry Stocking (Fellowship Hall & Gym) 5:30pm Yoga @ First (2nd Floor Programming Room) 5:30pm Group Victory (Marvin) 7:00pm BSA Troop 624 (Third)	24 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 5:00pm Christmas Eve Service 7:00pm Stewardship (Fellowship) 7:00pm Trustees (Marvin Lounge) 9:00pm Christmas Eve Service 11:00pm Christmas Eve Service	25 HOLIDAY -- FCCEJ Offices Closed 12:00am Christmas Eve Service 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 2:00pm Crafty Time Out (Marvin) 5:30pm Finally@First (Fellowship) 6:30pm Handbell Choir (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Boy Scouts (Fellowship)	26 12:00pm Brown Bag (Marvin Lounge) 3:00pm Easterseals (Third Floor) 6:00pm Music@First (Sanctuary) 7:30pm Confirmation (Marvin Lounge) 8:15pm Music @ First (Fellowship) 8:30pm Men @ First (Fellowship)	27 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)	28 9:00am Nepali Community Worship (Sanctuary & Fellowship Hall) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)
29 8:30am Worship Service (Fellowship Hall) 10:15am Worship Service (Fellowship Hall) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)	30 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Food Pantry Stocking (Fellowship Hall & Gym) 5:30pm Yoga @ First (2nd Floor) 5:30pm Group Victory (Marvin) 6:30pm Joe's Big Band (Fellowship) 7:00pm BSA Troop 624 (Third)	31 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)	Jan 1, 20 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Finally@First (Fellowship Hall) 6:00pm BSA PLC (Third Floor) 6:30pm Handbells Choir Rehearsal (Gymnasium) 7:00pm Boy Scouts (Fellowship)	2 8:30am Essex Art League 12:00pm JOY (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 3:00pm Easterseals (Third Floor) 6:00pm Music@First (Fellowship) 6:00pm Cub Scouts (Gymnasium) 7:30pm Confirmation (Marvin) 8:15pm Music @ First (Fellowship)	3 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Essex Eats Out (Prep Time) (Kitchen & FH) 5:30pm Essex Eats Out Community Dinner (Fellowship Hall & Kitchen)	4 9:00am Thrift Store Open 9:00am Nepali Community Worship (Fellowship Hall) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 4:30pm Worship Service (Fellowship Hall)

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