

MARCH 2020

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First Congregational Church
1 Church Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452
www.fccej.org



SPIRIT@FIRST

monthly newsletter

YOUR PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

"The Wildest Storm"
by Mary Oliver

Yesterday the wildest storm
I ever witnessed flew past
West to east, a shaggy
Howling sky-beast

Flinging hail even as lightning
Printed out its sizzling
Unreadable language
Followed by truly terrible
laughter.

But, no. Maybe it wasn't
laughter
But a reminder we need-----
Seemingly something to do with
power.

What could it be?
What could it be?
What do you think it could be?

I stumbled upon this poem by Mary Oliver recently and thought of our Lenten journey. Throughout most of the year, I try to preach a gospel message where I reassure folks that God loves them and wants to be in relationship to them: as a companion, as a follower of ethical behaviors, as a warrior for justice and a person dedicated to bringing peace into an aching world. Throughout the sermons, I seek to empower people to claim the power of God for their lives so that self-actualization and

meaning might prevail. The focus seems to be on us, our growth, empowerment, maturation and understanding.

Lent is a time when we should shift the focus away from ourselves and toward the Divine. God provided order out of chaos, ways of living that lead to peace, hope in the midst of darkness, justice as a way forward, life in the midst of death and relationship to mitigate our own isolation and self-absorption. The human condition always and naturally seems to highlight ourselves. As I have gotten older, I have moved away from friends who are wrapped up so much in themselves that they never know or even much care for what is going on in my life. It's always about them. Like a self-absorbed friend, humanity's focus is always on themselves. How old that must get to God!

This is the perennial and primordial sin. We place ourselves in God's place. We are always the center of attention. We claim and see power as a human construct and rarely sense the Divine presence in our own lives much less that of cultural movements, national identity, political prowess, truth claims, intellectual insights, behavioral standards or economic success be it personal or corporate. We see these humanistic definitions as

simply creations of our own making and God becomes a nice supporter of our endeavors, values, movements, truths.

Is it any surprise that the world is spinning out of control? Scripture clearly states that when we lose God as the foundational building block, then what we end up with is fraught with malignancy, corruption and division. Seems like Mary Oliver would define this as the storm.

Lent reminds us who actually has the power. Lent is supposed to hit the reset button so that we can readjust our own lives so that our actions are fulfilling and living out of God's truth, power and wisdom and not just tacking God on at the end to suit ourselves. This is important to apply to our own time and age as we look at national politics, the heroin and drug epidemic, the continued division of humanity along class, race, gender and socio-economic lines, and even church life.

As we move into Lent, let us reflect a bit more about God and what God desires of us and a bit less about our own needs and what we desire from God. Let us apply our reflections to some of the gospel imperatives and change our lives and ways of thinking and speaking accordingly.

Honored to be walking that
journey with you, I am
Yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark

ASSOCIATE PASTOR NEWS

In the early church, persons who desired to become members of the Christian church underwent a private, secret, one-to-one instruction over a two to three-year period. By the fourth century when Christianity no longer needed to hide in the shadows of the Roman Empire, those who desired to become a Christian underwent a 40 day process of moral and religious instruction along with daily exorcisms, fasts, prayers, and periods of abstinence from bathing and sexual activity, culminating with baptism on the Easter Vigil. Today we don't need to do all of those things, but the practices of the early church are a good reminder that Lent is a time for us to give up something that interferes with our ability to commune with God. Lent is a time for reflection. We do not always have an opportunity to take time to reflect. We go from point A to be point B quickly before pausing. Lent is a time to pause and reflect.

On February 9th when I preached, I invited you to join me on Monday nights at 7 pm to form small groups of support. I'm calling them Solidarity Groups. The purpose of the small groups is to help us grow our spirituality, fellowship and living out our faith through some form of action. Christian community is based on these three. I think we are best able to do that in smaller groups rather than in large groups. This is an opportunity for people to fight the isolation that we experience in this world with physically meeting each other to grow in faith, grow in relationship, and take some form of action. We grow in faith by worshiping God. We grow in relationship by listening to each other and sharing our hearts with each other. We take action so we might become better disciples. There is no

required reading prior to each Monday. As starting point each Monday, the UCC has a weekly devotional that we will read and discuss in our small groups. Our groups will contain 4-6 people. We'll select the groups by picking names out of a hat. You do not need to attend every Monday in order to participate in these Solidarity Groups. It would be good though if these groups go so well that they continue beyond March. I invite you to disconnect from tv and social media and reconnect with other people from this church or who have been invited by a friend.

Josh Simon
Associate Pastor

LAURIE'S LENS



As I write this, we say goodbye to the season of Epiphany and welcome in Lent with Ash Wednesday this week. Lent is time to reflect on our spiritual life and connect with our God in special ways. If you are one who would prefer a written daily devotion you can find one in your inbox of your email by subscribing to the UCC's daily devotions at

http://www.ucc.org/daily_devotional. The children and youth put together a Lenten Bag this week with items in it to help us center and learn during Lent as a family. These are available for all ages. Stop by Marvin Lounge or see me and you too can have a Lenten Bag that will walk you through a family devotional time. I've brought it back from a few years ago and adapted it for all ages. It encourages you to take a few moments after a family meal or at a special time that you set aside, then placing these items in a location in your home that everyone sees them every day. We all need more time with Jesus, God & the Holy Spirit.

So, carve out some time to reconnect, breathe deep and center yourselves in Lent.

Lent is a 40-day journey, not counting Sundays, until we arrive at Easter and celebrate the risen Christ. According to the Bible, Jesus' death and resurrection occurred around the time of the Jewish Passover, which was celebrated on the first full moon following the vernal equinox. For Christians today, Easter Sunday falls on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox (or the first day of spring). If the first full moon occurs on the equinox, Easter is the following Sunday. This means that Easter Sunday can fall anywhere between March 22nd and April 25th. Once you know when Easter Sunday is you then count back 40 days, not including Sundays, and you will arrive on Ash Wednesday. Spring begins this year on March 19th. The next full moon is on April 7th, so Easter Sunday is April 12th. When we count back 40 days, we arrive on Ash Wednesday, February 26th. I look forward to seeing you at service.

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

CAROL'S CORNER

Lent, Holy Week, and Easter Music

Have you ever wanted to sing with the choir? This is the perfect season to try it out. We'll be preparing special music for throughout Lent and into Good Friday and Easter. There is no requirement but the desire to sing. All voices are welcome. We rehearse Thursday nights and sing at the 8:30 Sunday worship service.

Talk to Carol Spradling, Sanctuary Choir director @ (802) 881-8353; cspradling@fccej.org.

The groups leading music for Lent and Easter worship is:

- **February 23: F@F** (both Sunday services)
- **February 26: Ash Wednesday** (Sanctuary Choir; evening service)
- **March 1** (Sanctuary Choir leads both Sunday services)
- **March 8, 15, 22, 29:** Sanctuary Choir 8:30am and F@F 10:15am
- **April 5: Palm/Passion Sunday** - Sanctuary Choir sings at both Sunday services
- **April 10: Good Friday** (Sanctuary Choir; evening service)
- **April 12: Easter Sunday** - Sanctuary Choir with organ, piano, and trumpet at 8:30am service; F@F leads 10:15 service

Our Currier Bell Choir is practicing music and we are particularly looking forward to hearing the bells on a Sunday once we are back upstairs.

All of our musicians have been adapting to our downstairs worship (in comfy chairs, for which we're grateful). We really look forward to being able to access our music library and our beloved organ again once Sanctuary work is completed.

In Christ, and in harmony -
Carol Spradling
Director of Music



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

The Sanctuary Restoration Project is on track to wrap up by Palm Sunday – we cannot wait to welcome everyone back to the sanctuary for Holy Week!

Worship services are being held in Fellowship Hall while the sanctuary is closed for restoration (Sunday Dec. 29 through Palm Sunday). If you haven't been able to come to a service in Fellowship Hall, we hope you will come check it out soon! Many people have commented that they love the cozy feeling and enjoy the chance to experience worship in a different setting.

The old plaster on the ceiling (and curved wall) was completely removed down to the lathe. This process involved hauling away 11 THOUSAND pounds of old plaster! The new ceiling weighs about the same as the old one... it consists of 5,500 pounds of sand, 4,300 pounds of gypsum, and 1,200 pounds of lime and "gauging plaster" in the new ceiling. We used so much sand that Trowel Trades actually ran out for a short time! The new ceiling will last another 100+ years.

While the ceiling was drying and curing during the month of February, Ron Bisson and his crew patched the many cracks in the wall in the sanctuary, narthex and stairwells. They chiseled out all of the cracked areas and then filled the voids with solid plaster. The walls will be covered with a joint compound to smooth everything out.

Meanwhile, Steve and Kris Griffiths (Griffiths Electric) have been working to update some of our light fixtures and wiring throughout the sanctuary. And, Norm Senna and his crew have begun painting. It is going to be beautiful!

Upcoming Campaign Projects:

We are moving forward with plans to add new interior door locks on classrooms and offices, as well as plans for a new controlled-access security system (including keyless locks on exterior doors and new locks on all classroom/office doors). These improvements will be paid for

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with funds from our \$47,000 federal grant. The Church Street Entrance will also be updated with new, wider doors to accommodate the new security system and locks. Campaign funds will be used for that portion of the project.

Pledge Payments: Your continued pledge payments are vital to our efforts! We have budgeted for bridge loan financing. While we have not needed it yet, our cash balance is getting low and we will need to secure a bridge loan in order to complete the Sanctuary Restoration. As always, early pledge payments are welcome to minimize interest expenses.

Trustee Notes: Much of the work of the Trustees is focused on Capital Campaign projects. But the Trustees Committee is also hard at work to maintain our facilities and fix anything that breaks. We are also updating the Facilities Master Plan to plan for future needs, and we are creating a Routine Maintenance Schedule. We will be organizing a Spring Clean-Up day to take care of small projects/sprucing up inside & outside. Stay tuned for details.

Kaki McGeary & Dave Johnson
Capital Campaign Committee Co-Chairs

DEACONS' CORNER

Hi everyone – as you may have heard, the Deacons are proposing ways to improve the sanctuary for the purposes of wheelchair accessibility, functionality, safety and comfort. The proposal includes the removal of a row or two of pews, and replacing them with movable, high quality chairs. We love our sanctuary and expect there to be a variety of viewpoints about this, but we feel strongly that our current layout needs improving and that we

are out of step with modern needs. We have heard a lot of input on this and look forward to working with the Trustees to find out what would work best, with the following points guiding our thoughts:

Accessibility: Our sanctuary is not as accessible and welcoming as it should be for people in wheelchairs or with other mobility challenges. People in wheelchairs have no choice but to sit conspicuously at the very front of the church (near the communion table and baptismal font, where opening announcements are made) or out in the narthex. We feel this is not consistent with our values as a welcoming faith/congregation, and we should make this change to, in a sense, “practice what we preach”.

Functionality: We need the sanctuary to be more functional for our musical groups and other performances, many of which struggle to fit into the front of the sanctuary, with performers scrambling awkwardly in and out of the pews during the services. There is a lot of discussion within the Church Council about using (and renting) our sanctuary for community events and concerts and this will enhance our ability to do so.

Safety: Our current use of the front of the sanctuary presents significant safety issues, should we need to evacuate through the emergency exits. Our band and bell choir must squeeze their instruments, music stands, speakers, power cords, etc. into the corner of the sanctuary, along with the piano, impeding access to the exit.

Comfort: We want to provide an enjoyable worship experience, including alternative seating for those who are uncomfortable or

inconvenienced in a pew (i.e., tall people who need to sit sideways to fit their knees, folks who'd like the help of an armchair to get up and down, or groups/families of 4 who need to split into multiple pews).

Our goal is to try and address all of these issues so that there are spaces for wheelchairs and also places with movable chairs (interlocking and alternating with armrests). The chairs will be stackable, few in number, and match the wood/color scheme of the pews. We feel this would enhance our church, making it more accessible, functional, safe and comfortable. We will schedule an information session for the congregation as plans take shape and look forward to hearing everyone's input!

Peter Schmalz, *Deacons*

YOUTH MINISTRY

All First Church Youth Programs are Parent Supported!

- Parent Helper signup for each JY time:
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c054fa4a82fa5fc1-fccej1>
- JY meal signup:
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c054fa4a82fa5fc1-fccej1>

Junior Youth
5th - 8th graders
Faith & Mission Focus with Fellowship/Games

Mark your calendars

- March 1st & 22nd: JY time ~ 11:30am to 1:30pm

On 1st Sundays ~ Help Greet/Usher/Read Scripture during 10:15am worship
Sign up with Pastor Mark, Pastor Josh or Laurie

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.

High School Youth

For updates and information contact Pastor Josh

UCC NYE trip to Purdue University: July 20-26, 2020

Pastor Josh & Laurie will travel with youth to Purdue University for our National UCC Youth Event. Check out the website below. Watch for a Youth/Parent meeting coming in March. Interested and not signed up yet be in touch ASAP. NYE happen once every 4 years! Click on the event link and see what all will be happening. Meet other UCC youth from across the country. Travel by bus with ME and NH youth to the event.

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

FAITH FORMATION



Sunday Morning
Calendar
PreK – 8th grade

- **March 1st** ~ 1st Sundays ~ Intergenerational Worship & Spiritual Friends *Cherubs singing Introit – arrive at 10am*
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.
- **March 8th & 15th** ~ Music & Peer Group Time
- **March 22nd** ~ Hands On Mission Activity
- **March 29th** ~ Music & Peer Group (& Pretzel Sunday?)
- **April 5th** ~ Palm Sunday ~ Intergenerational Worship & Spiritual Friends

High School Youth *are encouraged to help during faith formation on Sunday mornings. Connect with Laurie for more information. Be a helper on Spiritual Friends, Peer Group or Hands-On Mission Sundays. Helping so far this program year: Makaylah, Caitlin, Courtney, David & Sam*

Music Time

Cherubs ~ Preschool ~ 2nd grade

Joyful Noise ~ 3rd ~ 8th grade

Cherubs will be singing the Introit at our 10:15am service on March 1st. Arrive at 10am and meet in the Marvin Lounge. On Peer Group Sunday children and youth move first to music time. Faith Formation on these Sundays ends at 11:30am. Parents are encouraged to mingle in coffee hour and greet others before coming up to their rooms to sign out PreK through 2nd grade. Older children and youth will be excused at 11:30am and make their way to coffee hour.

2020 Faith Formation Offering

Current total is: \$74.20

Voting taking place on February 23rd & March 1st

3 Choices are:

- Church World Service
www.cwsglobal.org
- Heifer International
www.heifer.org
- Vermont Adaptive Sports
www.vermontadaptive.org

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?

Earn an allowance?

Practice dividing your money 3 ways:

- Save (in a bank)
- Give to the church/offering

- You (spend/save/give to an organization)

Nursery

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

Kelsey Carpenter, our Nursery staff worker, will help you and your little one gets 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. 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.

CAMPS



**@ the Lake
UCC Camp
at Rock
Point**

**Sunday, July 26 at 2pm to Friday,
July 31st at 4pm**

**(For those going into 5th – 8th
grade in the fall
of 2020.)**

Registration is
OPEN! Go to



<https://hortoncenter.org/camps/>

***** Scholarships are available –
particles and full *****

*Previous campers ~ Erik Frivoll &
Izzy Owens*

Join our community of friends at Rock Point as we explore the shores of Lake Champlain, enjoy the beauty all around us, go swimming, paddle boarding, hiking, have campfires,

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sing, worship, play, participate in community service and enjoy the amazing sunsets! Note: Campers arrive and depart directly from Rock Point Camp, <https://www.rockpointvt.org/camp>, Episcopal Conference Center in Burlington.



More camps to choose from on the Horton Center website. Take a leap and sign up for camp!

Vacation Bible Camp



KNIGHTS OF THE NORTH CASTLE
Quest for the King's Armor
Armor UP with Truth, Justice,

Peace, Faith & Salvation
August 10th – 14th from 9am to 11:45am

All ages, families and friends are welcome to attend!

(Use one registration sheet per family)

Age Groups for You & Me Toddlers (accompanied by a parent/grandparent) on up to 5th grade.

Leadership Team: Assembly Leader ~ Jessica Moos; Bible Drama ~ Allison VanSteensburg; Decorating Assistant ~ Jenny Bourn; Games ~ Sue Wood; Science/Discovery ~ Justin King; Snacks ~ Judy Allen & Ginny Coe; Media/Photos ~ Doug Olufsen; Co-Music Leader ~ Laura Cunningham Firkey

Recruiting for:

Decorators (creating items ahead, decorating the weekend before)
Group Leaders
Co-Music Leader
Mission Coordinator
Station Assistants

Youth Helpers (6th grade and older)
VB Camp Wish List – Coming soon! For questions and more information ~ contact Laurie.

Volunteer

Pretzel Sunday ~ March 29th or April 26th



A CE sponsored Sunday

Join the fun and volunteer mixing up the pretzel dough, rolling out the first pretzels and baking them for all to enjoy during coffee hour after both services. The children and youth will have fun rolling out more pretzels during the 10:15 service.

Adult volunteer shift times are:

- 7:30am to 9:30am (mix up dough, roll pretzels & bake);
- 9:15am-10:30am (bake & set up tables);
- 10:30-11:30am (bake);
- 11:30am-12noon (help Hospitality with clean up).

See Laurie or send her an email to sign up. Please let her know if you can do either the Sunday in March and/or April, as we need to be back up worshiping in our new Sanctuary so that Fellowship Hall is open for pretzel making.



VT Outdoor Ministry Team is RECRUITING

Volunteer

Counselors – 1 male and 2 females
Already onboard is UCC Pastor Shawn Bracebridge.

- Paid Lifeguards (2) ~ one needs to be 18yrs or older (lifeguards can be counselor too)
- Paid Nurse (1)

Interested? See Laurie. Volunteer training coming in early June. Volunteer Leadership team arrives on Saturday, July 25th at 3pm and departs at 5pm on Friday the 31st. Help us continue this very important

ministry. Stop by our Outdoor Ministry bulletin board by Laurie's office. Take a flyer and help spread the word.

MISSIONS

One Great Hour of Sharing

Through the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering, we are planting seeds of new life.

We are investing in communities worldwide: providing education to girls and boys, empowering communities through vocational training, supporting microcredit lending and seeing people achieve self-sufficiency and empowering solutions that offer dignity to all. These are just a few ways the OGHS offering touches God's children, in addition to disaster relief and refugee initiatives.

Through your generosity, the world is a better place. This month you have an opportunity to plant seeds into the lives of others. Be a co-worker with God. Building, planting, watering...and trusting that God gives growth to all good gifts shared in faith.

A team from First Congregational Church is going to Puerto Rico in the spring to help repair roofs destroyed by Hurricane Marie. Supporting OGHS means you will be supporting the volunteers from our church on their mission to Puerto Rico.



6th Annual Jamaica Cabin Fever Calcutta:

Saturday, March 7th @

5:00-8:30 pm, Catamount Country Club Williston

Last chance! Tickets still available for 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 \$125 each and include dinner for two and the chance to win the grand prize of \$1000 and other prizes awarded throughout the evening. Extra dinners can be purchased for \$20 each.

Schedule:

- **5:00-6:00** Cocktails and appetizers (Cash bar and opportunity to purchase raffle tickets and wine pull)
- **6:00-6:45** Welcome and Buffet Dinner
- **7:00-8:30** Calcutta

Raffle prizes include an iPad with Bluetooth keyboard and dinner and a one-night stay at Hotel Vermont (Juniper Restaurant), Courtyard (Bleu), The Inn at Essex (Junction). Door prizes include gift certificates to Leunigs, Skinny Pancake, Chef's Corner, Red Panda, Jules on the Green, golf fees at area clubs, family fair passes, and many more! There will also be the popular wine pull event, and a Jamaica Alumni Team Auction. Bid on a team of 10 or more alumni to help for two hours with your spring project.

Anyone interested in purchasing a ticket can contact Sharon Dettenrieder at dettenriedes@hartwick.edu or 802-871-5308 or contact the church at 878-5745. Checks should be made out to FCCEJ, with "Calcutta" on the memo line. We hope you'll join us in support of our Jamaica Mission Program!

Calcutta Cupcake Sign Up

The Missions Committee is responsible for providing the cupcakes for Calcutta Night at the Catamount Golf Club in Williston on March 7th. There will be a signup sheet at the Calcutta Night table on March 1st. Please stop by the table to sign up to bake cupcakes for the fundraiser for the Jamaica trip.

FELLOWSHIP & LEARNING

Yoga @ First: Mondays, 5:30pm-6:45pm, Gymnasium--Jonah Moos is offering a free yoga class! 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, Marvin Lounge--Gather with us 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!

Lenten Study: Thursdays @ 10-11:30am — February 27th-April 9th: "We Are Beloved" is the title of a book to be used to help us understand that, just as God called Jesus "beloved", each and every one of us is also beloved by God. The seven-week study will begin on Thursday, February 27 and the last gathering will be on Maundy Thursday, April 9. We will meet in Marvin Lounge from 10:00 a.m. until 11:30. Books will be available in the church office. Better hurry: there are only twelve books.

JOY (Just Older Youth): Thursday, March 5th @ 12:30pm, Marvin Lounge--If you are 55+ please consider joining our JOY (Just Older Youth) group. We strive to present programs that foster learning, fun or service. We are meeting a half hour later because we need to use the Fellowship Hall but can't get in there until 1. Join us at 12:30 with your lunch and conversation. We'll move into Fellowship Hall at 1pm. **Janne Giles** will lead a fun activity with a huge Vermont map. "Come see and interact with the biggest Vermont

map you have ever seen (24 feet by 18 feet). Share some things you know about Vermont and/or learn some new, cool things about Vermont!" Come join us for this light-hearted and entertaining venture.

Essex Eats Out: Friday, March 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. Visit our website for a tentative menu during the 2020 calendar year:

<http://www.essexeatout.org>

...and...

<http://www.fccej.org/v5/category/essex-eats-out/>

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!

Noontime Book Group: Monday, March 16th @ 11:30am, Marvin Lounge--We are reading Nickel and Dimed by Barbara Ehrenreich. The author is a social activist and an investigative reporter. In response to the welfare reforms in the 1990's, she went underground and worked in quite a few minimum wage jobs She tried to live the life of those she

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worked with. In this book she shares her experiences and gives us a look into that period of prosperity from the perspective of those trying to make ends meet on \$6.00 an hour. The story seems very pertinent to our world today. Come join us for an interesting discussion and bring a brown bag lunch.

[Public Forum] Fair & Impartial Policing and Community Affairs: Wednesday, March 18th @ 7-8:30pm-- It is a great pleasure to welcome Captain Garry Scott to our church for a public forum on Fair and Impartial Policing and Community Affairs. Captain Scott from the Vermont State Police seeks out venues to discuss critical issues concerning biases in policing: anti-Semitism, hate motivated crime, and issues around LGBTQIA. Captain Scott, with an honest candor and lots of factual information will try to build bridges and strengthen the ties that bind all of us together into one community. He is open in talking about VSP policies, procedures and incidents. He will honestly discuss anything concerning Vermont Policing and the many ways that the VSP are working to do their job to a diverse community more effectively. Church members and community members are free to come to this event. All are welcome.

Bridge: Friday, March 20th @ 1:30pm, Marvin Lounge--Each month we have an awful lot of fun playing bridge. Men and women with different abilities and learning curves come together with goodies to eat and joy in their hearts to have some fun around the card tables. Some are learning to play while others have been playing for decades. We play from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. in the Marvin Lounge on the third Friday of every month. Come and bring a friend. The winner is always

rewarded with one of Rev. Mendes' jams!

Women's Spirituality: 3rd Saturday of each month @ 9:30am, Marvin Lounge. Next: Saturday, March 21st--Please join us for our annual Easter Card activity. We have 25 seniors we will be making cards and baskets for. Andrea Sharp will create a card for us to assemble and write a message inside. We'll add these to the baskets with other goodies and they will be ready to deliver on Sunday, March 29.

SPECIAL SERVICES

The Saturday Experience: March 7th @ 4:30 p.m.--Each month, we have a tremendous experience where we worship God in the Marvin Lounge. People come dressed comfortably, we pray for folks by lighting a candle and drawing everyone's spirit to lift their voice in support of the prayer, then we discuss the scripture text and its implications for our lives. We throw in a couple of great guitar hymns by our very own Rick Dooley and finish with a time of communion: sacrament and fellowship. If you have not tried this new style, consider doing so. We hope to see you there!

Guest Preacher Ron Faux: Sunday, March 29th--It is a blessing to have such a gifted retired United Methodist Church pastor in our midst: Rev. Ron Faux and his wife Joan. They have both added many blessings to our family of faith. He also helps visit folks when Mark and or Josh are away of on vacation and will be doing a little more in the future as a way to help out. If you know Ron and Joan, they also offer to us great stories of the faith whether it be at Sermon Talkback or Fellowship Hour. Another way Rev. Faux will be helping is to preach every so often and on March 29th, he

will be doing just that so come out and support him and hear his take on Christ's gospel. NOTE: It is hoped that we will be in the sanctuary by March 29th and if that is the case, then we will also be celebrating Pretzel Sunday on that day. [Learn about Ron. Faux's Lenten Study series on page #7]

Lenten Sermon Series

One of the recent movements within the Christian Church is a move away from some of the defining doctrines of the church and toward a post Christendom world. Doctrines often seem outdated and all too often have been used as litmus tests of orthodoxy and thus a tool of control of the powerful to keep the undesirable or change seekers out. However, doctrines if understood and used well have a way of refreshing us with insights into Christ's message that have stood the test of time and helped countless millions better appreciate the finer points of faithful living. To undermine the former and lift up the later, Reverends Mendes and Simon will be preaching on some basic Christian doctrines of the faith and how they nurture our lives and apply to the every day fabric of discipleship. Come and listen as they unpack the following doctrines

- **March 1:** Rev. Mendes and the Incarnation
- **March 8:** Rev. Mendes explores Sin and Evil
- **March 15:** Rev. Simon unpacks the atonement
- **March 23:** Rev. Mendes explains Sanctification
- **March 29:** Rev. Faux teaches the finer points of the Trinity
- **April 5:** Rev. Mendes tells us about Salvation

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

JOHNSON, Dave	03/02
FRISBIE, Bart	03/03
STARKEY, Cameron	03/03
VOLKER, Beth	03/03
BLACKMAN, Bruce	03/04
TALLMAN, Sarah	03/04
RODDY, Jonathan	03/05
BICKFORD, Bill	03/06
BURNETT, Donna	03/06
DOOLEY, Sam	03/06
LEACH, David	03/06
WARREN, Beth	03/06
DOOLEY, Jen	03/08
CLARK, Lisa	03/10
STAPLETON, Renee	03/10
POWELL, Marilyn	03/11
SHARP, Joshua	03/12
TRUAX, Faith	03/17
GOODHEART, Cathie	03/19
TAYLOR, Toni	03/21
JONES, Bill	03/26
PALMER, Sean	03/26
SHEARER, Thomas	03/27
DEAL, Robert	03/28
CUNNINGHAM-FIRKEY, Eva	03/31

**Hours:**

Tues & Wed, 10am-3pm.

Thursday, 4pm-8pm.

Saturdays, 9am-1pm.

About: Doing business at Heavenly Cents, whether making donations or purchasing goods, strengthens our connections with each other and is good for your wallet, the environment and our community. The Thrift shop accepts new and gently used clothing, jewelry, table linens, bedding and household items. Clothing and linens should be clean, free of stains and tears and household items should be safe, in good working condition and contain all pieces and parts.

Donations: The Thrift shop accepts new and gently used clothing, jewelry, table linens, bedding and household items. Clothing and linens should be clean, free of stains and tears and household items should be safe, in good working condition and contain all pieces and parts.

Bridget Meyer, Sue Wood,
Linda Bogardus, and Elaine
Raymond

**The Heavenly 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.

Hours:

2nd Monday (March 9th)

@ 5:30pm-7:30pm

4th Thursday (March 26th)

@ 2pm-6pm

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 are desired. We'd love to welcome you into our Missions community.

Please, contact Anita Guild
(anitalguild@gmail.com) for
more details.

March 2020

March 2020							April 2020						
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
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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		

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Mar 1 8:30am Worship Service (Fellowship Hall) 10:15am Worship Service (Fellowship Hall) 11:30am Junior Youth Time (3rd) 11:30am Music Committee 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 6:00pm Cub Scout Leader	2 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) 6:45pm Communications 7:00pm BSA Troop 624 (3rd Floor)	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) 7:30pm OA Meeting (2nd Floor)	4 11:30am Religio-Spiritual Leaders' Lunch (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm FCCEJ Staff Meeting 5:30pm Finally@First (Fellowship) 6:00pm BSA PLC (3rd Floor Youth) 6:30pm Handbells Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm Boy Scouts (Fellowship)	5 8:30am Essex Art League 8:45am Jamaica Bound Calcutta 9:45am Jamaica Bound Leadership 10:00am Lenten Study (Marvin) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 12:30pm JOY (Marvin Lounge) 3:00pm Easterseals (3rd Floor) 5:30pm HRC Meeting (Marvin)	6 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 5:00pm Essex Eats Out Community Dinner (Fellowship Hall & Kitchen)	7 9:00am Thrift Store Open 9:00am Nepali Community 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 2:00pm St. Andrews Pipe Band 3:00pm Scout District Dinner 4:30pm Deacons: Setup for 4:30pm Worship Service (Marvin) 5:30pm Cabin Fever Calcutta
8 8:30am Worship Service (Fellowship Hall) 10:15am Worship Service (Fellowship Hall) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 6:00pm Venture Crew (Marvin Lounge)	9 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Food Pantry Stocking 4:00pm Food Pantry (FH & 5:30pm Food Pantry (Fellowship) 5:30pm Yoga @ First (2nd Floor) 5:30pm Group Victory (Marvin) 7:00pm BSA Troop 624 (3rd Floor)	10 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:00pm Deacons (Marvin Lounge) 7:30pm OA Meeting (2nd Floor Programming Room)	11 9:00am Summit Street School (Kindergarteners) (Fellowship) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Finally@First (Fellowship Hall) 6:30pm Handbells Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm Boy Scouts (Fellowship)	12 10:00am Lenten Study (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 3:00pm Easterseals (3rd Floor) 6:00pm Music@First (Fellowship) 6:30pm Lion Den #10 (3rd Floor) 7:30pm Confirmation (Marvin) 8:15pm Music @ First (Fellowship)	13 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:30pm Grange (Fellowship Hall)	14 9:00am Nepali Community Worship (Fellowship Hall) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 2:00pm St. Andrews Pipe Band (3rd Floor Youth Room) 4:30pm Deacons: Setup for Worship (Fellowship Hall)
15 8:30am Worship Service (Fellowship Hall) 10:15am Worship Service (Fellowship Hall) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall)	16 11:30am Noontime Book Group (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Food Pantry Stocking 5:30pm Yoga @ First (2nd Floor) 5:30pm Group Victory (Marvin) 7:00pm BSA Troop 624 (3rd Floor)	17 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:00pm CE Meeting (Fellowship) 7:00pm Communications 7:00pm Missions Committee 7:30pm OA Meeting (2nd Floor)	18 8:00am Food Shelf Delivery (Fellowship Hall) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm FCCEJ Staff Meeting 5:30pm Finally@First (Fellowship) 6:30pm Handbells Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm Boy Scouts (Marvin) 7:00pm Public Forum: Fair &	19 10:00am Lenten Study (Marvin) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 3:00pm Easterseals (3rd Floor) 6:00pm Music@First (Fellowship) 6:30pm Wolf Den (2nd Floor) 6:30pm Tiger Den #9 (3rd Floor) 7:30pm Confirmation (Marvin) 8:15pm Music @ First (Fellowship)	20 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Bridge Club (Marvin Lounge)	21 9:00am Nepali Community Worship (Fellowship Hall) 9:30am Women's Spirituality (Marvin Lounge) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 2:00pm St. Andrews Pipe Band 4:30pm Deacons: Setup for
22 8:30am Worship Service (Fellowship Hall) 10:15am Worship Service (Fellowship Hall) 11:30am Junior Youth Time (3rd Floor Youth Room; 2nd Floor) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship) 6:00pm Venture Crew (Marvin)	23 10:00am VAUCE (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 1:30pm Food Pantry Stocking 5:30pm Yoga @ First (2nd Floor) 5:30pm Group Victory (Marvin) 6:30pm Joe's Big Band (Fellowship) 7:00pm BSA Troop 624 (3rd Floor)	24 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:00pm Stewardship (Fellowship Hall) 7:00pm Trustees (Marvin Lounge) 7:30pm OA Meeting (2nd Floor)	25 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 5:30pm Finally@First (Fellowship Hall) 6:30pm Handbells Choir Rehearsal (Gymnasium) 7:00pm Boy Scouts (Fellowship Hall)	26 8:30am Food Pantry (Fellowship Hall) 10:00am Lenten Study (Marvin) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Marvin) 3:00pm Easterseals (3rd Floor) 6:00pm Music@First (Fellowship) 7:30pm Confirmation (Marvin) 8:15pm Music @ First (Fellowship)	27 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:30pm Grange (Fellowship Hall)	28 9:00am Nepali Community Worship (Fellowship Hall) 1:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 2:00pm St. Andrews Pipe Band (3rd Floor Youth Room) 4:30pm Deacons: Setup for Worship (Fellowship Hall)
29 7:00am Pretzel Sunday (Kitchen) 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 Programming Room) 5:30pm Group Victory (Marvin) 7:00pm BSA Troop 624 (3rd Floor)	31 8:30am Sermon Talk Back (Marvin Lounge) 12:00pm Brown Bag (Fellowship Hall) 7:30pm OA Meeting (2nd Floor Programming Room)	Apr 1	2	3	4

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: Maureen Evans [233-6127]
Vice President, Chair Finance & Pastoral Relations:
Cathy Shearer [878-6023]

Treasurer & Historian: Ann Gray [878-4088]
Asst. Treasurer: Dan Petherbridge [879-0261]
Financial Secretary: Pat Seaver [879-4445]
Clerk: Christine Sinkewicz [878-4470]
Christian Education: Lisa Clark [872-5849]
Communications: Andrea Sharp [879-0580], Judy McCullen [878-9794]
Deacons: Judy Larrabee-Pomainville [802-236-0604]
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], Shannon McCullen [922-8792]
Trustees: Kaki McGeary [879-2062]
Ushering: Justin King [238-6273], Jessica Moos [399-8068]

Recognized Groups at First Church

Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop Sue Wood [879-6552] woodsusanjane@gmail.com
Heavenly Food Pantry Contact: Valerie Gabert [879-0109]

First Congregational Church of EJ
1 CHURCH STREET
ESSEX JCT, VT 05452
Phone: 802-878-5745
Fax: 802-872-8236
Email: welcome@fccej.org
Web: www.fccej.org

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