

# SPIRIT@FIRST

monthly newsletter

FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH *of Essex Junction*

*Love. Serve. Grow.*

## June 2021: *In this issue...*

- Your Pastor's Ponderings 1
- Associate Pastor News 2
- Laurie's Lens 2
- Deacons 3
- Capital Campaign Update 3
- Trustees 4
- Communications 4
- Faith Formation/Youth Ministry 5
- Camps 5
- Missions/Volunteering 6
- Jamaica News 8
- Worship/Fellowship 9
- Hybrid Worship! 9
- Stewardship 11
- Birthdays 12
- Ministry Directory (A)

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### Your Pastor's Ponderings

Victor Hugo is known as perhaps one of the most celebrated French writers, giving all of us such classics as *les Misérables* and *the Hunchback of Notre Dame*. He wrote in many styles and was engaged in politics as well as philosophical discussions. His work and politics changed over the years, and he ended up opposing Absolutism. I am not sure what he would think about how truth and fact seem to be relative today depending on which news source or what scientific expert to which you listen. But being wise and long lived, his quote on change struck me this week as we as a church community begin to react to the changes coming from our political and scientific leaders concerning the safety with which we re-engage life after the worse world-wide pandemic in a very long time.

*Change your opinions, keep to your principles; change your leaves, keep intact your roots.*

Victor Hugo

The Executive Committee has opened our worship services up to every other pew, loosening the requirements for attendance and allowing for folks to sing in church with their masks on. In addition, musical offerings from choir members and Finally @ First have begun to bless our services as well as Deacon participation and a safely spaced and outdoor fellowship hour. These changes have been well received and those who have attended feel pretty good about our continued concern to keep people safe with the continued use of distance and masks.

If there has been any constant through the pandemic, it is the reality of changing to fit the circumstances and science. Even as I write these words, Governor Scott's challenge of an 80 % vaccination rate freeing people from the need to wear masks is on the verge of coming to fruition. He envisioned that happening closer to Labor Day than the 4th of July!

Individuals react to these changes instantaneous, literally taking off their masks as Gov. Scott changes the requirements. However, an institution takes a little bit longer and so I encourage everyone to give the Executive Committee a little grace as they strive to keep up with the changes. Overlaid on top of this process is the beautiful congregational reality of a wide variety of opinions and personalities each reacting differently to the changes being made by the CDC, Gov. Scott and the Executive Committee! Some folks are rearing to go and lose their masks and all the precautions that they have resisted for months; others are worried about the new strains appearing around the world and are choosing to continue their caution to ensure their and other's safety; some, even though they know it is safe to venture out into the world, have enjoyed their self-imposed hermitry and find it difficult to break the comfortable habits of staying at home.

Pray for the church's leadership as they move forward toward a new normal. I may not know the outcome of what our future will look like, but I like Victor Hugo's quote about staying true to our principles and keeping our roots intact. We are a family of faith who believe that we should take every possible effort to include anyone who wants to participate in our community. We ground this on the root of Christ's love which feeds all we do. Practically, this means moving forward with hybrid worship, meetings, social gatherings and pastoral care. Some committees are beginning to meet in person, but they are going to do so with a zoom meeting from the Marvin Lounge which will allow more cautious folks to join right in. Sermon Talkback is thinking about the same thing. Worship will continue to attract more and more people into our beautiful newly refurbished sanctuary, but we will continue to stream the service for all of our viewers who either choose to stay at home to watch or simply

cannot physically get to church either because of mobility issues or because they are a snowbird enjoying the winter in Florida.

Change is inevitable but the changes that the pandemic has brought on can bring great benefits to our community and allow us to reach even more people than we had previously. Our Past-President Kevin Dorn called his push toward hybrid service, the Norman Faunce Initiative, named after our old friend who would have loved to watch our services from Massachusetts.

Hopefully, this fall we will have the new normal down with hybrid services, meetings and social gatherings going on as a matter of course. Our church will be stronger for it. As the future shapes our life together let us continue to be true to our principles and our roots.

Blessings,  
Rev. Mark

### Associate Pastor News

I enjoy exploring the beauty of Vermont. During the search and call process before a candidate arrives, the committee asks the candidate what kinds of places they would like to see when they're visiting, for me, I want to be taken to places where I could explore and hike. Being out in nature, helps me think clearly, restores my body, and nourishes my inner spirit. Josh Sharp and Laurie Chipman picked me up from the airport. We ate at Skinny Pancake, and then went on a drive through the Notch. We meandered through 108. I delighted in the rocky boulders decorated with lush green trees. The beauty reminded me of Rivendale in the Lord of the Rings books. A couple days later on my way to preach for the search and call committee during Bethany, UCC's regular Sunday service, on the car ride down I-89, instead of worrying about the sermon I was about to preach, I was dazzled by the mist on the mountains and the clouds hanging low in the valleys. The words from Psalm 98 come to mind, "let the mountains sing together for joy." Hiking mountains might not evoke the word joy, at least not the physical trek, but yet moments of joy come along the way and certainly once reaching the top joy produces wonderment. Or when my grandma and aunt came to visit, I drove them on the Stowe Toll Road. They were filled with wonderment and joy.

This Summer we are going to explore the beauty around us. Get outside to explore and delight. We're hosting all church hiking trips. We'll hear the mountains sing for joy.

**All Ages Hike:** *Sunday, June 13<sup>th</sup> @ Noon-2pm*

Join us at Mills Riverside Park in Underhill for a hike. We'll gather in the parking lot and depending on who comes we'll decide which paths to walk. Bring a bag lunch. All ages are welcome.

Rev. Josh Simon, *Associate Pastor*

### Laurie's Lens



The first Sunday of June is traditionally the Sunday that we celebrate our faith formation program year. This year is no different! Even though the year has been different, somewhat disconnected and not feeling normal... we hope you will join us on June 6<sup>th</sup> at 10am and come see the people you have been missing throughout this pandemic. Faith Formation Outside will be happening the same time as worship. Families are invited to attend inside our out. Our full church body will come together for communion when the worshipers join us on the front lawn. We'll then move into fellowship time with pool noodle/wiffle ball crochet (fun for all ages), along with balloons, bubbles, and the Ice Cream truck around 11am! Youth are encouraged to come and see friends and reconnect with a fellowship circle. We are looking SO forward to seeing you all and hope you can come join the fun, helping us all feel more connected again!

I have four items on my planning list that will be coming along pretty soon. The first is our Family Camp weekend at Little River State Park on Father's Day weekend. I believe we have 14 families that will be attending. So

exciting to plan some fun outside outdoor ministry happenings for this group! It's sure to be a great weekend. Be watching the church weekly updates and we will let you know when we will be doing the park hike so you can come join us if you like. Next is my week of outdoor ministry at Horton Center the week of July 18<sup>th</sup> for 'VT takes a hike to the Mtn' for those going into 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade. There is plenty of room to still sign up for this camp (see more further down in our camp section or contact me with questions). Then comes Vacation Bible Camp and our week of August 9<sup>th</sup> that families can sign up their campers for in-person or the online program and volunteers (6<sup>th</sup> grade and up) can sign up to lend a hand. Your lime green t-shirt awaits you! Many of you have liked to help with donations and we hope to have our SignUp Genius up and available soon.

Then comes planning for our fall programs and what next year will bring. We learned and grew this year, so what do we take with us into next year and what do we leave behind from previous years and this year? We have climbed many mountains and paddled upstream against the rapids. How did your family do? I would love to hear from you (by phone, email, text) and have you share how our program offering changes have been helpful or not for you, your children, youth and the whole family. I'm happy to meet in-person too. Just let me know. I'll be asking those of you I see face to face so be ready to answer honestly. What worked for you and your family? What didn't work? What did you enjoy? Your responses will help us move forward and plan for an engaging program this fall and beyond.

Please continue to watch for and read our weekly emails (from the main office) and my monthly Faith@Home emails and please be open if the Holy Spirit starts nudging you to get involved, at whatever level. Remember the importance of sharing your faith. With family members especially, no matter your age or theirs, don't just hold on to it and keep it inside. God wants you to share it and pass it along.

Blessed to be on this faith journey with you,  
Laurie Chipman, *Christian Education Director*

### Our Home, Our Future, Our Time: Capital Campaign Update

Three years ago on June 3, Dave and I stood on the front lawn of the church and announced that our church had raised \$913,000 for the Our Home, Our Future, Our Time Capital Campaign, far exceeding our initial goal of \$822,000 and getting close to our \$1.09 million stretch goal! At that time, just a handful of pledges had been paid and we hadn't begun any of the projects. Fast forward three years, a pandemic and the addition of a new major capital project to our list, and we have zoomed way past our stretch goal, raising more than \$1.12 million and completing almost all of our projects!

If you want to see a complete recap of all that has been done, visit our website – look under Capital Campaign/Projects (<https://www.fccej.org/v5/capital-campaign/projects/>). THANK YOU to everyone for giving so generously to the Capital Campaign - your gifts have made Our Home more welcoming, safe, and beautiful – now and for future generations.

**A friendly reminder...** the Capital Campaign is approaching the end of our 3rd (and final!) pledge year, ending July 1, 2021. Please check your pledge records for any balance due. If you have any questions about your balance due, or if circumstances have changed, please contact Campaign Treasurer Dan Petherbridge.

<i>as of April 29, 2021</i>	<b>Phase 1/2</b>	<b>Phase 3 Elevator</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Pledges*</b>	\$1,014,161.14	\$108,755.57	<b>\$1,122,916.71</b>
<b>Cash received</b>	\$981,029.29	\$93,027.77	\$1,074,057.06
<b>Pledge Balance</b>	<b>\$33,131.85</b>	<b>\$15,727.80</b>	<b>\$48,859.65</b>
*Includes \$47K federal grant in Phase 1/2 & \$32K endowment transfer in Phase 3			

**“Phase 3” Fundraising Update & Elevator Project Update**

Great news! We have raised \$108,000 in pledges/gifts in response to our Phase 3 appeal (\$70K in new pledges and \$37,000 from the endowment and food pantry). We now have more than enough to move forward with the elevator project THIS summer! Trustees are working with our elevator contractor (Otis Elevator) to order all of the parts and schedule the work, expected to happen in July/August. Our goal is to have the work completed before Labor Day. We will let folks know the exact dates when the elevator will be out of service as soon as we are notified.

Our “Phase 3” goal was to raise \$130,000 and we came pretty close to that goal. After the elevator is complete, any remaining campaign funds will go toward the last few projects on our list. The next project up will be the kitchen renovation. We are working hard to get the kitchen project ready to roll this summer as well...we are meeting with contractors and reviewing quotes. Some of the quotes were coming in a bit higher than the last time we went through this process, so we needed to get additional bids.

If we have any funds left over after we do the kitchen, those will go toward replacement of flooring on the 2nd Floor Hallways, Gym, and Fellowship Hall. Stay tuned!

*Blessings to you and your families!*

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

Trustees

Much of our time is focused on bringing the elevator and kitchen projects to the starting line. In addition, we are looking to replace the oven at the parsonage (a mouse damaged the electrical panel). We recently began a pest control service for all the church properties. We have a number of heating system repairs that we are hoping to complete this summer while the boiler is shut down. We have a few small painting jobs – if you are handy with a paint brush and would like to help, please let me know!

Kaki McGeary, *Trustee Chair*

Communications

The Communications Committee is busy organizing and supporting several methods to share our church’s happenings and events. We are also planning ways to share the workload within the committee to ensure efficiency, use of our many talents and back up each other.

Andrea Sharp will be updating the website to four blocks taking down the information on Easter and Lent. This will leave space for Vacation Bible School information later in the summer. The committee is also still looking into setting up a staging website that will be a place to test website updates and software updates.

The committee discussed a suggestion from Council about whether the communications committee needs more members. It was thought that at this point no more members were needed. The committee plans to review and update documents relating to the responsibilities of the committee to better be able to share responsibilities and plan for future needs.

The live stream team is working on creating more documentation and training videos on how the live stream services are put together. The team is also working on cross training so that all members can run both the sound and video elements. If anyone is interested in helping and learning about the live stream services let Josh Simon know.

The committee also reviewed FPF posts for Vacation Bible Camp and offered some suggestions about a proposed FCCEJ t-shirt.

Respectfully submitted by Hannah Tracy

*Committee Members:* Francis Gravel, Andrea Sharp, Hannah Tracy and Douglas Olufsen

## Faith Formation

### Young Apostles

(3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> graders & a Parent/Grandparent)

We have wrapped up for the program year, so watch for our start up again in September. Keep looking around your for ways to reach out and help others around you.

### 2020-21 Faith Formation Offering

Current Total is \$176

You can bring your offering to the parking lot each Sunday for FFO. We will celebrate our gifts to Vermont Adaptive Sports on June 6<sup>th</sup> during FFO.



<https://www.vermontadaptive.org/>. If sending in a check, please write 'Faith Formation Offering' in the memo line or put your money in an enveloped marked as such and drop it at church. Blessings!

On Welcome Back Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, the children and youth will be voting on where they would like the offering to go for the 2021-22 program year.

## Camps



*FCCEJ Camper Scholarships are available to help you camp!*

Contact Pastor Mark ([mmendes@fccej.org](mailto:mmendes@fccej.org)) Pastor Josh ([jsimon@fccej.org](mailto:jsimon@fccej.org))  
or Lauri ([lchipman@fccej.org](mailto:lchipman@fccej.org))

with cost. We have a camp scholarship fund here at First and would like to use it! Om camps are a powerful way to grow deeper in your faith, connecting with God . It can be a life changing experience for many who attend. Covid information is on the Horton Center website, so please go there for questions or reach out to the camp director. Parents who would like to experience camp can be a counselor and receive a mini scholarship for your child/youth to attend camp this summer.

### Faith Formation Outside

**Last Sunday & Celebration: June 6<sup>th</sup> @ 10am**

*On the Church grounds*

**For the whole family ~ children, youth, parents & grandparents!**

*Hospitality/Fellowship ~ Gathering circle ~  
Welcome ~ Story Time ~ Activities/Fellowship*

Join us for FFO and celebrating our offering to VT Adaptive Sports, have communion with the full church at the end of worship outside on the lawn and enjoy seeing each other again! The Ice Cream truck will then arrive for our Ice Cream Social at 11am. Mark your calendars and come reconnect with your FCCEJ friends and make new ones. Make the journey back to church and come join the fun!

### Youth Ministry News

*Opportunities to Volunteer:*

Vacation Bible Camp ~ August 9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> (*sign up online or with Laurie*)

Food Pantry (*sign up online with SignUp Genius*)

### Junior Youth (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>)

*Mark your calendars!*

**June 13<sup>th</sup> at 12noon All Church Hike @ Mills**

*Riverside Park in Jericho*

*Bring a bag lunch & a water bottle. Come see your friends from FCCEJ!*

- Interested in coming to [www.hortoncenter.org](http://www.hortoncenter.org) as a camper? Watch this! <https://youtu.be/rLZm8fzCV2Y>
- Are you 18yrs or older? Love the outdoors and spending time helping children/youth? **Watch this one!** <https://youtu.be/gecZ0v3BGZk>

Camp will look a little different this year with less campers in a cabin and therefore more counselors are needed.

Send your child/youth to Horton Center this summer (or another UCC camp)! Thinking about it? Please reach out to FCCEJ staff as we would like to help

If you can't join Laurie for *VT Takes a Hike to the Mtn* week, then maybe there is another week you are interested. Check out all the tabs and look at all the pictures and videos on [www.hortoncenter.org](http://www.hortoncenter.org). It's a cool place to go!



**VT Takes a Hike to the Mtn: July 18-24, 2021**  
~for those going into 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> in the fall of 2021

*VT @ the Lake is taking a hiatus from the lake at Rock Point and hiking to the Mountain! Come join us up at Pine Mountain and unite with middle schoolers from the Green (VT) and White (NH) Mountains. God's spirit will be in all we do at camp this week as we hike, play, pray, sing, rock climb, do some arts and crafts, and discover our own courage through games, challenges, and much more!*

Elementary (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade) and Senior High Camp are also offered this week. Siblings could go together for a week at Horton Center. Check out their *Summer Schedule*.



**Vacation Bible Camp:**

*Discovery on Adventure Island*

August 9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**REGISTRATION is ONLINE and OPEN**

*(No Paper Forms this year!)*

REGISTRATION is ONLINE and OPEN (no paper forms this year!)

• Please click the 'registration' button on our Vacation Bible Camp page for campers. Laurie will then get your information.

• Campers arrive between 8:45 and 9am and are picked up at 11:45am. Volunteers arrive by 8:30am and leave by noon.

*"Arise! Shine! Your light has come: the Lord's glory has shone upon you!"*  
(Isaiah 60:1)

- Parents can choose between an in-person program or a flexible/online program if you are not comfortable yet with in-person.
- Not free the week of Vacation Bible Camp? You can help behind the scenes before camp. Please reach out to Laurie with your talent and time frame.
- Free the week of camp? Volunteer to be a set of extra hands with the campers OR be a grounds monitor and wear a orange vest (helping us keep everyone safe while watching the perimeter). Reach out to Laurie to sign up and with questions. Your LIME green t-shirt awaits you!
- Think tropical island! It's going to be a fun week!

Think **tropical** island! *It's going to be a fun week!*

### Missions & Volunteering

The missions committee would like to share with the church information on our continued work on several ongoing projects, use of mission funds for our church's outreach work, and information on upcoming events.

- **Support of Care Facilities Staff:** In the last several months, committee members Jane Schneider and Monica Johns have delivered individually wrapped donut treats to the staff at 7 area care facilities. Committee members were united in our desire to thank the staff at these facilities for their compassionate care during the covid 19 pandemic, a time that severely affected the residents and staff at care facilities. In May, the staff at the Residences at Shelburne Bay were thanked with signs and donut treats. Committee members have received many thank you notes from the visited care facilities.
- **Support of Charitable Organizations:** Your missions committee has been working diligently on being good stewards of the money entrusted to us in the church budget. At our April meeting, we voted to

donate some of our budget money in support of local charitable organizations. \$500 was donated to Meals on Wheels, an organization that provides healthy meals, social contact, and a caring, watchful eye for our senior citizens. Due to the pandemic, demand for their services has had an increase. \$250 was donated to EDD Adaptive Sports, a 501( c) 3 non-profit organization that provides recreational and competitive sports programs for individuals with any type of disability. The missions committee also gave to COTS. The Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS) works to end homelessness and provides emergency shelter, services, and long-term housing for Vermonters who are experiencing homelessness. COTS recently had a generous donor who offered to match donations of \$1000. Through a \$500 donation from the missions committee plus church member donations, we were able to give a donation of over \$1000 to COTS, which then like loaves of bread and fish multiplied, becoming a donation of over \$2000.

- **Calling All Veterans:** Your missions committee would like military veterans to be aware of a rewarding volunteer opportunity with the Josh Pallotta Fund, Inc. – According to the website, this fund “... is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting Veterans and Service Members. At the Josh Pallotta Fund, we hope to combine local and national resources, emergency services, and research to provide Veterans the resiliency, transition and reintegration tools to help them sustain or return to full and healthy lives.” Members of the missions committee recently visited Josh’s House; a wellness recreation center located in Fort Ethan Allen in Colchester. This new facility has been made possible through donations of many local businesses and private individuals. There is a current need for veterans who are willing to volunteer their time to help their fellow veterans. Volunteers are particularly needed during the evening and on weekends. Please refer to the website <https://joshpallottafund.org/> for additional information.
- **Strengthen the Church Special Offering June 6, 2021:** Your missions committee would like to ask for your support for this special UCC offering coming up in June. According to the UCC website, “The Strengthen the Church (STC) Offering reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC. Conferences and the national setting equally share the gifts given by members and friends through their local congregations. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. **By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ.**” Please find more information about this important offering at the UCC website at <https://www.ucc.org/giving/ways-to-give/our-churchs-wider-mission/strengthen-the-church/> As always, donations are gladly accepted both before and after the special offering date. Please just note on your donation that the funds are for the Strengthen the Church Special Offering.



**Heavenly Food Pantry** operates monthly on the *2<sup>nd</sup> Monday ~ 5:30-7:30pm* and *4<sup>th</sup> Thursday (3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays in November and December) ~ 2-6pm*. For this month, the specific distribution dates are Monday, June 14<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, June 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Eligibility:** Residents of Essex, Essex Junction and Westford are welcome to enter the parking lot at First Congregational Church of Essex Junction using the Church Street entrance. Vehicles will be ushered to a pickup spot after showing proof of residence and identification for each family member, including children. Food will be delivered to the vehicle’s trunk, thereby ensuring a safe contactless delivery. There are no income requirements to receive food, but additional items from the USDA are available to those who verify their income falls below federally mandated guidelines! We have shopping carts to borrow to get food home for those without vehicles for those living within walking distance!

**Donations:** The Pantry would benefit from the following items: At this time, we only need jams or jelly, small dish soap, tooth paste and baking items. Please, do not donate any egg cartons as we are overstocked.

**Volunteers:** We appreciate all help! *Signup here:* <https://bit.ly/3iVomZ2>

**Questions or Concerns?** Please, email [welcome@fcej.org](mailto:welcome@fcej.org) or call the church at 1 (802) 878-5745. Those needing food but unable to attend can call Pastor Josh at 878-5745 to make other arrangements. We ask that you contact us before 2pm on distribution days so that we may have ample time to accommodate you.

**Save the Date!****Nearly New Sale****Sat., August 14<sup>th</sup> 9am-1pm****Food Truck: 11am-3pm**

The Craft Fest Committee and the Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop will be again holding an outdoor Nearly New Sale! Drop offs for Nearly New will open that morning at 7am.

To highlight the mission work of FCCEJ at St Thomas Parish in Jamaica, the Food Truck, Jamaican Supreme, will be on-site selling food from 11-3. Stay tuned for more details as the day draws closer.

*Questions?* Please contact Cathy Shearer or Sue Wood.

**Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop**

**News:** The Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop continues to have a steady stream of business each weekend. Most days, there has been a line of folks waiting for the doors to open! Customers and volunteers follow the Governor's guidelines for retail operations: social distancing, mask wearing, and limited shoppers at any given time. The shop is thoroughly cleaned by a volunteer weekly.

**Donations:** We are currently accepting spring and summer items: Men's, women's, and children's clothing and accessories of good quality are appreciated along with bed and table linens, smaller household items, and jewelry. **We no longer accept books.**



**Hours & Contact:** Tuesdays, 10am-1pm; Saturdays. 10am-1pm. For questions or to donate, call the Shop (P# 879-6552); or contact Sue Wood (P# 878-3068) (E: [woodsusanjane@gmail.com](mailto:woodsusanjane@gmail.com))

**Jamaica News – Recruiting for the 2022 Team!**

The Jamaica Leadership team is now recruiting team members for our next service trip to Jamaica, June 21-30, 2022. We had a great response to an informational session held on May 13<sup>th</sup>! If you missed it and are interested in learning more about the Jamaica trip, please contact Sharon Dettenrieder ([dettenriedes@hartwick.edu](mailto:dettenriedes@hartwick.edu)) or Carolyn Rushford ([cjrushford@comcast.net](mailto:cjrushford@comcast.net)).

In addition, you can find out more about the Jamaica Service Program, with answers to many questions, as well as the application form, on the church website at

<https://www.fccej.org/v5/serving-others/jamaica-service-trip/>.

To access the application, click on "How do I sign up?" under the FAQs. Applications are due by September 1, 2021, and must be accompanied by a \$100 deposit. Please note that one of the forms requires a notary signature. You can give your completed applications to Doug in the church office, or mail to the church.

Team members must be 16 by September 1, 2022 and will need to be fully vaccinated for COVID19. Be assured that we will be monitoring the COVID19 situation and will take that into consideration in trip planning.

We look forward to hearing from you!

**Jamaican Food Truck Event**

The Jamaica program will be hosting an event on August 14, 2022, along with the FCCEJ yard sale and thrift shop open house. Jamaican Supreme Food Truck will be at the church from 11-1 providing authentic Jamaican food and music. Jerk chicken, rice & beans, beef patties, fried plantain, and Jamaican beverages will be available for purchase. A percentage of your food purchase will go towards our 2022 trip. Hope you'll join us for some delicious food! We will also be showing photos from our trips and will be happy to answer any questions.



### Dismas House. *Volunteers needed in 2021.*

Visit <https://bit.ly/36kYq44> for more information and to volunteer.

"The much-appreciated deed you can do!" As you may know, there are four Dismas Houses in Vermont. They are homes for folks who need a place to live after they have served a prison term. Each of the four Dismas Houses provide not only shelter but also support as residents make the transition from life in prison to life outside.

For the past several years, the members and friends of the Church have been helping with the support of Dismas House residents. We do this on the 4th Wednesday of each month by preparing a dinner for the residents of the Dismas House in Winooski. Typically, three of us do the food preparation. One prepares an entrée, (often a one-pot dinner such as a stew or lasagna). A second person prepares a salad, and a third, a dessert.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, we would enjoy the dinner with the 10 residents and the Director and the Associate Director. The interactions that occurred between us and the residents helped them overcome the fear of facing the public that former prison inmates have. And the meals that I had there were excellent! I found the residents friendly and every appreciative of our help. I feel that by helping the residents, we are living out Christ's message of love and care for our neighbors.

The outbreak of the pandemic changed things for a while. We still prepare the food, but we drop it off at the house, and no longer enter the house. In this way, we and they have been practicing social distancing. With the development of vaccines for Covid-19 during the winter of 2020, protocols will change so that we can once again enjoy eating dinner with residents if we choose to do so. If you have questions about becoming a volunteer, please contact the Church's facilitator for Dismas House, Ed Steele (P# (802) 871-5897; E: [edwardmsteele@msn.com](mailto:edwardmsteele@msn.com)). Ed will be happy to talk to you.



It's time to share your musical talents during the summer months. If you are interested in performing a piece or two, please contact Denise Keating (Music Committee Chair) at 802-345-8900. We would love to hear you share your talents. Thank you.

## Worship & Fellowship

LEAVE ROOM FOR JESUS



**Hybrid Worship:** *Sundays @ 10am,*  
Communion *1<sup>st</sup> Sundays*  
[youtube.com/c/fccej](https://www.youtube.com/c/fccej)

We are pleased to offer in-person worship on a limited basis with COVID precautions in place. We are offering a single 10am worship service currently.

If you need assistance or have any questions about in-person worship, please call the church office at 802-878-5745 or email [welcomed@fccej.org](mailto:welcomed@fccej.org). If there are no seats available, please visit [www.fccej.org](http://www.fccej.org) to join us for Teleworship.



**Altar Flowers:** *Request yours here:* <https://bit.ly/33JWlxj>

Altar flowers cost \$40. People typically buy flowers to honor of a special event, memorialize a loved one, or celebrate a birthday. *Trouble signing up?* Contact the church: [welcomed@fccej.org](mailto:welcomed@fccej.org) or 1(802) 878-5745.

### More Worship & Fellowship Opportunities

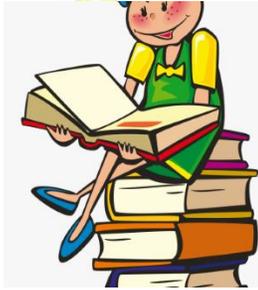
**Daily Devotionals:** *Weekdays @ 8am.* Search "firstcongregationalej" on Facebook or visit: <http://facebook.com/firstcongregationalej/>

**Sermon Talk Back:** *Tuesdays at 8:30am.* Join the pastors for a rousing discussion of the recent sermon. <http://zoom.us/j/740803865>

**Coffee Clatter:** *Thursdays at 8am.* Join for the pastors online. A little bit of caffeinated confection, a lot of joyful banter about everything under and above the sun! <http://zoom.us/j/97659276694>



**Graduation Sunday: Sun., June 13th. Submit graduation photos/details by Wed., June 9<sup>th</sup>!** Please email me, [jsimon@fccej.org](mailto:jsimon@fccej.org) a photo of your child when they were **a)** young and **b)** grownup. Also, **c)** please include details as to where they are graduating from and what their plans are for the near future including any technical colleges, internships, etc. We will happily include this content in our Teleworship service!



**Noontime Book Group: every 3rd Monday, 11:30am.** (Next date June 19<sup>th</sup>)

**Zoom Link: <http://zoom.us/j/626841083> / Password: 455 075**

We hope to meet out in the yard on the Church Street side of the church. If it is too hot, windy or rainy, we will meet in the Marvin Lounge. We will follow the church's guidelines for masking and social distancing that are in place at that time. Our book for June is *Mrs. Lincoln's Sisters* by Jennifer Chiavarini. After Abraham Lincoln's death Mary Lincoln had a difficult time and at one point seemed on the verge of suicide. Her sisters had become estranged during the Civil War due to conflicting sides taken by their husbands in the War. This historical novel explores how the sisters dealt with her problems. Would their love be strong enough to save her despite the fractured family ties? Was she really insane or just terrified of being sent to an asylum? As with her other writing, this book is well researched and will give much insight into this very significant period in our history. Jane Schneider will lead the discussion. Bring a bag lunch so we can enjoy a picnic and in person company of good friends. Questions/concerns? Contact Joanne Irwin @ [joanne.h.irwin@gmail.com](mailto:joanne.h.irwin@gmail.com)

**FCCEJ Life Story/Memoir Club: every 3rd Wednesday @ 1pm via Zoom.**

Anyone is welcome to join this group of (mostly) FCCEJ members, which is just getting off the ground. Our plan is to share ideas, collaborate and encourage each other in writing down our life stories, or the stories of others we know. We hope it will be a fun way to write and learn together and make the pandemic and winter months go by more quickly! If you are interested in joining us, please contact Pete Schmalz at [pnschmalz@comcast.net](mailto:pnschmalz@comcast.net) or P#879-3352. The Zoom link is kept private so please ask Pete for it.



**Ice Cream Social: Sunday, June 6th @ 11am in Church Parking Lot.**

FB Event Page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/234269931801178>

On Sunday, June 6th, we will celebrate our Faith Formation year and all the volunteers that help to run our programs by enjoying some ice cream! Mr. Ding-a-Ling will arrive around 11am. Even if you're attending via teleworship, do please drive to church to partake in the confections. Be sure to contact [lchipman@fccej.org](mailto:lchipman@fccej.org) -or- click "Going" on this Facebook event so that we know approximately how many people to expect.

## Ice Cream Social

*This event typically marks a transition from our programmatic year's worship schedule to the summer. However, through the summer, worship continues to be a single 10am hybrid service with limited Sanctuary seating.*

**All Ages Hike: Sunday, June 13<sup>th</sup> @ Noon-2pm**

Join us at Mills Riverside Park in Underhill for a hike. We'll gather in the parking lot and depending on who comes we'll decide which paths to walk. Bring a bag lunch. All ages are welcome.



## Stewardship

*Visit this link to Give: <http://www.fccej.org/v5/giving/>*

Izzy's smile is beaming, you just know, beneath her mask, because the warm brown eyes of this 13-year-old Essex Middle Schooler reflect her fun spirit and caring heart that no mask can hide.

Those traits are reflected in the tummy rubs she gives to eight-month-old Layla, a Golden Retriever who joined her family last October. "A covid puppy," Izzy's dad, Ed Owens, says with a laugh. "We haven't been able to socialize her around other dogs." Izzy laughs, too, when her dad describes the camping trips the family took last summer in a newly purchased camper. "We'd kinda like it - my brother and I - if we went to more places with more fun stuff nearby. Ice cream and great swimming!"

And fun is just how Izzy, an active member of the Junior Youth Group at FCCEJ for three years, describes her experiences both with the group, and at church.

"It's really just a lot of fun," Izzy says emphatically, and without hesitation. "I like all the kids. They're fun to be around. And I've always had an underlying feeling of being contented there."

Izzy and her parents Ed and Gretchen Owens, and 10-year-old brother Teddy, have been members at FCCEJ since 2016. For Izzy, her involvement going to church and youth group activities has been a chance to connect with peers, learn a bit more about herself and, simply put, learn.

"I didn't know that the Butterbeer in the Harry Potter books is an actual 'thing,' Izzy says without hesitation, when asked what she's recently learned. "I mean, I loved the books, and I knew about the beer, but I didn't know you could make it." Associate Pastor Josh Simon made the drink, a concoction of cream soda, sugar, cream and butter, and shared it with the group.

Self-growth, and the presence of spirituality, also draw Izzy to the group." When we do things like carry clothing into the thrift shop (Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop) and bag food for the food pantry, I'm aware there's a reason we're doing this. Sometimes when Josh or Laurie (Chipman, Christian Education Director) will talk about a particular bible story while we're doing things, I know there's a message."

"I don't know just the right word," Izzy says, "but I think being together probably subtly affects who we are. And I think that kindness is really predominant among all of us."

Izzy said, too, that a recent group activity in which they created portraits of each other, and shared them, opened her eyes to how her peers see her. So too, was completing a shared drawing with each person using a different colored marker. "When the drawing came back to me, I realized my drawing had been interpreted so differently than what I'd intended."

If a 13-year-old can learn that, along with sharing some laughs, pretty valuable life lessons are going on at FCCEJ among the youth.

And a wish for a post-covid youth activity?

"Hide 'n seek in the church with the lights off," Izzy says.

... And topped off with a mug of Josh's homemade butterbeer.



**Special Offering: Strengthen the Church**

*Sunday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021*

*Read more in the "Missions & Volunteering" section of this newsletter.*

**Donate to our Church**

Your donation could support our music, youth, missions, adult enrichment, Thrift Shop, Food Pantry, and more! We are also a United Church of Christ “5 for 5” participant in these fundraisers: *Per Capita*, *One Great Hour of Sharing*, *Strengthen the Church*, *Neighbors in Need* and *The Christmas Fund*. We appreciate this fundraising! Here are a few ways that you may help our ministry:

**Mail checks (payable to “FCCEJ”):**  
attn. Financial Secretary  
FCCEJ  
1 Church Street  
Essex Jct, VT 05452

- *Send a Check or use BillPay.* This is a remote service that issues one-time or recurring check payments by mail. Please, contact your banking institution for details. Be sure to note the reason for your donation in the check’s memo line (e.g., “food pantry”).
  - *Shop using Amazon Smile.* We receive 0.5% of your purchases! To start ordering, visit this link <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/03-0212216>
  - *Send money via PayPal.* We accept electronic donations through PayPal. Visit our donation page: [paypal.me/fccej](https://www.paypal.me/fccej). A PayPal account is not required to donate money!
- ? *Do you have questions about pledging?* Please contact Cathy Shearer, Finance Committee Chair. (P# 878-6023).
- ? *Do you need to confirm receipt of your pledge card or payment?* Please email the Financial Secretary ([finances@fccej.org](mailto:finances@fccej.org)).
- ? *Do you wish to pick up your pledge envelopes or need them mailed to you?* Please contact the church office by phone (802-878-5745) or email ([welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org))

# Birthdays!

SULLIVAN, Ann Marie	06/01	GIANNUZZI, Matthew	06/08	STAPLETON, Jonathan	06/17	CHADURJIAN, Cindy	06/25
BOYD, Susan	06/03	BICKFORD, Mindy	06/09	CONTI, Dennis	06/18	SARGENT, Paula	06/25
DEUTSCH, Erna	06/03	HAMILTON, Finn	06/09	FAUX, Joan	06/18	BRENNAN, Kathryn	06/26
KOLVOORD, Louise	06/03	MESSIER, Colleen	06/09	CATTERTON, Christine	06/19	WOOD, Abigail	06/27
SMITH, Max	06/04	CALHOUN, Connor	06/10	FIELD, Stephanie	06/19	GIANNUZZI, Lori	06/28
BERO, Paige	06/05	MCCULLEN, Sean	06/12	STEELE, Edward	06/19	JACKSON, Linda	06/28
WOOD, Steven	06/05	WELLS, Ann	06/12	BOGARDUS, Linda	06/21	NOEL, Whitney	06/28
HATHAWAY, Wayne	06/06	STRUCK, Holden	06/13	MAUGER, Rory	06/21	REARDON, Suzanne	06/28
DAVIS, Bev	06/07	NADEAU, June	06/14	GABERT, Henry	06/22	COE, Katie	06/29
DAWSON, Brenda	06/07	METCALF, Sarah	06/15	MAUGER, Lorelai	06/22	HOFFMAN, Nadine	06/29
YOULEN, Eva	06/07	KINNEY, Brandon	06/17	MCGEARY, Kaki	06/23	SCHMALZ, Peter	06/29
ASTORE, Janet	06/08	O'NEIL, Leslie	06/17	CILLEY, Andrea	06/24		