

# SPIRIT@FIRST

monthly newsletter

FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH *of Essex Junction*

*Love. Serve. Grow.*

## July/August 2021: *In this issue...*

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

Church offices are closed on *Monday, July 5<sup>th</sup>* in observance of **Independence Day**. They reopen on *Tuesday, July 6<sup>th</sup>*.

### Your Pastor's Ponderings

Dear Friends:

We have had quite an unexpectedly arduous journey through these uncharted waters of pandemic. As in any journey, we have had to adjust and make changes enroute and continue to do so as we hopefully approach the end of this world-wide tragedy. As in any difficult journey we have learned quite a bit about our community: our values, our principles, and the level of support from our members. Ironically, our church has done quite well, exceeded expectations in every aspect of ministry: worship attendance, capital improvements, yearly pledges and special gifts, community outreach and member support. I find this truth to be pretty gospelish in nature: life in the midst of death, joy in the midst of difficulty, freedom in the midst of commitment and abundance in the midst of generosity.

Recently, our brave little state has reached the 80% vaccination rate and as promised, Gov. Phil Scott has lifted the mask requirement and many of the health safety protocols. Since this is America, some folks have celebrated and returned to normal while others remain cautious and continue to wear their masks and retain some of the protocols. Hospitals, schools, governments buildings and restaurants have also responded differently with some still requiring masks and others feeling finally free from the restraints. Likewise, churches have also exercised their freedom of choice by having the same diversity in the way they have begun to re-open their doors. Some are not worshipping until September, others require vaccination cards for entrance, others require masks, some are worshipping outside only, and some are letting both vaccinated and unvaccinated people in with or without masks. Americans, New Englanders, and Congregationalists like their freedom!

First Congregational Church of Essex Junction will again slowly ease some of our protocol requirements. Starting July 4<sup>th</sup>, both vaccinated and unvaccinated people are free to come to worship where we will still sit in every other pew but will sing, have congregational responses, listen to live music, and enjoy some fellowship time with coffee after church. **We encourage children and adults who have not been vaccinated or with underlying health conditions or simply a bit more cautious to continue to wear their masks.** This easing of protocols will be true for group and committee meetings as well.

However, due to the ever-changing nature of the coronavirus, if the situation in Vermont changes, then we will adapt this new policy to meet the threat and adhere to what the scientists and the Vermont Department of Health say. Thank you all for honoring the cautious way we have approached this situation in the hopes of keeping our members safe. And thank you for continuing to make First Church a great place to conduct ministry, connect with friends and reach out to make the world a better place.

Blessings,  
Rev. Mark Mendes, *Senior Pastor*  
on behalf of Church Council

### Associate Pastor News

This Summer during the five weeks that I am preaching. I will focus our attention on the Letter to the Romans. The letter is directed at the church in Rome. He was not the one who organized the church in Rome. Paul has yet to go to Rome, so this letter is Paul introducing himself to them. In this letter, he writes about baptism; dying to old ways and living anew; salvation; how to live for Christ; and more. We'll examine the familiar passages and passages that are perhaps unfamiliar. Paul is often misunderstood and also understood through an interpretation that is not aware of his socio-political, religious context. Yet I believe the letter to the Romans offers insight into our contemporary faith. I'll even dare say, this letter offers words and encouragement for transformation and renewing of our minds. I'm taking the title of this sermon series from Romans 12: 2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God--what is good and acceptable and perfect." The sermon series title is Let Us Be Transformed and Renewed.

**Youth and Parents** – please mark your calendars for September 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> for a fall youth retreat off-site from Friday afternoon to Saturday evening. More to come! Please watch for updates coming in the September newsletter and youth emails.

All church hikes are taking place on the second Sunday in July and August. The hike locations are TBD.

Rev. Josh Simon, *Associate Pastor*

### Laurie's Lens



Great to see many of you on the first Sunday in June for worship, faith formation and Ice Cream Social! We celebrated the end of our year and now the planning begins for our start up of the fall faith formation time that begins on Welcome Back Sunday on September 12<sup>th</sup>.

We had a good turn out for our church camping weekend at Little River State Park. It was great to be with folks again in God's great outdoors and reconnect face to face. We had around 37 folk attend (10 plus families).

I will be away at Horton Center for a week of outdoor ministries, July 17<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>, leading the week called 'VT takes a hike to the Mtn' for those going into 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Vacation Bible Camp is coming soon! Don't forget to register for our fun week that begins August 9<sup>th</sup>! More information in the camp sections on ages, times, volunteering and wish list! Be a volunteer and join us for this fun week! There is something for everyone during VB Camp week. Youth helpers and adult helpers can email me with their t-shirt size and the mornings they can volunteer. We'd love to have you all week long, but if not sign up for the mornings that work for you. Check our our VB Camp webpage for information, the registration button and our wish list.

As I look towards fall and start planning with our CE team what faith formation will look like, I am taking into account all we have learned through these last 15 months. If you have any thoughts or feelings you would like to share around faith formation and our children and youth programming, please reach out. I'd love to chat and connect with you.

Youth and Parents – please mark your calendars for September 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> for a fall youth retreat off-site from Friday afternoon to Saturday evening. More to come! Please watch for updates coming in the September newsletter and youth emails.

Blessed to be with you,  
Laurie Chipman, *Christian Education Director*

**Reminder ... Faith@Home emails are now in your inbox on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month.**

### Communications

Over the summer the Communications Committee will be collaborating with various committees to support and get the word out about various events. For these activities, we will be adding information to the website, reviewing Front Porch Forum posts and assisting with SignUp Genius pages. At the time of this writing, we know that we'll be assisting with the following items:

- **Vacation Bible Camp** – adding information to the website, providing online content for families that chose the online option and additional Front Porch Forum posts to reach non-church families
- **Dismas House** – assisting Missions committee to share more information about this important ministry
- **August event** – Nearly New sale, Jamaican food truck and Thrift Shop porch sale – adding information to the website and Front Porch Forum posts to share with the community
- **Giving page of website** – coordinating with the Stewardship committee to improve the navigation to find the options for giving to support the church

The website is a great way to learn about what is happening at the church; please take an opportunity to browse the website at [www.fccej.org](http://www.fccej.org). Contact the church office via e-mail at [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org) or by calling 878-5745 if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted by Andrea Sharp

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

### 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!

<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			

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.

### **“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 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 McGear, *Capital Campaign Co-Chairs*

### Youth Ministry News

Opportunities to Volunteer

#### Vacation Bible Camp

August 9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>

We need you!

Sign up online or with Laurie.

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

Mark your calendars!

#### Youth Group Kick Off

September 19<sup>th</sup>, Time TBA

#### Fall Retreat Overnight

September 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>

@ Dick & Anne Harris' farm in Jeffersonville. Arrive on Friday at supper time and leave after supper on Saturday. Parents are asked to come join us for our opening on Friday and return for our closing on Saturday. This is a great opportunity for parents to see and get to know each other.

### Faith Formation

First Sunday of Fall faith formation will be on **Welcome Back Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup>**.

More information coming in the September newsletter.

#### Young Apostles: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> graders & a Parent/Grandparent

Watch for start up news in our September newsletter. Keep looking for ways to reach out and help others around you.

#### 2021-22 Faith Formation Offering

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.

### Outdoor Ministry Camps

Come to [www.hortoncenter.org](http://www.hortoncenter.org) as a camper!

Watch this <https://youtu.be/rLZm8fzCV2Y>

We have a camp scholarship fund here at First and would like to use it! Our 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.

### Female Counselors needed! July 17<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>

Are you 18yrs or older? Love the outdoors and spending time helping children/youth? Join Laurie for *VT Takes a Hike to the Mtn* for those going into 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade (volunteers arrive on Saturday afternoon and leaving after campers late morning on the 24<sup>th</sup>).

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!





### Vacation Bible Camp: *Discovery on Adventure Island*

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

Toddlers and a parent or grandparent, and children attending up to 5<sup>th</sup> grade this fall.

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

REGISTER Online!

- Go to <https://bit.ly/3v6Pni7> Laurie will then get your information.
- Campers arrive between 8:45 and 9am and are picked up at 11:45am. Parent are encouraged to attend our closing at 11:30am.

- Choose between in-person program or a flexible/online program
- Can you help behind the scenes before camp? We have a few easy backdrops to put together. Reach out to Laurie.
- Volunteers (youth & adults) arrive for 8:30am meeting and leave by noon.
- More hands on volunteers are needed with campers OR be a grounds monitor and wear an orange vest (monitoring the perimeter of our lawn). Let Laurie know your LIME green t-shirt size!
- Volunteers needed for Sunday, August 8<sup>th</sup> tent/canopy set up. See Laurie for details.
- Check out our WISH LIST at <https://bit.ly/355cBtR>

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

### Missions & Volunteering

The members of the missions committee are grateful for donations given to our committee through the church budget, through fundraisers, and for answering the call for support for local charitable organizations. Through these donations, our church has extended its outreach to many in need in our wider community and shared our love and support in tangible ways. Read below about two great ways your donations have shared the love emanating from First Church:

**Spectrum Youth and Family Services** –The Heavenly Cents Thrift Store advisory committee and the missions committee joined together to donate \$1000 dollars to Spectrum at their St Albans branch. Members of the missions committee brought this donation to St. Albans on June 10, 2021. Founded in 1970, Spectrum works to help youth ages 12-26 make positive changes in their lives by providing basic needs and supportive housing, through skills programs, and by providing counseling and mentoring programs. Please read more about this worthwhile organization at <https://www.spectrumvt.org/>

**Joint Urban Ministry Project (JUMP)** – The finance committee alerted the missions committee to money that had been donated and designated for JUMP in the past that was in a Red Tent fund. Members of the missions committee brought that \$625 to JUMP on behalf of our church. JUMP exceeded their spring campaign goal. JUMP put out the following press release:



Stefanie Comstock (left), Spectrum's St. Albans Drop-In Center Manager, accepting our check payment from Paula Sargent (right), Missions committee chair.

The Joint Urban Ministry Project, JUMP has reached, and exceeded the 2021 Spring Campaign Goal. Campaign funds will be used to help economically disadvantaged people in search of essential basic needs and assistance to gain independence to help themselves.

People in the greater Burlington community continue to be affected by COVID-19, with lost or diminished wages. Economic recovery appears unpredictable at this point. We anticipate increased needs for food, utilities and transportation. Spring Campaign funds will help us fill the gap created by COVID.



Ron Pynn, Board of Directors President, "I am so heartened by the generous commitment shown by JUMP's loyal, dedicated supporters in helping JUMP reach its goal of \$30,000 for the Spring Campaign. The past year has been a difficult, trying time dealing with the COVID pandemic, all the more so for JUMP's clients. Your generosity is greatly appreciated, and much needed. So on behalf of the more than 2000 JUMP families I offer a sincere thank you!"

Lastly, Wanda Hines, Director, "JUMP is most grateful to the many individual donors who funded our campaign. Your support will mean we can provide grocery vouchers, utility assistance, gasoline for transportation, laundry voucher as well as cleaning supplies and personal care items. Especially now when food vouchers and stabilizing living situations through utility assistance are the two greatest needs sought by low income and homeless households reaching out to JUMP."

**Get ready to bake** - As part of the Jamaica Food Truck Event (*read more in the "Jamaica News" subsection below*), the Missions Committee will be putting on a coffee and bake sale at the Yard Sale on August 14<sup>th</sup> to benefit the Jamaica program. Enjoy a snack and cup of coffee as you browse the yard sale and support the Jamaica program! We are planning a trip in June 2022 to work with our partners once again at the White Horses School and Morant Bay Rotary. Do you have a new recipe you would like to try out or an old favorite you would like to bake again? Well, there is a perfect outlet for your yearning. We need batches of individually wrapped baked goods such as brownies, cookies, muffins, and bars. Please bring your baked donations to the church by 8:30 am August 14<sup>th</sup>. If you have questions or need items picked up, please call Paula Sargent at 879-3598.

**Jamaica News:** *Interested in being part of the 2022 Team?!*

The Jamaica Leadership team is actively recruiting team members for our next service trip to Jamaica, June 21-30, 2022. If you 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. Participants must have/obtain a passport (by December 2021) that is valid until January 2023. 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 & Bake Sale: Saturday, August 14<sup>th</sup>

Sign up for the Food Truck meals at <https://bit.ly/3vOAMHI>

The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction will be hosting the Jamaican Supreme Food Truck at 1 Church Street, Essex Junction on August 14th from 11AM to 1PM. Come and try some delicious, authentic Jamaican food and support the Jamaica program at FCCEJ! 10% of the food proceeds will benefit the Jamaica program.

The Missions Committee will also be selling baked goods and coffee. All proceeds from the bake sale will benefit the FCCEJ Jamaica Service program. Please pre-order your Jamaican food (payment due at pick-up on the 14th) using the SignUp Genius link. Jamaican sodas and beverages will also be available for purchase on the 14th. Menu for the Food Truck is as follows (prices include tax):

- Jerk chicken meal\* (bone-in) \$20
- Brown Stew chicken meal\* (boneless) \$20
- Beef patty (spicy beef in pastry) \$7
- Side of fried plantains \$4

\*Meals include rice & beans, cabbage, and fried plantains.



### Nearly New Sale & 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Church Yard Sale

Sat., August 14th 9am-1pm  
Food Truck & Bake Sale: 11am-3pm

The Craft Fest Committee and the Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop will be again holding an outdoor Nearly New Sale! Start collecting your donations, and then get ready to shop! We had a great time at last year's event and are looking forward to this year. Drop offs for Nearly New will open that morning at 7-9am. Our "doors open" for shopping the sale at 9.

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. Missions is also hosting a bake sale that same day! (*More details in the 'Missions & Volunteering' section, page 6.*)

In addition to donations, we are also looking for volunteers to help staff the event and clean up after. Come join us! Questions? Contact Cathy Shearer by emailing [10cshearer@comcast.net](mailto:10cshearer@comcast.net).



### Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop

News: The Thrift Shop recently donated \$500.00 to SPECTRUM Youth and Family Services, partnering with the Missions Committee who matched that amount. This donation was specifically for the new center that just opened in St. Albans. (*More details*

*available in the Missions committee letter, page 6.*) We are grateful for the volunteers who support our mission, those who donate items to keep the shop operating, and our many customers.

Donations: The Thrift Shop is now open on Tuesdays and Saturdays, 10-1pm and will gladly accept your donations at that time. Due to a lack of storage space, we are asking that only summer clothing be donated at this time. We are also accepting small household items and linens. 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: Customer traffic continues to be steady and at this point, mask wearing is optional. 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))

### HEAVENLY PANTRY RETURNING TO IN-PERSON SERVICES IN AUGUST

The Heavenly Food Pantry has targeted August 9 as its return to in-person food assistance here at First Congregational. After serving the community for 17 months as a drive through operation, plans are being made to allow families to “shop” inside the building on a limited basis. Registration will take place outside, with a maximum of 4 families allowed inside the building at any one time. Masks will still be required for both volunteers and families visiting, and the food pantry is committed to continue its mission of feeding those in the area who may need assistance.

To that end, the pantry is looking for volunteers who are willing to help. Our drive through pantry has been able to run with a minimum of volunteers but returning to services inside the building will require many more to help with set up, shopping with families, stocking and transporting food to vehicles. We welcome all volunteers who have assisted in the past, both pre-pandemic as well as the wonderful people who stepped up to help during the last several months.

If you are interested in being part of the Food Pantry team, call the church office at 878-5745 or email [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org). The food pantry is open on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month from 5:30-7:30 p.m. as well as the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday from 2-6 p.m. This has been an integral program during this time when many who have never required food assistance suddenly found themselves in need. Volunteers may also signup online. <https://bit.ly/3iVomZ2>. *Don't you want to help?*

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 July and August, the specific distribution dates are *Monday, July 12<sup>th</sup> & August 9<sup>th</sup>*; and *Thursday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> & August 26<sup>th</sup>*.



• **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.

• **Eligibility:** Families will be asked to provide proof of residence in the form of a utility bill with the physical address listed. Identification for every household member, including children, should be available.

• **Distributions:** Families coming in vehicles via the Church Street entrance will be given a number and registered in the order they arrive. After registration, food will be picked up by the parking lot door, where it will safely be placed in vehicles. As always, there are no income requirements to visit the pantry; however, the USDA provides extra food to those who qualify based on federally mandated guidelines. Those without vehicles but within walking distance of the pantry are welcome to borrow a shopping cart to take food home.

• **Special Accommodations:** If you need food but unable to attend, please call the church office at 878-5745 between 8:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. to plan for a delivery. Or email [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org). There is no need to go hungry—let the Heavenly Pantry help!



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

For more information and to volunteer, visit <https://bit.ly/36kYq44>

"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 very 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.

## Worship & Fellowship

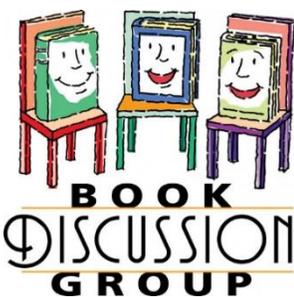
### LEAVE ROOM FOR JESUS



**Worship:** *Sundays @ 10am*, Communion *1<sup>st</sup> Sundays* via [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 [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org). If there are no seats available, please visit [www.fccej.org](http://www.fccej.org) to join us for Teleworship.

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.



**Noontime Book Group:** *every 3rd Monday, 11:30am. July 19<sup>th</sup> & August 16th*

Please note that we no longer use Zoom teleconference for our meetings.

In July, we will meet to discuss *Firefly Lane* by Kristin Hannah. This meeting will be in-person at the church. *Firefly Lane* is the story of two girls who promise in middle school to be best friends forever, no matter what. They come from very different backgrounds, and their lives take very different paths. Can their friendship endure as one becomes a stay-at-home mother and the other a nationally known news reporter and TV star? In August, we will meet to discuss *The Dutch House* by Ann Pritchett. One reviewer described it as a fairy tale - like cross between *Cinderella* and *Hansel and Gretel*. Two children are raised by their wealthy father in a large house dominated by paintings and furnishings from another era. Their mother has deserted them and finally their father remarries. As the children grow, they are ultimately driven away by their father's new wife. The book deals with the kids coming back and trying to understand what happened in their childhood. Bring a lunch and join us for fellowship and good conversation. Questions/concerns? Contact Joanne Irwin @ [joanne.h.irwin@gmail.com](mailto:joanne.h.irwin@gmail.com)

### More Worship & Fellowship Opportunities

**Fellowship Hour** immediately follows worship service. Please note that the Zoom teleconference component is on hiatus during the summer months.

**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>

**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.

*The following are some reflections by members of the Life Story/Memoir Club, which began meeting during the pandemic, to share stories and encourage each other's writing efforts. These reflections focus on our church life experiences during the pandemic:*

“Dressed in my Sunday best, 10 minutes before the service I sit in my lounge chair and scan the bulletin which I printed out the day before. My huge television screen makes me feel as though I am

in the sanctuary as I watch on YouTube. The first Sunday of the month I pour a small glass of juice and get a cracker to dip into it to be ready when Mark or Josh serve Communion. During the entire service it feels as though the Pastors, Deacons, and Laurie are speaking directly to me. This helps to make the service personal - as though I am truly present as things are happening.” – *Mary-Ellen Grove*

“At first it felt odd sitting in our easy chairs watching church on a screen. After several weeks we moved to our dining table and began having coffee and breakfast during church. Very relaxing. We established a little routine for ourselves, bringing our little candle to the table which Howard would light as the candles in church were being lit. We had the bulletin available to use for responsive readings and for reading along with the chosen scripture passages. If it was a communion Sunday, we prepared bread and juice ahead of time and had it ready at the table. This became a very comfortable routine. But hopefully not too comfortable!!!” – *Janne Giles*

“As Easter came, I was reminded that we had been in the pandemic for over a year and that at the beginning of the pandemic, we were thinking we would be back in church by Easter 2020. The committee overseeing the restoration of the sanctuary had worked hard to have the church ready for us to return on Palm Sunday. Despite the fact that the sanctuary was ready, the guidelines for group gatherings due to COVID19 didn't allow us to be together.” – *Sharon Dettenrieder*

“When the pandemic was still barely a whisper, I remember the last time we sat in Marvin Lounge, for the February Deacons meeting, brainstorming aspects of hygiene in worship. Some explained their own personal situation (immuno-compromised), and the staff talked about how they would need to keep their distance from parishioners and use the elbow-bump (regardless of who was “coming in for a hug”). One of the deacons joked about a new use of the phrase ‘no matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey...do not come near me!’ In those early days, we were still holding services in Fellowship Hall, due to the ongoing sanctuary renovations. The first online service was broadcast from Fellowship Hall, and the backdrop of tapestry behind the altar drew some chuckles at the next Deacons' meeting (someone remarked that it looked like a college dorm room or a basement in a hostage video). But it worked well enough, and our ministers pulled it off skillfully. It would get much better when the sanctuary was ready to use again.” – *Peter Schmalz*

## Stewardship

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



The enthusiasm that brothers Ethan and Braeden Koch express for the FCCEJ Youth Group is contagious. Couple that with the smiles and positive energy inspired by a gentle romp with the family dog in their Essex home, and the masks just have to slip away.

“Oh, just go ahead and take off your mask and let her see your smile,” their mother Aimee encourages Ethan, 12, as he perks up with excitement as he talks of the friendships, he’s been able to nurture during youth group meetings in the past year, with normal social activity nearly non-existent.

Ethan lifts his black mask, finally able to expose his smile beneath dancing brown eyes. So, too, does his brother Braeden, 14.

“I just like being with all the people,” Ethan says simply, “even if it’s on Zoom.”

“It’s just been good to see other people,” Braeden echoed.

When in-person learning at Essex Middle and Founders Memorial School stopped for the boys in March 2020, Braeden said he really missed seeing his friends, in person, and the lack of a school schedule. While Aimee could work from home and help supplement their academics, Braeden said he still found it difficult to stay motivated without his peers around him.

Both boys just missed their friends.

The youth group filled in a big gap, they said. Though many of the activities had to be on-line, those gatherings were with kids outside of their classes, and were smaller and much more personal than school Zoom sessions.

The Kochs, like many active households, made creative use of the free time they had with remote school, during the last three months of the 2019-20 school year. The consistency of being able to meet with other FCCEJ youth with Associate Pastor Josh Simon and Christian Educator Director Laurie Chipman filled a gap, Braeden said.

These brothers, born 18 months apart, gently tease each other about who has the most Superman-like qualities when mountain biking, and can recall younger years when they weren’t quite as emotionally close. Being in a youth group together has been a plus, they said.

“You can talk about stuff in youth group that we don’t talk about with our friends, and definitely don’t talk about in school,” Braeden said. Ethan added he’s enjoyed being among kids older than him.

The pageant that the group produced last December, shown during church via Zoom, was a highlight for both boys. Being able to read from a script, instead of memorizing lines, eliminated much of the pressure that he felt during the live performance in the past, Braeden said. “I was filmed right over there,” he said, pointing to a corner of the family room. “It was just so much easier. Then it was amazing to see the entire performance put together.”

“It was so cool,” Ethan added, “because I did my part here at home and then when I saw the video recording on Christmas Eve, I saw that I was part of the bigger picture. I could really look back and reflect on what we all contributed.”

Missing from the past year’s activities, Braeden said, has been the community outreach the youth group did. “It was really incredible putting together meals for people,” he said, referring to helping prepare food for the Heavenly Pantry Food Shelf and COTS in Burlington, an activity youth haven’t been able to participate in due to COVID.

“It was heartwarming,” Braeden said. “It made me feel really good.” And playing Frisbee in the parking lot afterwards, the boys added, is pretty fun, too.

**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*. Here are a few ways that you may help our ministry:

- **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, visit <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/03-0212216>
- **Send money via PayPal.** We accept electronic donations. Visit [paypal.me/fccej](http://paypal.me/fccej). (A PayPal account is not required to donate money!)



**Church Directory Update**

Fashion trends wax and wane; hairdos lengthen, and hairlines recede; houses hop on 'n off the market; kids ditch the nest after graduation or fly back soon thereafter. If this sounds like you, then I'd love to hear from you! Please, send me your best portraits (of both yourself and your family) whether you're garbed in your Sunday Best or schlepping some storied beach attire. FCCEJ also has a vibrant birthday ministry, so if you haven't received a birthday card or seen your special day in our newsletter's roster, then please be sure to share your special date. Finally, if you've seen the church directory and notice that your contact info is out-of-date, please let me know. Photos and details should be sent to [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org).

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



WRIGHTINGTON, Marion	07/01	CHIPMAN, Brian	07/18	MENDES, Mark	08/01	MARTHALER, Laura	08/16
FERRARA, Jonathan	07/02	HOFFMAN, Alessandra	07/18	CHIPMAN, Laurie	08/02	MOREAU, Judy	08/16
HOFFMAN, Carl	07/02	MOOS, Zoe	07/18	CONTI, Sue	08/03	NOEL, Matthew	08/16
STARKEY, Lauren	07/03	CUNNINGHAM-FIRKEY, Emily	07/19	KING, Henry	08/03	MCCULLEN, Shannon	08/17
JOHNSON, Rachel	07/04	MARTHALER, Lily	07/20	ALLEN, Dick	08/04	REED, Joseph	08/18
MENDES, Margaret	07/04	BLACKMAN, Judy	07/21	CHARLAND, Mallory	08/04	WARK, Amanda	08/18
HOLDEN, Mark	07/05	ELLIOTT, Riley	07/21	CLARK, Matt	08/04	CALHOUN, Kimberly	08/19
GABERT, Sawyer	07/07	KNIGHT, Dax	07/21	CULVER, Melissa	08/04	EVANS, Rob	08/19
HOFFMAN, Vincent	07/07	FRANK, Courtney	07/22	RAYMOND, Francis	08/04	MAYVILLE, Leah	08/19
LAFLAM, Tamsin	07/08	PETHERBRIDGE, Dan	07/22	SMITH, Barb	08/04	JOHNSON, Marie	08/21
DONLEY, Luann	07/09	STAPLETON, Walker	07/22	SZYMANSKI, Marissa	08/04	BABINGER, Fred	08/22
HOUGHTON, Martha	07/09	VINCENT, Marilyn	07/23	TOOF, Carolyn	08/04	EVANS, Bobby	08/22
ISHAM, Ira	07/09	CARPENTER, Kelsey	07/25	OSBORNE, Howard	08/05	ANTONE, Carolyn	08/23
WEISCHEDEL, Betsy	07/09	MAYVILLE, Darby	07/25	DAIGLE, Carol	08/07	BAKER, Ryan	08/24
GILLIAM, Christine	07/10	MESSIER, Clay	07/25	WILLIAMS, Pat	08/07	CULVER, Abby	08/24
JONES, Grace	07/10	FRIVOLL, JanRoald	07/26	BERO, Peter	08/08	RITTER, Dale	08/24
EDWARDS, Norma	07/12	BOTTAMINI, Diane	07/27	SMITH, Val	08/08	AHOKAS, Rachel	08/25
DEAL, Langston	07/14	NYHAGEN, Sylvia	07/27	FORGUITES, Hope	08/09	DEUTSCH, Stefan	08/25
BUCHSPICS, Grace	07/15	SINKEWICZ, Christine	07/27	FRIVOLL, Lois	08/09	CHEEK, Gene	08/27
MARTIN, Tucker	07/15	CHATES, Harriet	07/28	GIANNUZZI, Bruce	08/09	MCCULLEN, Judy	08/27
NOWELL, Tessa	07/15	CHARLEBOIS, Danielle	07/29	SMITH, Gary	08/09	FRIVOLL, Charlotte May	08/29
PHILLIPPO, Samuel	07/15	ACEBO, Trista	07/30	KRAUSS, Benjamin	08/10	BROOKS, Carolyn	08/30
DEAL, Lillian	07/16	CROCKET, Daniel	07/30	ASTORE, Henry	08/12	HOY, Adam	08/30
KNAPP, Jackie	07/16	HATHAWAY, Sheila	07/30	SCHMIDT, Owen	08/12	MEILLEUR, Kevin	08/30
KRAUSS, Sarah	07/16	ISHAM, Barbara	07/30	LIVAK, Terri	08/13	MITTL, Jan	08/30
HERLEY, Christina	07/17	BENTON, Lanie	07/31	GORNIK, Liam	08/14	KELLY, Calvin	08/31
SCHMIDT, Isabel	07/17	JACKSON, Brad	07/31	SPRADLING, Carol	08/14		
BOURN, Isabelle	07/18	SINKEWICZ, Robert	07/31	CODDINGTON, Bill	08/16		

# MINISTRY DIRECTORY

## Staff

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

## Music

**Director, Sanctuary Choir & Heavenly Harmony:** Carol Spradling [cspradling@fccej.org]  
**Currier Bell Choir Director:** Carolyn Harris [899-6759]  
**Finally @ First Director:** Rick Dooley [rickdooley5@gmail.com]  
**Men @ First Director:** Bill Bickford, Jr. [bill.bickford@aol.com]

## Officers

**President:** Maureen Evans [233-6127]  
**Vice President:** Cathy Shearer [878-6023]  
**Financial Secretary:** Rob Sinkewicz [878-4470]  
**Treasurer:** Dan Petherbridge [879-0261]  
**Clerk:** Christine Sinkewicz [878-4470]  
**Historian:** Ann Gray [878-4088]  
**Auditors:** Betsy Weischedel [922-2094] & Steve Wood [878-3068]

## Committee Chairs

**Christian Education:** Lisa Clark [872-5849]  
**Communications:** Francis Gravel [802-318-6235]  
**Deacons:** Judy Pomainville [236-0604]  
**Finance & Pastoral Relations:** Cathy Shearer [878-6023]  
**Hospitality:** Jim Glatz [503-5076]  
**Human Resources:** Maureen Evans [233-6127]  
**Missions:** Paula Sargent [879-3598]  
**Music:** Denise Keating [345-8900]  
**Nominating:** Dick Harris [1-802-644-6488]  
**Stewardship:** Kathryn Brennan [878-9509]  
**Trustees:** Kaki McGearry [879-2062]  
**Ushering:** Ushering: Marlene Frank [872-9126]

## Recognized Groups

**Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop:** Sue Wood [878-3068] [woodsusanjane@gmail.com](mailto:woodsusanjane@gmail.com)  
**Heavenly Food Pantry:** Valerie Gabert [879-0109]

**First Congregational Church of Essex Junction**  
1 Church Street  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
**Phone:** 802-878-5745 **Fax:** 802-872-8236  
**Email:** [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org)

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

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