

SPIRIT@FIRST

monthly newsletter

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH *of Essex Junction*

Love. Serve. Grow.

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Your Pastor's Ponderings

Time and memory are strange during this time of coronavirus as we live in what sometimes seems to be the *Twilight Zone*, but if memory serves, last September we were bummed to have to be offering purely a hybrid worship service with kids spaced in a wide circle for Faith Formation outside in the parking lot, which at that time was a push and a treat. Meetings were not taking place in the church building, and we had just found out that we had to add an \$80,000 elevator project to the capital campaign project list. We were tired of COVID then, much more so today.

And here we are in September of 2021 contemplating returning to wearing masks due to the new delta variant. Really. But then a sage member of the church said to me in a visit, "I do think that we are closer to the end of this thing than to the beginning." Despite not liking what the delta variant might do to our corporate lives, this member was hopeful that we are slowly moving to a time when we can return to a new normal and life can return to an ebb and flow that is a bit more natural.

And there has been progress. On September 12th, we will return to our normal Sunday morning routine with one more traditional service with our organ and sanctuary choir at 8:30 and one less traditional service with a praise band at 10:15 a.m. Faith Formation will also begin on Sept. 12th and will have their program ready to go outside for the month of September.

And a year has taken us to the edge of completing all the major projects of the Capital Campaign and many of the secondary projects. By September 12th, it is our great hope that both the Kitchen and the Elevator project WILL BE COMPLETE!!! Just think about it, over the course of the last two years, the parking lot has been completed, the entire sanctuary interior has been re-plastered and painted, our pulpit and lectern are now moveable, all of the windows in the building are completely new, we have two new entry doors and a new state of the art security and entry system, we have a new handicapped bathroom outside of Fellowship Hall and a new Deacons storage area, we have new floors from the new administrative door to the parking lot door, we have taken all the asbestos out of the pre-school and administrative wing of our building with new carpet in all those rooms. We have completely re-modeled the Marvin Lounge with beautiful new maple bookshelves, we have planted new grass and taken down two sick trees which are soon to be replaced. Everyone should come on September 12th just to see all the incredible work that has been completed.

I too am so sick and tired of dealing responsibly with this disease, but we are not in the same place as we were last September. I sense that we are getting close to moving on and stabilizing our lives. Our church is taking some major steps in that direction with the return to the two services, with committee meetings and groups beginning to meet in our childing, with Friday Morning Coffee Clatter and Bridge starting up again in September, with having both live people in Marvin Lounge attending a meeting as well as folks at home zooming in. Our church has weathered this storm well and despite remaining cautious, is still moving forward with ways to connect and keep our many ministries alive.

Thrilled to be here with all of you, I am
Yours in Christ
Rev. Mark Mendes, *Senior Pastor*

Church offices are closed on
Monday, September 6th in
honor of Labor Day. We reopen
on *Tuesday, September 7th*.

Associate Pastor News

I'm looking to recruit some adults who would be interested in helping with 6th grade and up youth ministry, as a youth ministry team. You would help Laurie and I organize, plan, and coordinate youth ministry activities. Any adult who wants to help young people grow into mature adults are welcome to join us. Our focus is not only on a fun program but also on life-changing, life-fulfilling ministry. You could be like a modern Eli who helped the prophet Samuel realize his call to serve God and to serve his community. When Laurie went on her research project trip a couple of years ago, many of the churches she visited have these youth ministry teams. We also know that when youth have five meaningful connections with adults beyond of their parents, they feel more connected to the church community and to their values. Contact me, jsimon@fccej.org to join us and/or questions.

Rev. Josh Simon, *Associate Pastor*

Laurie's Lens



Oh, the top of Pine Mountain, outside of Gorham, NH! To sit is God's great outdoors and see that view. Wow. My trip to dean a week of campers and counselors truly helped to recharge me and fed my soul to that I could focus on our Vacation Bible Camp program. We had a hot and humid week, for sure! We all got to see families, children and youth out on our church lawn and watch this place come alive again. It was pure joy! Read more about this and our awesome group of volunteers in the camp section of this newsletter.

On Labor Day weekend I'll be leading our second church camping trip at Grande Isle State Park. I'm currently waiting to see who booked a site and will be joining the fun. Please reach out to me if you have as I'm creating a map so we all will know where our FCCEJ families are located. Like many of you I have been trying to recharge, see family and do what I can to help my summer feel like it's a summer and catch up on projects as well as get my hands in the dirt with my perennials.

Welcome Back Sunday arrives again this year on the 2nd Sunday of September, the 12th. It will look a little different this year with children and youth being asked to bring their school backpacks for a blessing. Our faith formation program will start this fall on this Sunday with an outside program on our church lawn. Like many of you our CE committee is want everyone to stay safe and still be able to offer a program in person for our families. Just like we did for VB Camp week, we will be wearing masks outside as we will have children who are unvaccinated and keeping 3 to 6 feet apart will not be possible when doing activities together. We will all gather as a group outside (children, youth and volunteers) and then move into peer groups for more conversations. If you have not reached out to me yet and would like to volunteer with our programs this year, please don't hesitate. In fact, you will save me a phone call as I'm now in the last few weeks before we being our fall programming.

Please check out the Youth Ministry section and the news of our Youth Retreat coming up the end of September. Parents and youth, please be in touch. We need your input.

Faith@Home emails will continue to come out monthly. But will probably move more towards the middle or end of the month. Stay tuned.

I came across this lovely poem by Steve Garnass-Holmes. May the words give you rest, help you find restoration and be a blessing to you in the days ahead.

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

Unfolding Light

Child of earth, may you find within you
the humility of the grass,
the wisdom of the river,
patience of the mountain,
the generosity of the trees.

May you see with eyes of gratitude
the peace of the sunrise within you,
the beauty of the blossoming earth,
the joy of the bird on the wing.

May the fresh breeze of hope bless you,
the earth's steadfastness sustains you,
and the mystery of all living things
enfold you.

May each moment of your life
be a new day dawning,
and the sun and moon and stars
dance around you
and in you
every day of your life.

A Very Fond Farewell



There are ~170,000 words in the English lexicon. As I wrangle all of the jots and tittles during my last few weeks at FCCEJ, the word “passion” keeps scrolling through my brain like a bright Broadway marquee. It denotes pleasure and pain; aspiration juxtaposing exasperation; overanalysis longing for furtive contentment. This church is home to many passionate people doing good work. Cobbling together these publications has been the most rewarding of all my job’s passionate undertakings. Since the COVID19 pandemic began, I personally formatted, folded, stickered, and snail-mailed every copy of this newsletter, even when businesses like the Essex Reporter stopped the presses.

The deeds of the church’s beleaguered ministry and her volunteer’s during these harrowing times are worthy of their own testament!

To quote Bilbo Baggins’ evergreen prose: “I don’t know half of you half as well as I should like; and I like less than half of you half as well as you deserve.” I hope that you found beauty in the dissonance of our post-millennial world; that you were charged with gigawatts of positive energy; that this work cooled your fevers, soothed your worried hearts, and calmed your weary minds. Friends, I bid you all a very fond farewell.

Ex animo,
Doug Ovitt, *Church Administrator*

Church President

Maureen Evans has submitted her resignation as our president to the Human Resources Committee effective June 25, 2021. We thank her for her hard work and dedication to FCCEJ spanning over 19 years of committee and leadership roles. We are deeply grateful for her leadership not only through the pandemic but also with the Capital Campaign and in developing our strategic plan. We wish her well and offered her blessings of health, love, and support. With this transition, Cathy Shearer has assumed the role of Acting President. Brenda Dawson has generously offered to fill the role of Acting Vice President for the remainder of this leadership term (through the Annual Meeting 2022).

Deacons

Greetings and Blessings to all of you! The Deacons are excited to welcome all who are comfortable back into the Sanctuary as we offer our hybrid worship services. We will be transitioning back to two in-person services (8:30 and 10:15) starting on Welcome Back Sunday (Sept 12th) and plan to stream the 8:30 service. We look forward to welcoming our youth back into the church building and to keep them as safe as possible, we are strongly recommending the wearing of masks and will continue with minor changes to Communion. We plan to move Communion back into normal worship services – but will still hand out covered plates with the elements for each pew. As we continue into the unknown, we will continue to monitor the COVID situation to protect our most valued assets – our Church family. Working together as the close-knit family that we are, we can accomplish great things. May God grant us the wisdom, confidence, and patience to continue God’s work through these times. Again, God’s Blessings upon you all!

Communications

During July and August, information pertaining to the Jamaican Food Truck/Yard Sale was posted or reviewed on our website, Front Porch Forum and Facebook. The website also supported sign-ups for Food and Volunteers for the Yard Sale using the Sign-up Genius.

A video was reviewed in support of the Thrift Shop and feedback was provided with suggestions for improvements and alternatives to shorten and clarify the in message of the video. This was an initial attempt to use video media as a method for promoting the Thrift Shop mission and volunteers supporting the shop. A similar project for Dismas House is underway, but the committee has not received a video to review at this time.

The final website support for Vacation Bible Camp was put in place for the password protected online materials from Cokesbury by Andrea and Francis. This provided access for the campers who participated virtually to the daily content and videos and supported the optional rain day when the weather was not dry for the outdoor campers. This protected material will remain available for 2 weeks after the close of the camp for campers to review on their own time.

We continue to discuss having a “Staging Website” where we can modify and test changes on a duplicate of the Live Website prior to promoting the changes to the online website. The testing would include major updates to Word Press (our website support program), updates relevant to our theme and to explore new Plug-In’s to provide new and different presentation methods. This option also would provide a learning vehicle for team members to experiment with website support modifications without risk of disrupting the online site.

We received a request for a new Instagram account specifically to support the Jamaican Mission activities. Since all accounts on behalf of the church must be created and administered by our Administrator or Ministers to ensure the proper authorizations are managed by the church, we recommended the request be submitted to Josh Simon and Doug Ovitt. The church already has an Instagram account, and its use should be reviewed by Josh to see if it can support this request.

The committee also discussed the need for a Social Media Policy to provide guidance about the creation, administration and use for the church Social Media accounts considering the request for a new Instagram account. The specific items discussed were the creation and administration process need to be done and managed by the church Administrator so that this responsibility can be passed along properly when and if we change Administrators and Individual accounts are not used on behalf of the church. The content for these accounts may need to be reviewed by the Communications Committee to insure it follows the policy guidelines. We will be working on this policy in the coming months.

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. Contact the church office via e-mail at <mailto:welcome@fccej.org> or by calling 878-5745 if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted by Douglas Olufsen

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

Trustees Update

Trustees continue to be focused primarily on overseeing the elevator and kitchen projects. Other items of note:

- ❖ Maple tree by our parking lot entrance had to be removed because it was slowly dying due to root-girdling issues; we are considering whether to plant another tree somewhere in the front
- ❖ We completed a major boiler repair (main valve replaced and new shut-off valves installed)
- ❖ We are getting quotes to do some necessary maintenance and painting over at the Sawyer House.
- ❖ We are looking into a new phone service carrier to have a dedicated line for the elevator as required by code.

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

The nights are starting to get a little cooler, kids are getting ready to go back to school and soon we will see the tips of leaves changing colors. The church is starting to see more people come through our doors...for worship, committee meetings, food pantry, AA meetings and family gatherings. Our Capital Campaign is winding down and *Our Home* is ready to welcome everyone.

We are in the final stretch of the last two major capital projects — elevator work is underway and should be complete by Labor Day. AND... it looks like the kitchen will be done ahead of schedule thanks to Frank Smith! We just have a few punch list items, and we are still waiting for the small hand sink to come in, but the kitchen is functional, and we will be “moving back in” soon!

If we have funds left over after these two last big projects, we will tackle some of the flooring projects on our list - the 2nd floor hallway floors, the gym, and Fellowship Hall. We are working on getting quotes now so that we can be ready when funds become available.

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! Together, we have raised \$1.13 million in pledges, far exceeding our initial goal of \$822,000 and even surpassing our \$1.09 million stretch goal! In three short years, we have been able to complete almost ALL our projects, even during a pandemic and with the addition of major elevator project.

If you want to see a complete recap of all the projects your investment has made possible, visit our website – look under Capital Campaign/Projects (<https://www.fccej.org/v5/capital-campaign/projects/>).

A friendly reminder... the 3rd (and final!) year of our initial pledge payment period ended on July 1, 2021. If you need additional time to fulfill your pledge, you can still make payments. If you have any questions about your balance due, or if circumstances have changed, please contact Campaign Treasurer Dan Petherbridge.

Blessings,

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

Faith Formation

Sunday Morning Faith Formation

weekly during 10:15am service

Fall program starting outside with mask

September 12th ~ 1st Sunday

Blessing of the Backpacks (bring your school backpack)

2021-22 Faith Formation Offering

We are switching to a program year of giving to an organization. Instead of ending our year in December we will start in September and go through June. This means the children and youth will vote on September 12th for their choice of offering. Help us level the playing field for people with disabilities.

1st Choice

EDD Adaptive Sports
www.eddfund.org

2nd Choice

SPECTRUM Youth Service
<http://www.spectrumvt.org/>

3rd Choice

JUMP (Joint Urban Ministry Project)
<http://www.jumpvt.org/contactus.html>

Young Apostles

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

September 26th ~ 4 to 5pm

Youth Ministry News

Mark your calendars!

ALL Youth Kick Off – September 19th from 4 to 6pm
6th – 12th graders

Come fill out your paperwork, play some games & have an ice cream sundae!
Parents please join us. RSVP to Pastor Josh or Laurie

ALL Youth Retreat - September 24th – 25th

Call ALL Youth! 6th – 12th graders. *Times are a changing.*

Junior & High School youth will have attended four weeks of school in person before our retreat dates. We are looking for some guidance and would like to know how you are feeling now so we can either continue to plan an overnight retreat at the Harris' farm in Jeffersonville or would you be more comfortable attending a full day retreat on Saturday. PLEASE reach out to Pastor Josh or Laurie by Sunday, August 29th. We could use your help!



Dick & Anne Harris are welcoming us to use of their second kitchen, barn, scenic views of Mt Mansfield, rolling hills, a great yard and a big campfire area. An overnight retreat would have everyone (youth & parents) gathering dinner Friday night at 6:30pm and then return for our Saturday dinner at 5 pm. We'll play games, have fellowship time, enjoy our meal, and hopefully see a lot of stars! Our Saturday will be a day to work on a service project, play games, go on a hike and recharge. This youth retreat is aimed at helping us build community (for youth and for parents). Our hope is that this turns into a yearly event that continues to help build our youth program and something you won't want to miss!

So, whether we end up doing a full overnight retreat or just a Saturday retreat, come reconnect with your old friends and make new ones. We've all had a crazy year and a half, so let's reconnect and unwind. If you have something else already on your calendar, we are hoping you will make this youth retreat a priority. If you need to arrive late or leave early, we understand, but hope you will attend! FCCEJ Youth time can only be what you make it. Remember to RSVP to Laurie or Pastor Josh and share your thoughts. (*Overnight pack list would include sleeping bag, pillow, lawn chair, comfortable & warm clothes, toiletries/no showers.*)

Camps

Outdoor Ministry Camps



Learn more: www.hortoncenter.org

As you start your fall, don't forget about our outdoor ministry site camps that still have some programming going on.

Family & Friends Weekend on 9/3-6

Fall Confirmation Retreat on 10/1-3

Fall Workdays on 10/8-10

Just like at a church, program planning and prep for the next season are always happening so please hold the staff and leadership folks in your prayers, as well as those who will be attending and keep our UCC camps alive and well. Watch this <https://youtu.be/rLZm8fzCV2Y>

As you look to the summer of 2022, please remember that here at FCCEJ we have a camp scholarship fund, and we love to help support those who attend outdoor ministry camps. Scholarship money is available to pay some or all your cost. Attending a camp is a powerful

way to grow deeper in your faith, connecting with God and is a positive life changing experience for many.

Vacation Bible Camp. *Discovery on Adventure Island: Quest for God's Great Light*

THANK YOU all! What an awesome week of camp here at FCCEJ outside on our lawn with all wearing masks and having a great time finding and remember to shine their own light for God. If you see any of these folks below (*if I missed you, my apologies*), please thank them and ask about their experience. You might find that you'd like to join the fun next summer!

VB Camp Volunteers: *Judy Allen, Ginny Coe, Calleigh Bruyns, Donna & John Burnett, Laura Cunningham-Firkey, Sharon Dettenrieder, Abby Desilets, Christine Dewey, Kaki McGeary, Zoe Moos, Tessa Nowell, Doug Olefson, Izzy Owens, Judy Roy, Paula Sargent, Jane Schneider, & Maryanne Warren.*

Behind-the-Scenes Volunteers: *Janne & Howard Giles, Frances Gravel, Gary Hartmann, Justin King (science), Jonah Moos, Allison VansSteenburg (crafts), Carl Wermer...*

Coming in August of 2022: Food Truck Party: On a Roll with God!

Scout Opportunities

Are you looking for something fun for your children to get involved in? Come check out what scouting can do for you and your family! We offer the perfect opportunity for children and parents to get out and socialize while learning new things and making new friends. Scouting helps youth get outdoors, become good citizens, develop good character, learn to lead, learn life-long skills, community service, and so much more. Pack 630 and Troop 624 are looking for more youth to get involved in the fun. Cub Scout Pack 630 is for boys and girls in Kindergarten - 5th grade. Contact essexpack630@gmail.com for more information. Young men age 11-18 can join Scouts BSA Troop 624. Contact Scoutmaster Clint Kilpatrick at ckilpatrick624@gmail.com.



Our Den Leaders
Lion: Nikki Mayhue*
Tiger: Dan Barhight
Wolf: Nikki
Bear: Nick Dennis
Webelos: Nikki
AOL: Robin Law
**temporary*

Missions & Volunteering

Your missions committee members would like to share news about the following:

- **Jamaica Food Truck Event** –As part of the festivities for the Jamaica Food Truck Event on August 14th, the missions committee was responsible for the drinks and baked goods offering at this wonderful event. Many delicious treats were on offer with proceeds given toward the Jamaica mission trip in 2022. Thank you to all the bakers who contributed to this event.
- **September Special Offering** - On September 12th this year, there will be a special offering that the members of the missions committee want to encourage you to support, the **Seminary Sunday Offering**. The missions committee is pleased to announce that this year's Seminary offering will be sent to Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School to support our own seminarian, Josh Sharp. Congratulations Josh!
- **Missions Committee donations** – members of the missions committee voted last month to contribute to two organizations: 1. \$500 to Vermont Interfaith Action (VIA), whose stated purpose is to create solutions to systemic issues that prevent our most vulnerable citizens from enjoying the quality-of-life God intends for us all. Read more about this organization at <https://viavt.org/> 2. \$500 to RIP medical debt (<https://ripmedicaldebt.org/>). This organization buys medical debt directly from hospitals at

MISSION CHALLENGE! - Help the missions committee double a donation to Haiti relief. Because of the severe devastation in Haiti from a recent earthquake, your missions committee has voted to use mission funds up to \$1000 dollars to match contributions from the congregation. Funds will be sent to the United Church of Christ (UCC) and designated for Haiti relief. What a great opportunity for folks to double their donation to the people of Haiti, who are in great need! Please mark any donation for Haiti relief on your check or envelope.

Jamaica Service Program Update

The Jamaica Leadership team has made the difficult decision to cancel our planned 2022 service trip. We have been carefully monitoring the COVID 19 situation both here and in Jamaica. Based on the current and projected vaccine rates in Jamaica, current US and CDC international travel guidance, and the unknown course related to variants, we don't feel that it will be safe for both the team and our Jamaican partners to make this trip in June. We hope to be able to reschedule to 2023. Over the next year, we plan to focus on the following goals:

- Strengthen our ongoing relationship with the White Horses School community
- Engage the FCCEJ congregation in learning more about the service program and the Jamaican community

We will keep you all posted on our activities as well as the health situation in Jamaica. We are still planning to hold a Calcutta event provided it is advisable at that time. We all look forward to enjoying this fun night out together!



Dismas House. *Volunteers needed in 2021.*

"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 provides 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. Ed will be happy to talk to you. If you simply want to sign up as a volunteer, go to the Church's Sign-up Genius website. It's address is <https://bit.ly/36kYq44>

Thank you for supporting the Jamaica program!

Thank you to all who supported the Jamaica program by purchasing Jamaican food and baked goods at the August 14th Yard Sale event. The Jamaica team appreciates the efforts of the Missions committee, all those who baked and those who enjoyed the amazing spread of delicious baked goods! We are grateful to the yard sale event team for graciously combining activities that day, and to all who helped with publicity. Thanks also to Jamaican Supreme for providing delicious food and donating 10% of each meal to support the Jamaica Service Program.

Worship & Fellowship

LEAVE ROOM FOR JESUS



Two Services - Sundays @ 8:30am* and 10:15am. Communion 1st Sundays. *First service streamed via [youtube.com/c/fccej](https://www.youtube.com/c/fccej)
We are pleased to offer in-person worship with COVID precautions in place. This includes masking and social distancing regardless of vaccination status.



Communion

Communion will be observed in the sanctuary. The elements will be sealed and passed out to the people in the pews

Special Worship Speakers

Due to our long-standing partnership, with crucial social service agencies in Chittenden County, we thought it would be both educational and inspirational to listen to these Executive Directors about these outstanding organizations and learn how we as a church and as individuals can help create a better society.

Sept. 12th: Richard Gagne, Dismas House

Sept. 19th: Jill Evans & Kristen Dunn, Essex Community Justice

Sept. 26th: Wanda Hines, Joint Urban Ministry Project (JUMP)



Church Camping Trip - Grand Isle State Park Labor Day Weekend September 3rd-5th

Did you sign up for a site to join the fun? It's looking like the campground is full. She will be putting together a map so we will know where others from FCCEJ are and provide a welcome bag for your arrival. We would love to plan a few activities that will help bring us all together, especially evening s'mores around the campfire. Please be in touch with Laurie at lchipman@fccej.org.

Come Join the Pride Parade! Sunday, September 5th

Anyone interested in participating in the Burlington Pride Parade is welcome to join the staff as we head to Burlington where we will meet at First Congregational Church of Burlington. We will gather with other UCC members from different churches and together walk over to King Street where the parade begins. Supporting our GLBTQ members and friends is a recently cherished gift received after decades of fighting and paying the price of believing in Christ's extravagant love. Come and be a part of this ongoing movement to see all God's children free to be the way God intended. We will carpool in cars immediately after worship ends on September 5th or you can just meet us at 1st Congo Burlington around 11:30 a.m. or meet us at the parade starting point by 12:30 a.m. Let's have a good turnout for this important event of witness.



INTERFAITH PRIDE SERVICE

Thursday, September 2nd @ 7pm (Online)

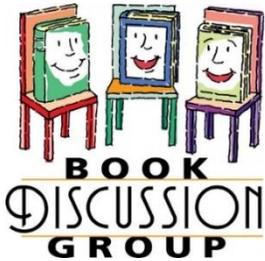
RSVP here: <https://go.uvm.edu/interfaithpride>

Gather with Vermont's LGBTQ+ and ally communities to remember and celebrate that we are not alone in the midst of life's challenges and uncertainties. We are held by the greater LGBTQ+ community, as well as by our diverse religious and philosophical traditions and practices.

The Planning Committee for the service includes clergy and members from the UVM Interfaith Center, Ohavi Zedek Synagogue, Vermont Zen Center, The Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Ruach haMaqomb, The Society of St. Edmund, All Souls Interfaith Gathering, First Congregational Church in Essex Junction, and local Pagan and Indigenous communities.

COVID-19 Memorial Service. *Sunday, September 19th @ 4pm*

To honor Vermonters lost to COVID-19 and to process our grief, Vermont Interfaith Action is hosting a memorial service on the Vermont Statehouse Lawn in Montpelier. Please save the date now. The heart of the event will be a ceremonial reading of the names so that each individual who has died of COVID-19 is recognized. In addition, various clergy will offer brief interfaith prayers and readings. Governor Phil Scott and Health Commissioner Dr. Mark Levine have also been invited to participate. For more information, contact Debbie at debbie@viavt.org or 802-651-8889.

**Noontime Book Group:** *every 3rd Monday, 11:30am. (Next meeting: September 20th)*

The Noontime Book Group will meet in Marvin lounge. Please plan to wear a mask. Weather permitting, we may meet on the side lawn. We will be discussing the Book of Longings by Sue Monk Kidd. It's the story of the first century woman frustrated by her family's expectation that she will marry an older widower. She is intelligent ambitious and wanting more from life than cultural expectations for a woman of her times allow. She meets and falls in love with the 18-year-old Jesus. We are reminded that this is a well-researched novel but is indeed a work of fiction. It does however reflect the limitations that have been put on women throughout the centuries. What would it have been like to marry Jesus? Please join us for a brown bag lunch and what promises to be a very interesting discussion. Gail Babinger has agreed to lead this meeting.

Friday Coffee Clatter Resumes. *Friday, September 10th*

Our regular Coffee Clatter Group will resume on Friday, September 10th. Everyone is invited to meet at Martone's in downtown Essex Junction and get some coffee and baked good and sit with a bunch of church friends and talk about absolutely anything that comes up. The mask policy will be determined by whatever Martone's dictates. We meet from 8-9 and laugh often while discussing whimsical aspects of life and significant issues of the day. Rev. Mark hosts the group, and we hope to see you there.

**Bridge Group Returns:** *Monthly, 3rd Fridays 1:30-4:00pm. (Next date: Friday, September 17th)*

The Church Bridge Group will return on. We will begin meeting in Fellowship Hall to allow for extra space and air circulation. As always, we will have some goodies to munch on AND a jar of Rev. Mark's jam for the winner. Come, whether you are an old pro or someone who just like to talk and have some fun.

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](https://www.paypal.com/fccej). (A PayPal account is not required to donate money!)

12th Annual Five Corners Christmas Craft Fest. Saturday, November 13th @ 9am-3pm. Mark your calendar for this big holiday event! Our holiday event is back. To make this event a success at our church your

Nearly New - Consider donating your gentle used items to the fest! We will be accepting **donations in Marvin Lounge starting October 10th.** The following is a quick list of best sellers:

- Books
- Holiday items especially Christmas
- Frames of all sizes
- Games
- Children toys
- Accessories – Scarfs, pursues and jewelry
- Dishes

Silent Auction – Consider donating an item to the auction. The following are suggestions:

- Donating Tickets to a theater, arts, or sporting event
- Giving golf/tennis lessons
- Baking a cookie/pie/cake/bread of the month,
- Making a homemade dinner
- Homemade items such sweater, quilt, table runner
- Original Artwork
- Gift Certificate to your favorite store

Sweet Shoppe – The Sweet Shoppe is a popular stop for Craft Fest shoppers, and we welcome your contributions of unique items such as:

- gluten free options
- donuts
- whoopee pies
- peanut brittle
- home-made candy
- Annual favorites such as fudge, cooies, and various types of breads.

assistance would be greatly appreciated with the areas listed below. We would also welcome a variety of pies this year. Other popular items include jams and jellies, relishes, horseradish, salsa, etc. As you begin planning your holiday baking, please consider making an

item for the Sweet Shoppe!

Heavenly Spirit Café: We will again be serving a delicious lunch including homemade soups, macaroni and cheese, and Chili. We'll again be asking for food and drink donations.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Linda Bogardus at 872-8972 or lbogardus@myfairpoint.net. Thank you to everyone for your support from Linda Bogardus, Ann Gray, Sue Conti, Elaine Raymond, Wendy Wark, Gail Cromie, Maureen McKenzie, and Mary Gratton.



GUILD, Kevin	09/02	HARRIS, Austin	09/08	KOCH, Aimee	09/17	CATE, Merrill	09/24
MENDES, Karen	09/02	LEACH, Dillan	09/08	VINCENT, Bob	09/17	RUSHFORD, James	09/24
FRANK, Melody	09/03	WILLIAMS, Riley	09/09	BRENNAN, Ian	09/19	PARKER, Bruce	09/25
WATT, Eric	09/03	SHARP, Andrea	09/10	LEACH, Julie	09/19	EDWARDS, Julie	09/26
DETTRE, Tom	09/04	MENDES, Nicholas	09/11	SIEVERS, Libby	09/19	WILSON, Alma	09/26
GALBRAITH, Gary	09/04	BERO, Mindy	09/12	EVANS, Maureen	09/20	ELEY, Meaghan	09/27
RAYMOND, Elaine	09/04	HAMILTON, Kevin	09/12	MCGEARY, Charles	09/20	GALBRAITH, Kathy	09/27
KOCH, Ethan	09/06	ROY, Judy	09/13	GARVEY, Erica	09/21	GUZIAK, Emily	09/28
SICALOWSKI, Graham	09/06	GRAY, Ann	09/14	DUSHARM, Olivia	09/22	HALL, Nancy	09/28
ANTONE, David	09/07	BICKFORD Jr., Bill	09/15	NUTTING, Muriel	09/23	STEIN, Heather	09/29
HOPPER, Ken	09/07	SIEVERS, Sebastian	09/16	STEIN, Tristan	09/23	BOURN, Jenny	09/30
BOURN, Phil	09/08	COE, Harper	09/17	WATT, Craig	09/23		

MINISTRY DIRECTORY

Staff

Senior Pastor: Rev. Mark Mendes [mmendes@fccej.org]
Associate Pastor: Rev. Josh Simon [jsimon@fccej.org]
Minister of Visitation: Rev. Ron Faux [revronfaux@gmail.com]
Christian Education Director: Laurie Chipman [lchipman@fccej.org]
Music Director: Carol Spradling [cspradling@fccej.org]
Church Administrator: Doug Ovitt [welcome@fccej.org]

Music

Sanctuary Choir & Heavenly Harmony: Carol Spradling [cspradling@fccej.org]
Currier Bell Choir: Alison Wermer [clwerme@msn.com; P# 879-7650]
Finally @ First Director: Rick Dooley [rickdooley5@gmail.com]
Men @ First Director: Bill Bickford, Jr. [bill.bickford@aol.com]

Officers

President: Cathy Shearer [878-6023]
Vice President: Brenda Dawson [1-802-881-5253]
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: Brenda Dawson [1-802-881-5253]
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
Heavenly Food Pantry: Valerie Gabert [879-0109]

First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
1 Church Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Phone: 802-878-5745
Email: welcome@fccej.org

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