



# SPIRIT @ FIRST

FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH *of Essex Junction*

*Love. Serve. Grow.*

## March 2022: In this issue...

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## Your Pastor Ponders...

Lent is the oldest season of the church year and was a time to prepare folks interested in joining the church on Easter to learn about the faith and practice living a Christian lifestyle. It was a season of both penitence and reflection. Lent continues to draw us to learn about the faith and practice some of the faith rituals that we might normally neglect.

This year is not different.

First, very practically, we will go back to having two services on the first Sunday of Lent (March 6th). In addition, Faith Formation will begin meeting in person and our youth group will go back to meeting in two separate groups with the younger youth meeting after church and the older youth meeting on Sunday afternoons. We are pleased to see that Hospitality is planning to come together to provide sustenance and a time of fellowship after each worship service. Slowly, we are getting back to normal and I encourage everyone to think about joining us. To be safe, we will still be requiring masks in large indoor gatherings like worship.

Second, worship during the six Sundays of Lent will include some ancient rituals that feed the soul and cause us to examine our faith. Each service will begin with our singing drum, a sacred reading and a minute of silence so that we might center ourselves on the divine. Each service will have a Lenten Candle Lighting Ritual similar to our Advent Candle Lighting ritual which will teach us a bit about what Lent means to our faith. We will have an opportunity to light a candle in prayer for someone in need of God's help or guidance. As we move through Lent, those who offer the Pastoral Prayer will shape it to demonstrate the six type of prayers with a focus each week on one type. Our last ritual to help us draw from the great spiritual disciplines of the church involves our writing those ways we fall short of God's grace [sin, if you will] in our lives by writing them on dissolvable paper and placing them in water, watching as they swirl to the bottom and totally disintegrate. Not letting our sin obstruct healthy and joyful living is a great resource of confession that allows us to be free of past negative behaviors.

Third, each Wednesday, except Ash Wednesday on March 2, we will provide an in-person and or zoomed educational program that will both deepen our understanding of the faith and or expand the ways our church ministers to the needs of our members and friends. Rev. Josh will provide a study of the book *The Phoenix Affirmations* by Eric Elenes which looks at 12 affirmations that progressive Christians affirm. Rev. Mark will be looking at different aged groups within the church and lead a brainstorming session on practical ways our church can resource them and provide programs that will feed their souls and nurture them as human beings. The ideas garnered from these brainstorming sessions will then be appropriated into the life of our community. Both groups will be offered on Wednesday nights from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. either in person at the church or zoomed at Zoom ID# 861 3832 8437, passcode 141168.

Lastly, we will have our normal special Lenten services:

- ◆ Ash Wednesday on Wednesday March 2 at 7:00 p.m. In person in sanctuary
- ◆ Maundy Thursday on Thursday April 14, details TBD
- ◆ Good Friday on Friday April 15, details TBD

My hope is, despite the continuing challenges of the coronavirus, that we as a faith community will continue to be able to deepen our faith and strengthen the church in ways that are both significant and meaningful. Please join me in these offerings.

Blessings,  
Mark

# 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]  
Church Administrator: Jen Kelly [welcome@fccej.org]

## Music

Organ: Marie Johnson  
Piano: Denise Keating  
Finally @ First Director: Rick Dooley

## Officers

President: Cathy Shearer  
Vice President: Judy Larrabee Pomainville  
Clerk: Brenda Dawson  
Assistant Clerk: Alison Wermer  
Financial Secretary: Ann Gray  
Assistant Financial Secretary: Pam Blake, Linda Bogardus  
Treasurer: Dan Petherbridge  
Assistant Treasurer: Matt Clark  
Internal Church Auditors: Betsy Weischedel, Steve Wood

## Christian Education

2022 – Donna Burnett, Lisa Clark (Co-Chair),  
Sue Conti, Open Position (1);  
2023 – Sharon Dettenrieder, Erna Deutsch,  
Derek Lyman (Co-Chair), Terry Stein,  
Open Position (1);  
2024 – Judy Roy, Open Position (2)

## Communications

2022 – Geoff Brown\*, Hannah Tracy;  
2023 – Francis Gravel (Chair), Andrea Sharp

## Deacons

2022 – Myrna Doney, Alison Wermer (Co-Chair),  
Peter Schmalz, Rusty Sargent;  
2023 – Jonah Moos, Amy McIntyre,  
Maureen McKenzie, Judy McCullen (Co-Chair);  
2024 – Betty Busciglio\*, Gary Hartman,  
Carolyn Rushford

## Hospitality

2022 – Rose Drost, Gorden Starkey;  
2023 – Jim Glatz, Beth Porratti;  
2024 – Jill White, Jen Dooley (Chair)

## Missions

Note: 8-12 members  
2022 – Tony Marthaler, Sue Wood, Anne Harris\*,  
Paula Sargent (Chair); 2023 – Monica John, Mary  
Winslow, Ed Steele; 2024 – Suzanne Boyajain\*,  
Jane Schneider, Mary Hopkins\*, Ann Marie Sullivan\*

## Music

2022 – Laura Marthaler, Amanda Palmer;  
2023 – Curtis Guild, Denise Keating (Chair);  
2024 – Joanne Irwin, Ed Owens

## Nominating

2022 – Dick Harris (Chair), Elaine Raymond\*;  
2023 – Mary Ann Warren, Janne Giles\*;  
2024 – Lauren Starkey\*, Sandy Tallman\*

## Pastoral Relations

Vice President - Chair;  
2022 – Riley Elliot, Julie Leach;  
2023 – Stephanie Field; 2024 – Brenda Dawson\*

## Planned Giving

Stewardship Chair, Treasurer, Finance Chair;  
2022 – Matt McGeary\*; 2023 – Darryl Koch\*;  
2024 – Dave Johnson\*

## Stewardship

2022 – John Roddy, Emily Guziak;  
2023 – Kathryn Brennan (Chair), Alex John;  
2024 – Mark Ferrara, Shannon McCullen

## Trustees

2022 – Frank Smith, Ed Guild;  
2023 – Art Winslow, John Burnett\*;  
2024 – Dennis Conti, Kaki McGeary (Chair)

## Ushering

2022 – John Mauger\*, Open Position (1);  
2023 – Judy Allen, Justin & Melisa King;  
2024 – Aimee Koch\*, Marlene Frank (Chair)

## Vermont Conference Delegates

2022 – Laurie Chipman, Open Position (4)

## Church Association Delegates

2022 – Clint Russell\*, Open Position (1)

\* Denotes new nominee

## Simon Sez...

For many of us, and especially those friends and family members who are not part of a church like ours, Christianity does not work. The perception is that Christianity is devoid of reason, science, and intellect, or it only cares about controlling the levers of power to serve the interest of greed, or it cares more about controlling the bodily expressions of women, trans people, and queer people—and there are many pieces of evidence to support this perception. Even if we have a positive experience with Christianity, it can be difficult to articulate why, despite the negative perceptions of many, we still root ourselves within it. That does not need to be so.

During Lent, I am leading a discussion on *The Phoenix Affirmations: A New Vision for the Future of Christianity*. The book's title derives, in part, from the mythical bird the Phoenix. Medieval Christian mystics saw the phoenix as a symbol for resurrection and renewal. We will read this short, small book to guide us on a spiritual journey this Lent; a spiritual journey we hope will lead to renewal and resurrection. Resurrected to the new life guided by a renewed spirituality that navigates our scientific and technological age, a guide for how we can live with spirit and with purpose. This study will root us in our Christian tradition and, with new insights, deepen our awareness of God's presence, renew our commitment to the Path of Jesus, and empower our trust in the creativity of the Spirit. Books can be found at the church office. Suggested \$5 donation.

We will read two chapters for each gathering.

Wednesday, March 9, 7pm

*Affirmation 1: Walking fully in the Path of Jesus without denying the legitimacy of other paths that God may provide for humanity.*

*Affirmation 2: Listening for God's Word, which comes through daily prayer and attending to God's present activity in the world.*

Wednesday, March 16, 7pm

*Affirmation 3: Celebrating the God whose Spirit pervades and whose glory is reflected in all of God's Creation, including the earth and its ecosystems, the sacred and secular, the Christian and non-Christian, the human and non-human.*

*Affirmation 4: Expressing our love in worship that is as sincere, vibrant, and artful as it is scriptural.*

Wednesday, March 23, 7pm

*Affirmation 5: Engaging people authentically, as Jesus did, treating all its creations made in God's very image, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental ability, nationality, or economic class.*

*Affirmation 6: Standing, as Jesus does, with the outcast and oppressed, the denigrated and afflicted, seeking peace and justice with or without the support of others.*

Wednesday, March 30, 7pm

*Affirmation 7: Preserving religious freedom and the church's ability to speak prophetically to government by resisting the commingling of church and state.*

*Affirmation 8: Walking humbly with God, acknowledging our own shortcomings while honestly seeking to understand and call forth the best in other, including those who consider us enemies.*

Wednesday, April 6, 7pm

*Affirmation 9: Basing our lives on the faith that in Christ all things are made new and that we, and all people, are loved beyond our wildest imagination—for eternity.*

*Affirmation 10: Claiming the sacredness of both our minds and our hearts, and recognizing that faith and science, doubt and belief serve the pursuit of truth.*

Wednesday, April 13, 7pm

*Affirmation 11: Caring for our bodies and insisting on taking time to enjoy the benefits of prayer, reflection, worship, and recreation in addition to work.*

*Affirmation 12: Acting on the faith that we are born with a meaningful purpose, a vocation and ministry that serve to strengthen and extend God's realm of love.*

Please consider joining us for this meaningful and strengthening study.

Rev. Josh Simon

## Laurie's Lens

Remember that Epiphany ends on Shrove Tuesday, March 1st. The last day of the season when the early Christians ate a feast of their food staples, taking them all in so that when they fasted for the 40 days of Lent their supply of food would not go bad. I hope you and your family are starting a new tradition of Shrove Tuesday supper and enjoying pancake, crepes, waffles or whatever is a main staple in your home.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, March 2nd and continues until we celebrate the risen Lord on Easter Sunday. In our Faith Formation peer groups for PreK up through 8th grade (high school are encourage to help) we will be talking about and hearing the stories of Jesus – his miracles, some of the parables he told, and getting to know each other again as we meet and gather in our peer rooms. I'm looking forward to having our children and youth meet in their peer rooms again; recruitment for more volunteers in under way. I'm trying to connect with many of you about volunteering, but please feel free to reach out to me first if you are wondering what volunteering is all about. And yes! Our Junior Youth will start meeting separately from the High School Youth indoors and gather on Sundays after 2nd service. Come build community, catch up with one another, work on some projects together and hang out in the Youth Room. I'm hoping to see many of you on March 6th. You are the ones who help fuel me and give me energy to do all that I need to tackle here, so please come share your energy.

Our CE committee is excited to also help planning our Lenten Scavenger Hunt on March 20th and Pretzel Sunday on April 10th. These will be two fun events that we hope will help bring your back to church, see old friends, meet new ones and feel the warmth of your church family.

Lent has been a time for me when I have usually not given anything up, but taken something on instead. Recruitment of volunteers at this time of year is usually for VB Camp in August, however not this year. With programs moving back in person, in doors and back into peer rooms, recruitment is in full swing for all our programs as well as planning the program. So, my juggling balls are out and in the air. I'm hoping to keep them moving freely and as smoothly as possible, praying not to drop not even one. Here is your invitation. To come bring your talents, your time and your support. Feel a part of the family of God, reach out and lend a helping hand. Be the church.

Don't forget all the opportunities and ways to get involved that are in this newsletter. Keep looking for the Weekly email on Thursdays for the latest news, Lenten happenings, summer opportunities and information.

Peace & Blessings to you all,

Laurie Chipman

Christian Education Director

### Lenten Devotions

~Ready for pick up inside the Church Street doors and in our Narthex~

~Faithful Families - Calendars for Adults & Children/Families~

~40 days of Kindness~

### Faith @ Home Page

<https://www.fccej.org/v5/grow-in-faith/faith-home/>



We hope you will click on the link and take a look at our online page. We have moved things around and added some more resources. Many thanks to our amazing Communications team and Andrea Sharp!



### 2021-22 Faith Formation Offering



EDD Adaptive Sports ~ [www.eddfund.org](http://www.eddfund.org)

*Help us level the playing field for people with disabilities.*

Have you gotten injured lately? Sprained a ankle, a wrist, been sore from a covid shot? You know what it's like to not feel your best or be able to do what you normally can. EDD Adaptive Sports helps to engage those who need assistance and support to help them play sports. Visit their website and ask yourself the question—what can I give to help those in need? Then send in your support by mail or bring it with you on Sunday. Envelopes are in the Narthex by the worship supplies. Our giving is currently at \$413.97

# Faith Formation & Youth Ministry

**\*\*Watch for Faith@Home emails in your inbox\*\***

## Sunday Morning Faith Formation

Sunday Morning Faith Formation weekly during our 10:15am service (**masked**).

Peer groups for PreK-2nd, 3rd-5th, and 6th-8th. Everyone begins in the Sanctuary, then after the Children's Message those in PreK-8th grade are welcome to join Laurie in the peer rooms (air purifiers running). Come meet your peer group leaders and helpers, walk through and see the other side of the building, the new flooring and rooms that were painted. Spend some time and build your faith community, making new friends and seeing old ones.

**Reminder to parents/guardians:** Please pick up and sign out your child (PreK up to 5th grade) at 11:30am after you have greeted the pastor and had some fellowship time with others following worship.

## Young Apostles

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

This group meets once a month for fun-filled fellowship. Recreation, Bible study, mission projects, laughing & talking, and, most important, creating bonds that will steer our children into lasting friendships in their teen years. This is all found in Young Apostles.

**Next Gathering on March 13 at 4pm** - Come join the fun as we gather at church, get to know each other, chat about the season of Lent and do a mission project together. We will wrap things up before 5pm.



Here's the group that gathered at Catamount on February 6th having fun with EDD Adaptive Sports for sledding and snowshoeing.

## Youth Ministry

Calling ALL Youth! Do your part and reach out to each other. Help build our youth numbers back up so you see your peers & friends each week. ☺

Mark ALL your calendars! Youth will not meet on the Sundays when there is no school on that Monday: March 20, April 17 & May 29

**Junior Youth** - 6th-8th grade - March 6, 13 & 27 from 11:30am to 12:30pm

Join Pastor Josh & Laurie for fellowship and an art project: Who is Jesus to you? Check on the Free Little Art Gallery & Library and play some games in the Youth Room. We'll close in time to get you home for lunch.

**Youth Gathering for High School** - 9th - 12th grade - March 6 from 5:30 to 6:30, and March 13 & 27, time TBD.

Join Pastor Josh and our YM team for fellowship, see your church friends and plan service projects for this summer. Spend time in the Youth Room and experience the new sound tiles on the walls.

## Join the Youth Ministry Team

A group of adults are forming to help the staff (Pastor Josh & Laurie) plan and lead youth times, mission experiences and trips. Join Barb Smith & Kathryn Brennan. The goal is to build the team up to 8 to 12 adults who, through their involvement in the program, will build relationships with our youth and therefore help build our programs. Interested? Want to hear more? Reach out to one of us, we'd love to chat with you. Help our youth build long lasting relationships and stay connected to their church.



**Vacation Bible Camp - Coming August 8-12, 2022 - Mark your calendars!!!**

## ★ Food Truck Party: On a Roll with God!

★ *Outside on the church lawn or inside on a rainy day.* Join the fun! Registration is open and ready: <https://www.fccej.org/v5/grow-in-faith/vacation-bible-camp/>

## ★ VB Camp Team is Coming Together

★ Recruitment is underway for this year's station leaders! We can use your help with Crafts, Science, Snack & Mission/Service. We are also looking for youth helpers (going into 7th grade and up) and a photographer. <https://www.fccej.org/v5/grow-in-faith/vacation-bible-camp/>

★ Station leader guides are ready to be passed out to help with planning. VB Camp Team meeting will be coming in mid March. Not sure where or how you'd like to get involved? Contact Laurie and she'll be happy to sit down with you and figure out what works for you.



## Communications

We had a long discussion about ways to market the church to the larger community. Thinking about different ways to get information to people including QR codes to the website. We talked about how to express the values of the church and what people might be looking for. We are going to create some draft signs that could be hung up on community bulletin boards. We also talked about different ways to encourage members to interact with the church social media to help promote the church.

The website has been updated with the Vacation Bible Camp information for this summer, the annual meeting information as well the March Essex Eats Out. We also talked about Google analytics or other ways to get some information on how the website is being used.

Respectfully submitted by Hannah Tracy

Committee Members: Francis Gravel,  
Goeff Brown, Hannah Tracy and Andrea Sharp

## Deacon's Corner

We are delighted to welcome two new Deacons to our committee, Betty Busciglio and Allison VanSteenburg. We bid farewell to Lauren Starkey and Judy Larrabee Pomainville and wish them well in their new responsibilities within the church.

Did you know that the Deacons in our church are ordained and thus able to perform weddings? Keep us in mind next time you or someone you love is planning a wedding. During March, Rev. Mark will ordain our Deacons during Sunday worship.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 2, and ends on Easter Sunday, April 17. The Deacons, in collaboration with the staff, are planning ways to make this year's Lenten season meaningful and possibly interactive while maintaining Covid-safe protocols. We are considering both indoor and outdoor events (depending on the weather). Details will be revealed this month in an ongoing basis.

Deacons continue to monitor our community's COVID-19 status, the congregation's comfort level and the recommendations of the state Board of Health. As a result, we will no longer be asking worshipers to sign in for contact tracing. We will continue to encourage everyone to wear masks when indoors.

Alison Wermer  
Co-chair Deacons

## Stewardship

### **Exciting News! Another First at First Church!**

We are thrilled to announce the first ever Concert Series at FCCEJ featuring guest musicians. Our goal is to bring our community together to enjoy great music and celebrate amazing artists from around Vermont and New England. We are anticipating a wide variety of musicians - four to six concerts per year - Classical, Folk, Jazz, Bluegrass, and more.

Our hope is that a portion of the proceeds from these concerts would be donated to a local organization that is supported by our Missions Committee.

What we would love from you: We need 10 people to help us with the logistics, with ideas, ticket sales, publicity, etc. (four to six times a year). The first concert is anticipated to be in May 2022.

What better way to celebrate the Spring Season and to share our beautifully-remodeled church with our members and the greater community!

Please contact Alex John [jgutsrus@gmail.com](mailto:jgutsrus@gmail.com) if you would like to assist in this exciting new project.

The Music Concert Series Committee is also looking for a name for this initiative and are asking for your input. The person whose suggested name is chosen will receive a \$50 gift card to the restaurant of their choice. Please send your suggestion for the concert series to Kathryn Brennan [khbrennan@comcast.net](mailto:khbrennan@comcast.net) by March 8th.



## **FREE Little Art Gallery & Library**

Onsite at bottom of ramp to Church St. entrance

Stop by ~ Pick one out ~ Drop one off

*Looking for a family who would like to be the FREE Stewards and stop by every now and again and tidy it and organize the books.*

*Contact Laurie for more information.*

## Missions Committee



The Grab 'N Go Chili Fundraiser is back by popular demand!

SAVE the Date: Friday, March 18th

Cost is still \$10.00/quart which includes 2 cornbread muffins and cheese topping. Drive-by pick up at church on March 18th from 4-6pm. Deliveries will be made between 4-5pm. Correct cash or check payable to FCCEJ is appreciated.

The sign up to donate chili and or cornbread muffins and to place your order will be on "Sign up Genius" and will be available soon...stay tuned!

Proceeds from the Fundraiser will benefit the Missions Committee and outreach programs at the church.

### One Great Hour of Sharing



Sunday, March 27 is the date for this year's One Great Hour of Sharing special offering. Join with other churches of the United Church of Christ (UCC) in support of the Church's wider mission. The theme for this year's offering is "Love Remains".

The UCC website states that this special mission offering "... carries God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water, food, education and health care, small business micro-credit, advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons, and emergency relief and rehabilitation. One Great Hour of Sharing also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response."

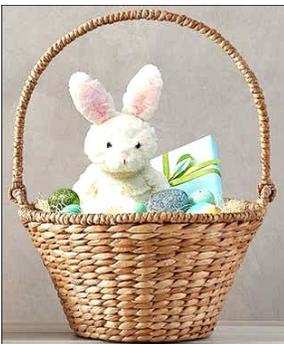
You can access videos and other information about this important offering through the UCC website:

<https://www.ucc.org/oghs/>. When giving, please clearly indicate your contribution is for the One Great Hour of Sharing. Contributions are always accepted both before and after the March 27 date.

### U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants Vermont (USCRI Vermont)

Last month, your Missions Committee donated ten \$50 Shaw's gift cards to USCRI Vermont, which was very appreciated. This month, USCRI has once again begun accepting donations of household goods with a list of needed items on their Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/USCRIVT>. Check out the great work this organization is doing in Vermont: <https://refugees.org/uscri-vermont/>.

### Called 2 Care Easter Baskets



We are looking for 50-60 Easter baskets to distribute to home-bound people in our community. You may either assemble baskets or donate basket items. Contents typically include non-edible gifts except for some teas (e.g., lavender, green tea, chamomile) and digestives (e.g., lemon or vanilla wafers.) Examples of non-edible gifts are (not limited to) the following: puzzles (e.g., crosswords, Sudoku, jigsaw), pencils, note pads, bingo markers, mandala coloring books, greeting cards, stuffed animals, playing cards, lip balm, stress balls, lotions, travel tissues, hand sanitizers (scented and non-scented OK), plant starters, flower seeds, and other tchotchkes. Hand-made gifts are also greatly appreciated.

**Requests:** If you wish for a friend or family member to receive a basket, please email [welcome@fccej.org](mailto:welcome@fccej.org).

Donations may be dropped off at the church Monday-Friday, 8am-2pm. We will have a bin placed outside our Church Street entrance where items may be deposited after hours. Look for the bin with the Easter basket image on it.

**Sunday Worship - 8:30am\* & 10:15am**

\*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 is served in the Sanctuary on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month. The elements will be sealed and passed out to the congregation.

**Sermon Talk Back**

Join us every Tuesday from 8:30-10am to talk about the Sunday scripture and message. This time provides opportunities to delve deeper into scripture and hear the perspectives of others in our faith community. Sermon Talkback meets in Marvin Lounge and via Zoom: <http://zoom.us/j/740803865>.

**Lenten Scavenger Hunt**

On Sunday, March 20, your CE committee will be sponsoring an outside activity on the church grounds. Join our Scavenger Hunt right after worship and Faith Formation programs that morning or come later in the day. We plan to have it stay up throughout the day on Sunday. Come, enjoy the outside activity, build community with others and learn more about Lent and it's symbols. There will be clues that lead you from one location to the next. All ages are welcome. Children, youth, families, and the young at heart.



**Pretzel Sunday**

Mark your calendars for April 10, Palm Sunday. Remember this day?! Volunteers up early, arriving at church at 7:30am to mix up pretzel dough, volunteers rolling out the dough, volunteers bake some so they are ready for fellowship time. Maybe the weather will cooperate and we can be outside enjoying a beautiful spring day. Children and youth will get to roll out pretzels during our morning Faith Formation time of 2nd service. Many hands are need to help make this special Sunday in Lent happen. Please reach out to Laurie if you are interested or wonder how you can help.

*Heartfelt Thanks*

*Dear FCCEJ Family,*

*Thank you so much for the yellow rose that was delivered for my birthday.*

*It's a blessing to have such a caring faith community.*

*Much love, Connie Marshall*

*Dear Friends,*

*I would like to thank you for the TLC I received after my fall. The cards, texts, prayers, flowers, visits and calls have been the best medicine! I am truly blessed to be a part of this church family! God bless you all!*

*Love, Mary Anne Warren*

**MARCH BIRTHDAYS**

|                            |       |                                  |        |
|----------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|--------|
| LAGRANGE, Arthur (85)..... | 1-Mar | CLARK, Lisa (50).....            | 10-Mar |
| JOHNSON, Dave (76).....    | 2-Mar | STAPLETON, Renee (50).....       | 10-Mar |
| FRISBIE, Bart (74).....    | 3-Mar | POWELL, Marilyn (73).....        | 11-Mar |
| STARKEY, Cameron (22)..... | 3-Mar | SHARP, Joshua (28).....          | 12-Mar |
| VOLKER, Beth (68).....     | 3-Mar | TRUAX, Faith (75).....           | 17-Mar |
| BLACKMAN, Bruce (81).....  | 4-Mar | GOODHEART, Cathie (73).....      | 19-Mar |
| MARTHALER, Tony (44).....  | 4-Mar | TAYLOR, Toni (97).....           | 21-Mar |
| TALLMAN, Sarah (25).....   | 4-Mar | JONES, Bill (85).....            | 26-Mar |
| RODDY, Jonathan (34).....  | 5-Mar | PALMER, Sean (46).....           | 26-Mar |
| BICKFORD, Bill (90).....   | 6-Mar | SHEARER, Thomas (58).....        | 27-Mar |
| BURNETT, Donna (73).....   | 6-Mar | DEAL, Robert (35).....           | 28-Mar |
| DOOLEY, Sam (20).....      | 6-Mar | WERMER, John (38).....           | 29-Mar |
| LEACH, David (66).....     | 6-Mar | CUNNINGHAM-FIRKEY, Eva (21)..... | 31-Mar |
| WARREN, Beth (54).....     | 6-Mar | STONE, Elizabeth (81).....       | 31-Mar |
| DOOLEY, Jen (54).....      | 8-Mar |                                  |        |

**Friday Coffee Clatter**



Everyone is invited to meet at Martone’s in downtown Essex Junction on Friday mornings from 8 to 9. Get some coffee and baked goods with Rev. Mark and other faith friends and talk about absolutely anything! The mask policy is determined by Martone’s. We laugh often while discussing aspects of life and significant current events. It’s a great way to start your day!

**Monthly Bridge Group**



Each month, we have two to three tables of folks get together to play some bridge. The skill level is quite diverse with some folks knowing all sorts of strange conventions and others who just like to get together to dabble with the game of bridge as they catch up on what is occurring in our community. Some come to learn and hone their skills. We have snacks and Rev. Mark offers a jar of homemade jam to the winning score. We meet in Marvin Lounge on the 3rd Friday of the month from 1:30 to 4pm and in March that is the 18th. We hope to see you there!

**Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop News!**



March has arrived and it’s time to THINK SPRING! Currently we have sales of winter inventory however later this month we will be preparing for our “change-over” to spring and summer items. On March 22-23, we will run our Bag Sales and March 29 is our FREE DAY where all clothing is free to customers.

We need YOUR help re-filling the shelves and racks with spring and summer inventory! We accept donations during our business hours. Please remember all items need to be in saleable condition to be accepted by our sorter. We accept men’s, women’s, and children’s clothing, bed and table linens, artwork, smaller household items, and jewelry. We no longer accept books. For questions or to donate, please contact Sue Wood at 878-3068 or email her at woodsusanjane@gmail.com. Thanks for your continued support throughout the pandemic and steady customer traffic, we continue to meet our outreach of serving others.

Hours: The Thrift Shop is currently open on Tuesdays and Saturdays, 10am-1pm and Wednesdays, 4-7pm.

Volunteers: If you are interested in spending a few hours contributing towards the mission of helping others in our community, contact Sue Wood or Elaine Raymond. The “crew” will be happy to welcome you to the shop and show you the ropes of operations!

**Leadership Retreat**

Dear Committee Members / Church Leaders:

All of you help lead our church by serving on a committee or as a church officer. This year, we are going to return to having a church leadership retreat in the winter months so that we might remain an active, vibrant and well run organization. Each committee has new members and each year committee leadership shifts just a bit so staying centered on good practices and understanding how our church is organized and operates will benefit all of us and the wider church community. A well run church where everyone is on the same page and working together in a cohesive way keeps our committee members happy and even attracts folks to serve in various positions.

The Leadership Retreat will be held on Sunday, March 6th, from 1-3pm in the Sanctuary. We wanted people to have enough time to attend our morning worship services [we will be returning to two services that day] and then go home to eat and relax a bit before coming back to church. We strongly encourage everyone in any leadership role on a committee to attend and believe this is an excellent way for whole committees to deepen their understanding of their work and nurture a team sentiment.

During the Leadership Retreat we will also be conducting the March Church Council Meeting. There were not many items on the agenda so we figured we would just have an expedited meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Blessings,

*Mark Mendes, Sr. Pastor; Cathy Shearer, Church President; Judy Larrabee Pomainville, Church Vice President*

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