



SPIRIT @ FIRST

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH of Essex Junction

Love. Serve. Grow.

July 2022: In this issue...

- Simon Sez..... Cover
- Laurie’s Lens, Music Notes..... 2
- Faith Formation, Youth Ministry, Vacation Bible Camp 3
- Camping Ministry, Nearly New Sale..... 4
- Deacons Corner, Communications..... 5
- Missions, Racial Justice Advocacy 6
- Connection Opportunities..... 7

Simon Sez...

I don’t remember which musical was the first musical I saw in person. It was either “Hello, Dolly!” or “The Princess and the Pea.” But I do remember who took me: my grandma, Bobbie. Taking me to musicals and plays, my grandmother instilled within me a love of the theater and its power to transport. There is something about the overture played at the beginning of the musical that brings the audience to attention and transports us into a different world. Instrumental themes played during the overture are present throughout the musical.

Musicals, like art in general, can help us to have transcendent intervals; moments that take us beyond ourselves, that lift us from our daily lives, and carry us into a realm of imaginative possibility. I would even dare say help us to have transcendent moments with the divine. For the divine is made known in many ways, including music. Music infuses us with divine energies and sustains us. This year’s sermon series based on musicals is focused on spiritual resources to survive and thrive in times like ours.

We are featuring four musicals: *The Sound of Music* (July 3), *Music Man* (July 10), *Chorus Line* (July 17), and *Rent* (July 24). Each is paired with scripture passages and highlighted by at least one sung song during worship. We hope that you will join us.

Pastor Josh

COMMUNITY CONCERTS @ FIRST
presents
Ray Vega Jazz QuARTet
Sunday, July 10 at 7pm

Community Concerts at First is thrilled to host the Ray Vega Jazz QuARTet! Come and enjoy local jazz greats; Ray Vega on trumpet, Michael Hartigan on piano, Jeremy Hill on bass, and Geza Carr on drums. Concert proceeds support FCCEJ community outreach and Dismas House.

Ray Vega has established himself as one of the innovators of the international Jazz and Latin music scenes. A multi-talented trumpeter, percussionist, composer, and arranger, he presents Jazz from a refreshingly original and contemporary perspective. You might also know him as host of VPR’s Friday Night Jazz and UVM faculty member.

\$20 suggested donation. Tickets are available in the Fellowship Hall after Sunday worship as well as on the FCCEJ website, at the church office, or at the door.



Volunteer Recruitment for 2022-23

I have been reaching out for our volunteers for next year's programmatic year. Recruiting is something that never stops and is always happening for faith formation as plans continue to move forward for our time together in peer groups on Sunday morning. Do you need a degree? No. Do you need to have done this before? No. Do you need to have all the answers that the children or youth may ask you? No. Faith is not taught. Faith is caught. Do you feel it's important for our children and youth to be able to spread their wings, grow in faith and feel comfortable here at FCCEJ where they are free to ask questions? If yes, then I hope you will reach out to me, say 'yes' and join our team for this coming year.

You do not need to be available every Sunday. Can you lead a peer group weekly or be helper? Yes, you can. Just to be clear, many do not. Life happens and our busy lives have a juggling the pieces. Not to worry. That's why it's important to have many on the list who are willing to step up and help keep our program vibrant and strong. You will learn as you go right along with the children.

Teams are being formed for all our peer groups. We have two volunteers, a leader and a helper, or co-leaders, with each group. You will receive weekly emails from me and there will be a Safe Conduct training (online or in person) on a quarterly bases. This is a way for me to connect with the full team as a group and help us support each other. We ask that you be a part of our faith community for 6 months before volunteering and all adults receive our Safe Conduct Guidelines and fill out background check paper work.

High school youth are encouraged to be helpers in a peer group as well as be on staff in our Nursery. Either (or both) will strengthen the spiritual journey, and it looks great on resumes and college applications!

Please let me know if you have any questions. I am here to help you along your faith journey also.

Peace & Blessings to you all,

Laurie Chipman

Christian Education Director

Faith @ Home Page

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

Have you visited this site lately? It's a great place to go for another copy of Flat Jesus, explore different ways to pray, and different activities you can do.

Faith Formation Offering

For the 2021/2022 program year, our young people voted to support EDD Adaptive Sports. On June 5, we were thrilled to be able to present them with a check for almost \$500! Many thanks to all who donated towards this worthy organization.

Children and youth will vote on the 2022/2023 offering choice in September.

Music Notes



My family and I are appreciative of the warm welcome we have received here at FCCEJ! I would like to extend a big thank you to everyone who has helped introduce me to the music program and the church community here. Special thanks also goes out to Sanctuary Choir members who have volunteered to help do a "summer clean" of our music room in the choir loft...that way we'll be ready to go when choir resumes in the fall.

I am looking forward to our upcoming musicals series the first four weeks in July...we have some surprises in store for you! Please "stay tuned" for more news regarding upcoming concerts on our new concert series (Ray Vega is 7/10). Finally, I wanted to mention that I enjoy teaching keyboard instruments and offer lessons for all ages on piano, organ, or harpsichord. For more info, please email me or contact the church office.

Bethany Blake

Faith Formation & Youth Ministry

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

Summer Faith Formation

We have items in our Narthex and in our moveable Library in Fellowship for children and the young at heart during our summer 9am worship services (June through Labor Day weekend). Please take and use to help your feel more comfortable and welcomed as you sit in the Sanctuary or decide to move and wiggle around more in our Fellowship Hall. Please take your craft project home with you or pass it along to someone. Supplies should go back to their locations (please take the crayons in baggies with you).

Young Apostles

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

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. Our next gathering will either be in late September or early October. This group will be moving to quarterly gatherings for our next program year. If you have attended any of the gatherings, please pass along your feedback to Laurie lchipman@fccej.org, as this will help with our future planning

Join the Youth Ministry Team

Pastor Josh and Laurie are looking for a few more adults to add to this fun team. Do you like to plan or gather with youth? Help them grow in their faith? Be a mentor? Interested? Questions? Want to hear more? Wondering how you can help this team and our youth? Reach out to Josh, Laurie or Barb Smith and/or Kathryn Brennan (team members). One goal is to expand the number of adults that our youth get to know here at FCCEJ and therefore help them be more likely to keep church in their live and their faith growing.



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

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

★ 9am to 11:45am - Program starts at 9am. Parents can drop off beginning at 8:45am or stay and join us.

★ *Outside on the church lawn or inside on a rainy day.*

★ Join the fun! Registration is open and ready! **Register online:** <https://www.fccej.org/v5/grow-in-faith/vacation-bible-camp/>. **Same link to sign up and volunteer!**

★ *You & Me Toddler (not potty-trained, attend with an adult) up thru current 5th graders*

★ *Youth Assistants – 6th grade and up*

★ **VB Camp Team is Coming Together!**

★ All volunteers arrive by 8:30am for our morning team meeting and depart by noon. Not sure where or how to get involved? See the blank spaces below and contact Laurie. There's a place for everyone at VB Camp!

⇒ **Crafts** – Judy Roy & Mary Anne Warren

⇒ **Decorations & Prep** – Allison VanSteensburg

⇒ **Music Leader** – Laura Cunningham Firkey

⇒ **Photographer** – Linda Lou Parker

⇒ **Snacks** – Nancy Milne & Lauren Starkey

⇒ **Tech Crew** - Doug Olefsen

⇒ **Games** - Eric Lindholm / _____

⇒ **Opening/Closing “Head Chef”** - _____

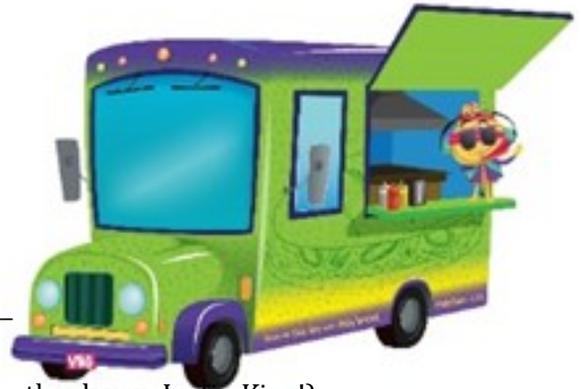
⇒ **Puppeteer** - Izzy Owens

⇒ **Science Leader** - Amanda Palmer (planning complete—thank you, Justin King!)

⇒ **Youth Assistants** – 6th grade and older (be a group leader or help at a station) – Izzy Owens, Teddy Owens, _____

⇒ **Canopy Set-up** (the week before camp) - _____

⇒ **Backdrop Assembly** (weeks ahead) - _____



Deacon's Corner

Living Out Our Faith

At our recent Deacons' meeting, we discussed a current political issue in Vermont (Proposal 2, on the ballot this November, would change the language of the 1st amendment to the Vermont State Constitution to abolish all current exceptions allowing for slavery in VT). This led to a conversation regarding the many important current issues including income inequality, gun violence, racism, climate crisis, LGBTQ rights, food insecurity, and the overturning of Roe v. Wade. Many people are suffering, oppressed, and impacted by these issues, especially marginalized groups in our society.

We believe that as followers of Jesus, it is our duty to lift up the rights and well-being of those who are marginalized and oppressed, and to work toward a safe, peaceful world. Jesus modeled and taught this open-hearted, inclusive behavior.

³⁵ 'for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Matthew 25:35-36

As many of these issues are impacted by political policies and actions, we believe that this calls us to be politically engaged. Silence, when others are oppressed, is complicity.

We encourage all our members to be politically engaged. Identify what issues matter the most to you. What do you feel called to address? Learn about the issue. Contribute your voice, your vote, your time, your financial resources, and/or your gifts and talents to make positive change. For example, FCCEJ now has a Racial Justice Group which is under the umbrella of the Missions Committee. This group was initiated by Rev. Josh and is co-led by Katie Ricks and Carolyn Rushford. We invite you to learn more about what we are doing to address this issue.

We recognize that FCCEJ is a diverse community politically. Despite the current national climate of highly polarized politics, we believe that our diversity is a strength. It is by working together that we can find the best solutions. We are considering hosting opportunities to hear from experts on various issues and to learn the facts. We trust that as a congregation of Christians, we can listen to each other with respect and compassion, even when we disagree. We welcome your feedback about this issue or any others.

On behalf of the Deacons,
Carolyn Rushford

Communications

Recent updates to the website include the following:

- ◆ Details for the Ray Vega concert in July, including access to pay for tickets online
- ◆ Information for the Nearly New Yard Sale planned for July 23rd
- ◆ Updating the Staff page to include Bethany Blake our new Music Director
- ◆ Access to the VB Camp Wishlist sign up from the VB Camp page
- ◆ Consolidation of the Capital Campaign information in the Giving area

In July and August the committee will continue to support the Community Concert series with updates for the September concert after the July concert is over. Also, there may be additional changes needed to the VB Camp page to help families enjoy camp in August.

Rev. Mark briefed the committee on the Proposal 2 Resolution to "Amend the Vermont Constitution to clarify that slavery and indentured servitude in any form are prohibited." Other committees are working on a statement regarding this action and once finalized it will be added to the website.

Respectfully submitted by

Andrea Sharp

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

Missions Committee

The members of your Missions Committee are grateful for all the people in our church who have made our outreach work successful. We thank you for your donations of time and money, including for the following:

- ♦ **One Great Hour of Sharing** - For the United Church of Christ special offering One Great Hour of Sharing, \$630 was donated. According to the UCC website, "One Great Hour of Sharing, part of Our Church's Wider Mission, is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that 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." Thank you for your support of this important offering!
- ♦ **Community Concerts at First Concert Series** - Donation to Spectrum. The first concert in the series raised \$470.25 for Spectrum Youth and Family Services. According to Spectrum's website, "Our mission is to empower teenagers, young adults, and their families to make and sustain positive changes through prevention, intervention, and life skills services." For more information about Spectrum, please refer to their website at: <https://www.spectrumvt.org/>



Calling All Bakers!

Your Missions Committee is holding a bake sale as part of the church lawn sale on Saturday, July 23. Our esteemed member, Ann Marie Sullivan, is organizing the event. Bake up your favorite recipe or experiment with a new one! **Please individually wrap servings of your baked good for ease of sale.** Feel free to call Ann Marie at 802-879-6044 or email her at ambs6155@comcast.net with questions or simply drop off your baked goods at the church kitchen the morning of July 23. Proceeds from the bake sale will benefit COTS, The Committee on Temporary Shelter. This organization "advocates for long-term

solutions to end homelessness and provides emergency shelter, services, and long-term housing for Vermonters who are experiencing homelessness or are marginally housed." Did you know that COTS supports 9 different locations including the WayStation, the DayStation, the Firehouse Family Shelter, Canal Street Veterans Housing, and more? Just think, your baked goods can fill bellies and support a worthy organization at the same time! For more information on COTS, please check out their website at: <https://www.cotsonline.org>.



Racial Justice Advocacy Group

As mentioned in the June Spirit@First Newsletter, the Racial Justice Advocacy Group is a subcommittee of Missions, working together to end racism. We meet at 7pm on the 4th Thursday of each month in person or via Zoom. These meetings provide an opportunity for participants to support one another and to share thoughts and concerns regarding racial justice. We invite you to join us as we navigate how best to be allies and end racism.

On the first Sunday of each month, we sponsor a 30-minute silent vigil for racial justice on the front lawn of the church. Please consider joining us! After some fellowship following the later worship service, grab a cup of coffee and join us.

During the fall we will be reading and discussing Dante Stewart's book, *Shoutin' in the Fire: An American Epistle*. The book chronicles the author's experience of being black in majority white Christian spaces. We are tentatively planning to meet three times during the fall, discussing and reflecting on approximately a third of the book each time we meet. Specific details will be available in early September.

If you would like additional information about our group, please reach out to either Carolyn Rushford at cjrushford@comcast.net or Katie Rick at katie.i.rick@gmail.com.

With faith and hope,
Betsy Weischedel



FREE Little Art Gallery & Library

Did you know that this exists right outside our Church Street entrance? Visit it on a Sunday morning when you are here for worship, or another time during your week. Take a little piece of art, a book or two, and/or add your creation to the gallery for someone else to enjoy. Please note, it's our objective to keep this a faith-based gallery and library. We hope you will stop by!

Guest Bakers & Hosts Wanted!



FCCEJ is FULL of amazing bakers and friendly people and your Hospitality Team would love to spotlight any of that amazing energy on a Sunday for Fellowship Time. Have you wanted to volunteer but don't have a lot of extra time? Do you have a wonderful recipe that you would like to try out with a crowd? Would you like to help out hosting with us or be a sub for a Sunday? We would love the help! Contact Jen Dooley via email at dooleyjrj2000@comcast.net or by phone/text at 802-578-0230 for more information!

Noontime Book Group



The Noontime Book Group will meet in the Marvin Lounge on Monday, July 18, at 11:30am. This will be a hybrid meeting with a Zoom Meeting ID 626841083, Passcode 455075. This month, in response to increasing interest and concern about censorship of books in libraries and schools, we will each choose a book from a banned book list. Then we will each lead a short discussion about why the book is or was once banned. Is it appropriate for all audiences? How and why are these decisions made? Bring your lunch and join us for a lively and timely discussion.

JULY BIRTHDAYS

WADSWORTH, Ann	07/01	MARTHALER, Lily	07/20
FERRARA, Jonathan	07/02	ALLEN, Mary Jane	07/21
HOFFMAN, Carl	07/02	BLACKMAN, Judy	07/21
STARKEY, Lauren	07/03	ELLIOTT, Riley	07/21
JOHNSON, Rachel	07/04	FRANK, Courtney	07/22
MENDES, Shay	07/04	PETHERBRIDGE, Dan	07/22
HOLDEN, Mark	07/05	STAPLETON, Walker	07/22
GABERT, Sawyer	07/07	VINCENT, Marilyn	07/23
HOFFMAN, Vincent	07/07	CARPENTER, Kelsey	07/25
LAFLAM, Tamsin	07/08	MAYVILLE, Darby	07/25
DONLEY, Luann	07/09	MESSIER, Clay	07/25
HOUGHTON, Martha	07/09	ROBINSON, Eric	07/25
ISHAM, Ira	07/09	FRIVOLL, JanRoald	07/26
WEISCHEDEL, Betsy	07/09	BOTTAMINI, Diane	07/27
GILLIAM, Christine	07/10	NYHAGEN, Sylvia	07/27
JONES, Grace	07/10	SINKEWICZ, Christine	07/27
EDWARDS, Norma	07/12	CHATES, Harriet	07/28
BUCHSPICS, Grace	07/15	CHARLEBOIS, Danielle	07/29
NOWELL, Tessa	07/15	ACEBO, Trista	07/30
KNAPP, Jackie	07/16	CROCKET, Daniel	07/30
HERLEY, Christina	07/17	HATHAWAY, Sheila	07/30
BOURN, Isabelle	07/18	ISHAM, Barbara	07/30
CHIPMAN, Brian	07/18	BENTON, Lanie	07/31
HOFFMAN, Alessandra	07/18	JACKSON, Brad	07/31
MOOS, Zoe	07/18	SINKEWICZ, Robert	07/31
CUNNINGHAM-FIRKEY, Emily	07/19		

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ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

Sunday Morning

Intergenerational Summer Worship - 9am

In-person and streamed via youtube.com/c/fcej
Music: Bethany Blake leads our musical offerings
Finally @ First Praise Band is on summer hiatus
Communion is served on the 1st Sunday of each month.

Visit us online:



FCCEJ.ORG



FCCEJ



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FIRSTCONGREGATIONALEJ

We do not draw people to Christ by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it.

Madeleine L'Engle