



SPIRIT @ FIRST

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH *of Essex Junction*

Love. Serve. Grow.

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Your Pastor's Ponderings.....

The Christmas season is over, whew! The music from the Sanctuary Choir, Men at First and Finally at First was superb as were the leaders Rick Dooley, Bill Bickford Jr. and Bethany Blake. All three services were different, and well received; the 9pm service had the bonus of the baptism of a precious baby girl who naturally stole the show. Josh and Laurie were fantastic in their dramatic presentations at the 5pm service, and behind the scenes, Jenn did a tremendous job juggling the multitudinous amount of details for each service. The Deacons were of course ever vigilant in making sure everything ran smoothly. On top of that, the Giving Tree again outdid themselves in providing presents to 60 plus families this year, thanks to the dedication and hard work of Elaine Raymond. And with over 84 distinct hits to our streaming 9pm service, it looks like we reached more people than ever with our message of God's extravagant love offered through Jesus Christ. It was a good season!

Like Christmas long ago, once it was over the Holy Family was on the run to Egypt to save their newborn child and create a new life for themselves. They had planned to return home to Nazareth and live a quiet life as they watched their messianic son grow up and into his role as God's Son. However, due to circumstances beyond their control, they were immigrants facing new challenges.

And we are right with them!

On December 22nd, Creative Discoveries gave their notice that they would be terminating the rental of our property and partnering with another center to make a stronger business. We wish them success and we are glad they have sojourned here for a while. Plus, as we all know by now, our own Associate Pastor Josh Simon is leaving for the green pastures of Wisconsin and Emanuel Church outside of Milwaukee to become their new settled pastor. Having watched him grow into his own ministry with his own unique style and remarkable skill, we know Josh will do well in his new call. His departure will also leave the parsonage without a tenant.

All three of these realities will demand that our church take a serious look at our future and make some determinations about what that future will look like.

Will we stick to two full time pastors with the financial support that entails, or look to a new model where part time programmatic positions take on aspects of our ministry that the congregation feels important to pay someone to accomplish? Will we look for a new child care business to take up the empty space in our building to provide us with some income or look to use the space in a way that lives into our ministry in some way while also providing income? And finally, what will we do with the parsonage? Will we simply clean it up and rent it out, or look for ways to do ministry while also garnering income to support our budget?

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Simon Sez...

Leave-taking is a hard task to do after five years! Five years of laughs, tears, smiles, hugs, and handshakes. It is difficult to measure the impact of a ministry. As a priesthood of all believers, you and I have ministered together. You have ministered to me as much as I have you. The great American musical hymn, Seasons of Love, "How do you measure, measure a year? In daylights, in sunsets, in midnights, in cups of coffee, in inches, in miles, in laughter, in strife. How about in love?" When Paul leaves the Christ-followers in Ephesus, Acts 20, he quotes Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and my grandma reminds me, "count your blessings." I want to spend my final newsletter with you counting my blessings. Many of these blessings are mixed with what I learned. If I were to list them all, the whole newsletter would be mine. So here are a few: First and foremost, you. Yes, you. You have been a blessing to me. The people here have been my best and most caring teachers, and I have had a lot of them.

When I arrived, this church was in the midst of celebrating its 150th anniversary. You were planning a capital campaign. This campaign had just reached the point of training folks to talk to church members about the campaign's projects. I was able to witness the love, care, and support this congregation has for its buildings and especially its members. It taught me the importance of capital campaigns to energize a church, and that buildings are much more than just buildings or beloved worshiping spaces, they're community centers—platforms for all of our ministries to spring forth.

At the beginning of 2019, after years of Crohn's disease, my body required surgery. It's a lesson that pastoral care is mutual between the pastor and church members. Being a two-day car ride or one layover flight from home, I leaned on you—church members and staff—for in-person emotional support. You visited me in the hospital, prepared meals that fit my dietary restrictions, and prayed. You did not shirk at the request. Your love poured out, and our bond strengthened. Thank you for blessing me. My appreciation for you is eternal.

And then, we know what happened in 2020. The pandemic uprooted and changed our church. The biggest lesson from that time is how quickly the church can change its operations. In just a short week, we moved from in-person worship to worshiping and communing together online. The church council invested in live stream equipment that would meet our needs. We learned how to live stream our worship on YouTube, and Zoom became our friend. For many, this was the first time using these digital spaces. It was a challenging time and it was formative.

I remain impressed by what we accomplished during the short but long two years of the pandemic. The Food Pantry adapted to the changing circumstances with diligence and careful thought, taking into consideration the needs of the community and the best way to distribute the food. For a year, tables in the fellowship hall were filled with bags of groceries for individuals and families. New volunteers came out to help when we asked older volunteers to stay home out of concern for their safety and health.

In the United States, over a million people have died from COVID, reaching into the lives of tens of millions of Americans. In our place in the country, we committed ourselves to keeping people safe and staying hopeful for a vaccine. This is not to say that there has not been a psychological toll. Social distancing led to isolation. The carelessness many of our national leaders treated COVID added anxiety to the psychological distress. The recovery work from the pandemic is not over; from reconnecting to each other in-person to supporting youth as they navigate their spiritual and psychological well-being. I remain proud of what we have done. Thank you for centering people's safety.

Another blessing is how well FCCEJ operates. The various committees and ministries work well together. There is so much ministry taking place in this church it is hard to keep track of it all. Thankfully, dedicated lay leaders keep churches humming along, serving God and being disciples of Christ.

Youth ministry has been a blessing as well. I learned a lot when we went on a service project trip to New York City in 2018. Participating in Confirmation Class leadership placed me in a spot to see our youth grow theologically and faithfully. They were able to articulate their current understanding of their faith. They asked thought-provoking questions and even had some that challenged me. I have also appreciated the many sporting and theater events I have attended to root for our youth. *Big Fish. Rent. Little Mermaid.* Hockey. Basketball. Field Hockey. Volleyball.

Continued on next page...

Simon Sez, continued...

You embraced my passion for social justice in my preaching and in our church ministries. Ending oppression and supporting a fairer economic system are at the heart of who I am as a person and as a disciple of Jesus. My commitment to racial justice strengthened during my time here. The murder of George Floyd led many churches with majority white congregations to think about their relation to race and racism. Many church and community members participated in our Recognizing White Privilege curriculum from the United Church of Christ. From there, we read some more books and have begun the process of paying for the use of African American Spirituals in worship. The Open and Affirming ad hoc committee is just getting rolling.

The congregation has shaped me as a preacher. I have taken in the constructive feedback I received and incorporated it into my preaching. You may not always agree with what I feel God calling me to say. I have learned how to say it in a more approachable way. The Broadway musical sermon series blessed me by letting me/us try something a bit different in the summer.

Of the many groups I have participated in and led, one group stands out the most, Tuesday Morning Sermon Talkback. So many tears, jokes, laughter, irreverent humor, deep theological conversations, care and support for me and each other, these sacred moments are cherished in my heart.

Last and certainly not least, Mark, Laurie, Bethany, and Jen. Mark and Laurie have been here since the beginning. Mark has been a great mentor. The tidbits, the reflections, the vision for ministry, love for the people have all contributed to my learnings. Laurie has been my brainstorming partner and co-pilot on many things. Both have blessed me with their collegiality, support for my ministry, and care for my personal life.

To close, I offer these words from Mary Tyler Moore, given on the last episode of the eponymous sitcom:

*“Well, I just wanted you to know...that sometimes I get concerned about being a career woman. I get to thinking my job is too important to me. And I tell myself...that the people I work with are just the people I work with...and not my family. And last night, I thought, what is a family anyway? They're just people who make you feel... less alone... and really loved. And that's what you've done for me. **Thank you for being my family.**”*

Your Pastor's Ponderings, continued.....

In the next month and more, our church will be having conversations about these very things and we welcome input from everyone in the congregation. If you could choose a staff person to do a specific ministry in our midst, what would the shape of that ministry be? If we could add three part time employees, what would they do? Would you include an IT person, or an community outreach person, or a youth organizer, or maybe a Member Development person who would oversee how we draw people to church and then integrate them into the full life of the congregation. And concerning the day care part of our building, is there another purpose we could propose that would feed not only our budget but our souls? Could we create a Wellness or Spirituality Center where yoga, Tai chi and Reiki classes help bring in come funds. Could we hire some pastoral counsellors that would use our church as a foundation for their business? Would we consider renting our space to social service organizations that are seeking to make the world a better place? And concerning the parsonage, could we partner with Vermont Refugee and Resettlement program in hosting newly arrived immigrants to our community as they transition to independent living or perhaps a partnership with Dismas House as we create a space in Essex where people transition from prison to non-prison life.

There are just a few ideas that have surfaced and I am sure there are others. So send me your ideas; participate in the upcoming discussions over these matters, think about what direction and or shape our church should take as we enter an ever changing future. The more people that participate, the more the spirit will work in and through us. The church is dramatically changing in our culture and world, these changes offer us a unique opportunity to shape our ministry to meet the ever changing needs of people of faith.

Blessed to be on the journey with you,

Rev. Mark



Our first intergenerational pageant! Many thanks to our youth and adult cast who gave of their time, energy and gifts to make this year's pageant a reality. You were all awesome! If you were not with us in person or were not watching online, remember that you can go to our website, click the Sunday worship button (that leads to you our YouTube channel) and watch the December 18th worship service. There were many great comments following both our services that day. Our youth and adults brought their energy, humor and joy to their parts with every line and step they took. We had some great young magi and angels, as well as some lovely voices from our children leading the congregation in the carols at the 10:15am worship service. It was truly one of my favorite Sundays of the year. Thank you all!



In January, I start to think of summer, both personal and professionally. Are you starting to plan your summer yet? Read on about our FCCEJ camping opportunities at Button Bay & Branbury State parks and our VB Camp in August. Let me know if you are interested, want to be put on the camping list or want to volunteer to help with either of the programs. Gathering together as a church family, any time we do it, is a great way to help grow your faith, widen your circle of those you know here and be a mentor/helper/leader. Maybe you can't wait for summer. Maybe you'd like to support our programs now. Sunday mornings could always use a few more helpers and leaders during faith formation peer group time. Did you know that our 2022-23 calendar for the year can be found on the Children & Youth page of our website? Copies can also be found on your way into worship.

As we move into 2023 and beyond, winding out the 12 days of Christmas and moving into Epiphany (January 6th), we continue to strive to keep our programs strong and healthy. One of the best ways to help us do that is to reach out to the staff and committees. Share your thoughts. Ministry is a two-way street and hearing from you all - what you find helpful - what you struggle with - new ideas - all help us stay vibrant and engaging.

Find your light and let it shine! Bring the hope, peace and joy to those around you as you continue to do acts of kindness and spread the love of Christ.

Blessed to be on this journey with you,

Laurie Chipman

Christian Education Director

Faith Formation

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

Faith Formation Peer Groups for 2022-2023

All ages are encouraged to ask questions, as we learn together about Jesus and the love our God has for everyone.
On All Family Worship days children/youth participate in the full worship service with their families.

January Schedule

- 1/1—All Family Worship / Communion ~ ONE service @ 10am
- 1/8—Peer Groups
- 1/15—Peer Groups
- 1/22—Peer Groups
- 1/29—Peer Groups

2022-23 Faith Formation Offering

Church World Service

Building a world where there is enough for all.

CWS walks with families all over the world as they put food on their table, connect to clean water and build what they need to thrive.

Think about your giving as you read and reflect on this information:

- \$5/month — you send a child in Serbia to school for a week.
- \$10/month — you deliver a month of emergency rations to a child in Kenya.
- \$25/month — you provide a month of food to an entire family in need.
- \$55/month — you pay the rent for a family living in poverty in Egypt.

To learn more, visit them at <https://cwsglobal.org/>

Young Apostles

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

Recreation, 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.

YA will meet on January 22 from 4-5pm. If the weather is good, we may do an outside activity. Dress warm or bring extra layers. Have an idea for a project? Share your thoughts with Laurie at lchipman@fccej.org.



Vacation Bible Camp 2023

Mark your calendars for August 7-11, 2023

Hero Hotline – Called Together to Serve God!

'So let's strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.' Romans 14:19

VB Camp is changing and trying to keep up with the times. We have a goal to add an afternoon session which will give campers the opportunity to be at a full day program and help parents have a later pick up time. Our morning session will remain the same with volunteers arriving at 8am, having a morning meeting at 8:30am and campers being dropped off between 8:45-9am, traveling to stations. They can either be picked up at 12noon or sign up for the afternoon session as well, staying until 4pm that will include lunch, a movie, large group art project and games. Scholarships will be available.

Youth in grades 6th – 12th are encouraged to sign up with Laurie and volunteer for the morning session, gaining community service hours. Those going into 10th-12th and soon off to college, or in college already, are encouraged to fill out a job application and work the afternoon session (attending a couple training sessions will happen prior to camp week). We are looking for at least four older youth/college aged to help turn our afternoon session into a reality so families can start signing up for camp. We are also recruiting adult support volunteers for the afternoon session, to be present and back up our youth. Both sessions will be faith based and follow the camp theme.

Calling ALL Youth

Come Build Community – Disconnect from your Phone - Reconnect with God

Reach out to Laurie if you are interested: lchipman@fccej.org

Junior Youth—Sunday, January 8 from 11:30-1:30

Food, Fun & Games

Come unplug from your devices and connect with God and your church friends.

High School Youth

Sunday, January 8th from 4-5:30pm

Mark your calendars for our next gathering of Nursery staff and HS youth. Come connect with your peers, share what mission/outreach you'd like to do as a group and have a little God time. It will be Pastor Josh's last time to gather with us. We had a small, but strong showing on December 11th at our gathering and put together the goodie bags for the Giving Tree children.

VB Camp week - Paying Opportunity

We are looking for 4 youth who would commit to working the afternoon session of VB Camp the week of August 7-11th from 11:30am to 4pm. Hurry and get your name on the list! (Going into 10th grade up thru college.) Volunteer in the mornings from 8:30 to 12noon for community service hours and a chance to know the campers before the afternoon.

Nursery Staff

Contact Laurie for an interview, fill out paperwork and get an orientation to the Nursery. Be on staff and earn \$20 a worship service. Possible new member class and funeral childcare also. We currently have 8 on payroll and there is room for more. Job applications available by request. Email Laurie at lchipman@fccej.org.

Youth Ministry Team

It's time to build our team up and expand. Join Elizabeth Miller and Barb Smith. Help plan youth events, participate when you can, making connections with our youth that can last a lifetime.

FCCEJ Outdoor Ministry



The 2023 camping weekends with FCCEJ families have been set! A bunch of sites have been booked and paid for by the funds in our FCCEJ Outdoor Ministry Fund, thanks to many of you who have given on the special offering in February. So, check your calendars and reach out to Laurie to hold a site for your family.

Friday, June 23 through Sunday morning, Jun 25:

Button Bay State Park on Lake Champlain:

<https://www.vtstateparks.com/buttonbay.html>
(10 tent/RV sites and 4 lean-tos)

Friday, August 25 through Sunday morning, August 27:

Branbury State Park on Lake Dunmore:

<https://www.vtstateparks.com/branbury.html>
(8 tent/RV sites, 1 tent only and 2 lean-tos)

Deacons Corner

The season of Advent has passed when we celebrated Hope, Joy, Peace and Love. The bad weather could not diminish the warmth and fellowship we experienced as we gathered to celebrate Christ's birth on Christmas Eve. Pastor Josh led the single service Christmas morning.

In recent meetings, your Deacons have been discussing ways we can be more welcoming to visitors. Reaching out with a personal gesture lets visitors know we noticed and care about them. Ideas include follow up visits with a homemade treat, such as bread or jelly.

As Pastor Josh moves through the transition to his new job in Wisconsin, Deacons has been discussing what staffing configuration we would like to have in the future at FCCEJ. The two choices are to hire a new associate pastor OR a programmatic model with people hired to fill different areas of need, usually on a part-time basis. We will continue to study these two options and the benefits of each.

Alison Wermer
Co-chair Deacons

Heavenly Food Pantry

People frequently ask what they can do to support our Heavenly Food Pantry. We are asking for assistance in providing needed food. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the pantry has seen changes in how we secure food for the pantry. The Vermont Food Bank, which has always been well-stocked with food, dropped all charges for food and delivery to local pantries during the pandemic. Beginning this month, the Food Bank has resumed their fees for all food and for its delivery. Also significant is a current drop in food choices from the Food Bank.

Listed here are foods we can currently not order from the Food Bank: juice (apple, grape, etc...), baked beans, canned green beans, basmati rice, canned pastas such as spaghetti and meatballs and ravioli, chunky soups and canned fruit.

Needless to say, these items are staples in the homes of many of the clients we serve at our pantry. We distribute a substantial amount of these food items each month. We are presenting this information in the hopes that those of you who would like to assist the pantry in its mission would be willing to purchase any of these items for distribution at each pantry. The need is great. We are praying that you are moved to help us with this vital request. Food can be dropped off just outside the church office or across from the elevator in the grocery cart.

The pantry continues to need help to fulfil the delivery part of its mission. If you have an hour or so available on a food pantry day and the means to deliver 8-10 bags of food, then the pantry could use your help. Please call the church office at 802-878-5745 or send an email to welcome@fccej.org.

We appreciate all the support as we continue the pantry's mission of seeing that no one goes hungry! www.fccej.org/Serving-Others/Heavenly-Food-Pantry.

Stewardship

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your 2023 pledges to the First Congregational Church! You make it possible to continue to provide help and services to our community, educational opportunities to our youth and adults, maintenance for our buildings, salaries for our staff, and multiple ways for fellowship and worship.

The act of giving enriches our lives. It promotes social connection and cooperation. It makes us happy. It is good for our health. And it makes us feel grateful. The Stewardship Committee hopes that your financial gift to the church brings all these positive benefits. Thank you for your generosity!

In Christ's name,

Your Stewardship Committee

*Kathryn Brennan, Emily Guziak, Alex John, Shannon McCullen,
Dan Petherbridge, Rev. Josh Simon, Rev. Mark Mendes*

Communications



Communications met the first week of December in order to have plenty of time to collect input for and make updates to the website for Advent and Christmas. An Advent/Christmas block was added to the home page which leads to a newly created page at <https://www.fccej.org/v5/advent-christmas-2022/>. Check it out!

The Communications Committee also discussed what responsibilities a Tech Communications role might encompass should the church choose to include such a role in its new model.

Respectfully submitted by,
Francis Gravel

Donate to FCCEJ

Your donations support 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. Please note the reason for your donation in the check's memo line (e.g., "missions").
- ⇒ **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. (A PayPal account is not required to donate money.)

Missions Committee

As we prepare to honor the legacy of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., it is important to remember the third Monday in January isn't simply a day off, but "a day on" to volunteer and give back to our communities and causes that matter to each of us. On Monday, January 16, 2023, Saint Michael's College will be hosting a full day of programming to celebrate the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Visit this link for more information and a schedule of events: <https://www.smcvt.edu/student-life/diversity-and-inclusion/martin-luther-king-jr-convocation/>

Your Missions Committee would like to offer an opportunity to give back through USCRI. According to the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants – Vermont website, USCRI Vermont has been welcoming newcomers to Vermont since 1980. In the last 42 years, over 8,000 refugees have started new lives in Vermont with assistance from USCRI. You could help this organization by:

Volunteering

The USCRI website lists many opportunities to volunteer including: Family friend, youth mentor, English Language Tutor, transportation, administrative support, temporary housing, etc. If interested, please refer to the USCRI Vermont website: <https://refugees.org/uscri-vermont/>

Pillow Drive

Missions is sponsoring a pillow drive during January. New pillows are a high demand item as new Vermonters settle into their homes. Please bring only new pillows in their original wrappings to the church office by January 17th, and Missions Committee members will deliver them to USCRI-Vermont for you. What a nice way to welcome our new neighbors with a clean place to lay their heads!

VERMONT DISMAS HOUSE NEWS

In mid-December, both the Buell Street and East Allen Street Vermont Dismas houses came together with members of the Burlington council to celebrate with a potluck dinner! There was singing, and during dinner, many conversations, creating a very relaxing, yet active atmosphere.

Many area non-profits take turns providing meals, and sharing it with Dismas residents throughout the year. It is a wonderful way to share of yourself. FCCEJ regularly provides meals for the East Allen Street (Winooski) house. If you are interested, please contact Jen at the church.

Also, to learn more about Dismas and their mission of supporting formerly incarcerated men and women as they make the difficult transition to society, please visit: <https://www.dismasofvt.org/>



WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA 2022 - A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

On December 17 and 18 families, friends, and Veterans groups gathered at Veterans cemeteries across America for a service of remembrance and the opportunity to place holiday wreaths on graves to honor of our American veterans. After a snowfall of over a foot in Vermont it was an invigorating experience to carry wreaths and place them in memory of those who sacrificed for our country. Over 200 people participated in the Randolph event. Sincere thanks to all of you who offered their support and made this a resounding success!

THE GIVING TREE

The Giving Tree for 2022 was a happy success! FCCEJ provided **183** gifts of clothing and toys, books, games or gift cards to 61 children in Essex and Westford. In addition to these gifts, the Rotary donated winter coats for a number of children. As well, handmade hats, mittens and scarves were given to the kids. Our youth group put together bags of candy and clementines for each child. Last, the Heavenly Food Pantry provided fresh vegetables and fruits, and goody bags to each participating family.

Many parents, and sometimes grandparents, expressed their thankfulness to those of us distributing the gifts, saying it would make their children's Christmas very special.

I want to give special thanks to Sharon Dettenreider, Belinda Gabert, Valerie Gabert, Jen Kelly, Anita Guild, LindaLou Parker, Josh Simon, Laurie Chipman and the youth, Ginny Coe, Mary-Ellen Grove, and Rotary, for their significant help in setting up Sign-up Genius, accepting gifts as they came in, sorting gifts by family, providing coats and distributing gifts and food to all of the families we helped.

In appreciation of all you do,

Elaine Raymond

COMMUNITY CONCERTS @ FIRST PRESENTS

Paul Asbell, Blues Guitar

Sunday February 5, 2023 at 3pm in the Sanctuary ~ \$20 suggested donation - supporting Essex CHIPS

Please join us for the first concert of the 2023 CC@F season! Blues guitarist Paul Asbell will share fresh takes on blues and jazz standards, old-timey country tunes, and original pieces from the "American roots" tradition.

In his 50 year professional career, Paul Asbell has played and recorded with Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, David Bromberg, Mary McCaslin, Bobby McFerrin, and many others. Paul has taught guitar for over 50 years..

He presently teaches at Middlebury College and the University of Vermont.



"I've actually been a fan of Paul's guitar playing for quite a few years- I think he's one of the best-kept secrets in American music today!"

David Bromberg, acoustic guitar legend

Veteran guitarist Paul Asbell fingerpicks his way through a stylistically diverse collection of tunes plucked from the great American musical canon and arranged and played with finesse, imagination, and humor."

Acoustic Guitar magazine

Concert proceeds will support Essex CHIPS and First Congregational Church of Essex Junction. Tickets are available by calling the church office or online via this link: <https://sevendaystickets.com/events/118903>

JUMP will be holding its third Online Auction February 1-10, 2023. The theme again will be "Showing Love for JUMP". The success of this JUMP fundraiser will be based on the number and type of items being auctioned and the number of people who place bids on those items. Here are some suggestions for our faith communities to donate for JUMP's Online Auction:

Services offered by members - snow removal, landscaping, tax services, pet sitting/dog walking, photography, baked goods, meal services, etc

Themed Baskets - Here are a few basket ideas but please feel free to create your own!

- ◆ Family Game Night - games, movie gift cards or DVDs, popcorn
- ◆ Coffee and Tea - mugs, coffee, tea, spoons
- ◆ Chocolate Basket - all things chocolate
- ◆ Kid's Favorite Library (great for adults too!)
- ◆ Hot Off the Grill - marinades, skewers, grill supplies

The most popular items in JUMP's Online Auctions are gift cards and food items. Do you have a signature dish/ food item you can donate? The Sunday after the auction closes is Super Bowl Sunday. It would be fun to have some Super Bowl Sunday themed items! **All donated items must be new/never used.** All items must be secured by Friday, January 27, 2023.

Rising food, energy and housing costs, following two plus years of COVID realities, have impacted everyone, but none more than our low-income neighbors. Hear these words from people that JUMP has helped in 2022:

"Thank you so much for making a payment on my power bill. I appreciate JUMP very much for what your organization does in supporting me in hard times." Kate

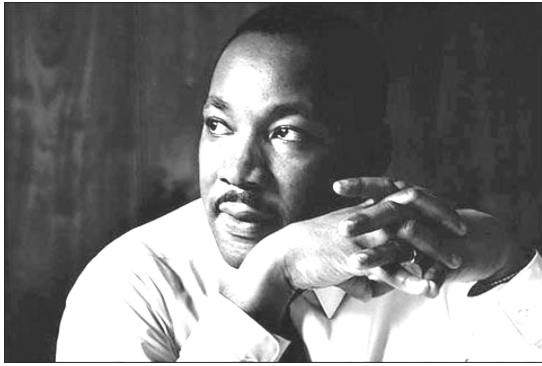
"I was evicted from my apartment and am living in my car. I hope to be back housed again soon. Thank you JUMP for helping me." Rebecca

Low-income Vermont households need the help that JUMP has a 30 plus year history of providing. JUMP services include assistance with utility payments, groceries, transportation and essentials like toiletries, clothing and cleaning supplies. JUMP needs your support of this vital mission.

Last February's Online Auction raised over \$6,000 for JUMP and the services it provides. We hope to do the same with the third Online Auction in February 2023. Please contact Margaret Welch (802-862-2428 or auction@jumpvt.org) to arrange for donation collection or with any questions.



To commemorate the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, we offer some quotes:



"It may be that this generation will have to repent not only the bad actions of those of ill will but the appalling silence of those who are willing to wait."

Speech University of Massachusetts, Amherst

"True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring." Speech Beyond Vietnam

"We must rapidly begin the shift from a 'thing-oriented' society to a 'person-oriented' society. When machines and computers, profit motives, and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered."

Beyond Vietnam

"I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizens Councilor or the Ku Klux Klanner but the White moderate who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice." Letter from a Birmingham Jail

"When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds of despair, and when our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe, working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil, a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice." Address to Southern Christian Leadership Conference

For further reading from MLK:

Where do we go from Here? Chaos or Community?

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

DAHAL, Kul	01/01	BARTLETT, Lincoln	01/15
FRISBIE, Paulette	01/01	GUILD, Ed	01/15
HARPLE, Glenn	01/01	HELMSTUTLER, Elaine	01/15
RUSHFORD, Nicholas	01/01	BOOMHOWER, George	01/17
MCINTYRE, Amy	01/02	RUSHFORD, Bob	01/18
OWENS, Teddy	01/03	ADLER, Jacquelyn	01/20
DULANEY, Donna	01/04	COBURN, Mary	01/20
LAFLAM, Chris	01/04	DEAN, Ed	01/21
WINSLOW, Arthur	01/04	BEACH, George	01/24
WISLOSKI, Jessica	01/08	WILLIAMS, Penny	01/24
NOWELL, Jeff	01/10	SHEARER, Cathy	01/25
SINKEWICZ, Sara	01/10	VANSTENSBURG, Allison	01/25
DONLEY, Steven	01/11	GILLIAM, Ingrid	01/26
DOOLEY, Alex	01/11	MCCULLEN, Kevin	01/29
SIMON, Joshua	01/13	MILNE, Nancy	01/29

Birthday Card Volunteers

One of the awesome traditions of our faith community is recognizing birthdays. Member Andrea Sharp donates beautiful hand-made cards and we have volunteers that personalize, address, stamp, and send them out each month. We are looking for a couple more people to add to our volunteer rotation. All supplies are provided for you. If you are interested in helping for one or more months out of the year, please contact the church office.

SERMON TALKBACK

Do you ever get home and discuss Rev. Mark or Rev. Josh’s sermon and wonder how they reached the conclusion they did, or totally disagree with how they interpreted a particular text, or have some fascinating sentiments to add that you have read from another source, or maybe have an unanswered question? Well, Sermon Talkback is the group for you! We meet every Tuesday morning from 8:30 – 10am in Marvin Lounge. Coffee is provided and sometimes we even have some tasty treats. You can also join us via Zoom, ID# 740 803 865. All are welcome.

THE SEARCHERS

The Wednesday Night Searchers is a group that explores our faith and how it applies to our lives and world. We have studied books of the bible, secular books, prayer life, issues of social justice, other religious traditions and so on. There is no subject off limits to where our minds reach as we journey with God in this world of ours. Our group will start up again on January 4th.

Our first book of 2023 will be, *Life is in the Transitions: Mastering Change at Any Age* by Bruce Feiler. With change so much a part of our society and lives, it is a timely book for all. We will order the books and have them on hand to begin our exploration on the 4th. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to bring a friend!

We meet every Wednesday night from 7-9pm in the Marvin Lounge and via Zoom ID # 853 5516 9054.

COFFEE CLATTER

Every Friday morning at 8m, join Pastor Mark at Martone’s Market & Café for an hour of lively conversation and friendly banter. Grab a cup of coffee and/or a tasty treat and spend some time in community.

BRIDGE GROUP

On the third Friday of each month, a group [1-3 tables] gets together to have some fun playing bridge. The purpose is fun and there are no master points awarded, just a jar of Pastor Mark’s yummy jam for the winner. We usually have some cookies and snacks as well as quite a bit of interesting conversations. There are all levels of players and everyone is welcome including folks who do not attend our worship services or church. In Our next gathering is Friday, January 20 from 1:30 to 4pm in Marvin Lounge.

Yoga @ First

Come practice a compassionate, inquisitive sequence to integrate the mind, body, and soul. In each session, we will focus, breathe, build heat, strengthen, and relax. Tuesday evenings, from 5:00-6:15 in the Sanctuary. Wear comfortable, non restrictive clothing. Bring a mat or borrow one. Donations (to FCCEJ) welcome, but not required.

Fall Prevention - Tai Chi

Join your faith family for Tai Chi class on Tuesday mornings at 10:15 in the Fellowship Hall. This is a beginner class of slow, controlled motions that aid in strength and balance. There is no charge for the class but donations to FCCEJ are appreciated. Contact Betty Adams for more information: adamsvt123@gmail.com. Sponsored by Age Well.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

- ◆ **Monday, January 2**—Church office closed all day
- ◆ **Tuesday, January 3**—Committee reports due for Annual Meeting
- ◆ **Friday, January 13**—Farewell dinner for Pastor Josh—details TBA
- ◆ **Sunday, January 15**—Pastor Josh final Sunday at FCCEJ
- ◆ **Monday, January 16**—Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Church office closed in observance
- ◆ **Sunday, February 5**—FCCEJ Annual Meeting
- ◆ **Wednesday, February 22**—Ash Wednesday

First Congregational Church of Essex Junction

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Essex Junction, VT 05452
Phone: 802-878-5745
Email: welcome@fccej.org

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

Sunday Morning Worship:

8:30 - In-person and streamed via youtube.com/c/fccej
Music: Bethany Blake directs our Sanctuary Choir and provides accompaniment

10:15 - In-person—Faith Formation for PreK - 8th grade
Music: Finally @ First Praise Band

Communion is served on the 1st Sunday of each month at each service—all are welcome at Christ's table

Visit us online:



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FIRSTCONGREGATIONALEJ

As each day comes to us
refreshed and anew,
so does my gratitude
renew itself daily.

The breaking of the sun over the
horizon is my grateful heart
dawning upon a blessed world.

Terri Guillemets