



# SPirit @ FIRSt

monthly newsletter

FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH of Essex Junction

Love. Serve. Grow.

## April 2023: In this issue...

- *Your Pastor's Ponderings* ..... Cover, 3
- *Dates to Remember* .....2
- *Laurie's Lens*.....3
- *Faith Formation, VBC*.....4
- *Youth Ministry, Outdoor Ministry*,.....5
- *Missions*.....6
- *Stewardship, Deacons* .....7
- *Connection Opportunities*..... Insert

## Your Pastor's Ponderings.....

### 2021 Situation Overview in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains one of the most complex and long-standing humanitarian crises in Africa, with 5.4 million internally displaced people (IDPs) due to conflict as of December 2021. At the same time, there were 853,000 Congolese refugees and asylum seekers in neighboring countries immediately affected by the DRC situation, and almost 1 million Congolese refugees and asylum seekers across the continent as a whole.

Intercommunal conflicts and military offensives continued to trigger vast and repeated displacement of millions of people, especially in the east of the country. Gender-based violence remained a major concern, compounded by a weak judicial system and widespread impunity. In May 2021, the President of the Republic declared an état de siège ("state of siege") for the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu to address deteriorating insecurity. Despite these efforts, several parts of the country remained engulfed in violence and armed conflict at the end of 2021. This overall situation in the DRC was further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Ebola and measles outbreaks, severe food insecurity, and natural disasters including the volcanic eruption of the Mount Nyiragongo volcano in the east of the country in May 2021.

- Refugees and asylum seekers: 853,000, 50% women and 51% children
- IDPs due to conflict: 5.4 million
- IDP returns: 1.04 million
- Refugees and asylum seekers in the DRC: 526,000

Much of our geopolitical attention lately has been focused on the war raging in Ukraine. Our hearts go out to those who are suffering and putting their lives on the line to defend democracy in their homeland. For the last couple of years, and currently, we are sending a collection from the sale of bread and other avenues to that war torn country.

But dire situations arise in every corner of the earth. We should remember the religious nature of China's catastrophic treatment of the Uyghur Muslim community in China, civil wars raging in Syria and Afghanistan, the 50 million people in 45 countries that are facing starvation, the 324 million people in 63 countries that are dealing with natural or human made disasters from Yemen to Somalia, from Ethiopia to the DRC. Each of the countries affected could be the poster child for help in our country as life, livelihood and stability is challenged at every turn.

The challenge is always, what can we do to help? Our Food Pantry and Thrift Store help local folks in need but the millions that suffer in far distant places weigh heavy on our hearts. As followers of Christ, we embrace the theology each week of God loving all the world's children, nations and peoples.

And yet our church has stepped up to help a family from the Democratic Republic of the Congo by partnering with the United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants [USCRI – formerly known as Vermont Refugee and Resettlement Program VRRP] by renting our parsonage to a family of nine people from the DRC. This was no small feat! The Trustees put in double duty to ready the parsonage early so that it would be a welcoming home when the family arrived. This involved a bathroom rehab, a new dishwasher, painting, and a deep clean. When the Missions Committee found out, they immediately allocated some funds to purchase last minute items for their arrival. Then the Food Pantry expedited their food distribution and sent over a huge amount of food to fill their kitchen and Kaki McGeary and I personally welcomed the family to the parsonage. And that was just the first two days!!!

*Continued on page 3...*

# **APRIL WORSHIP / SPECIAL SERVICES**

## **SUNDAY, APRIL 2 - PALM SUNDAY**

**~Worship Services @ 8:30\* and 10:15am - In-person and streaming\*~**

Sanctuary Choir Cantata "The Power of the Cross"

The FCCEJ Sanctuary choir is thrilled to present "The Power of the Cross", by Mark Hayes, at both services! This is a memorable, musical version of the story of Christ's Passion. The choir has been putting in extra rehearsal time in order to present this magnificent cantata, uninterrupted, to you! Think of it as a musical sermon! It features powerful melodies

sure to knock your socks off. This is a fitting way to begin Holy Week.

Spiritual Friends for PreK-2nd grade will be offered during 2nd Service.

Holy Communion will be served at both services.

## **THURSDAY, APRIL 6 - MAUNDY THURSDAY**

**~Service at 6pm in the Fellowship Hall~**

*When Jesus came to Jerusalem for his last week of life, nobody knew how it would end. He entered the city in a parade of pilgrims streaming in to celebrate Passover and was in some way uniquely recognized as someone who just might be the messiah; the one everyone was waiting to see usher in the kingdom of God. He challenged and won every verbal encounter with the Jewish leaders, drawing huge crowds to his way of thinking about God's kingdom. He then celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples in an upper room where he taught them key elements about how to follow him and his way. By Thursday of Holy Week, the disciples and those around Jesus would have been filled with excitement, thinking they were on the verge of victory over the Jewish leadership who held the wider community at bay with stringent rules and doctrines. Stepping into that milieu is where our Maundy Thursday meal takes place: the first to eat as a faith community and the second to remember the sacred words and rituals of the Lord's Supper. All ages will appreciate this meal and be able to enter into its celebration. All are welcome to the meal and service.*

## **FRIDAY, APRIL 7 - GOOD FRIDAY**

**~Service at 7pm in the Sanctuary~**

*At the end of day on Thursday, betrayal creeps into the story as Jesus moves to the Garden of Gethsemane where the passion begins. Jesus prays while his disciples sleep, then he is arrested in the wee hours of the morning and over the next two days he is tortured, mocked, tried, convicted and put to death. Good Friday holds this part of the story up as powerfully and oddly salvific. Somehow, this brutal part of Christ's journey embeds itself in our Christian psyche as a path we all take in life as we struggle with the darker side of worldly existence in both our personal and corporate lives. However you interpret these experiences of Christ, it is the journey Jesus takes to get to beyond the cross to resurrection and eternal life. We celebrate the latter on Easter, but on Good Friday we hear the story and draw strength from Christ's actions. The service starts at 7pm and everyone is welcome although it may not be the best service for the youngest among us.*

## **SUNDAY, APRIL 9 - EASTER SUNDAY**

**~Ecumenical Easter Sunrise & Breakfast - 6:30am~**

Each year, we gather at the Holy Family gazebo with Father Charlie Ranges and a host of various denominational folks from the community as we celebrate Christ's resurrection at the break of day. This practice goes back to the earliest of traditions in the early church. Everyone is welcome to watch the sun rise and sing of God's glory. The service lasts no more than 30 minutes, after which everyone is invited back to the FCCEJ Fellowship Hall for our traditional Easter Breakfast, which formally starts at 7am.

**~Worship Services @ 8:30\* and 10:15am - In-person and streaming\*~**

We will celebrate Christ's resurrection and the hope of eternal life at our regularly scheduled Sunday worship services on April 9th. Both the Sanctuary Choir and Finally @ First have great music planned, and we have a baptism scheduled for the later service. Everyone is welcome to our churches most significant liturgical celebration of the year. Both services will be All Family Worship; nursery care is available for infants through 3 years.

## **SUNDAY, APRIL 16 - A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN CELEBRATION**

**~Our Home, Our Future, Our Time~**

**~Worship Services @ 8:30\* and 10:15am - In-person and streaming\*~**

During the last week of March, our church will complete the last project [Fellowship Hall Floor] of the Our Home, Our Future and Our Time Capital Campaign. We kicked off the campaign with initial pledges of \$650,000 out of our stated goal of \$822,000. Our church had never raised such an amount and no one was sure we could do it, so we added a number of projects as a stretch goal which then totaled \$1.09 million and to everyone's delighted surprise we ended up raising \$1,148,809! Almost, every room, surface, and floor in our facility has been upgraded and our church facility is in the best shape it's been in over 60 years! We will celebrate this great accomplishment in worship at both services. You will not want to miss this **PARTY!**

The new Congolese family just may come to church which would bring 5-7 new kids to our Faith Formation Program and allow all of us to not only welcome them to our country but offer them the light of Christ from what must have been a harrowing journey of both spirit and body.

The future is unknown and I have no idea if they will come to church, but regardless of that decision, we as a congregation have a concrete way that we can venture into the devastating world of geopolitical tragedy and actually help a family in need. They are grateful to be here and safe and have smiles and spirits to match their excitement, but let us not forget the hidden toll and toil that preceded their journey. Let us display the qualities of Christ as we help them assimilate into a new culture and climate.

They are open to getting to know people and invite folks into their home. If you are interested in making those connections, please email me so that I and or the Missions Committee can coordinate those efforts. I will also be working to have a church Pot Luck to introduce them into our community and let them experience some Vermont hospitality.

Thank you, God, for bringing this family into our midst.

Blessed to be a part of this loving community,

I am, yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.*  
Hebrews 13: 2

## Laurie's Lens

I felt the warmth of spring last week! It was such a welcome reminder that our green grass, flowers and sunny warm days will be here soon, even though as I write this we still have snow on the ground.

If your children or youth are attending summer camps, you have probably been busy getting them registered. We hope that our Vacation Bible Camp (August 7-11) is on your schedule.

Our VB Camp attendance was low last year, so as planning process for 2023 began, we reached out to parents to see if having an afternoon option would be of interest. An overwhelming number said yes. Now is the time to get your campers registered so we can accurately judge our purchasing and staffing needs. The morning session remains free of charge and the afternoon session is \$250 per camper (scholarships available). Here is the registration link: [www.fccej.org/v5/grow-in-faith/vacation-bible-camp/vb-camp-registration/](http://www.fccej.org/v5/grow-in-faith/vacation-bible-camp/vb-camp-registration/)

CE came up with the idea to offer youth and college students an opportunity to lead and run the afternoon sessions (along with adult support). I have heard from a few who were interested and the job application is ready! All who are current 8th graders this year on up to college students are encouraged to apply. Applications are posted on the Youth Board by the landing in the office hallway and on the VB Camp webpage right below the logo. We are offering \$425 to our afternoon staff for the week.

We also have two weekends of outdoor fun for everyone to help build long lasting connections with other families and friends here at FCCEJ. Our camping weekends in June and July are not full yet. We have reserved sites so we would be closer together and not spread out across the parks. We have 6 more sites and 3 lean-tos available for Button Bay State Park and 6 sites available for Branbury State Park. We can find room for you whether you have a tent or camper. Our time together in God's great outdoors, outdoor ministry, is very simple has great koinonia (Christian fellowship with God and with other Christians).

Yes, we are in a transition year with many things in transition in the life of the church. Please reach out and do your part to help our programs for the children and youth continue to be a strong part of our ministry here. I look forward to hearing from you all.

Many thanks for your support as we walk this journey of faith together.

Blessings,

Laurie Chipman

Christian Education Director

### Pretzel Sunday - THANK YOU!



Many thanks to all the great volunteers that helped to make this day a special one in the life of the church! Mixers, bakers, clean up crew and helpers during faith formation time. So many great comments about the yummy pretzels and the smell throughout the building. This annual event will be back in the 2024 Lenten season.

# Faith Formation

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

## Faith Formation Peer Groups

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.

### April Schedule

4/2—Cantata, Communion & Spiritual Friend Sunday (*program for PreK-2nd grade*)

4/9 & 4/23—All Family Worship

4/16 & 4/30—Peer Groups—PreK-8th grade

## 2022-23 Faith Formation Offering

**Current Total \$310.66 (3/27/23)**

**Church World Service** - *Building a world where there is enough for all.*

<https://cwsglobal.org/>

Offering will be sent to CWS in June and go towards purchasing blankets (\$10 each). Continue to bring your offering with you on Sunday morning (or mail it in). Remember to pick up an offering envelope out in the Narthex basket (with a bible picture scene) so that your offering is counted for Faith Formation and not the general offering for the church.

The children and youth asked to assemble Welcome Backpack kits for CWS, so we are asking for your help in buying and bringing in items needed to fill them. A list of what is needed can be found by clicking on this Signup Genius link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0545a8ab2faaf58-cwswelcome#/>

Sign up and bring your items to FCCEJ any time between now and Sunday, April 16, when the children and youth will fill them during 2nd service. Backpacks will then be boxed and taken to the CWS drop off site in Vermont, Waterbury UCC, May 2-5. Thank you for helping!



## Vacation Bible Camp 2023 - Hero Hotline - Called Together to Serve God!

August 7-11, 2023

*'So let's strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.'*

Romans 14:19

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

<https://www.fccej.org/v5/grow-in-faith/vacation-bible-camp/vb-camp-registration/>

**Morning Session: Drop off between 8:45-9am**

**You & Me Toddler** (*attend with an adult*) **up thru current 5th graders**

**Youth Assistants** - *current 6th—12th graders*

Closing segment of the morning session starts at 11:30. Parents are encouraged to arrive by 11:45, or before, to hear the topics of the morning and pick up their children who are not registered for the afternoon session.

**Afternoon Session: Immediately after morning session till 4pm**

Parents - here is your full day option - cost is \$50/afternoon or \$250 for the full week—Scholarships are available.

Campers have lunch, watch a movie, do a VB Camp hands on mission/art project and play games.



### VB Camp Team

All volunteers arrive by 8:30 (or before) for morning team meeting and depart shortly after noon.

Not sure where or how to get involved? Contact Laurie. There's a place for everyone at VB Camp!

**Recruitment is underway! Are you available? Contact Laurie.**

*Crafts - Decorations - Music Leader - Opening/Closing - Photographer - Puppeteer - Science Leader -*

*Snacks - Tech Crew, Youth Assistants* - are those currently in 6th grade and older

Other Volunteer Opportunities: *assemble backdrops, name tags, divide up crafts, set up Canopies (week before camp)*

**~High School Youth & College Students are encouraged to apply to work the afternoon program. We need 4-6 workers to start to build this program. \$425/week. First ones to sign up get the first slots.~**

# Calling ALL Youth

A Time to Unplug - Share – Ask Questions - Build Community -- Reconnect with God

All Accepted & Welcome

## **Junior Youth ~ Sundays from 11:30-1:30pm**

**April 2 & 16** - make crayons for Kings Street Youth Center

**May 7 & 21** - **inviting this year's 5th graders to JY time** - activity plans are in process

Starts with a Game or Mission Activity

## **High School Youth ~ Wednesdays from 1:45pm to 3:15pm @ FCCEJ**

April 5 & 19 (1st & 3rd Wednesdays of May as well). Connect with Laurie and let her know you are coming. Snacks provided. Come unwind and destress.

## **Join the Nursery Staff**

Interested in joining the Nursery staff? Applications are on the Youth Board outside the staff offices. Turn them in to Laurie and set up an interview and be oriented to the Nursery. Staff earn \$20 per worship service and are on the contact list to work childcare for new member class, etc. You can also request a job application by emailing Laurie at lchipman@fccej.org. Those who will be freshmen in the fall can apply in June and start working over the summer.

## **VB Camp Community Service & Income Opportunity**

### **Next Year's High School Youth & College Students**

August 7-11th with PreK – 5th graders

~ Volunteer the mornings of camp week from 8:30 to 12noon for community service hours.

~ Work the afternoon until 4:30pm (\$425 for the week). Applications are now posted on the bulletin board in the hall or reach out to Laurie. **Sign up ASAP.** The number of workers needed will be determined by the number of campers that register. Two youth/college are needed for every 4 campers. Reach out to Laurie with questions.

## **Youth Parent Gatherings**

**Thursday, April 20th from 7-8pm**

Calling all parents of youth in grades 6th-12th. Come join Laurie for a time of fellowship, conversation and experiencing some of what youth gatherings look like as you grow in your faith. Gather with other parents and renew old friendships and make new ones. Dessert provided.

---

## FCCEJ Outdoor Ministry

The 2023 camping weekends with FCCEJ families are set! Several sites have been booked and paid for by our FCCEJ Outdoor Ministry Fund; many thanks to those of you who have given on the special offering in the past. Check your calendars and reach out to Laurie to hold a site for your family. Currently signed up for camp sites are the following families: Chipman, Lyman, Mendes, Moos, Stein, Wermer.

- Friday, June 23 to Sunday morning, Jun 25 at Button Bay State Park on Lake Champlain  
<https://www.vtstateparks.com/buttonbay.html> (6 tent/RV sites and 3 lean-tos)
- Friday, August 25 to Sunday morning, August 27 at Branbury State Park on Lake Dunmore  
<https://www.vtstateparks.com/branbury.html> (5 tent/RV sites, 1 tent only)

## Outdoor Ministry Camps

FCCEJ Camp Scholarships await you! For children, youth, adults, or families. Connect with Laurie or Pastor Mark if you are planning to attend one of our UCC summer camps - Horton Center (NH), Silver Lake Conference Center (CT) or Pilgrim Lodge (ME). Funds are available to help you and your family attend one or these and/or our FCCEJ camping in Vermont.

Attending a week at an UCC camp is a powerful way to connect with God, get to know others while enriching your own faith. If you like VB Camp then you are *really* going to enjoy your overnight time at camp. This life changing experience is one you will never forget and when your week is over you won't want to come home. You'll want to sign up every summer for a week at a UCC camp!

Visit the Horton website for pictures of the great views on top of Pine Mountain: [www.hortoncenter.org](http://www.hortoncenter.org)

Multiple camps are available each week for 3rd – 12th graders, along with these specials:

**Opening Work Days** – May 19-21

**Open House Day** ~ Saturday, June 17—11am-4pm

**Grandparent / Children Camp** ~ July 30-August 1

**Peace, Faith & Rejuvenation** (*women only*) ~ August 3-6

**Family & Friends Weekend** ~ Sept. 1-4

**Fall Work Days** ~ Oct. 6-8

## Missions Committee

### **EASTER SPECIAL OFFERING FOR PASTOR'S FUND**

Your Missions Committee would like to remind you of an opportunity to give to the Pastor's Fund this April. The Pastor's Fund is used at the discretion of our minister to provide support for heating bills, emergencies, food etc. for both members of our church and community. What a great way to demonstrate our caring to our neighbors in need! The date of this offering is April 9th, Easter Sunday, but donations are always gladly welcomed both before and after this date. Please clearly mark your donation for the Pastor's Fund.

### **EDD ADAPTIVE SPORTS**

Registration is open for the 7th annual Dream Big 5K: Run, Walk, Roll on April 30, 2023 sponsored by EDD Adaptive Sports! The Dream Big 5K in Essex, VT is an inclusive running event with general and adaptive divisions. The race brings together the Essex-Westford community for a morning of friendly competition and is an opportunity for athletes with disabilities to experience racing in a supportive setting. Join us in Essex, VT - or virtually anywhere - to support EDD Adaptive Sports programs. 10am race start time.

Register or donate online: <https://runsignup.com/dreambig5krunwalkroll>

Donate to the "Essex Strong" team established by an EDD athlete, or create your own personal fundraiser.



### **PILLOW DRIVE**

Thank you to all who donated pillows to the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI-Vermont). These pillows were dropped off at the USCRI - Vermont office in Colchester. New pillows are a high need item as new Vermonters settle here. You may read more about the important work of USCRI-Vermont via their website: [www.refugees.org/uscri-vermont](http://www.refugees.org/uscri-vermont)

### **COTS WALK - SUNDAY, MAY 7, 2023**

This family-friendly annual event guides walkers along a 3.6-mile route through downtown Burlington, visiting some of the shelters and facilities operated by COTS. This event is designed to illustrate the path a person experiencing homelessness might take when using COTS services. The walk begins and ends in Battery Park with music, Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream and other fun activities. Bring your friends, family, co-workers, dogs and strollers...all are welcome!

This year, COTS is planning a hybrid event with daily online activities. Starting April 1, COTS will have 25 daily walk activities for every weekday of the month available on their website and ready to explore as we count down to COTS Walk day on May 7th!

FCCEJ will have a team for the Walk which you can join beginning on April 1st. The Team will be listed as First Congregational Church of Essex Junction and Gail Cromie is listed as team captain. Not a walker? There are other ways to participate! There are a wide range of volunteer opportunities available on the day of the walk and you can make a donation on our team's COTS site. Simply Google COTS Walk 2023 or go to Committee on Temporary Shelter:

[www.cotsonline.org](http://www.cotsonline.org)

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

Age Well is seeking volunteers to provide regular social interaction and assistance to seniors in their homes. Help older Vermonters by delivering Meals on Wheels, providing friendly visits, shopping, errands, assistance with appointments, organizing, bill paying, respite, minor home repairs, veterans visiting veterans and more. Time is based on your availability--it can vary from one day a week to two days a month (M-F between 8am-4pm). Contact our Volunteer Department at 662-5249 or [volunteer@agewellvt.org](mailto:volunteer@agewellvt.org) for information.

Since 1974, Age Well has been part of Vermont's Area Agencies on Aging, coordinating services and care for older adults throughout Addison, Chittenden, Franklin, and Grand Isle Counties. Age Well provides services and resources to older Vermonters (60+) such as Meals on Wheels, Community Meals, Restaurant Ticket Programs, Special Events, Care and Service Coordination, and Health and Wellness opportunities like Tai Chi. All programs and services are offered at no cost to those that receive services.

We are always looking for Friendly Visitors, Senior Companions & Meals on Wheels drivers and Respite Volunteers!

# Stewardship

Submitted by Emily Guziak

A huge grin spreads across Lorelai Mauger's face on a recent Sunday morning in the church Nursery, a clear indication that she loves this Sunday morning job, caring for children under age three, during worship.

"One of my favorite parts is watching the children change so much," Lorelai said. She is comfortably dressed in jeans and a sweater, ready to play with toddlers or hold a baby. In a corner is her homework for AP Lit and Math and Finance classes; if there are no children in the 8:30am service, she tries to catch up on homework, avoiding a Sunday evening last-ditch effort. But often she ends up chatting with the other teen working with her.

"It's just an easy way to get to know each other," she said.

The youth of the church have been employed as childcare workers on Sunday mornings since July 2022. They are paid \$20 per service. Adults from the Christian Education Committee and others, all of whom are background checked and arrive before the Nursery staff, are handed the first beeper and carry it to worship, ready to support if the staff need them (a rare occurrence).

For Lorelai, the chance to work in the Nursery provided an opportunity to return to church on Sunday mornings following the tragic and sudden death of her grandfather, John Mauger III, last September. "I just wasn't ready to come back to church services without him being there," said Lorelai, who has been part of the church since infancy. Lorelai is 17 and a senior at EHS. She also had to recover from the death of her grandmother, Carol Mauger, five years ago from cancer. Her grandparents raised her.

"Now I have a sense of responsibility on Sunday mornings," said Lorelai, who has worked in the Nursery since October. The church, she said, and her friends and wonderful cat, Utear, "really have saved me" during the loss of the two people most important to her in her life.

She has loved watching Bethany Blake's youngest daughter become an active, talkative 20-month-old in our church Nursery, clarifying for her that working with children is a future opportunity.

For now, Lorelai is happy to share the memories of her beloved grandparents, contribute to the church, and feel loved in the church family. She grins, again, at the close of the service on February 12. "My homework isn't quite done, but I'm still going to watch my favorite team tonight. I'll never forget how happy my grandmother was when the Eagles won the Super Bowl last time!"

## Deacons

Forty days after Ash Wednesday we celebrate Easter. It falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Vernal equinox. This year that is April 9th. The Deacons have been active in worship during Lent and look forward to participating in the special services on Maundy Thursday (6pm, April 6), Good Friday (7pm, April 7) and the prayer vigil (spanning 40 hours from 3pm Good Friday until sunrise Easter morning, 6am).

Easter morning itself will be a joyous celebration of the resurrection of Jesus with 2 services at the usual times along with an ecumenical sunrise service at the Holy Family gazebo. In addition, we will enjoy the return of Easter breakfast in our newly refurbished Fellowship Hall.

We invite everyone to sign up for an hour block during the prayer vigil. The time can be used for personal reflection, prayer or an opportunity to wind down from the business of daily life and just relax.

[www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0a48aaad2ca2ff2-easter1#/](http://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0a48aaad2ca2ff2-easter1#/)

We look forward to having all people join us in these special services to remind us of the true meaning of this season.

In addition to Lent and Easter, we are starting new ministries for the church. We have assigned a Deacon of Visitation, Deacon of Baptism and Deacon of New Visitors. We seek to reach out to new attendees and also maintain contact with those who have attended in the past but may not have been in church recently. The Deacon of Visitation will work with Mary McHugh for training. The Deacon of Baptism will follow up with families who celebrated baptism here but may not have returned since. The Deacon of New Visitors will welcome them with a new visitor gift and packet.

We are very blessed to be part of such an amazing congregation. Happy Easter!

Alison Wermer

### **THE SEARCHERS**

The Wednesday Night Searchers is a group that explores our faith and how it applies to our lives and world. During Lent, we began watching a tremendous new TV series called "The Chosen" that portrays a pretty accurate picture of Jesus, his disciples and the culture and context in which he lived and did his ministry. We've enjoyed it so much that we are going to continue with the series through May. Join us on Wednesday nights from 7-9pm at the church or watch the episode at home [new.thechosen.TV] and join the discussion with those present at church via zoom [ID# 889 3269 5920].

### **SERMON TALKBACK**

Do you ever get home and discuss Rev. Mark's sermon and wonder how they reached the conclusion he did, or totally disagree with how he 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.

### **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. Our next gathering is Friday, April 21 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.

### **GIVING THAT GROWS – PLANNED GIVING PROGRAM NOW AVAILABLE**

All church members and friends were recently mailed information regarding the new Planned Giving Program. Entitled Giving that Grows, the program announces a way that church members and friends can make a lasting charitable contribution to FCCEJ – through planned giving. Planned gifts are different from annual stewardship campaign gifts which provide funding for day-to-day operations. Planned gifts are typically made from accumulated assets supporting FCCEJ 's endowment and leaving a legacy for future generations. Planned giving comes in many forms – from donating assets via beneficiary designations, gifts of stock, wills and estate plans. There is a common attribute – every planned gift is a gift that will grow, providing stability and strength to our church today, tomorrow and for all the years to come.

How can you make a legacy gift? Review the FCCEJ webpage information regarding Planned Giving under the Giving tab. Contact Pastor Mark or another member of the Planned Giving Committee. Contact your financial advisor.

As a component of the Planned Giving Program, you are invited to a Planned Giving Seminar to be held on May 4, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Holly LeMieux, a local estate planning attorney, will be the presenter. Covered topics will include estate planning, wills, and elder law.

Whether FCCEJ benefits from your planned giving or not, the Planned Giving Committee encourages everyone to have a written plan (such as a will, trust or estate plan). The Planned Giving Seminar is free and open to church members and friends of FCCEJ. Please call the church office if you would like to attend.

Planned Giving Committee Members:

Dave Johnson, Kathryn Brennan, Darryl Koch, Matt McGeary, Kaki McGeary, Rev. Mark Mendes, Dan Petherbridge, and Judy Pomainville

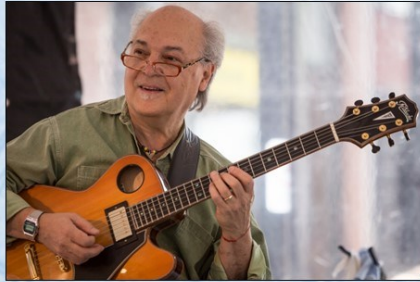


# COMMUNITY CONCERTS @ FIRST

presents

## PAUL ASBELL

### Singing & Playing Steel-String Americana



Sunday, April 30 at 3pm

Suggested Donation: \$20

Concert proceeds support:  
*Essex CHIPS Afterschool Programs & FCCEJ community outreach*

Tickets:  
 802-878-5745  
<https://sevendaystickets.com/events/118903>



First Congregational Church ~ 39 Main Street, Essex Junction



### APRIL BIRTHDAYS

DORN, Emily	04/01	KING, Genevieve	04/14
MESSIER, Carla	04/01	CLARK, Ashley	04/15
HENNESSEY, Barbara	04/03	COBURN, Bob	04/15
SAVAGE, Cheryl	04/03	MUDGETT-RUSSELL, Barbara	04/16
DORN, Kevin	04/05	BELIVEAU, Lyn	04/18
SILVERMAN, June	04/05	COE, Ginny	04/18
SULLIVAN, Mike	04/05	HAYES, Nancy	04/18
KOCH, Darryl	04/06	ADAMS, Betty	04/19
GRENON, Katherine	04/07	GOEDKEN, Linus	04/20
LYMAN, Derek	04/07	PORATTI, John	04/22
MCGEARY, Caitlin	04/07	MARTIN, Poppy	04/23
HAMILTON, Kim	04/08	MITCHELL, Steven	04/24
KINAMAN, Lilo	04/08	BRENNAN, Ciaran	04/25
VOCK, Steve	04/08	PORATTI, Rob	04/25
FOSS, Suzanne	04/09	HARRIS, Dick	04/26
GRENON, Nova Louise	04/09	WERMER, Carl	04/26
SIEVERS, Arnd	04/10	PETTINGILL, Davin	04/27
HOPPER, Jan	04/11	DONEY, Myrna	04/28
NOEL, Blakely	04/12	WAHL, Hannah	04/29
BLAKE, Abigail	04/14	CLARK, Ryan	04/30

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

## ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

### Sunday Morning Worship:

**8:30** - In-person and streamed via [youtube.com/c/fccej](https://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\**

**Our Lord has written  
the promise of  
resurrection,  
not in books alone,  
but in every leaf  
in springtime.  
Martin Luther**



FCCEJ.ORG

Visit us online:



FCCEJ



FCCEJ\_802



FIRSTCONGREGATIONALEJ