



SPirit @ FIRSt

monthly newsletter

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH of Essex Junction

Love. Serve. Grow.

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Your Pastor's Ponderings.....

One of my great blessings is to be able to get away for an extended period of time and rest, allowing my body, mind, and spirit to be fed by the time apart. This year we headed out west and spent most of our time at Rocky Mountain National Park. Even though I was on vacation, my thoughts turned reflective in nature as I pondered our church, her many ministries and the future. As we begin another program year together, let me share some of these ramblings.

To begin with, I do not think we are over Covid and many of our folks are still cautious about being in large groups like worship services. The coronavirus threw a monkey wrench into our lives and influenced how we live. I am impressed that when our folks are not feeling well, they simply stay home and watch the service in the safety and comfort of their own abode; a positive outcome of the pandemic. However, the time away has embedded itself into our psyche and I think there is a mental obstacle in physically going to church as well as a safety concern.

For those of you who enjoy staying home and watching worship in your pajamas as you sit around your breakfast table, I would encourage you to make an effort to come and experience in person the fullness of worship as manifested in community. We miss you! We want to see you face to face! We miss the sparkle in the eye, the conversations, the handshakes and hugs, and the uplifting feelings when we are all together singing or praying.

For those of you with a little extra time, I would encourage you to get your church directory and simply make some calls to the people who have gotten out of the habit of participating in church life; catch up with them and encourage them to come back to a worship service or some activity. I am going to gently ask if our staff and Deacons can do the same thing in a bit more organized way. When the pandemic started, the Deacons called folks to see how they were doing and if they needed anything. It's time to do so again.

The second reflection is that we need to ensure that two of the great pillars of the church that people gravitate to and that draw people into our community be strengthened. Our Music Program and our Social Justice Component each attract folks here and keep them engaged. Over the course of this program year I would like us all to work on strengthening these two areas. Volunteer for a choir or talk to our extraordinary Music Director, Bethany Blake, and let her know that you would be interested in helping to start up our bell choir. Let's continue to strengthen our quarterly musical series by attending them ourselves and inviting friends to join us. Perhaps you can even afford to give a couple of tickets away to neighbors you know would enjoy it. Our Social Justice Outreach is strong but could be better. The Social Justice Subcommittee of Missions is looking for members to focus on four distinct aspects of our public witness: Issues around race, LGBTQ+ inclusion, affordable housing and conservation. Part of expanding our witness is to partner with Vermont Interfaith Action [VIA] by having one of our members serve on their four areas of concern this year. They are a great organization that tries to get Christ's message of extravagant love applied to issues of concern in our state. The Racial aspect of our Social Justice Subcommittee of Missions is looking to host Sunday afternoon Social Justice Speakers on Race. These would parallel the Community concerts that we host and it is our hope that it would draw folks into our building for an afternoon of thoughtful engagement or education.

Continued on next page...

Digital Marketing & Communication Specialist Hired



There is no rest for the weary and over the summer, while many of us were off playing in the mountains or at the beach, the HRC was busy finalizing job descriptions and interviewing candidates for our Social Media Position. At the end of August, we hired Andrea Hickey who has experience in working in media and technology marketing. Andrea is a designer, illustrator and writer originally from Keene, New York. After graduating from the Rochester Institute of Technology in 2011, she spent over eight years living and working in New York City. She now resides in Essex Junction with her boyfriend and their dogs, Eddie and Roux.

Andrea brings a wealth of gifts that we hope will expand our outreach and let more people know about our church and all we do. She will also help all of our members stay in better touch with the programs and opportunities to serve. Andrea will be working ten hours a week and much of that will be from home, but we hope to have her here to meet with staff and committees occasionally and maybe even make it to worship sometimes so that she can connect with the tech crew and see what we are all about.

It's exciting to welcome Andrea into the FCCEJ family! If you would like to connect with her regarding social media for your committee or program, please contact Rev. Mark or Jen in the church office. It's vital that we all work together to utilize her time in the most efficient way possible.

Employment Opportunity

Childrens Ministry Coordinator

Do you have a passion for sharing the missions of FCCEJ, an Open and Affirming Congregation? We are seeking a Childrens Ministry Coordinator to work with ages Nursery up through 5th grade in support of the mission, vision, and values of FCCEJ. This position is primarily responsible for the Sunday morning Faith Formation program. Other children's programs with which the Coordinator may be involved currently include the Young Apostles "youth group" and summer Vacation Bible Camp. This position is part-time (10 hours/week). To apply, send a cover letter and resume, or for more information, email welcome@fccej.org.

Pastor's Ponderings, continued...

In our church, there are two large and loyal groups of people who are concerned about both music and social justice. Strengthening these aspects of our church could easily serve to attract folks to come here and make this their faith community. It also not only helps us live out our faith but feeds our own spirits.

Focusing on reaching out to our membership, music and social justice will not limit the many other facets of our faith community. We just hired a new Social Media person who will help get the word out about our church and her programming. We are even now seeking to hire a Christian education person to take over the programming in our Faith Formation Program with the younger kids. Church Council will continue to discern how to use the old day care space. And naturally we will continue to have great worship and explore the faith through the church seasons and special activities. I even have a few surprises up my sleeve.

But I am convinced that spending some time and effort on the three pillars of membership, music and social justice will strengthen our church and keep us engaged with each other and the wider community. Looking forward to the year ahead, I am yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark

Deacons

Submitted by Allison Van Steensburg

It's been a while for sure, but September still brings with it for me the excitement of the new school year, a time to see old friends and make some new ones, to return to the comfort of a routine accompanied by the promise of new adventures. At FCCEJ, we also look forward to a fuller building, the return to two services, Faith Formation and many of our beloved fall activities, and the chance to reconnect with our fellow parishioners and meet some fabulous new faces. With awe and gratitude, the deacons also want to extend our thanks to all those who kept things moving during the summer months with their personal stories, powerful sermons, and phenomenal music. And so, with the long summer days starting to shorten and the hint of a cool breeze in the air, we welcome you and welcome you back! We are so excited you are here and hope you'll join us September 10th for Welcome Back Sunday and the many opportunities our church and this wonderful fall season have to offer.

Laurie's Lens

2023 continues to be a journey, like most years are in ministry, however this one is quite different. Each month, each program, each ball that I juggle has a different feeling, and with more balls to juggle there doesn't seem to be enough hours in the week. Before the congregation voted to switch to a programmatic model of staffing, I informed leadership of my plans to retire by June of 2025. Our grandchildren who live across the county have a way of pulling at my heartstrings♥. When Pastor Josh departed, HRC asked if I would take on the leadership of the youth programs with a few more hours; I did not hesitate. Youth have always held a special place in my heart. So, as we begin this program year, if you didn't get a call from me and would like to volunteer, please reach out. There are many ways to do so here at FCCEJ. Behind the scenes, as a Spiritual Friend on Communion Sundays, in our Faith Formation program, with our Youth Ministry planning team, alongside the youth, Vacation Bible Camp, etc.

Our Faith Formation Family Registration Form is updated for this program year and posted on our website. Parents, please fill this out if you are new to us or your contact or child information needs to be updated. Here you can check the boxes of the communication you'd like to receive from us.

New this year is a family form for Youth Ministry. Now, if you have more than one youth in your family, you no longer need to fill out duplicate forms for each of your youth. This is the form to register for youth gatherings and receive specific emails/updates about youth programming. General news and the calendar for Junior and Senior High Youth programs will continue to be in the church newsletters, Friday weekly emails and the Children, Youth & Family weekly Monday emails. Youth time helps to reaffirm church as a safe space for self-discovery, to build self-confidence, and strengthen a foundation that can be carried with them throughout their life. A valuable opportunity. It is foundationally about loving God, your neighbor, and yourself as we live in community with each other, passing on the love that was given to us so freely. It provides a place to unplug, gather with peers, and spend time relaxing in the Youth Room, along with other activities.

When I arrived, 15 years ago, I was hired to lead your Faith Formation program (then called Church School). The following year VBC was added. 5th & 6th Youth came a few years later, and then Young Apostles (3rd-5th), outdoor ministry camping and co-leading Junior High Youth. When I shared with leadership and CE my plans of retirement, I was glad they agreed to make creating, advertising and filling a Children's Ministry Coordinator's position a priority. This position will be someone to lead the children's Faith Formation up through 5th grade for the next few years. I would then be able to focus more on the youth, they know me and they are the ones who usually get lost in staffing transitions. My hope is by fall of 2024 HCR you will have another new person leading the youth program and I will go down to part time, supporting both the new staff. Leading your faith formation program has brought me joy, deepened my faith, expanded my knowledge of the bible along with getting to know the young families. I'm looking forward to passing on the torch and helping them get acclimated and watching them lead the program with new energy and eyes. If you know of someone, maybe it's you, who might be interested in the position please know that you do not need to be seminary trained; I was not. Years of experience in the field brought me to where I am today, along with yearly continuing education events, getting to know others in the field, sharing ideas and of course working alongside all the volunteers and children through the years. I was a member of my first congregation before taking on this role. Many thanks for all your continued support!

Blessings,

Laurie Chipman, Christian Education Director

Faith Formation News

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

Faith Formation Calendar

September

- 10 ~ **Welcome Back Sunday** & Blessing of the Backpack Tags (take one home for your backpack)
Peer Groups during 2nd Service (PreK through 8th) ~ Picnic 11:15-12:30pm
- 17 ~ Peer Groups during 2nd Service (PreK through 8th)
- 24 ~ Peer Groups during 2nd Service (PreK through 8th)
Acolyte Orientation in Sanctuary (3rd grade & up) 11:30-12noon

October 1 ~ Communion / Spiritual Friends during 2nd Service (PreK through 2nd)

Offering

Each year, our Faith Formation kiddos have the opportunity to suggest what non-profit organization will receive their offering money for the program year. They learn a bit about the various suggestions and then are able to vote on which one to support. *2023-24 organizations will be picked and voted on October 29th. Children must be present to vote.* Previous recipients include COTS, Heavenly Food Pantry, EDD, Heifer Project, Humane Society, Church World Service, and several others. Remember to bring an offering each Sunday and help the fund grow!

2023-24 Program Year Recruitment

Pick your comfort age level and how often you can volunteer.

Faith is not taught, faith is caught.

As we begin the program year, the recruiting for Faith Formation volunteers continues (notice the commas). If you have been attending FCCEJ for more than 6 months, you are qualified! Would you like to learn more about the bible stories yourself? Here's your chance! It's never too late to come aboard and lead or help in a peer group on Sunday morning. Reach out to Laurie at lchipman@fccej.org. Come join in the fun and catch some faith yourself as you lead and help the children and youth. Church life is so much more fun and full when we help others to learn and grow. We follow our Safe Conduct Guidelines and help you keep connected and supported while you volunteer.

Our current leadership and helpers are:

- PreK & K – Derek Lyman, Anne Marie Sullivan,
- 1st & 2nd – Matt Noel,
- 3rd, 4th & 5th – Justin King, Mel Gibson-King, Judy Roy,
- 6th – 8th – Laurie Chipman,



Young Apostles

3rd – 5th graders

Sunday, September 24 from 11:30-12:30pm

Begin with acolyte orientation and practice lighting candles, then a game, and a hands-on mission project. Snacks provided.

Come VOTE on your new name!

R.O.C.K. (Rolling Out Christ Kingdom), J.A.M. (Jesus-and-Me), J-Walkers (walking with Jesus)

Think of another one and we'll add it to the list!



What is a mathematician's favorite book of the Bible?
Numbers.

What did Daniel tell his real estate agent?

"I'd prefer a house with no den."



Why wouldn't the Pharaoh let the Hebrews go?
He was in de-Nile.

Youth Ministry News

****Unplug – Share - Ask Questions - Build Community – Reconnect ****

Check out the Youth Board in the staff hallway!

Youth Ministry Team

Join the team that helps plan and support the youth gatherings for Junior High and Senior High. Opportunities are available to attend the gatherings and/or help plan behind the scenes. Remember, it takes a village!

Currently on board: Elizabeth Miller & Barb Smith

Junior High Youth

6th- 8th grade

Sunday, September 17th ~ 11:30-1:30pm
Make your own pizza & friendship bracelets
October 1st ~ Sub sandwiches & ?

Senior High Youth

9th – 12th grade

Thursday, September 21st & October 5th ~ 6:30-8pm
Pizza & dessert & planning session
Sunday, October 22nd ~ 11:30-1pm
Coffee / Lunch ~ Meet at a local spot / hosted by FCCEJ

Important Reminders

- Fill out your paperwork, turn it in so that you receive up-to-date emails of information.
- Please share your personal calendar of events with Laurie so she can attend and support you in the community, at your sporting events, music concerts, theatre shows, etc and be able to invite others from FCCEJ to support you too!

Nursery Staff (*Senior High & College Youth*)

We have added two more staff to the Nursery, Abigail Jackman and Shay Mendes. A couple of the staff are starting college this year, Ashley Clark, Courtney Frank and Lorelai Mauger. If you are interested in working in the Nursery, please reach out to Laurie at lchipman@fccej.org. Once you've turned in your application, then we'll set up an interview and orient you to the Nursery room. Youth workers are paid \$20 per worship service (arrive 15 minutes ahead and stay 15 minutes after) and are on the contact list for new member class childcare and other events.

VB Camp Youth Staff

Many thanks to our 4 VBC Youth staff who helped lead our afternoon session of camp. Ashley Clark, Abigail Jackman, Rachel Gibbs and Izzy Owens. Great job everyone! When you see them around, please help us thank them for all their hard work! They all said they had a lot of fun and would definitely do it again.

Camps

Vacation Bible Camp Survey

Many thanks to those who volunteered, attended, and supported VBC 2023. We could not have done it without you! Looking to 2024?! We'd like your help answering some questions, both parents and volunteers. Paper surveys will be out on Welcome Back Sunday. We'll also provide a link soon if you are not able to be with us in person. Feel free to reach out to Laurie lchipman@fccej.org for more information.

Outdoor Ministry

FCCEJ Family Camping



We had 2 weekends of fun camping this summer. One to Button Bay State Park in Vergennes on the shores of Lake Champlain with 7 families and the other was down at Branbury State Park on Lake Dunmore with 3 families.

We are hoping to grow the number of families who are participating in the camping weekends and would like to hear from you, especially if you were hoping to join us and could not. Please email Laurie a few weekends that would work on your summer calendar and how far you'd be willing to travel. Thank you!

UCC Outdoor Ministry Camps - Horton Center Camp on Pine Mountain, NH

Coming up:

Family & Friends Weekend ~ September 1-4 ~ Attend as a family and see the great location!

Fall Work Days ~ October 6-8 ~ Go volunteer and help them close up camp for the season.

For more information, visit their website: www.hortoncenter.org.

Missions Committee

September Special Offering – In September, the special offering is the **Seminary Sunday Offering**. This offering supports the education of future ministers. “Our seminaries continue to play a vital role in the health of the church,” said UCC General Minister and President John Dorhauer. “With a clear mission for preparing leaders to serve the church, they have all become centers of adaptive learning in a rapidly changing world that also maintain clear and strong ties to our cherished traditions and core values.” For more information about this important special offering please refer to the United Church of Christ website: <https://www.ucc.org>

August Bake Sale - As part of the church lawn sale on August 19th this summer, the Missions Committee sponsored a bake sale. Thank you to all who baked and to those who gave donations. \$266 was raised and donated to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. Vermont. USCRI-VT has been welcoming newcomers to Vermont since 1980. For additional information about USCRI-VT, please refer to their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/USCRIVT.

Spectrum VT - Spectrum VT is desperately in need of mentors – the time commitment is not huge – 8 hours of training from Spectrum at your convenience (in one to two hour increments), and 4 hours per month for your child, scheduled over 2 to 4 sessions - but in terms of a child who you might mentor, it can be life-changing. You can make an appointment online - www.spectrumvt.org/volunteer/

Also consider supporting Spectrum through **Detail Works** – Spectrum VT’s car detailing service at Avenue C in Williston. To quote from their website, “*At Detail Works, we employ young people to give them progressive, on-the-job experience. In our car detailing shop, we emphasize attention, communication, and accountability, and give youth a chance to try out these skills in a safe environment.*”

Montana Service Trip

We are delighted to announce that we have a team who will be going to the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana in June, 2024. We are partnering with Global Volunteers who coordinate service trips both nationally and internationally and manages many of the on-site details. Global Volunteers partners only with communities where they have been invited and works with local leaders to identify areas where the community would like assistance. Our intergenerational team of seventeen is looking forward to this opportunity to learn about the Blackfeet Tribe and to work on a service project there. Our team members are: Ashley, Lisa and Matt Clark; Bill Coddington; Sharon Dettenrieder; Christine, Dave, Sam and Mae Dewey; Catherine Lapierre; Mark Mendes; Gretchen and Isabelle Owens; and Heather, Terry, Addie and Tristan Stein.

As we prepare for this trip, there will be fundraising. Be sure to set aside the date of March 9, 2024 for our seventh annual Cabin Fever Calcutta that will be resuming after a three-year hiatus. Proceeds from this event support our service trips.

Racial Justice Group

Save the Date!!

Sunday, October 15 at 3pm Guest Speaker: Rev. Dr. Arnold Thomas

“Black Angels of the Green Mountains: The Challenge of Black Abolitionists in Antebellum Vermont”

Are you concerned about racial equity in our state and country? Would you like to learn about the history and how to move forward? Please join us for a lively lecture and discussion about this very important topic. This event is free and open to the public so bring a friend!

The Rev Thomas is currently the pastor of Good Shepard Lutheran Church in Jericho, VT. Prior to returning to Vermont he served as Minister for Education, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations at the Riverside Church in New York City and Adjunct Professor of Religion at New York Theological Seminary. Dr Thomas received his BA from Hiram College, his Master of Divinity from Yale University and his Doctorate in Ministry from Hartford Seminary. He has a long and rich resume including lead roles in local repertory theater and is a lyricist whose words have been published in hymns.

COMMUNITY CONCERTS @ FIRST

presents

Bethany Blake

Organ & Harpsichord



Sunday, September 24 at 3pm

First Congregational Church
39 Main Street, Essex Junction



Suggested Donation: \$20

Concert proceeds support:
Community on Temporary Shelter &
FCCEJ Community Outreach

Tickets: 802-878-5745

<https://sevendaystickets.com/events/bethany-blake-9-24-2023>



Heavenly Cents Thrift Shop September News!

The end of summer is upon us and we are starting our end of season sales! Starting Saturday, September 2, we began our Bag Sale, \$5/bag. Our customers always look forward to our bag sales.

We will be closed Wednesday, September 20th, and reopen Saturday, September 23rd at 10am with Fall and Winter items. We continue to explore ways to reuse and recycle items donated that we cannot sell, with a goal of keeping the clothing waste in our community and continue to reach out to folks who reuse and recycle. We appreciate the continued support our community at large provides and always welcome donations of gently used items in good resalable quality.

We accept women's and men's clothing, shoes, boots, children's clothing from 2T up, children's shoes, boots, winter coats, hats, mittens. Also jewelry, linens, such as bedding, towels, etc., household items, games and puzzles. We no longer accept infant clothing, books, toys, and larger items.

We would like to thank the many generous community members who make donations, so we may continue to meet our Mission of serving others, both with sale items and financial donations to local organizations. Over the summer we were able to donate \$1,000 each to The VT Flood Response and Recovery Fund 2023, World Central Kitchen and to JUMP. Please spread the "good word" of the shop's mission with your friends and if you are interested in volunteering, contact Elaine Raymond, 879-7350 or Sue Wood, 878-3068 or Sandy Tallman, 879-0665.

We are open for shopping and receiving donations on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 10-1 and Wednesday evenings from 4-7pm.

Church Planned Giving Update

You will remember that FCCEJ launched a formal Planned Giving program in early 2023, including the creation of a new Legacy Circle for church members and friends who make a planned gift to our church. We are thrilled to announce that several church members have already included FCCEJ in their wills and/or estate plans. Legacy Circle members will be invited to attend an annual reception and may choose to be recognized in the Annual Report. When you designate a planned gift to FCCEJ, please notify Rev. Mendes or a member of the Planned Giving committee so that we keep accurate records and add you to our growing Legacy Circle.

In May, ten people attended our first estate planning/wills clinic, led by local estate planning and elder law attorney, Holly Lemieux. We plan to offer these free informational clinics on a yearly basis, with the next session in April/May 2024. The biggest takeaway from this seminar is that every adult should have a will – with or without planned giving - and some basic healthcare proxy documents.

What is a Planned Gift and How is that Different than My Annual Gift/Pledge?

Planned gifts are different than annual stewardship campaign gifts, which provide vital funding for day-to-day operations and reflect your support for the church's mission and programs for a given year. Planned giving asks you to make a long-term commitment to the church's mission and leave a legacy for future generations. A planned gift supports FCCEJ's long-term endowment fund and is made out of your accumulated assets through your will or estate plan. Several examples include bequests, beneficiary designations from insurance policies or IRA's, a charitable gift annuity or gifts of stock. Each of these examples are fully described under the Planned Giving tab on the FCCEJ website.

Planned Giving Myth: I don't have much and I don't have an estate!

Nearly everyone has an estate. Your estate is made up of everything you own!

- Real property – land and buildings on it.
- Intangible property – accounts.
- Tangible property – your stuff.

No matter how large or how modest, everyone has an estate and something in common: you can't take it with you when you die. Estate planning is making a plan in advance of an emergency and naming whom you want to receive the things that you own after your lifetime.

The Planned Giving Committee suggests you consult with your attorney, insurance agent, or financial advisor before making a planned gift.

Giving that grows. Like a mustard seed, your planned gift will grow over time and is a way, both financially prudent and spiritually sound, for you to support FCCEJ's mission and ministry for future generations.

Your Planned Giving Committee:

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

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").
- ⇒ **Send money via PayPal.** We accept electronic donations! Visit paypal.me/fccej.
(A PayPal account is not required to donate money.)

Stewardship Through the Decades

Submitted by Ann Gray, Historian

My first plan was to review the stewardship reports in past annual reports of the church to find the most successful ones and tell their story in this article. The reports all said things like “most successful in terms of the number of pledges received”, “greatest percentage increase ever seen”, “most funds pledged in history of church”. Since these results could be due to variables like a larger church membership or the changing value of the dollar, it soon became apparent, I needed to change my focus. So starting at our church’s beginning, this article will highlight a sampling of stewardship campaigns and fund raising drives.

- 1873 – A women’s group managed victualling (selling food) at the Chittenden County Fair. No easy task as it was located in Burlington near the corner of North Street and North Avenue. Getting there would have required travel by horse and wagon or by train and then walking several blocks from the train station to the fairgrounds. \$366.23 was raised toward a fund for a future parsonage. Converted to 2023 dollars, this is \$9,284.24.
- 1880 – An envelope system for collection of pledges was adopted.
- 1913 – The church voted to repair & remodel the church and build a parish house. Cost was approximately \$18k.
- 1925-1927 – \$5,000 was raised to purchase a pipe organ as a memorial to past members.
- 1953 – “Every Member Canvass” proved a great success to the church both financially and spiritually.
- 1960 (June) – Men of church conducted an Every Member Canvass to raise funds for construction of the administrative wing. Total cost \$90,000.
- 1970 – 303 pledges were received including 60 from Sunday School children. The total amount pledged from the children was \$600 (are any of those children still members of FCCEJ?).
- 1973 – A financial milestone occurred: the membership pledged more money than was requested.
- 1976 – A special appeal to help rebuild the South Hero church, destroyed by fire, raised \$2,000.
- 1989 – A postcard was sent to all members announcing an Every Member Canvass on Stewardship Sunday, asking them to be home as a fellow church member would be visiting.
- 1990 – Barb Blanchette did sketches of each of the church committees. Committee members provided the functions and aspirations to include with the sketches.
- 1999 – Three “Double Your Pledge” Sundays raised \$6,654.25 for high priority parsonage repairs.
- 2001 – The stewardship campaign theme was “We Gather Together”. Cornucopias, cornstalks, pumpkins, and real apples were used to symbolize a gathering harvest. The campaign was concluded by announcing the pledge total during worship followed by singing of the hymn “*We Gather Together*”.
- 2005 – A church-wide financial meeting was held to share information and gather information from the whole congregation for the 2006 direction.

Other stewardship campaigns that did not give much details of what they entailed but are intriguing:

- 1985 – The campaign theme was a pony express with trail bosses and station agents.
- 1988 – The campaign consisted of branch managers and tree bosses with Fred Allen’s real maple syrup buckets visiting each church family.
- “Neighborhood Books” and “Pick-up Drivers” were mentioned several times.

Can any long-time members provide more details on these campaigns and what Neighborhood Books and Pick-up Drivers were? If so, send an email to grayann8@aol.com. The information will be printed in a future newsletter.

The 1990 Stewardship Campaign theme was “Caring and Sharing for the New Millennium”. The Stewardship Committee noted “those who came before us have cared enough to share their resources with each other and created our church of today”. In the 24 years since, this caring and sharing has not changed; and there is complete confidence in my mind that it will continue well into the future.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

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

Craft Fest Updates

Thank you to everyone who made donations to the Summer Nearly New Sale! A big thank you to Sue Conti, Mary Grafton, and Gail Cromie, who helped with setup. Also, thank you to volunteers Barbara, Donna, Maureen, Don, Dennis, Steve, Dan, Andrea & and many others. A thank you to the Boy Scouts for moving their tent for the sale.

The sale made close to \$1,200 for the church. Great job!

Everyone should mark their calendar for Craft Fest Celebration on Saturday, November 11th. The following are ways everyone can start preparing for the event:

1. **Craft Tables** - There are still tables available. The cost is only \$20 for church members. If interested please contact Ann Gray at 802-878-4088.
2. **Nearly New** - If you missed the Summer Sale, don't panic! You will have a chance to clean out your closets for our fall event. We are looking for gently used kitchen items, books, toys, puzzles, linens & holiday items. Donations can be dropped off at the church gym starting in October. The exact date will be posted in the next newsletter.
3. **Silent Auction** - Shoppers love to bid on homemade items, paintings, gift baskets, gift certificates & anything food-related. Please consider donating! We will also be asking for items for our theme baskets next month.

Our volunteer sign up table will be begin in October. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact Linda Bogardus at 802-872-8972 or at lbogardus@myfairpoint.net. Thank you!

Sunflower Quilt Raffle

During the November Craft Fest, one of the Silent Auction items will be this beautiful handmade quilt, submitted by the Missions Committee to benefit Ukraine. This lovely quilt was made by Anna Dorey, sister of Catherine LaPierre. Anna enjoys making these wonderful hand quilted items from, baby blankets to coverlets and now this beautiful queen coverlet. Hand stitched with buttons. It will be a treasure for any household!



SERMON TALKBACK

For fifteen years, there has been a group of people who meet every Tuesday morning to discuss the worship service, the sermon content and anything else that might come up. We support each other and laugh and cry as we explore the faith and how it applies to our lives. There is plenty of disagreement in outlook and theology but we are united in our love of FCCEJ and each other. If you are looking for a group to join, we meet every Tuesday morning from 8:30am until 10am in the Marvin Lounge. 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

If you like to play bridge, you are welcome to come and have a little fun. We have snacks and unlike many other bridge venues, we are simply there to learn and enjoy the time together: no crazy competitiveness! We play three rounds and the high score wins a home made jam by Rev. Mark. Everyone is welcome so bring a friend.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SEARCHERS

Wednesday Night searchers will begin their year of study and reflection by reading the Rev. Dr. Peter Gome’s book, *The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus: What’s so good about the good news* on Wednesday September 13th from 7- 9pm. For those of you that already have the book, let’s read the introduction and Chapter 1. There are a few copies left if anyone still needs it. I knew Peter personally, and he was a brilliant scholar, tremendous preacher and an ever-faithful follower of Jesus. He was born in Plymouth Massachusetts and lived there all of his life. His mother was the organist at my first wife’s Baptist church in town and he was always a faithful member of that church. This book will yield some interesting discussions so come and bring a friend.

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. Join us Tuesday evenings, from 5-6:15 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.

Finally @ First Praise Band
Do you enjoy singing? Play an instrument? Percussionist? Keyboardist? Finally @ First is looking for folks to join us! Our musical pieces range from traditional hymns to contemporary Christian to 70’s throwbacks to 80’s rock ballads to current indy rock – We’re up for anything! Rehearsals are generally Wednesday nights 5:30-7:00, and we sing at second service on most Sundays during the program year. For more information, contact Rick Dooley, at rickdooley5@gmail.com or call/text at 802-578-0229.

Member News

Just a note to our members that our long standing member June Nadeau died a few months ago and her graveside service will be in Bridport Vermont with her family. Rev. Mark will be officiating the service. Beth Volker whose mom passed away recently, will also have a service conducted by Rev. Mendes on Cape Cod on September 21st. Everyone is invited to send cards to June’s son Jay and his family or to Beth Volker.

First Congregational Church of Essex Junction

1 Church Street
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/fcej
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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I slept and dreamt
that life was joy.

I awoke and saw
that life was
service.

I acted and behold,
service was joy.

Rabindranath Tagore