

#### The Search Begins:

On November 19th, the congregation held a Warned meeting to elect and charge a Search Committee to represent us in the search for a new Settled Pastor. The members elected to that committee included Pam Dearborn, Kate Fish, Alice Kitchel, Kris Norris, Randall Northrop, and Peter Schweigert. Randall will serve on the committee as an alternate member. Moving forward you will receive regular updates directly from the Search Committee. I offered to provide this initial report.





On November 20th, I met with the new Search Committee for an organizational/orientation meeting. I will not be participating directly with the committee but have agreed to serve as a resource when they call on me. During the meeting the committee elected Peter Schweigert to serve as their chairperson and they agreed to a regular schedule of bi-weekly meetings. I provided the committee with several documents to help begin the search process including the 2021 Church Profile

developed by the previous Search team along with the responses collected from the small-group meetings that were held in preparation for crafting that Profile. The new Search Committee will use these documents to prepare an updated Church Profile that should be ready to post early next year.

As part of the updating process, the Search Committee is considering holding a few additional smallgroup meetings and/or seeking responses to an email survey. Please make every effort to respond to their invitation(s) as your input will be important and appreciated.

In addition to this initial orientation session, the Search Committee will be receiving training this month with Rev. Lynn Bunjak from the Vermont Conference. I also have several more documents from the previous Search team that I will provide when appropriate as the current committee moves through the search and call process. Please keep the Search Committee in your prayers. While there is a need to maintain confidentiality during the search process, the committee is committed to representing our congregation and community and to working toward a successful search and call for a new Settled Pastor for United Community Church.

In a slightly related matter, I neglected to report earlier that once the Council realized we would be without a settled pastor this spring, we requested that the Vermont Conference find another location for the Conference Annual Meeting in April. While we look forward to sharing our facility and community with representatives from across the state, we did not feel it was practical to host the Annual Meeting this year without a settled pastor to help coordinate the event.

Nevertheless, United Community Church is active and thriving. Please review the list of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany opportunities that we are hosting in the next few weeks (see page 7). We hope you will take advantage to attend, invite, participate, and/or assist with several of these events. There are additional opportunities being planned for the winter, Lent and Easter seasons, and spring along with our ongoing commitment to community lunches on Wednesdays and Fridays.

We continue to minister where we are as we search for a pastor to help lead us to where God wants us to be. Blessings for our ministry together,

Phil Brown, moderator



Sunday, December 24—Ghristmas Eve 10 am Worship to include the Christmas Pageant 7:30 pm Service of Lessons and Carols Harp Prelude begins at 7 pm (Bill Tobin)

#### **Ministry Reports**

#### Worship & Care

We are beginning that busy, festive, thankful, sometimes overwhelming but joyous time of year - Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, and New Year's Eve/Day. There are many who see this time of year as bleak - gray, cold, stick-season. But, for me, these short days are full of activity and expectation. Especially at church.

Advent begins this Sunday, a time of waiting and preparing for Jesus' birth. Each Sunday we will light the candles on the Advent wreath, beginning with the Hope candle this Sunday and adding an additional candle each Sunday (Peace, Joy, Love, Christ). We are reaching out for readers for this part of the service for each Sunday. And, of course, we need our "regular" readers each week, as well.

On Christmas Eve morning, we will have our pageant, this year as a reading of The Story with congregants taking roles as shepherds, angels, sheep, Mary and Joseph and the 3 Wisemen, coming forward as their part of The Story unfolds.

Christmas Eve, beginning at 7pm, we will have a traditional service of lessons, carols and songs. Many readers (7 - 10) needed.

New Year's Eve, also a Sunday, will see an ecumenical worship service at St Andrew's Church, with Bob Amos providing our music. The rest of the details are yet to be finalized. And, finally, Epiphany, when the long wandering Wisemen traditionally arrive. But that is in the New Year.....

If you would like to be a reader, please contact the Church Office (email or phone) or Karen Sayles (kmsayles@yahoo.com). Especially if you will be here at Christmas (and the Christmas Eve service) let us know if you would like to take part – there are a number of readings that evening and it is a joy to see many people participate. Thank you all! And have a joyous Advent season!

#### .Outreach



Thanksgiving day was truly a day of thanks giving. With all the volunteers we were able to set up on Wednesday serve and clean up on

Thursday and still get home for our own family get togethers. We fed over 300 people here in United Community Church and sent over 100 take out meals

to those who preferred to eat at home or were not able to get here themselves. We look forward as we begin our spiritual new year with Advent beginning on December 3. Community lunch continues to feed the hungry. We are also participating in the co-op Christmas gifts with our Christmas tree of gifts for others. Gifts should be returned unwrapped by December 5 to the church so the "angels" can put them together for the many recipients who are not assisted by the Santa Fund. Christmas dinner will be here at United Community Church under the direction of Daisy McCoy and Kingdom Community Services. Volunteers are always welcome. You can contact Daisy through either the UU church or here at our office. Please don't forget the special United Church of Christ Christmas Offering. This offering goes to retired pastors, families, and lay persons who may not have had the advantage of retirement funds. Checks can be made out to United Community Church and put Christmas Fund (or Veterans of the Cross) in the memo line. See page 6 for more information.

#### **Spiritual Formation & Nurture**

Every Sunday during Advent the children will be having Sunday school to learn more about the advent season. On December 10th we will Family Advent'ures with pizza and crafts. The Christmas pageant will take place dur-



ing the morning service of December 24th . Adult Advent Bible Study will meet on Fridays (Dec. 1, 8, 15, 22) at 1 pm. Advent Devotionals are available in the office "Grace in The Manger" by Rev. John W. Stevens.

The second Sunday of every month the Spiritual Formation Ministry will meet after church.

#### Stewardship



Stewardship has several projects that are expensive and we are looking at grants to help fund these projects, such as masonry, efficiency and kitchen needs. We are filling out applications and submitting them. Recently Passumpsic Savings Band presented different proposals for our endowment. We are evaluating each choice. We continue to work on smaller and shorter term projects such as bike club, thermostat improvements, warming oven in kitchen, parsonage oil tank. We are pleased with the

management by Garrett Properties (continued on page 3)



Have you visited our Facebook page? UnitedCommunityChurchUCC Did you know you can check the website three different ways? UCCSTJ.com UCCSTJ.org Unitedcommunity.church



#### **Ministry reports** (continued from page 2)

of our apartments. Due to the holidays Stewardship will not have an in-person meeting in December but we continue to work via email. If you wish to help out, contact Kris Norris.

#### Reach Out



November was a busy month with 8 requests for gas cards, 3 requests for diapers, 1 for feminine products, 1 COVID test, 2 hygiene bag, 3 backpacks with food and warm socks & mittens, 1 food request, and

4 gifts of warm socks, gloves and hats. We also referred someone to community connections for medication co-pays, assisted referral to SASH and a referral to HOPE for a clothing voucher for warm clothes.

We had a wonderful donation of hygiene bags to give to people in need. We are in need of easy foods that don't need heating up and are non-perishable for Ted and Frannie's cabinet.

#### Archives

It takes time to organize the materials received from the committees involved in the merger of South and North Congregational Churches. The archive email is: stjuccarchives@gmail.com



#### **Mission Statement**

As one body in communion with God. Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, we, the members of United Community Church covenant with one another to care for and love each other as Jesus Christ loves us, and to maintain, support, and foster a compassionate ministry in our community and throughout all God's creation

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## Church Council Members

#### Meal Site

Thanksgiving! What an outstanding effort by our church family and community volunteers! I think that everyone in our congregation participated



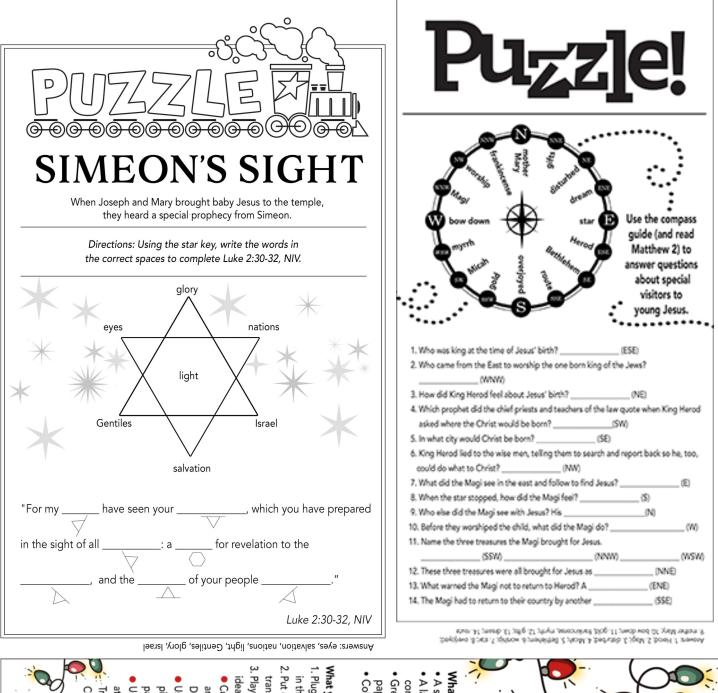
in some way, either through food donations, food prep, meal set-up, meal service, dishes, or clean-up. Here's the run-down: on Tuesday, Kris picked up the food that was prepared by St J Academy, (15 cooked turkeys, mashed potatoes, stuffing, cranberry sauce, a bizillion rolls, and 4 dozen apple and pumpkin pies). We had to find refrigeration for all of it, but we did it! On Wednesday, our volunteers packed up 80 take-out meals, we prepped more mashed potatoes, more cranberry sauce, cut all of the pies, and cooked 2 more turkeys (just to be sure), we prepped squash and green-bean casseroles to round out the meal. Volunteers also set up the dining room with extra tables & chairs, put out condiments and decorated each table beautifully. Then came the BIG DAY! I can't even begin to describe the flow of the day, but suffice it to say, we did it! We sent out a total of 107 take-out meals and served about 200 guests in our dining room. The day could not have gone better! I'm so proud of us! Behind the scenes of all of this Erika and Barbara planned, fielding phone calls, and keeping things on track for weeks in advance. Thank you all.

Our next adventure will be the AA Conference on Saturday, 12/9. We're expecting about 60 guests for breakfast and lunch on that day, and proceeds from the day will go to the Kitchen Fund. Our numbers for our Wed. and Fri. Community Meals keep growing, and we will put the profits from this effort to good use. With your help, and God's Blessing, we feed a lot of hungry people.

	Phil Brown, Moderator	
	stjmusic@sover.net	Pam Dearborn, Member at Large
9 CELES	Alice Kitchel, Assistant Moderator	pamelad@nchcvt.org
	alicekitchel@gmail.com	Gail Warnaar, Member at Large
Elisa Rowell, Tre	asurer	gailw@theoldhomestead.com
	elisamay1978@gmail.com	Karen Sayles, Worship & Care
Helene Millas, As	ssistant Treasurer	kmsayles@yahoo.com
	frenchcutie289@yahoo.com	Kris Norris, Stewardship
Karen Sayles, Cle		KristanNorris312@gmail.com
•	kmsayles@yahoo.com	Vicki Scherer Spiritual Formation & Nurture
Kathy Brown, As	• •••	vickyrscherer@gmail.com
•	kbpb@together.net	Alice Kitchel, Outreach
Pam Dearborn, pa		alicekitchel@gmail.com
	pamelad@nchcvt.org	

# Young and the Young at HEART PAGE

Children's bulletins are available at our worship services as well as downloadable from the Constant Contact with the worship materials and on the website: uccstj.com.





#### **Advent Bible Study on Fridays**



Heaven

and Earth

ADVENT and the INCARNATION

Will Willimon

pm we journey with the Rev. Dr. Willimon as our guide as we discover *Heaven and Earth: Advent and the Incarnation*. We will explore the topics introduced in his book. (*Heaven and Earth* can be ordered through Boxcar & Caboose. Reading the book, while encouraged, is not a prerequisite for study participants.)

December 1, 8, 15, & 22 at 1

It is not within our own power

to make a fresh start. If we are to have a future different from the past, it must come as a gift, something not of our devising. What we need is a God who refuses to be trapped in eternity, a God who not only cares about us but is willing to show up among us and do something with us, here, now.

In Heaven and Earth: Advent and the Incarnation, Will Willimon, one of our country's most noted preachers, introduces us to the God who does just that, bringing heaven to earth and changing everything. In Advent we celebrate and anticipate the earth -shaking, life-transforming good news that God is coming to us. Watch out. Get ready. God is on the way.

May we go and grow together!

#### **Projects from staff:**

- Sunday morning services slide show
- Support Pulpit Supply pastors
- Make flyers for Advent activities
- Help with Thanksgiving meal
- Assist with Christmas Co-op in finding a location in the building
- Locating photos for All Saints Sunday
- Supporting people in addressing community supports
- Press releases and advertising church events.
- Assist with worship planning
- Addressing current issues with building use
- Support members of congregation
- Worship and care
- Order supplies for meal site
- Lollipop Wednesday
- Gas cards
- Performed background checks
- Coordinate maintenance request

#### Offerings

Offering Other directed offering Roof Fund	Nov 3,192.38 504.05 25.69	July-Nov(YTD) 30,543.94 1,080.61 1,341.30
Community meal <b>Total Offerings</b>	913.89 <b>4,636.01</b>	3,433.09 <b>36,398.94</b>
Wider Mission	92.00	342.00
Local Mission	50.00	690.00
Total Mission	142.00	1,032.00
]	Mission	Offering
2023/2024	\$4,780.00	\$70,000.00
% of budgeted amt	21.6%	52.0%

#### VOLUNTEER READERS NEEDED



There are a couple ways to be a reader these days...we had started having one reader for the service in response to a request from a member of the congregation but

that isn't set in stone. If you like that idea, and are

willing to be a single reader, that's fine. But if you would like to read but want to share duties we can make that work. Also, you can read from the pulpit (and sit "up above" if you like) or read from the lectern down on the floor. Both ways will work. See Karen Sayles (802-274-0986 or



kmsayles@yahoo.com) to volunteer for a Sunday. If reading scares you, we also need people to hand out bulletins and greet people as they come in. It's always welcoming to be greeted by a smiling face and a warm "Hello".



Kate Piper transferred her membership to United Community Church on October 22. Welcome Kate!

## The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

#### "Grace upon Grace." John 1:16

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift



checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need.

Donations can be made via check made out to United Community Church with Christmas Fund in the memo or can be made through our website:

UnitedCommunity.church



# Swinging Epiphany Celebration With SWING NO2TH BIG BAND

## Saturday, January 6, 2024 - 2:00 pm

Wells River Congregational Church

Sunday, January 7, 2024 - 2:00 pm United Community Church, St. Johnsbury, VT

A service of "lessons & carols" accompanied by jazz <u>interpretations</u>

For Information: www.stjjazz.org stjjazz@stjjazz.com



#### **December 17 activities Finalized**

Sunday, December 17 following worship you have several different activities available to continue the anticipation of Christmas. Third Congregational Church in East St. Johnsbury is hosting a concert at 1 pm of seasonal music by members of the congregation. Following the concert one can travel back to United Community for a Taize service at 3 pm.

The youth of our church have been invited to a 1 pm youth group get together at the Lancaster Congregational Church. They plan to go caroling at 2 and be finished by 3 pm. For more information contact Rev. Pam Spain at Revpspain@gmail.com

Vicki Scherer and Jonah Raser represented St. Johnsbury Academy at the Scholars Bowl GHOST Tournament in Hanover, NH



#### "Listening Groups" Return

Discussion "listening groups" will be formed to gather the opinions, thinking, and suggestions from every member and regular attendee of the United Community Church concerning three important topics — separate and yet very inter related.

1) Our Mission — how wide, priorities, funding

2) Our Endowment — its use and purpose, how much is enough?

3) The apartments — are they mission? Income? Albatross?

4)Future possibilities?

We will be looking at these topics individually and as they connect to and affect one another.

A committee is forming to offer some historical and current background for your thinking and responses, to organize and facilitate the listening sessions, and to tabulate the data to be presented to the Council. Your responses will help the Council to shape its direction as it carries the business of the Church into 2024 and beyond. The information will also assist a new Pastor in serving the Congregational Community as well as greater St Johnsbury.

If you are interested in being part of the Committee please contact Gail Warnaar — 802-274-3461. Plan on a six month commitment.

#### 2023 Advent and Holiday Events

United Community Church 1325 Main Street, St. Johnsbury

**Fridays, December 1. 8, 15, 22** Advent Bible Studies – 1 pm **\*** Saturday, December 2 Men's breakfast - 8:30am "Conversations on Christmas" **Friday December 8 United Community Handbell Ensemble** Ringing on Railroad Street starting 5:30 pm ✤ Saturday, December 9 "A Christmas Carol" 2:00 pm 1940's Radio Play by St. Johnsbury Players **Sunday, December 10** Family 'Advent'ures starting at Noon Christmas ornaments and pizza **Sunday, December 17** Holiday Concert and Taizé service Third Congregational Church, East St. Johnsbury (Time TBA) **Friday, December 22** Christmas Caroling - 2:00 pm followed by cookies and hot cocoa **Sunday, December 24** Christmas Pageant Service -10:00 am **Sunday, December 24 Service of Lessons and Carols -** 7:30 pm with Bill Tobin playing harp at 7:00 pm **Sunday, December 31** "First Night" Service 10 am Ecumenical Worship at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church with music by Bob Amos, Alive & Well **Sunday, December 31** First Night North - 3:00 pm on with United Community Handbell Ensemble, Barbara Connelly & Paul Connelly, Bob & Sarah Amos Band, and More!

**Sunday, January 7** 

"Swinging Epiphany" - 2:00 pm Celebration with Swing North Big Band

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- 12/2 Jean Pulsifer
- 12/4 Bill Tobin
- 12/6 Donna Goodhue Sam Lynch
- 12/9 Mark Russell
- 12/23 Christina Potter-Jacobus
- 12/24 Evelyn Mulliken
- 12/26 Carew Magnus Joan Knutsen
- 12/27 Bryan Sayles Pam Smart
- 12/28 Shawn Locklin Eamon Roosa
- 12/30 MacKenzie Beck Greg Brown



#### DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 12-24 Nancy & Jay Sprout12-27 Marcial & Marie-HeleneBelanger Rodriguez-Arenal
- 12-30 John & Karen Colgrove



**Evelyn Mulliken** December 24, 1940 - October 12, 2023

## Edwin Magnus

May 12, 1942 - October 18, 2023 Memorial Service to be held in the spring

## Marjorie Reed

March 27, 1935 - October 19, 2023



CHOIR REHEARSALS 9 AM SUNDAYS 11:30 AM—12:30 PM DECEMBER 3 DECEMBER 17



UNITED COMMUNITY HANDBELL ENSEMBLE REHEARSALS 6—7:30 PM WEDNESDAYS

## SUNDAY SCHOOL PRE K—6TH GRADE EVERY SUNDAY IN ADVENT STUDENTS LEAVE SANCTUARY FOR CLASS FOLLOWING THE ANTHEM



#### In our Thoughts and Prayers

Julie Brisson Bob Chapman Barbara Connelly Mary Feron Joan Knutsen Magnus family

If we have missed your birthday or anniversary please let either Barbara or Erika know at 802-748-2603 or UnitedCommunityChurchUCC@gmail.com United Community Church

United Church of Christ 1325 Main Street St. Johnsbury, VT 05819



