

UNITED COMMUNITY CURRENT



SUMMER 2023

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Pastor's Ponderings

Photographic Reflections on a Busy Summer

This has been such a busy and meaningful Summer that I want to take up all the space I am allotted here on the front page with wonderful photos that tell the story.



Pet Parade Outreach



Thaddeus Fairbanks Society Luncheon Honorees

St. Johnsbury Academy Thaddeus Fairbanks Society Luncheon-Dr. Sharon Howell, Headmaster, presenting a pin to celebrate our congregation's generosity. Much to my surprise they called me forward to recognize United Community Church's gift of what is now South Church Hall. It was wonderful for our congregation to be acknowledged in this way. I was honored to be a stand in for our whole church family. We will be permanently listed as a major donor and included in this event to honor our gift.



UCC General Synod-Selfie with others from the Vermont Delegation in Indianapolis. At General Synod I was elected to the Board of Directors for the United Church of Christ.



Make Music Day on South Lawn



Watching *Harvey* at our Movie Night on the top floor

Blessings,

Rev. Andrew Ponder-Williams



Property Management

It has become increasingly clear over the past three years that our efforts to manage our apartment rental properties through the church office is unsustainable. Not only do management responsibilities take time away from ministry and “church business”, the stress on our church staff from a 24/7 on-call relationship with our tenants is significant. Even with major hands-on support from our Stewardship chair, the management and maintenance demands are overwhelming for our staff.

Your Church Council has been discussing options for addressing this issue for several months. Obviously, any permanent change in the status of our rental properties would require affirmative action/vote by the congregation. We will be beginning that process with an informational meeting and possibly a series of listening sessions next spring. In the meantime, the Council has voted to contract with Garrett’s Properties for management of almost all aspects of tenant relations and building maintenance for our rental properties effective September 1st.

We will be paying Garrett’s a 10% management fee, plus a leasing fee for each new tenant, plus the actual cost for maintenance expenses. Garrett’s has their own maintenance staff and will use our local contractors for maintenance requiring additional expertise and licensure. We will maintain ownership of the properties and will have significant input on major projects or renovations through our Stewardship chair and Church Council. The day-to-day management of the properties will no longer be handled through the church office and our staff will be released from any on-call responsibilities.

As noted above, we will hold information and listening sessions in the new year to determine a congregational plan for the rental properties. A little history may be helpful at this time. It appears that in the past a few different members of the congregation served as property managers for the apartments. These property managers apparently donated hundreds of hours of their own time towards the maintenance and administration of our rental properties. We honor these men and deeply appreciate the gifts they gave to this, and to our legacy, congregation. A result of this generosity was a positive cash flow from the apartments; along with a distortion of the actual cost of administering and maintaining these properties. Because each of these volunteer managers had unique strengths, there were other areas of property maintenance that were deferred. As people’s interests and commitments changed over time it became more difficult to find volunteers who had the time, skills, and interest necessary to manage five properties with 15 rental units.

With the formation of United Community Church it was decided to manage the properties using church staff. It was believed that a quarter-time secretary and half-time custodian could effectively manage the business and maintenance of the properties. This time allocation has proven woefully inadequate. In addition, interactions with tenants have become frequent and confrontational resulting in additional stress for our staff. At the same time, and particularly since the pandemic, much of the deferred maintenance from the past has come due resulting in significant unbudgeted expenses.

For the past three years, at least, the apartments have produced negative cash flow and we have had to draw from the church’s endowment to cover apartment expenses. It is currently unclear if, or when, the apartments might be able to contribute positively to the church’s finances and ministry. What is clear is that we cannot continue with our current management plan. Our hope is that by working with Garrett’s Properties for the next year and by having an open discussion with the congregation we will be able to gain some clarity to determine a path forward for these properties.

We welcome your thoughts and input – and particularly your prayers – as we seek to move forward together as United Community Church.

Blessings for our ministry together,

Phil Brown, moderator



Beth Norris is looking for some help with food prep on Tuesdays and/or Thursdays. Now that we are serving over 100 meals both on Wednesday and Friday, it is necessary to do some food prep on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Prep would begin around noon and helpers need not stay all afternoon. Give what you can. Beth congratulates everyone who has donated so far and wants you all to know that your donations make a BIG difference. All edible donations are used. If you have extras from your garden they will be welcomed!

Ministry Reports

Worship & Care

Vacation time has been upon us in these past 2 months and will continue through August! On June 18th and July 2nd we welcomed Steve Winkler as he joined us as a guest minister. It was lovely to have an old friend with us those two weeks. Donna Murray joined us as guest organist on June 18th and 25th. On July 2nd, Paul joined his mother on the piano and Crystal joined in as a reader as they were both here during their vacations. We also welcomed Lynn Jones back as a reader on July 23rd, as she was with us on her VT vacation time.

Going forward in August, we will have guest musicians on each Sunday. On August 6, the Maple Leaf 7 will join us for their Dixieland service. On the 13th, Pat, Alice, and Pam will be providing us with special music. On the 20th there are plans in the works for special music. And on the 27th, the St. J Jazz Quartet will be providing the special summer music. A huge thank you to all who make our worship special! July 30th is planned as a work Sunday (5th Sunday of the month).

A special thank you to all who have filled in as our worship tech -people. If we want to have live-streamed services it is a necessary piece of the pie. And even the sound system is a piece of the tech even when we don't use the projectors. Thank you so much - I know it feels like a big responsibility! And, always, thanks to all the volunteers who help make this work!

Please come and join us for any and all of our worship opportunities during this vacation-time of year!

Outreach



During June, Outreach ministry took the lead in providing refreshments for the Make Music event that Catamount Arts sponsored on our South lawn. We would like to thank all who made brownies, and helped to dish out the ice cream and sundaes that were enjoyed by the many attendees.

With all the state and federal organizations helping out with the flood victims, Outreach has taken a back seat but we will continue to keep an eye out for ways that we can help. It was great to see that some of the CWS Clean up buckets came back to VT. We encourage all to be checking out the sales and when you see



an item that is used in either the health kits, school kits, or clean up buckets purchase it and bring it to church. We have a closet set up to receive items as they come in throughout the year. We also happily receive any item for the food shelf or our community lunch program. If you have extras from your garden, bring them in and we will use them either in the lunches or over at the food shelf. Thank you in advance for all your help and generosity.

Spiritual Formation & Nurture



Movies Under the Stars. Please join us this Summer for outside movies in a drive in theater style. Bring your own blanket, we will have popcorn, and lemonade. We will be showing "101 Dalmatians" on August 8th at 7:30 pm. This event is free and all are welcome.

On July 23 the confirmation class got to go to Bread and Puppet, afterward we went to Parker Pie to share a meal of yummy pizza together

Our next meeting will be September 10 following fellowship time.

Stewardship

The roofing project moves forward in this coming week and should be completed in several days. A section of the parking lot will be blocked off, please note any signs.

We would like to acknowledge Paul Bergeron for all that he has done over the past several years. We hope retirement suits him well. This leaves a big hole and there is much to be done. The management company will be relieving us of a great stress with the apartments, but there is a plethora of projects beyond the apartments. We have hired a new housekeeper and landscaping company.

The Stewardship Committee has new members and a lot of activity. We are pursuing grants to help with many of the major projects that will be required. Some of these projects are stained glass windows, mortar and pointing, portico repair, accessibility to the church, meal site expenses and more. The meal site continues to grow. We have added two refrigerators at the Salvation Army store. We now supply take out meals to the Salvation Army for the homeless population (*continued on pg 4*)



Have you visited our Facebook page? [UnitedCommunityChurchUCC](https://www.facebook.com/UnitedCommunityChurchUCC)

Did you know you can check the website three different ways?

UCCSTJ.com

UCCSTJ.org

Unitedcommunity.church



Ministry reports (continued from page 3) and others. Other meal sites that are struggling for resources have contacted us about using our facilities. We continue to discuss new potential models for cooperation between meal sites, KCS, and other organizations. We have an incredibly committed set of volunteers & growing integration with the community.

Reach Out



Erika and Andrew attended the “Building Communities that Thrive Through Connections” We made several connections with agencies to help us better support people in the community. During June and part of

July we assisted with 8 gas cards, 4 COVID tests, and 6 families with diapers.

Apartments

We have been working on fire doors. Bourne energy will be our new oil/ propane company. They have been checking all the equipment so that we are ready for the heating season. Starting on September 1st Garret’s property will take over managing and all maintenance for the apartments, although they will still be owned by United Community Church.



Archives



Since I have started working on archives I have moved things from the old room to the new room. The last 5 weeks I have been at upward bound. In the coming weeks I will start working on cataloging the papers that were moved from South Church.

Meal Site



By the end of June, 2023 we had been open and running for 10 months; that is, from

September, 2022 for Wednesday meals and November 2022 for Friday meals. During that time, we took in \$2,226.55 in direct contributions from our guests, and spent \$2,566.70 on food alone, so that is very close to balancing out. This does not include food contributions from the Academy or from the Food Shelf. Then we spent \$3,605.85 on supplies which includes things like paper towels, sterno, cleaning supplies, take-out containers, etc. I do not have an exact breakdown of that by items, so it's all just one chunk. I think the initial cost to get the mealsite going was actually the lion's share of this amount. (Thank you, Melanie for the numbers!)

This congregation has really stepped up with canned -good donations! We are able to make use of all of it as we stretch ourselves to meet the needs of our

community. I have also begun to keep a spreadsheet log of the menus we serve each week – ask me if you would like also helps to track proteins, starches, fruits, veggies, and sweets as we try to provide balanced, nutritious meals.

Also, at the end of June we began an outreach to the homeless community through the Salvation Army Store which is incredibly exciting. Ellie purchased 2 new fridges for our mealsite through a grant to KCS (Kingdom Community Services) and Kris took our 2 used fridges down to the store for them to use. For the past few weeks we have been carrying bagged lunches down the hill and putting them in their care. So far, they have distributed 208 meals to anyone who is in need. This is such an important mission, and I pray we can continue doing it. The folks at the Salvation Army are thrilled to be able to help distribute our lunches. And they are okay “monitoring” the fridges so nobody takes more than they need. On a related note, the Wounded Veterans Association just presented our church with a \$300 donation ear-marked for our meal site which will help us keep the food flowing.

Today I sat with one of our guests, John who had a terrible bicycle accident on Monday. He went to the ER and an X-ray showed he has 4 broken ribs and a dislocated shoulder along with multiple cuts and scrapes. I talked with him for quite some time, and near the end of our conversation, he said that he loved coming to our meal site because it truly feels like he’s with his family. He loves that we talk to him and care about how he’s doing. He said “When I come here, I don’t feel so alone”. That’s it folks – Jesus said “feed my sheep” and it’s not the mashed potatoes or hotdogs or spaghetti – it’s God’s love that’s the real food!

Beth Norris, Kitchen Manager

Projects from staff:

- Sunday morning services slide show
 - Starting a membership drive
 - Assist with worship planning
 - Addressing current issues with building use
 - Moving archive room
 - Organize third floor
 - Support members of congregation
 - Stars and Stripes parade
 - Help with movie nights
 - Worship and care
 - National day of make music
 - Pet parade
 - Order supplies for meal site
 - Attend planning meeting for Annual conference
- **Please ministry chairs check your office mailbox**

**Special Events
Coming up
Don't miss them**



Sunday, July 30 will be a work Sunday. We are still planning activities. If you have jobs that you need assistance with, let Karen Sayles know so we can include them in our service time.

Sunday, August 6 we will be hosting the MapleLeaf Seven at our traditional Dixieland Service. Invite your friends to come worship with us.

Tuesday, August 8 "101 Dalmatians" will be our free movie. If the weather cooperates, we will be showing it outdoor. Lemonade and popcorn will be available.

Sunday, August 13 we will have special music provided by Pat Campbell, Pam Dearborn, and Alice Kitchel.

Sunday, August 20 some of the service music will be provided by Ellie Raser and Luke Raser.

Sunday, August 27 St. J Jazz Quartet will be providing the music for our worship service. Come swing with us.



Have you noticed our new Little Library on the front lawn of the church? Randall Northrop over heard members talking about wanting a little library on the lawn and lo and behold, he found plans, built, painted and put it up. Thanks so much!

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

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. So 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 with Andrew "up above," if you like) or read from the new lectern down on the floor. Both ways work. See Karen Sayles (802-274-0986 or kmsayles@yahoo.com)

Church Council Members



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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.



Creator of the stars

The stars and sky testify to God's amazing power and creativity.

Directions: Use the clues and Bible passages to fill in the blanks. Then transfer the circled letters (in order) to the spaces below to complete a verse of praise.

God determines this and calls each star by name. (Psalm 147:4)
 ○ -----

The heavens are the work of God's what? (Psalm 8:3)
 ----- ○ -----

What does God bring out one by one? (Isaiah 40:26)
 ----- ○ -----

God made two great lights to do this. (Genesis 1:16)
 ○ ----- ○ -----

God promised Abraham this would be like the stars. (Genesis 15:5)
 ----- ○ -----

The sun, moon and stars have this. (1 Corinthians 15:41)
 ----- ○ ----- ○ -----

The lights in the sky serve as what? (Genesis 1:14)
 ----- ○ -----

The heave_s declare the _lory _f _od;
 the ski_s _roc_aim the wo_k of his ha_ds.

PSALM 19:1, NIV

Answer: number, fingers, host, govern, offspring, splendor, signs. The heavens declare the glory of God; the stars proclaim the work of his hands. Psalm 19:1, NIV


Puzzle!

Fill in the blanks with the correct words. Then transfer the letters to the numbered boxes below to complete Psalm 107:1, NIV.

Shape that symbolizes love 31 15 7 18 5
 Part of a stove used for baking 12 3 24 39
 Color made by red and yellow 28 42 7 8 27 37
 A present 1 32 29 11
 Clothing a girl wears 19 22 43 44 33
 Something you open to go into a room 40 29 17 47
 Opposite of soft (sound) 34 17 41 30
 To take a long walk 14 2 9 38
 A high body temperature 45 50 49 48 42
 Items used to build or fix things 13 35 21 16 26
 Edge of the sea 10 23 46 51 4
 Home for a bee 6 25 36 4

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	
37	38	39	40	41	42	43	
44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51

Answer: heart, oven, orange, gift, dress, door, loud, hike, fever, rook, shore, hive; Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Psalm 107:1, NIV



A Biting Storm

Use simple ingredients and your imagination to bake these fluffy, cloud-like treats.

What you need:

- 3 egg whites
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- Mixer
- 2 Tbsp. powdered sugar
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch
- Parchment paper

What you do:

1. Preheat oven to 300°. In a mixing bowl, combine egg whites and vanilla. Whisk eggs with mixer at medium speed until frothy.
2. While whisking, gradually add sugar and cornstarch. Keep whisking at high speed until stiff peaks form.
3. Spoon mixture onto a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Create fun shapes.
4. Bake 20 minutes. Cool and enjoy!