

UNITED COMMUNITY CURRENT



JANUARY 2023

Email: Unitedcommunitychurchucc@gmail.com

Website: UCCSTJ.com



Pastor's Ponderings

Fun is a Spiritual Practice

I recently read an article about the importance of fun. It can improve our physical health and it can help us improve our mental health. Most importantly in our times it can help us reconnect with one another and overcome differences that we often perceive as significant. We talk about a lot of topics relating to God and our spiritual lives in the church, but is really remarkable how often we don't talk about fun. God wants us to enjoy this life which is a true gift from the divine. Happiness is...

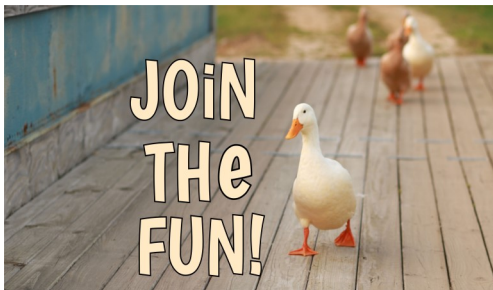


What is being suggested is that we each do a Fun Audit. That doesn't sound much fun does it?! Audits are usually frightening administrative matters. The idea is to do a deep assessment of what brings us joy and what makes us feel happy in a unique way we can't otherwise experience. I feel like we each know a lot about what seems to take away our happiness. Overuse of social media and other technologies, watching too much news, and letting ourselves fall into general negativity and hopelessness.

As we begin this New Year I can't think of a better spiritual practice to try than a Fun Audit. Perhaps this year can be one where we dwell less on the obvious of what we know makes us feel unhappy and instead lean into the things we discover make us happy.

When I did my Fun Audit I realized that sharing a meal with others makes me uniquely happy. I also remembered that watching an old movie while resting results in content centeredness. For fun I realized that music is very uplifting and can make anything I am doing more fun. I also set goals of new outdoor activities to try in this new place Ashton and I now get to call home with all of you.

I can't wait to hear about your Fun Audit and what you discover about yourselves as we live this life God has blessed us with thoughtfully. God wants us to have fun and let go of what we know doesn't bring us joy, even when we feel obligated to it. Your true friends will forgive you if you are on social media less and leaning into what brings you joy more. Each time we have fun I know God is present with us just as when we struggle or need support. A way to give God thanks for all our blessings might be to have fun with God. Amen.



Blessings,

Rev. Andrew Ponder-Williams



Church Council Members

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Happy New Year! – Again!

MODERATOR



Last month we celebrated the beginning of our Liturgical year. This month, of course, we celebrate the beginning of the Julian calendar year. Welcome to 2023! The beginning of a new calendar year often inspires us to take stock, re-evaluate and adjust or renew our commitments. Your Church Council is committed to reviewing all of our abundant resources and working to make sure we are using our resources most effectively to address our ministry priorities.

One of the blessings/resources of United Community Church is the generous giving of our congregation members and friends. We hope that as we enter this new year that each member and friend of the church will re-view and re-evaluate their giving and consider making appropriate adjustments in their giving plan. Here are some areas to consider:

Inflation – We’ve all dealt with inflation over the past year. Your church is no different, our costs have gone up as well. While you may not be able to increase your giving by 7.1%, hopefully most of us received some Cost-of-Living adjustment over the past year. Did you receive a 3% or 5% raise during 2022? If so, increasing your giving by a similar percentage (example: \$100 to \$105/month) should not have a major impact on your quality of life. Those of us receiving Social Security will see an 8.7% increase in our benefits starting in February.

Total Charitable Giving – How much do you contribute each year to Catamount Arts, Vermont Public, NVRH, American Red Cross, Vermont Food Bank, etc., etc. These, and so many other worthy organizations deserve our support. Nevertheless, I believe that my church should receive the largest, or even the majority, share of my charitable giving. United Community Church feeds the hungry, supports the arts, and promotes healing and education right here in our community and through the UCC, across the nation and the world.

Your Legacy – We know that all adults, regardless of age or the size of their estate, should have a will. The whole point of estate planning and writing a will is to provide some support for the family and institutions that we hope will continue after we have passed from this life. Hundreds of parishioners and friends of our predecessor congregations included the churches in their estate planning which has provided the endowment that supports many of our current ministries. This tradition of legacy giving has continued to bless United Community Church and we hope it will continue into the future as each generation passes on the cloak of ministry.

Your neighbors – Not everyone will be in a position to increase their giving, and some may not be able to give at all. Each of us, as a follower of Christ, needs to consider whether a “fair share” of our blessings could include giving on behalf of our less fortunate members and friends.

As we move forward together into 2023 and the 2nd half of our fiscal year, I encourage all of us to prayerfully consider how we can appropriately contribute to the life and ministry of United Community Church.

Blessings for our ministry together,
Phil Brown, moderator



Ministry Reports

Worship & Care

December brought a busy season for us at United Community Church. We began the month with our Building Rededication service on December 4th. It was a wonderful service that allowed us to not only rededicate our building as a place of worship and service, but also a way to rededicate ourselves as a faith community that supports each other and our greater community in love and service. Our Advent theme was Come Home for Christmas and we welcome all to join us and find a home here.



Poinsettias were delivered to those in our family who were not able to join us. Our sanctuary was beautifully decorated for Christmas with an array of poinsettias, greens and lights. A huge thank you to those who worked on creating this warm Christmas glow!

Christmas Eve service was a service of Lessons and Carols on Saturday, December 24th with a worship service on Christmas Day (an unusual occurrence). This was a wonderful service held in the parlor (filled nearly to capacity!) that was a time of sharing memories and singing carols. At both services we were mix of family, friends and new faces. A joyous Christmas celebration!

Throughout Advent we had Fellowship after church in the parlor. We are looking to continue this as we move into the new year. There have been many comments about how important this is to many within our congregation – a time to connect, share and enjoy conversation and snacks together! Please sign up to host or simply bring a snack to share!

Thank you to all who were readers and volunteers throughout Advent. Especially those who were our Advent Wreath candle lighters – a different mix of people- did you figure out those connections?

As always, there is a need for readers, usher/greeters, and acolytes. The sign-up is available on Google docs if you are technological or a sign-up sheet is also available each Sunday at church. Please consider signing up for these parts of the service. Acolytes also are needed each week – people of all ages are welcome to light the candles during the Prelude!

Thank you to all who volunteer to make our worship meaningful and a shared experience!

Outreach



Outreach has been helping other ministries during this holiday season.

We were pleased to let KCS and Beth-El Synagogue use our fellowship hall for a very successful Christmas dinner. We continue to brainstorm ways that we can reach out to our community. If you have ideas please share them with us. We will be meeting again January 24 at 7 pm at the church.

Spiritual Formation & Nurture



The Christmas pageant was a huge success again this year. We sponsored a movie and cookie decorating afternoon. We watched the original Miracle on 34 Street. Thank you Beth and Kris for providing lunch to us.

Confirmation classes will start in March. We are excited that we will be partnering with the Littleton UCC. For more information email Pastor Rev. Andrew Ponder William at uccstjpastor@gmail.com We will also be sponsoring a workshop in January about “Preparing for the Future.” (Signing up for Medicare, Advance directives, pre planning funerals and the 5 wishes)

In February we are will be starting the secret angel program. We will be pairing a mentor with a person early in their faith journey. The pairs will exchange correspondence all through Lent and around Easter we will have a reveal celebration. If you have any interest in being part of this please contact Erika.

Stewardship

The life of our church continues to grow and with it more changes to the use of our building. The meal site participation by our own church members and community members continues to increase. The Christmas meal by KCS and Beth El synagogue, and First night were wonderful events to see in our church again. These events brought welcome interactions to our faith communities throughout St. Johnsbury. The use of our building has brought various needs to light that our members have identified.

This Sunday we will be placing old chipped and damaged silverware, plates and bowls in the dining hall. After the service, anyone interested in any of these items may take them home. There are other items in our building also need to find a home soon.

Plans are being made to finish the flooring into the other half of our basement. A catering service for weddings, funerals, birthdays, etc. is hopeful.

(Continued on page 4)



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

When was the last time you checked out the website? UCCSTJ.com



Being an open and affirming church we have discovered the need for some additional boundaries recently. The presence of animals in our church is a wonderful presence for many, but brings issues also. In our growing pains we have discovered the need to limit animals in our building to being on a leash. Allergies and previous trauma associated with animals are something we had not considered. We will also need to avoid animals in smaller rooms such as the parlor due to safety and allergy issues. Certainly, all of these policies will change as needed with time.

The finances of our church are stable at this time and the endowment is recovering from this year's drop in the economy. Giving is up and we have been able to limit our draws from the endowment while performing many belated maintenance issues. We look forward to all that the new year brings and many thanks to all of our church members for their faithful presence.

Reach Out



We now have a new gas card policy. We can give out one gas card per driver every 90 days. Donations to the gas card fund will be greatly appreciated. We still need some non perishables for Frannie's and

Ted's cupboard. We have set up an arrangement with NECKA that when people come in saying that they are sent from there we will verify. Erika and Pastor Andrew will also be attending the St. Johnsbury Community Partners meeting.

In December we assisted with 5 gas cards, 6 packs of diapers, and 2 bags of food from Ted & Frannie's cupboard.

Apartments

The empty apartment is almost flipped. Erika is in the process of working on the waiting list for a new tenant.



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

Sign up for Summer camp now

Students going into grade 3 and up

Scholarships available see Erika

Listing of camps are available at:

<https://hortoncenter.org/summer-camp-sessions/>



Offerings

	Dec.	July-Dec. (YTD)
Offering	8,820.00	32,906.00
In Kind offerings	0.00	0.00
Loose Offerings	254.36	1,328.94
VANCO Offerings	350.00	2,040.00
Total Offerings	9,424.36	36,274.94
Directed Donations	12,411.75	44,356.82
Wider Mission	628.00	1095.00
Local Mission	82.00	1382.00
Total Mission	710.00	2477.00
	Mission	Offering
2023	\$4,780.00	\$70,000.00
% of budgeted amt	51.8%	51.8%

Projects from staff:

- Candy cane Wednesday
- Assisted Worship and Care with coverage and planning services.
- Erika meets weekly with stewardship.
- Advent bags
- Building use and scheduling questions answered
- Staff development
- Christmas eve candle
- Creating power point for worship service
- Christmas ornaments
- website/ facebook
- Contacting contractors for bids
- Supporting and advertising community lunch
- Christmas Pageant
- Marketing
- Gas cards
- Co-op Christmas
- Maintaining and opening of chapel.
- Christmas card
- Christmas dinner
- Slide for movie theater
- Congregation fellowship with "Miracle on 34 St"
- Organize staff lunch
- Assisted with rededication of building

Please ministry chairs check your office mailbox



UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH

CHURCH APPAREL ORDER FORM

Cathedral T-Shirt (\$25)



- Women's
- Men's
- Small
- Medium
- Large
- XL
- XXL

St. J Scale T-Shirt (\$25)



- Women's
- Men's
- Small
- Medium
- Large
- XL
- XXL



Hoodie (\$35)

- Small
- Medium
- Large
- XL
- XXL



Hat (\$20)

Add up your total:

Your Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Please make out a check to United Community Church and put "apparel" in memo line. If paying in cash please put in an envelope and label it "apparel order" and provide your name. Please submit this form and payment to Church Office.

Advent Candle lighters: November 27—Karen Sayles, Kathy Brown, Phil Brown (worship and Care Ministry); December 4—Elijah, Scherer, Erika Thompson, Kathleen, Haines, Rev. Andrew (Spiritual Formation and Nurture Ministry); December 11—Alice Kitchel, Beth Norris, Barbara Connelly (Outreach Ministry); December 18—Elisa Rowell, Kriss Norris, Amanda Cochrane (Stewardship Ministry); December 24—Alice Kitchel, Pam Dearborn, Phil Brown (Moderators—Past, Present, Assistant).

December Begins with Rededication of our Building



Special litany ties the original dedication to today, December 4, 2022



Choir sings "Bless This House"



Fellowship after enjoyed by all

Congregation participates in Pageant: Reader's Theater version of "What Love Really Means"





Christmas Poinsettias given



In Memory of

Esther Elizabeth & John Batky by Klari Emmons
Mildred & Fred Beck by Alice Kitchel
Eleanor Belding by Pam Dearborn
Jim Connelly by The Connelly Family
Joshua Connelly by The Connelly Family
Alice Crystal by Klari Emmons
Doris Damon by Roger Damon
2nd LT Joseph Fortin by Sunny Wood
Esther Naomi Fuller by The Keller/ Lynch Family
Elora S. Geddes by Alice Kitchel
Brian Hanson by Phil & Kathy Brown
Grandpa & Grandma Hayward
 by The Keller/ Lynch Family
Sarah & George Hollos by Klari Emmons
Helen & Allan Kitchel by Alice Kitchel
Sybil & Doug Kitchel by Alice Kitchel
Richard & Barbara Lynch
 by The Keller/ Lynch Family
Marion Macleod by Klari Emmons
Bonnie Simons by Pam Dearborn
Doc & Peg Tirrell by The Connelly Family
Midge Whitcomb by Pam Dearborn
Don Wood by Sunny Wood
Family Members by Karen Sayles

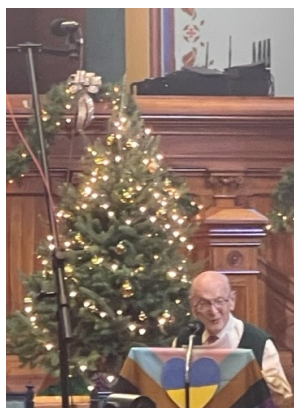
In Joyful Celebration of

Linda Damon by Roger Damon
Amy Grover by Roger Damon
Kathy Izquierdo by Roger Damon
Ed Magnus by Carew Magnus
Elora by Alice Kitchel
Our Blessed Savior by Pat Campbell

The wreaths are in memory of Phil & Elsie Grime
by the Grime family


Donations of trees for those unable to buy one
by Rev. Bob Potter and family

Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols



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:



PUZZLE

Ordering the days

God spoke and created all that exists. He separated and ordered his creation. What did God say about all he made?

Directions: Write the correct day of creation next to each clue. Then fill in the circled letters in order below to complete Genesis 1:31, NIV.

FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	FOURTH	FIFTH	SIXTH
God made wild animals and livestock.					
God said, "Let there be light."					
God gathered the waters under the sky into one place.					
God made a vault to separate the waters and called it "sky."					
God created plants and trees.					
God separated the light from the darkness.					
God made the water teem with living creatures.					
God made the sun and moon.					
God made birds fly above the earth.					
God made stars.					
God created mankind in his own image.					

God _aw all tha_ he _ad ma_e, an_ _t was ve_y g_od.

GENESIS 1:31, NIV

Puzzle!

Match the blocks of spaces and letters to complete an NIV Bible verse about an important commitment.

Y	M	L	O	F
A	E	A	P	E
S	O	M	L	X
	W	F	L	I
		T	H	
O	E	A	P	E
.	S	C	R	X
:	T	H	I	
1	1	C	R	1




Answer: Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ 1 Cor. 11:1

Answer: sixth, first, third, second, third, first, fifth, fourth, fourth, sixth, sixth, and it was very good.

TASTY CREATIONS


Make this yummy treat to remember what happened on each day of Creation.

What you need:

- 6 large pretzel rods
- Candy melts (white, chocolate and blue)
- Green sprinkles
- White or star-shaped sprinkles
- Fish crackers
- Animal crackers
- Adult help

What you do:

1. With help, melt the three colors of candy melts in separate dishes. Microwave for 30 seconds at a time, stirring until soft.
2. Decorate one pretzel for each day of Creation:
 - Dip half in white and half in chocolate to show light and darkness.
 - Dip half in white and half in blue to show separation of the atmosphere.
 - Dip half in chocolate, add green sprinkles and dip half in blue to show land, plants and water.
 - Dip in chocolate and add white or star sprinkles to show the stars.
 - Dip in blue and add fish crackers to show sea life.
 - Dip in chocolate and add animal crackers to show land animals.
3. Share the Creation story — and the snack — with a friend!





JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- Marcialito
- Rodriguez-Arenal 1/2
- Erika Thompson 1/4
- Nathan Amos 1/8
- Jeannette Mayo 1/10
- Gail Roberts 1/12
- Chris Brown 1/14
- Beth Norris 1/15
- Nancy Reynolds 1/17
- Leo Merchant 1/18
- James Stock 1/20
- Roger Damon 1/21
- Sarah Amos 1/23
- JoAnn Gieselman 1/25
- Liam Tobin 1/25
- Liza Sprout 1/29
- Brad King 1/30



JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

1/17 Donna and Dennis Goodhue



**Choir Rehearsal
January 1 & 15**



April Rose Potter

Born November 18, 2022

Daughter of Nick Potter & Robyn Potter

Great Granddaughter of Rev. Bob & Christine Potter



David Sargent

August 14, 1955 - November 23, 2022

Barbara Jean Nelson

*July 31, 1947 - December 5, 2022
Widow of former custodian, Phil Nelson*

Ray McCulloch Clifford

March 25, 1928 - December 11, 2022

Betty Lou Maynard

*March 18, 1930 - December 22, 2022
Former secretary of North Church*

In our Thoughts and Prayers

Julie Brisson

Bob Chapman

Clifford family

Mary Feron

Joan Knutsen

Ed Magnus

Maynard family



Nelson family

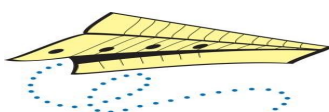
Raser family

Sargent family

Lorraine Scherer

Pam Smart

Gail Warnaar and 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



Just a reminder:

Although we don't require mask wearing we ask you respect one another's choices to stay safe



SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES 10am

In-person and
Facebook Live /Zoom

Zoom etiquette:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=209599687060439>

STAFF

<i>Pastor</i>	Rev. Andrew Ponder-Williams
<i>Music Director /Organist</i>	Barbara Connelly
<i>Handbell Director</i>	Phil Brown
<i>Virtual Worship Director</i>	Phil Brown
<i>Virtual Technicians</i>	Sean Cavanaugh, Betty Keller
<i>Secretaries</i>	Barbara Connelly, Erika Thompson
<i>Building Manager</i>	Paul Bergeron

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Email UnitedCommunityChurchUCC@gmail.com



January Lectionary



January 1

Isaiah 63:7-9
Psalm 148
Hebrews 2:10-18
Matthew 2:13-23



January 8

Isaiah 42:1-9
Psalm 29
Acts 10:34-43
Matthew 3:13-17



January 15

Isaiah 49:1-7
Psalm 40:1-11
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
John 1:29-42



January 22

Isaiah 9:1-4
Psalm 27:1, 4-9
1 Corinthians 1:10-18
Matthew 4:12-23



January 29

Micah 6:1-8
Psalm 15
1 Corinthians 1:18-31
Matthew 5:1-12

