

UNITED COMMUNITY CURRENT



JANUARY 2024

Email: Unitedcommunitychurchucc@gmail.com

Website: UnitedCommunity.church



The Year Ahead:

“There is but one refuge that one man (a person) has anywhere on this planet. And that is in another man’s (person’s) heart.”

Rev. Howard Thurman

MODERATOR



I came across this Howard Thurman quote recently in a biography of Martin Luther King, Jr. Rev. Thurman was the Dean of Marsh Chapel at Boston University while King was a doctoral student at BU and had a major influence on King’s beliefs on “integration, community, and the interrelatedness of all life.” During this season when we remember Joseph and Mary seeking refuge in a stable and then fleeing as refugees to Egypt, we should also be mindful of all our current brothers, sisters and children who are seeking refuge from war, violence, homelessness, and climate disasters. It’s easy to become overwhelmed with the needs that we see in our community, on our national borders, and across the world. Jesus, we give thanks for the innkeeper who opened his/her heart to provide refuge for your parents and your birth. Help us to open our hearts and to encourage others to open their hearts so that You may help us provide refuge for Your children in our present age.

As we look toward the year ahead, I am reminded of another Howard Thurman quote, in the form of a poem:

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost, To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry, To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations, To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.

The Church Council has extended an invitation for Rev. Sprout and Rev. Winkler to continue providing pulpit supply and pastoral care for the next three months. We are blessed that Steve and Jay have accepted this invitation and have indicated a willingness to continue through June if the Council so chooses. We are also blessed that our Search Committee, with the leadership of Peter Schweigert is working diligently toward a search and call for our next settled pastor.

In the meantime, we still have work to do individually and as a congregation. Let us continue the “work of Christmas” throughout the year ahead. Let us open our hearts to each other, and to our neighbors, so that with God’s help we may provide refuge, comfort, and understanding.

May the Blessings of Christmas fill you throughout the year,

Phil Brown, moderator

Ministry Reports

Worship & Care

What a busy, hectic and joyous Advent season!

A huge thank you to all joined in to make it special. For all those who joined the Bible study (quite a group!). To all those who were Advent wreath candle lighters! To our readers throughout Advent. Especially to those who participated in Christmas Eve morning and evening services. That was an epic day! Caroling was a fun time for our singers and those who heard their renditions of traditional Christmas carols. A special thank you to our Pageant participants; some of whom were guest attendees, because we had to keep replacing those who couldn't attend due to Covid and flu!

Thank you to those who always serve faithfully - Barbara for her special music and the choir for giving it all voice. Phil for special music and technology. Erika for her work on the Pageant and ornaments for the congregation. Kathy and those who helped her decorate the sanctuary. It was quite lovely.

Thank you all. And to paraphrase Tiny Tim, God bless us, everyone! Don't forget to join us for the Swinging Epiphany on Sunday, January 7 at 2 pm. Come enjoy Swing North Big Band as they tell the Christmas story one more time with the addition of the visit of the Magi using Jazz music.

If you would like to be a reader, please contact the Church Office (email or phone) or Karen Sayles (kmsayles@yahoo.com).

Outreach



As we begin 2024, we continue to reach out to those in our community who need our assistance. Community Lunch feeds over 100 persons each

Wednesday and Friday with either eat in, take out or the sandwich meals we deliver to the Salvation Army store in St. Johnsbury. We appreciate all the donated foods. Thanks also to all those who gave to the Christmas Fund—sometimes called fund for the Veterans of the Cross. Our Christmas Eve offering was designated for this special mission fund. Looking ahead, we are planning for the Dessert and Dancing event to be held at United Community in February. Swing North Big Band will be providing the music. We will be needing help in setting up, clean up, and of



course making those delicious Valentine desserts.

Spiritual Formation & Nurture

As Spiritual Formation we were so happy to welcome so many new visiting families. We wanted to share that Spiritual formation. We offer Sunday School classes on the second and fourth Sunday after the anthem for all ages. With the current research and studies it has been shown that children that spend more time in the service with their families are more apt to attend church as adults. We love to hear the noisy children and see their faces. See article on page 5.



Advent was a wonderful and full season for Spiritual formation. Please enjoy the photos from the season.

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 Bank 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 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

We assisted persons with diapers (2), 1 gas card, 2 Covid tests, 1 hygiene bag, and 1 set of warm socks, gloves and a hat. There was a referral to the SASH program. We are in need of easy foods that don't need heating up and are non-perishable for Ted and Frannie's cabinet.



Archives



I have started to go through boxes of random stuff that has been placed in the archive room. There are now extra file cabinets to file away some North Church bulletins.

(continued on page 3)



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 2)*

Meal Site



December was a big month for us as it began with a bang and ended with a boom! On 12/9 we prepared and served both breakfast and lunch for the Area 70 AA Convention. It was a lot of work for our team of very dedicated volunteers and netted our Kitchen Fund about \$600. BANG! That will go a long way in helping us continue to serve between 120 to 160 meals each and every Wednesday and Friday.

And then on Christmas Day at 10:45 am, as Daisy McCoy, community members, church members, and volunteers from the Beth El Synagogue were preparing to serve dinner at 11:30am, the stove quit! It looked like we had run out of propane. Yes; and, there was a bigger issue. Bourne Energy found not one but two gas leaks! Fortunately, that did not really end in a giant BOOM! I don't know how Daisy and her team did it, but they served more than 120 meals in spite of circumstances. There is never a dull moment in the kitchen as we answer God's call to "Feed my sheep"! With your help, and God's Blessing, we feed a lot of hungry people.

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

Search Committee



The Search Committee has begun regularly meeting while beginning the process of producing an updated profile to be used to advertise for a new settled pastor. We have been reviewing the existing profile and have received training from the conference minister in this search process. As the previous profile is only a couple of years old, it was originally our hope that a quick update with minimal changes would suffice to tell the story of who we are and who we hope to become as a church body. While this is still largely the plan and while the previous profile provides a great starting point, the search committee has determined that there is a bit more work to do than a quick change of dates before we are ready to issue the call for a new settled pastor.

As the search committee revisits and updates the profile, expect to hear about opportunities in the coming weeks to have your voice heard and recognized, particularly if you were not part of that process last time. There will be opportunities for informal discussion and for feedback as we progress through this process. While we have just begun our work it is still our hope to put out the profile in the next few months, moving (relatively) quickly to find a new settled pastor.

Your Search Committee,

Peter Schweigert, chair

Pam Dearborn

Alice Kitchel

Kris Norris

Kate Fish

Randall Northrop

Church Council Members



Phil Brown, Moderator

stjmusic@sover.net

Alice Kitchel, Assistant Moderator

alicekitchel@gmail.com

Elisa Rowell, Treasurer

elisamay1978@gmail.com

Helene Millas, Assistant Treasurer

frenchcutie289@yahoo.com

Karen Sayles, Clerk

kmsayles@yahoo.com

Kathy Brown, Assistant Clerk

kbp@together.net

Pam Dearborn, past Moderator,

dpam2203@gmail.com

Pam Dearborn, Member at Large

dpam2203@gmail.com

Gail Warnaar, Member at Large

gailw@theoldhomestead.com

Karen Sayles, Worship & Care

kmsayles@yahoo.com

Kris Norris, Stewardship

KristanNorris312@gmail.com

Vicki Scherer Spiritual Formation & Nurture

vickyscherer@gmail.com

Alice Kitchel, Outreach

alicekitchel@gmail.com

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.

PUZZLE



HAPPY NEW YOU!

Changing the calendar each January is a reminder that God makes all things new.

Directions: Use the clues and the calendar code to complete 2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV.

JANUARY 2024						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	God	night	word	in	love	Jesus
glory	therefore	again	give	light	Christ	a
new	beginning	anyone	waters	help	in	many
be	again	through	earth	made	whole	back
new	if	and	creation			

The second Monday _____
 The last Monday ____
 The 16th _____
 One day before the 20th ____
 The day before the first Friday ____
 The last weekday of the second week _____
 The day after the 20th ____
 The day after 18th ____
 The first day of the second weekend ____
 The last Sunday ____
 The last day of the month _____

Answers: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

Puzzle!

Use the grid to discover what James 5:13-18 advises when challenges loom.

	A	F	L	P	T
	C	H	N	R	W
	E	I	O	S	Y

P _____

Answers: Pray in faith. Pray for each other. Pay earnestly.

New INSIDE




Geodes look plain on the outside but contain beautiful crystals. Create these "rocks" to show how God makes us new on the inside.

What you need:

- Clean cardboard egg carton
- Scissors (and adult help)
- Epsom salt
- Plastic zippered bags (one per color of dye)
- Food coloring
- Glue
- Paintbrush

What you do:

1. Cut out the tops and bottoms of all the egg compartments so you can make 6 ball shapes.
2. In each bag, put 3 tablespoons of Epsom salt and a drop or two of food coloring. Seal and shake to mix.
3. With the paintbrush, spread glue inside two egg-carton halves. Sprinkle a spoonful of Epsom salt into those halves. Then close and shake.
4. Open your homemade geode and shake out excess salt.
5. Optional: Preserve the crystals with a coat of clear-drying glue.

Offerings

	Dec	July-Dec(YTD)
Offering	6,034.19	36,578.13
Other directed offerings	615.00	1,695.61
Roof Fund	25.69	1,366.99
Community meal	823.50	4,256.59
Total Offerings	7,498.38	43,897.32

Wider Mission	398.73	740.73
Local Mission	220.00	910.00
Total Mission	618.73	1,650.73

	Mission	Offering
2023/2024	\$4,780.00	\$70,000.00
% of budgeted amt	34.5%	62.7%

Projects from staff:

- ◆ Sunday morning services slide show
- ◆ Support Pulpit Supply pastors
- ◆ Advertise Advent activities
- ◆ Help with Christmas Meal
- ◆ Assist with Christmas Co-op in finding a location in the building
- ◆ 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
- ◆ Candy Cane Wednesday
- ◆ Gas cards
- ◆ Performed background checks
- ◆ Coordinate maintenance request
- ◆ Decorate For advent and Christmas
- ◆ Write Christmas Pageant
- ◆ Costumes for Christmas Pageant
- ◆ Hospice Poinsettias
- ◆ Christmas Eve Poinsettias orders, and organization
- ◆ Pizza donations
- ◆ Welcome bags

Swinging Epiphany

January 7, 2024

2 pm

Worship and Children

To the parents of our young children, may we suggest...

- ◇ Relax! God put the wiggle in children; don't feel you have to suppress it in God's house All are Welcome!
- ◇ Sit toward the front where it is easier for your little ones to see and hear what's going on. They tire of seeing the backs of others' heads.
- ◇ Quietly explain the parts of the service and actions of the pastor, ushers, choir, etc.
- ◇ Sing the hymns, pray, and voice the responses. Children learn liturgical behavior by copying you.
- ◇ If you have to leave the service with your child, feel free to do so, but please come back. As Jesus said, "Let the children come to me."
- ◇ Remember that the way we welcome children in church directly affects the way they respond to the Church, to God, and to one another. Let them know that they are at home in this house of worship.

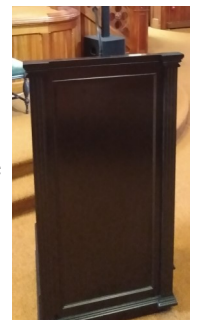
To the members of Our Church:

- ◇ The presence of children is a gift to the Church and they are a reminder that our congregation is growing.
- ◇ Please welcome our children and give a smile of encouragement to their parents.

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".





Swinging Epiphany Celebration

With
**SWING NORTH
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 interpretations*

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



“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 Warnar — 802-274-3461. Plan on a six month commitment.

December Scenes



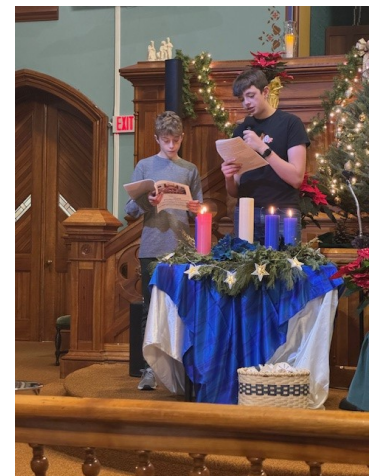
Left : Christmas Eve
poinsettias

Right: Christmas Eve
Advent Wreath
lighting—

Luke and Jonah Raser

Lower Left: Caroling at
NVRH

Lower Right: Advent
Bible Study



JANUARY Birthdays

- Marcialito
- Rodriguez-Arenal 1/2
- Erika Thompson 1/4
- Nathan Amos 1/8
- Jeannette Mayo 1/10
- Neil Abella
- 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

In Christian Sympathy

C. Sanford (Sandy) Murray

June 1, 1935 - December 10, 2023
 Memorial service January 6 2 pm
 First Congregational Church, Lyndonville

James (Jim) Kennedy

April 10, 1946 - December 16, 2023
 Celebration of Life to be held in the
 spring/summer



December 24 morning pageant

SUNDAY SCHOOL PRE K—6TH GRADE

2NS AND 4TH SUNDAY

STUDENTS LEAVE SANCTUARY FOR CLASS FOLLOWING THE ANTHEM



CHOIR REHEARSALS

9 AM SUNDAYS

11:30 AM—12:30 PM

JANUARY 7

JANUARY 21



UNITED COMMUNITY HANDBELL ENSEMBLE

REHEARSALS

6—7:30 PM WEDNESDAYS



JANUARY Anniversaries

1/17 Donna and Dennis Goodhue

In our Thoughts and Prayers

Julie Brisson

David Martin

Bob Chapman

Mulliken family

Mary Feron

Murray family

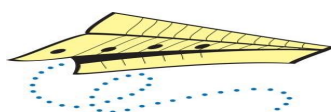
Kennedy family

Pam Parker

Joan Knutsen

Gail Warnaar

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



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>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

CONTACT INFORMATION

United Community Phone number 748-2603
Email UnitedCommunityChurchUCC@gmail.com
Website UnitedCommunity.church



January



Lectionary Texts

January 7

Genesis 1:1-5
 Psalm 29
 Acts 19:1-7
 Mark 1:4-11



January 14

1 Samuel 3:1-20
 Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
 1 Corinthians 6:12-20
 John 1:43-51



January 21

Jonah 3:1-5, 10
 Psalm 62:5-12
 1 Corinthians 7:29-31
 March 1:14-20



January 28

Deuteronomy 18:15-20
 Psalm 111
 1 Corinthians 8:1-13
 Mark 1:21-28

