

UNITED COMMUNITY CURRENT



MAY 2023

Email: Unitedcommunitychurchucc@gmail.com

Website: UnitedCommunity.church



Pastor's Ponderings

"No Matter Where You Are On Life's Journey, You Are Welcome Here"...Chapter 1

April 25th marked Ashton and I's completion of our first year of calling St. Johnsbury our home. We are true blue Vermonters now, right? I heard it only takes a year. We have had a wonderful year of getting to know our wonderful congregational and community, settling into our new jobs here, and the joy of making the parsonage our home.



Andrew and Mom

In the UCC we talk a lot about journeys. A big part of this is to pause sometimes and reflect on where we are now and where we have been. It is remarkable to discover how God has been at work in our lives throughout each step of the way.

I have been reflecting on the little journey that came right before the beginning of this journey we share now. We caravanned on a diagonal drive right across the nation from Arizona to Vermont. We stopped halfway in Missouri to share a little bit of time with my family. It is convenient to have grown up in the Midwest because when you drive cross country you have a free place to stay with your beloved.

Along this journey Ashton and I both wondered if this tremendous change in our lives would result in our feeling at home in our new surroundings here in St. Johnsbury. When we reflect back on this year together we give God thanks for all the ways you have made us feel welcome, which makes us feel right at home.



Hello Vermont!

Ashton and I are looking forward to our second year of journeying together with our church family here at United Community Church. Words are inadequate to express our thanksgiving for this loving and nurturing congregation and all the ways we are sharing God's love with each other and our larger community.

I've included some pictures of our cross country journey a year ago to be with you all here in Vermont. Blessings,



Saying Goodbye to Scottsdale, AZ



Andrew, Ashton, and Aunt Patsy

Rev. Andrew Ponder-Williams



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“Am I Like You”

Over the past few months, I and several members of our choir and community have been preparing with North Country Chorus to present “Considering Matthew Shepard” on May 6 and 7 at South Church Hall. You probably recall that Matthew Shepard was a young, gay college student who was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered in Laramie, WY in 1998. The oratorio incorporates poetic reflections on these events along with actual text from diaries, court statements and news reports presented in a broad spectrum of musical styles.

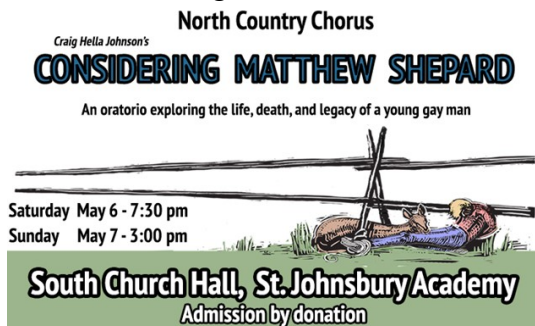
The overall tone of the presentation is hopeful, and thankful for the lessons we have learned as a nation from this tragic event. However, in order to tell the story honestly the music, by necessity, contains some very dark moments.

One particularly dark section entitled “A Protester” reflects on the words and signs carried by Fred Phelps and members of the Westboro Baptist Church outside of the Episcopal church where Matthew’s funeral was being held. As members of United Community Church, I hope we all agree that this behavior was truly abhorrent. It is easy for us to dismiss Westboro Baptist as an extreme fringe distortion of Christ’s message and to believe that we would never participate in behavior so disrespectful and hurtful. Or would we?

For me, a more troubling section of the program is the piece “I Am Like You”. In this movement a small group of voices directly addresses Aaron and Russell, the two young men who committed the crimes against Matthew Shepard, and questions whether we are really any different from the perpetrators. We all have “hopes and dreams.” We’ve all “been reckless . . . and made mistakes and hurt people very much.” We all appreciate “the sunshine warm on my face.” We all carry biases and hidden hatreds that we struggle to acknowledge and address.

One of the “Because” reasons that we attend and support United Community Church is that this community provides us a place to explore our biases and our privilege and challenges us to daily stretch beyond ourselves into the reality of Christ’s love for all people. We may feel like a small group of voices, yet we are asking the important questions and trying to answer Christ’s call to Kin-dom.

“Considering Matthew Shepard” ends with an uplifting hymn of “Thank You” and a celebration of love for “All of Us”. I invite you to take advantage of this “stretching” opportunity and attend one of the performances and May 6 and 7.



Blessings for our ministry together,
Phil Brown, moderator



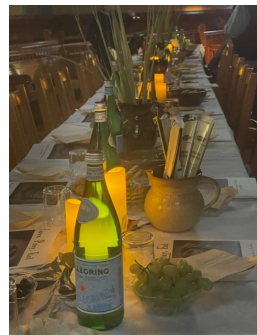
(above) Palm Sunday
(below) Easter



(above) secret angel reveal on Palm Sunday
(below) New members Easter
Ashton Beebe, Pastor Andrew, Elizabeth Rowell, Jigme Thennes, Randall Northrop, Kate Fish



Tables set for
Maundy Thursday



Ministry Reports

Worship & Care

We welcomed 5 new members on Easter Sunday; Ashton Beebe, Kate Fish, Randall Northrop, Elizabeth Rowell, and Jigme Thennes. We look forward to May 7th when we will welcome other new members. Prior to Easter, we had a very successful and meaningful Maundy Thursday meal and Tenebrae Service. The sanctuary was open for meditation on Good Friday and Easter Vigil was meaningful for those who attended Saturday evening. Sunday morning we met in front of the church for early worship service and then adjourned to the fellowship hall for delicious egg casseroles and time to enjoy each other's company. We rejoiced during Easter 10 am service and shared the resurrection with everyone there. We have been enjoying Easter each Sunday as Easter is not just a day but a season. We look forward to Pentecost, the birthday of the church, which will be on May 28th. Worship and Care meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month, May 16 at 4 pm.



Outreach



We were tasked with coordinating the MapleFest Pancake Breakfast. It was wonderful to see all the volunteers come out to help make this fundraiser for the North Side Roof such a success. Special thanks go to Beth & Kris Norris for all the extra work they did prior to April 22. We want to thank everyone who helped, set up, serve, clean up. You were all amazing! Maple Grove donated the pancake mix and syrup and White Market donated towards the extra food supplies. Thank you very much!

Looking back to March, we want to thank all the gentlemen who put on the very successful "Chowder Supper." They brought in many members of the community to enjoy the chowder and company. We look forward to May 8th, when a tour group from New Brunswick, Canada will be stopping at our church for a soup and sandwich lunch. Their tour guide was taken by our church and asked if we could host them for lunch. Thanks Beth for arranging this.

Also in May on the 6th, we will be assembling the Church World Service kits. If you wish to help, we will be doing this at 9:30 am. Kits will be blessed during church on the 7th. United Community Church

is the depot for northern Vermont and New Hampshire CWS kits pick up. Several churches will be dropping off their completed kits the first week of May. The CWS 18-wheeler is scheduled to pick up at UCC on May 10th. See page 6 for more information on "Blanketing the World" with CWS blankets and tools, for Mother's Day and Father's Day.

Spiritual Formation & Nurture



Our youth will be planting a herb garden for the church meal site. The youth will be caring for the herbs as they grow. Anyone with a green thumb is welcome to share gardening tips. This project will be both part of our pledge for Earth Day and local mission.

Sunday School has started back up. The youth have been enjoying having classes again and a chance to spend time together. We meet on the second and fourth Sunday of every month. All youth 6th grade and below are invited to join us. After the anthem we will go to the back conference room and read the lectionary together, do a craft or project together, and then meet our families for coffee hour. Erika continues to look for adult volunteers so we are following Safe Church Policy.

Confirmation classes are going really well. The youth have enjoyed visiting other churches and learning from different pastors. The next class will be May 7th at First Congregational in Littleton. This class will focus on public theology and witness with Pastor Andrew. Class will be at 3 pm.

Stewardship

For stewardship it is budget time of the year. This has been a difficult budget process considering the large cost of apartments, parsonage, and our cathedral building. All three have needed substantial improvements during this last year. Our roof will be next in line for renovation. In spite of all the costs that the church has endured, the endowment increased significantly this last month.

Our investments have had some wonderful results seen by the number of events hosted in our building. The pancake breakfast was a success that we did not predict, and soon we will be hosting a travel group from Canada. Worship and community involvement continue to

(continued on page 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)*

improve and grow. Thanks to all of you for your support for the life of our church!

Reach Out



As we get into warm weather, we could benefit from donations of water for people that are living out of their cars or tents.

This past month we assisted with 6 gas cards, 10 packs of diapers (4 of which were pullups that went to the St. Johnsbury School, 1 food bag from Ted & Frannie's, and 6 Covid tests.

Apartments

We continue to work on some safety improvements that we need to make to be in compliance. We are completing the process of applying for the town grants. We would like to publicly thank Rosemary Hampton for her dedication and passion for preparing the church grounds for the spring.



Special Events Coming up

Don't miss them



Saturday, May 6 is a Brian Hanson Memorial Bike Fair in St. Johnsbury at the park on the corner of Main St and Winter St. from 10 am to 1 pm. Come get your bike inspected, repaired, bike helmets and food. All free—Bike4life St. Johnsbury.

Sunday, May 7 United Community Church will be receiving new members during the 10 am worship service. If you are interested, contact Pastor Andrew.

Sunday, May 14, is a special Sunday. Not just because it is Mother's Day but also because it is **Blanket Sunday**. We will be collecting donations for Church World Service Blankets in memory or honor of our Mother's, daughters, or those who have mothered us. Blanket donations purchase blankets to be given to persons who have lost their homes due to natural or human-made disasters. \$10 buys a blanket that can be used to create tents, keep people warm and safe.

Also on **May 14**, United Community Church will be holding its **Annual meeting**. Following worship on May 14 we will reconvene to hear reports of the past year, hopes for the next year, and vote on the budget and ministry members.

Sunday, May 28, we will be celebrating Pentecost, the birthday of the Christian Church.

Offerings

	April	July-April(YTD)
Offering	10,679.19	52,263.60
In Kind offerings	310.83	1,469.53
Loose Offerings	678.86	3,178.91
VANCO Offerings	0.00	2,982.75
Total Offerings	11,668.86	59,894.79
Directed Donations (includes community meal site)	12,913.86	17,634.90
Wider Mission	450.00	2,397.50
Local Mission	263.05	1,716.90
Total Mission	493.50	4,114.40
	Mission	Offering
2023	\$4,780.00	\$70,000.00
% of budgeted amt	86.1%	85.6%

Projects from staff:

- Lollipop Wednesday
- Assisted Worship and Care with coverage and planning services.
- Erika meets weekly with stewardship.
- Welcome bags
- Helped people with questions about building use and scheduling
- Staff development
- Working on 20 yr projection for all buildings
- Organizing and cleaning 3rd floor
- Advertising
- Power point for worship service
- website/ facebook
- Contacting contractors for bids on various projects.
- Supporting and advertising community lunch
- Marketing
- Gas cards
- Maintaining and opening of chapel.
- Newsletter
- Planning Holy Week and Easter
- Organizing Church World Service items
- Ordering kitchen & cleaning supplies
- Restocking Diaper bank


Please ministry chairs check your office mailbox

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

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.




Wind, fire & spirit

Acts 2 describes the amazing events of Pentecost, when the apostles received the Holy Spirit.

Directions: The last letter(s) of each word is the beginning letter of the next. Fill in the missing words to complete Acts 2:1-4, NIV.


1. HEAV []
 2. [] ABLE
 3. [] AY OF PENTECOS []
 4. [] ONGUE
 5. [] PIRI []
 6. [] OGETHE []
 7. [] ES
 8. [] ONGUE
 9. [] A
 10. [] IND



"When the _____ came, they were all _____ in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent _____ came from _____ and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They _____ what seemed to be _____ of fire that separated and came to _____ on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy _____ and began to speak in other _____ as the Spirit _____ them."

ACTS 2:1-4, NIV

Answer: 1. heaven, 2. enabled, 3. day of Pentecost, 4. tongues, 5. Spirit, 6. together, 7. rest, 8. tongues, 9. saw, 10. wind



"A Time to Plant..."

The spring of the year is time to plant gardens or tend to other plants. The list below contains the names of plants that grew in Bible times. How many do you recognize? Circle the names from the list. They may be found → ← ↓ ↑ ↘ ↙. There will be 13 letters uncircled. Write them in the spaces below.


myrrh	aloes	cassia	mint	dill
lentil	apple trees	crocus	barley	cucumbers
balsam trees	melons	leeks	onions	garlic
oak trees	wheat	figs	mustard	grain
pomegranates	olive trees	beans	millet	cane
almonds	cinnamon	pistachio nuts	rose of Sharon	
lily of the valley				

P L E N T I L M C C J E B S U
 I O G R A I N I I U B E A N S
 S A M I N T E L N C D A L S U
 T P Y E S B N L N U R L S S C
 A P R M G A A E A M A M A E O
 C L R E A R C T M B T O M E R
 H E H L R L A L O E S N T R C
 I T S O L E S N N R U D R T O
 O R N N I Y S N A S M S E E F
 N E O S C D I L L T O F E V I
 U E I W H E A T L E E K S I G
 T S N G O A K T R E E S O L S
 S R O S E O F S H A R O N O D
 L I L Y O F T H E V A L L E Y

Who is the "Master Gardener"?

_____, _____.

[Jesus, Son of God]



SPIN it SPINNER

For Pentecost, make a thaumatrope, a spinning toy that creates an optical illusion of motion.

What you need:

- White paper
- Cup
- Scissors
- Pencil and markers
- Plastic drinking straw
- Glue

What you do:

1. Using the cup's circular shape, trace two identical circles on the paper. Carefully cut them out.
2. In pencil, draw a person's head on one circle. Then place the blank circle on top and use the image beneath to guide you in drawing a flame above the head.
3. Color the two images with markers.
4. Apply glue to the backs of the circles and sandwich the top of the straw between them so it looks like a lollipop. Let dry.
5. Roll the straw quickly between your hands to view a mini motion picture.



**Pancake
Breakfast
Huge Success**



Honor Parents with a Church World Service blanket or Tool kits



Mother's Day, May 8, is Blanket Sunday at United Community Church. A \$10 gift buys a wool blanket so Church World Service can provide motherly comfort to a disaster victim and keep her/him/they warm and dry. A blanket can be given in honor or memory of your mom, or a daughter, or someone who is like a mother. Children are welcome to make a smaller gift in honor of Mom. Father's Day, June 19, gives us an opportunity to honor your father, son, brother, father figure with a donation towards tool kits given out by Church World



Service to people around the world who need them to help with food and/or water production. \$6 will provide 200 pieces of chalk, \$16 gives writing supplies for 12 students, \$30 will provide 20 concrete blocks, \$45 supplies maps & posters for a classroom and \$100 provides a bench for a classroom.

Checks can be made out to United Community Church and put blanket or tool kits in the memo line. Upon request, the church will send a Mother's Day or Father's Day card (snail mail or email) telling Mom or Dad of your gift in her/his/their name. Please fill out a separate form for each gift.

Mother's Day Blanket

Father's Day Tool Kit

given in Memory / Honor

given in Memory / Honor

of _____

of _____

by _____

by _____

Optional: address if you want a card sent:

Optional: address if you want a card sent:



MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 5/1 Caleb Decker
- 5/2 Crystal Connelly
- 5/8 Sunny Wood
- 5/10 Lizabeth Edwards
- Jim Eldridge
- Luke Raser
- 5/11 Jeannette Keenan
- 5/12 Ed Magnus
- 5/15 Caitlin Kellogg
- 5/19 Gail Warnaar
- 5/20 Phil Brown
- 5/22 Sally Crocker
- Letu Leadbeater
- 5/24 Katelyn Lambert
- Bernard Mulliken
- Elijah Scherer
- 5/26 Bob Swartz
- 5/31 Bob Potter



MAY ANNIVERSARIES

- Richard & Jean Pulsifer 5/11
- Bob & Anne Amos 5/16
- Kristan & Beth Norris 5/21
- Diane Nelson & Steve Russell 5/23

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)



Performing in St. Johnsbury School's production of **Newsies**:
May 5, 6, 7

Jonah Raser & Luke Raser

In our Thoughts and Prayers

- Bergeron family
- Julie Brisson
- Brodien family
- Bob Chapman
- Mary Feron
- Dennis Goodhue
- Joan Knutsen
- Ed Magnus
- McCulloch family
- Kim O'Connor
- Pam Smart



Daniel Fred Brodien

September 17, 1929 - April 1, 2023

Wayne Albert Bergeron

May 23, 1959 - April 10, 2023

Brother of Building Manager, Paul Bergeron

Joyce Magoon McCulloch

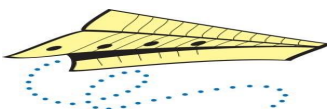
March 20, 1935 - April 11, 2023



Jonah Raser placed 7th in the Vermont State Math Counts competition!



**After Church
Choir Rehearsals
May 7 & 21**



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

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

May Lectionary



May 7

Acts 7:55-60
Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
1 Peter 2:2-10
John 14:1-14



May 14

Acts 17:22-31
Psalm 66:8-20
1 Peter 3:13-22
John 14:15-21



May 21

Acts 1:6-14
Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35
1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11
John 20:19-31



May 28

Acts 2:1-21
Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13
John 20:19-23

