

# STEWARDSHIP 2024

## Minister's Message

*Together we will...*

One of the most common laments today is about the division in American society – between generations, parties, classes, and neighbors. Here at First Church, we have members from both sides of the political aisle. We have kids in their first few months of life, almost 40 active children, and members who have been here 8 decades. We have folks who own multiple homes, and those who are homeless. And while we might not agree on everything, we *do* agree on one thing: the importance of being *together*.

It is, in fact, a sacred responsibility. In the Hebrew Bible, we are charged to set aside the sabbath as a day of “sacred assembly.” Even in the first century, when gathering wasn’t safe, Paul wrote that we were not to “neglect gathering,” but rather to

“encourage one another, and continually consider how to spur one another to love and good deeds.”

Gathering is the way we express, practice, and grow our faith. And gather we have. In 2023, we have averaged almost 100 for worship in the building, and over 155 (!) online. We have gathered for benefit dinners, breakfasts, cooking competitions, and simple meals. We have gathered for concerts, art receptions, dragon-boating, discernment, and retreat. We have gathered for worship in just about every room in the church, as well as by the lake, on the lawn, downtown in service, and with College Street down the road. *[Continued on other side.]*



**Rev. Elissa Johnk.**

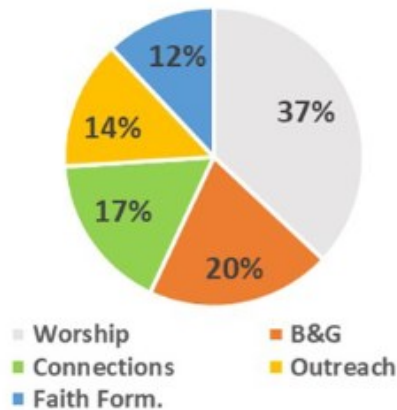
# BUDGET

In both 2022 and 2023, our church received over 100 pledges totaling more than \$400,000. That makes pledging one of the church's largest sources of income. These gifts fund the ministries, events, and projects discussed elsewhere in these stewardship materials. Together everyone who pledged helped make all that First Church accomplished in 2023 possible, and together we will continue our mission as a church.



As for the FY24 budget, it is still under development but more information will be shared soon. All teams have been asked to have earnest conversations about their expenses, contemplate whether more or less should be spent on certain items, and if there are new initiatives, events, or programs they want to pursue. Thank you for your patience as the budget is prayerfully considered.

## FY24 Projected Expenses



FY24 expenses are expected to resemble the percentages shown to the left. These are only approximate figures, though, and there will be sizeable increases in the dollar amounts this year as FCCB returns to full staffing.

## VERMONT CONFERENCE, UCC

FCC is assessed a per capita payment of \$15 per church member to the VT Conference of the UCC to help fund the services it provides to more than 100 Vermont UCC churches, including our own. The VT Conference's mission is to equip Vermont UCC churches for Christ's mission and ministry today and tomorrow. You can learn more about the VT Conference at their website: <http://vtucc.org/>.

# MINISTER'S MESSAGE

[Continued from other side.] I firmly believe this is why First Church is thriving. In a time of mainline decline, we are in a time of renewal – a truth that will only be enhanced by the implementation of our visioning goals. I run quite a risk saying this, as there are two possible reactions to hearing that things are going well: giving will drop, or giving will increase. I am banking on (excuse the pun) an increase, and I feel confident in doing so, *not* because it is clear that First Church is a “wise investment” (though it is). Rather, I feel confident in your response to this letter because it is clear to me that what you are all “invested” in is not yourselves, or your portfolios, but the love of God we know when we gather in this place.

Without a doubt, the single greatest spiritual challenge we all face is money – how to get it, what to do with it once we get it, and how much of our self-worth we link to these two processes. Jesus talked about money more than any other subject. Whether we like it or not, money is the medium through

which we communicate what we value – not just to the world, but to *ourselves*. We pledge our money so that we might pledge our hearts. How much is enough? That is not for me – or anyone – to say; it is a decision that can only be made in prayer. What I *can* say is this: pledging at First Church ranges from \$5 a year to the traditional 10% of salary, and each pledge is valued, appreciated, and put to good use. Our goal this year is to emphasize doing this *together* – to get as close to 100% pledging as we can – whether you pledge \$1 or \$10,000.

If you are in a position to support our growing vitality and vision, and to help us spread the good news, I hope you will consider doing so. If you are not, then I hope you know that the rest of us are here to support you. Because that is, after all, what Stewardship, the Kingdom, Christianity, and First Church are all about – we’re in this together. Thanks be to God. ~The Rev. Elissa Johnk.

*Elissa Johnk*

# PLANNED GIVING

**What is it?** All we have is a gift from God. This church has been here for us and our community and we have an opportunity through our bounty to help support it going forward. **Planned Giving** is a program that can be adopted and set in motion to help keep us on this path.

**Ways to Give.** Gifts can be funded with cash, appreciated securities, real estate, tangible personal property, or even closely held stock. They can be made as either **grants** (gifts) or **bequests** (made as part of a will or trust).

**Note:** A planned giving plan starts with sitting down with your tax professional and legal and financial advisors. The above is for informational purposes only and should not be considered personal investment or tax information.

Annual Tithe Suggestions (1/1/24 - 12/31/24)										
Avg Salary	1%	3%	5%	10%	Avg Salary	1%	3%	5%	10%	
\$10,000	\$100	\$300	\$500	\$1,000	\$60,000	\$600	\$1,800	\$3,000	\$6,000	
\$15,000	\$150	\$450	\$750	\$1,500	\$75,000	\$750	\$2,250	\$3,750	\$7,500	
\$20,000	\$200	\$600	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$90,000	\$900	\$2,700	\$4,500	\$9,000	
\$30,000	\$300	\$900	\$1,500	\$3,000	\$105,000	\$1,050	\$3,150	\$5,250	\$10,500	
\$45,000	\$450	\$1,350	\$2,250	\$4,500	\$120,000	\$1,200	\$3,600	\$6,000	\$12,000	



Spring 2023—FCC Building, Front Portico.

# CONNECTIONS

We seek to connect visitors, congregants, and the greater Burlington community with the people and work of First Church. But how do we put this mission into practice?



FCC at the 2023 Burlington Pride Parade.

We have a small but mighty team which is very busy behind the scenes so that, together, we will continue to grow the church. We developed a new visitor process providing Radical Hospitality to our new visitors through a warm and friendly welcome. New visitors, or church shoppers, regularly come to FCCB and they will decide within 7 minutes if they intend to return...7 minutes! You will see our Welcomers on Sunday morning holding up signs at the Midway and Narthex, greeting everyone, especially our new visitors. We encourage all members to give a warm greeting to new people each and every time you meet them. And everyone please wear your Name Tags, they make a difference! *[Continued on other side.]*



2023 Trunk or Treat.

# OUTREACH

The Bible asks us to support our wider community. Leviticus 27:30 says, "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil, or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord."

In recent years, our church's level of in-kind support, particularly use of space, has changed, especially as we no longer own the Ronald McDonald House. Consequently, as your Outreach team, we'd like to expand our monetary support for other ministries.

In this way, together we will reach out to our congregation, community, and world to ease the burden carried by others, through organizations like JUMP and Our Church's Wider Mission.

*[Continued on other side.]*



2023 Service Sunday—JUMP Hygiene Kits.

# CONNECTIONS

[Continued from other side.]

Connections also hosts and supports other large church activities such as a Valentine's Day Auction & Bazaar, a Summer Yard Sale, the Chicken & Biscuit Dinner, and Christmas Fair. We also know small groups are important to connect and collaborate on Fellowship Breakfasts, Fall Homecoming, Women of the Church activities, Art Exhibits, Sunday Breakfasts, Senior Lunches, Trunk or Treat, Summer Pop Ups, and many other fun activities. Check out the Church Calendar for upcoming events!

We also thank our many volunteers who help support FCCB activities and encourage everyone to come to our events and sign up as a volunteer or join our leadership team of Linda Elrick, Carol Schoonmaker, Patty Thomas, Lucy, and me. Who knows, you may connect with old and new friends!

~Bob Wolf, Connections Team.



2023 Valentines Auction & Dinner.

# OUTREACH

[Continued from other side.]

Together we will continue supporting our current community projects through acts of faith. These include our monthly racial justice vigils, as well as our support for the Possibility Shop, Dismas House, Elmwood Shelter, Outright Vermont, the Howard Center, Small Potatoes, Legal Clinic, HOPE Fund, Vermont Interfaith Action, and the Racial Justice Alliance.

Together we will seek and support new community opportunities like those that came to us this year, such as a Red Cross Blood Drive, a Street Dog Vet Clinic, and the Vermont Freedom Fund, which supports women newly out of jail.

~In faith, Louise Brewster, Outreach Team.



2023 Service Sunday - Trash pick-up.



2023 Dragonboat Team.



# WORSHIP



The Worship Team provides support to Rev. Elissa, Amy Shortt (our Music Director), and guest ministers and speakers leading congregational worship. We strive to explore and introduce new, creative, and engaging worship experiences throughout the church calendar year. We plan and organize several lay led services, and special worship such as Epiphany Star and Jazz Sundays. We also decorate the Sanctuary for special seasons and holy days like Easter, Advent, and Christmas.

Together we will be invited to:

- Let go and let God
- Honor, celebrate, and serve each other
- Love and seek peace
- Absorb the infectious energy and joy of our children and youth
- Listen, learn, and act
- Welcome Ava in our search for the Spirit
- Know we are beloved
- Actively participate, remotely or in person.

We will joyfully sing, pray, & break bread together. ~Cyndy Hall & Ann Vivian, Worship Team



2023 Easter - Singing in the Sanctuary.

# FAITH FORMATION

The Faith Formation Team supports our members—young and old alike—as we grow together in faith. With your support, Faith Formation has big plans for 2024. Together, we will:

- Learn how to utilize the Bible as a source of God’s word for us today, and for practical and inspirational guidance;
- Foster a sense of mission and concern for others;
- Laugh and create community in Kidz Lab!;
- Delight in seeing children and youth grow in faith;
- Openly share our faith questions; and
- Create a loving community that nurtures our faith.

Congratulations to our 2023 confirmands! You have the support of the congregation as we continue our spiritual journeys together.



2023 Peace Camp - Children & Adults.

# WORSHIP THROUGH MUSIC



On Sunday, December 11, 2022, First Church Burlington hosted a performance of Camille Saint-Saëns' beautiful Christmas Oratorio. This musical performance was organized and conducted by our Director of Music, Amy Shortt, and featured the First Church Sanctuary Choir and many gifted musicians (soloists and instrumentalists playing the harp, organ, violin, viola, and cello) from the music faculty of East Carolina University, the University of Vermont, and from the wider community of Vermont professional musicians.

# FAITH FORMATION



Easter 2023—Children's Storytime.



June 2023—Middle and High School Youth Trip to Maine to serve with HOME, Inc.

# BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

The Buildings and Grounds Team monitors the health of our building and organizes maintenance and repairs as needed to ensure that we can continue to welcome everyone into our home. Sometimes those tasks are small, like patching holes and repairing leaks, and sometimes those tasks are large, like repainting the exterior trim and removing dying trees. Regardless of the work, our small team gathers monthly to manage all of these projects and the resources (people and money) to make them happen. Between our annual spending on things like utilities, insurance, preventive maintenance and the special projects we manage, B&G's budget is second only to Salary and Benefits for our staff. We also support management of rentals, which brings in some money to offset our costs. We do this work because, while the building is not our "church", it does contain our Spirit.

*[Continued on other side.]*



**FCC Building—Front View.**

# BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

*[Continued from other side.]*

Looking forward to 2024, the team is already planning some major projects including painting the rest of the exterior trim, supporting the many projects likely to come through our Strategic Implementation Process, and some much needed maintenance on our aging fire suppression system. Together we will continue to serve our church through loving care of our buildings and grounds so that they can continue to serve our future generations.

~Dave Grace,  
Buildings  
& Grounds Team.



Saturday, January 21st, 2023—Members of the congregation joined together at First Congregational Church to honor the legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. through service projects. With projects available for every age and every ability, we cleaned, prepped, and painted to make our space shine for community ministry.