



## "SpiritSpark"

The First Baptist Church  
of Manchester Center, VT  
P.O. Box 1049, 4895 Main St. 802-362-1555  
[www.fbcmanvt.org](http://www.fbcmanvt.org)  
Pastor: Rev. Rebecca Sommons

This month, thinking of the many changes and adaptations we, and our church, have gone through, it seems right to revisit a small piece of our past. Perhaps it will serve as a reminder that changes, albeit some greater than others, have always been inevitable and we're still here.

See page 3 for more information about this photo and for Walter Hard's poem "Elm at the Crossroads".

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AUGUST 2020

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### A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR REBECCA

Dear Church Family,

I miss you all. Please know that you are in my prayers and that I am happy to hear how you are doing. I guess I can identify with the Apostle Paul, who was often separated from his brothers and sisters in Christ by circumstances out of his control. He wrote to the Philippians saying, "*God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 1:8). I am looking forward to seeing you either in worship or perhaps in an outdoor visit, if that is better for you. This longing led me to think about how Jesus might be longing for the time when we are together with him, enjoying one another's company for eternity. Perhaps his return will be soon!

I also want to assure you that even though I am moving to Danby, I am happy to come and meet with you. I love being your pastor, and our commitment to do life together is very important to me. My family and I appreciate your flexibility in allowing us to move into a home of our own, closer to Matt's work. We hope to be able to share meals and fellowship with you there once we are settled. We are grateful for our time in the parsonage as well, and have confidence that you will make a good decision regarding its future.

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Rebecca

## **MEETING NOTICE**

**First Baptist Church of Manchester Ctr., VT**  
**August 9, 2020**  
**following 9:30 A.M. worship**

The members of the First Baptist Church of Manchester Center, Vermont are hereby notified to meet at their house of worship or join by Zoom or phone on August 9, 2020 for the following purposes:

- 1.) to hear information gathered by the Prudential about facts of selling or retaining the Parsonage property such as proposed income from sale of Parsonage and creation of a trust account; projected sales figures from local realtors; information about how the Prudential Committee plans to proceed with either sale or retention of Parsonage property.
- 2.) The church membership will vote on final decision of selling or retaining the church Parsonage and authorize the Prudential Committee to act on behalf of the church membership.
- 3.) to hear any other business proper to come before the church assembly.

Church Clerk  
Martha Thompson

## **RE-ENTRY COMMITTEE**

The Re-Entry committee has decided to continue our Sunday morning services using the hybrid model. This gives attendees the choice of being in the sanctuary or participating at home via zoom. For those who find themselves more comfortable staying home, we encourage you to participate with us from there.

Our church meeting to make decisions regarding the future of the parsonage is on Sunday, August 9<sup>th</sup> following our worship service. A paper ballot will be provided for members of the church attending the meeting in the sanctuary and an email ballot will be provided to church members who join us from home. You can expect to receive instructions about returning your email ballot to the moderator.

## **MISSIONS**

The Mission committee members would like to thank the congregation for all their giving to the One Great Hour of Sharing. It is helpful around the world as this COVID 19 seems to have touched everybody.

Next Mission Meeting August 19, 2020 at 3PM.



Thank you. God Bless You All  
Submitted by Linell Pike, Secretary

**In 1918, a branch of the elm tree in front of the church came down. You can see the corner of the church at the right of the photo on the front page. The road was paved in 1928-29 and the elm was allowed to stay. However, it died and was removed in 1931.**

**Walter Hard writes in his poem, “think of all the people who have passed that tree”. We might add, “think of all the people who have passed that church”!**

"Elm at the Crossroads" by Walter Hard

Of course a tree is just so much timber  
Or so many cords of firewood.  
The timber may make a home  
Or the firewood may keep it warm.  
But a tree like the elm at the crossroads  
Has seen too much of life  
To be just timber or firewood.

There it is with its thick trunk on the ground.  
They're chopping out the branches  
And digging around the broad stump.  
Count the rings.  
A hundred and eight.  
It could tell you a lot of history.

It was young when Factory Point was beginning.  
There was the Tannery along the river  
With piles of bark in the yard.  
There was the woolen mill with its whirling looms,  
And a dozen other mills along the stream.  
It really was Factory Point.

Think of all the people who have passed that tree!  
Think of all the people  
Think of the slow plodding oxen with loads of goods;  
Heavy creaking wagons with blocks of marble  
From the quarries on Dorset Mountain;  
Gay prancing horses drawing shining buggies;  
Processions in somber black;  
Gay parades with bands and flying banners;  
Ladies walking with parasols held over quaint bonnets;  
Men with high hats and tailed coats.  
Statesmen, scholars, warriors, artists—  
All have passed under its spreading branches.

There it lies.  
Just so many cords of firewood.  
Of course it had to go.  
It's a martyr to what we hope is progress.  
Our rushing life cannot be stopped by a tree.  
A hundred and eight years  
To grow some firewood.

Thank you to Shawn Harrington and the Manchester Historical Society for the photo and poem.

## **PRUDENTIAL**

Many repairs to the parsonage are underway: pointing of bricks, chimney repairs, power washing of back patio, driveway window wells, painting the barn, replacing a piece of trim, replacing 25 pieces of slate, installing a new kitchen roof including new insulation. Pastor Rebecca and Matthew Sommons have generously covered costs. Pastor Rebecca also painted radiators and a mirror.

Plans are underway for painting the Joy Hall stair hallway and the choir stairway door entrance.

A new electrician is needed to complete renovation plans.

Lorraine Wilkins posted a new cleaning checklist in the kitchen which includes cleaning the kitchen, vestry and bathroom.

Instructional info for reopening the church is in place.

The church steeple is being repaired this month by Total Restoration.

Plans are underway to clean the vestry floor.

Jeremy is working on a fix-it hit list.

~Submitted by Dottie Sundquist, Secretary

## **DIACONATE**

Our sermon series in Psalms will continue through the month of August. We are glad to hear Psalms preached from a variety of perspectives and look forward to hearing the messages from Annie Crumb on August 16<sup>th</sup> and Cara Davenport on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. While Pastor Rebecca is away for the week of August 10-16, deacons will be available to help with any pastoral care needs. There is a healthy balance in our fellowship fund, so don't be afraid to let us know if you have a financial need. It is a joy to be able to help each other and a healthy expression of living in community, like the church in Acts 2. If you are new to First Baptist and have not yet received a directory with people's phone numbers, please let Pastor Rebecca know, and she would be happy to get one to you.

Deacons ~ Jim West, Carol Lattuga, John Hess, Linell Pike, Martha Thompson, Anna Ennis, Cara Davenport, and Kelsey Towslee.

## **MARY & MARTHA FELLOWSHIP**

HEADS -UP!

Because the Mary & Martha Fellowship has not been able to hold the many fund raising activities that would normally occur throughout the year, it is becoming more difficult for us to meet our financial obligations, especially to the Community Food Cupboard and to our own First Baptist Church.

After some thought, we have decided to do a "Silent Bake Sale". As much as we would like to actually BAKE, this "sale" just requires each of us to determine how much our food items would cost if we were to make them, or if we were to purchase an item from the sale, and then contribute that amount of money to the M&M treasury.

Watch for an email which will be sent towards the middle/end of August once we have more details.  
Thank you!

*The following was sent to Pastor Rebecca by Dale Edwards, Executive Minister of the ABC/VNH Board.*

To the American Baptist Churches of Vermont and New Hampshire:

At the virtual July 18 ABCVNH Board of Trustees meeting, the Board received a draft statement concerning our nation's ongoing struggle with racism. As the Executive Minister, I was instructed by the Board to receive further input from its members and in a timely manner release a revised statement. The statement was revised 3 times during the week and it attempts to respect and incorporate the consensus of the Board. This statement is released, with the Board's approval, to our Pastors and Churches for their presentation, sharing, and/or utilizing within their congregations. It is not a perfect statement, but represents the sincere work of the Board.

Please prayerfully receive the following attachment from ABCVNH's Leadership Board.

In Jesus name,

Dale

### Statement on Racism

As our nation continues the work of confronting the violent and painful realities of racism, discrimination, and inequality, and witnessing such acts toward our community, it is necessary to offer an unambiguous statement concerning racism.

The American Baptist Churches of Vermont and New Hampshire renounce all notion of racial superiority of any sort and all acts of violence. As we affirm with Scripture that all people are created in the image of the eternal God, we acknowledge that all forms of racism and the inevitable injustices which are its outcome are evil, since they damage and dehumanize both the perpetrator and the victim(s).

We confess that despite our being a diverse denomination, having no white majority, we have too often failed to see the victimization of Christ' black and brown communities. We recognize the responsibility of those who enjoy privilege to end the suffering of those who are harassed, disenfranchised, and brutalized because of the color of their skin. We understand that unless ears are open to the cries of those who suffer, the heart remains deaf and the call for justice and peace mute. The need for honest conversations, deeper understanding, empathy and repentance is great. We also acknowledge the need for thoughtful and coordinated acts that will cause justice and mercy to flow down. Christians of all races must speak as one, in faithfulness to our Christ, for the ending and reforming of public policies and practices which harm communities of color and violate the consciences of those who must implement such policies and practices. We believe it is a Christian imperative to lift the curse of racism and inequality and reckon with our own histories of racism.

For the glory of God and for the love of Christ, to all black and brown communities, we recommit ourselves to Jesus Christ, himself a Jew from Galilee, who is our peace and hope, who makes us one, who destroys the barriers and dividing walls of hatred, who creates in Himself a new humanity, who reconciles all people and races to Himself through the cross, and who gives us all one and the same Spirit (Ephesians 2: 14-18). We recommit ourselves to His commands, knowing that to love God is to

obey His commandments. (John 14:15). And we approach the work of racial reconciliation and justice with a renewed commitment to the Gospel, a Gospel that changed the Apostle's Peter heart as evidenced by his words, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right." (Acts 10:34-35.)

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The Board of Trustees of the American Baptist Churches of Vermont and New Hampshire  
July 27, 2020



The following came from Leadership Transformations. If you are interested in checking out what they have to offer, go to our church website: [www.fbcmant.org](http://www.fbcmant.org)

## **Register Today for an Online Soul Care Event**

Our hope is that our events might offer you encouragement, engagement and community during this strange and stressful season. We are here for you! Join us as you are able for an online retreat or workshop. New events are being added all the time!



Russ forwarded this to me to include. This is not a new scam, but apparently it has made a big comeback. Last week, someone from Bennington posted that he had received such a phone call.

## **Scam Alert from the VT Attorney General's Office - Grandchild Imposter "Grandparent" Scam**

### **VT - Attorney General's Office**

The Consumer Assistance Program has received numerous scam reports that Vermonters are being contacted by scammers purporting to be grandchildren in an emergency situation, such as in prison, at the hospital, or in legal trouble, and need money to resolve the problem.

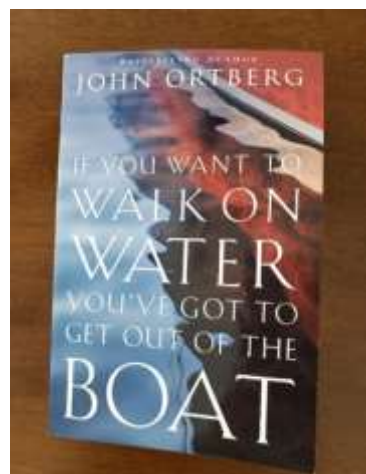
In some interactions the scammers were reported to have completed research, citing a local county court and familial history that can be found online through scanning social media profiles and online people-search databases.

Whenever contacted by someone, who asks for money, a gift card to be purchased, funds to be wired, or for any other financial transaction initiated, take steps to verify the identity of your loved one in distress.

1. Slow down. The scammers urge you to act urgently; don't.
2. Take the phone number of the caller and hang up.
3. Call your grandchild or any other person who can verify their whereabouts and well-being.
4. Call another person in your life who cares about you.
5. Call CAP at 1-800-649-2424. We care and can help identify scams.

Even if you have not been contacted by this scam, now is a great time to connect with loved ones to create a scam action plan in preparation for when a scam call like this might come in. Consider creating an uncommon family code word or pin number that you agree to not publicize or share with others.

The Tuesday Evening Prayer Group has chosen *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat* by John Ortberg to guide our next series of discussions. We will begin this book on Tuesday, August 18<sup>th</sup>. If you are interested in joining us and ordering a book, let Pastor Rebecca know. The cost of the book is \$11. We continue to meet each Tuesday at 7 pm via zoom for prayer.



### **CHURCH DATES**

Church Business Meeting Sunday, August 9<sup>th</sup> following the worship service

Prudential Meeting Tuesday, August 11<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm via zoom

Deacon Meeting Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup> at 1 pm via zoom

Mission Meeting Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm via zoom

CE Meeting Tuesday, August 25<sup>th</sup> at 8 pm

PRC meeting Thursday, August 27<sup>th</sup> at 1 pm via zoom

### **Dates for Prayer & Study Group all via zoom**

Prayer Group Tuesday, August 4<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm

Prayer Group Tuesday, August 11<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm

Prayer Group & Book Discussion Tuesday, August 18<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm

Prayer Group Tuesday, August 25<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm

**Pastor Rebecca will be in Maine the week of August 10<sup>th</sup>.**

**Sunday Message on August 16<sup>th</sup> will be given by Annie Crumb**

**Sunday Message on August 23<sup>rd</sup> will be given by Cara Davenport**

### **IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION**

Church Office Hours 9:30-12:30 AM on Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Pastor Rebecca's e-mail address: [rebeccasommons@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccasommons@gmail.com)

Pastor Rebecca's cell phone: (802) 688-3024

Church office Phone: (802) 362-1555

Please call to request a meeting or visit outside of regular church office hours.

### **FLOWERS**

Aug. 2: Lisa Hess

Aug. 9: Russ & Glenna Taxter

Aug. 16: Jackie Perry

Aug. 23: Carol Lattuga

Aug. 30: Flower Arrangement



