



A Maurie Hill photo



"SpiritSpark"

**The First Baptist Church
of Manchester Center, VT**

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Pastor: Rev. Rebecca Sommons

FEBRUARY 2020

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR REBECCA

Dear Church Family,

First of all, let me thank you for your patient involvement in our annual meeting last Sunday. Three hours is a long time to sit on those pews, and that doesn't count the morning service! The spirit of unity and wisdom that were demonstrated that afternoon are encouraging to my heart and an answer to prayer.

Another thing that has been encouraging to me recently was a conversation I had with Joy Lowenthal. Joy lives in New York state, and has served as my mentor and spiritual director for the past couple of years. Since I have joined the Emmaus Community for retreats and continuing education, I have made the change to having spiritual direction via skype with Dianne Suazzo, someone I met through my connection there. Joy was most gracious in understanding this transition in my life. It warmed my heart to hear that she continues to pray for me. In fact, to close our phone conversation, she read a prayer she had written based on the Lord's Prayer that we say every Sunday.

She told me that she rewrites it as a spiritual exercise from time to time, to make sure she is engaging it on a soul level. As part of my quiet time, I decided to give it a try. Here is what I wrote ~

*Holy One, high above me, you invite me to call you Abba,
To enter your throne room and feel your loving gaze upon me.
I long for your shalom to fill our world like it does in heaven.
May it fill my heart while I wait for your time to come.
I pray that you will provide what is needed for life to flourish
And for the work you've invited me to do as I come alongside your beloved ones.
Lord, please forgive me for my thoughts, words, and actions
That do not align with your heart.
Help me to forgive others as you forgive me.
Father, keep me close to you when temptation arises,
So I choose you and your ways over poor substitutes for the fulfillment you can give me.
Be near me when the darkness of this world threatens to steal my joy,
And let your light flood me with healing and confidence.
You are the one full of glory.
May my life be a reflection of your greatness,
Now and forevermore.
Amen*

Maybe you might like to try writing your own soul language for the prayer that brings such a steady touch-point for our faith. I'd love to see your prayer if you would like to share it with me. Joy has given permission to share hers as well, so just ask me if you would like to see it.

May God bless and keep you,
Pastor Rebecca

PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE

Highlights from the Prudential meeting of Jan 14, 2020.

Discuss changing our post office box to Walgreens to save the \$200 fee.

Discuss ongoing kitchen renovation

Questions were raised about the timing of the foam insulation part of the project, and the benefits of it.

We reviewed the options for repairing our clogged sewer line, which was brought before the congregation at our annual meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan Richeimer, chairman



Moderator, Jim Comar holding the microphone for Martha Thompson, clerk, as she calls the role for the First Baptist Church annual meeting.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Save the Date: The Christian Education Committee is hosting our second annual Cabin Fever Potluck and Game Night on Saturday March 21st. Bring a dish to share from 5-6 pm, and a game to enjoy from 6-8 pm. This event is for all ages, so please consider joining us! We had a great time last year, and we are hoping to see you there.

In February, we are planning a dinner and movie event for the youth group. Stay tuned for more details to come soon.

Please consider joining us in a Sunday school class for learning and discussion about God's Word. We have a class for children through grade 5, a class for youth in grades 6-12, and an adult class. All classes meet at 9:30 Sunday morning; the younger class and the adults meet at the church; the youth class meets at the parsonage.

John Hess is exploring local interest in a Youth Alpha class. If this is something you or your middle or high school student would be interested in, please speak to John.

Respectfully Submitted,
Annie Crumb

MISSIONS COMMITTEE

The Missions Committee met in early January. Martha and Lisa shared that they were sad to get off Missions, but Dot Beers and Linda Bushee will be joined by Judy Koch and Linell Pike. During January, we collected \$367.00 for Retired Ministers and Missionaries offering. We also asked the congregation to remember the Lebanon Baptist Church who are beginning to rebuild after their disastrous fire and have, so far, collected \$295.00.

One project in the works is a Mission Sunday Service to be held on Feb. 23, 2020 with presentation by Matt and Rebecca about their work in Rwanda, followed by a potluck dinner. You will find much more information about this on the next page.

~submitted by Martha Thompson

MARY MARTHA FELLOWSHIP

For a change of pace our Fellowship met at the Manchester Firehouse for breakfast and our meeting. It was a successful idea enjoyed by all. At this time, Lisa Towslee, our president, presented the tentative program for the year for comments, corrections and additional ideas. The flower list is in the program and copies are available on the platform and eventually in the vestry. At this time, it was announced that Lois Squires, our long-standing treasurer, is stepping down and we are pleased to announce that Judy Koch will be taking her place. Cathy Comar will remain as White Cross chair as well as Barb West - devotions, Martha Thompson - secretary, Linda Hulett-sunshine, and Lois Squires and Lindy Mylott-kitchen. Dottie Sundquist will be a vice -president.

Future plans for the Fellowship include the possibility of a pork roast dinner, the basket party on March 28th and most exciting of all the completion of the kitchen renovation and moving back into the kitchen.

Our next meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2020.

~submitted by Martha Thompson

DIACONATE

Please continue to give to the fellowship fund. As you can see in the annual report, the needs are always great.

We added three new members to our church family this month!

The young adult group is still planning on getting together soon. If anyone knows of anything that you believe would be good to do, we welcome your ideas.

The coffee hours after our services are being put on hold for now as we wait for the kitchen/vestry to be a more useable space. However, we still have fellowship time within the sanctuary.

~Submitted by Kelsey Towslee

MISSIONS SUNDAY

On February 23rd, Matthew and Rebecca Sommons will share pictures and stories about their trip to Rwanda last September.

You will get to see how the work on Thousand Hills International University is coming along and learn more about what T L Africa is doing now.

You will also have the opportunity to get to know Rev. Aloys and the story of his church in Kinihira, Rwanda.

He has asked us to be sister churches with his congregation, and we have already been sharing prayers and praises with them since this past fall.

One of the prayer requests is for fifteen of their congregation's upper level students to have enough financial provision to be able to attend school

It costs each student \$50 per trimester, and some of them are from poor families or are orphans.

Rev. Aloys has not asked for any financial support, but we would like to combine our prayers with our willingness to help as we can.

To that end, we have already had two people send a combined donation of \$600 to help with the first trimester's expenses.

The money is sent to T L Africa and designated for the new Youth Empowerment endeavor in Kinihira.

There has been some discussion about creating a sustainability project there, so future school fees could be generated from within their community and whole families could be blessed.

On February 23rd, we will have an opportunity to give to this cause.

We will also celebrate the kitchen being usable again by having a meal together following the service.

We would like to feature some of the common fare of Rwanda.

If you would be willing to help make something new, Pastor Rebecca has recipes available for you.

Hope to see everyone there!



BASKET PARTY

The Mary & Martha Fellowship will be holding their annual basket party on Saturday, March 28th at the VFW Hall. We need donations of baskets, food and help. If you'd like to help out in any way, please contact Lorraine at 645-9525. You will also find a sign-up sheet in the vestry. Anyone in the church can help!

INTERFAITH COUNCIL OF THE NORTHSHIRE

The Interfaith Council meets once a month on the first Thursday of the month at the member churches. Interfaith has 5013c status and are the umbrella organization for several projects in the Northshire including Auto Angels, The Kids Summer Lunch Program, Neighbor to Neighbor, The Emergency Needs Fund which underwrites the Interfaith Holiday Project and also pays for a storage unit where furniture is collected for those needing help in establishing a home. During the year they sponsor The Martin Luther King Service and The Thanksgiving Eve Service. An Annual Meeting is held in the fall along with an auction that raises funds for the Emergency Needs Fund.

A Sunday was set aside in October to honor all First Responders. Each church planned ways to honor First Responders particularly those who are associated with that church. First Baptist invited members of the congregation to share personal experiences relating to First Responders and had a special coffee hour in their honor.

Carol Lattuga, Martha Thompson and of course Rebecca Sommons attend the monthly meetings.

The next meeting is on February 6, 2020 at Christ Our Savior on Bonnet St.

MEN'S GROUP

The MEN'S GROUP (F.O.C.U.S.) will meet on Saturday, February 1st at 8:00 am! Come for coffee and donuts, good fellowship and planning the year ahead!

KITCHEN NEWS



The church kitchen should be ready to paint on Wednesday, February 5th! The upper cabinets are expected to be installed on the 6th and 7th. If you are available on the afternoon of the 5th, and you haven't yet spoken to Jeremy Crumb, please let him know. Note: For those of you who are seeing this in color, the paint pictured in the can will NOT be the color of the kitchen! Most of you will be happy about that, but I'm sure someone will be disappointed!

The following piece came in the ABC of Vt/NH January Newsletter.

Rev. Dale Edwards: Thoughts on Discipleship

*"In whose hand is my life and whose are all my ways,
"Keep me from fluttering about religion;"
"fix me firm in it, for I am irresolute:"
"my decisions are but smoke and vapour,"
Puritan Prayer, The Valley of Vision*

Recently I was asked the question "Who was the key person in my journey of being a disciple of Jesus Christ?" I didn't have an answer. I remember Sunday School, VBS, youth group, and even some sermons. I remember my baptism, and I remember a couple of very good pastors. I remember some professors from both college and seminary, but I could not identify a particular individual. My formation has occurred within a very visible, traditional, church world. I remember my mother taking me to Sunday School with flannel graphs and take-home papers, which I would read on Sunday afternoons.

The context that formed my journey occurs less and less. As many ABC churches age in place and potentially cease to exist, there are simply fewer young people present to be formed as disciples. It is a longer reach to persons outside the church. Increasingly, I meet persons of younger generations with no Christian memory, "church experience," or positive interaction with Christians. I know we have contributed to the chasm between Christian community and secular America by our "fluttering about religion" at the expense of the Great Commission. What occurs in our "fluttering" and "vapor" is a message of the trivial and anachronistic, of anxiety, and of sometimes anger. Yet the words of Jesus are hanging in the background: "go and make disciples of all nations." Jesus commands us to invite others into a saving, transforming relationship with Him, and enter a lifetime of growing and changing in this relationship with Christ and others while living out our faith and witness in a broken world. Can you imagine if every church meeting began with the question of "How will the decisions we make here help us make disciples?" In the "fluttering" of our preoccupations and best intentions, we miss the point of who we are: disciples of Christ, commissioned to make ourselves available to the Holy Spirit to join in the work of God.

This fall I read and re-read a report on "Thriving Churches in New England." The report was not preoccupied with metrics, but with what healthy, sometimes growing churches, looked like. Interestingly, worship style, place of worship, church governance, and demographics had no bearing on discipleship making. What was very apparent was how much could a Christian community love those who had not yet joined them? From such love, with clarity and confidence, the Gospel can be shared and lived, that others come know Christ and want to be His followers. And others, on the same journey, a humble bit further down the path, are there to teach, help, and exemplify. Discipleship making is about relationships where both heart and head speaks of Jesus Christ. In some ways, I am re-learning what it is to make disciples in a changed world. In the interactions I have with secular persons, I find curiosity, openness, and contemplation when I share my faith. Has my confidence in Jesus Christ become a novel idea to so many? Do I talk about "church" or do I talk about Jesus? Does the Great Commission motivate me outward in the name of Jesus, or do I find too much meaning in the "fluttering" and the "vapor?"

**OUR CHURCH IS PRIVILEGED TO BE ABLE TO OFFER
OUR FACILITY TO THE FOLLOWING AA GROUPS EACH WEEK.**

Equinox Group: Mon-Fri from Noon to 1:00 pm

Thursday Morning Men's Group: Thursday 7:30-8:30 am

Primary Purpose Group: Sunday 7:30-8:30 pm

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Pastor Rebecca's e-mail address: 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

Feb. 2: Dottie Sundquist

Feb. 9: Judy & Ray Koch

Feb. 16: Barb West

Feb. 23: Cheryl Hess

CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Feb. 5: Lisa & Annie

Feb. 11: Cheryl & Linell

Feb. 18: Cathy & Lindy

Feb. 25: Holly & Ronan

