



Manchester Historical Society

## "SpiritSpark"



The First Baptist Church of  
Manchester Center, VT

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Pastor: Rev. Rebecca Sommons

FEBRUARY 2021

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### A Message from Pastor Rebecca

Dear Church Family,

As I look ahead to February, two words beginning with *L* are on my mind: *love and Lent*. Love comes to mind, because I grew up making valentines for classmates and have always found ways to express my love for people around Valentine's day. Lent seems a bit more somber, and for me, less familiar. I had not been a part of a church that had an Ash Wednesday service or observed Lent until I was an adult. When Ash Wednesday fell on Valentine's day a couple of years ago, I felt pressed to

find a connection between love and Lent. That year, the Lord showed me that it is His great love for us that makes it safe for us to take an honest look at ourselves, acknowledging our sin, our limitations, even our mortality. God's love holds us securely and will not let us drop in our times of confession, trial, or death. When our time comes to leave this earth, He will carry us all the way home.

This year, Ash Wednesday is on February 17<sup>th</sup>, but I am still listening to the dual invitations this month holds for leaning into love and Lent. I believe the Spirit is teaching me that it is not for the sake of self-discipline or seriousness that I take up the challenges of Lent. It is simply because I love God. The spiritual practices that this year will come in the form of a challenge each week of Lent are simply invitations to set aside something that may be coming between God and me and draw closer to His heart. Before Jesus started his ministry on earth, the Holy Spirit directed Him into the wilderness for forty days. All the normal comforts of life were gone, and it was just God and Him. Am I willing to set aside time, some comforts, resources, and offences to be with God, in solidarity with Jesus, just for love? I'm saying "yes." How about you?

I think that as we engage *The Lent Experience* through the last half of February and all of March, we will get to express our love for Christ and learn how to love others more deeply. That's what happens when our "false self" or "old nature" gets out of the way. These reorienting, deepening, loving emphases are also found in Jesus' first sermon in Matthew, the famous Sermon on the Mount. I'll be drawing our sermons from there (Matthew 5-7) and other places in the Gospel of Matthew, as we prepare our hearts for the joy of spring and Easter. They are coming, so let's enjoy the anticipation together.

Love in Christ,  
Pastor Rebecca



## **Christian Education**

Save the date! The Christian Education Committee is planning a Valentine Tea and Talk social hour via Zoom on Thursday February 11 from 7:30 to 8:30 pm. This will be much like the November get together where we can gather on Zoom with a warm beverage and spend some time in fellowship. We hope you can join us. Please look for a Zoom invitation from Pastor Rebecca as the day gets closer.

In March, we hope to hold an online game night. Watch for further details in the newsletter and in the Sunday announcements. Also beginning in March, the Diaconate and the Christian Education groups are inviting us all to participate in *The Lent Experience*. This is a set of weekly videos available through RightNow Media that will guide us through different challenges to help us experience Lent in meaningful and purposeful ways.

We hope to hold a sledding party for the youth at Pastor Rebecca's house if we get the right mix of snow and comfortable temperatures.

Finally, a Sunday School class for adults will continue to meet in the vestry and online on the first and third Sundays of the month from 9:30 to 10:00. We hope you can join us!

In Christ,  
Annie Crumb

## **Prudential Committee**

We are bracing for a boring 2021 as soooo many projects were addressed in 2020 under the excellent project managerial skills of our two year Chair, Jeremy Crumb. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for pouring your love of God into our church community and for managing major improvements at FBC with steadfast grace and perseverance.

Electrical upgrades are now complete. Should we need to add additional electrical devices (or wish to dim lights in the sanctuary, for instance) we would need additional electrical services from Bonnet Street.

The food trap in the kitchen needs to be emptied on a regular basis to avert odors. When we are not using the kitchen as normal, we need to be mindful to run water in all sinks to keep the traps wet. This also aids in preventing odors.

The attic and sanctuary insulation installation was completed during the week of January 18th.

Total Restoration is working on completing the slate roof replacement and will be paid once the job is complete.

The plexiglass trim needs to be installed, the Joy Hall crawl space opening needs to be closed-in and we continue to await replacement of the stained floor tiles in the Vestry as Manchester Carpet has a backlog of work due to the active housing climate.

Lorraine Wilkins has created a checklist for cleaning the entire church. During Other Business at the Annual Meeting, she asked for volunteers to lend a hand.

Jeremy Crumb contacted Consolidated Communications (one last time) asking for their best deal and came away with one. The (communications) plan will go down in price and up in service with a 3 year commitment. The phone line will remain the same. The business modem will be changed in January to the new plan. (\$92.98+ taxes and fees with a 60MG connection)

We are installing a programmable thermostat in the sanctuary to allow for remote control. Heat in the sanctuary must be raised two hours prior to a service to warm up the organ. We need a different power cable (about 10') to run from the furnace (Joy Hall) to the thermostat in the sanctuary located directly above the furnace. Once the installation is complete, we will receive a rebate of \$130 from Energy Vermont which will cover the cost.

We are awaiting installation of 10 emergency lights and exit sign units, 2 additional lights for the staircases, and 6 smoke/carbon monoxide detectors.

Our By-laws require a church Auditor. Lorraine will contact Martha Thompson from the Nominating Committee to seek out someone.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dottie Sundquist



## **Diaconate**

January meeting 1/22/21

We briefly discussed the Christmas service, which was enjoyed both on Zoom and in the sanctuary, with thanks to all who participated in the service. A special thanks is given to Jeremy Crumb for all his hard work and dedication to making the service technically available to all of us! We are truly blessed to be able to still worship together in the difficult times the pandemic has presented.

Pastor Rebecca initiated a discussion about Lenten season and how we might experience it. She presented information on The Lent Experience, found on Right Now Media, where there are three six-minute videos dealing with the Lenten season. There is also a journal which can be purchased on Amazon, or through the Pastor. More information was presented at the 1/24 service.

Martha Thompson reminded us that we will be celebrating our 140 year anniversary of this church and suggested that we consider ways to celebrate it! There was a lively discussion of how to do that, and Martha then presented the subject at the annual meeting, where a committee was formed by Martha to follow through on this idea.

We also discussed staying connected with each other and especially those of us who may be feeling isolated at this time. We are making an effort to reach out and, please feel free to call on any of us at any time!

We closed the meeting with prayers for our church family and those beyond our church for hope and peace.

With thanks and love to all our church family, working tirelessly in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Submitted by Carol Latuga

## **Mary Martha Fellowship**

The fellowship meets on the Second Sunday of each month in person, by zoom and phone right now at 9:00 A.M. because we do not serve refreshments due to the pandemic.

At our last meeting we discussed fund raising ideas so we can fulfill our financial obligations. We discussed having a silent bake sale. Willing members would make a donation equal to what their baked item might have earned. (See Bakeless Bake Sale on the next page.)

Another takeout dinner is being considered.

MMF is also responsible for keeping the kitchen supplied. There will be a sign-up sheet at our next meeting to help with this need. You can find items presently in need on the next page of this newsletter.

Our next meeting is Feb. 14 at 9:00 A.M.

Martha Thompson, Secretary

## **Church Cleaning**

The Prudential Committee is beginning a sign-up schedule for cleaning the church. With the upcoming celebration of our church's 240th Anniversary, it will be a great time to "spruce up" the church. We are optimistic that one day soon we will once again resume the use of the church for our "normal" activities. Even though we haven't been able to use the church as we did before the pandemic, it still continues to gather dust (Amazing how that works!). Paul Bauer continues to do a great job in several areas of the church, but we need to have others cleaned. There are a few weekly jobs, several monthly, and some yearly ones. If you can help in any capacity, please let me know. There is a slight chance we can organize a spring cleaning day in May or early June. Please let me know if you would like to be part of this day.

Lorraine Wilkins



### **NOTE from The Mary & Martha Kitchen Chairperson:**

As you may know, the Mary & Martha Fellowship has the responsibility of providing supplies for the church kitchen. Occasional help from other members of the church makes the job easier so you may see a request for an item or two from time to time.

As of this writing, the kitchen needs 9-gallon garbage bags and paper towels. If that is something you can provide, you may drop them off in the kitchen or let Lindy Mylott know. Thank you!

### **Bakeless Bake Sale**

Mary & Martha Fellowship is conducting a Bakeless Bake Sale during the month of February. Since, we are unable to hold any fundraisers right now, it is a way to raise monies to continue our work for the church, our community, and around the world. How does a Bakeless Bake Sale work? Just calculate how much you would spend on making something for a bake sale including ingredients, time, and electricity(gas). Of course, when you drop off your "goodies" do you buy something? Then, decide what you wish to donate! Of course, any donation is welcome. Please make checks out to Mary & Martha Fellowship and mail to Judy Koch (She is Mary & Martha treasurer.) at 3763 River Road, Arlington. VT 05250.

Lorraine Wilkins

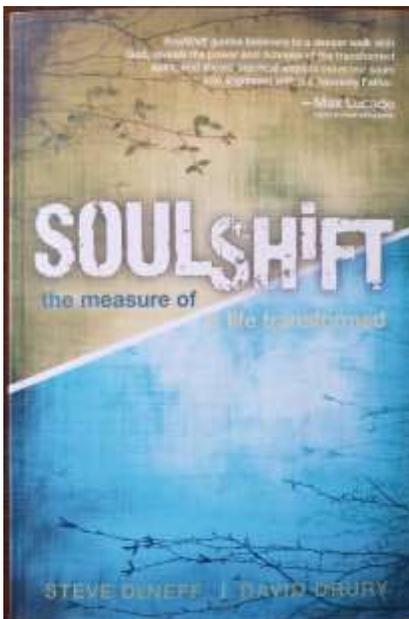
## Special Church Anniversary

On June 22, 2021, our congregation will be celebrating the 240th founding of our church. A church wide celebration is being planned. Several members have expressed an interest in forming a group to make plans for this occasion. There have already been some ideas to make this a special day. If you have some thoughts you'd like to share, please contact Martha Thompson at 362-3473.

### The Missions Committee

The Missions Committee would like to thank you for your generous giving to the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering in January!

Their next meeting is Wednesday, February 10th at 2:00 pm in the vestry.



The FBC Prayer Group meets every Tuesday at 7:00 pm via zoom. On alternate Tuesdays we also discuss a chapter from a book we have chosen to study together. The other Tuesdays are given to a prayer time of approximately 20-30 minutes.

Our current book is SoulShift by Steve Deneff and David Drury. This is a powerful book that helps us to examine our current relationships with God and others and how God can deepen those relationships as we surrender our current way of thinking.

We would love to have you join us! You may talk to Pastor Rebecca for more information and to receive the weekly invitation.

The following poem is submitted by Holly O'Brien. Thank you, Holly!

## “Hope” is the thing with feathers”

by Emily Dickinson

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.

### **IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION**

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

Pastor Rebecca continues to remain open and eager to meet with church family. These get-togethers have taken a different look as they have moved away from set office hours. She has, instead, met on an as needed basis. She is happy to meet with you in person, over the phone, or through zoom. When the weather is good, she has often met people outside and talked while taking a walk and she is happy to continue that during the winter. She is open to any ideas you may have.

Pastor Rebecca's phone number and email are included here. Feel free to reach out to her anytime throughout the week.

(802) 688-3024 rebeccasommons@gmail.com

## **CALENDAR of CHURCH EVENTS**

Monday, Feb. 1 Emmaus Group at 7 pm via zoom  
Tuesday, Feb. 2 Prayer Group at 7 pm via zoom  
Wednesday, Feb. 3 Seeking God Together at 11 am via zoom  
Thursday, Feb. 4 Interfaith Council Meeting at noon via zoom  
Sunday, Feb. 7 Adult Bible Study 9:30 am vestry and via zoom  
Monday, Feb. 8 Emmaus Group at 7 pm via zoom  
Tuesday, Feb. 9 Prudential Meeting at 4 pm via zoom  
Tuesday, Feb. 9 Prayer Meeting with Book Discussion on chapter 2 at 7pm via zoom  
Wednesday, Feb.10 Mission Meeting in the vestry at 2 pm  
Thursday, Feb 11 Valentine Tea and Talk zoom opportunity at 7:30 pm via zoom  
Sunday, Feb.14 Mary and Martha meeting at 9 am via zoom and in vestry  
Monday, Feb.15 Emmaus Group at 7 pm via zoom  
Tuesday, Feb.16 Prayer Group at 7 pm via zoom  
Wednesday, Feb.17 Seeking God Together at 11 am via zoom  
Wednesday, Feb. 17 Ash Wednesday (Details to be announced)  
Friday, Feb.19 Deacon's Meeting at 11 am via zoom  
Sunday. Feb. 21 Adult Bible Study 9:30 am vestry and via zoom  
Monday, Feb. 22 Emmaus Group at 7 pm via zoom  
Tuesday, Feb. 23 Prayer Group with Book Discussion on chapter 3 at 7pm via zoom  
Thursday, Feb. 25 Christian Education Meeting at 7:30 pm via zoom

### **FLOWER PROVIDERS**

Feb. 4: John & Cheryl Hess /mothers - Julia Hill & Shirley Guthridge  
Feb. 11: Barbara West / father - Mark George  
Feb. 18 Judy & Ray Koch / Jason Brosemer  
Feb. 25: Dottie Sundquist / niece - Jenica Junilla



The First Baptist Church family  
would like to extend their condolences  
to the family of Gregory Russell who passed on January 14, 2021.  
We wish to surround Jenny and her family  
with our love and prayers in this difficult time.

