



The Empty Chair

Dear Friends,

In looking ahead to the holidays and thinking whom we might see and when, I can hear my mother saying, "Have a stranger around; it always makes the family behave." Many of you may know first hand that this is true. We have heeded her advice, sometimes couching our decision to invite someone in an altruistic light, "Fred doesn't have family around; maybe he'd like to come have Thanksgiving with us." Or, "Lizzie has had a really hard time of it recently, let's invite her."

But truth be known, we mostly have other people join us for Thanksgiving and Christmas out of self-protection: literally, to protect us from ourselves.

In the Hebrew tradition at the Passover Seder an extra seat and place setting is put at the head of the table for the prophet Elijah. The belief is that Elijah will arrive to herald the coming messiah. In the New Testament Jesus viewed John the Baptist as fulfilling that role.

Setting an extra place at the table is an intriguing idea because it provides tangible evidence of hope and expectation. Perhaps in the absence of a wandering stranger, it might also make the family behave. But the real value as I see it in adopting this practice is to introduce an element of mystery and expectation into what can be a raucous, chaotic, joyous and sometimes fractious celebration. An empty chair is quiet and fertile ground.

Many among us will be faced with empty chairs this Thanksgiving; loved ones have died, some have families of their own now and must parcel out their

appearances between in-laws; some chairs will speak of estrangement and trial, others of just plain sadness.

Intentionally setting an extra place acknowledges that those

who are not physically with us are, nonetheless, always with us in spirit. Our memories will be tickled as well as we argue whether Grandpa liked white meat or dark and what it was he said about cranberry sauce as he made that horrid face of disgust.

Beyond our memories, perhaps we will invite to the table someone we believe to be a prophet. What prophetic voice would you have fill your house? In Ancient Israel prophets were pretty wild people and a lot of the time they saw it their job to proclaim doom and destruction. To my way of thinking, we have entirely too much of that around these days to make for good digestion. I'd like the empty chair at our table to be occupied by someone who embodies assurance, love, serenity and joy. Julian of Norwich's message that "All Will be Well," is a balm of blessing. Having that around will surely lighten hearts and fill us all with thanks.

Grace and Peace to you all,

Susan



November CALENDAR

sunday 1

- WORSHIP, 10 AM
- ALL SAINTS DAY
- COMMUNION

tuesday 3

- CASA MEETING, 7:45 AM
- BOOK GROUP, 9:30 AM
- CENTERING PRAYER, 6:30 PM

thursday 5

- MUSIC COMMITTEE MTG., 6 PM
- CHOIR PRACTICE, 7 PM

sunday 8

- WORSHIP, 10 AM
- BRUNCH BUNCH, 11:45 AM
- KID'S COOK!, 3 PM

tuesday 10

- BOOK GROUP, 9:30 AM
- CENTERING PRAYER, 6:30 PM

wednesday 11

- CABINET MEETING, 6:30 PM

thursday 12

- BREAKFAST BUNCH, 9 AM
- CHOIR PRACTICE, 7 PM

sunday 15

- WORSHIP, 10 AM
- PINS SUNDAY
- CHRISTMAS PAGEANT REHEARSAL BEGINS
- SENIOR YOUTH GROUP, 1 PM

tuesday 17

- BOOK GROUP, 9:30 AM
- CHRISTIAN ED. MTG., 6:15 PM
- CENTERING PRAYER, 6:30 PM

thursday 19

- CHOIR PRACTICE, 7 PM

sunday 22

- WORSHIP, 10 AM

tuesday 24

- BOOK GROUP, 9:30 AM
- CENTERING PRAYER, 6:30 PM

thursday 26

- THANKSGIVING

sunday 29

- WORSHIP, 10 AM
- ADVENT/CHRISTMAS BOOK SALE AFTER WORSHIP
- ADVENT BEGINS

monday 30

- DEACON'S MEETING, 5:30 PM

Apple Pies
Pie baking Wed. 10-1 and Friday
9-noon and sales 3-5 until 11/13



Charlotte Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

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802-425-3176 • charlotteucc@gmavt.net

www.charlotteucc.org

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Embraced by the healing love of Jesus Christ and inspired by his teachings, we commit ourselves to prayerful, compassionate, and courageous action in the world.

Rev. Susan Cooke Kittredge, BRIDGE PASTOR

Julia Blocksma, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Kim Findlay, COMMUNICATIONS/ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Karen Speidel, BOOKKEEPER

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To subscribe by either email or snail mail, please contact us
by email at charlotteucc@gmavt.net or by phone at 802-425-3176.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEW MEMBERS MEETINGS

In November we will be having some gatherings for those interested in pursuing membership in the Charlotte Congregational Church. Attending these meetings in no way obligates you to join the church; they are, rather, a chance to learn more about our church, our denomination and each other. Please Rev. Susan scookekitt@mac.com know if you are interested. We are hoping to receive the new members during worship in December.



BOOK GROUP

Starting **Tuesday November 3rd at 9:30 am**, we will be reading Richard Rohr's *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*. Please read through the Introduction to page 1 for our first meeting. Books area available at church.

"In *Falling Upward*, Father Richard Rohr—the founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation—offers a new paradigm for understanding one of the most profound of life's mysteries: how our failing can be the foundation for our ongoing spiritual growth. Drawing on the wisdom from time-honored myths, heroic poems, great thinkers, and sacred religious texts, the author explores the two halves of life to show that those who have fallen, failed, or "gone down" are the only ones who understand "up." We grow spiritually more by doing it wrong than by doing it right." (From the dust jacket of *Falling Upward*.)



5TH ANNUAL MESSIAH SING!

Sunday December 6th at 4 pm

Mark your calendars, call your friends, plan on making this wonderful event part of your holiday tradition. We are very fortunate to we have gifted soloists and members of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra and Burlington Chamber Orchestra accompanying us. Tickets are \$12 per adult and \$40 for a group of 4 and can be purchased in advance at the church's website: <http://www.charlotteucc.org/>. Tickets will also be available for sale at the door. For more information please contact the church office : 425-3176.

As some of you know, the expenses for the Messiah Sing-a-long are underwritten by ticket sales and generous donations from a few members of the congregation. Please let us know if you'd like to contribute to the event beyond the price of your ticket. It would be greatly appreciated!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CAROLS FROM MANY LANDS - A SINGALONG

You're invited to help create a new Christmas tradition. Join in our Carols From Many Lands Singalong. Charlotte Congregational Church pm on **December 18, 2015 from 6 to 7:30**. We'll sing together favorite carols and beautiful new-to-you carols. Enjoy our candlelit sanctuary. Our special Christmas Band will accompany us.



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT!

Calling all angels, sheep, shepherds and magi! Join in the magic of the Christmas Pageant. Rehearsals begin **November 15th** during the service, with a reading of the story and casting/choosing characters. Can't make it that day? Don't worry - just email Hadley Bunting at hadley_abernathy@yahoo.com. Rehearsals will take place in lieu of Sunday School until the performance on December 20. **EVERYONE is welcome. Please invite friends!**



CENTERING PRAYER GROUP

The Centering Prayer group will continue to meet in the Vestry on **Tuesday evenings from 6:30- 7:30 pm**. We usually devote 20 minutes to contemplative prayer practice and another 20-25 for the ancient practice of Lectio Divina. The latter is a way of responding to scripture that is in tune with a contemplative approach (*see below*) . **ALL ARE WELCOME.**

Question: "What is Lectio Divina?"

Answer: Lectio Divina is Latin for "divine reading," "spiritual reading," or "holy reading" and represents a method of prayer and scriptural reading intended to promote communion with God and provide special spiritual insights. The principles of lectio divina were expressed around the year 220.



ADVENT & CHRISTMAS BOOK SALE!

After worship on **Sunday, November 29th** - Advent and Christmas books, Advent calendars and other good books for gift-giving will be available for sale in the vestry. A share of the proceeds will go to support Christian Ed.

YOUTH GROUPS

KIDS COOK!

Sunday, November 8th at
Susan and Charlie's house
at 3 pm.



A MORAL CALL
PEOPLE OF FAITH CONFRONTING
THE TRAGEDY OF GUN VIOLENCE
Inspiring sacred conversations on guns and the common good

**SUNDAY
DECEMBER 13
3 PM**

First Unitarian Universalist Society
152 Pearl Street, Burlington

Co-Sponsors:
All Saints Episcopal Church, Ascension Lutheran Church, Bahai-Burlington, Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Charlotte Congregational Church, Christ Church Presbyterian, College Street Congregational Church, First Baptist Church, First Unitarian Universalist Society, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Islamic Society of Vermont, Pax Christi-Burlington, Ohavi Zedeck Synagogue Social Action Committee, Shambhala Meditation Center, Sisters of Mercy-Northeast Community, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, The Episcopal Church in Vermont, Williston Federated Church.

Participants in the
2015 National Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence Sabbath Weekend



Senior Youth Group
Sunday, November 15th at 1 pm
at Susan and Charlie's house
in Shelburne.

We will be preparing for the historic interfaith prayer and remembrance vigil, "A Moral Call". This event will launch a sacred conversation on gun violence prevention in the coming year.

For more information please contact Rev. Susan at scookekitt@mac.com or 985-5617

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

BRUNCH BUNCH SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH AT 11:45 AM AT THE DUTCH MILL, SHELBURNE

BREAKFAST BUNCH THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12TH AT 9 AM AT THE DUTCH MILL, SHELBURNE

PINS SUNDAY SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15TH

KEEP KNITTING PRAYER SHAWLS NOW THAT THE WEATHER IS COOLER! FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE JEANNIE MACDONOUGH OR ANN BIELAWSKI.

CASA SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

The Contemplation and Social Action, CASA, invites you to join us on any of our initiatives at any time and at any level of involvement. This could be as simple as contacting a local legislator by phone, email or a letter on topic that speaks/calls to you. Next meeting Tuesday, November 3rd at 7:45 AM at Carol Geske's home.

- Solar Panel Dedication (see more on the CCC website)
- Met with Prudential to discuss the master plan for all the energy-saving projects for the church and vestry
- Working with 350.org on divesting Vermont's State Pension away from fossil fuel companies
- Involved in initiatives with Vermont Interfaith Action and Vermont Power and Light
- Exploring support of Carbon Tax in VT, speaking at Public Service Board hearing on the VT Comprehensive Energy Plan
- Lake Champlain clean up efforts: CCC as a demonstration site to reduce storm water runoff and increase infiltration
- Taking up the UCC challenge to become a Green Justice Congregation
- Discussion and study of Professional Services Tax in VT to increase revenue for much needed social services

COMMITTEE NEWS

Interim Pastor Search Committee

The interim pastor search committee is meeting this week with Pam Lucas from the UCC Conference. We will be reviewing the first pastor profile which was received on the day our church profile was posted. We are encouraged by the immediate response and understand that there has been more interest as well. We promise to keep you posted as things progress.

Ad Hoc Committee

We are working on looking at our Governance and By Laws. We have met twice and are currently discussing different ideas related to how the committee structure might be reworked to make them a little more flexible. We will keep the church members informed when we come up with ideas that we think have merit!

Personal Stewardship Committee

The Personal Stewardship Committee has been quiet this year. We are currently reviewing the by-laws with an eye towards change. The current committee structure is difficult to maintain due to the requirements based on number of members per committee. That is not to say that the committees are not functioning well, for the most part they are. However, there are positive changes that can be made so that people can serve the church without having to be tied to a committee. More will be forthcoming on this by the time we meet for Annual Meeting.

Financial Stewardship

As of 10/28/15, \$103,906 has been raised toward the goal of \$200,000 for the 2016 Stewardship Pledge Campaign. Ideally all pledges for next year will be made by Stewardship Sunday on November 22nd. It's heartening to see our faith community off to a good start.

Prudential Committee

The Parsonage has been cleaned and readied for occupancy. Green Mountain Power will be installing a new dehumidifying hot water heater in the near future. Over the past few Saturdays, we have been cleaning areas of the property that need additional attention: pathways, infill potholes in driveway, thorough cleaning of Sanctuary carpets and pews and other items. We are looking into the costs to further improve our energy consumption by insulating the heat system ductwork and other measures. Thank you to all those who have lent a hand.

Apple Pies

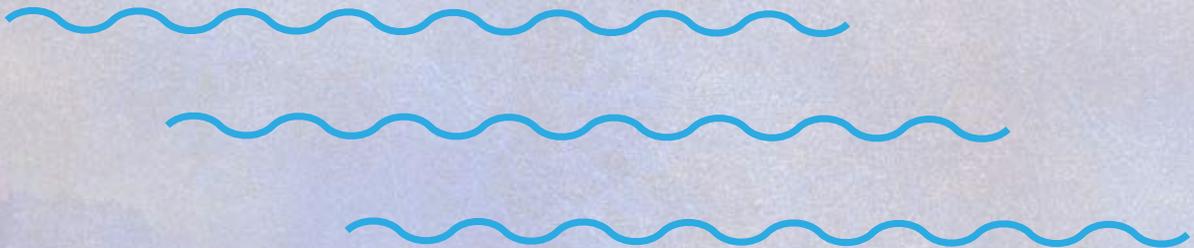
We are a little more than 2/3 of the way through our 2015 Apple Pie season, as we call it. To date 25 terrific people have participated in our annual offerings of Apple Pies to happy customers. We have folded nearly 500 boxes and cut out and glued on the same number of Apple logos. Apples are delivered to our door two days a week by Champlain Orchards in Shoreham.. On average we have baked and sold 64 pies per week - in all it looks like we have made and sold almost 400 pies. Many people give us a \$20.00 bill and say, "Keep the change." Our sales time is now 3-5 PM on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Clean Lake Forever

An effort is underway to unite key stakeholders who care about cleaning up Lake Champlain. The plan is to create a visual map of how each one sees the reality of the Lake's conditions and efforts to keep it clean. Then all the stakeholders will meet to agree on a common vision and goal for Lake cleanup plus three to four major actions that will take us to the goal.

This effort is a collaboration between the Earth Ministry Center at All Souls Interfaith Gathering and ECHO and is called "Voices of the Lake, a collaboration to create a culture of clean water." Over the years, many groups have emerged that are interested in keeping the Lake clean. Their efforts, at some points, have become siloed. This current listening and goal/action setting process will get everyone on the same page.

Three people from our church have been included in this process: Susan Moegenburg, Linda Patterson, and Jackie McMakin. They took part in one of the groups that contributed to the reality map. On December 8 and 9, the entire group will create a common goal and three or four major actions to get behind. We'll let you know how that goes. If you have questions or ideas for this process, talk with Susan, Linda or Jackie. If you would like to know more about the process, google "Collective Impact" by Kania. This is the process being facilitated by Scott Spann, from California, who has facilitated collective impact processes for two other Vermont groups: Energy Action Network and Farm to School Network.



AREA EVENTS

Annemieke McLane in Concert

Sunday, November 8th • 4:00 pm

Charlotte Congregational Church

Donations Accepted

Bill McKibben

Friday, November 13th • 6:30 pm

The Old Lantern

Presented by The Charlotte Land Trust

God Group

Sunday, November 8th & 15th • 4:30-5:30 pm

315 Dorset Heights, South Burlington

Karen Newman • kpsct@optonline.net • 203-561-0334

A VERY NICE, confidential SHARING OF LIVES....no pressure to share...just come and have coffee, tea, hot chocolate and sit and listen if you like. We are a community of people who come together in the midst of life challenges and blessings...and we pray for one another at the end or if the Holy Spirit prompts us, we pray right when the person needs us to.