



(See note on page 7 regarding this photo.)

"SpiritSpark"

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

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Pastor: Rev. Rebecca Sommons

April 2018

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR REBECCA

Dear Church Family,

It seems like an April Fool's joke that Easter is here, but we're still stuck in winter. I'm longing for the snow to melt and the color green to once again surround us. There *are* signs that spring is coming. The sun stays around past suppertime, and its rays are getting stronger. Chickadees and goldfinches flutter around the birdfeeder, bringing a smile as I wash dishes. Tulips and Irises are pushing their way up through the soil, despite the banks of snow that are holding territory in the yard. I recognize my impatience. In this age where technology moves so quickly, the weather still gives us the chance to practice waiting.

It's not only the spring thaw that takes time; other things take time to come to life. The seeds of God's love and gospel truth that set us free take time to penetrate hearts and lives. Maybe even more time than ever, since technological distractions pop up everywhere like weeds. I can't make the seeds grow

more quickly in my life by sheer effort, because the growth is God's work. It's only as I surrender and welcome the Master Gardener's work that I see the beauty start to unfold.

This is true in ministry too. None of us can make growth happen in another person or in our church. We can be faithful to sow the seeds of God's love and truth in the ways we serve, teach, and interact with others, and water the seeds with our prayers, but the growth can only come as God's gift. Let's encourage each other not to be impatient, but to trust that the Holy Spirit is at work. We can celebrate each new sign, however small it seems, trusting that we'll have even more to thank God for in the days to come.

Love in Christ,
Pastor Rebecca



*".. The one who plants or the one who waters is not the important one.
God is the important One. He makes it grow...
We work together with God."
1 Corinthians 3:7, 9*

INTERFAITH COUNCIL of the NORTSHIRE

On Easter Sunday the Council is sponsoring an Interfaith Sunrise Service to be held at the Dormy Grill on Union St. at 6:45 a.m. There is a wonderful view of the sunrise from this vantage point. Refreshments follow at The First Congregational Church.

The Interfaith Council and the Manchester Community Library are co-sponsoring a program about immigration - The Current State of Immigration Law in the United States. The speaker and leading expert on immigration in VT will be Susan Sussman a caseworker for Sen. Patrick Leahy. The program will be held at the library on April 2, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. Pastor Rebecca has been working on this project with an Interfaith committee.

Cantor Scott Buckner announced that there will be Stand-Up Comedy event on Saturday night, April 7, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. at Israel Congregation starring Rabbi Bob Alper and Rev. Susan Sparks. The proceeds from this event will go to the Benefit Puerto Rico Project.

-submitted by Martha Thompson

Happy Spring from the Missions Committee!

We serve an awesome God and you all are awesome servants! On March 18th we collected a special offering to benefit the people of Puerto Rico through the American Baptist Home Mission Societies Puerto Rico Recovery Appeal. We collected \$570.00 on that single Sunday. We were also able to report that the overall goal of \$1 million has been reached. We will continue to collect donations through the end of March, if anyone was missed that wishes to make an offering.

At our March meeting, we voted to send \$150.00 to the World Vision Food Basket Program to supplement food shortages in Africa. This contribution was subject to an 8X match, so our \$150.00 generated \$1350.00 in food donations. This will provide supplemental food (beans, lentils and grains) for more than 26 families for a month. What a way to maximize our resources!

During April, we will collect special offerings for our local mission activities and the America for Christ Offering through the American Baptist Churches USA. You will hear more about these programs through the month.

We are considering our participation in the Global 6K for Water, sponsored by World Vision on Saturday, May 19th. We will have more information in the near future, but save the date (it's the day before Pentecost, so the Spirit should be strong)!

We would also like any ideas you may have for how to present First Baptist during the summer Street Fests on June 15th and July 20th. Please hit us with any suggestions (figuratively, of course).

Finally, we would like to encourage you to attend a night of standup comedy, sponsored by the Interfaith Council to benefit Puerto Rico through emergency solar energy kits on Saturday, April 7th at 7:30 pm at Israel Congregation of Manchester. We will be entertained by our friend Rabbi Bob Alper and Rev. Susan Sparks for a night of Interfaith laughter. Tickets are \$15.00 in advance at www.ticketor.com/icmvt/ or \$20.00 at the door. Appropriate for ages 11 and up.

Yours in Christ's service,

Jeff Linebeck, Martha Thompson, Barbara West and Lisa Towslee

CELEBRATE RECOVERY

There is a new facet that we would like to add to the Celebrate Recovery ministry that takes place on Wednesday nights here at our church. It will be a chance to join a small group called a **Step Study**, which will be a more informal and individualized way to learn about the twelve steps and finding freedom in Christ. Please see Pastor Rebecca if you have interest or questions about this upcoming opportunity. We will begin the first week of April.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NOTES – Holly O’Brien, Church School Sup’t.

The Sunday School children have been preparing for Palm Sunday and will have a special song to lead a parade with palms.

For the Teen class, Matthew presented a video and led discussion on the origins of Easter, including various influences on our traditions.

The Adult class is discussing the book of James over several weeks.

On Sunday, March 11 Christian Ed kids were able to take advantage of perfect sledding conditions at a sledding party at Dottie and Bryan's house in Sandgate. (See photos below.)

Thank you, Dottie & Bryan!

The Teen group had an evening of inspiration at Art Night and Matthew provided pizza from Christos. Thank you, Matthew!

The Sunday School kids are earning/spelling "Spring Fling" for their next warmer weather activity.

Plans are in the works for an All Ages Game Night in May, more information to come.

The next CE meeting is Thursday, April 26th at 5:30pm.



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Thank you, Dottie, for the beautiful collage!

MARY & MARTHA FELLOWSHIP

The Mary & Martha fellowship invites all women of the church to join us on the 2nd Sunday of the month at 8:30 for breakfast and a meeting which follows at 9:00 am. We will not be meeting in April as our meeting was held on March 31st to prepare the bouquets for our annual floral cross.

We held a successful lasagna dinner in February which netted \$636.00. Thank you to Dottie Sundquist and all who helped out.

The Mary & Martha Basket Party was held in March with 95 donated baskets and 65 persons attending. Thank you to Lorraine Wilkins and to all who so generously gave of their time and talent to make this such a success! The basket party realized \$1,349.30.

Our current goal for White Cross is \$200.00 which we will be collecting over the next few months. Please see Cathy Comar or Lindy Mylott if you would like to contribute. Our Love Gift collection will be shared with 75% going to our church Mission Committee and 25% to American Baptist Women and Girls.

Because of our recent successful fund raisers, we were able to transfer \$1,500 to our Kitchen Renovation Account. We also received a generous and unexpected gift from Hoa and Orland Campbell of \$500.00 to add to our Kitchen Renovation Fund. We were especially touched to learn that this gift from the Campbells was made in memory of Jean Fielding and Bev Hinkley.

The Mary & Martha Fellowship is blessed with an amazing Sunshine Committee chair! Linda Hulett continues to remember birthdays, special anniversaries and thoughtfully attends to the needs of our church with cards throughout the year.

Submitted by Lisa Towslee, Co-President



DIACONATE REPORT

The main focus of Diaconate work this month has been planning for the worship services preceding Easter on Sunday April 1. Communion will be served on the following Sunday, April 8.

The services include Palm Sunday, March 25

Maundy Thursday Agape Meal followed by a reenactment of the Last Supper and Communion, March 29 at 5:30 pm

Good Friday Quiet service of reflection, 3:30 pm

Easter, April 1 Sunrise Service at Dormy Grill Porch, 6:45 am

Easter Worship Service, 10:30 am in the sanctuary

Each month we identify people in the church community who want Communion served by Pastor Rebecca and a member of the Diaconate, or others wanting prayers for their healing. Visits to those receptive to home visits can decrease loneliness and depression. Feeling listened to and remembered can really brighten one's day.

In Christ's Love,
Martha Bowen, Linda Hulett, Co-chairs of Diaconate

NEWS FROM KITCHEN COMMITTEE

The Kitchen Committee held a meeting last month to go over the initial plans that we had received from Attention to Detail. We discussed a few changes that we thought we should make. Everything is still in the beginning stages. Jim, Martha and I all had some items that we had to look into such as: Can we change the windows in the kitchen? Martha and I both had an idea for possible leads for obtaining grants. Nothing solid, just a place to start. The committee will have to continue with design in order to obtain some idea of an estimate for the project. This will allow us to proceed with finding funding\grant(s). The recent Basket Party netted approximately \$1350 which was slated to go into the kitchen renovation fund. At the last Mary and Martha Meeting, it was voted to add \$150 to make the total going into the kitchen fund \$1500. As we progress we will keep everyone informed. Personally, I am praying money "falls from the sky"!

Lorraine



Report on the Annual Gathering of the American Baptist Churches of VT and NH

On March 2nd, I represented our congregation at the Annual Gathering of American Baptist Churches of Vermont and New Hampshire in West Lebanon, NH. I was among over 200 representatives from churches around these two states. "Built on the Rock: Redeeming Lives" (Matthew 7: 24-25) was the theme for the two days. The two days strove to provide encouragement, opportunities for training, and resources for Christian services for the participants. Worship and workshops were led by Dale Edwards, Region Director ABCNNH and Lee Spitzer, General Secretary American Baptist Churches USA. I found the experience of meeting people from around the region to be extremely valuable and was inspired by the content of the day's worship and workshops. It would be a very worthwhile opportunity for others in the future to attend.

Paul Bauers

Highlights from the Prudential Committee (from the March 13th meeting)

- We hired Chris Fontaine to repair the plaster above the organ in preparation for the organ cleaning and tuning.
- We picked a door for the Bonnet St entrance and it will be installed by Chris Fontaine next month.
- We contracted Vermont Roofing to repair our steeple and soffit to be scheduled soon.
- We are working on two insurance claims with Church Mutual, to repair the steeple and the damage to a parked car nearby.

Respectfully Submitted, Bryan Richeimer

FBC PRAYER AND STUDY GROUP

What will Heaven be like? Will I be myself? Will I see friends and loved ones? What will we do forever? What about children and pets?

Have these thoughts ever floated through your mind?

On Tuesday, April 24th, the Prayer and Study Group will be beginning a new book titled Imagine Heaven. In this book, John Burke, compares more than a hundred stories of near-death experiences – those times when a person has clinically died, was resuscitated, and claimed to have gotten a peek into the afterlife. John Burke looks for the commonalities between these shared experiences and compares them with what we know about the promises in the Bible.

With modern medicine's ability to bring more people back to life than ever before, the accounts are from all ages, cultures and religions.

We believe you will be both amazed and comforted!

Each of our Tuesday evening get-togethers begins at 7:00 pm at the home of Lois Squires. Lois always provides a warm and welcoming place for us and we would love to have you join us! For more information, you may see Barb West, Lois Squires, or Glenna Taxter.

Cleaning Team

Last week's sermon by Pastor Rebecca highlighted a need to serve the Lord with time given in tangible service to the church. The timeline of the message is perfect as we reach out to FBC to join a **Cleaning Team** to brighten our bathrooms. Members of the Prudential committee have already signed on and *we are asking others to join us. We need 26 people to complete the semi-annual sign-up. One hour of cleaning (per person) every six months is our goal, preferably done on a Friday or Saturday.

In the same breath, we need to give thanks to Paul Bauers, Glenna Taxter, Linelle Pike and Pastor Rebecca for graciously washing and/or vacuuming floors over the past months. If someone else has also been cleaning do let us know so we have a handle on who else is serving to keep the church looking so sparkly!

*Lindy Mylott and I will be calling able-bodied people to consider cleaning.

Dottie Sundquist, Prudential Committee

ABOUT THE COVER PHOTO: Shawn Harrington, of the Manchester Historical Society, says that this photo is from the late 30s or early 40s. One of the ways he makes this determination is because he believes the church was painted white in 1937 or 1938 and didn't go back to fully red until the later 70s.



The First Baptist Church family would like to extend their condolences to the family of Bradford West who passed away on March 19, 2018.



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
Parsonage Phone: (802) 362-5335
Please call to request a meeting or visit outside of regular church office hours.

FLOWERS

April 1: Easter Memorial Lilies
April 8: Peggy Brockett
April 15: Martha Thompson
April 22: Jim & Barb West
April 29: Lisa Towslee

CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

April 1: no childcare
April 8: Glenna & Annie
April 15: Cathy & Lindy
April 22: Holly & Ronan
April 29: Maurie & Kristen