

The Federated Church of East Arlington



January 2021

Meditation, Meanderings and Musings from Pastor Kathy

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There's a tradition in Ireland for New Year's Eve that seems so appropriate for this year like no other. Just after midnight you open the front door to let the old year out and the new year in. I'm prepared to give 2020 a hearty push out and welcome what will hopefully be a new year that brings with it an end to this global pandemic and a recovery from many losses that will help so many households, businesses and organizations to rebuild.

I was reminded by one astute reader of this newsletter to go back and read what I wrote for the January 2020 newsletter. Back then I looked to 2020 with optimism and spoke of planning, using these words from Todd Jenkins as the jumping off point:

According to Plan

*I just got back
from a visit
to tomorrow.*

*There's good news
and bad news.*

*The bad news:
things won't go according
to your expectations or plans.*

*Some of what you wanted
and planned to do,
you can't.*

*You'll have to do some things
you never imagined;
and most of it will be less glamorous
than you dreamed.*

*The good news:
if you do what needs
to be done for those you love,
or even and especially
for a stranger,
you'll be spending
a day called today,
in a life called your own,
doing something helpful
for someone else;*

*and isn't that more valuable
than having things go
according to plan?*

Things definitely did not go according to anyone's plan in 2020. It was a year ago that this thing we know as the Coronavirus was just beginning to come to the world's distracted attention but getting very little notice. Three months later, everything changed and no nation was spared. Some of us lost loved ones to COVID-19. Others were sick and may carry life-long health impacts from it. The Merriam-Webster word of the year 2020 is *pandemic* – a word that many of us had used only to refer to other faraway people or in some other era of history. Now, as a result of this pandemic that affects us all, we communicate and interact in whole new ways. And we look to the widespread availability of a vaccination as our shared hope.

There are so many lessons I've learned over these past nine long months. I've learned that we can do hard things. I've learned to treasure human interaction more deeply than I thought possible. I now appreciate more how vital and life-affirming rituals can be – around worship and holidays and birthdays. I've experienced first-hand how important being able to pivot and adapt is and recognizing that just because something is different than it was doesn't make it bad – it's just different. The ability to move about freely will never be taken for granted again. The critical role that so many play in holding our shared lives together has made me even more grateful for cashiers, wait staff, nurses, EMTs, teachers, truck drivers, scientists and so many other workers that previously worked in obscurity. I've come to recognize that experiencing this pandemic has been made more bearable with the use of technology. Hard times can bring a generosity of spirit that feels like a lifeline. And that on many days, prayer – the act of listening to and speaking with God in all its forms – is all that separates me from despair.

As a new year unfolds, one wrapped in intense hope for something better for all God's people, may we hold onto the lessons learned from 2020. Let us walk into the new year with the strength of the power of God Almighty and our eyes always on the light that is love.

Peace and grace,

Kathy



The Federated Church of East Arlington

Website: federatedchurchofeastarlington.org

Facebook: Federated Church of East Arlington

Email: federatedchurch05250@gmail.com

YouTube: Federated Church of East Arlington, Vt

Church office: 802-375-2548

Report of the Financial Secretary, Sandra Grover

2020 Congregational Giving Budgeted:	\$ 60,000.00
Congregational Giving Received 1/1-12/31	\$ 62,581.45
Building Use 1/1- 12/31	\$ 991.35
Fundraising 1/1-12/31	\$ 934.72

Thank You!



Church attendance

Many via Zoom on computers, phones and tablets and on tv. from many states.



Church is who we are, Not where we go!

This has been a very long year as all would agree. We have learned new ways to do things and communicate with people. The Church service for Christmas Eve was wonderful. There were people from far and near that were on Zoom with us. It was good to see people I have not seen in a while. It also was wonderful to see the Church interior.

The Church Council is getting ready for our Annual meeting. Alyson is working on a budget even as we are still not sure if we can open the church yet. The budget review will be via Zoom after the worship service on January 17th. The Annual meeting will be held on Zoom on January 24th. Please get all your reports done so that Sandy can put together an Annual Report for everyone.

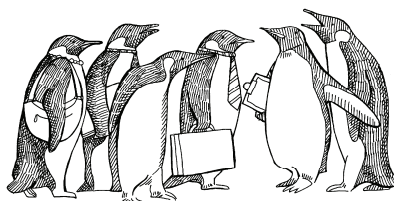
Pastor Kathy has a garage full of items that are going to be Covid community kits that have to be put together to hand out to older and disabled folks.

2021 will be our year to step back and realize how lucky we will be with a vaccine and maybe a little more normal life. Until that time please stay safe, wear a mask, wash your hands and keep social distancing.

Peace be with you

Sue Congdon

Church Council Chair



Annual Meeting

January 24, 2021

Our Church Council

Chair	Susan Congdon	Treasurer	Alyson Grzyb
Clerk		Ex Officio	Pastor Kathy Clark
Building & Grounds	Olavi Wirkki	1. Alyson Grzyb	2. Jeff McConnell
Christian Education	Tammy Lang	1. Scott Lang	2.
Finance	Brian Allen	1. Herb Taylor	2. Raebeth Hitchcock
Worship & Ministry		1. Linda McDevitt	2. Phyllis Warren
Missions	Sandy Grover	1. Wendy Bahan	2. Gail Rice

January Birthdays

2 – Harriet Welther
2815 Sunderland Hill Road
Arlington, VT 05250

18 – Kaylee Bushee
150 Sunderland Hill Road
Arlington, VT 05250

26 – Alyson Grzyb
95 Lost Road
Sunderland, VT 05250

**January Anniversaries**

6 – Michelanne and Bill Sylvester
3008 Vt. Route 7A
Arlington, VT 05250

Happy Anniversary



**Annual Reports
Are due to the office
By
January 8th**

If you have reports or information to be included in the 2020 Annual Report, please be sure the office has it by January 8th.

Thank you, Sandy

**In the White Mailbox****January Newsletter**

The January/February UPPER ROOM devotional,
"Where the World Meets to Pray"

2020 Church Directory

**Southwest Association, UCC
Prays for their Churches**

Each week one of the churches in the Southwest Association, UCC, will be prayed for by the other churches in the association.

Jan. 3: First Congregational Church of Hubbardton

Jan. 10: First Congregational Church of Manchester

Jan. 17: Congregational Church of North Bennington

Jan. 24: Pawlet Community Church

Jan. 31: Peru Congregational Church

Lectionary Readings for January

Jan. 3: Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20

Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:(1-9), 10-18



Jan. 10: Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29

Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11

Jan. 17: 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20); Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51

Jan. 24: Jonah:3:1-5,10; Psalm 62:5-12

1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20

Jan. 31: Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111

1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28

**Thank You**

As the financial secretary for our Federated Church, I am very thankful to all who continue to send in checks, cash and give online. The ministry and mission goes on even though we are unable to physically meet.

Please contact Kathy or the office if you know if anyone who needs assistance.

Sandy Grover, Financial Secretary

Contact Sandy Grover: sandragrover@gmail.com;

375-4982; church office 375-2548 or church email

federatedchurch05250@gmail.com

The Federated Church of East Arlington



KNIT. CROCHET. PRAY.

We will gather together when it is safe but until then...
Keep knitting, crocheting and handiwork!

We pray that God will continue to bless this ministry,
it's participants and the shawl recipients.



Questions:

Raebeth Hitchcock

375-9294



Worship With Us

Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom
using this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89119439251>.

Or join by phone at 1-646-876-9923 and you will be
asked for the Meeting ID and you should enter
891 1943 9251 followed by the # sign.

Our services are on GNAT Sundays at
9:30a.m. and 6:00 p.m. and Wednesdays at 6:30 a.m.
and 5:00 p.m. on channels 1074, 1084 and 1094.

Also on our Youtube channel: the federated
church of East Arlington.

Watch for an email from Kathy with the
Sunday bulletin and link to join.



Adventures in Reading

While I, Janet, like you, definitely dislike our
current COVID19 situation, one plus is more
time to read. Never before have I finished
reading 5 books by this time of the year.

I recommend the following:

Group I "Holy Envy"
Group II "How to Walk a Pig"
Group III "Pelosi"
Group IV "The Trumpet of the Swan"
and also "Where the Crawdads Sing"

I am looking forward to 2021 expecting I can
select from our list the same number of good
readings.

HAPPY NEW YEAR from Janet and Phyllis;
Phyllis having suggested so many good read-
ing books and also provided for them at the
Canfield Library.



Phyllis Warren and
Janet Wilson
Co-ordinators

Christian Education

December was a busy month:

We had our Zoom Advent Workshop which was so much
fun. We had 4 crafters, we made 6 crafts, and we had 20
people participate.

Thank you so much to Reverend Kathy, Amy Caples, Sara
Pelletier, Karen Underhill, and Diane McConnell.

On December 20th we had an "Ugly Swearer Christmas Pag-
eant", which was so much fun with scripture and carols.

We hope you have a wonderful new year!!

Tammy Lang

Stay strong, wash your hands., wear a mask.

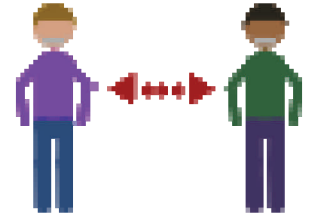
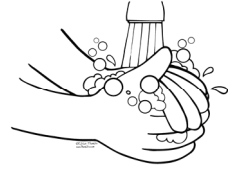
Need extra support during the Pandemic?

During these difficult times, could you use some emotional support and a listening ear? Are you looking for connections to community resources during the pandemic?

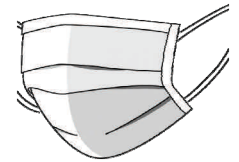
COVID Support VT is a statewide program offering free and confidential emotional support and connections to resources for anyone needing help. They offer a wide range of supports on their [website](#).

If you or someone you know could use some support coping with the pandemic, reach out to COVID Support VT. Call 2-1-1 to reach a Support Counselor. You can also access their [self-care resources flyer](#), [daily stress management plan](#) and their online [Weekly Wellness Groups](#).

Wash your hands!



Wear a face mask!



COVID Community Support Kits to Be Prepared and Delivered

We are pleased to announce that the Federated Church of East Arlington, in partnership with Battenkill Valley Health Center and The Collaborative, was awarded a \$10,000 COVID Relief Grant through the Vermont Department of Health.

The target population are residents of Arlington, Sandgate and Sunderland who are at higher risk for illness from COVID due to age (65 years and older) and disability.

The kits are intended to help folks stay healthy and safe through the winter and into spring of 2021. We will be partnering with multiple human service organizations to distribute the kits.

Volunteers to put the kits together and possibly assist in distribution will be needed in early January. Please contact Pastor Kathy with any offers of assistance or questions.

FROM THE OFFICE

If you know of a prayer request please let Kathy know.

Thank you, Sandy



WARNING

2020 ANNUAL MEETING

To discuss the business of the church
Acceptance of Reports
Vote on proposed 2021 budget
Vote on nominations
Other business

Online via Zoom following worship

Please plan to attend. We need everyone's input.

January 24, 2021

**Immediately following worship
(approximately 10:30 a.m.)**

WARNING

January 17, 2020

via Zoom following worship-about 10:30 am

Congregational meeting to review the 2021 budget.

Annual Reports will be ready to be picked up by Jan. 15th (hopefully earlier)

Let Sandy know if you would like a report delivered or mailed to you.

The Federated Church of East Arlington

RED STOCKING Christmas Project –

Many thanks to all who participated in this year's Red Stocking project helping many children and families have a happy holiday.

Contact Sue Wirkki or Barb Benjamin if you have questions.

Annual Reports will be ready to be picked up by Jan. 15th (or earlier)

Let Sandy know if you would like a report delivered or mailed to you.

Bible Study

Fridays at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom
Beginning Jan. 8, 2021 – letter of James

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91377329294>

or

Dial on your phone 1-646-876- 9923

Meeting ID: 913 7732 9294 followed by the #

Happy
New Year!

Arlington Area Food Shelf

2020

Our goal: 2,020 pounds
Received to date: 415 pounds

The Arlington Food Shelf

P.O. Box 723

Arlington, VT 05250



Consider automating your regular donations with our electronic giving program.

The Federated Church of East Arlington relies on the financial support of the congregation and donations – electronic giving offers an easy way to give on a recurring basis. Visit the church office for more information or go to our webpage (click on contact) at

www.federatedchurchofearlington.org

Thank you!

SAVE THESE JANUARY DATES

Online Via Zoom

Jan. 3, 10, 10:00 a.m. Worship

17, 24, 31 10:00 a.m. Worship

Jan. 17 Budget meeting following worship

Jan. 24 Annual Meeting following worship

FROM THE OFFICE

If you know of a prayer request to add or change in the bulletin, please let the office know by Thursday.

Thank you, Sandy

Why You Can't Meet God Over Zoom

Virtual services are inadequate — but I keep going.

By Esau McCaulley

Dec. 24, 2020

When our congregation, Church of the Savior, moved to online services some nine months ago, our family tried to keep things normal. We had the children dress in nice Sunday clothes, though we would be watching via screen instead of entering a sanctuary. We arranged the chairs in the living room to look like pews. We tried to follow along, bowing at the right times and crossing ourselves at the right moment.

Anyone who has ever attended a religious service (or any event) with children knows it is a constant struggle to get them to sit still, pay attention and not distract those around them. Every Sunday in the pew is a battle of wills. But if in-person services were a skirmish, online church is war.

My family is a group of outliers. Just 33 percent of Americans attend religious services weekly. As for the rest of the country, about one-third make their way to a place of worship somewhere between a couple of times a month and a few times a year. The final third attend rarely, if at all. But no matter where one falls on that spectrum, the pandemic has changed the way we experience religion.

After that first Zoom church week, our family abandoned the church clothes and makeshift pews. Everyone's attention lagged.

Maybe it was screen fatigue. My children have Zoom school. As a professor, I have Zoom teaching. With my wife deployed, we have a Zoom marriage and, now, Zoom church. Something had to give.

In July, researchers at Barna, a group dedicated to studying faith and culture, found church attendance in America had dropped significantly during the pandemic. I'm not surprised. I, too, have gone through periods where I couldn't stomach a Zoom service. Instead, we open our Book of Common Prayer and worship as a family.

And yet this is what we've got — lest we simply shut down these services until the church can gather without restriction.

It is true that Zoom religious services are fundamentally inadequate. This is not a criticism of the clergy and lay leaders who have put in tremendous creative effort. In a sense it is an indictment of the very idea of what we look for in church, and a chance to realign our perspective. That is because even in-person services are, in a sense, inadequate. Everyone who has come to follow a religion knows of that initial season of zeal. People are excited and energetic about their newfound faith; the services seem transcendent. But that feeling often fades and becomes something else.

If bodies and physical spaces are really means by which we attempt to encounter God on earth, something immeasurable is lost when worship goes virtual. This loss becomes all the more acute during the holiday season, a time when churches are usually filled with candles, flowers and flowing vestments. Instead, the choir stalls and pews will be largely empty.

W.E.B. Dubois is famous for describing the Black church as “the preacher, the music and the frenzy.” That is true enough as a sociological analysis, but to members of the congregation there is a fourth element to that mix: finding God's own presence among them.

There are few things more powerful than being in the presence of a Black gospel choir, its lead singer clapping and moving in rhythm testifying to the power of God. There are moments when the choirs and the preachers who follow can lift an entire congregation and transport it. They can fill the despairing with hope and the fearful with the courage to demand justice.

These days, instead of choirs, we mumble along trying to harmonize with a virtual worship leader.

In the months of pandemic worship, I have come to recognize that religious services, by their very nature, cannot fulfill what they promise. Services attempt to usher finite people into the presence of someone we believe is infinite. What hymn or sermon can capture that? We are chasing the wind. There are fits and starts, hints of something at the edge of our perception, but not the thing itself.

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Humans disappoint, especially those we expect to share our beliefs and values. We see other believers fail to display the deep love for one another and the stranger that is commended in our sacred texts. We witness others compromise our deepest values, sacrificed for access to power. Integrity seems in short supply. We attend services where the people are unfriendly, the sermons aren't great and the music is a struggle. Instead of encountering the transcendent, we bump against the limits of human talent.

These frustrations, large and small, cause some to check out on religion in much the same way that people have checked out on Zoom services. And yet, why did roughly a third of Americans trudge off to services week in and week out before the pandemic? Why do some of us continue to log on during it?

We stay because attendance is not about what the church gives us; it is our way of offering something to God. It is a small rebellion, a way of saying that there is more to life than simply the acquisition of more. It is an attempt to become the kind of people who live lives of charity and service.

The very inadequacy of church services, Zoom and otherwise, is a reminder we do not come into churches to encounter a life lesson on how to raise our children or to learn to be good Americans, whatever that means. Our aim is much more audacious. We are attempting to encounter God and, in so doing, find ourselves, possibly for the first time.

One recent weekend we gathered once more for Zoom church. My wife logged on from her military outpost and I logged on with the kids. I settled into my role at tech support. Two of the younger kids lingered on the couch happily coloring. As I followed along in the service, something surprised me. I looked up from the computer and saw my daughter standing in the middle of the living room. Her tender, beautiful voice resounding throughout the space. She was singing. I found myself ushered into the presence of something that defies description.

Epiphany, the story comes again...

There's the story about the pregnant woman
whose fiancé married her anyway
and how they traveled together
to the crowded city
where an innkeeper offered a stable,
and the animals shared a hospitality of hay.
And there's the sequel about shepherds
who were watching their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground
when the angels came harmonizing
SATB in the sky
and sent them to Bethlehem
to see the child born for them
and then to share those good, good tidings.

And that's what they did -
they went back to the fields all christmasy,
greeting everybody
with good will, peace on earth...
though probably not chestnuts.

But then there's the other plot line
that gets folded into the bathrobe pageant
though it happened weeks
or even years later -
about the travelers and their gifts
and the detour home
to avoid the homicidal Herod.

And that's what makes us part of the story -
not because we are wise and
certainly not royal,
but because we're always late or lost,
and, if we arrive at the holiness of it at all.

We come with road dust on our feet,
and star dust in our hair.

*"Christmas Eve at the Epsom Circle McDonald's and other
Poems" by Maren C. Tirabassi*

Contribution Statements

Please let me know how you would like your contribution statement for 2020 delivered to you:

email, mailed, pick up at the office or white mailbox

You can contact me any time to get an update of your giving.
Sandy Grover, Federated Church of East Arlington Financial Secretary,

sandragrover@gmail.com,
375-4982