



UNITED CHURCH OF HINESBURG

Newsletter – May 2024

Pastor's Page

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Sabbatical

The definition of the word *sabbatical* is something like “an extended period of leave from one’s customary work or job for rest, training or the development of new skills.” A sabbatical leave can last anywhere from one month to a year, is fully paid and comes with the promise that the same job will be there upon return. Historically, sabbatical leave is a common practice for academics and clergy where educators and pastors take time away from professing and pastoring to rest, recharge, and research. Today, sabbatical time is also being offered in other vocational in other fields as employers have found planned time away beneficial for their companies and employees alike.

The Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ recommends that UCC clergy take regular sabbaticals. The Ministerial Excellence, Support & Authorization Ministry Team of the UCC writes the following:

A sabbatical is a significant time of rest, renewal, and refreshment for pastors. For pastors, the sabbatical is time to nourish their relationship with God, recommit to their call, and provide renewed vision and focus for ministry. A sabbatical is not a vacation, but it does provide time away from the daily work of ministry. Sabbatical leave may include study or a project, but its first goal is reconnecting with one’s sense of vocation through rest, reflection, and prayer.

I will be on Sabbatical Monday, June 24th to Sunday, August 25th. The focus of my time away will be personal health and self-care. In the past, I have rarely prioritized my own health and well-being, and the busyness of work and family have given me “excuses” to eat poorly, skip the gym, and forgo spiritual practices that take time and effort. Small changes have not worked so a significant reset is in order. I plan to take time to reset my diet, physical activity, and mental and spiritual practices with the goal of having more energy and focus on my return. I believe this time will not only benefit myself, but my family, and my role as your pastor.

During these two months, I will step away from UCH entirely. Rev. Debbie Ingram, our former bridge pastor and good friend will serve UCH as Sabbatical Coverage Pastor. She will be responsible for pastoral care and

visitation, Sunday worship, and other pastoral responsibilities that arise. Members of the congregation will work together to cover other day to day operations.

I am thankful for the Personnel Committee and the Board of Directors for helping me think through this sabbatical plan and for recognizing my desire and need for healthier living. I am also thankful that this faith community is able to offer this time away for rest and resets.

There is still much work to be done between now and the beginning of the sabbatical. One major project is the summer youth service trip. You can find more information about this trip later in the newsletter.

Blessings,

Pastor Jared

Property

Wetlands Restoration, Green Space, and the Playground

Wetlands Restoration

- * The project to restore the wetland behind the church that was scheduled for last summer was put on hold until this spring/summer, ironically, because of last year's rain and flooding. The work is now scheduled to begin in early May and is expected to continue into August.
- * The contractors will be using the area between the church and the Parish House to access the project area. The Little Free Pantry will be temporarily located on the south side of the Parish House during the construction.
- * The project is paid for through grants secured by the Lewis Creek Association.

Green Space

- * Work on the initial phases of a planned green space ("an area of grass, trees, or other vegetation set apart for recreational or aesthetic purposes in an otherwise urban environment") located adjacent to the wetland will begin once that project is near completion.
- * Donations made in memory of Paul Eddy and Sandy White will fund the initial phase which includes the purchase of trees and benches.

Playground

- * The playground, which was severely affected by the flooding, has been taken down and the parts stored behind the Parish House. Replacement parts have been purchased
- * It will be installed in a new location in conjunction with the wetlands project

For more information about these projects, go to: www.ucofh.org/property-updates.html.

“Baptist Lot” Conservation Easement and Solar Land Lease

Background

- * In 1876 and 1913 two plots of land located to the west of Silver Street and just south of the Hinesburg Community School and the LaPlatte River were deeded to the Baptist Society.
- * The land (17.3 acres) is primarily wetlands and cannot support any type of septic system because the water table is too high. Due to its location connecting to the town sewer system is not an option.

Conservation Easement

- * The USDA approved an application submitted by the church for a conservation easement purchase that will cover approximately 16 acres of the land; the church will continue to own and pay taxes on the property (taxes are assessed because the property is not used for religious purposes and is not contiguous to the land on which the church buildings sit).
- * A legal issue with a reversionary clause in one of the deeds has been resolved and the easement purchase will move forward over the next few months.

Solar Land Lease Agreement

- * The church has entered into a land lease agreement with Cornerstone Renewables who will install six (6) AllEarth trackers on a portion of the Baptist Lot that is not included in the conservation easement. The church will receive rent in an amount that is equal to 5% of the dollar value of the net metering credits generated by the trackers. The rent will help to offset the \$800 per year in taxes the church pays on the property.

Fundraisers 2024 Plant Sale

Online Perennials Sale

- * Over 1200 perennials sold to 138 community members
- * \$10,045 raised
- * 20 church members and friends dug plants, washed roots, and potted or wrapped them in damp newsprint
- * Numerous articles in local papers and Facebook, Instagram, and Front Porch Forum posts marketing the sale
- * Countless hours spent by Howdy Russell and Anne Donegan tending plants throughout the year, getting them ready for sale, and managing the whole operation



Plants and Pies Sale

On **Saturday, May 11th**, the day before Mother's Day, the Plant Sale continues with our in-person sale. There will be a large selection of annuals in full bloom, some select perennials, and pies. Don't miss it!

Lake Monsters Game

Take me out to the ballgame! On **Saturday, July 20th** join friends and family for a fun evening at the ballpark, and raise funds for the church, too. The church will receive \$4.00 for every ticket sold by **6:00 pm on July 2nd**. To purchase tickets [click here](#). The link is also on the home page of the church website (ucofh.org).



The poster features the 'Lake Monsters' logo in green and blue at the top. Below it, the text 'TICKET FUNDRAISER!' is written in large, bold, white letters. On the left side, there is a cartoon illustration of a green monster wearing a black and white baseball jacket. To the right of the monster, a white box contains the following text: 'United Church of Hinesburg', 'Sell your discounted grandstand tickets for \$8.00', and 'United Church of Hinesburg will receive \$4.00 for every ticket sold!!'. Below this box is a small illustration of a baseball. At the bottom left of the poster is a QR code. To the right of the QR code, the text reads: 'Saturday, July 20th', '6:05 PM First Pitch', and 'Scan to Purchase!'.

Personnel Committee Survey Results

Earlier this year the Personnel Committee (Dave Eddy, Sheri Brody Hanlon, and Laurie Locke) asked church community members to respond to a survey soliciting opinions and comments as they prepared for their annual review of church staff. As part of that survey, they asked “What keeps you coming to UCH or, if you are new, what drew you here?” and encouraged other comments. The overwhelming response was “community”. Specific comments included:

- I come because this community is my family. I need the worship and I need the personal connections.
- Meeting parents 1/2 way; community, friendship, welcoming, dinners, gatherings.
- Multi-generational connection; Coffee Hour.
- Nursery helping and coffee hour.
- The people and that we are all welcome. There is no pressure to believe a certain way.
- Over more than a decade the UCH Sunday celebrations have made me feel I am contributing in a variety of ways to ‘our’ community and the Hinesburg community in ways that feed the Spirit and the intellect.
- There is humor as well as joy and reverence.
- Great minister. Wonderful community. Liberal theology. Social mission. Welcoming congregation.
- Beautiful holy space.
- The people of our church, primarily, and the feeling of community and of belonging to something greater than me as an individual.

- I have been coming here since a child, I still come as an adult, gives me sense of community. I love the events and engaging with the community.
- Sense of community; music that is awesome; solid and positive leadership.
- Belonging, God, Committees, Volunteering.
- The location, fellowship, Sunday School, and of course, the best coffee hour in VT.
- The people of the church and its leadership. There truly is respect for others here.
- The community spirit, the folks in the congregation, Pastor Jared's interesting homilies and sense of humor, and the music.
- Missions and the status as open and affirming.
- The church is a strong force in the community. I love that we reach out to people and help as we can
- I wish more people could overcome whatever reluctances they have and come in our doors because if there ever was an antidote to the kind of loneliness and disconnection so much talked about these days, this communal "faith" experience is it.
- I feel so lucky to be a part of this amazing community. It provides a real anchor for me.
- Our church is the BEST!

Responses to the question "Is there anything UCH doesn't provide currently that you would like to see offered?" have been shared with the Board of Directors to consider as they set goals for the upcoming year.

2024 Youth Trip

"Intro to Service"



Summer youth service trips were a hallmark program of the United Church of Hinesburg before the pandemic. For several years, youth from Hinesburg, Shelburne, Williston, Monkton, Bristol, and Starksboro would take time during their busy summers to provide volunteer service hours for non-profit organizations in New York City, Boston, Maine, Puerto Rico, and other locations. In addition to volunteering for worthy causes and programs, young people were provided with an opportunity to dig deeper into big issues like rural poverty, food insecurity, animal welfare, and emergency relief. Experiences like these are life-shaping and character forming.

That is why I am excited that we are restarting the summer youth service trip program this June. Ten of our young people will spend the week of June 16th in Boston, Massachusetts providing service and volunteer hours to a range of worthy non-profit organizations. Because this year's kiddos are young, our summer trip focus will be an introduction to service. Youth will have some say in the organizations that we work with. In the past, we have worked with animal shelters, a service dog training center, food pantries, racial justice organizations, LGBTQ youth centers, Just Peace organizations, watershed associations, free meal programs, and many others.

As we have done in the past, we will keep you all up to date on our activities by posting daily to the UCH Facebook page.

If you have any questions, please contact me. If you would be willing to support the youth trip financially, consider writing a check to the United Church of Hinesburg with "2024 Youth Trip" in the memo.

More to come!

Pastor Jared

Youth Program Investment Fund

As a truly multi-generational church, we take joy in our children and youth programs. These programs have rebounded well after the pandemic and now need greater attention.

The Youth Program Investment Fund was established in 2017 through a bequest from the Polly Quinn estate. The fund is intended to support youth programming at the United Church. Consistent with other church investments, the funds are held in Socially Responsible Investments (SRI), which include companies that have positive environmental, social and governance characteristics. As of March 31, 2024 the fund was valued at \$20,217.

We are looking to grow this fund over the next few years to help provide long-term financial support for our youth programs. If you would like more information on how you can be part of this effort, contact our treasurer, Yvonne Whitaker, through the church office.

Community News

The Red Cross holds blood drives at the church three times a year, in coordination with blood drives at St. Jude's Church. The next UCH drive is scheduled for Tuesday, July 16th from noon to 4:30 pm. Blood donors are urgently needed to help ensure patients at hospitals across the country continue to receive critical medical care.

To schedule an appointment, go to www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive or call 1-800-RED CROSS.

Church Membership



Are you interested in becoming a member of the United Church?

Joining a church is one way of acknowledging the bond between individuals and a community of faith. When new members join, the entire community has the opportunity to pledge their care, support and commitment to the new member and the new member does the same.

If you are new to the United Church of Hinesburg and are interested in learning more about the church and/or joining as a member, please contact Pastor Jared at revjared@gmavt.net or the church office at 802-482-3352 or unitedchurch@gmavt.net

Calendar

Saturday, May 11th ~ 9 to noon ~ Plants and Pies Sale

Sunday, June 2nd ~ Sunday School end-of-year celebration

Sunday, June 9th ~ after church ~ Annual Meeting

June 16th – June 20th ~ HYP Trip to Boston

June 24th – August 25th ~ Pastor Jared's sabbatical

July 20th ~ Lake Monsters Ticket Fundraiser Game (purchase tickets by July 2nd)

Donating to the United Church of Hinesburg and Updating Your Automatic Donation

Thank you for your continued support of our church. If you are not taking advantage of the convenience and ease of electronic giving, we encourage you to consider it. Set up a one-time or monthly donation from a bank account or with a credit card by scanning the QR code with your phone or going to the Donate page on the church website, www.ucofh.org/donate.



If you make an automatic donation to the church from a bank account or with a credit card and would like to change the amount or the account, how you set up your donation will determine how you accomplish that:

- If you used your bank's bill pay system, contact your bank
- If you completed a form authorizing Vanco, our payment processing service, to pull the funds from your bank account, submit a new form (available from the church office)
- If you set up your donation through the Donate page on the church website (www.ucofh.org/donate):
 - log in to your account and click Profile
 - click the Edit button below your scheduled transaction
 - make your changes, and save.

If you have any questions about electronic giving or your donations, contact the church office.

Contact Information

The United Church of Hinesburg

Pastor: Reverend Jared M. Hamilton

Pastor's Email: revjared@gmavt.net

Office Email: unitedchurch@gmavt.net

Office Phone: 802-482-3352

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 9 AM to noon, and by appointment

Website: www.ucofh.org

We are a welcoming and inclusive community where all are invited to connect, serve, worship, celebrate, learn, and grow with God's help.

Please help keep our records current by contacting the UCH Office with changes to your e-mail or mailing address. Thank you!