



UNITED CHURCH OF HINESBURG

Monday, August 23, 2021

Newsletter –September 2021

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Pastor's Page

We Do Not Bear These Burdens Equally

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”
Galatians 6:2

It was a great joy to return from my two-month sabbatical to in-person worship. Specifically, I was moved when we sang our opening hymn together on August 1st because congregational singing has been one of the most valued community activities I’ve missed during the pandemic. Even though I place myself squarely in the “can’t carry a tune in a bucket” category, music and singing in worship preaches to my heart in ways that simple words cannot.

I could not know that our ability to sing as a congregation would be so short lived. Community singing is what’s been dubbed a “super-spreader” activity, and by August 15th we made the decision to forgo hymn singing until the COVID-19 Delta variant surge runs its course. It’s a bummer. We will, however, have wonderful music offerings during worship, and plan to feature some of that special music during our online worship services held at noon on Sundays on Zoom.

We’re entering into the 18th month of the pandemic in the US. It has been wearing on all of us, but there have been moments when life felt kind of normal. As folks got vaccinated in Vermont, some of us were able to see family and friends again, plan outings, and feel a little more relaxed. Recently, the Delta variant has halted much of this, and many of us, who have not experienced the pandemic up close, now feel the strains the pandemic has put on our community.

Yet, there are solid reasons why we remain hopeful. The Delta variant surge is expected to burn itself out relatively quickly, within the next month or two. And there’s more. In a recent article at Mother Jones entitled, “[Despair Not! Vaccination Rates Continue to Rise](#),” Sinduja Rangarajan noted that as of early August, more people in the US were fully vaccinated than unvaccinated. Vaccination rates are now climbing again, and states with the highest vaccination rates (like Vermont) are experiencing significantly less hospitalizations and COVID-related deaths than states with lower vaccination rates.

Yet, while some are a little inconvenienced or bummed out about the recent setback, there are others in our community and around the world that must navigate this recent surge while balancing other significant life events. Recently a close friend, moved to a new town, and began preparing her classroom as a first-year teacher. She was informed by her mother a few weeks ago that her father would be placed in palliative care. Her father contracted COVID-19 in March and has been in and out of the hospital and rehabilitation centers for over five months in another state. She's juggled all this as a single parent of two young children. Under normal circumstances, these major life events would be difficult. The pandemic has made matters even more challenging.

There are others we should be thinking of too. In other parts of the world, people are navigating wildfires, and the loss of homes and communities during a pandemic. In Haiti, thousand are unable to meet their most basic daily needs during the pandemic because of a recent earthquake. And in Afghanistan, the pandemic rages as the Taliban return to power, threatening the recent gains made in women's rights and education.

As we consider how the recent surge affects us, we also think of those who bear far more of the burden of this pandemic, but not for our own encouragement or inspiration, thinking, "at least we don't have it that bad." Rather, we think of others, and work for others because that is what people of faith do. Our faith challenges us to bear the burdens of others as a spiritual practice.

If you know someone that has been particularly affected by the accumulated effects of life events and the recent surge, figure out how you might help. You might also consider how you can help those hit by wildfires by giving money and other goods through the Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.org/about-us/our-work/disaster-relief/wildfire-relief.html>. If you are looking to help those hurting from the earthquake in Haiti, consider the United Church of Christ's Haiti Appeal, which seeks to raise \$100,000 for immediate relief and long-term recovery here: <https://www.ucc.org/ucc-haiti-appeal/>. If you would like to support women and children in Afghanistan during the current humanitarian crisis, our own Meaghan McKenna, who worked in a women's leadership program in Afghanistan in 2015 has organized a fundraiser for the not-for-profit organization Women for Afghan Women. You can help by following this link: <https://www.facebook.com/donate/362911535502124/>.

May we all work toward the healing and good health of all God's creation.

Blessings,

Pastor Jared

"Think of Others"

By Mahmoud Darwish (from *Almond Blossoms and Beyond*, Interlink Books, 2010)

As you prepare your breakfast, think of others
(don't forget to feed the pigeons).

As you conduct your wars, think of others
(don't forget those who want peace).

As you pay your water bill, think of others
(those who only have clouds to drink from).

As you go home, your own home, think of others
(don't forget those who live in tents).

As you sleep and count the planets, think of others
(there are people who have no place to sleep).

As you liberate yourself with metaphors, think of others
(those who have lost their right to speak.)

And as you think of distant others think of yourself
and say *"I wish I were a candle in the darkness."*

Christian Education

In response to the uncertainty around increasing COVID cases in our area, the Christian Education Committee will be focusing on planning several outdoor family activities to bring children and families together in a fun and safe way this fall.

The first outing will be a FAMILY OUTDOOR MOVIE NIGHT on **Friday, September 10th** - more details to follow. Other possible activities include: apple picking, pumpkin carving, and community service projects.

We will continue to evaluate the safety of resuming indoor weekly Sunday school as the situation evolves and the vaccine becomes available to our younger children.

Staff/Parish Relations Committee

Administrative Assistant Position

The Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is pleased to announce that Barbara Haggard of Starksboro has accepted the Administrative Assistant position. She will start on Tuesday, September 7th; her regular hours will be Monday - Thursday, 9:00 AM to noon. Barbara, recently retired after over 40 years as a legal assistant, is looking forward to working with us. A more complete introduction to Barbara will be included in next month's newsletter.

Christian Education Coordinator Position

The Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) has posted a job description for the Christian Education Coordinator position. [Click here to view the job description](#). The committee encourages you to share this announcement with anyone who might be interested. Resumes and cover letters can be emailed to the church (unitedchurch@gmavt.net) or mailed to the church office (PO Box 39, Hinesburg, 05461).

Worship

Deacon* Volunteers Needed

Want to help the United Church despite having limited time? We are starting a Deacon program to help with Sunday services and now looking for a few volunteers to join our team. Don't worry, the time commitment is

minimal, and the tasks are easy. David Eddy and I have been developing this program over the summer and now understand what tasks are needed and how to do them. We are ready for volunteers to join our team.

Why do we need Deacons? A few years ago, we realized there were several tasks associated with opening and closing the Sanctuary prior to and immediately after Sunday services. These were being done by Jared. It seemed unfair to have him worrying about these tasks when our Pastor should be focusing on service preparation and interacting with participants. So, we thought others should take care of these tasks (Ta Da - Deacons!).

What is the commitment of time?

We want to have 4-5 Deacons and since we only need one Deacon on any Sunday, Deacons only need to commit to about 1 Sunday/month. The time commitment is 8:45 to 11:30am. We'll make a schedule so you can sign up for the Sunday you choose and if something comes up, no problem, we can be very flexible.

What skills are required? Pretty Simple. The primary tasks include unlocking the church, verifying the heat is working and the walkway is safe (sanding), turning the lights and sound system. At the end of the service, we shut windows, turn off lights, etc. and lock the Sanctuary. Those who are interested can be trained in less than 30 minutes. We have an established check list and description of tasks so you can feel confident on remembering how and what to do.

So, what do you think? We encourage anyone who is interested to call or email Phil Pouech, 482-2060 / ppouech@gmavt.net or David Eddy, 482-2645 / davideddy09@gmail.com. We can give you more details and answer your question. Thanks

* "Deacon" has different meanings in different faith communities. Currently, we are using the term to describe someone that helps facilitate in person worship services during the pandemic.

Finance

Financial Update

Below is a summary of church budgeted income and expenses through June 30, 2021 for the fiscal year which began July 1, 2020.

	Fiscal YTD	% of Budget
Income	\$153,973	102%
Expenses	\$152,688	101%

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional detail.

Yvonne Whitaker, Treasurer

FY22 Budget

The Church Council has passed an FY22 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022) budget of \$169,916. Details will be presented at this fall's Annual Meeting.

Yvonne Whitaker, Treasurer

Property and Grounds

“Baptist Lot” Update

The Trustees have been working with the USDA to conserve a large portion of what is known as the “Baptist Lot” just south of the Hinesburg Community School. We submitted an application last year and were not selected due to funding. The application received preliminary approval this year and we are going through the approval process which will take at least 12 months. More to come on this in the future.

We have also been working with Lewis Creek Association, their engineer, our neighbors and the Town to transform part of the former soccer field behind the Parish House into wetlands to help alleviate some of the stormwater problems with the town. This is in conjunction with our Green Space team which is developing plans for the soccer field as a green space for the church (see following article).

Andrea Morgante has been instrumental and a big help with both of these projects.

If you have any question, please contact Andy Seaton at aseaton@pcconstruction.com.

UCH Green Space

For many years the Iroquois Soccer League maintained and utilized the field that UCH owns behind the Parish Hall. With the development of the Bissonette recreation area, their games have moved to those fields. The Trustees took over the maintenance of our field and it has been and will continue to be mowed.

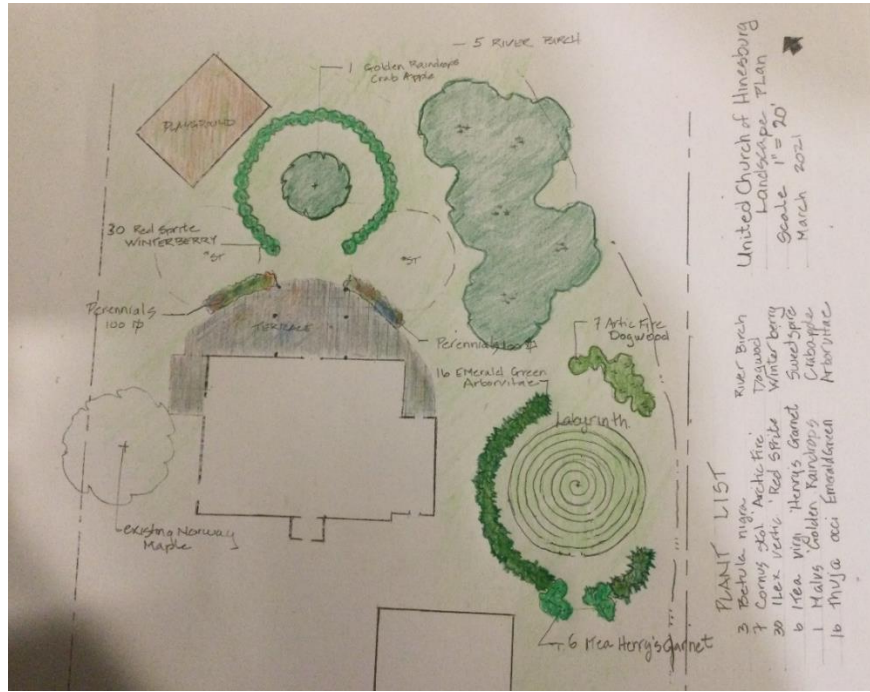
In conjunction with the UCH centennial celebration planning two years ago there was discussion and a general proposal to reclaim this field to create a contemplative green space. Ideas included trees, benches, garden type spaces and possibly some type of labyrinth. The thought was that, by creating a new use for this land, it be a demonstration of our commitment to a sustainable future and support our vision and mission statements. With our location in the heart of the village, we expect this would serve as a gathering place for many events including outdoor worship services.

A team of folks including Howdy Russell, Heidi Simkins, Andy Seaton and Mary Eddy Stewart have been working with Andrea Morgante to develop a master plan for this area in the context of our overall property and our physical location in the heart of the community. During this process a grant was received for the design of a wetland restoration project. The grant covered the cost of the project design and included working with the appropriate parties including the town and our neighbors.

A sketch of the preliminary Green Space design is below. The details continue to be worked out in conjunction with the wetland restoration design plan.

In a parallel process to the Green Space master plan design, there has been work done on identifying Phase I funding for this project and a plan will be developed for fundraising for this and other needed capital improvement projects for the church, parish hall and grounds.

The Steering Committee has been apprised of the work throughout the process and the Green Space Team will review the planning work to date at this fall’s Annual Meeting (not yet scheduled).



Lawn Mowing Schedule



Thank you to our faithful lawn mowers! The September volunteers are:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| August 26 – September 1 | Phil Pouech |
| September 2 – September 8 | John & Sally Mead |
| September 9 – September 15 | Ken Cudney |
| September 16 – September 22 | Bill Baker |
| September 23 – September 29 | Matt Sayre |

Community Events

Fall Festival – Save the Date!

Plans are underway for a Fall Festival at UCH on Saturday, September 25th. More information to come in the weekly update.

Pride Vermont Parade in Burlington

The Pride Parade is **Sunday, September 5th**, starting at **12:30 pm**. First Congregational Church of Burlington (38 South Winooski Avenue) has invited UCC churches for a pre-parade gathering at 11:30 am on their front yard – their parking lot is available (there is also street parking and a parking garage across the street with an entrance on Cherry Street). At 12 pm, head over to the Hood Plant parking lot on King St to line up. The parade route goes up Church Street, then follows Pearl Street to Battery Park.

Individual walkers from UCC congregations throughout Vermont are welcome to join in with the larger UCC group of congregations and walk jointly as a United Church of Christ contingent.

Silent Vigil for Racial Justice

First Congregational Church of Burlington is hosting a Silent Vigil for Racial Justice, also on Sunday September 5th from 1:30 to 2 pm on their lawn – all are welcome to participate.

COVID-19 Memorial

To honor Vermonters lost to COVID-19 and to process our grief, Vermont Interfaith Action is hosting a memorial service on the Vermont Statehouse Lawn in Montpelier at 3 pm., Sunday, Sept. 19. The heart of the event will be a ceremonial reading of the names so that each individual who has died of COVID-19 is recognized. In addition, various clergy will offer brief interfaith prayers and readings. Governor Phil Scott has been invited to participate. For more information, contact Debbie at debbie@viavt.org or 802-651-8889.

Calendar

September 6: Labor Day; office closed

September 10: CE Family Outdoor Movie Night

September 25: Fall Festival

November 1: Red Cross Blood Drive

Contact Information

The United Church of Hinesburg

Pastor: Reverend Jared M. Hamilton

Pastor's Email: revjared@gmavt.net

Administrative Support: Yvonne Whitaker

Office Email: unitedchurch@gmavt.net

Office Phone: 802-482-3352

Office Hours: call or email for us during the pandemic

Website: www.ucofh.org