

The NCC UCC *LIFELINE*

May/June 2017

Pastor's Thoughts

Unless the Lord builds the house, they who build it labor in vain; unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain.

– Psalm 127:1

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it.

– I Corinthians 3:10

It has been lots of fun to delve into the history of our 200 year old sanctuary. As I have mentioned in previous articles, the building of this structure was contentious rather than smooth. Residents in different parts of the town of Norwich had strong feelings about the location of a meeting house. As I read about this, it brings up the question: is a church a building or a group of people? And what defines belonging?

1816 was “the Year without a Summer” in Vermont: a stressful time when people were pushed to the edge of survival by crop failure. At the same time, territory seemed to be opening up to the West following the end of the War of 1812. I am sure it was time of fear and confusion, crisis and possibility. Did these things factor in to the mood of some in the town when a new, larger meeting house structure was proposed on Union Village Road? Did the citizens who lived on the plain feel that this unsettled time was their opportunity to make a change? Who knows the exact motivation? But, at first, it was just a question of the best location for a structure, not the gathering of an entirely new congregation.

In any case, Joseph and John Emerson began getting subscriptions, or pledges, for construction of a meeting house on the plain in the early months of 1817, while a committee of those who favored the original site (across from the Zea's house on Union Village Road) were arranging for their own construction materials. Suppliers must have been very happy! Work on both new meeting houses began in the spring of 1817. There were not 2 congregations, just 2 sites and 2 groups that could not agree. The minister warned that the town could not support 2 structures. Nevertheless, they persisted ☺

That same minister, the Rev. James W. Woodward, preached the dedicatory sermon in our sanctuary on November 20, 1817. Naturally, the split between the 2 camps of builders was on his mind, and he said, “I forbear to recall to your recollection the unpleasant circumstances which have led to the erection of two buildings for religious purposes, attended with obvious disadvantages to each other. With pleasure, I would rather refer you to former days of union and peace, when we went in company to the house of God...” Six weeks later, the same minister preached the dedicatory sermon at the *other* meeting house, the home of what was called “the First Religious Society.” I imagine he must have felt a little exhausted at being pulled in both directions.

Even though our sanctuary dates from 1817, a “church” in the sense of a gathered congregation did not exist until the South Congregational Church of Norwich was organized on July 19, 1819 with eleven members. It seems almost incredible, in retrospect, that this large building project was undertaken with so few people willing to become members at the start. Although more people slowly joined in the next few years, it seems that the First or North Church remained the larger of the two for some time. As the center of activity grew around our

building on the “Plain,” the North Church eventually became so financially strapped that it became necessary to close and “dissolve” as a congregation. After dismissing their last pastor in 1853, their meeting house was dismantled, the components sold, and the remaining members transferred their membership down to “our” church. You could say that those Emerson brothers had “won,” though I don’t think that they were still alive to enjoy their victory.

Another noteworthy historical fact is that there have been many years the last 200 years when there was no settled pastor here. Preaching was done by “supply” preachers, often professors or students from Dartmouth. For instance, from 1840 to 1853, six different men preached, but no one was called as a permanent pastor. The church thrived under mostly lay leadership. To me this is a sign of strength. So often these days, we attribute the health and vitality (or lack of it) to the work of the current pastor, and the “value” of a church in its physical plant. Clearly other measures for church life are needed.

Another not-so-obvious feature of our beautiful historical space: there have been changes and renovations going on continually over the years. In 1872, all the windows on the north side of the sanctuary were closed in. In 1908, funded, as many of the changes were, by the Ladies Aid Society, extensive interior remodeling was done, including moving the organ, adding the Greek Revival trim behind the pulpit, shortening the balconies so that they did not run all the way to the north wall, AND replacing the original pews with our current ones. We often think that the church has “always looked this way,” but this is not true. I wonder what improvement we might decide to make...and what our descendants will think of them?

Perhaps there are both spiritual and practical lessons to be learned from our history. Many of our ancestors in faith emphasized the scriptural teaching “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built!” (I Kings 8:27) Still, they struggled with each other about how and where to meet God. They spoke and taught the words of Jesus, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” Still they accused each other of underhand practices and questionable motives. Perhaps it is just in our human nature to bend Scripture or religious precepts for our own benefit. Belonging, or membership in the body of the Church, offers a check on selfishness and pride. It is by deep listening to each other and deep devotion to “the Lord who builds the house” that our congregational heritage, our Christian faith, and our common hopes will be realized.
Mary

SAVE THE DATE!

*The Norwich Congregational Church, UCC
would like to invite you to our*

200th Anniversary

Homecoming Celebration

*6 pm, Saturday, September 16:
Food, Song, Friends, Memories*

*10 am, Sunday September 17:
Worship*

More details to follow -- Please come!

200th Anniversary Event Update

The NCC UCC 200th anniversary committee is preparing a self-guided tour/scavenger hunt to be available beginning this summer. This will be a printed, with photos, resource for folks to personally explore NCC's heritage in the church building, in the photo exhibit, and in Norwich itself. When this resource is published, we will let folks know where they can pick up a copy!



Easter Morning – Flowering of the Cross

Aging in Place Norwich and the Norwich Congregational Church UCC present

*Healing the Body Healing the Soul:
Exploring the Spiritual Dimensions of Health
Care*

At the Norwich Congregational
Church, UCC May 15 at 7pm.

This panel will be held in memory of Dennis
McCullough MD

Panelists: Lori Harding, RN, co-director of the
Upper Valley Community Nursing Project,
Joseph F O'Donnell MD, Geisel Medical School,
Rev. Frank Macht, DHMC Chaplain and
Elizabeth McGrath, RN, DHMC.

Pam McCullough will read one of her poems to
start the proceedings. There will be refreshments
after the presentations

Donations gratefully accepted.

NCC Summer Camp 2017, June 26-30, 1:00-4:00pm, Ages: 5-11

Norwich Congregational Church 200th Anniversary Celebration History Camp

Call Church Office at [802-649-1433](tel:802-649-1433) to register

Our Paul Revere bell is calling all kids ages 5-11!! Come join us for an 'nontraditional' church summer camp. As part of the 200th anniversary celebration of the Norwich Congregational Church, we are pleased to offer a history focused summer camp. Campers will:

- Learn about the history of the church in Norwich
- Learn historical games, crafts, and songs
- Meet some historical visitors from the past
- Visit the Norwich Historical Society
- Have a ton of fun!!!

Update from Ministry of Building and Finance

We have been busy with maintenance work for the church and parish hall. This is our 200th anniversary year, and we are considering how to beautify and restore our beautiful sanctuary, as well as make our other spaces more useful.

- ❖ In March, we purchased a new dishwasher for the kitchen. The donated one has stopped working. The new one has an automatic soap dispenser, and washing up means just pushing a button.
- ❖ We are planning new flooring for the parish hall and hallway. The existing tiles are beginning to deteriorate. A new vinyl planking product that looks like maple has been chosen and will be installed within the next 2 months. This will involve some inconvenience while those spaces are unusable. The installation is scheduled to start on Monday, May 22 and continue for 10-12 days.
- ❖ The “terrace” area has been graded so that the doors leading outside from the east side of the parish hall will exit onto a safer, smoother grass terrace. Steps will be constructed as well.
- ❖ We have received an assessment of the stained glass behind the pulpit done by Greg Gorman and Kathy Chapman. It is deteriorating and will require rebuilding for a cost of about \$18,750. Funding is not yet established.
- ❖ We contacted the Preservation Trust of Vermont to find someone who could do an assessment of the sanctuary windows. Sally Fishburn did the assessment as well as an estimate of restoration costs. Our windows date from the 1817 construction of the church. Restoration would include weather stripping for energy efficiency. This is a sizeable project, but seems appropriate to undertake in our 200th anniversary year. Funding is to be determined. If any church members would like to “sponsor” a window so that it could last another 200 years, or make a donation to the window fund, please contact the Ministry of Building and Finance via the church office. An estimated cost of restoration per window is \$1800.
- ❖ We are considering how to deal with the worn carpet in the sanctuary, either with replacing with similar carpeting or some other option.

Input to any of the Ministry members is encouraged.

Mary Brownlow, Brooke Trottier, Joanne Egner, John Langhus, Doug James, Dick Broussard

Draft Church Council Minutes from April 9, 2017

Present: Ryan Calsbeek (Chair CC), Willemien Miller (VChair CC), Brittny Calsbeek (Ed.), Terri Ashley (Outreach), John Langhus (Building&Finance), Christopher Ashley (Worship), Hill White, Mary Brownlow, (Pastor)

-Meeting opened with a prayer led by Mary.

Minutes from April 19, 2017 were accepted.

Reports:

-Building&Finance: The replacement of the Parish Hall and hallway floor is proceeding with vinyl maple planking, estimated to cost less than \$20,000. The discussion of the Sanctuary carpet replacement was continuing with the need to first consider the possibility of changing to movable pews. The stained glass window repair estimate was \$18,000.

-Outreach: They had not met since the last CC meeting.

-Worship & Care: Their meeting included a discussion of music and choir recruitment needs. They are working on revising the pew cards and writing protocols for volunteer tasks. They agreed to provide the words to the chants sung in our services or to put their page numbers into the bulletin.

Education: The committee is looking for volunteer help/support in the nursery, in the Sunday School, on Easter, and for Children's' Sunday. An adult education program is being planned. A pizza night for parents on the topic of "How to Talk About God with Kids" is scheduled. An updated child protection policy- ratio guidelines, child safety, etc. is being discussed. The possibility of keeping children in church on Sundays over the summer was discussed.

Discussion:

The decision making process for the Sanctuary carpet replacement/ pew configuration was discussed. There was CC support for a process to involve our wider congregation (examples: cottage meetings, outreach, budget discussions, decision at annual meeting, working group, etc.) in these matters. It was recognized that this discussion could create divisions within our church. This led to a more general discussion of processes, roles, and responsibilities in congregational decision making. Ryan will contact Tom Kinder at the Bradford UCC and Nancy Brown, the consultant they used, to explore an educational effort to help the entire congregation create a process that allows for discussions including different view points that bring us together as opposed to dividing us.

We were reminded to submit bullet points from the Ministry meetings for the Church Council meeting.

Next CC meetings: May 21, 2017 and June 18, 2017 after worship.

Submitted by Christopher Ashley



From the April 2017 Trip to the Dominican Republic

Update from Rita Severinghaus on DR Projects

I am absolutely overwhelmed by the generosity and support received towards our mission efforts in the Dominican Republic. Our two teams, aided by another 15 on the ground professionals and friends will be installing a middle school library and at the same time run a health clinic where we will screen for diabetes, hypertension, respiratory concerns, and distribute vitamins to women and children.

You may have questions about education and health needs in a society where its history is tarnished by a 31-year dictatorship, today attempting to live by democratic principles. Over the years I have compiled data on the Dominican educational system from various sources. More recently, my daughter Elysa whose field is Education decided to tackle and update some of my information.

Although finding limited reliable sources, the quoted stats claim to be from either UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, UNDP...with no concrete references or citations.

- **Quality of Education:** The Dominican Republic ranks **143rd** in quality of primary education and **137th** in quality of the educational system overall, out of **144** countries worldwide (World Economic Forum Report 2012-2013). The Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo reported in 2011 that the average incoming student tests at a sixth grade level; meaning it takes 12 years to achieve the equivalent of a sixth grade education in the Dominican Republic (Center for International Development at Harvard University 2011).
- **Public Investment in Education:** The Dominican Republic's public investment in education is **2.2%** of their gross domestic product in 2012, which puts the country at the 21st percentile in public spending on education (World Development Indicators 2013). In 2014, the government committed to increase that spending to 4% of their gross domestic product, the percentage mandated by a 1997 law that the government had previously not been following - updated data is not yet available.
- **Gaps between high income and low income communities:** The biggest gaps in school enrollment are between the high income and low income populations. In secondary school, 9% of students in the top income quintile are not enrolled in formal schooling, while 36% of students in the bottom income quintile not enrolled. (Demographic and Health Survey 2007)
- **Student-Teacher Ratio and Teacher Training:** The ratio of teachers to students ranges from 1:24 in primary school to 1:30 in secondary school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012). In public schools with 500 students or more (accounting for 68 percent of total enrollment in public schools), the student-teacher ratio is 78:1 (USAID 2010). Teachers often do not have the preparation necessary to teach their students, are paid far below a living wage (approx \$268/month), and thus are unable to afford official certification to be put on an official payscale (Education in Crisis 2012).
- **Primary education enrollment and completion:** Primary school enrollment is often reported above 100% due to the high number of students above primary school age who are still enrolled in the primary grades. Only 81% of male students and 86% of female students are expected to complete 5th grade. (Education Policy and Data Center 2011) For every **100** Dominican children entering formal education, only **75 complete grade 4**; 63 complete grade 6 and only 52 complete the 8-year primary level. This situation is even worse in rural areas where most schools stop at grade 5.
- **Secondary education enrollment and completion:** The Dominican Republic secondary school enrollment rate is 58% for boys and 66% for girls. (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012). Only 12% of low-income students who start high school will complete their studies, compared to 62% of those from higher income brackets in the DR.
- **Serving students with special needs:** The 2010 Dominican Census indicated that 12.3 percent of the population, or 1.1 million people, have some kind of disability. A United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) study, published in December 2012, reported that 70 percent of children wit

Our hope is that with vitamin supplementation now funded through a grant from Vitamin Angels, children's nutrition improves from survival to thriving, and that this second school library installation instills and nourishes an early curiosity in reading and a hunger for more.

The Norwich Congregational Church, UCC
presents



A Choir Focusing
on Music from the
African and African
American Traditions



Penn State University's Essence of Joy is conducted by
Dr. Anthony T. Leach. We are happy to host them
on their return journey from a Canadian tour.

Thursday May 18. at 7:30 pm
15 Church Street, Norwich, VT

Come be inspired!
Admission is free
All are welcome!

Music Notes from Kathy Sherlock

In March, I had the pleasure of traveling to the National American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) National Conference in Minneapolis with Ella Caterini, Ani Menkov, Stella Menkov, and their mothers Molly Caterini and Meg Menkov. Ella, Ani, and Stella had all earned a spot to represent NCC in the prestigious Children's Honor Choir which would be rehearsing and performing over a period of four days. In the meantime I would be attending conference performances, interest sessions, discussion panels and exhibits all related to the art of choral singing across the generations.

The journey started last September when the three girls prepared for and made their audition recordings. This year they were required to learn an excerpt from Handel's "Sound the Trumpet." We recorded several files onto a digital recorder and chose the best ones to upload to the conference website. All three girls had participated in previous ACDA Honor Choirs but that is never a guarantee for acceptance. We received the roster of accepted singers in early November. That's when the real work began. A packet of music arrived which had to be learned and memorized in a little more than three months. The repertoire this year included works in sung in Latin, German, Russian and Hungarian. There was a Bach duet to learn as well as a classic three-part rendition of Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy complete with choreography. With the help of rehearsal sound files, parental tutoring (thank-you so much Meg), and several Friday afternoon group practice sessions, the girls were in good shape come travel time.

After checking into their hotel the night before, the Caterinis and Menkovs went right to work on Wednesday morning registering and going through the re-audition process to gain a permanent chair in the Honor Choir. Rehearsals also began that day, which were several hours long with a few short breaks in between. Meg and Molly were responsible for feeding their girls during all meal breaks. This was pretty much the routine for the next three days. We discovered that our hotel was connected via Skyway to several shopping and food establishments. The Skyway also provided a 20 minute walk to the Conference Center and Orchestra Hall where I would spend most of my days.

Participating in the Honor Choir provides young singers with the opportunity to work with world class conductors (Joan Gregoryk this year) in a setting with other highly motivated young people from all over the U.S. The repertoire is both challenging and fun, designed to provide the singers with an experience to stretch and inspire them. Choral composers are also on hand to work with students. Andrea Ramsey paid a visit to help out with her composition "The Gift to Sing." The culminating event was a set of early morning concerts for conference attendees and parents. The first concert was in the beautiful Minneapolis Orchestra Hall. The second was at the Conference Center Auditorium. The girls were done by 11:00 on Saturday morning so it was off to The Mall of America to celebrate with their moms. I had more conference to attend and then a dinner date with some old friends who lived in the area. We all had flights out on Sunday morning and made our way back to NH without too much trouble.

I have been taking young singers to ACDA Conferences almost every year since 2006. I've traveled with our NCC youth to New York City, Hartford CT, Philadelphia, Chicago, Providence, Dallas, Baltimore, Salt Lake City, Boston, and now Minneapolis. Next year will be an Eastern Division Conference set for Pittsburg, PA. For those capable and lucky enough to experience an ACDA Honor Choir, it is an experience of a lifetime that infuses their work back home. It takes a lot discipline, effort, and supportive parents but I think all would overwhelmingly agree that the opportunity is unmatched both in terms of quality and impact. As long as I continue to work with young singers at our church, I will offer to sponsor them for future ACDA Honor Choirs.



Outreach Ministries – Mission Offering May – June 2017

As a member of Feeding America, Vermont Foodbank's Mission is to gather and share quality food and nurture partnerships so that no one in Vermont will go hungry.

Thousands of our neighbors struggle to meet their food needs. Each year the Vermont Foodbank and their network of partners throughout the state serve as many as 153,000 Vermonters in need of emergency food assistance.

Food insecurity is when a family or an individual is unable to obtain enough safe and nutritious food from socially acceptable sources in order to lead an active and healthy life.



There are thousands of our Vermont neighbors – including children, seniors and working families – who are unable to put enough food on the table. Visits to their local food shelves can help with this shortfall, and that’s where the Foodbank comes in.



VT Foodbank acquires and distributes food to 225 network partners around the state – food shelves, pantries, senior meal programs and other community meal sites – enabling Vermonters in need to eat.

Vermont Foodbank Programs

Food Distribution - The core function of the Vermont Foodbank is to provide food to a network of 225 food shelves, meal sites, senior centers and after-school programs.

VeggieVanGo™ is a program of the Vermont Foodbank that delivers fresh produce to schools and hospitals. The aim of the program is to provide enough fruits and vegetables to sustain a healthy lifestyle.



delivers fresh produce to program is to provide cannot afford to buy a healthy lifestyle.

Backpack Program - For most kids, a backpack might contain books. For children participating in the BackPack Program, it means much more: a weekend with a full belly.



The **Community Kitchen Academy (CKA)** prepares underemployed and unemployed Vermonters for careers in the food service industry.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a USDA nutrition program which offers free monthly nutrition information and nutritious foods to income-eligible senior citizens.



3SquaresVT, also known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps low-income people and families buy the food they need.

farms

The Gleaning Program organizes groups of volunteers to harvest and gather excess produce from



VT Fresh increases access to fresh fruits and vegetables by offering at food shelves.



to fresh fruits and cooking demos & taste tests to visitors

Collective Impact brings people together, in a structured way, to achieve social change

For more information: <http://www.vtfoodbank.org/>

To donate, use the yellow Mission envelopes in the pews



Norwich Congregational Church
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**AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION
WORSHIPING ON SUNDAYS AT 10 AM**