

The Star



PUBLISHED FOR THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF GRACE CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, RUTLAND, VERMONT

In-Person Worship to Resume at Grace!



We are thrilled to announce that Grace Church reopened its building to small church groups on Wednesday, June 17, the start of a phased reopening plan.

Worship services will resume in the Sanctuary on June 28!

The phased plan will allow for low density, low contact gatherings first, to be followed by other activities as deemed safe by the Church Council.

To view details of the plan, see pages 4-5.

We understand that not everyone will feel comfortable coming back to worship in person right away. Know that we support you in your decision! For that reason, we will continue to offer the same online worship options as have been in place since the start of the quarantine: services on our website and Facebook pages, and PEG TV (channel 1075) versions on Sunday at 11:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.

To resume your small group meeting at Grace, please call or email Kit at the Church Office (775.4301, kit@gracechurchvt.org) to be put on the calendar. We are requiring 48 hours between meetings in the same room, so meeting spaces may have to change.

Looking forward to being together in worship soon!

July Worship at Grace

July 5 Rev. Holly Ross Noble, preaching
Communion Sunday; Food Shelf Sunday
Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30; Psalm 104:1, 14-24
Lost in Wonder

July 12 Rev. Holly Ross Noble, preaching
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23
Tending the Garden

July 19 Rev. Holly Ross Noble, preaching
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; Mark 10:17-31
The Kingdom – In or Out?

July 26 Rev. Holly Ross Noble, preaching
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-49a
Leaven for the Future

A Word from our Pastor...

Shooting Stars, Fireflies, and Bats



Did anyone see “shooting stars” on June 19 around 11:30 p.m.? The next day someone told me they saw about half a dozen around that time! Now I love a meteor shower more than fireworks; and knowing that meteor showers are seldom a one night occurrence, I looked up to see when I might see them the next night. I awoke just before “peak time”. I went down to the dock to get an unrestricted view. I decided to lie down so I could see the whole sky at once. Sure enough, there was the Milky Way and a gazillion stars. I watched...and I watched...and I watched...

Nothing was happening...or was it? I heard various kinds of frogs croaking and being answered. I heard a barred owl off in the distance. I heard a fish break the surface of the water, catching a late night snack. I reached down and felt the cool water run through my fingers. I shined my flashlight into the water and saw a sunfish guarding her eggs. I smelled the remnants of a neighbor’s campfire. I saw a bat whiz past overhead. But no meteors.... Oh, wait! There’s one! I think...and then again! No, it was a lone firefly in the night.

I decided I had better get back to bed... I had waited half an hour... but as I climbed back into bed, I realized I really wasn’t disappointed. Meteors, while fascinating...are a sign of death... the meteor is falling to the earth...in a last display of brilliance. But everything I had experienced that night were signs of life! I was especially thrilled to see the bat and the firefly. Both have been on the decline and I haven’t seen nearly as many as I used to see decades ago... but they were there that night. And that gave my heart hope.

Maybe next time I will see meteors. I love the Perseid Shower that comes around August 11. But in the meantime, I will cling to signs of life that are all around me. Let us all pause and give thanks.

Holly



Congratulations Graduates (we missed these last month!)

Jamie Ashcroft-Billings, daughter of Mary Ashcroft, graduated from Mill River Union High School.

Kelsey Sheehe, daughter of Monika and John Sheehe, graduated from Mill River Union High School. She will be attending Clarkson University in the fall, majoring in applied mathematics and statistics.

McKenzie Swane, daughter of Brian and Lisa Swane and granddaughter of Bob and Bette Parker, graduated from Merrimac College in Andover, MA where she was on the President’s List. She will be attending NCPHS University, working towards her master’s in Occupational Therapy.

Chris Wilk, son of Frank and Susan Wilk, graduated from Rutland High School.



Healing Ministry with the Reverend Robert Boutwell

A recent article in *Spirituality and Health* magazine tells about Rumi, a Persian Sufi poet who lived in what is present day Turkey in the 13th century and is known the world over for his volumes of mystical poetry. The author, Melody Moezzi, wrote a book about Rumi and how his poetry changed her life, offering a path to healing.

When hospitalized due to mental illness, her father read Rumi poetry to her. That opened her heart and her soul to God. That was the beginning of the healing of her soul and her recognition of herself not as a victim of mental illness but as a mystic, freeing her from fear, anxiety and a sense of isolation. Her own faith community could not accept and support her. Yet it gave her a strong cultural foundation for her recovery. Healing of the soul involves reintegration of life, getting it all back together, the Creator, the culture, the family DNA, all of creation, and the cosmos. It is finding one's place and recognizing that one is not alone but that God is with us; God's spirit is within us.

During this COVID 19 epidemic when we are physically separated from one another, we may feel depressed, isolated, and lonely. It can be a time for us to be in contact with family members, friends, and neighbors - by telephone, by email, and by sending cards and letters. Now that we may begin to worship together in the Sanctuary, this feeling of isolation may lessen for some. For those who are not yet comfortable with gathering together, the virtual worship services on PegTV are a way to feel connected with other members of the congregation. We can continue to pray for one another and to smile at one another from behind our masks. We should practice all the prevention guidelines that are required and we should pray that the Holy Spirit will protect us from infection and that Jesus will send guardian angels to watch over our household and our whole congregation. Count your blessings, name them one by one and give thanks for all that God has done.

Due to the continuing Coronavirus quarantine, Healing Prayer services are still on hold. Healing resources are available in the Spirituality Center behind the Sanctuary. You may contact me by telephone for prayer at 802.773.3057 or by email at revrbtwl@myfairpoint.net



Weekly Bible Study Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m. in the Parlor

We have resumed in-person gatherings each Wednesday in the Parlor for Bible study, studying the text that will be included in worship on Sunday morning. Join with others for Bible study and discussion facilitated by Rev. Holly Ross Noble.

No preparation needed - come each week or when you are able. All are welcome!

Prayer Shawl Ministry Resumes



A Prayer Shawl is a gift to someone, to "wrap" them in prayers and bring them love, comfort, and strength. Many blessings and prayers are knitted and crocheted into each shawl, which are then blessed during worship.

We would love to have you join us in the Parlor on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 9:30 a.m. for an hour or so to knit, crochet & pray.

Our summer gatherings: July 8 and August 12.

Draft Reopening Plan for Grace Church

Our plan aligns with this recommendation from the Vermont's COVID reopening requirements:
Adopt a phased approach to reopening which provides sufficient opportunity to operate first in a low density and low contact environment before making the incremental changes needed to accommodate more moderate density activity while continuing to maintain health and safety.

This plan is a starting point for ReOpening the building and will be updated as additional information is received from our government regarding updated COVID protections. **At this point, masks or other appropriate face coverings are required, as is social distancing.** We understand that our entire Grace family will have to assess their individual readiness to rejoin in-building activities as they feel comfortable. Grace will continue to utilize and enhance their on-line presence to include members of our community that prefer to participate from afar. **Please note that dates are subject to change.**

Phase 1 Wednesday June 17: small church groups may meet

- ◆ Small church groups may meet (up to 25 people); they may meet outside if desired
- ◆ All groups must call Kit (775-4301) to reserve rooms; organizers must keep a contact log by date
- ◆ Minimum of 48 hours between meetings in one room to allow the virus to die
- ◆ Hand sanitizer will be available at church entrances and in rooms
- ◆ Staff asks for minimal casual contact during this phase; please call the office to make an appointment to meet with staff
- ◆ No food or beverages will be served or shared

Phase 2 Sunday, June 28: Sanctuary worship services resume at 10 AM (no Chapel)

- ◆ Online service and broadcasts also continue so those worshipping at home can participate
- ◆ In person participation allows for 200 people, socially distanced throughout the Sanctuary
- ◆ Greeters will welcome, remind about social distancing, compile required contact log information
- ◆ Hand sanitizer and masks available at all entrances
- ◆ Masks or other face covering required for everyone's protection; those not able to wear masks requested to worship in the Parlor (up to 20)
- ◆ No congregational singing and no choir singing during this phase
- ◆ Offering plates will not be passed; plates will be located at each entrance
- ◆ Children's Time will be included during the service, Church School will resume at a later phase
- ◆ Communion will be presented in a non-contact, individualized format
- ◆ Use all doors so the crowd is able to separate and disperse. Socialize out of doors.
- ◆ Use handicapped, Narthex, and Preschool floor bathrooms only
- ◆ No food or beverages served
- ◆ Baptisms, funerals, weddings – Tuesday - Friday only to allow 48 hour quarantine and cleaning
- ◆ No on-site receptions held

Phase 3 July 13: Chapel services resume; small groups from outside organizations allowed to book rooms through Kit if they agree to our policies.

- ◆ Chapel service resumes with limit; may greet each other outside following the service
- ◆ Church building open to small, scheduled outside groups

Phase 4 August 31: Preschool resumes; larger outside groups allowed

- ◆ Larger groups allowed
- ◆ Preschool resumes complying with state regulations
- ◆ Groups that meet more frequently may need to arrange with Kit to alternate meeting space to allow for proper cleaning timeframes.

Phase 5 TBD: Singing & Concerts allowed

- ◆ Singing in worship will be allowed once guidelines have been published and once Grace feels we can do so safely

We will monitor the mandatory gathering numbers and re-evaluate this plan with each phase as new research and guidance surfaces. All Grace Employees have completed the Vermont State COVID Safety training. The building will be cleaned utilizing the Vermont State cleaning procedures.

RSVP TO 775.4301
(Max. 25 people)

TRAVELOGUE

SOUTH CENTRAL ENGLAND AND NORTH WALES
Grace Fellowship Hall, masks and social distancing required
The travelogue will be live streamed on Facebook Live

July 1 at 7 @GraceChurchVT
8 Court Street, Rutland, VT - 802.775.4301 - GraceChurchVT.org

*Happy 100th Birthday
to these Members:*

*Edna Conner, who turned 100 on
May 25. Edna joined Grace in
1933! She currently lives at The
Meadows, 240 Gables Place,
Rutland.*

*Mary Hughes, whose birthday
was May 21.*

*Mary joined Grace Church in
1951. She was married to Paul for
76 years before his passing in
2016. She lives at Our House, 162
Jackson Avenue, Rutland.*

Special Mission Offerings: One Great Hour of Sharing and Strengthen the Church

Due to the pandemic, we have “missed” two of our five special mission offerings, which would normally have been highlighted with Moments for Mission and collected during this time. (One Great Hour of Sharing during Lent and Strengthen the Church on Pentecost.) The Mission Committee, like most of other committees of the church, has not met during this time, either.

Now that we are slowly opening up the church building to meetings and in-person worship, perhaps it is time to reschedule these special offerings which others rely on for our help. If you would like to contribute to these causes, you can, of course, give to them at any time! However, to do them justice, we need to provide more information on the importance of these causes, in the form of flyers and mission moments.

Hopefully the Mission Committee can meet in the next month and we can reschedule these very important offerings, perhaps one in August and one in September. Thank you for your concern and understanding – and generosity to these missions.



HEAL Raising Our World Foundation Caring 4 You Kits

Most of our children are orphans. When they are not at Rapha Community Center, they stay with a guardian, typically a grandparent or another family member.



There are usually multiple siblings in each family and very little income to take care of everyone’s needs. They do not have enough food to eat. They do not have soap to wash their hands. They are the most vulnerable among us. There is a reason these children are part of our community. They need help.

Due to COVID-19, Rapha Community Center and all schools have been closed by the Kenyan government. Our children returned to their guardians on March 16th. We had hoped to reopen in June, but the virus has continued to spread and schools are still closed. While we are thankful our community is still healthy and safe, we know that our children are struggling.

To continue to support our children, the staff at Rapha are compiling Caring 4 You Kits which include a two-week supply of: vaseline, toilet paper, soap, toothpaste, sanitary towels, maize, beans, and porridge flour. These kits will be delivered to our children on an ongoing basis until school is reopened. Our goal is to deliver 100 kits/month. Each kit costs \$25. If you are in a position to join us in supporting our children by purchasing one or more Caring 4 You Kits, we would greatly appreciate your help. They will provide crucial support to our children and their families.

Kits can be purchased online at (www.healraisingourworld.org/caring4you) or by sending a check payable to HEAL with :Kits” in the memo line to: HEAL, PO Box 452, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

Black Lives Matter Vote

When the Council voted to bring the issue of flying the Black Lives Matter flag alongside our “God is Still Speaking” banner, it was approved to have the invitation to vote be broadcast via the Grace Good News and for anyone in the directory not receiving the GGN to be called with the opportunity to vote. The urgency of responding to the crisis in our country, the support for such actions in our vision and mission statements as well as the UCC, our history of studying racism and acting on that awareness. all made it obvious that now was the time to vote. By using the GGN and calling, more people were included in this vote than have been in many annual meetings. There were passionate and thoughtful comments on many sides of the issue, and our church family voted its conscience one by one. This action is part of a journey that will continue at Grace. The Spiritual Growth Committee is collecting materials from the UCC for us to share in small groups going forward.

I would like to share an excerpt from the United Church of Christ Advocate for Justice group: “Why Black Lives Matter”: *Our faith's teachings tell us that each person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and therefore has intrinsic worth and value. So why, when Jesus proclaimed good news to the poor, release to the jailed, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed (Luke 4:16-19) did he not mention the rich, the prison-owners, the sighted and the oppressors? What conclusion are we to draw from this? Doesn't Jesus care about all lives?*

Black lives matter. This is an obvious truth in light of God's love for all God's children. But this has not been the experience for many in the U.S.

When Black lives are systemically devalued by society, our outrage justifiably insists that attention be focused on Black lives. We live out the love of God justly by publicly saying #BlackLivesMatter.

Grace Church’s own carefully crafted Vision and Mission Statements also speak to inclusion:

VISION STATEMENT

- ◆ Bravely inclusive with open doors
- ◆ Boldly caring with open hearts
- ◆ Broadly spiritual with open minds

MISSION STATEMENT - Striving to worship God, follow Jesus, and be inspired by the Holy Spirit, we seek to:

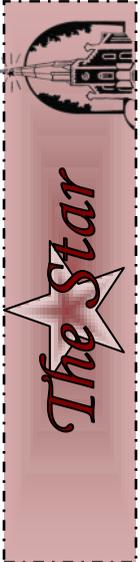
- ◆ Cultivate a community of intentional and abundant welcome.
- ◆ Celebrate our diversity and creativity.
- ◆ Love, support, and care for each other and God’s creation.
- ◆ Serve all humankind both locally and globally.

Grace Congregational UCC has voted to focus on the disenfranchised and oppressed as Jesus did, in the knowledge that God loves us all and all of creation. 94 members have made their voices heard: 70 yes, 23 no, 1 abstention.

Ellen Green, Chair of Spiritual Growth

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Grace Church Memorials



The Sanctuary and Chapel Flower Memorials

July 5 to the Glory of God and in loving memory of the **Hazen and Jenkins parents** by his David and Carolyn Hazen.

July 12 to the Glory of God and in loving memory of **Ethel Young Williams** by Norma Delfosse.

July 19 to the Glory of God.

July 26 to the Glory of God and in loving memory of **Matthew Wingfield** by his family.

(To arrange for a flower memorial, please contact David Hazen - 483.2337/peren@aol.com.)

The Church Spire will be illuminated

July 5 to the glory of God and in loving memory of **Mary and Hugh Onion** by their daughter, Holley Moran.

July 12 to the glory of God and in loving memory of **Matthew Onion and Carlie Onion Banks** by their cousin, Holley Moran.

July 19 to the Glory of God and in loving memory of **Gladys and Harry Hart**.

July 26 to the glory of God.

The Star on the steeple is lit as a beacon of hope and peace for the Rutland community. We thank **Naomi Adams, Barbara Densmore, and Mary Wilkins** for contributing to this mission.

*To have the Church Spire lit for a loved one, please contact the Church Office (775.4301). The cost for this is \$20.



The Church Office will be closed on
Monday, July 6
in observance of Independence Day.

Summer Church Office Hours

(Memorial Day through Labor Day)

Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.