



# In God We Trust, With God We Do.

*Faith, without works, is dead.*

At least, so writes James, brother of Jesus in his letter to the earliest Christians. If you have faith, but it is not shown in your life, what is the point? If it serves only you, is it really faith – of the Jesus-following kind – at all? These are the questions of our stewardship season, and they are the questions of the Gospel itself. If it is *in God we trust*, then how is it that *with God we do*?

The pages of this booklet begin to answer these questions, at least from the perspective of our communal life together here at First church. Our faith produces challenging and lively worship. It nurtures our intellectual and spiritual lives, and connects us – deeply – with one another. Moreover, it charges us with the inheritance of a prophetic public witness – both in the preservation and central location of our historic physical resources, and in the justice and service ministries of our congregation. We hope it becomes clear, in looking at these pages, that faith is vibrantly alive in works here at First Church.

On an individual level, what these pages ask us to ponder is how *your* faith will influence the work of *your* life. In what ways are you answering faith's call to give of yourself – life and livelihood – to the work of God? Is your faith alive and well or beginning to stagnate? If it is the former, then these pages might read as affirmation. If it is the latter, perhaps they might read as invitation to twine yourselves more deeply with the life of this place.

Indeed, after 2.5 years of a global pandemic, the strength demonstrated in these pages is, in and of itself, a miraculous work both *of* and *with* God. As you read, keep in mind the strength and diversity of programming and people that you see, and the place of support that First Church has held for you in this time. We are only able to be in this place – a place of beginning and possibility – because of the support of our dedicated congregation. We will only be able to live in to this possibility with the continued support of each and every one of you.

This is not a throw-away fundraising line, but a maxim of the gospel. Our faith is alive only if our works are alive. As a congregation, our work is our people. We literally cannot do this without you. So we hope you will consider this prayerfully, because this means you are the good news. Thanks be to God.



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## IRAs and RMDs

Are you 71 or older and have a traditional IRA? If so, you probably know that, every year, you must withdraw a minimum dollar amount from your retirement account. However, you can give the gift of a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to count toward satisfying your required minimum distributions (RMD) for 2022.

A QCD is a direct transfer of funds from your IRA custodian, payable to a qualified nonprofit like FCC. In addition to the benefits of giving to a nonprofit, a QCD excludes the amount donated from taxable income, unlike regular withdrawals from an IRA. Keeping your taxable income lower may reduce the impact to certain tax credits and deductions, including Social Security and Medicare.

To qualify, all gifts must be by your RMD deadline, typically December 31. To learn more, please consult your financial advisor. This article is for informational purposes only and should not be considered as investment or tax advice.



## Stewardship 2023 Message — Steve Hyde

Welcome to Stewardship 2023, “In God We Trust, With God We Do!” I sincerely do mean welcome. Stewardship is an opportunity for all of us to proclaim one’s belief in God & to support the work of our church, large & small & near & far.

This year’s campaign has a couple of themes that I would like to highlight for you. First: the campaign is trying to highlight the power of one’s life works, when they are in harmony with one’s Christian faith – as inspiration, support, & guidance one for the other. This can be a healthy & powerful symbiotic relationship, & it is what First Church represents in my life. This year, this symbiosis is particularly exemplified in the exciting & ongoing work of the Vision Team, & all the subgroups that have come from the visioning process we have been engaged in over the last several years.

The second theme to highlight is that stewardship is open to *all* &



meant for *all*. It is certainly about raising money for the operation of First Church, but it is also about proclaiming one’s commitment to a life of Christian faith & works. My hope is that everyone who seeks to live a faith-informed life stands up & makes a joyful noise, by making a pledge to First Church in whatever monetary capacity they are able. Such an act is, in my opinion, faith affirming & available to absolutely everyone.

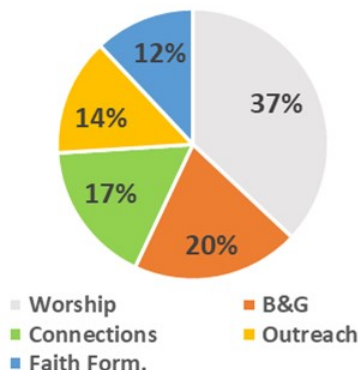
So welcome to Stewardship 2023!

## Vermont Conference & Dues

In addition to your pledge, a separate per capita payment of \$15 per church member is needed to fund the VT Conference of the UCC and the services it provides.

The VT Conference of the United Church of Christ assists more than 100 VT UCC churches, including First Church, by supporting clergy, helping with individual church ministerial searches and calls, consulting with local church leadership, aiding in resolution of conflicts within churches, and linking Vermont’s UCC churches with each other through the Conference Annual Meeting.

### FY23 Projected Expenses



## Income & Expenses

The FY23 budget is still under development, but the expenses are expected to resemble the percentages shown to the left. Thank you for your patience as the budget is prayerfully considered.

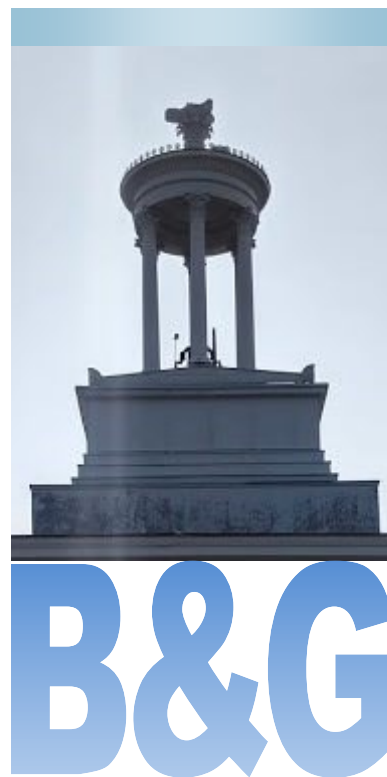


## Building and Grounds — Mission and Works

**Acts 20:23, ESV — Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.**

Our building and grounds are the literal place where our faith & works come together, as they are where we come to have our faith batteries recharged to do our work in the world. Similarly, the care our B&G team gives it is a labor of faithful love. They monitor where repairs are needed & coordinate the efforts of our building staff & a corps of volunteers who help to keep the church facilities in good order. Using their expertise, volunteers have been instrumental in saving considerable amounts of money.

Thanks to your support, our works this past year included updating & simplifying the rental rates for church spaces, adding handicap access to the Memorial Garden, painting the exterior of the church (still in progress), & general upkeep & maintenance of the building. Our vision for the coming year is to continue with the necessary upkeep & maintenance of the building while supporting FCC's larger visioning work with building-related projects. This includes those being discussed in the Building Projects & Renovations visioning group & other visioning groups as well.



Memorial Garden Walkway Construction—Finished.



Memorial Garden—Gardeners.

## Worship — Making a Joyful Noise

**Faith cannot help doing good works constantly. It doesn't stop to ask if good works out to be done, but before anyone asks it has already done them and continues to do them without ceasing. ~Martin Luther.**

Communal worship is the one activity First Church experiences together! It is here where we build our lives of faith, care for one another, & go out to serve in Christ's name. From preaching that challenges us, to music that inspires us, & prayer that connects us, worship is where we learn to trust in God, & God's body the church. This spring, we hired our new Director of Music, Amy Shortt, who has filled our worship with renewed vibrancy, & we hope to deepen

these offerings over the coming year.

Also included in this category is all the work your Worship Team does to prepare the Sanctuary to reflect the liturgical seasons & worship experiences, to plan our lay-led worship, & organize special events like our Epiphany Star & Paper Crane Prayer projects. From Star Sunday to Jazz Sunday, Christmas Eve & everything in between, our goals for next year are to present new & fresh worship experiences while honoring our rich & meaningful worship traditions & enhance the relationship between communal worship, faith, & works. With your support, we are certain to be successful.



## *"Faith Plus Works!"*

### Outreach Ministries

- Dismas House
- JUMP
- The Legal Clinic
- Meals on Wheels
- The Possibility Shop
- Share Christmas
- Small Potatoes
- Vermont Interfaith Action
- VT Racial Justice Alliance
- VT UCC Hope Fund



### Outreach — With God We Do

**1 John 3:18 — Dear Children, let us not love with words and speech but with action and in truth.**

Some of the clearest ways our faith inspires us to do here at First are the works of love that fall under the umbrella of Outreach. From the discounted clothing and household items at the Possibility Shop, to the free Legal Clinic, meals for Dismas House, and our standing Vigil for Racial Justice, we are given the opportunity to show our faith through action rather than words.

For the past many decades, one of the largest works of First Church has been our support of the Ronald McDonald House, by renting the parsonage for \$1/year. Now that the sale has been completed, we have the exciting opportunity to think about new ways to engage our faith through works here at the church. What ministry is God calling us to together?



Possibility Shop Volunteers.



## Connections — Building the Community

**Hebrews 10:24, ESV — And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.**

Have you ever felt the support of folks at First? Gotten a meal when you were sick? Attended a concert or event, online or in person? Been met at the door with a friendly smile? Opened our e-news? From the work of our Partners in Pastoral Care, our Friends at First, & our Connections Team, the way we interact with one another is the heart of life at First Church. It is the way we do — supporting one another, & the way we trust — understanding that we, too, will be held when the need arises.

Indeed, hospitality done well changes lives! Did you know a New Visitor takes only 30 seconds to form a first impression of FCCB? And within 7-10 minutes people decide whether to return or not! Our Connections Team seeks to connect New Visitors, Congregants, & the greater Burlington Community. We do this by having some fun, & supporting activities that realize the joy & blessing coming from things like: Valentine's Day Auction, Pets of FCCB, FCCB Jeopardy, Book Groups, Lenten Bag Delivery, Coffee Hours, Jazz Festival, Yard Sale, Dragonboat, Fall Homecoming, Moth Story Hour, Trunk or Treat Halloween, Chicken & Biscuits, & so much more!



## *“Works Plus Faith!”*

### Faith Formation — In God We Trust

**Matthew 19:14 — Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.**

The Faith Formation Team supports both our youngest members in the nursery and our adult members as we grow in faith together. Children experience church as a fun, enriching space where Bible stories are explored. Middle school students find a safe place to ask questions about faith and explore

how this ancient book remains relevant today. This journey continues with our high schoolers as they travel the road to confirmation, led by Elissa. Our faith formation is not only where we learn how God has worked in the past, but also where we come into small-group and community that supports us as we grow. To this end, over the past year, God has called us to:

- Joint Youth Group with College Street;
- Welcoming Jason Vanderlaan as Youth Ministries Leader;
- Teach our youth how to serve church and community;
- Offer multigenerational events like Peace Camp;
- Offer events like weekly bible study; and
- Support adult studies like our book groups and sermon series.



Peace Camp Band, July 2022

## Vision Team

- Rob Backus
- Amanda Grace
- Tony Hall
- Jennifer Jorgenson
- Susan Saunders
- Charlie Smith



## Visioning — In God We Trust, With God We Do

What embodies this duality more than our Vision work? From a year's worth of congregational house-meetings, all the way through this year's Lenten book studies and worship series, we have been in careful reflection and discernment, asking ourselves these questions:

- ◆ "Who is God calling us to be in the world, specifically in service to this community?"
- ◆ "What will be our vision of a faithful expression of our discipleship?"
- ◆ "How will we serve the people of God in this time and place, toward a more equitable and just future?"

How are we being called? This spring, we considered and narrowed more than 35 proposals to six topic areas of focus. You chose which of those teams you wanted to support with prayer and discussion, and all of these groups have begun to meet and to do research into specific areas so the scope of the work can be defined. Final proposals will be due early next year, and then we will gather again to read, pray, and listen for the call of God.

First Church has been gifted with a truly unique opportunity to step into the next phase of our life together with purpose and vision — the kind that allows us to see just a little bit more of the Kingdom of God, here on earth as it is in heaven. Through this process, we place our trust in God. And as we emerge into the new year, with God we will do.

Faith + Works and Works + Faith = the First Congregational Church of Burlington!

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PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

