

# Newsletter – Summer 2020



**West Fairlee Center  
Congregational Church**  
PO Box 431  
Fairlee, VT 05045

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*West Fairlee Center Congregational Church on the corner of Bear Notch and Middlebrook Road offers a simple space for worship, ceremony, contemplation, meditation and private prayer.*

**Events:** Annual events will need to be determined based on conditions due to COVID-19. The Annual Meeting has had to be postponed. Announcement details will be made available on the Church website. All ceremonies must follow the State Guidelines. The Board is available for questions, comments and Church use by email, [church.wfc@gmail.com](mailto:church.wfc@gmail.com) or phone:

Larry Russ, Moderator, (802) 333-4588  
Cleo Kearns, Asst. Moderator, (802) 333-4662  
Katherine Adams, Clerk, (802) 889-3440  
Jon Sanborn, Treasurer, (413) 531-0337  
JoAnn Sanborn, Outreach, (912) 657-0439

## Church Maintenance/Repair Projects:

The handrail and front steps have been replaced and painted. The fallen tree that bordered the cemetery has been completely removed. The furnace has been repaired and should not be an issue in the future.

The next big project in the plans is to refurbish the second-floor area which will include wiring repairing and sheet walling. The work will also include shoring up any internal weak spots within the steeple. A grant from the Vermont Community Foundation will help to fund this project.

## Ice Cream Social & Blessing of Animals - 2019

The Valley News had an article written in 1986 titled “A Church of Summer, There’s a Reunion of Sorts in West Fairlee Center.” Doris Honig was quoted as saying that it was like Old Home Day when people who have a connection to the Center return.

The Blessing of the Animals and Club’s Ice Cream Social has evolved into a similar tradition. Locals, summer people, new neighbors, visitors, young and old, all come together. It has been a unique opportunity to reconnect, meet new people, reminisce, and share stories over a delicious ice cream sundae. Part of the fun last year was recognizing the schoolmates in this 1958 photo:



First Row: Carl Godfrey, Rick Eaton, Gaye Pape, Sherry Cook, Penny Southworth  
Second Row: Fred Cook, Sonny Godfrey, Lorraine Godfrey, Shirley Nelson, JoAnn Barker, Billy Southworth, Glee Pape  
Third Row: Chuck Eaton, David Smith, Nick McFarlane, Ann Heinig, J. Godfrey, Mrs. Whitcomb

Janice Godfrey Rosner recently shared a story that she remembered. The school didn’t have drinking water so the teacher would have the older boys go down to the Pape’s house to get water for drinking. Mrs. Pape made delicious pickles and she would sell the boys a jar for a quarter. If they brought back the jar, then they would only pay twenty cents for a refill. The boys would bring the pickles back to the school to share with all the schoolmates and what a treat it was. On a sad note Mrs. Pape’s daughter, Gaye Pape Morgan, passed this past April.

The Blessing of the Animals Service began in 2002 but the love and care for animals goes back to the Center's very beginnings.

Through the 1800s into the 1900s, the Center was a thriving farm community being in an area of streams and fertile valleys. It prospered with a meetinghouse, school and a general store. Its growth was further evidenced by the increase in its church membership to 148. By the 1940s, the population was on the decline. The Congregation could no longer support a full-time minister and started sharing with the village church. The Center church held its service in the evening. Farmers could make hay while the sun shined.

During the 1950s, economics and food safety brought hard times to the small dairy farmers. To keep the land they loved, they needed to find work off the farms. There was no industry except for the local sawmill where some went to work. They became carpenters, electricians, plumbers, or whatever they could find to make a living.

In Recollection of Milldale Farm, Sheldon Miller wrote that by 1976, *"there are very few flocks of sheep. Pastures that once had supported herds of cattle are now grown up to bushes and trees. Nearly all creameries have disappeared. Summer homes and ski resorts have taken over many farms."*

A sense of the feelings those farmers had for their farm animals can be felt through Sheldon's description of having to sell his cattle when his health was failing and could no longer take good care of the herd. He related how his cattle were his pets. *"The thought of selling them seemed like selling members of the family. I had one little heifer that, when she saw me across the field, would come up to me to have her neck rubbed and received the expected pats. When she came up for sale, I could not control myself; with my arm around her neck, I asked that whoever purchased her, please be good to her and treat her like a lady."*

Times change but the understanding of land preservation and community remains. Vermont is known nationwide for its farm products. Tourists come to Vermont for the beautiful landscape. Tourism is a key component for many small businesses. Farming remains the backbone of this region. The impact and relationship of daily living and the surroundings are as relevant today as they were in the past.

## **Daniel B. Smith & Lucinda Tufts Life Story**

In response to our ongoing request for information about past and present people of West Fairlee Center, Dorene Smith contacted us regarding a story that she has been writing of her husband's (Jonathan Smith) paternal great-great grandfather and grandmother.

In 1824, Daniel Smith and his wife moved to what is now Russ Road. Their son, Nathan A. Smith, was a member of the West Fairlee Center Congregational Church from 1849 to 1888, when he died. He was one of the contributors to the building of the present Church. His name can be found in the 1854 Church Constitution.

Dorene started collecting information and sources for these ancestors many years ago. After much research, she has tried to present accurate information as much as possible. She has shared her work with church with the hope that some descendants of the families would like to read it and may even have pictures or more information. She requests that if her document is used for family history purposes and non-commercial uses that she is referenced as the writer. Jonathan and Dorene Smith live in Colorado and can be reached by email: [dorenehsmith@gmail.com](mailto:dorenehsmith@gmail.com) or phone: 303-432-1777.

## **Thanksgiving Eve Service, 1979**

The following is an excerpt from a Thanksgiving Eve Service given by Gary Wait. *"we are sometimes inclined to think that one person doesn't make any difference anymore. Washington, Moscow, Cambodia, Iran and even the slums of Boston and New York all seem a long way off. And yet, I never come into this valley and see it as it must have been long ago without marveling at the influence of one person like Niles."*

The PDF links for Reverend Wait's sermon and the life story of Daniel Smith may be found on the [Newsletters and More](#) page of [www.wfcenterchurch.org](http://www.wfcenterchurch.org). The website is dedicated to the "People of West Fairlee Center" from past to present who have been a part of Middlebrook and Blood Brook valleys and nearby Wild Hill. It is truly "work in progress" with the hope that it will help preserve for future generations, the character of the community. If anyone would like to add photos and stories of family members, neighbors, and friends who have been a part of this small community, they are most welcome.