

Newsletter – 2022



West Fairlee Center Congregational Church on the corner of Middlebrook and 9 Bear Notch Road.

**West Fairlee Center
Congregational Church
P. O Box 155
Post Mills, VT 05058**

www.wfcenterchurch.org

Please note the change of mailing address.

Members, Friends and Neighbors:

It has been a while since our last Newsletter. It seems that with Covid, we are still in the midst of two steps forward and one step back.

The Church Board would like to thank everyone who has been a part of keeping West Fairlee Center the special place that it has always been. A special thanks goes to Don Phoenix who for the past 20 years has mowed the Common and Church grounds keeping them well tended. It has been his personal contribution in keeping the Center picturesque.

Another special thank you goes to Peggy Burden and Cat Spalding who have been the Church caretakers in many different ways and provide music for special occasions. A special task that they do is taking care of the candles in the Church windows through the dark winter months. It is difficult to put into words, the sense of comfort it can bring.

The Ice Cream Social and Blessing of the Animals will be held on August 14, 2022, 2:00 to 3:00 PM.

The West Fairlee Community Club and the West Fairlee Center Church invite you to an old fashion Ice-Cream Social followed by the Blessing of the Animals on the church green. This is a wonderful event for all ages and family pets.

Two traditional events were held in 2021: The Ice Cream Social & Blessing of the Animals and the Service of Gratitude. Both events are somewhat unique to the Center and bring together so many different perspectives.

Ice Cream Social & Blessing of the Animals - 2021

Nikki Darling wrote the following description:

On Sunday, August 22 West Fairlee Center came alive with its annual Ice Cream Social and Blessing of the Animals. The Church and the West Fairlee Community Club jointly hosted this time-honored event at the crossroads of Middlebrook Road and Bear Notch Road. The lawn of the West Fairlee Center Congregational Church was ablaze with color and greetings. Nate's Sugar Shack served up old fashioned ice cream sundaes, maple frappes and maple cotton candy. Club servers added yummy chocolate and/or blueberry sauce, brownie bits, whipped cream, nuts, sprinkles, and cherries for the top.

Once the signal was given, the crowd gathered round to start the Blessing. The Reverend Jan Hustlar, minister of the Unitarian Church in Norwich, offered heart felt thoughts about how much we love our animals before she blessed each pet individually. The Serenata musical trio played music. Dr. James Hughes sang a cappella "Ole Shep" with a brave baritone voice that rang through the valley. Newcomers met neighbors and old friends greeted each other amid smiles and laughter. Memories and stories floated on the air.

Service of Gratitude - 2021

From Cleo Kearns:

The annual Service of Gratitude for 2021 was held by zoom on the Sunday after Thanksgiving with over forty people in attendance. We began as is traditional with the Haudenosaunee liturgy for gatherings, and then had a series of speakers and prayers from a wide variety of faith traditions.

Kyle Barrett said the Prayer of Contrition which marks this day as one of mourning for the lives of those natives peoples lost in the celebration of what settlers called "Thanksgiving." Chief Nate Pero of the Kowasak tribe responded. We then had short talks from Sensei Aaron Hoopes, of Dragon Mountain in Vershire, Cleo Kearns of the West Fairlee Center Church, Reverend Gregory Wilson of Vershire, Mohsen Mehdawi of West Fairlee, Deecie Denison of Thetford, Ann Cook of Thetford, and Cat Spalding of West Fairlee. Traditions from all over the world were represented, including the Buddhist, Taoist, Bahai, Islamic and Jewish lineages. People spoke of their own personal practices of prayer and devotion, and we prayed together for the earth and the wellbeing of all peoples.

This coming year we will once again begin our circuit around the elements with the 2022 Service of Gratitude to be held on Sunday November 27, 2022 at 3:30 focused on the theme of earth. Anyone who wishes to speak in the spirit of the occasion is welcome to ask if there is space on the program to do so. The format will be slightly different, as we will need to reduce the number of speakers in order not to go over time. For more information, please contact Cleo Kearns, cleo.kearns1@gmail.com.

West Fairlee Center – An Important Historical Site

The Congregational Church was designated as an Historic Site in 2002. Built in 1855, it typifies many characteristics of the Greek Revival architectural style. It is also significant in that members of its early church community, such as Nathaniel Niles, played important roles in the formation of the state and nation.

Nathaniel Niles is buried in the adjoining cemetery under a large pyramid shaped gravestone. Nathaniel Niles (1741-1828) was a Revolutionary War patriot and author of the popular ode "The American Hero," written in celebration of the Battle of Bunker Hill. Niles attended both Harvard and Princeton as a student in law, medicine, and theology. He was very talented and over the years he had been a teacher, minister, inventor, farmer, and one of the first two Representatives to the United States Continental Congress along with Judge and other civic duties. The cemetery dates back to the 1780s. At one time, the

cemetery had become overgrown but in recent year the Cemetery Commission has done an outstanding job of caring for this site.

The Clubhouse originally a brick one-room school was built in 1804. In the 1930s, the Mother's Club bought this abandoned dilapidated building for \$1 plus a promise to insure and maintain the building from the Town of West Fairlee. The Mother's Club was founded in 1918 and in many ways this building is a tangible symbol of the transitional role of women over the last 100 plus years. The Mother's Club is now the West Fairlee Community Club with a broader membership. The Clubhouse is undergoing some renovations and the challenge is to honor its history while making the needed changes. *More on the Clubhouse in the coming Newsletters...*

Donations are always gratefully accepted.

For the Club: West Fairlee Community Club,

P.O. Box 84, Fairlee, VT 05045

Cemetery: West Fairlee Cemetery Commission,

PO Box 32, Post Mills, VT 05058

Church: West Fairlee Center Church

P.O. Box 155, Post Mills, VT 05058

In Memory

And we pause to reflect the passing of two Church Members: Vin Jerome and Jon Sanborn.

The Jeromas spent their summers in the Center, very much part of the Club and Church. Over the past few years, Vin had contributed to the operations fund of the Church in particular making sure that the electricity was not shut off in order that the Church candles would be lit throughout the season.

Jon was married in the Church on July 20, 1968. The Community Club held a lovely reception at the Clubhouse. Jon remained a member of the Church throughout his life. Both his daughter, Charity, and son, Marc were baptized in the Church. He had been the Church Treasurer since 2015. A Celebration of his Life ceremony was held on July 24, 2021 at the Church with a reception at the Clubhouse. It was a very poignant day reminiscent of his wedding day.

Do you have a person or memory, a story, or photos of West Fairlee Center that you would like to share on the website? Send an email to church.wfc@gmail.com or JoAnn Sanborn at joann.sanborn@gmail.com.