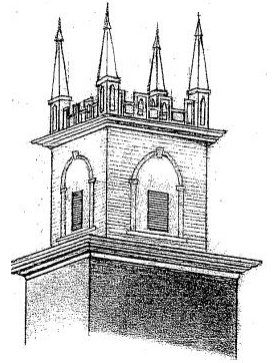


**+ N.E.W.S. CONNECTION**

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Vol. 23 No.08

August 2023

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**Message from the Pastor**

**CHURCH AND COMMUNITY**

As each month draws to a close, and that always seems to come up fast, I pray that I will have something worthwhile to say as the word (WORD too) goes out to our church members and beyond. July has been an earth-shaking time on a number of fronts: the hottest temperatures recorded for the month, with rainfall causing our rivers and streams to burst their banks. My variation on the popular saying that here are only seven degrees of separation in the world: In Vermont, we often experience just two degrees of separation. We all know individuals impacted by flooding both here in town and elsewhere in the state. As we have responded to the crisis, opportunities will continue to present themselves as we assist our friends and neighbors— whether they belong to the church or not. We all belong as God’s children.

When we do come together as church, we do Christ’s work on earth. In recent weeks with the contrast of the baptism of an adolescent to the packed-house memorial service of a beloved community member, we draw strength, consolation, and inspiration from standing and praying together. Christ’s work on earth through us continues to be ongoing and dynamic. A foundation in faith is not static; it moves us forward as we manifest who we are through thought, word, and deed.

A lifetime of singing in church has filled my head with lyrics and melodies. I hear this one as I compose this message to you:

Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers  
That you do unto me.  
Whatsoever you do to the least of my sisters  
That you do unto me.  
When I was hungry, you gave me to eat;  
When I was thirsty you gave me to drink.  
Now enter into the home of my Father.  
When I was weary, you helped me find rest;  
When I was anxious, you calmed all my fears.  
Now enter into the home of my Father.  
When I was homeless, you opened your door;  
When I was naked, you gave me your coat.  
Now enter into the home of my Father.  
When in a prison, you came to my cell;  
When on a sickbed, you cared for my needs.  
Now enter into the home of my Father.

When I was laughed at, you stood by my side;  
When I was happy, you shared in my joy.  
Now enter into the home of my Father.

Every stanza makes us aware of the good that we can do.

The gift of music also touched me in a special way when my college friend Leo Racine and his wife Yvonne came to worship with us on July 30. You have heard me describe how Leo and I became friends in our first few days at Boston College in August 1977. Only now I discovered that Leo spoke to the campus chaplain and suggested that we, along with another student, sing as a trio for the first official freshman Mass. What a grace-filled opportunity it was for me to sing again two of those songs we sang 46 years ago. I am blessed with wonderful friends.

With shared blessings,

Michael F. Dwyer, Pastor

