



The Old Meeting House

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August 2011 Newsletter

Letter from Elissa Johnk, Senior Pastor

Dear Friends,

Church, at its core, is about stories – our ancient and collective stories, our personal stories, and the ways in which these come together as *one* story: God’s story of good news for the world. You have all been so willing to invite me into your life and stories – particularly as they relate to the OMH – that I thought it might be helpful if I did the same. As a fan of Letterman’s “Top 10” (and, of course, that other “Top 10” list [the Commandments]), I present to you the “Top Ten Things to know About Your Minister”:

10. I am a Hawkeye! I love becoming a Vermonter, yet a part of my soul will always reside in Iowa. The peace of corn fields and the exuberance of Big Ten Football are a part of my DNA. Iowa is where my family resides, and I cherish *every* moment I can be with them. I can’t wait to show them around Green Mountain country!

9. I am a Church geek: I love being part of a tradition that exists simply to worship the beauty of what is, and to work for the beauty of what can be. Yet, as a “church child,” I grew up steeped in the (sometimes painful) realities of what it can look like to gather as a body of people wanting to do good, but often in different ways. As such, I value open communication in church, *including* feedback. If you have any questions or concerns, dreams or desires, it is my hope that you will be able to work openly and collaboratively with me to discern what/who/how God is calling us to be!

8. I am worship’s #1 fan: Creativity. Custom. Candles. Choirs. Community. Comfort. Challenge. Change. What else is there to say?

7. I am a dog lover: Hamlet is a 12 year old, nine lb. mutt rescue. He is with me often, and although he is occasionally frightened by large groups, he will try to convince you that I starve him for attention. (It’s not true, but you can love him anyway!)

6. I believe life is too short for long-faced religion: This is a UCC slogan that I think is spot-on. The primary tasks given to us in the Bible are give love and give thanks – church, God and community are meant to be joyful things! I love to laugh, and do so often.

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Revised Common Lectionary Readings

(bold denotes focus scripture)

August 21:

Exodus 1:8-2:10 with Psalm 124

Romans 12:1-8

Matthew 16:13-20

August 28:

Exodus 3:1-15 with Psalm 105:1-6,
23-26, 45c

Romans 12:9-21

Matthew 16:21-28

Sept. 4:

Exodus 12:1-14 with Psalm 149

Romans 13:8-14

Matthew 18:15-20

Sept. 11:

Exodus 14:19-31 with Psalm 114

Genesis 50:15-21 with Psalm 103:
(1-7), 8-13

Romans 14:1-12

Matthew 18:21-35

Sept. 18:

Exodus 16:2-15 with Psalm 105:

1-6, 37-45

Philippians 1:21-30

Matthew 20:1-16

Sept. 25:

Exodus 17:1-7 with Psalm 78:1-4,
12-16

Philippians 2:1-13

Matthew 21:23-32

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5. I love stories: There is an anonymous quote that states, “anyone who says they have only one life to live must not know how to read a book.” I love delving into the lives and mysteries of others through the written word (autobiography, theology and mystery are favorite genres), through film, and through music. I am always open to suggestions!

4. I am active in the wider Church: This is how our efforts at OMH get connected with the larger work of bringing about the peace-full Realm of God. Not only is this work affirming personally, it also enables OMH to draw upon (and share!) resources with others who are invested in this common goal, both within and across denomination and faith lines.

3. I am not married: As a colleague of mine says: “but this does *not* mean you need to find my prince charming!”

2. Mondays are (usually) my Sabbath: As the same wise colleague said (see the resource sharing?!): “but God is available every day!”

1. I believe in grace. I believe in the grace of moments small and large. I believe in the grace of God who loves us *just* as we are, and I believe in the grace of God who loves us *too* much to let us stay that way!

Which is good, because you can see I am far from perfect. And we will be far from perfect together. We will have our successes and our failures as we try new things together. But, to me, one of the good things about grace is that it means God is not done with us yet. In fact, we are just beginning!

Thanks be to God,
Elissa

MEET THE MINISTER

Elissa would like to meet with as many members of the congregation as possible this fall to discover what brings you to the Old Meeting House and what your hopes for our new ministry together might be. Small groups are a good format for these discussions, and it will be fun to meet in a variety of settings to suit the needs of those involved.

Some possibilities are a cookout, an afternoon tea, a potluck dinner, a picnic lunch, or meeting at a coffee shop.

A “Transition Team” has been formed to help set up these events. We would love to hear from anyone interested in hosting or facilitating a gathering at their home or another location. Please contact Peter Timpone (522-6130, peter.timpone@VermontCollege.edu), Kim Sturgis (229-5613, kgsturgis@gmail.com), Linda Cueto (223-5175, ompompanoo@aol.com), or Diana Fielder (223-6548, malcolmfielder2@hotmail.com) if you would like to host a get-together, or if you are so excited to chat with Elissa that you want to be sure to be included in the first of these events!

Spiritual Life Committee

At our August meeting, the Spiritual Life Committee welcomed Pastor Johnk and discussed ways the committee was prepared to support her.

To help her get acquainted, we've already started using name tags at Sunday services, and plan to continue to do so until Gathering Sunday, on September 11. Pastor Johnk expressed her

appreciation for our willingness to wear them as she gets to know the congregation.

Finally, we formed a subcommittee, consisting of Alice Angney, Tony French, and Joy Schricker, to define the process for the next church and pastoral evaluations. They'll be making decisions about everything from the schedule, to the congregation's participation, to the implementation of surveys.

Christian Education Committee

It's that time of year again! The start of Sunday School is just around the corner. To kick things off, the Christian Education Committee is hosting an event after church on Sunday, August 28th. Come enjoy a scoop of ice cream, learn about the upcoming Sunday School year (which starts September 18th), and reconnect with other OMH families and friends. This will be an opportunity for our new minister Elissa Johnk to get acquainted with our smallest members and share some of her ideas about Christian Education with all of us. Even if you don't have kids in Sunday School, please join us.

Hope to see you at the . . .

**Sunday School Open House
&
Ice Cream Social
Sunday, August 28th
Right after church
In the Parish House and outside**

Peace,

The Christian Education Committee

Painting of the OMH Parish House Complete

During the first week of August, Will Russell of Ideal Painting finished painting the exterior of the Parish House. Trustees who reviewed the work were impressed with the finished paint job. Will even added a few things such as painting the

lattice under the "bride's porch" which went beyond his contract because he "thought it would look better." All in all it appears the OMH got a quality product at a price that was several thousand dollars less than the next lowest bid.

Gathering Sunday Farmers' Market

This year marks the 6th annual Farmers' Market on Gathering Sunday! All are invited to donate goods from the garden or kitchen—vegetables, berries, eggs, jams, bread, pies, and more. Please drop off donations before worship on September 11. After church we can admire each other's bounty and buy what we don't grow or make ourselves. *Proceeds benefit OMH.*

OMH Book Group

*“If **you have run out of breath** yourself – or **out of faith** – then this book is for **you**. [...] I have no idea what you will see when you look at your life – but if you are **tired of arguing about religion, tired of reading about spirituality, tired of talk-talk-talking** about things that matter without doing a single thing that matters yourself, then the pages that follow are dedicated to **you**. My hope is that reading them will help you recognize some of the **altars** in this world – ordinary-looking places where human beings have met and may continue to **meet up with the divine More** that they sometimes call God.”*

Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith*

Does any of this describe you?

Does *none* of this describe you?

Do you like evenings of fellowship and fun?

Do you simply need a night out and like to read?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then this is for YOU!

**We hope you will come join us for the first meeting of an Old Meeting House book group
Wednesday, September 21st 7:30 p.m.**

This is the very first gathering of our new book group. ANY and ALL are welcome – new members, old members, visitors and guests! All we ask is that you make an effort to read the book (Elissa has extra copies available in her office) and RSVP to Heidi Tringe (hkmohlman@hotmail.com; 272-7853), who will be hosting this first gathering.

OMH Coffee Hour

Coffee hour got off to a great start the first Sunday in August. The Parish House was uncharacteristically full for a summer Sunday, with members eager to welcome our new pastor, Elissa, and to share in the hospitality that coffee hour provides.

A dedicated group of volunteer hosts have already committed to cover coffee hour most Sundays for the coming year. These folks generously donate their time so that the rest of us can relax and socialize after the service. Hosts arrive early to set up, make coffee and organize edibles. During coffee hour they bustle to and from the kitchen and they stay until the end to make sure all is cleared away and cleaned up. Several “regulars” among the congregation assist by tackling dish duty with vigor and good cheer.

We can all help the coffee hour hosts by regularly or occasionally contributing food to share. Home baked goodies are always nice, but all contributions are welcome, enjoyed, and eaten up! Donuts, bagels, fruit and veggies are all great alternatives. Our hosts rely on your spontaneous generosity as we no longer ask people to sign up in advance to donate goodies. If you enjoy the camaraderie of coffee hour, please consider bringing something to share.

We also need a few more volunteers to act as host, either for a week or a month. Training provided, great benefits (you get to hear the choir practice.) If you would like to become a coffee hour host, please contact me at julie.s.henderson@gmail.com or 454-1569. Thank you. —Julie Henderson, *Coffee Hour Coordinator*

Meetings Schedule, Events & Announcements

OMHAM—Wednesday, August 24, 6:00 p.m.

Trustees—Monday, September 5, 5:00 p.m. (*potluck and meeting at Norman Hill's house*)

Christian Education Committee—Monday, September 12, 5:45 p.m.

Spiritual Life Committee—Monday, September 12, 7:00 p.m.

Executive Board—Tuesday, September 13, 7:00 p.m.

Missions Committee— Sunday, September 18 , 11:00 a.m.

Coffee Hour—Sundays after church service

Parish House Café—Wednesdays at noon beginning Sept. 28; by donation

Choir Practice—Sundays, 8:30 a.m.; Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. beginning Sept. 7

Chase Race—August 25

The annual East Montpelier Center Chase Race, which begins and ends at the Old Meeting House, will be held on Thursday, August 25. Net proceeds from the race support social service projects of the Old Meeting House Missions Committee. The scenic race course is five miles, and covers Center, Dodge and Lyle Young roads. This is a staggered start race, with start times adjusted by age and sex. Registration for the race begins at 5:00 p.m., and the race begins at 6:00 p.m. Contact Tim Noonan, Race Director, if you have any questions (223-6216; carrnoonan@comcast.net).

Sunday School Open House and Ice Cream Social—August 28, following church service

This is an opportunity for Elissa to meet the youngest OMH members—and vice versa.

Please join us—all are welcome!

Gathering Sunday—September 11

We are still finalizing details, but so far plan to have our traditional OMH Farmers' Market, special music, and a brief commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the 9/11/01 tragedy within our service, which will be led by Elissa. Sunday school classes will not begin until September 18th, but there will be special activities during the church service for OMH youth. There will be a full Coffee Hour with goodies after our service, and we will wear name tags to help Elissa and all of us learn one another's names. Elissa is working with local clergy to prepare an ecumenical Service of Remembrance for Sunday evening to mark the 9/11 anniversary; time and location to be announced.

First Day of Sunday School & Blessing of the Backpacks—September 18

Please bring your children's backpacks to church so we can shower God's love down upon them for the upcoming school year. If you can contribute school supplies for our wider community, please feel free to bring boxes of pencils, notebooks and other supplies.

Newsletter Deadline—September 20

OMH Book Group—September 21, 7:30 p.m. (*see page 4 for details*)

"Elissa's Labyrinth"—September 25

Meet and Greet new OMH Senior Pastor, Elissa Johnk, following church service, as she gives a brief tour of her spiritual journey.

OMH Silent Auction

There *will* be a silent auction this fall to benefit OMH. More information to come!

Bereavement Support Group

Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice will offer two Bereavement Support groups beginning in September. Information is posted on the Parish House bulletin board.

A WORD OF THANKS

"I am your brother Joseph ... God sent me ... to preserve life" –Gen 45

The sermon on Sunday, August 14, discussed the ways in which the stories of the famines in Genesis can inform the ways we react to the current crisis in Somalia and Kenya. In response to the special offering collected, members and friends of the Old Meeting House gave almost \$400 to be sent directly to the East Africa Famine Relief Fund, administered through *Our Church's Wider Mission*. The response, particularly in this time of economic uncertainty, was faith-filled and life-giving. Although my appreciation pales in comparison to that of the recipients, I am grateful to be a part of such a generous community.

If you are still looking to make a donation, the collection basket will remain in place on the pulpit table for the next two weeks. Checks can either be made out to The Old Meeting House, or to the UCC, with "East Africa Drought/Famine" in the memo portion.

-Elissa

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