

First Congregational Church
1 Monument Circle
Old Bennington, VT 05201

December 2017

*Vermont's Colonial Shrine: Welcoming all to share God's light,
and proclaiming God's embracing love since 1806*



CHURCH ORGANIST NEEDED – The First Congregational Church of Bennington, VT (“The Old First Church”), seeks a Church Organist, ideally with interest in directing a choir; interim / substitutes also encouraged to apply. Salary commensurate with experience; opportunity for increase with growth of the music program. Support for further development of organ skills is a possibility for a talented and motivated pianist. For details, visit www.OldFirstChurchBenn.org or email office@oldfirst.comcastbiz.net or call (802) 447-1223. Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled.

Christmastide at Old First Church

12/3: Hanging of the Greens

12/10: Poinsettias arrive

12/17: Candlelight Service

12/24: Christmas Eve Service



Mitten Tree: Donations for the mitten tree would be appreciated (mittens, gloves, hats and scarves).

Blanket Drive: Donations of new or gently used blankets would also be appreciated. Please make sure blankets are clean and note that we cannot accept electric blankets.



The Lantern

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church (Old First Church)

December 2017

FROM THE MINISTER

Each year brings change; this year is no exception perhaps only notable for the extent of change we have all witnessed. Passing of friends, changes in life or work, challenges of family and neighborhood and more. Christmas is a constant—standing amidst all life's changes with simple wisdom. Christmas season is in part a nostalgic look back beyond the changes in any year that mark our lives but there is more. Christmas is a constant that shapes days to come. It tells us, wherever change may carry us, that an unchanging love will always follow. It tells us hope and peace can be found in years ahead and are not only an ancient dream or tale that is told. That is the light we hold in this shadow time of every year. Candles burn bright not only for a remembered past but for a bright and happy future. So may this Christmas season renew us all with Christ's news of joy and peace!

The Rev. Ken Clarke

NEARING THE FINISH LINE!

The Narthex project is nearly complete with the floors restored and the installation of new cabinetry. The cabinetry was designed and constructed by Don Swanda with the help of several others from the church. We have been viewing the progress of this project each week as we enter for morning worship and look forward to the final unveiling in the coming days!

Christmas at Old First

The *first Sunday in Advent* on December 3 is a special day at Old First with our annual *Hanging of the Greens!* We begin at 9:30 a.m. with a scrumptious breakfast served in the narthex, followed by "decking the halls". It's ok to dress down for worship that day because working with pine needles can be messy! Our thanks to Peter and Monique Geannelis for donating the wreaths and trees again this year and to all who provided food for breakfast. Mardi Sargent, Mike Kovage and Scott Frost will be singing during worship.

The *second Sunday in Advent:* The poinsettias arrive on December 10 completing the Christmas décor. We will have our usual 11:00 a.m. worship service.

December 17th, the *third Sunday in Advent:* Following the morning worship the deacons will set up the globes and candles in preparation for the evening Candlelight Service and the lay readers will have an opportunity to practice their readings from the upper pulpit. *The Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols begins at 7:00 p.m.* Playing the organ that night will be Jacqueline Metsma. Continuing with our tradition, the Bennington Children's Chorus will be singing. Bring a friend along and be a part of this annual event at Old First! This service is a gift we make to the wider community and it's a real treat to have so many visitors. A wheelchair ramp will be available.

December 24, the *fourth Sunday in Advent:* There will be **NO MORNING WORSHIP.** Join us for our much anticipated *Christmas Eve service* which takes place at 5:00 p.m. This family service will be filled with a meaningful Christmas message, familiar carols and readings. Jacqueline Metsma will be playing the organ and Virginia Poole will be playing the oboe. The service concludes with the congregation singing "Silent Night" with lighted candles in front of the church. A wheelchair ramp will be available.

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www.oldfirstchurchbenn.org • office@oldfirst.comcastbiz.net • (802) 447-1223

Kenneth A. Clarke, Minister

Don Miller, Moderator

AND THE WINNER IS...

CATHY T. FROM BARRE, VT!



Thank you to all who purchased tickets for the original Ann Herrick hooked rug. The winning raffle ticket was drawn at the Harvest Meal. \$765 was raised by ticket sales with 100% of it going to the Church's Preservation Fund. Our thanks again to Ann for her remarkable talent and generous donation to the church.



Poinsettia Memorial

Donations toward the purchase of the *Christmas poinsettias* would be appreciated. If you are interested in having a poinsettia in memory of a loved one in the church, please send the name of that person(s) along with your name and a donation to the church office



Mitten Tree

We invite the congregation (as well as the entire community) to donate new mittens, hats, scarves, socks and blankets to our "Mitten Tree" located in the Narthex of the church. Please note, we cannot accept electric blankets and used blankets must be clean. Donations will be delivered prior to Christmas to various agencies which serve people in need

The Gift of
Warmth...



Stewardship Sunday Results

Thank you to all who made a financial commitment to the church for the 2018 fiscal year. Compared to last year, pledges are about even for the General Fund and down 37% in the Preservation Fund. We are hopeful those in our congregation who have not already pledged, will consider doing so. Donations large and small are important and very much appreciated. In the year ahead we will continue to be present in the community and in the unfolding of the spirit in all things. We cannot do so without generous gifts of time and effort and financial support.

A Year-End Reminder Regarding Pledge payments...

In an effort to follow the tax laws as closely as we can, please understand that we *must* have your 2017 contributions **IN THE OFFICE** by December 31. Any donations that are received after December 31, *regardless of the date that you've written on the check*, must be counted as contributions made in 2018. While it might be tempting to put a pre-dated check into the collection plate on that day and ask that it be counted in 2017, we really cannot make those exceptions. However, if sent through the mail, any envelope with a postmark of December 31, 2017, or earlier, despite its date of delivery to the office, can count as "received by" the end of the year.

Contact the church office if you would like to know where you stand on your pledge balance.

IN OUR THOUGHTS & PRAYERS:

Our church member and dear friend Jon Traver passed away at his home in North Carolina on October 24, 2017 after a brave battle with cancer. Jon had been a member of the church for 23 years and served on the Board of Trustees (holding the position of chair for a number of them) and will forever be remembered for his architectural skills and leadership roles in countless projects that have taken place at the church and barn. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Kiki and family.

December 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hanging of the Greens Sunday! Communion Sunday 11:00 AM worship The Rev. Ken Clarke Minister		DKG Barn use 2:30-6:00 PM Old Bennington Trustee mtg. 7 PM, Barn	Deacon's mtg. 4 PM, Barn Trustee's mtg. 5:30 PM, Barn		Knights of Columbus event 5-7 Barn	Sweet family Barn use 11-4 Jones family Barn use 10AM-5 PM
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
AAUW Barn use 1-4 PM 11:00 AM worship The Rev. Ken Clarke Minister	Old Bennington Planning mtg. 7 PM, Barn					Seddon family Barn use 12-4 PM
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols at Old First Church 7 PM 11:00 AM worship The Rev. Ken Clarke Minister					Bennington County Head Start training at the Barn 12-4 PM	Skidmore family Barn use 1-7 PM
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Christmas Eve worship service at the Old First Church, 5 PM						Gauthier family Barn use 9-2
31						
11:00 AM worship The Rev. Ken Clarke Minister						

DEACONS ON CALL:

Paul Goodrich & Jeannette Lesser

USHERS:

12/3: Paul Goodrich & Jeannette Lesser
 12/10: Pat & Larry Ross
 12/17: Joe, Ginny, Scott & Lilly Adams
 12/24: No morning worship
 12/31: Paul Goodrich & Jeannette Lesser

READERS:

12/3: Reg Jones
 12/10: Don Miller
 12/17: Marsha Pilachowski
 12/24: No morning worship
 12/31: Claudia Dalton

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS:

12/3: "Hanging of the Greens" breakfast
 12/10:
 12/17: Bill Hartz & Sue Katz
 12/24: No morning worship
 12/31:

FLOWERS:

12/3:
 12/10: Poinsettias
 12/17: Poinsettias
 12/24: No morning worship
 12/31: Poinsettias

BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH:

12/3: Ellen Knapp
 12/9: Mark Donovan
 12/10: Don Goodrich
 12/22: Fischer Gauthier
 12/31: Gail Gras Morin