

First Congregational Church  
1 Monument Circle  
Old Bennington, VT 05201

*January 2018*

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



### SCOTT SMEDINGHOFF MEMORIAL CONCERT

*To past & present members of the Bennington County Choral Society, Battenkill Chorale, Bennington Children's Chorus, Old First Church choir, Bennington and Williams College musicians, and all other singing friends & fans of the late great **Scott Smedinghoff**, organist, singer, mathematician, and wacky T-shirt collector extraordinaire:*

Matthew Marsit, director of the Dartmouth Wind Symphony, is preparing a May concert in memory of Scott. He has asked for help in putting together a choir made up of as many members as possible from the choirs Scott worked with over the years: Full Circle, the church choirs in Lyme and Thetford, Bennington and Williamstown, and of course his many musical friends from near and far.

- Concert is **Saturday, May 5, at 8PM**, at Spaulding Auditorium on the Dartmouth College campus
- Dress rehearsal is **Friday, May 4, 6-9PM**

**Any interested singers should contact Jennifer directly at [Jennifer.yocom@thet.net](mailto:Jennifer.yocom@thet.net)**

### Women's Book Group



The **WOMEN'S BOOK GROUP** will meet on January 19 at 6:30 p.m. at Marsha Pilachowski's home to discuss *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell.

Newcomers are always welcome. For more information or a listing of all the books being read this year contact Wendy Schmitt or the church office.

February's book is: *The Last Thousand* by Jeffrey Stern.



# The Lantern

## Newsletter of the First Congregational Church (Old First Church)

January 2018

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### FROM THE MINISTER

We had a real old-fashioned Christmas this year. Snow right on cue, but weather on Christmas eve gentle enough for the congregation to pour out onto the green in front of the church and sing “Silent Night”. The church decorated beautifully as it is every year through the hard efforts of all. Visitors, family, neighbors, and friends gathered to worship and sing. The Bennington Children’s chorus set the tone with a moving performance in the days leading to Christmas and the readers, music and feeling on Christmas eve were so appreciated. Thanks to all!

January is a busy season as budgets are drawn, the books on 2017 closed and we look ahead to projects to come. The work that has been done on the floors in the entrance hall at the church inspires us to see old things in new ways. It is symbolic of how we not only can keep the past live through it in our times by a steady vision of who we wish to be and what form of hospitality God intends. Changed but unchanging. The new closets keep with this theme, and the labor, taste, skill and goodwill of all who contributed to this transformation is mightily appreciated!

There is much to say at the start of a year with hope and good intentions. My prayer is that we remain strong as a community of goodwill, service, and spiritual meaning.

Lastly, about the weather! This month we cancelled morning worship on a cold day. In retrospect, I think, a bad decision on my part. My old rule has been to say that church when scheduled is never cancelled—but individuals should always use their own common sense in deciding whether or not to venture out. It may be only two or three will

make it, but we will improvise as the spirit leads us. On a bad weather day don’t endanger yourself by going out but you should know you might find at least one other person at church if you do set forth. This was the rule (violated only once before in my memory during hurricane Irene) and will be my rule going forward.

The Rev. Ken Clarke

### ANNUAL MEETING

Due to the weather the church Council postponed their regularly scheduled meeting to Sunday, January 21, following worship. At this rescheduled meeting, the Council will be setting the Annual Meeting date as well as discussing a proposed revision to the church’s By-Laws. In accordance with our By-Laws a notice will be mailed to our church members informing them of the meeting date and the proposed By-Law change.

If you are a Chair or Advocate on the Church Council, please prepare a 2017 *year-end report* and get it to the church office by January 31<sup>st</sup>.

### 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL LENTEN DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET

Submissions for our *Meditations for Lent* booklet, by and for members and friends of Old First Church, are being accepted. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14. The deadline for submissions is February 4<sup>th</sup> and email is the best way to get it to the church office. The devotionals are printed on a half-sheet of 8 ½ x 11” paper so please keep your selections brief.

1 Monument Circle, Old Bennington, Vermont 05201

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Kenneth A. Clarke, Minister

Don Miller, Moderator



## Christmas at Old First Church



Our annual *“Hanging of the Greens Day”* took place on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. This annual event, loved by all who participate, literally transforms the sanctuary in a matter of minutes to a picture perfect Christmas scene. All are treated to a delicious breakfast provided by many and organized by our Fellowship Advocate Claudia Dalton. Thank you to Peter and Monique Geannelis for donating the wreaths and trees this year and for all those who donated memorial poinsettias.

Our annual *Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols* took place on December 17<sup>th</sup> and people came from far and wide to enjoy it. Those who participated were the Bennington Children’s Chorus, director and soloist Kerry Ryer-Parke, Matthew Edwards at the piano and Jacqueline Metsma at the organ; Dave Pilachowski, Lucy Gardner Carson, Anastasia Gauthier, Mardi Sargent, Bill Gordon and Jim Pullman reading the six scripture lessons. Along with the minister, Brandy Lesser welcomed the congregation with the Call to Worship and Reverend Clarke delivered a moving sermon. Thank you to our ushers who played such an important part in the service: Stacy Carreau, Paul Goodrich, Dick and Pat Guerrero, Bill Hartz and Sue Katz (head ushers), Jeannette Lesser, Kyle Lesser, Amy and Bill Tronsen. Thanks to Hal and Betsy Ehrenfreund for lighting the Advent candles and to Sandy Bechtel for lighting the Christmas candle. After expenses, the offering netted \$618 to the Greater Bennington Food and Fuel Fund.



On *Christmas Eve*, we were treated to a very special evening of music, readings and prayers. Reverend Clarke offered a delightful meditation, the young people of the church participated in the service by ushering, lighting the Advent wreath and reading scripture. Our thanks to organist Jacqueline Metsma, oboist Virginia Poole and soloist Mardi Sargent for providing superb music that evening. The service concluded with everyone singing “Silent Night” out in front of the church by candlelight. It truly was a special evening!

Our thanks to Vicky Printz, Jane Radocchia, Kathy Wagenknecht, Pat White and Roberta Webb for decorating the Barn for the holidays and for un-decorating it, packing everything up perfectly and tucking it away in the attic for next year.

Our newly transformed Narthex was on full display for all to see and enjoy during the Christmas holiday and we couldn’t be prouder of how it looks. When you walk in the front door you can’t help but instantly notice the gleaming original wood floors and the impressive and well thought out cabinetry (built with mostly donated materials) which includes dedicated space for coffee hour and Open Church items. The new heavy duty front door mat and the specially crafted entry rug, which was made up of scraps of leftover carpet from the sanctuary, sets the stage for all who enter into our glorious Sanctuary.

This project required the expertise and teamwork of so many in our church. It was a fun bonding experience for all of the volunteers. THANK YOU!

# January 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 New Year's Day	2 Old Bennington Trustee mtg. 7 PM, Barn	3	4	5	6 Weber family Barn use 11-3
7 Hover family Barn use 11-3  11:00 AM worship The Rev. Ken Clarke Minister	8 Old Bennington Planning mtg. 7 PM, Barn	9 PFOA informational mtg. 5-6:30 PM, Barn	10 <b>Deacon's mtg.</b> 4 PM, Barn  <b>Trustee's mtg.</b> 5:30 PM, Barn	11	12	13
14  11:00 AM worship The Rev. Ken Clarke Minister	15 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	16	17	18	19	20 Belville family Barn use 11-4 PM
21 <b>Council Mtg. following worship (to be held in the Church Parlor)</b>  11:00 AM worship The Rev. Ken Clarke Minister	22	23	24	25	26	27
28  11:00 AM worship The Rev. Ken Clarke Minister	29	30	31			

## DEACONS ON CALL:

Sandy Bechtel and Pat Ross

## USHERS:

1/7: Closed  
1/14: Sandy Bechtel & Pat Ross  
1/21: Don & Lynda Swanda  
1/28: Larry & Pat Ross

## READERS:

1/7: Dave Pilachowski  
1/14: Bill Gordon  
1/21: Patrice Nolan  
1/28: Reg Jones

## COFFEE HOUR HOSTS:

1/7: Closed  
1/14: Stacy Carreau, Jeannette Lesser &  
Wendy Schmitt  
1/21: Marsha Pilachowski  
1/28:

## FLOWERS:

1/7: Poinsettias  
1/14: Poinsettias  
1/21: Poinsettias  
1/28:

## BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH:

1/3: Lucy Gardner Carson  
1/8: Carol A. Wade Gordon  
1/8: Tracy Locher  
1/9: Joan Kevorkian  
1/10: Issalee Niles  
1/12: Sandra Foster  
1/17: Colden Deveneau  
1/20: Eileen Druckenmiller  
1/22: Jon Gauthier  
1/28: Chelsea Lutz