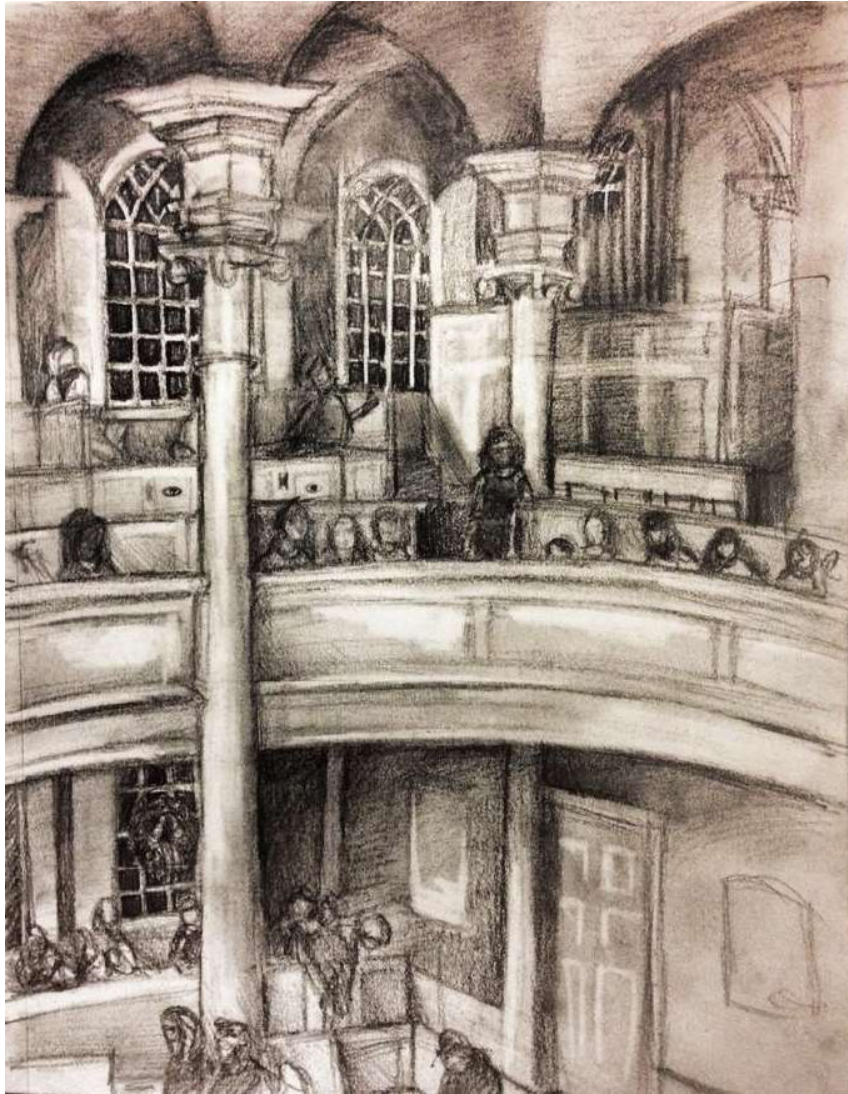


Christmas Eve at the Old First Church



Old Bennington, Vermont
Gathered 1762

Christmas Eve at the Old First Church

Old Bennington, Vermont

December 24, 2025

5:00 p.m.

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

KENNETH A. CLARKE, MINISTER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST
OLD FIRST CHURCH CHOIR
FRANÇOIS SECORDEL, VIOLIN
MARY ELIZABETH GROUPÉ, VIOLA

PRELUDE

Carol of the Birds

- Bas-Quercy Carol setting by Don Michael Dicie
Gene Marie Callahan, soprano, Francois Secordel, violin

The Shepherds at the Manger

- Franz Liszt
Gene Marie Callahan, piano

The Midnight Rose

- arr. Brad Nix and Wanda Cooley
Old First Church Choir, Francois Secordel, violin

* CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

O Come, All Ye Faithful

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels! | 2. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all Glory in the highest! |
|---|---|

Refrain:

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

Refrain

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Renny and Hillary Ponvert

CALL TO WORSHIP (responsive)

O sing to the Lord a new song,

FOR GOD HAS DONE MARVELOUS THINGS.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth;

BREAK FORTH INTO JOYOUS SONG AND SING PRAISES.

So all of creation may sing new songs of gladness

AND WALK IN THE WAY OF PEACE.

A MOMENT WITH THE CHILDREN

***CONGREGATIONAL CAROL**

What Child Is This

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. What Child is this, who, laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary! | 2. So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,
come, one and all, to own Him;
the King of kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise a song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy for Christ is born,
The Babe, the Son of Mary. |
|--|---|

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER (unison)

We rejoice this night in the unquenchable and eternal light that shines upon all creation. In that light we acknowledge those greeds within us which have darkened our days and those selfish customs among us that have shadowed the lives and spirits of others. This night may the light of Christmas enter our hearts in spoken word, song and wonder. May the joy of Christ's birth illumine our every hour and thought until all of us, as part of God's family, shall be brought out of any darkness to holy light eternal. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

*** CONGREGATIONAL CAROL**

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
joyful, all ye nations rise
join the triumph of the skies
with the angelic host proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem" | 2. Christ by highest heav'n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
offspring of a Virgin's womb
veiled in flesh the Godhead see
hail the incarnate Deity
pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel |
|---|--|

Refrain

Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Refrain

3. Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
ris'n with healing in His wings
mild He lays His glory by
born that man no more may die
born to raise the sons of earth
born to give them second birth

Refrain

* CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

O Little Town of Bethlehem

1. O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.
2. For Christ is born of Mary;
and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
and peace to all on earth.
3. How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Alex Knowles, Reader

* CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

In the Bleak Midwinter

1. In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.
2. Our God, heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away, when He comes to reign:
in the bleak midwinter, a stable place sufficed
the Lord God incarnate, Jesus Christ.
3. Angels and archangels, may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim, thronged the air;
but His mother only, in her maiden bliss,
worshiped the beloved, with a kiss.
4. What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man, I would do my part;
yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:1-20

Jessie Kuzmicki, Reader

* CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

The First Nowell

1. The first Nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay a keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
2. They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east, beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.

Refrain:

*Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.*

Refrain

3. And by the light of that same star,
three Wise Men came from country far;
to seek for a King was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.

Refrain

OFFERING

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

O Holy Night

- Adam Adolphe
Gene Marie Callahan, soprano

*** DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

Love's Wonder

*** CONGREGATIONAL CAROL**

Angels We Have Heard on High

1. Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song?

Refrain: Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Refrain

3. Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.

Refrain

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)

*** CONGREGATIONAL CAROL**

Joy to the World!

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

2. Joy to the world! the Savior reigns:
let us our songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

*** BENEDICTION**

* **OUTDOOR CANDLELIGHT CAROL**

Weather permitting, the congregation will gather to sing *Silent Night* in a circle outside the church tonight. Candles will be available outside.

Silent Night, Holy Night

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright,
round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight,
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing:
“Alleluia; Christ the Savior is born, Christ the savior is born.”

Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love’s pure light
radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord at Thy birth.

Silent night, holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing, alleluia to our King;
Christ the savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.



*stand if able

We welcome all of you to this annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, a tradition we are proud to host here at Old First Church. We are glad you have made it part of your Advent/Christmas season this year and we hope this service of worship tonight both enriches your life and glorifies God. The “Old First” Congregational Church was first gathered on December 3, 1762, and is thus celebrating its 263rd anniversary during this Advent season. The term, “gathered,” signified that the church was composed of all who chose to be part of its communion, regardless of where they lived. People still gather here from a wide area, including Arlington, Bennington, North Bennington, Shaftsbury, Pownal, Peterborough, New Hampshire, Buskirk, Hoosick Falls, Cambridge, White Creek, Melrose and Albany, New York. If you have no other church affiliation, we invite you to do the same. Livestream and later recorded content of our worship services--including the Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols--can be found and enjoyed at any time online by going to Livestream and later recorded content of our worship services--including the Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols--can be found and enjoyed at any time online by going to <https://oldfirstchurchbenn.org/index.php?content=worship>.

Tonight’s ushers are Courtney Cowan, Joe and Kate Musso, Pat and Larry Ross, and Sherry Schreiber.

This Christmas we are especially thankful for the skills and participation of our church choir: Susan Kachmar, Wayne Kachmar, Carol Poppe, David Roberts, its director and our organist Gene Marie Callahan, François Secordel, violin, and Mary Elizabeth Groupé, viola.

The sketch on the front cover is by Sarah Jane White, a graduated member of the Bennington Children’s Chorus. Sarah sketched this scene at our Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols 2013. Our thanks to her for permission to reprint her work as part of tonight’s order of service.

God’s grace to all this Advent-Christmas season!

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)
VT RTE. 9 AND MONUMENT AVENUE
OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

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CCLI # 3009679

The Old First Church thanks Peter Geannelis and Geannelis Tree Farms for providing the holiday greens and to the following who have provided memorial Poinsettias:

In Memory Of

Given By

Calley Baldwin, Marie Baldwin, Davis Baldwin, Peter Baldwin, Marge LaRowe, Pepper Morrisey, Colleen Dewey, Evan Parker, Pete Mickelson, Heather Mae Lenardo, Ed Parmachek, Marion Urman, George Remsberg, Ellen Eisenberg, Jacob Vasconcellos, Jessica Vasconcellos Moore

Lucy Baldwin

Family and loved ones

Sandy Bechtel

Dorothy Theberge Clarke and James F. Clarke

James, Ken and Johanna Clarke

Amy Coseo

Nancy Coseo

Hal Ehrenfreund

Betsy Ehrenfreund and Susan Congdon

Stephen Satterthwaite (Dad); Art and Kit Roberts (Grandma & Papa); Margaret Crawford (Grandma)

Anastasia, Jonathan and Fischer Gauthier

George Goeke

Joyce Goeke

My beloved father, Armand U. Lampron

Mary Elizabeth Groupé

Nicholas and Elizabeth DeVos and Louis and Rose Guariniello

Lou and Marie Guariniello

Esther Jonas Lubesco, Rosamond Adams Guerrero, and Amelia Lubesco

Dick and Pat Guerrero

Sam Hibbard

Marietta, Wendy, and Melinda

Our parents

Wayne and Susan Kachmar

Leif Laertes Langford and Cy Langford

Amber and Noah Langford

Keith Lesser, Henry and Florence Wentworth, and Sandy Vance

Jeannette, Brandy, and Kyle Lesser

My brother Geoffrey H. Locklin and my cousin, Donald P. Lubin

Cynthia Locklin

Jeff Munson

Darlene Munson

Our loved ones

Larry and Audrey Pietrucha

Our parents

Marsha and Dave Pilachowski

Grandparents (parents)

Carol Poppe and Lauren Beckerman

Gary Printz

Vicky Printz

Barbara Stevenson Turner

David Roberts and Debbie Turner

Valerie Heisler

Kristin Roessner

Our loved ones

Pat and Larry Ross

Our parents

Tom and Wendy Schmitt

Eric Matthew Tronsen

His family

June Carroll

Evie Wild