



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH Old Bennington, Vermont

February 2020 Lantern

FROM THE MINISTER

The winter has been mild enough--so far. Even so, cold and storms pass through making the ground either icy, damp, muddy, or snow-covered enough so that a walk can be a considered luxury. This is not "tour bus" season unless the bus is headed to the mountains where snowboards and skis rule. The church is quiet outside of worship in the winter with its heavy doors closed to cold and visitors alike.

So one might think. Tourists come here in winter time nonetheless. Some creep through the cemetery down the slope to Frost's grave. Others stay on the street and peer through the looping fence across the yard of graves and history then moving up to the monument and onward to other places equally out of season.

Some find the meetinghouse door and try it. Often this time of year it is closed tight--but in the hours after worship on Sunday, after the coffee hour is cleared away and a few people remain inside, the knock is answered, the door opens and the tourist in winter arrives. Our greeting is usually warm and the response, warm or guarded, depends on who steps across the threshold. Each journey is unique and only a part of the purpose shared.

One caller might glance in, others walk in slow silence around the aisles and exit, others chat, some show an appreciation of beauty, suggest a theme, or ask a good question. When winter visitors leave they aren't continuing on for more leisurely travel but instead return immediately to the icy walks and cold winds of midwinter.

All the more reason for a door that opens and a warm greeting when least expected. More reason for a silent glimpse of beauty or a suggested answer to some soul ache. That is why we are here--and faith exists--for winter tourists in a life of challenge and sometimes cold. That is why we open doors in every

season to whomever happens by.

This month is annual meeting time and lent's beginning (so soon?) too. Let's prepare for our own late winter journey with faith that doors will open and those we love shall be well.

- The Rev. Ken Clarke

WARNING... OLD FIRST CHURCH'S ANNUAL MEETING

The Church Council has set the Annual Meeting date for **Sunday, February 9, 2020** to be held in the church sanctuary following worship and a brief (but "beefed up") coffee hour. It will be a time to receive reports from advocates and boards as well as a report from the nominating committee electing people to various responsibilities within the life of the church.

17TH 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 26. **The deadline for submissions is February 14th.** 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.

WOMEN'S BOOK GROUP

The Women's Book Group will meet next on Thursday, February 20, 6:30 PM at Ann Martin's home to discuss the book *The Rosie Project* by Graeme Simsion.

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. March's book is: *The Secret Diary of Hendrik Groen* by Hendrik Groen.

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Kenneth A. Clarke, Minister

Don Miller, Moderator

BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study meets at the Barn on Tuesday afternoons at 4:00 PM, with the exception of the second Tuesday of the month when the Deacon and Trustee meetings are held.



SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY SPECIAL

COLLECTION - Once again our church joined with other churches across the country on Super Bowl Sunday in collecting money for those who are hungry and hurting. \$235 was collected at Old First and 100% of it will be donated to the Greater Bennington Interfaith Community Service's Kitchen Cupboard.

CONCERT AT THE OLD FIRST CHURCH

ANDRÉ LAURENT O'NEIL PERFORMS
CELLO SUITES BY J.S. BACH
March 21, 2020
4:00 PM

On Bach's birthday, André will play some of the unaccompanied cello suites, and launch his CD. Following the concert come to Bach's birthday party in the Church Carriage Barn on Monument Circle.

(Suggested donation \$40 to benefit Bennington Baroque)

March 21st, 2020 is J. S. Bach's 335th birthday and the 300th anniversary of his Cello Suites. There could hardly be a more fitting day to hear selected Cello Suites performed on baroque cello. Hailed by The Daily Gazette (Schenectady) as possessing a "lustrous ringing tone, facile technique and (a) strong convincing grasp of the baroque style," cellist and composer André Laurent O'Neil has performed in distinguished venues worldwide including Carnegie Hall, Symphony Hall in Boston, Disney Hall in L.A., Musikverein in Vienna, and the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. He has also performed with renowned groups such as the Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), New Trinity Baroque (Atlanta), New Belgrade Opera (Serbia), and II Rossignolo (Italy), among others. He is the newly appointed Principal Cellist of the Schenectady Symphony Orchestra.

Following the performance everyone is invited to a gala birthday party in the Barn at 1 Monument Circle.

FREE SUNDAY SUPPER

Every other month our church hosts the **FREE SUNDAY SUPPER** at Second Congo Church and we are due to host next on March 8th. We are looking for a few volunteers to prepare and serve the meal as well as food items for our pantry (sauce, spaghetti, Italian salad dressing, parmesan cheese). As it gets closer we will be seeking perishable items such as meatballs, salad, Italian bread and desserts. If you can help out in any way, please contact the church office.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

Thank you all who donated to the Mitten Tree this year. In a joint effort with our church and in the community, just over 100 blankets were donated to GBICS and Second Chance Animal Shelter. Numerous hats, mittens and scarves that were placed on the mitten tree were also donated to GBICS and distributed to those in need in and around our community.

We will be continuing to collect blankets through the winter months as the need is great. Donations can be left at the church office. Please note, we can not accept electric blankets.

MONUMENTAL TAG SALE


This year the Old First Monumental Tag Sale is returning **Saturday, June 6th**. The warm winds of June seem like a distant dream today but the months will pass quickly. **NOW** is the time to clean out your attic and those over-stuffed closets and to set aside items for the sale. Ask your friends and neighbors to do the same.

Our first planning meeting will take place after worship on Sunday, March 8 in the Church Sanctuary. We are looking to develop an expanded leadership team, so then please be thinking if there is one aspect of the sale that interests you. Bring your ideas and suggestions. Everyone is welcome! If you haven't been involved in the past we have a great time working on the tag sale and getting to know each other better. Please contact Marsha P. (447-3868); Susan K. (447-0738); Pat R. (753-7123) or the church office (447-1223) if you have any questions.

HEARING DEVICES:

We are having trouble locating one of our two hearing devices, used by parishioners to amplify what is being said from the pulpit. It is a little black box about the size of a deck of cards with a label on the front that says "Personal P.A. – Williams Sound". If you have seen this device or inadvertently carried it home one day, we would greatly appreciate it being returned so others can use it.

February 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Old First Church's Annual Meeting following worship Communion Sunday 11:00 AM worship The Rev. Ken Clarke Minister	3	4 Bible Study 4 PM at the Barn Old Bennington Trustee mtg. 7 PM, Barn	5 Hope for Parents Al-Anon meeting 6:30 -7:30 PM in the Parlor	6	7 MPCC Social Hall use 8:30-10:00 AM	8
9 Kasulinous family Barn use, 1-3 PM 11:00 AM worship The Rev. Ken Clarke Minister	10 Old Bennington Planning Committee mtg. 7:30 PM, Barn	11 Deacon's Mtg. 4 PM at the Barn Trustee Mtg. 5 PM at the Barn	12 Hope for Parents Al-Anon meeting 6:30 -7:30 PM in the Parlor	13	14	15 Hendee family Barn use, 1-5 PM
16 11:00 AM worship The Rev. Ken Clarke Minister	17	18 Bible Study 4 PM at the Barn	19 Hope for Parents Al-Anon meeting 6:30 -7:30 PM in the Parlor	20 Women's Book Group meeting 6:30 PM at Ann Martin's home	21	22
23 11:00 AM worship The Rev. Ken Clarke Minister	24	25 Bible Study 4 PM at the Barn	26 Hope for Parents Al-Anon meeting 6:30 -7:30 PM in the Parlor	27	28 MPCC Social Hall use 11:30-4:30 PM	29 Bombard family Barn use 11 AM-4 PM

DEACONS ON CALL:

Marsha Pilachowski & Wendy Schmitt

USHERS:

2/2: Marsha Pilachowski & Wendy Schmitt
2/9: Claudia & Steve Dalton
2/16: Darlene & Jeff Munson
2/23: Dave Pilachowski & Bill Wood

READERS:

2/2: Audrey Pietrucha
2/9: Dave Pilachowski
2/16: Patrice Nolan-Fox
2/23: Anastasia Gauthier

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS:

2/2: Marsha Pilachowski & Pat Ross
2/9: Annual Meeting (lunch provided by many)
2/16:
2/23: Anastasia (and Fischer) & _____

FLOWERS:

2/2:
2/9:
2/16:
2/23: