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Kiki Traver, Moderator

October, 2009

The Lantern

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church

Thank you to all who participated in the **LAY SUNDAY** service on September 20th. It was a wonderful and very meaningful service. We would like to especially recognize Reg Jones for all his effort in writing and preaching the sermon as well as selecting relative scripture, prayers and hymns.

The **GAME NIGHT/PIZZA PARTY** on October 9 at 6:00 p.m. at the Barn is gearing up to be quite the social event and we hope you'll come too! Please contact the church office so we know to expect you and have enough pizza. Bring along a salad or dessert to share and your favorite (easy to explain) game!

On Sunday, October 11 a group of people from the church will travel to **PEACE PAGODA** in Grafton, NY. The plan is to leave directly after worship so be sure to bring hiking shoes and a packed lunch. Driving up to the Pagoda is possible but if you are able, walking up is a wonderful way to experience the Pagoda. We will hear a short talk by Buddhist nun and peace activist, Jun Yasuda and be able to explore the grounds on our own for as long as we like. It is tucked back in the woods on sacred Native American land so a short hike would be nice. It is an amazing place that has a lasting effect on all who visit. We should bring a donation to express our gratitude.

If you are interested in walking or sponsoring a walker in the community **CROP WALK** on Sunday, October 11 please contact the Rev. Mary Lee Clark at Second Congregational Church. The walkers start off at 1:00 p.m. from 2nd Congo. ¼ of the CROP Walk funds stay in our community to help those in need.

Our church will be hosting the **FREE SUNDAY SUPPER** at Second Congregational Church on November 8 and December 13. If you can help out, we would greatly appreciate it. Supplies of spaghetti noodles and pasta sauce (as well as some perishable items which will be listed in the weekly bulletins as the dates get closer) are needed for the upcoming dinners. Donations may be brought to the church office or left in the box in the narthex.

The food pantry at the **HARVEST HOUSE** is running low. Donations of canned and other non-perishable items would be greatly appreciated. You may leave items in the box at the church in the narthex or you may bring items to the church office.

The **LIVING THE QUESTIONS** Sunday morning discussion group met on October 4, at 9:30 a.m. in the church parlor. Watch for the October schedule in the bulletin.

Everyone in the church is invited to a very special **90th BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR MERRITT HEWITT** on Sunday, October 25, 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. at the Barn. There will be live music and snacks. No gifts please!

Update from our Pastoral Search Committee...

The pastoral search process is nearing the finish line and we couldn't be more pleased to let everyone in the congregation know our expected timeline for recommending our new minister. The timeline can be found below, but before your eyes drift there, let us tell you about the arduous tasks so many people went through to get where we are today.

An Interim Pastoral Search Committee was formed and the Rev. Robin Greene was hired shortly after Rev. Barton's departure. During Robin's time with us a Mission Study Task Force (MSTF) was created and given the task of figuring out the identity of the Old First Church and the future direction of the church. The MSTF's findings played a key role in developing the Church Information Forms needed for the Pastoral Search Committee (PSC). The MSTF working intensely and tirelessly and in record time brought their findings to the congregation at the February 2009 Annual Meeting.

For continuity reasons, several members of the MSTF committee moved onto the search committee and joined some fresh faces from the congregation in an effort to find our new pastor. The work of the PSC has included formulating the search process, filling out the Church's information form, advertising for candidates, reviewing resumes and Minister Information Forms, listening to taped sermons and watching video worship services, formulating interview questions and interviewing candidates by telephone conferences and finally interviewing potential ministers in person. The finalists have been invited to preach in and around our area.

There were twenty-one candidates who sent along their information for the committee to review and four remain under consideration. Work remains to be done including discussions with candidates' references, viewing worship services led by the candidates and conducting second interviews. The PSC expects to recommend their pastor choice in late October to early November. Then as required in the church by-laws, a warning for a special church meeting will be announced for 2 weeks prior to that meeting. Our recommended candidate will preach at the Old First Church on the Sunday before this special church meeting. After that service the congregation will vote on the recommendation of this candidate.

The Pastoral Search Committee has had the good fortune of working in an affable, close and respectful manner in the past six months. The seven members have a wide range of backgrounds, views and beliefs, and represent the varied views of the congregation well. We are confident that the choice recommended by the PSC will be by consensus and that the right person will be called. We look forward to fulfillment with the new minister and among ourselves. Those who served on the various committees continue to appreciate the congregation's thoughts, prayers, patience and good will. These last few weeks will be busier than ever for the committee and we trust that "the best person for the job" will be clear and evident.

In His love and grace,
The Pastoral Search Committee

Timeline of the pastoral search process and where we are today

February 17, 2008	Rev. Scott Barton's last day as our minister
March 13, 2008 - March 11, 2009	Rev. Robin Greene's time as interim pastor.
Summer of 2008 – February 2009	Mission Study Task Force was charged to articulate the direction and identity of the Old First in order to assist the yet-to-be-appointed Pastoral Search Committee. The MSTF was urged to move expeditiously as possible and produced a comprehensive mission statement that was presented at the February 2009 Annual Meeting and information for the search committee to use on the Church Information Forms necessary for the search process.
March 2009	Pastoral Search Committee was formed and began its task to find our new minister.
Late October, 2009	The PSC intends to recommend a candidate to the Church
Late October, early November	A warning will be issued from the pulpit of a special congregational meeting.
Early – mid November	The recommended candidate will be expected to preach the Sunday service and the congregation will vote on the candidate after the service.

As “Leaf-Peeper Season” kicks into high gear, the guides continue to enjoy meeting visitors to the church. Many thanks to all who have been guides this season: Sandy Bechtel, Suzy Donovan, Betsy Ehrenfreund, Bill & Carol Gordon, Lou & Marie Guariniello, Ann Herrick, Marietta & Sam Hibbard, Arlene Horvath, Charlie Horvath, Sue Katz, Joan Kevorkian, June King, Jeannette Lesser, John & Isobel Meyer, Bettenell Miller, Patrice Nolan, Rick Oller, Olivia Oller, Gunther Pagel, Dave & Marsha Pilachowski, Wendy Schmitt, Ken & Mary Walling and a couple Interact students from Mount Anthony Union High School. We enjoy telling visitors about who we are as a church and interesting facts about our building and early history.

If you would like to be a “helper” on a shift or two, please contact Marietta Hibbard, 447-0856 or the church office, 447-1223.

Clip on “guide badges” can be found on the glass top table if you wish to identify yourself as the Open Church guide or helper.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS...

So many times we take for granted the “behind the scenes” things that magically get fixed, cleaned or spruced up and many times we never know who does the fixing or cleaning! We would like to thank YOU if you have done something to better Old First! Please know we appreciate YOU and your efforts.

For instance, you may have noticed the dead tree out in front of the church was removed – thank you Dave Pilachowski and Ken Walling. Thanks also to Ken for the constant upkeep of the church and barn. Ken replaced the light switches with illuminated switches in the stairwell behind the pulpit; he removed an old vent from the electric toilet that used to be in the narthex (how many of you remember that scary piece of equipment?!); he has replaced multiple bulbs at the barn; ventured on a squirrel relocation quest in the barn attic (with not much luck because they are SO CRAFTY!); arranged for pest control to spray at the church for carpenter ants and faithfully cleans the bell tower looking for evidence of continued activity and Ken also cleans the church each week. The church owes Ken a great deal of gratitude, so the next time you see him, please be sure to recognize his efforts!

The newly renamed **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE** met in September. The committee is developing a formal evaluation/review process for our staff members (pastor, secretary and organist). We would like to remind the congregation that this committee is available to receive your input about any issue relating to staff members. We will strive to provide a supportive and confidential forum for staffers to discuss their concerns, successes, and goals. Feedback from the Congregation will be helpful in this process. Do you have some praise you'd like to share about a staff member's performance? Perhaps you have an idea about how we can make our church run more efficiently. Ideas, suggestions and comments can be shared confidentially with any member of the committee, who are: Carrie Croft, Dave Pilachowski, Marsha Pilachowski, Rick Oller and Mardi Sargent. Thank you!

Preaching this month...

10/4: Rev. Kenneth Clarke
10/11: Rev. Lou Guariniello
10/18: Rev. Arthur Wright
10/25: Rev. Lou Guariniello

WOMEN'S BOOK GROUP

The Women's Book Group will meet at Kathy Yarnall's home on *Thursday, October 15*, at 7:00 PM to discuss the book *Speak Softly, She Can Hear* by Pam Lewis. Newcomers are always welcome.

For more information, contact Wendy Schmitt.



BENNINGTON EMPTY BOWLS SUPPER

Sunday, October 11, 2009, 5 to 8 p.m.
Mount Anthony Union High School

Come break bread with us, while raising awareness of hunger in our community!

The first 500 participants will have the opportunity to choose a unique pottery "empty bowl" made by a member of the Great Bennington community over the past few months.

For a minimum donation of \$10, you can fill your bowl with some soup, take some bread and beverage, and sit down with friends, neighbors, and strangers to enjoy a very simple square meal. You will get to keep your bowl when you go home, to remind you that there are individuals and families in the Bennington community who experience hunger every day.

All proceeds will benefit the Bennington Food and Fuel Fund. For information call 802-379-0149; or visit us on the web at: <http://benningtonemptybowls.blogspot.com/>

Mount Anthony Union High School is located at 301 Park Street in Bennington, VT.

Will you be making a New Year's resolution to get active and fit? Come join the Old First Church's yoga group at the Barn!

If enough people come forward and sign up we would be able to get experienced yoga instructors from Off the Wall gym to come teach our classes. We would meet two late afternoons per week for 8 weeks which will give the participants the maximum benefit to Body Flow. This is a three-discipline program. The three disciplines are Tai Chi, Yoga and Pilates ending with relaxation and meditation. The class is available for all levels, beginner to expert and is co-ed!

The cost per person will be \$75 pre paid with a minimum of 10 people and maximum of 20. This would be a breakdown of \$4.68 per class. A GREAT deal!

We are looking to start classes in early January and were thinking of an afternoon time around 4:30 or 5:00 each class is 55 minutes long. PLEASE let Nancy know in the office if you are interested. Be sure to invite a friend to join our group!

Good News Corner...

Dave and Marsha Pilachowski are delighted to announce the recent engagement of their son James to Cynthia Obsitnik. A spring 2010 wedding is planned.

We are happy to announce the recent marriage of Laurie Guariniello, daughter of Lou and Marie to Steven Solesky on September 26 at the Old First Church.

Tom & Wendy Schmitt are delighted to announce the wedding of their daughter, Kim to Jon Belk of California. An October 17th wedding will take place at Old First.

Former church member, Matthew Hall will marry Mikilena Greusel on October 17th as well. Matt is the son of Patti Hall Flemming and the late Ronal Hall.

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October, 2009

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

