

# Green Steeple

## Messenger

### **Sweet December**



The Advent season is known as Sweet December in the Karen Baptist tradition. It is a holy time to prepare our hearts, minds, and whole lives for the astonishing fact that God Almighty chose to come to us as a tiny baby in order to share our experiences and to show to the world the limitlessness of divine love. In Burma, there are worship services every night. Here, our Karen community has special events and activities to celebrate this holy season.

Advent calendars are a beloved part of our New England Advent traditions but I wonder if perhaps they lead us to think of Advent as a countdown to the main event rather than a season to honor and savor. We often spend December in a frenzy of shopping, decorating, cooking, and other busyness. I have actually heard folks say that they just can't wait for Christmas to be over so that they can finally relax.

This year I invite us to approach Advent as Sweet December, a holy time to focus on the love of God made known to us through the incarnation of Jesus. We can be intentional about how we spend our time. We can appreciate the special activities of the season. We can try to keep our busyness in check!! Of course we will look forward to Christmas but our experience of resting in the love of God doesn't have to wait until then.

This newsletter is full of opportunities to celebrate Sweet December and the joy of Christmas and Epiphany. I look forward to celebrating with you. It is a joy to be in ministry together.

Yours in Christ,

~ Karen

Rev. Karen A. Mendes

Pastor

# Advent and Christmas Events for all Ages

Celebrate the Season with your Family of Faith

- **Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup>: Advent Workshop**

Make Christmas Crafts in Fellowship Hall after worship.

- **Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>: Christmas Tree Sunday.**

Bring an ornament from home to decorate our Sanctuary Tree

- **Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup> : Nightlight Jewelry Sale**

An opportunity to support missions in Thailand.

- **Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>: Advent Stories & Songs.**

Our Second Hour will be filled with music & stories

- **Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>: Christmas Worship**

Wonderful music & the Christmas Pageant to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent

- **Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup> 4pm: The Longest Night Worship**

A Christmas service for those who mourn

- **Wednesday December 25<sup>th</sup>, 10pm: Christmas Eve Service**

Candlelight Service at 10pm

- **December 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day Worship**

Celebrate Christmas with our Karen Speaking Church Family

- **December 28<sup>th</sup>: Afternoon Caroling**

Bring Christmas Cheer to our homebound members and friends



# Opportunities for Fellowship and Learning

**There's more the Church than Sunday mornings.**

WEEKDAY BIBLE STUDY - Mondays at 11:30am - We are continuing our study of the Gospel of Luke. Please join us in person or remotely and feel free to bring your lunch. The Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86024135383?pwd=b1pWcXRqZVo1Yjl2Zmh3Q2x5MXliZz09>

FBC MUSICAL ADVENT CALENDAR Each day of Advent (except for Sundays) we will post a Christmas carol video on the church Facebook page to create a Musical Advent Calendar. May the videos and our good wishes bring you joy and peace during this Sweet December.

LOVE DIVINE, ALL LOVES EXCELLING is our Christmas pageant that will be presented on December 21 during worship. A full dress rehearsal will be on Saturday, December 20 at 4pm. All children and youth who would like to participate are welcome. Adults helpers are deeply appreciated.

CHANCEL CHOIR REHEARSAL on Thursdays at 7pm. Come sing with this melodious community! Contact Anna Roy at [aroy@fbcburlingtonvt.com](mailto:aroy@fbcburlingtonvt.com) for more information.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR - Our Coffee hour happens on Tuesdays at 10am. The Zoom Link is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89855564406?pwd=R2FtbC9tRnoyU1R1cXJTRmRsY1Vldz09>

THE SOCIAL JUSTICE TEAM - There are many opportunities in our wider communities to speak out and act on our faith such as vigils and letter writing campaigns. We know that many First Baptist folk are active in these ways. So we are organizing a new Social Justice Team through which those who are interested can receive notice of these community events and perhaps attend together. The Team might also want to organize events for First Baptist or share their experiences with the congregation. If you are interested in being part of the Social Justice Team, please respond directly to [revkamendes@fbcburlingtonvt.com](mailto:revkamendes@fbcburlingtonvt.com).

THE BOOK GROUP is reading The Galapagos Islands - A Spiritual Journey by Brian McLaren. Our Zoom meeting is Mon, Dec 8<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. We will discuss chap 12 - the end of the book. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86392397962?pwd=ZEdnWXA5Y0NNNGFxK3d1b0IPd0JBdz09>

FLOWERS FOR WORSHIP: All are invited to provide flowers for a worship service. This can be a meaningful way to memorialize a loved one or commemorate an important event and bring God's beautiful creations into the sanctuary to enhance our spirit of praise and joy in worship. Please call the church office to sign up for a particular Sunday.



# Church School News

BLESSINGS TREE: The early elementary class has been learning about blessings and missions. They are doing a beginning mission project here in the church. The project is giving everyone a chance to reflect on one or more blessings they feel and thanking God for those blessings. In the Narthex on one of the door side windows you will find a paper tree and background. There's a basket of paper leaves, pens, glue, and tape. We hope you will feel inspired to write down one or more blessings on the leaves and glue or tape them on the blessings tree poster as a thank you prayer. The kids have gotten us started with their own blessing leaves.



The following are new developments in the Director position. The Education Team has altered the position expectations and description in the following ways. The position will be a flexible 15 hour per week position with salary being up to \$18,000.00 per year. Otherwise, the job description would be substantially the same with some outreach expectations eliminated. We will be carefully looking at ways to finance the position in 2026 including applying for a Dinwiddie grant and tapping Shaub/Whitney funds. At present the Team still has funds in its budget to pay for the position in 2025. We have been interviewing candidate for the revised position.

# Mission News

## 2025 Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering

During the month of December, we contribute to a special thank you offering for our American Baptist retired ordained ministers and commissioned missionaries and their surviving widowed spouses. A certain portion of the funds is also allocated for direct emergency relief. With gift revenue from the RRMO 2024 offering, ABCUSA distributed 3,331 thank you checks averaging \$174, a modest amount in which the gesture says far more than the dollars. The theme this year is Worthy of Love from 1 cor.16:14 “let all that you do be done in love”. In 2024, First Baptist gave \$343.50. Reverends David O’Brien, Reid Trulson, and Jeff Middleton will be among the recipients. For all the blessings they’ve brought us, together let’s remember them again this year.

## Fall Edition of the Friends of Burma Newsletter

Check out our Mission Outreach Bulletin Board in Fellowship Hall. We have received the fall edition of the Friends of Burma newsletter which tells about a new nursing school opening in Kawthoolei, Burmese artifacts for sale, and the impact of ending US aid food support to refugee camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border.



# Mission News Continued

## One Great Hour of Sharing for Hurricane Disaster Relief

We are collecting for OGHS for hurricane disaster relief, especially for Jamaica. If sending a check to First Baptist, put Melissa Hurricane in memo or use envelope in church pew and check OGHS hurricane relief



## The Share

We thank all our loyal soup-makers for The Share. Our soup-makers were Lois D'Arcangelo, Deb Holonich, Cindy and Dave Little, Ginger Calder, Jamie Burke and Debby Tate. Fern Sparks and Beth Gamache also attended 'The Share' and spent time in the dining area conversing with our guests. We are now needing 3 soups weekly due to our increasing number of visitors. We will be conducting a nonperishable food drive in January for Anew Place in Burlington. A list of the most needed nonperishable items will be posted in the January Green Steeple.

## HELPING TRAFFICKED WOMEN IN THAILAND

There will be a jewelry/ornament sale in the Narthex, after church on December 7. The jewelry and ornaments are made by women living in a shelter in Bangkok, Thailand. This shelter is run by Nightlight International, a global organization that restores the lives of women affected by trafficking and Nightlight Bangkok is a place where women can get shelter and employment (making and selling jewelry). Nightlight is a ministry supported by ABCUSA International Ministries.

# Photos and Reflections



This month, we had our first heavy snow. Please open your heart to this seasonal gift of quiet, darkness, cold. Allow it to reveal the blessing of community. To reveal the simple gift of a lit candle.

May you be well, may you feel welcomed.

"In the depths of winter, I learned that within me there lay an invincible summer."

- Albert Camus



The functioning of our church is a collective achievement. From the unison of our voices during worship to a generously shoveled walkway, we are in it together. Thank you for all the ways that you support First Baptist.

It is felt. It is appreciated.



# Community News

## December Birthdays!

- Charles Roy 12/01
- Dorian Wright 12/02
- Diana Hall 12/02
- Don Spawn 12/03
- Daniel Calder 12/03
- Blu Saw Nah Wah 12/06
- Noah Smith 12/07
- Joseph Burke 12/09
- K. Penny Smith 12/09
- Ethan Gaylord 12/12
- Christ Moo Wah 12/14
- Iris Roy 12/15
- Blessing Wah Htwee 12/20
- Penilee Saulnier 12/21
- Cindy Little 12/23
- Hallelujah Kut 12/25
- Priscilla Smith 12/27
- Judith Austin 12/27
- Peter Gaylord 12/31
- Carolyn Vadeboncoeur 12/31



## WORSHIP SERVICE INFORMATION

### Advent 1, November 30<sup>th</sup>

**Sermon Title:** Walking in the Light

**Scripture:** Isaiah 2:1-5

### Advent 2, December 7<sup>th</sup>

**Sermon Title:** The Peaceable Kingdom

**Scripture:** Isaiah 11:1-10

### Advent 3, December 14<sup>th</sup>

**Sermon Title:** Magnificat

**Scripture:** Luke 1:47-55

### Advent 4, December 21<sup>st</sup>

**Love Divine, All Loves Excelling**

**Scripture:** Matt 1:18-25

# OUR BEAUTIFUL LOGO

NOW AVAILABLE IN GIFT GIVING FORM!

Water bottles, Totebags, and Winter hats adorned with our new logo will be available to order with delivery by Christmas.



THE COST FOR  
EACH IS  
**\$25**



Sign up in the Narthex or by  
emailing  
[welcome@fbcburlingtonvt.com](mailto:welcome@fbcburlingtonvt.com)

The deadline for ordering will be  
December 11.



# Make Your Financial Donation

If you are unable to attend worship in person, you may mail a check to the church office or give electronically through the donate button on our church website: <http://www.fbcburlingtonvt.com> or through the smartphone app called Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement. Our ministries depend on the generous gifts of our members and friends. You can also give using this QR code. Thank you for your participation in sharing the love of God in our community and our world.



## UGB MEETING

The UGB group met on Monday, November 17th. The outreach team communicated their readiness for the Thanksgiving Food drive. The Fellowship team noted new and repeat visitors coming for Sunday Service. The music team reported being prepared for the Advent and Christmas season, particularly after the generous donation of an additional drum set by Matt Little. The education team team is continuing interviews with a potential director, and the property team has reduced patrols thanks to lowered activity outside the church and the addition of security cameras. A potential renter for the children's room was discussed, as well as sharing the new logo with new merchandise. The archives team advocated for secure offsite backups for all our digital records and quotes are being collected for different options regarding storage. The financial secretary's report was approved, as was the treasurer's report. Various information is being gathered before finalizing the 2026 budget. Looking forward, there are plans for a Tuba concert on Church St. December 13th. FBC has been made available as a back-up location in case of inclement weather. Christmas caroling logistics were discussed and it was announced that the new website has been partially launched. Finally, thanks to all the volunteers that handled the greening of the church was expressed.

# Contact Us!

## Church Staff Directory

Rev. Karen A. Mendes - Pastor  
Pastor Thee Say - Karen Baptist Pastor  
Pierre Compere - Church Administrator  
Evan Allen - Organist  
Anna Roy - Chancel Choir Director  
Brenda Perkins - Youth Choir Director  
The Karen Baptist Community - Sexton Team  
Dazzling Diadem - Tech Support

## Officers of First Baptist

Cindy Little - Moderator  
Mark Paulsen - Assistant Moderator  
Beth Gamache - Assistant Clerk  
Frank Swasey - Treasurer  
Daz Diadem - Assistant Treasurer  
Marilyn Siple - Financial Secretary  
Marie Morton - Assistant Financial Secretary  
Pat Reasoner - Historian  
Mark Paulsen - Parliamentarian

## CHURCH EMAIL ADDRESSES

The church office - [welcome@fbcburlingtonvt.com](mailto:welcome@fbcburlingtonvt.com)  
Karen Mendes - [revkamendes@fbcburlingtonvt.com](mailto:revkamendes@fbcburlingtonvt.com)  
Evan Allen - [eallen@fbcburlingtonvt.com](mailto:eallen@fbcburlingtonvt.com)  
Anna Roy - [aroy@fbcburlingtonvt.com](mailto:aroy@fbcburlingtonvt.com)  
Treasurer - [treasurer@fbcburlingtonvt.com](mailto:treasurer@fbcburlingtonvt.com)  
Financial Secretary - [financialsecretary@fbcburlingtonvt.com](mailto:financialsecretary@fbcburlingtonvt.com)  
Karen Baptist Community - [KBC@fbcburlingtonvt.com](mailto:KBC@fbcburlingtonvt.com)

## CHURCH CONTACT

Office: 802-864-6515  
Conference: 802-864-4721  
Email: [welcome@fbcburlingtonvt.com](mailto:welcome@fbcburlingtonvt.com)  
Website: [www.fbcburlingtonvt.com](http://www.fbcburlingtonvt.com)  
Visit Us On Facebook: [First Baptist Church, Burlington, VT.](https://www.facebook.com/FirstBaptistChurchBurlingtonVT)

## PAST WORSHIP SERVICES...

are available on our website and our YouTube Channel.  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0vlptkSAyIRbAifDbGFIw>

