

Green Steeple

Messenger

Christmas 2025-2026



It may be a quirk of the calendar but I feel it is providential that the 12 days of Christmas spans from one year to the next. The wonder and radical power of God's incarnation in Jesus our Christ can not be limited to one season or one year. The joy and generous spirit which fills the holiday season can be shared all year long. In fact, perhaps in January we can share of ourselves even more than in December when we are so busy with holiday preparations.

January 2026 brings opportunities for us to reflect on our ministries and how we will continue to grow in our faith and witness. With so much divisiveness in our wider society, we have a powerful opportunity to model what it means to be an inclusive, diverse, American Baptist community of faith, buoyed by God's love.

We will work with Robert Gillespie, our new Director of Christian Education, as he supports our Church School and Family Ministries. Our Youth will make plans for our Mission Trip to Boston in April. Our Thriving Congregation Working Group will gather to begin the application process for the ABCRGR Thriving Congregations Initiative. Our new Social Justice Team will advocate for the vulnerable in the wider community. Our Mission Outreach Teams will continue their vital local and international ministry projects. We will worship together. We will learn together. We will fellowship together. We will serve together.

2026 will be a year filled with new opportunities to grow in faith and share the Spirit of Christ with the world. It is a great joy to be in ministry with you.

Yours in Christ,

~ Karen

Rev. Karen A. Mendes

Pastor

Upcoming Special Sundays

- **Jan. 4** - On Epiphany Sunday, we will celebrate the arrival of the Magi, bringing gifts to the baby Jesus. After worship we will have an Epiphany Party with a 3 Kings Cake. Whoever finds the coin in the cake will be King or Queen for the day!
- **Jan. 11** - As we ponder Jesus' baptism we will reaffirm our own commitment to Christ by coming forward to touch the Water of Remembrance and receive a blessing. It will be a powerful moment to rest in God's deep love for us.
- **Jan. 18** - On Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend, we will explore how his Baptist roots and his prophetic voice empower and compel us to make positive change in our communities. We will hear from him in worship and then discuss our responses during the Second Hour.
- **Jan. 25** - After worship we will gather for a potluck lunch and our Annual Meeting. This will be a great time of fellowship as we look back over the past year and look forward to how God is calling us in 2026.

A Memorial for Malcolm Severance

On December 13th, the community gathered to celebrate the life of Malcolm Severance (10/09/1924 - 11/24/2025). We extend our love and appreciation to his spirit and his family.



Opportunities for Fellowship and Learning

There's more the Church than Sunday mornings.

OUR YOUTH MISSION TRIP TO BOSTON will be April 23-26. We have been invited back to work with the First Baptist Church of Jamaica Plain's Food Hub. We will stay at the First Baptist Church of Newton Centre and worship with them on Sunday, 4/26. Youth in grades 8 and above are invited to participate. **All youth and parents/guardians are asked to attend an organizational meeting on Sunday Jan. 11 at 11:15am.** We need a firm number of who will participate so that we have enough adult volunteers. For more information, please contact Rev. Karen at revkamendes@fbc Burlingtonvt.com.

WEEKDAY BIBLE STUDY - Mondays at 11:30am. On Jan 5 we will begin exploring the Book of Daniel. Please join in person or remotely and feel free to bring your lunch. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86024135383?pwd=b1pWcXRqZVo1Yjl2Zmh3Q2x5MXliZz09>

CHANCEL CHOIR REHEARSAL on Thursdays at 7pm. Come sing with this melodious community! Contact Anna Roy at aroy@fbc Burlingtonvt.com for more information.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR - Our Coffee hour happens on Tuesdays at 10am. Zoom Link: <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@fbc Burlingtonvt.com.

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.



Christian Education News



Director of Christian Education: The team had several applicants. The position was offered to Robert Gillespie, who accepted the position and began immediately learning about our community and curriculum. Robert is new to Vermont and comes from Pennsylvania where he worked as a public school teacher. He is continuing a research project for a graduate degree and has been active in social service work. Please welcome Robert, as we look forward to his leadership.

Pageant: Pastor Karen directed the kids in a pageant she had written. She rehearsed with the main speaking cast and had one rehearsal with everyone on December 20th. Costume and prop helpers were Karen Pope, Lynn Blodgett, Penilee Saulnier and Lois Lynch, Sarah Wright, Bill Mason, and Max Balderas. The wonderful pageant took place during the service on December 21st, Christmas Sunday. Everyone enjoyed experiencing the story of the birth of the Christ child.



A Letter From Robert Gillespie

Hello First Baptist Families:

Greetings to everyone! I want to take a moment to introduce myself to the First Baptist Church community. My name is Robert Gillespie, and I will be taking the role of Director of Christian Education here at First Baptist.

I have been in attendance at both the 10:00AM and 12:00 Karen service, yet there are many of you and you families I hope to meet in the upcoming weeks. I truly believe First Baptist Church was calling to me, and I hope to become a part of this community, and someone that can help grow our congregation and strengthen our relationships inside and outside of the church.

I am new to the Burlington area as of November, moving up from Reading, PA as I complete my Doctoral Studies dissertation at the University of Vermont. My employment history encompasses the education, business, and social services sectors, with the majority of my career as a 5th grade classroom teacher in the Reading School District in Reading, PA.

My religious affiliations have varied since childhood, being raised with a UCC upbringing, converting to Catholicism during my marriage, and later joining a Lutheran organization when I began working with shelters and addiction centers in Pennsylvania for my dissertation studies. I look forward very much to meeting all of you and your families and becoming an even more ingrained member of First Baptist. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at rgillespie@fbcburlingtonvt.com or at 802-363-4949.

Sincerely,

Robert Gillespie

Mission News

We provided Thanksgiving dinners to 3 families. Two turkeys were purchased from our Thanksgiving offering. 167 pounds of food and essentials that the congregation brought on Thanksgiving Sunday were given to Feeding Chittenden Food Shelf. Thank you to Sarah Wright for delivering to Feeding Chittenden.



We reached out to ANEW Place about items needed for their guests who are moving out to an apartment in the near future. We will be posting these needs in the newsletter. We are hopeful that members and friends of FBC may have some of these items to donate. Stu Burroughs is communicating with his contacts at Habitat for Humanity to see how we can work together to meet these needs.

Thanks for all who enjoyed or purchased items from the Nightlight Jewelry/Ornament sale at church on Dec. 21. We sold over \$1100 in merchandise - \$450 employs a Women at Nightlight for an entire month!



Lois D'Arcangelo communicated with her contact at JUMP. We learned about the many essential services they provide and will invite her for a Mission Moment and second hour discussion in the upcoming winter months.

Photos and Reflections



In this New Year, please take
excellent care of yourselves.
This community of worship is here
for and with you.
Together, with open hearts,
we greet the new and unknown.

“And now we welcome the new
year, full of things that have
never been.”
— Rainer Maria Rilke



Moment by moment,
breath by breath,
the unfolding epiphany of
daily life.



Community News

January Birthdays!

- Suzanne Paulsen 01/01
- Tracy Gilbert 01/10
- Thalei Paw 01/12
- Caroline Vandevord 01/11
- Bernice Dandridge 01/15
- Chelsea Casarico 01/15
- Moses Doh 01/19
- Stephen Perkins 01/19
- Ariel Ballard 01/23
- Jeneve Joslin 01/25
- Nancy Danforth 01/30
- Jay Hammer 01/30
- Moo Thay Lay Htoo 01/31

Upcoming Anniversaries!

- Dec 29th - Jim & Ginger Calder - 47 years
- Jan 5th - David & Chris O'Brien 52 years
- Jan 23rd Larry & Penny Smith 55 Years



WORSHIP SERVICE INFORMATION

Epiphany Communion, January 4th

Sermon Title: The Wisdom of Strangers

Scripture: Matt 2:1-12

Baptism of our Lord, January 11th

Sermon Title: Beloved

Scripture: Matt 3:13-17

Epiphany 2, January 18th

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Day

Sermon Title: Following the Lamb

Scripture: John 1:29-42

Epiphany 3, January 25th

Sermon Title: The Kingdom of

Heaven Has Come Near

Scripture: Matt 4:12-23

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.



A Thank You from Karen

Dear Church Family,

Thank you so much for the generous Christmas gift given to me.
I so appreciate all the many ways in which we share God's love.
You all are great blessings to me!

Merry Christmas!

UGB MEETING

Our monthly meetings are open to anyone who would like to sit in on them. Please check in the church office for the Zoom Meeting ID and Passcode. They normally are the 3rd Monday of the month at 7:00pm.

Highlights from this past month were:

- Outreach Team reported that they provided Thanksgiving food for 3 families, purchased 2 turkeys and donated 167lbs of food to the Feeding Chittenden Food Shelf. ANEW Place has provided us with a list of items they would appreciate to meet the needs of their guests.
- The Fellowship team noted a few new faces who have joined us on Sunday for worship.
- Education Team reported that we welcomed Robert Gillespie as our new Christian Education Director. He is in a doctoral program at UVM and is a former school teacher from Pennsylvania. The classrooms were preparing for the Christmas pageant (That took place during the worship service on 12/21 and was a wonderful production and telling of the Christmas story. We appreciate all who acted and helped to make it happen for us! It was so special to have baby Zoe as baby Jesus!).
- The Property Team is glad to have reduced their patrolling of the outside of our building, down to 2 times a week. The camera system is in place and has allowed us to view the outside activity remotely. They had a plumber come in to work on a valve in the men's restroom as well as to fix the hot water heater. Batteries were replaced in thermostats and 3rd floor heating units were balanced.
- 139 Bank Street: As of November 30th the income is at 99.73% and expenses are at 95.43%. The 4th quarter payment to our local fund happened on 12/15. Snow removal charges for December are not known as of this writing.
- Historian Report (Archives): Research was done on 2 options for backing up our office computer. We voted in favor of purchasing Carbonite for that computer to be backed up on a daily basis. Should we have a hard drive failure, it would allow us to reinstall Carbonite Software to rebuild the computer data and programs from the internet.

Financial Reports:

- Financial Secretary: All were in favor of approval.
- Financial Treasurer: All were in favor of approval.
- TPF: Our portfolio value showed healthy growth this fiscal year. TPF works to maintain the purchasing power of the designated funds.

Pastor's Report:

- The Nightlight Fundraising Jewelry Sale was to take place 12/21 with the proceeds benefiting the International Ministries program in Thailand. As for the logo merchandise, the order came in and was available for pickup on 12/21. Caroling was canceled as no volunteers were able to come.
- Our January meeting was bumped up to 1/12/26 at 6:30pm to prepare the budget for the annual meeting on 1/25/26.

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
Karen Mendes - revkamendes@fbcburlingtonvt.com
Evan Allen - ellen@fbcburlingtonvt.com
Anna Roy - aroy@fbcburlingtonvt.com
Treasurer - treasurer@fbcburlingtonvt.com
Financial Secretary - financialsecretary@fbcburlingtonvt.com
Karen Baptist Community - KBC@fbcburlingtonvt.com

CHURCH CONTACT

Office: 802-864-6515

Conference: 802-864-4721

Email: welcome@fbcburlingtonvt.com

Website: www.fbcburlingtonvt.com

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PAST WORSHIP SERVICES...

are available on our website and our YouTube Channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0vIptkSAyIRbAilfDb>

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