

# THE STEEPLE

## Williston Federated Church

*An Open and Affirming, Reconciling Congregation*

### Pastor's Message

*"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.... We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now." (Romans 8:18 ff.)*

With Thanksgiving behind us, thoughts in our house have turned to Christmas preparation, a fitting occupation for the season of Advent. Familiar objects are beginning to make their appearance — Advent wreath, decorative greens, holiday cards. Soon the ultimate harbinger of Christmas will appear — the evergreen tree. Watching my kids is my favorite pastime in Advent. After all, more than any of us, children have a proper sense of Christmas anticipation.

Of course, it's the presents they expectantly await. Should it be otherwise? Kids wait hopefully, not for intangibles such as peace, but for concrete, amazing things to arrive. I recall the day we brought our second child, Ellie, home from the hospital. Debbie was insistent on greeting Sarah first, so Sarah would know mom was back and still loving her before we brought this new person into our home. But, disregarding mom's hug, Sarah demanded, "Where's Ellie?!" Months of talk about the arrival of Sarah's new baby sister had prepared her for big changes in her own life and she was ready (finally!) to get on with it.

All of this reminds me of the way Advent is a season not unlike pregnancy. Some of us might be uneasy with this analogy, feeling it to be far too bodily for such a spiritual subject. However, a look at the Bible shows that we are in good company. For it was St. Paul who told us "the whole creation is groaning and laboring" as it awaits the renewal and blessings God has in store for us all.

So, consider the following Sylvia Plath poem, "Metaphors":

*I'm a riddle in nine syllables,  
An elephant, a ponderous house,  
A melon strolling on two tendrils.  
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!  
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.  
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.  
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.  
I've eaten a bag of green apples,  
Boarded the train there's no getting off.*

A careful reading will reveal that each of these nine lines of poetry is crammed with metaphors — for being pregnant! Nine lines, nine syllables each, nine clues for what happens after nine months. All of these pregnancy images help us recall some of the key aspects of pregnancy. Each line, in order, speaks of how pregnancy is: darkly mysterious, overwhelmingly cumbersome, passing strange, admirably beautiful, full of growth, abundantly productive, entirely uncontrollable, unfailingly painful, and absolutely inevitable.

Advent is all these things — a combination of the fearful and the exciting, the painful and the joyous, the out of control and the sublime. Above all, however, it is part of the Divine Comedy that is still going on. The promise of a happy (if strange!) ending to the story is what Advent hope is all about. Though, like pregnancy, it will demand our patience and surrender, and may make us more than a bit anxious, may this Advent find us all preparing for the coming of Emmanuel, as we eagerly await the birth of new life and love among us.

Peace, Jonathan



**DECEMBER**  
**2006**  
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Monday-Friday 8:30-12:30  
Phone: 878-5792  
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Sunday Worship  
Service:  
9:30 AM

**Interim Pastor:**  
Rev. Jonathan New  
**Director of Children's  
and Youth Ministries:**

Laurie Chipman

**Church Secretary:**

Brenda Racht

**Organist and Junior  
Choir Accompanist:**

Carolyn Pillsbury

**Music Director:**

Martin Hain

**Nursery Caregiver:**

Michelle Davis



**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS FOR THE ALTAR**

**Congratulations To.....**

- ◆ Susan and Keith Willis upon the birth of a daughter, Emilie Sarah, born on November 11, 2006. Emilie has a sister Abigail and is the granddaughter of John Willis, and the niece of Carolyn and Jeff Carlson.

**New Year's Eve at WFC**

Come ring in the New Year with a family potluck dinner and games on December 31 in the Fellowship Hall. Bring a dish to share and a game to play from 5:30 pm until 9:00 pm. We will toast the New Year at 8:00 pm. If you have any questions, please contact Karen and Bruce Allen at 434-5371.

**Christmas Eve Offerings**

This year our Christmas Eve Offering will be going to the Howard Center for Human Services and to UMP (Joint Urban Ministry Project). We will hear more about these organizations during December "Mission Moments."

**The Alternative Christmas Gift Shop .....**

The Shop will be open every Sunday during Advent. Come and browse and consider celebrating the true meaning of Christmas by helping those in need . Thank you, Mission and Social Concerns Committee.

Red or white poinsettias may be ordered by December 11<sup>th</sup> by calling Music and Worship Committee member Esta Brayton at 879-3961. The prices are \$5.95 for a 4" pot, \$10.95 for a 6"pot and \$22.50 for 8"pot containing 3 plants. Please make checks payable to Williston Federated Church with your order. If you wish to designate that the plant is in honor or memory of someone, please include this information when you call. Because there will be other worship services on Sunday, the 24<sup>th</sup>, please consider picking your plant up during the week or after worship on the next Sunday, the 31<sup>st</sup>.

**HANGING OF THE GREENS**

Come help decorate the church on Saturday, December 9 at 6:30 PM. We will make wreathes and garlands out of the freshly cut greens that the youth bring down early that morning from Urie's Tree Farm. We'll also put up the sconces and candles in the sanctuary. Folks who like to climb tall ladders are especially welcome! Please bring clippers and loppers, if you have them. And bring along a dessert to share. Coffee and punch will be provided.

**The Giving Tree**

The Giving Tree, a WFC annual tradition, has been placed in the gallery . All gifts need to be wrapped (with the tag securely fastened) and placed under the tree **no later** than December 17. This is a way to share with our Williston neighbors, many of whom would not have gifts under their trees without our help. Questions? Call Stephanie Robitaille at 878-4359.

**LECTIONARY**

Each Sunday we join Christians from many faith communities in hearing God's Word as selected from the *Revised Common Lectionary* ~ readings that over a period of 3 years take us through much of the Bible. Following are the Lectionary readings for this month ~ one or more are read aloud during the service.



<p>December 3, 2006</p> <p>Jeremiah 33:14-16 Psalm 25:1-10 1Thessalonians 3:9-13 Luke 21:25-36</p>	<p>December 10, 2006</p> <p>Malachi 3:1-4 Luke 1:68-79 Philippians 1:3-11 Luke 3:1-6</p>	<p>December 17,2006</p> <p>Zephaniah 3:14-20 Isaiah 12::2-6 Philippians 4:4-7 Luke 3:7-18</p>	<p>December 24,2006</p> <p>Micah 5:2-5a Luke 1:46b-55 Hebrews 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-45</p>	<p>December 25,2006</p> <p>Isaiah 9::2-7 Psalm 96 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-20</p>
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## THE TRUSTEE'S CORNER

### Sprinklers

Stan Trawczynski drew up a complete set of plans for our Church to facilitate the installation of a sprinkler system and he has donated them to us free of charge! This unexpected gesture has saved all of us a considerable amount of money. Many, many thanks to Stan for his generosity! The plans will be used by three commercial companies who are calculating bids for sprinkler installation

The sprinkler system project will be costly, but it is something which your Trustees feel cannot be ignored much longer. The Church structure is predominantly wood, very old and very dry and we must do everything we can to protect it. Because we are an active Church, we are unfortunately prohibited from getting funds from Historical Preservation groups so we will have to rely on private contributions or bank loans. We are now awaiting bids from three installation companies.

The installation is complex. We must get permits from the State, the City, the Fire Marshall and the Historical Preservation Society. A company must be hired to dig a trench from the Church to the City water main and then repair the concrete sidewalk and the asphalt street. The water pressure is measured at the main and the sprinklers are then selected to match that pressure. The piping has to be installed throughout the Church, hidden wherever possible, starting in the steeple and ending in the basement area and then the system must be connected to the fire alarm box near the Fellowship Hall.

### Storm Windows

Look about you in the Sanctuary and you'll see that all the storm windows are now in place. The restoration of the interior windows is progressing nicely thanks to the efforts of Jeff Fellingner.

That's it for this month!

### **Thank You from the Youth Groups**

Thank you to everyone who donated their talents and items to the Silent Auction, and to everyone who participated in the auction by bidding on items. Through your generosity, we were able to raise more than \$1,400 for the church Youth Groups. The funds will be used to help send our youth on mission trips such as the one to Heifer Overlook Farm, to Youth Autumn Celebration (YAC) and to special events like Soulfest coming up this summer in August. Thank you for continuing to support the auction!

The church website is getting a face-lift, and we need help. Specifically, we are in search of a photographer or two to provide some flattering material for the new site, and also a person (or two) with a little computer know-how to be the one (s) who keep all our great new photos organized. If you already have good digital photos (or film negatives) from recent church events, we'd love to include those, too. Please contact the church office or Tony Shaw if you can help out.

### **Updates from the Pastoral Search Committee**

As reported a couple of weeks ago, our Pastoral Search Committee is continuing its work to find the best match for a pastor for our church. At this point, we continue to accept new profiles (a 20 page application) while moving forward with a select set of candidates who meet our criteria. The next step in "moving forward" is to request an audio/video copy of a sermon from the candidate. When a perspective minister continues to be a match, we will then move further to the third step – to invite them to an interview.

We're finicky! What looks good on one person's profile does not necessarily transfer into a sermon. It is our goal to get the best match possible for our church. We have nine committee members reading each profile and observing each sermon. Though we try to not to take ourselves too seriously, we do take our responsibilities very seriously. So, if you have been wondering what we are doing, please know that we read daily and meet weekly. We are moving forward and are excited about our prospects. With God's guidance, we are confident we will be bringing a final candidate forward for your approval.

Mark Trifilio

Chair, WFC Pastoral Search Committee

### **Peace Vigil**

**Tuesday, December 5 at 5:15 pm**

**Front steps of the church**

The time for the monthly Peace Vigil has changed from Thursday at 6:30 pm to Tuesday at 5:15 pm. We will meet at the same place—the front steps of the church. The vigil consists of a peace song, a reflection message, a prayer, and a sharing of possible action items. All are welcome!

### **Dismas House Meals**

Thanks to everyone who helps out with Dismas House meals. The sign up sheet is up for the next three months. Please help out if you can.

# DECEMBER 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 6:30 am Men's Bible Study	2
3 9:30 am Worship <b>11am Youth Ministry</b>  6:30 pm "An Inconvenient Truth" Showing in the F.H.  6-8 pm Sr. High Night	4 7 pm Search Committee  7:00 pm Music & Worship	5 10-12 Senior Exercise  Choir 6,7, 8:15  Trustees 7:30 pm  <b>Peace Vigil at 5:15 pm</b>	6 7:30 pm AA	7 7:30 am Rotary  10-12 Senior Exercise  7:00 pm Membership	8 6:30 am Men's Bible Study	9  <b>6:30 pm Hanging of the Greens</b>
10 9:30 am Worship	11 7 pm Search Committee	12 10-12 Senior Exercise  7:00 pm Official Board	13 7:30 pm AA  7:00 pm Education	14 7:30 am Rotary  10-12 Senior Exercise  Choir 6,7, 8:15	15 6:30 am Men's Bible Study  <b>Steeple deadline</b>	16  <b>9-11am Christmas Pageant Rehearsal</b>
17 9:30 am Worship  <b>Christmas Pageant</b>	18 7 pm Search Committee	19 10-12 Senior Exercise  <b>Dismas Meal</b>	20 7:30 pm AA	21 7:30 am Rotary  10-12 Senior Exercise  5:30 pm Pastor/Staff Relations  Choir 6,7, 8:15	22 6:30 am Men's Bible Study	23
24 9:30 am Worship  Christmas Eve Services at 5,7,9 & 11  31 9:30 am Worship 5:30 pm Potluck and games in F.H.	25 <b>Christmas Day</b>  <b>Church Office Closed</b>	26 6:30 am Men's Fellowship Breakfast at the Lincoln Inn  10-12 Senior Exercise	27 7:30 pm AA	28 7:30 am Rotary  10-12 Senior Exercise	29 6:30 am Men's Bible Study	30

## People with mental illness: Part of our lives

Stop. Look around when you're at work, driving in your car, in your classroom, grocery store, library, or church. One in five Vermonters is personally affected by mental illness, and will need mental health care at some point during their lifetime. More than 40,000 Vermonters suffer from serious mental illness — but only about half seek and receive any type of treatment.

What is mental illness? Research tells us that it has its roots in disruptions of brain function. Being sick with mental illness is not much different than being sick with any other chronic illness, like diabetes or heart disease. With proper care, all these illnesses can improve — though they may require lifetime treatment.

Mental illnesses can profoundly disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, and ability to relate to others. They include bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety disorders (including post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD]), borderline personality disorder, and other severe and persistent mental illnesses.

Mental illnesses affect Vermonters of every age, race, religion, and socio-economic status. Mental illnesses are not the result of personal weakness, lack of character, or poor upbringing. They are not the fault of parents, or the person with the illness.

But even Vermonters, with their proud tradition of accepting those who are different, often express undue fear, prejudice, and discrimination against people who are mentally ill. Because of this stigma, many people with mental illness remain "in the closet," unwilling to reveal their condition to their neighbors, co-workers, schoolmates, and even their family members

Thus, stigma is a key obstacle to seeking and getting treatment for those living with mental illness. It's also getting in the way of current efforts to improve our system of mental health care in Vermont.

The potential consequences of untreated mental illness for the individual and society are staggering: unnecessary disability, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, inappropriate incarceration, and suicide. The economic cost of untreated mental illness is more than \$100 billion each year in the United States. On the other hand, with treatment, people with mental illness can and do get better. More than 60 percent of those with a diagnosed mental health condition are employed.

If mental illness affects you or your family, you are not alone. Support and education can make a huge difference in your ability to cope, get treatment, and work toward recovery. Established in 1990 by Congress, Mental Illness Awareness Week promotes greater public understanding of the nature of mental illness, and encourages people to get help when they need it.

Look around you. If you see a friend, neighbor, co-worker, or family member struggling with symptoms of a mental illness, you have a choice. Instead of turning away, consider reaching out to them. When you see that next fifth person, remember that it could be you. For more information about mental illness, or to learn more about the services and programs of the Vermont chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, visit [namivt.org](http://namivt.org)

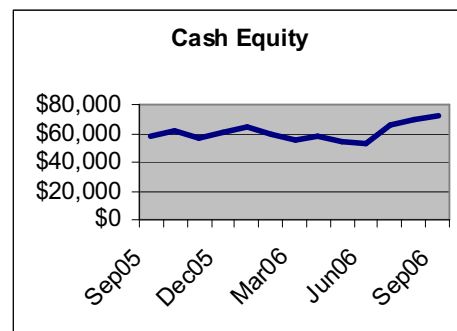
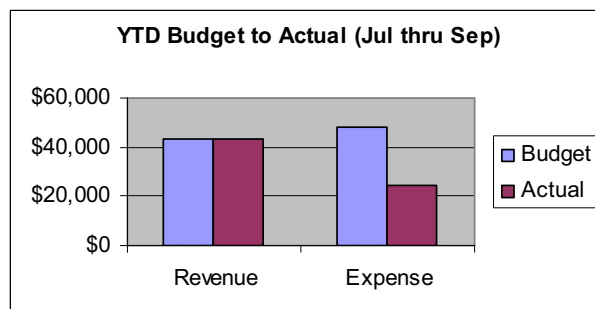
## Carnival Thank You

Thank you to those families who brought their child (ren) to the Halloween Carnival that I hosted on Make a Difference Day October 28th. As a result of your generosity, I raised \$65 for the VT Campaign to End Childhood Hunger. Lillian Coletta

## "An Inconvenient Truth"

The Official Board is sponsoring the viewing of a movie about global warming, "An Inconvenient Truth", on Sunday, December 3 at 6:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall. It had previously been scheduled for November 5, but was postponed due to a later date of distribution in November to video stores. The Vermont Ecumenical Council joined with Vermont Interfaith Group in October to show the movie statewide in conjunction with a national group to alert faith communities of the danger facing the planet. A discussion will follow the movie.

## Summary Financial Reports



**The Steeple  
Williston Federated Church**

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RETURN SERVICE RE-  
QUESTED

**Come, Meet Christ, Go Serve**

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Thanks

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**Sunday, December 24, 2006  
Christmas Eve Services At WFC**

**9:30 am Worship Services ~ No Sunday School**

**5:00 pm Children's Service** ~ A briefer service especially designed for young children.

**7:00 pm Family Service** ~ A family service with carols, blended choral music, children's message, scripture and brief reflection.

**9:00 pm Traditional Service** ~ A traditional service with blended choral music, carols, sermon and candle lighting.

**11:00 pm Community Service at the Old Brick Church** ~A community service that includes lessons, carols, special music, and candle lighting.

**Nursery care will be available at our 9:30 am service ONLY. There will be no child care during the 5,7,9, & 11 services.**

