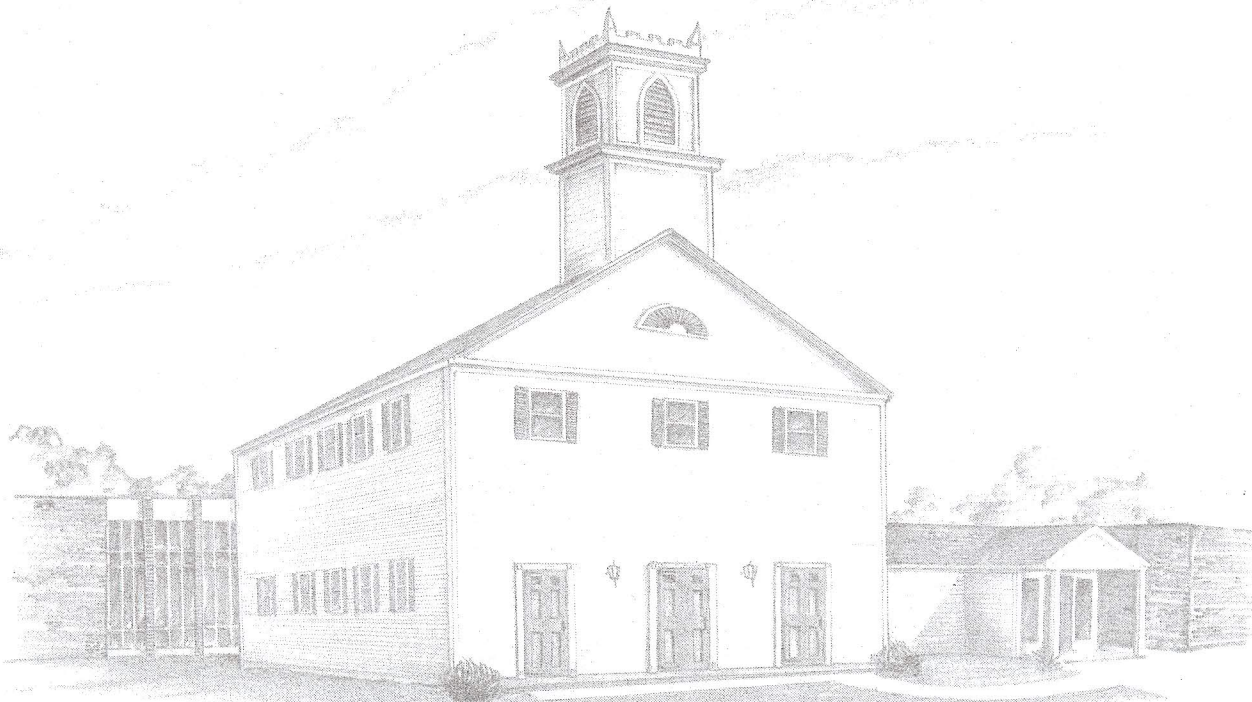


The Message

January 2012



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From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Friends,

I received a bit of sad news in the middle of December. It was a note from an old friend who is a staff member of a church I know. Evidently the congregation is struggling with its very survival even as it continues to engage in some very meaningful ministries. Its future is in question. It is seriously looking at two options: one looks at revival and will “consider even the most radical of ideas” while the other one looks at a “plan to die.”

That church is not alone. According to recent article by Religion News Service: In many cases congregations are seeing not only fewer people but older ones in the pews. At least one third of members in more than one half of mainline Protestant congregations are 65 or older. Many of the mainline – or “oldline” as they are now being called – churches are facing challenges of all kinds. Many have already gone from having a full time pastor to a part-time pastor. Some are already using up their endowment funds to pay their bills. Others have simply closed their doors.

We are not immune to many of those same challenges. While our numbers hold steady our financial resources have lessened. While our numbers hold steady the average age of our people continues to climb. While our numbers hold steady those able to take part in the ministries of the church has declined...

For us another year together begins. With that change in the calendar the challenges do not go away; they go with us. What the future holds for us only God knows. However, I can and will hope and pray for the following:

We grow in our faith.

We welcome new members.

We learn “new” ways to do the “old” things.

We remain open to God’s leading.

We stay steadfast in our resolve to work for the furtherance of His kingdom

We find ways to keep our Christian education ministry strong.

We strengthen our financial position.

We keep involved in missions near and far...

But it will take more than hoping and praying. God expects us to do our part. God expects us to take leaps of faith. God expects us to try new things while proclaiming the glorious message of old. God expects us to be faithful followers of the One who calls for sacrifice, who said "Take up your cross and follow me," who said "Love one another..."

I do not want us to find ourselves in the same position like the one in which my friend's church finds itself, one of desperation, one of survival. How about you?

A new year awaits us. May it be a great one for you personally and for this faith community of which we are all a part. God is counting on us.

See you in worship. See you in Sunday School. See you in the mission fields.

Peace.



Pastor Keller



Sermons For January

January 1	Ecclesiastes 1:7-10	What's New
January 8	<u>John</u> 3:16	Why Did Jesus Come
January 15	<u>John</u> 3:17	Why Did Jesus Come, Part II
January 22	<u>John</u> 10:10	Why Did Jesus Come, Part III
January 29	<u>John</u> 14:1-7	Why Did Jesus Come, Part IV

