



## The Old Meeting House

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## March 2011 Newsletter

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### Letter from David Connor, Associate Pastor

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Dear OMH Friends,

Amidst all the current world-wide crises—Japan, Libya, New Zealand, Syria, Somalia, Egypt, etc.—we in Vermont are facing a critical \$172M shortfall in our State budget that is threatening many of the vital supports that our most vulnerable fellow citizens rely on to sustain them, especially in this continuing Recession. Governor Shumlin's budget contains Draconian cuts to—among others—mental health services, aid to the disabled, school drug/alcohol counselors, teen centers, and many others.

As I have testified often before legislative subcommittees and to various legislators and state administrators, cutting out vital services only shifts the burden of intervention, treatment and care back to the local community, because Vermonters will not stand by and allow desperate families to not receive help. "No New Taxes" has political cachet, but really means that the State will no longer pay for its part of the net of support which sustains Vermonters with special needs in these times of severe fiscal stress. Consequently, the churches, other religious groups, socially responsible businesses, service organizations, volunteers, self-help groups, charitable donors, foundations, etc. will pick up the slack created by the state's "economizing".

Back in the 1990s the Old Meeting House was the first church to collaborate with Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) in Barre to provide goods and services for children with emergency needs and for families who could not afford holiday gifts or school supplies for their children or those in state's custody. That collaboration grew into a statewide program called PINS--Partners in Service--which for many years has had a Coordinator paid by the State. I was shocked and dismayed to be informed that this position has been de-funded in the Governor's budget at the very time that the other cuts will demand even more resources from PINS participants in each locality. I hope some of you who agree with me will have a chance to recommend restoration of this key position that OMH had a part in initiating.

I feel especially blessed to be able to serve as associate pastor in a church that has always prioritized service to the less fortunate as a core mission

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### PREACHING SCHEDULE

March 27—Rona Kinsley  
April 3—David Connor  
April 10—Rona Kinsley  
April 17—David Connor  
April 24—Rona Kinsley

### Revised Common Lectionary Readings

March 27: Exodus 17:1-7

Psalm 95

Romans 5:1-11

John 4:5-42

April 3:

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Psalm 23

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

April 10:

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Psalm 130

Romans 8:6-11

John 11:1-45

April 17, Palm Sunday:

*Liturgy of the Palms:*

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Matthew 21:1-11

*Liturgy of the Passion:*

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Matthew 26:14-27:66 or Matthew  
27:11-54

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## Letter from David Connor, Associate Pastor *(Continued from Page 1)*

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and obligation of our calling to serve one another. Our 10% tithe of our annual budget gets supplemented by our pastors' discretionary fund, benefit events/concerts, PINS contributions, food/meals for the hungry and homeless, Circle of Care visits, transportation, flowers, meals, extra funds for special projects--local, national

and international. The OMH community always reaches deeply for those in need. Thank you for your exemplary faith-in-action; you are my inspiration constantly. I wish you all God's blessing and peace in this holy season.

*David*

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## Honorary Trustees to be Named

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Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup> was one of those rainy, warm days of early spring. Around 3:00 in the afternoon, Barbara Ploof went into the Old Meeting House to bring flowers from the Parish House. Barb noticed that there was water dripping down onto the piano in the choir loft. Unable to move the piano by herself she put in a desperate call to her trustee husband who wasn't near the phone and then to David Connor.

Dave came armed with buckets and cloths, and Allen, who saw Barb's voice message, also came with buckets and cloths. The problem stems from the fact that snow blows through the slats in the steeple and, when the weather warms it melts. The snow has been collected in a tarp that the Trustees had set up above the choir loft. Apparently the tarp has gotten permeable with age and the water was soaking through.

The piano was moved out of harm's way and the water leakage was stopped before more damage could occur. The piano was carefully dried and wiped off and appears not to have been harmed. A second tarp was hung below the one that was leaking so if any more snow gets through the slats this winter there should be no further damage.

We have lost some plaster and the ceiling in the back of the choir loft is water marked but the damage could have been far greater if Barb hadn't noticed the problem when she did and David hadn't responded so promptly. *For that reason Barb and David will be proposed as Honorary Trustees at our next Trustee's meeting.* An agenda item for the Trustees will be to come up with a better system to keep snow out without blocking airflow through the steeple.

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## Thank you, Old Meeting House!

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Many thanks to the Missions Committee and the congregants of The Old Meeting House for the generous donation of \$1000 received recently by The Onion River Food Shelf. Also, we want to acknowledge the donations of non-perishable foods collected in the narthex and in the Parish House. We are very appreciative of all this support and commitment from all the parishioners of The Old Meeting House.

—*Diana Fielder, OMH Representative to the Food Shelf Board & Volunteer Staff Member*

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## Missions Committee Update

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Missions Committee members have met twice since the Old Meeting House Annual Meeting. The beginning of the year is always busy. After welcoming our new members, Catherine West and Randy Brown, we got down to business.

Committee members have agreed to the following responsibilities: Fran Mallery will chair our group, Tim Noonan will manage the budget and Judy Granger will serve on the Executive Committee. Carol Pierce, Ann Stanton and Rona Kinsley will join the newly revitalized OMHAM Committee. As pastors, Rona and David will also continue to be actively involved in the Executive Committee.

Before you read more about what we have done during the last two meetings we want to remind you to keep an ear out for announcements of two annual OMH spring projects, helping people through the international effort called *One Great Hour of Sharing* and our local *PINS Easter Basket project*.

The Missions Committee is already beginning to distribute much needed funds to organizations including the Onion River Food Shelf, the Masai Ranch School in Kenya where we provide the salary for one teacher, and the UCC's Church's Wider Mission. Locally, we are continuing our commitment to help the Good Samaritan House. OMH provides a main meal twice a month for between 25 and 35 people. For the second year Missions has taken on the responsibility of ensuring these meals arrive on the first Sunday and second Saturday of each month. It is through the generosity and teaming of the congregation that these meals continue to feed so many in need of a hot dinner at the end of a challenging day.

Fortunately, we have volunteers signed up to prepare Good Samaritan meal into early summer. Fran will continue to ask people to choose a date to prepare a meal. We urge all to let her know if you would like to help prepare food, with others.

Whether in your own kitchen or as a team cooking at the Parish House, it is a big job made light by many hands. Our informational brochure and sign-up sheet are always on the table near the Sunday coffee table.

Last Sunday night, we had what is becoming an "annual" dinner meeting so that we could begin the year by revisiting Mission's larger picture. Early on, as we were thinking together, Rona was prompted to share an old story about seeing people in danger as they floated down a turbulent stream. Recognizing the need to rescue them, people kept lending a hand and pulling them out. But as fast as one person was pulled out another would round the bend and need to be rescued. Finally someone realized that no matter how long they stood there rescuing people they wouldn't get to the source of the problem. They needed to see who was pushing them in or how they were falling in. Whenever we can, our goal is to help people from falling over the edge in the first place.

Tim Shea placed the following words at the top of a recent OMH Executive Board agenda:

*Welcome to those searching for a spiritual home  
Welcome to those questioning your faith, your God,  
yourselves*

*Welcome to those exuberant in faith and eager to share the  
grace of God*

*Welcome to all who have felt the doors of a church closed;  
our doors are open.*

*Welcome to the Old Meeting House.*

We briefly reflected on three items: 1) this statement; 2) our expenditures sheet covering the past three years; and 3) the areas around which we have distributed funds (using the 2008 Q-Sort). The latter suggests that we have distributed our funds in the following ways:

- Near and far: that is, meeting local needs and reaching out to help people around the world, and;

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## Missions Committee Update *(Continued from Page 3)*

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- Addressing different important human needs including: food; shelter, warmth and safety; education.

**Our brainstorming focused on what we value for people and the world, and what we believe the OMH community values.** Our responses included:

- Individuals want to be involved.
- It feels better when everyone is committed and involved...doing it together can define community.
- Social and economic justice is important to us, here at home and around the world.
- Being mutually connected—that is, as we help others we are also feeling the joy of being involved. It's a loop.
- People want to understand similarities and dissimilarities, the complexity of things.
- We have the freedom to do something big, to do things that make a difference.
- Teaching our children to be constantly aware of the world and
- Sharing hope by our involvement;
- Seeing the outcomes of helping, of making a real difference;
- Appreciating and honoring the involvement of the members of our community through our individual and OMH community support;
- Remembering our own history: women in the Dale Jail, PINS, Masai School, Good Samaritan Haven help, using OMHAM to do good;
- Paying attention to needs;
- Paying attention to *opportunities* that come along.

**We realize that:**

- Faith can't exist without an action component;
- We want to be aware, raise the questions and be able to take action (as we have with PINS);
- We want to be attentive and well-informed as well as concerned and compassionate

- We at the Old Meeting House are amazingly involved, as individuals and as a small church community!

**Reflections:**

- We raised the question: how can we help people connect with efforts, organizations and individuals that need help?
- We realize we need to better connect Missions with our OMH kids. Their hearts, concerns and energies are here.
- We recognize that we want to do what really matters, what can really make a difference.
- Regarding our Missions budget, we raised a question to ourselves, should we keep a portion for discretionary funds, keeping in mind the individual members' involvement in the world, from Honduras to Niger.
- And we recognized the ever-present challenge of fund raising.

**Thoughts, while recognizing how busy our lives are:**

- How can we continue to share our time and talents in meaningful and productive ways as we focus on understanding our OMH mission?
- Could we create a calendar for fund raising efforts?
- Could we find ways to share our OMH and individual interests and special commitments—even involvement that made and/or continues to make a difference in our lives—from Peace Corps to building schools and supporting relief efforts?
- Finally, what if we could find ways to share our stories: whether through Mission Moments or a Missions Sunday?

**The simple act of sharing our stories, no matter how small, recognizes a need and honors the importance, the wonder and the joy of being involved in the world.**

**Hope seems to blossom in the presence of a helping hand.**

—Judy Granger, Missions Committee

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## Spiritual Life Committee Update

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At the March meeting of the Spiritual Life Committee, we made plans for the vigil and decorations in the sanctuary for Easter. The vigil will start on Maundy Thursday, April 21, at 8:00 pm and conclude 24 hours later. We will sign up participants and provide a handy handout of vigil protocol. Brent Kinsley is generously making a cherry wood tray for the candles with a rim to corral runaway wax.

We decided to make some changes to the weekly bulletin. It now features a statement about the Old Meeting House developed by Tim Shea, based on material he located on our website. And we'll be printing the page numbers of scripture readings to help you locate them more quickly if you want to follow the written text. Note that we'll use the page numbers for the New International Version of the Bible, the edition we have in greatest supply. This will be the only edition we'll place on the ushers' tables, though you will find other versions in the pews. Please let us know how you feel about our efforts to incorporate access to scripture readings into the service.

Finally, we did some collective editing of an early draft of the pastor evaluation survey. We expect to have a survey ready for the congregation's responses in April. You will be able to choose an online survey or a printed questionnaire, and we're looking forward to giving everyone a way to provide constructive comments for our pastors.

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### Three Cups of Tea and a Healthy Helping of an International Lunch

*(Mark your calendars for April 3, right after church)*

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Plan to stay after church on April 3 for a delightful culinary experience brought to you by professional cooks Hannah and Joey Conner with the support of the Christian Education Committee and the OMH kids. As a fitting wrap-up to the Pennies for Peace Sunday School unit, the Conners have volunteered to cook traditional Afghan and Pakistani food to be offered as a light lunch opportunity for the Congregation. OMH children will act as servers. Donations will be collected to supplement the money the children have raised through their weekly penny collection. All of this goes to support Greg Mortenson's Central Asia Institute's efforts to build schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan. OMH children have learned a lot about the lives of children living in a troubled part of the world. The Conners' generous gift of time and cooking talent gives our kids a delicious opportunity to share what they've learned with you. Please plan to join us if you can (*We will not have regular coffee hour that day*).

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### Greg Mortenson to Speak in Massachusetts on May 3

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**Greg Mortenson** will speak in Worcester, MA on May 3, 2011, 6:30 p.m., as part of the New England Conferences of the United Church of Christ. The event is open to the public; tickets are \$51.50/person. Scholarship money is available if the price is prohibitive (speak to Rona or David). Register on-line at [www.celebratingcall.org](http://www.celebratingcall.org).

To car pool, contact Rona at [ronakinsley@wildblue.net](mailto:ronakinsley@wildblue.net) or Marcia Bellas at [admin@oldmeetinghouse.org](mailto:admin@oldmeetinghouse.org). To learn more about Mortenson's work, visit [www.penniesforpeace.org](http://www.penniesforpeace.org) and read *Three Cups of Tea* and *Stones into Schools*.

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## Old Meeting House Standing Committees—2011

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### Executive Board

Moderator: Tim Shea  
Treasurer: Janice Waterman  
Peter Nielsen  
Heidi Tringe  
Search Comm. Rep: Lowell VanDerlip  
Christian Ed Rep: Priscilla Gilbert  
Missions Comm. Rep: Judy Granger  
OMHAM Rep: Tim Shea  
Spiritual Life Rep: Joy Schricker  
Trustee Rep: Malcolm Fielder

### Trustees

Erik Esselstyn  
Malcolm Fielder  
Cory Gustafson  
Norman Hill, Chair  
David Lewis  
John Mallery  
Nathan Phillips  
Tom Pierce  
Allen Ploof  
Liz Pritchett

### Christian Education Committee

Maureen Carr  
Charlie Catlin  
Jed Davis  
Priscilla Gilbert  
Cristin O'Donnell  
Marianne Perchlik  
Carolyn Scoppettone, Chair

### Missions Committee

Randy Brown  
Judy Granger  
Fran Mallery, Chair  
Tim Noonan  
Carol Pierce  
Ann Stanton  
Betsy VanDerlip  
Catherine West

### Personnel Committee

Alice Angney  
Kim Swasey  
Lowell VanDerlip, Chair

### Old Meeting House Arts Ministry (OMHAM)

Marcia Clark  
Dana Lawrence  
Tim Shea  
Finance Comm. Rep: Peter Timpone  
Missions Reps: Ann Stanton & Carol Pierce  
Spiritual Life Rep: Kim Sturgis  
Trustee Rep: Liz Pritchett

### Spiritual Life Committee

Alex Brown, Chair  
Adri Luhr  
Tony French  
Chris Pratt  
David Schutz  
Joy Schricker  
Wendy Soliday  
Kim Sturgis  
Angela Timpone

### Finance Committee

Janice Waterman, Treasurer  
Cherie Staples, Assistant Treasurer  
Mark Catlin  
Sandy England  
Susan Labarthe  
Tracy Martin  
Peter Timpone  
Shaun Stephens

### OMH Staff

**Interim Pastor**—Rona Kinsley (229-9593 ext. 4; ronakinsley@wildblue.net)  
**Assoc. Pastor**—David Connor (229-9593 ext. 2; davidwconnor@yahoo.com)  
**Administrative Assistant**—Marcia Bellas (229-9593 ext. 3; admin@oldmeetinghouse.org)  
**Pianist & Music Director**—June Morse  
**Choir Director**—Marcia Clark  
**Sexton**—Pat Forbes

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## Sweet Sledding

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The sugar-on-snow sledding party hosted by Celina Moore and Erik Esselstyn last Sunday was a fabulous, fun time enjoyed by many, young and not so young. The conditions were perfect, sunshine and warm temperatures, good snow and tremendous sledding terrain, a nice fire, cocoa, good company, and of course Brent

Kinsely's tasty offering of hot, thick syrup on icy snow. Thanks to all who helped get the word out and make it happen, especially Celina and Erik, for the perfect venue and welcoming spirit. I'm still smacking my lips!

—Tony French for the Spiritual Life Committee

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## Announcements

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**OMH Sermons**—If you would like a copy of Rona's sermons, contact her at ronakinsley@wildblue.net. David's sermons are now being audiotaped, and tapes are available in the OMH Library (Blue Room)—please use library sign out notebook if you borrow one.

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**OMH Library**—Have you read a book that you think others in the OMH congregation might enjoy? If so, please consider donating it to the OMH Library! The library occupies most of the shelving in the Blue Room of the Parish House. Book categories include Theology, World Religion, Spirituality, Inspiration, History and more. There's also an extensive collection of Books on Tape, donated by Susan Cooke Kittredge. If you aren't sure whether a book is appropriate for the Library, please check with Rona or David. There's a box for donations on one of the shelves, as well as a notebook for signing books and tapes out and back in.

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**Pennies for Peace**—OMH Sunday School children are continuing to collect pennies through April 3 to help with Greg Mortenson's work building schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan. See page 5 of this newsletter for information on a special closing event to the OMH Sunday School's fund-raiser. Mortenson has written two books about his work—*Three Cups of Tea* and *Stones into School*.

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**Newsletter Deadline**—Tuesday, April 12 (email Word file to admin@oldmeetinghouse.org)

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**Good Samaritan Haven**—Help is needed preparing meals for Good Samaritan Haven, a homeless shelter in Barre. OMH is committed to preparing meals for approximately 30 people twice per month. Funds are available to pay for the cost of food. Please contact Fran Mallery if you can help (272-2763; keepsakepearls@gmail.com).

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## Meetings Schedule & Events

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**Christian Education Committee**—Monday, April 4, 5:45 p.m.  
**Trustees**—Monday, April 4, 7:00 p.m.  
**Spiritual Life Committee**—Monday, April 4, 7:00 p.m.  
**Executive Board**—Tuesday, April 5, 7:00 p.m.  
**Missions Committee**—Sunday, April 10, 11:00 a.m.  
**OMH Arts Ministry (OMHAM)**—Wednesday, April 13, 6:00 p.m.

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**Choir Practice**—Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m.

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**Centering Prayer Group, led by Rona Kinsley**—Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. in the Blue Room  
*(the group will not meet on April 8)*

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**Living the Questions, led by Rona Kinsley**—Wednesdays, 5:45 p.m.

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**Parish House Café**—Wednesdays at Noon

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**Coffee Hour**—Sundays, after church service

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