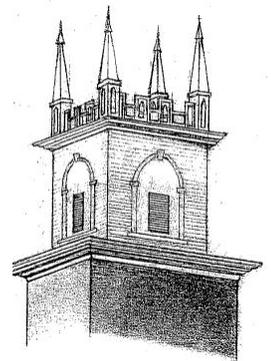


+ **N.E.W.S. CONNECTION**

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**Message from the Pastor**

***We shall not dwindle***

Our summer travels, by choice, took us only as far as Hyde Park, New York, on one trip, and to Cooperstown on another. Although major highways bring us to locations faster, I much prefer driving along secondary roads that go through towns and villages, taking note of how the various buildings reflect changes over time.

Route 20 follows the old Boston Post Road. Along its path, as well as the various Route 9s in New York, I pay much more attention than I used to as I pass churches. How does the outward appearance of a church and its signage reflect the congregation that sustains them? Some churches look vibrant and alive while others look tired and forlorn, and saddest of all, those that bear a sign “Church for Sale.” What happened to those church buildings before they were put up on the auction block?

We all know how much life has changed from the days when a greater number of families gathered in church buildings to worship. Churches also filled an important social function that people now seek elsewhere. In Rutland, some church communities have made the difficult decision that they could no longer sustain a structure too large for their congregation. The Methodist Church has successfully moved to a new location while its former location on Williams Street remains for sale. As headlined on recent front page of the *Rutland Herald*, the Baptist Church on Center Street faces a similar dilemma in its inability to support the upkeep of the building. Often cited as a common denominator in these circumstances: “an aging and dwindling congregation.”

Time does not stand still for any of us. This summer we were diminished by the death of Doris (Hoare) Champine, our oldest member baptized in this church. We extend our condolences to Doris’s sister, Marion Worosila, and her family. We will also miss Bruce Humphrey, who with his late wife Harriet, made many lasting contributions to the church.

Due to the generosity of deceased members and the strength of our endowment, we do not have to pass a collection plate to pay for the cost of repairing the church foundation and making the Fellowship Hall watertight. That is good only for the short term. We do, however, need to meet the challenge of dwindling head on. What are the opposites of dwindle? To grow, to invigorate, to nourish, to strengthen. We can and will grow our church, one person, one family at a time. Every time that happens, we begin to reverse a trend.

Please mark on your calendars **Sunday, September 19**, as **New Member Sunday**. During a special segment of the service, we expect to welcome formally, with the affirmation of the congregation, new members through public profession of their faith or through the sacrament of baptism. I know that you will continue to welcome new members into our fold. That is why we are encouraging everyone to wear their name tags so that the new folks get to know us. Covid precautions and construction issues in the Fellowship Hall notwithstanding, a reception will follow the service.

We shall not dwindle! We will grow and spread the Good News as we as Christians are compelled to do. Let every one of us take the steps to make this happen.

In faith, hope, and love,  
Michael F. Dwyer, Pastor