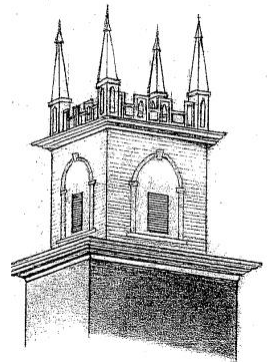


+ **N.E.W.S. CONNECTION**  
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### Message from the Pastor

#### “Keeping Faith”



My friend and former student Richard Elnicki recently gave me this postcard of the church. The photo has no date, but from the style of the back of the card, it is at least a century old. While the overall image looks so comfortingly familiar, a discerning eye will notice several changes to our present exterior. More about those changes and concerns momentarily.

As April unfolds with Eastertide, a season of resurrection and renewal, allow me to share some reflections with you about our church, the building, and our church, our community of committed Christians. In Vermont and through the Northeast, many long-established churches face crisis. Among the causes—a diminishing and aging congregation, buildings that have become financial drains, and a lack of clergy. Some churches have adapted through combining with other communities or have downsized to become storefront churches. Others meet in homes.

In coming to know more deeply members of this congregation over the last three years, I fully support the ongoing maintenance of our historic buildings and value all the individuals past and present who have labored for its upkeep. Why should we continue this practice? I have said often we keep faith with the courage and convictions of those who built this house of worship on the village green. Too easily today, when historic buildings disintegrate, we lose a vital part of community cohesiveness.

The rhythm of weekly services in the sanctuary, the joy that accompanies swelling attendance at Christmas and Easter, and the camaraderie we experience in the Fellowship Hall for a variety of purposes all contribute to what makes this church, church for us now. We all take pride in how our church looks and how faith has prevailed. What will our Pittsford Congregational Church postcard look like in fourteen years when the building celebrates two hundred years?

Shared custody and responsibility of this building is a strong tie which binds us. Our trustees exercise vigilance in their maintenance of the church, but we cannot rely on them alone. The last major renovation in 2008 gave us an elevator, two bathrooms, and a spruced-up interior. More recently, we solved the long-standing water leakage into the Fellowship Hall. What needs to be next on our list?

Going back to the postcard, you will notice sheds no longer there on the east side of the building. Repairs have been made to the doors of the sheds on the north side of the building. Our tower looks in better shape today without the additional four spires and rows of decorative crenelations. Also note that the porte cochère, over the door of the Fellowship Hall was considerably wider when it fulfilled its original purpose in allowing a small carriage rain protection for discharge of a passenger. Flat roofs then and now are wholly impractical in Vermont! This structure now has a leaking ceiling which drips on the walkway beneath, and without sun, it creates a film of ice that is a wintertime hazard. How will we go about a major constructive repair and or redesign? Our handicap access ramp also needs to have the wires and bolts fixed.

Inside the sanctuary, ongoing maintenance is more easily solved. Our windowsills need scraping, painting, and some recaulking. While I am not a fan of omitting a worship service on the fifth Sunday of the month, a shorter service would allow some work time for a painting party. [Unless we are dealing with leaded paint!] Within the building, we anticipate a major clean-out of the nursery which is now seeing a comeback in its use for children and parents. We can all pitch in to make these things happen.

With all the woes of the world, both far and far, why do I choose to focus on our own house of God? The structure is not inherently holy—we make it holy through the work we do. When our own house is in order and presents an appearance that values our history to the world, we are better equipped to meet the needs of those beyond our doors. I value not only the integrity of how I proclaim God's word each week to you but also where I proclaim it.

Wishing you Easter joy!

Michael F. Dwyer, Pastor