

# Flame bearing the message of peace makes its NH debut

◆**Trailblazer:** Gretchen Osgood of Bedford Presbyterian Church is the state's first Peace Light coordinator.

By **KATHY REMILLARD**  
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**BEDFORD** — A tradition that has been years in the making will travel thousands of miles and arrive in Bedford on Dec. 17. The Peace Light, a holiday tradition in Europe since 1986, will be presented at the Bedford Presbyterian Church by Cub Scout Pack 114.

Each year, a child from Austria retrieves the light from Bethlehem. It is carried in two blast-proof miners lamps on an Austrian Airlines jet from Tel Aviv, Israel, to Vienna, Austria.

From there, it is distributed at a ceremony to delegates from across Europe, who take it back with a message of peace to their own countries. Austrian Airlines then flies the lit lamps containing the Peace Light to New York City.

The goal is to get the light to travel to as many locations as possible, spreading a mes-

sage of peace wherever it goes. It's transported by Boy Scouts throughout the United States and Canada, but had never before reached New Hampshire, said Gretchen Osgood, who became the state's first Peace Light coordinator.

"It's fun to see how far it can get before Christmas," she said.

Osgood and her 11-year-old son were part of the delegation that picked the light up at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York on Nov. 29.

Osgood's husband is German, and she was looking through some of his old Scouting magazines when she saw an article about the Peace Light.

After getting permission to bring the light to her church, she volunteered to be a Peace Light coordinator.

"I am both an elder for Children's Ministry at Bedford Presbyterian Church and a Webelos den leader for Cub Scout Pack 114, so the Peace Light was a natural fit for me," Osgood said.

"I thought it was just such a beautiful gesture," she added. "I loved how they spread it (the light)."

For Osgood, the Peace Light experience has made an already meaningful time of year even more special.

"I am truly blessed that my son and I were able to make the trip to JFK Airport," Osgood said. "For me personally, having the Peace Light burning in my own home is a visual reminder of God's presence in my life and what it really means to prepare my house and heart for the coming of Christmas," she said.

Although she said it's an honor to be a keeper of the flame for the time being, sharing the light with others has made it even more meaningful.

"Witnessing the grateful and emotional responses of those I have shared the Peace Light with so far, many of whom are experiencing illness or loss or are overwhelmed by circumstances beyond their control, has been a deeply moving experience," Osgood said.

"The Peace Light we keep burning in our home is not a Christmas decoration, but a call to action for us to reach out in love to others in our community and around the world," she added.