

EPISTLE

December, 2017



Bradford Congregational Church – UCC
An Open & Affirming Congregation!
Bradford, VT (802) 222-4034

Our website: <http://bradforducc.org>
email us at: bradfordvtucc@gmail.com
see us on Facebook: **Bradford Congregational Church**

1st Sunday of Advent: December 3rd we light the **Candle of Hope**, 10 a.m.

2nd Sunday of Advent: December 10th we light the **Candle of Peace**, 10 a.m.

3rd Sunday of Advent: December 17th we light the **Candle of Joy**
and the children portray the nativity story, 10 a.m.

4th Sunday of Advent: December 24th we light the **Candle of Love** for Christmas Sunday,
10 a.m. And see the memorial poinsettias.



Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service
6:30 pm

when we light the
Christ Candle

Message from Pastor Jeff: I often bemoan what our culture has made of Christmas. So I look for encouragement where I can find it. Here is one of my resources - a poem by Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

Christ Climbed Down

Christ climbed down
from His bare Tree
this year
and ran away to where
there were no rootless Christmas trees
hung with candycanes and breakable stars

Christ climbed down
from His bare Tree
this year
and ran away to where
there were no gilded Christmas trees
and no tinsel Christmas trees
and no tinfoil Christmas trees
and no pink plastic Christmas trees
and no gold Christmas trees
and no black Christmas trees
and no powderblue Christmas trees
hung with electric candles
and encircled by tin electric trains
and clever cornball relatives

Christ climbed down
from His bare Tree
this year
and ran away to where
no intrepid Bible salesmen
covered the territory
in two-tone cadillacs
and where no Sears Roebuck crèches
complete with plastic babe in manger
arrived by parcel post
the babe by special delivery
and where no televised Wise Men
praised the Lord Calvert Whiskey

Christ climbed down
from His bare Tree
this year

and ran away to where
no fat handshaking stranger
in a red flannel suit
and a fake white beard
went around passing himself off
as some sort of North Pole saint
crossing the desert to Bethlehem
Pennsylvania
in a Volkswagen sled
drawn by rollicking Adirondack reindeer
with German names
and bearing sacks of Humble Gifts
from Saks Fifth Avenue
for everybody's imagined Christ child

Christ climbed down
from His bare Tree
this year
and ran away to where
no Bing Crosby carolers
groaned of a tight Christmas
and where no Radio City angels
iceskated wingless
thru a winter wonderland
into a jinglebell heaven
daily at 8:30
with Midnight Mass matinees

Christ climbed down
from His bare Tree
this year
and softly stole away into
some anonymous Mary's womb again
where in the darkest night
of everybody's anonymous soul
He awaits again
an unimaginable
and impossibly
Immaculate Reconception
the very craziest of
Second Comings

Amidst the din of the season and all its distractions, we wait, and long, and listen for angels to sing again.

Faithfully,
Pastor Jeff



Christmas Dinner



All are most graciously and joyously invited to come feast amongst friends!

Community Christmas
Dinner

Noon

December 25th

(freewill donations always gratefully accepted)
for more information: Bethanne Tillotson 802-522-9271

Board of Missions and Social Action

The Board of Missions and Social Action's November meeting was filled with excitement, ideas, and celebrating. We recently dedicated the school and health kits that the members and the children of our church got the opportunity to assemble throughout the months of October and November. Because of their dedication and support, as well as support from the community, we were able to dedicate 60 health and school kits! We also received over \$500 of donations towards materials and processing of the kits.

SERRV

Lucia and Peggy have been very busy with the sale of SERRV items at various recent church events. They will continue selling items as we move into the Christmas season. SERRV helps craftspeople around the world earn a livable wage. If you are interested in buying beautiful items from this great organization, you can ask Lucia or Peggy for a catalog. Currently, have sold over \$500 worth of merchandise. Keep up the good work!



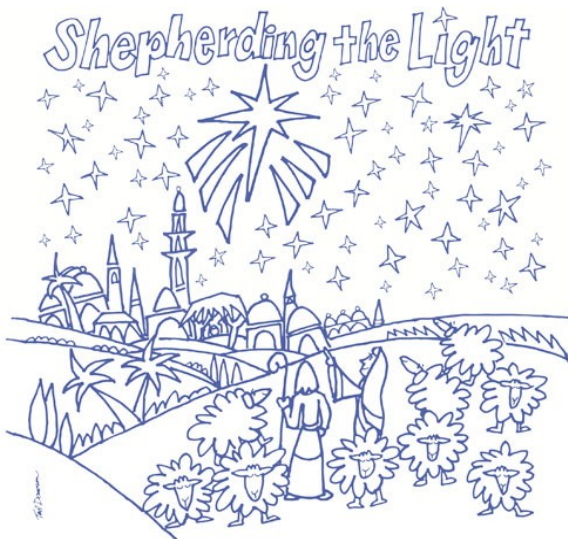
Reverse Advent Calendar Basket (see page 8 also)

The Board of Missions and Social Action is sponsoring Reverse Advent Calendar Basket. The idea is that instead of opening a door on a calendar (and getting chocolate or some other reward), you instead add a non-perishable food item to a box each day of the Advent. At the end of the month, all donations go to the Bradford food shelf. If you would like to participate, we ask that you bring

your box of food to church on the morning of Sunday, December 24, and Pastor Jeff will dedicate the boxes during the service.

Christmas Fund

For 117 years, the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the



Emergency Fund has been a tangible expression of God’s love. One of the four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ, the Christmas Fund provides UCC congregations and members an opportunity to reach out in loving compassion, providing assistance to those who have so faithfully served our church and who now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs. If you would like to donate to the Christmas Fund this year, we will be taking a collection on Sunday, December 24.

**“I don't know what your destiny will be,
but one thing I know:
the only ones among you who will be really happy
are those who have sought and found how to serve.”
— [Albert Schweitzer](#)**

Community Supper

The November Community Supper was a full house with some very special newcomers: Pastor Jeff and volunteers from Oxbow. As the steaming hot dishes came through the door, student helping hands were there to place them on the bountiful table already laden with breads and fruits and veggies. And Pastor Jeff chose to come across state just to experience this event with us!



The students were two seniors from Oxbow High School who had just completed a unit on Hunger in Vermont with teacher Wendy MacKenzie. They had done a bake sale and donated the funds to the Food Shelf. But they wanted to do more even though that unit was finished and they didn't need any more community service points*. In other words, they wanted to help. Not only did they enjoy helping in the kitchen and the dining room and for the clean-up afterwards, they asked if they can come again! And Mrs. MacKenzie said that starting in January she may bring more students!

Our next supper will be **Wednesday, December 27th**

Starting in January the suppers will be the 4th THURSDAY of each month.

*Community Service points are now mandatory for graduation in most U.S. High schools

To Everything There Is a Season

The REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR Challenge for the Food Shelf

Take an empty box and decorate it. Each day, during the month of December, put in one item for the **Bradford Food Shelf**. Any non-perishable items will do as well as hygiene items. They always need tuna fish, peanut butter, canned vegetables, toilet paper, toothpaste etc. Instead of opening a door on your advent calendar each day before Christmas, you will be gifting an item to the food shelf. **On Christmas Eve we will bring the boxes to church to be dedicated.** After the holidays the food shelf is in great need of being replenished and we will be ready with our boxes to do just that.

Everyone loves advent calendars to count them down to Christmas Day. If you want to try something a little different this year, you can create an advent calendar that you and your children put something into every day instead of taking something out.



What is a reverse advent calendar?

(click here to watch)

Not only is this a fun thing for the whole family to do together, from decorating the advent calendar box itself to picking the goodies to go in it, it more importantly enables you and your family to be of help to others and to see the bigger picture at Christmas.



From our Organist/Choir Director

The music of the coming season promises to be varied and very "Christmasy!"

The choir music will be especially diverse including new introits, Christmas carols sung a capella, and special music from well known soloist, Betsy Alexander. On Christmas Eve evening. Flutists Danelle Sims and Lisa Barfield will play four Christmas selections with organ. We welcome back Betsy, Danelle, and Lisa!

As pre-service music the choir will sing Advent carols on 17 December and Christmas Carols on the morning of 24 December. The choir will be augmented by at least three voices to do this. Since the carols are sung un-accompanied, yours truly will sing bass.

For special music on Christmas Eve Betsy Alexander will sing Schubert's "Ave Maria" for the morning service. For the evening service we welcome back Danelle Sims and Lisa Barfield who will play arrangements for Christmas carols with organ accompaniment.

Organ music will be largely chorale preludes on Christmas carols by German and French composers. On 3 December, I will play Bach's famous chorale prelude, "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme" (Sleepers Awake). On 17 December I will feature "My Soul doth Magnify the Lord" by J. S. Bach, a large chorale prelude that brings in the Pedal Trombone as the chorale melody. These are both major chorale preludes of Bach. On the morning of Christmas Eve "I will play "Where are the joyful Shepherds going?" as a postlude.

Introits will feature two selections from our new hymnals, "Isaiah the Prophet has Written of Old" and "O Loving Founder of the Stars." The choir will sing "Break Forth O Beauteous Heavenly Light" of J. S. Bach on 17 December. On Christmas Eve morning the choir will sing an Afro-American spiritual, "Mary had a Baby."

Choir anthems include "Let all Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" (3 December) and "Gabriel to Mary came" (10 December) based on a 14th century Irish melody that fits the season so well you won't want to miss it!

John Atwood

From the United Church of Christ



The Vermont Conference Website is in transition at this time, please be patient. If you need anything in regards to the website information, please feel free to call 802-728-4999 or email me.

**Thanks for your patience,
Charri Robinson
Communications Director & Office
Manager**

The Vermont Conference welcomes a new Ministries Coordinator!



We welcome Sherri Caouette to our conference staff. Sherri is the new Conference Ministries Coordinator. She will be working administratively with Search and Call as well as supporting Annual Meeting, MSSC and Vitality Events.

Hi!

My name is Sherri Caouette. I live in Randolph, VT with my husband Bobby and our Cocker Spaniel; named Sophie. Together we have 5 adult children and 5 grandchildren. I love my family and look forward to working together with all of you.

Lectionary Readings DECEMBER (Year B begins)

For this Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany season the hymn hymns are linked to video performances ... click on each for meditative listening as you read your scriptures



December 3 ... 1st Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 64:1-9 (we are the clay, You are the potter)

1 Corinthians 1:3-9 (God has given us all we need)

Mark 13:24-37 (stop listening to soothsayers)

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19 (prayer for restoration)

theme hymn: [O Come, O Come, Emmanuel](#)

December 10 ... 2nd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40: 1-11 (Behold, your God comes! Tell the people)

2 Peter 3:8-15a (expect, anticipate, prepare)

Mark 1:1-8 (How to prepare? Turn away from sin)

Psalms 85: 1-2, 8-13

theme hymn: [On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry](#)

December 17 ... 3rd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11 (Israel will be restored by God)

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 (test your actions against God's will)

John 1: 6-8,19-28 (John is quizzed by the priests and Levites)

Psalm 126

theme hymn: *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

December 24 ... 4th Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7: 1-11,16 (No, David, no temple building now)

Romans 16:25-27 (a mystery now made known to all)

Luke 1: 26-38 (this child, born by this woman, will save the people)

Luke 1: 47-55 (The Magnificat/Song of Mary)

Psalm 89: 1-4, 19-26

theme hymn: *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*

Christmas

Isaiah 9:2-7 (see the great light, the presence of God)

Titus 2: 11-14 (we live in the light of His second coming)

Luke 2: 1-14 (Gloria in excelsis!)

Psalm 96

theme hymn: *Break Forth, O Beauteous Light*

December 31 ... 1st Sunday after Christmas

Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3 (we will be renewed ... Rejoice! Exalt!)

Galatians 4: 4-7 (it's all by God's timetable)

Luke 2: 22-40 (Simeon see, and Anna tells good news indeed)

Psalm 148

theme hymn: *Arise, Your Light Is Come!*

January 6 ... Epiphany

Isaiah 60: 1-6 (Awake! Open Your Eyes! Rejoice!)

Ephesians 3:1-12 (all the people share the same promises)

Matthew: 2: 1-12 (Magi from the East arrive)

Psalm 72: 1-7, 10-14

theme hymn: *We Three Kings of Orient Are*

The theme hymns listed with the Lectionary reading lists are found in our hymnals and/or the Hymn folders and are listed here only as lyrical illustrations of the week's scripture selections, so readers may carry the theme in tune form throughout their week! Click on their titles to hear them.

The Revised Common Lectionary runs in three-year cycles with each year focusing in on one Gospel as well as related Psalms, Epistles, and Old Testament selections:

- Year A Gospel of Matthew, begins 1st Sunday of Advent in 2019, 2022, etc.
- Year B Gospel of Mark, begins 1st Sunday of Advent in 2017, 2020, etc.
- Year C Gospel of Luke begins 1st Sunday of Advent in 2018, 2021, etc.

Portions of the Gospel of John are read throughout Eastertide, and are also used for other liturgical seasons including Advent, Christmastide, and Lent.

January 7 ... 2nd Sunday After Christmas/Ordinary Time

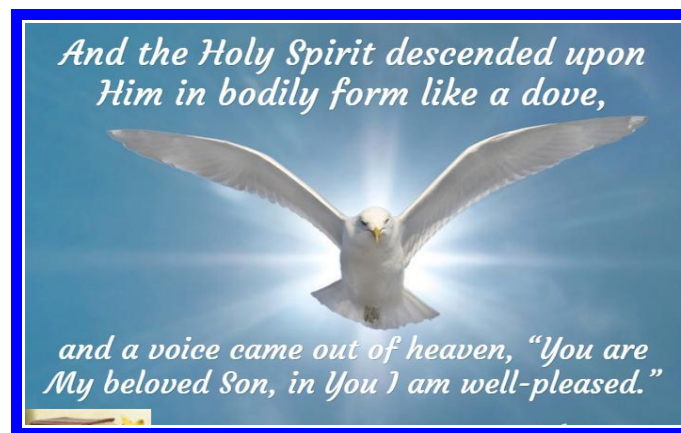
Genesis 1:1-5 (God saw that the light was good)

Acts 19: 1-7 (baptism of repentance only is incomplete)

Mark 1: 4-11 (“You are my beloved Son”)

Psalm 29

theme hymn: [Lord, When You Came to Jordan](#)



The Seasons of the Church Year

Happy New Year! Welcome to the beginning of the church year.

Advent, that meditative time of anticipation and preparation begins on December 3rd this year. That is the first day of the liturgical year for us. During the next 364 days the church will follow and celebrate and reflect upon our faith. Using a year to journey through the story is a way to learn and there is so much to learn! So much to try and keep straight. So many names and dates and places.



Having a liturgical year provides us with repetition ... repeating opportunities to celebrate our Christian Faith in worship, for festivals and holidays and times of prayer and penitence.

The initial reason behind a Christian liturgical year was due to illiteracy and poverty. The majority of worshipers could not read or write and even if they did they could not afford to own any scriptures. Borrowing from ancient times ([see Exodus 12-13](#)) faithful in every generation have made use of a

structured time-line to help teach and learn about God's steadfastness and actions, as well as a tool for personal spiritual growth and vitality.

It's especially helpful for our children as each year, in any given church season, they hear the same story, they sing the same songs, and they become aware of the importance of it all ([Deut 6:20-25](#)).

Here's a snapshot view of the liturgical year:

Advent (preparing and anticipating for the birth of Emmanuel)

Christmas (He is born! Our redeemer is come)

Epiphany (He is now revealed to the world)

Lent (beginning Ash Wednesday, a time for penitential prayer and meditation)

Holy Week (Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday)

Easter (He is Risen!)

Pentecost (the Holy Spirit empowers us to witness to Jesus the Christ)

Ordinary time is when we focus on our faith-in-action, our mission. Those are the times shown in green. The other times are penitential or celebratory or meditative. Notice how much of our year is meant to be in action! The first time of action is right after Christmas when we are called to tell the world that Jesus Christ is born! The second stretch, the big one, is to tell the world in word and deed the Good News of God's steadfast love and salvation.



Friday, Dec. 22

7:30 p.m.

Full Circle performs their annual Holiday Concert

Directed by Jennifer Yocom

accompanied by Patricia Norton

Full Circle, a 23-voice singing group, will present an eclectic selection of holiday and winter pieces. As usual, there will be opportunities for audience participation.

The concert is free but donations are gratefully accepted.



Memorial Poinsettias
2017 Order Form



Please place your order for this year's memorial poinsettias on or before **December 18th**. Christmas Sunday is **December 24th**.

1. _____ \$15.99 each in a 6 ½ inch pot with 5-8 blooms.
20% of the purchase is donated to the UCC Flower Fund by the florist.
2. Make your check out to: **UCC Flower Fund**.
3. Print the name of the person(s) it is to be in memory of (as you wish it to be printed in the bulletin insert).
4. Print your name on the “from” line (also as you wish it to be printed in the bulletin insert).
5. Print to whom the plant should be delivered and give instructions if needed.
6. We will have large name tags in each plant – please look for correct name.
7. Help will be needed to deliver plants.
8. Mail the check and this form to:
Janice Larabee, P.O. Box 216, Bradford, VT 05033

In Memory of:

From:

Deliver to:

Check here if you wish your plant to remain for the Christmas Eve service, after which you will take it.