

EPISTLE

November, 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**

First and foremost, “Thank you.” You have been both generous and gracious in receiving me as “bridge pastor.” I have truly enjoyed getting to speak with many of you and how kind you have been about me having to ask so many times for your name! It will get better but you have been very understanding and I appreciate it.

Thanksgiving is this month – one of my favorite holidays. I have a great deal to be thankful for. I am blessed beyond measure. But having said that, I am glad that Thanksgiving is a formal time to ponder what we already know. God’s grace has seen us to this point in time and we wait in anticipation of what God’s future will unfold.

The spiritual problem I face is Paul’s admonition in Philippians 4:4 to “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice.” If one takes seriously the providential hand of God, this admonition seems, at first blush, to be impossible. There is not a person in our congregation who has not passed through “the valley of the shadow of death,” who has not known the devastating pain of the loss of a loved one, who has not had to deal with a health issue that no one would wish upon them. “Rejoice in the Lord always?” Not so easy a thing to do.

But I do not think God is in the habit of suspending the laws of nature, of twisting physics and preventing one from falling. But imagine for a moment if God did. If God put some kind of protective dome over those who find God’s

favor, what a hellish mess that would be. I could look out and see who is prospering and who is in trouble with God. The surety of my judgment would cause me to become demonic – condemning those I perceive to be outside God’s grace and aligning myself with those whom God blesses. That’s what I would do if I was certain that God brought blessing and curse upon us out of some sort of moral calculation. Rather, I take my solace in the fact that “the rain falls on the just and on the unjust.” We all face inevitable hardships and thus I can’t pretend to know whom God favors.

Which leaves me with Philippians 4:4. If truth be known, it has been hard for me to rejoice in the moment of any given tragedy. It can take years before I can see my way through to joy and even then, I would not wish the pain it took to get me or those I love to that point of acceptance. But I am a better parent and human being because what I once thought was working proved to be insufficient. The darkness of feeling lost finally helped me to see the light of God’s grace in the midst of the trauma.

Perhaps that is what Thanksgiving gives us. It helps us reframe our experience and to see God’s light even in the darkest of days. May we be afforded such joy this Thanksgiving that we come to “rejoice in the Lord always.”

Faithfully,
Pastor Jeff



Singing a New Song



On *Reformation Sunday, October 29th, we had planned to dedicate our newest addition to our worship resources, the New Century Hymnal. Due to the widespread power outage we decided to wait until Nov. 5th ... which means you have time to plan on coming!

With grateful hearts to Katrina Munn, this purchase was made possible by the Katrina Munn Music Fund. Here is the Litany of Dedication from the worship service:

Leader: The people of God have sung songs from the beginning of time. We sing in times of ceremony:

People: "David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals" (2 Samuel 6:5, NRSV).

Leader: We sing because our God is so great and so good:

People: "Praise the Lord with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings. Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts" (Psalm 33:2-3).

Leader: We sing in times of celebration:

People: "Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob. Raise a song, sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our festal day" (Psalm 81:1-3).

People: We sing because it pleases God:

Leader: "Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful. . . . For the Lord takes pleasure in his people" (Psalm 149:1,4a).

Leader: We sing as an expression of our joy and thanksgiving:

People: "It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy" (Psalm 92:1-4).

Leader: We sing in times of uncertainty and distress:

People: "I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:29-30).

Leader: And we sing because it is part of our new life in Christ:

People: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God" (Colossians 3:16).

Leader: We present these hymnals to the glory of God and for service in the life of this congregation.

Let us pray.

Eternal and loving God, we thank you for music and the gift of song through which we offer our praise and thanksgiving, our confessions and petitions, and our sorrows and laments. We give thanks to you for all those who have contributed to this hymnal: the authors, composers, arrangers, and translators who give us the words and music to express the thoughts and emotions that may otherwise have remained silent. We pray that these hymnals may be used in worship, in education, in outreach, in evangelism, in nurture, in fellowship, and in faithfulness. We consecrate them, and our lives, to your service, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Adapted from Discipleship Ministries, United Methodist Church

*see next page

(Reformation) *the 500th anniversary of when Martin Luther made his way to the doors of the Cathedral of Wittenberg, Germany, and posted his famous 95 theses (complaints) against the teachings and practices of the Roman church. His followers were dubbed “Protestants.”

Congregational singing had been halted since the close of the fourth century, when the church leaders decreed: “If laymen are not to interpret the Scriptures for themselves, so they are not to sing the songs of the church”.

Martin Luther declared, “Let God speak directly to His people through the Scriptures, and let His people respond with grateful songs of praise.” One of his best known hymns is “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”, based on Psalm 46.



The reformation made great changes. Martin Luther capitalized on German interest in singing. Holding that music ranked next to theology, he exalted the role of congregational singing as well as the use of the choirs. He wrote hymns which taught doctrine, and would rehearse new hymns during the week with the congregation. Not only did he write his hymns in the language of the people, but he adapted popular tunes sung in the beer gardens, thus setting all Germany singing Gospel truth in the garb of secular songs.

A wonderful look at Martin Luther, the Reformation, and what happened was broadcast by “Rick Steves' Europe” and [can be seen by clicking here](#).



"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." Well, that's how we felt when we gathered for worship on Oct. 29th, despite 60,000 homes and businesses (including our church) being without power! We set up in the vestry close to the south wall of windows, sat close around the altar and piano.

When it was time for the children's story Pastor Jeff introduced them to our guest musician Danelle Sims and she explained how she started on the flute and how practice helped her get better and better. The children and Bridget went to the kitchen and surprised us all by pulling together a really fun “coffee hour” with graham crackers, salsa and incredible (how did they do it?!) enchilada/burritos.



To Everything There Is a Season

Even more seasonal joy was experienced at the annual Harvest Bazaar in mid-October. The atmosphere was festive, the room filled with crafts and goods from around the world as well as right here within the congregation.



One of the favorite tables is the one dedicated to SERRV products. Serrv is a nonprofit, fair trade organization dedicated to lifting disadvantaged artisans, farmers, and their families out of poverty. Behind every basket, tunic and necklace, you'll find a story of positive change. A story of an empowered artisan or farmer who works in a safe environment, can send his or her children to school, and can save for the future with the reliable income he or she earns through fair trade. In this picture is a beautiful and

spacious shoulder bag with intricate hand-sewn embroidery and sequins.

[By clicking here](#) you will be taken to SERRV's website where you can read the uplifting and awe-inspiring stories as well as connecting to the catalog of absolutely lovely items made throughout the world. There is also a very good video there. Lucia Button has hard copies of the catalog for anyone who prefers flip the pages from one wow to the next!



Always a mainstay of delight are the displays of knitted, sewn and crocheted gifts: sweaters, stockings, quilts, mittens, hats, afghans, washcloths.

These are only a few of the Bazaar's offerings this year. More pictures can be seen on our Facebook page!

Prayer requests may be emailed to
[our prayer group](#)



It is our privilege to pray for you and those you care about.

**We pray for each other,
without ceasing
and your prayer requests
are held in strict confidence.**

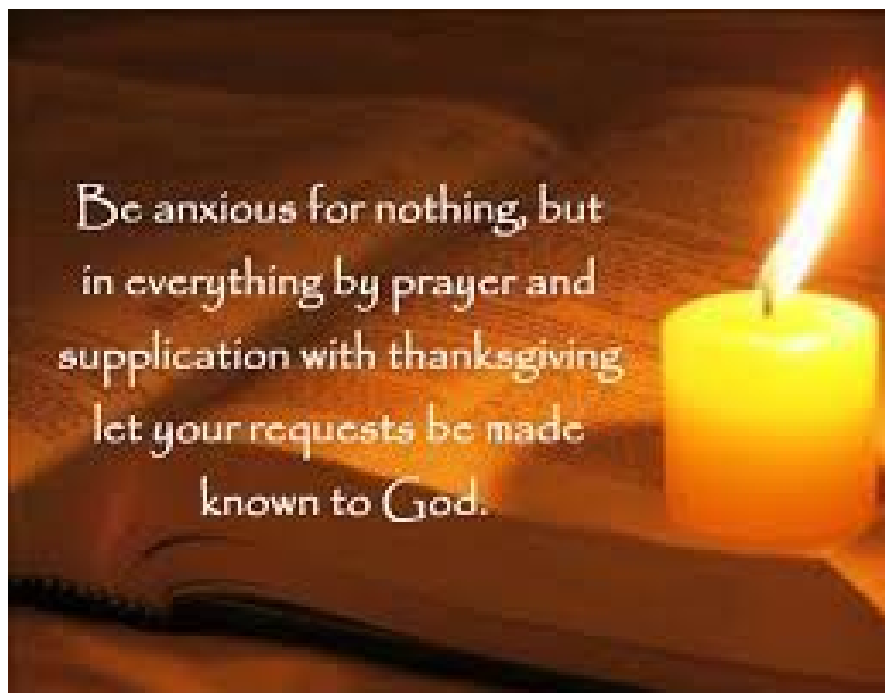


From the United Church of Christ



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



Lectionary Readings **NOVEMBER** (end of Year A)



November 5

Joshua 3:7-17 (God is with His people into the Promised Land)

I Thessalonians 2:9-13 (they welcome God's word despite sufferings)

Matthew 23:1-12 (greatness is revealed only in service to others)

Psalms 107:1-7, 33-37 (the redeemed give praise)

theme hymn: ***Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah***

November 12

Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25 (ceremony of covenant renewal)

I Thessalonians 4:13-18 (all believers will share in the resurrection)

Matthew 25:1-13 (parable of the bridesmaids)

Psalms 78:1-7 (tell the children of their God)

theme hymn: ***Watchmen, Tell Us of the Night***

November 19

Judges 4:1-7 (Judge Deborah commands Barak)

I Thessalonians 5:1-11 (put on the armor of God)

Matthew 25:14-30 (invest or play it safe?)

Psalms 123 (we look to God for mercy)

theme hymn: ***Come, Labor On***

November 26 ... Christ the King Sunday

Ezekiel 34:11-16,20-24 (from now on God is the shepherd)

Ephesians 1:15-23 (be wise and understanding in Christ)

Matthew 25:31-46 (the righteous see need and respond with love)

Psalm 100 (enter His gates with thanksgiving)

theme hymn: ***O Worship the King***

Thus ends Year A in the lectionary.

Year B begins the 1st Sunday of Advent on December 3rd.

December 3 ... 1st Sunday of Advent

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

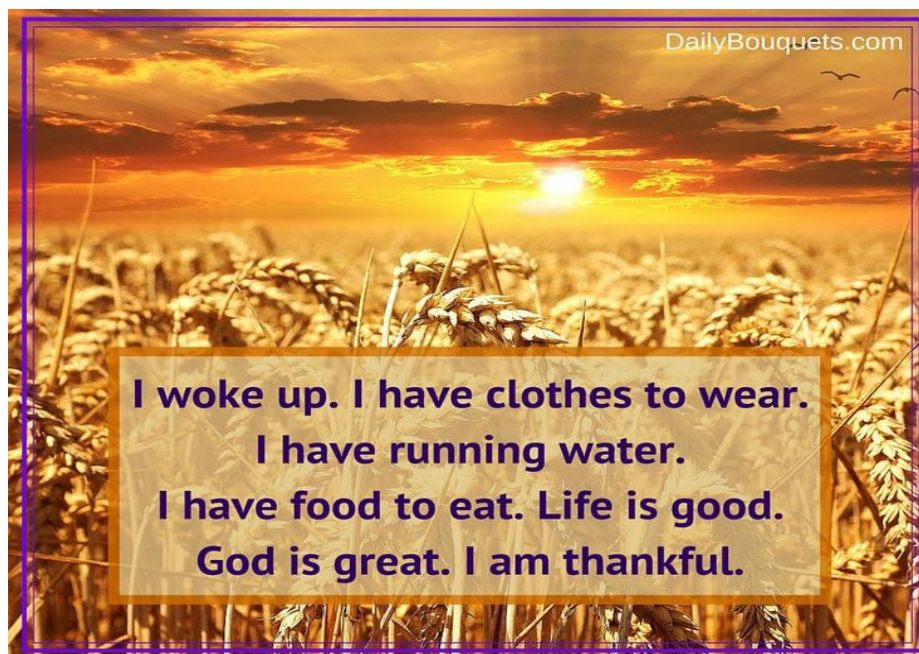
1 Corinthians 1:3-9 (God has given us all we need)

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

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

theme hymn: ***O Come, O Come, Emmanuel***

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.



It's Criminal

A Tale of Prison & Privilege

Tenney Library is handicapped accessible. No fee; donations welcome.

**Sunday, Nov. 12
2 p.m.**

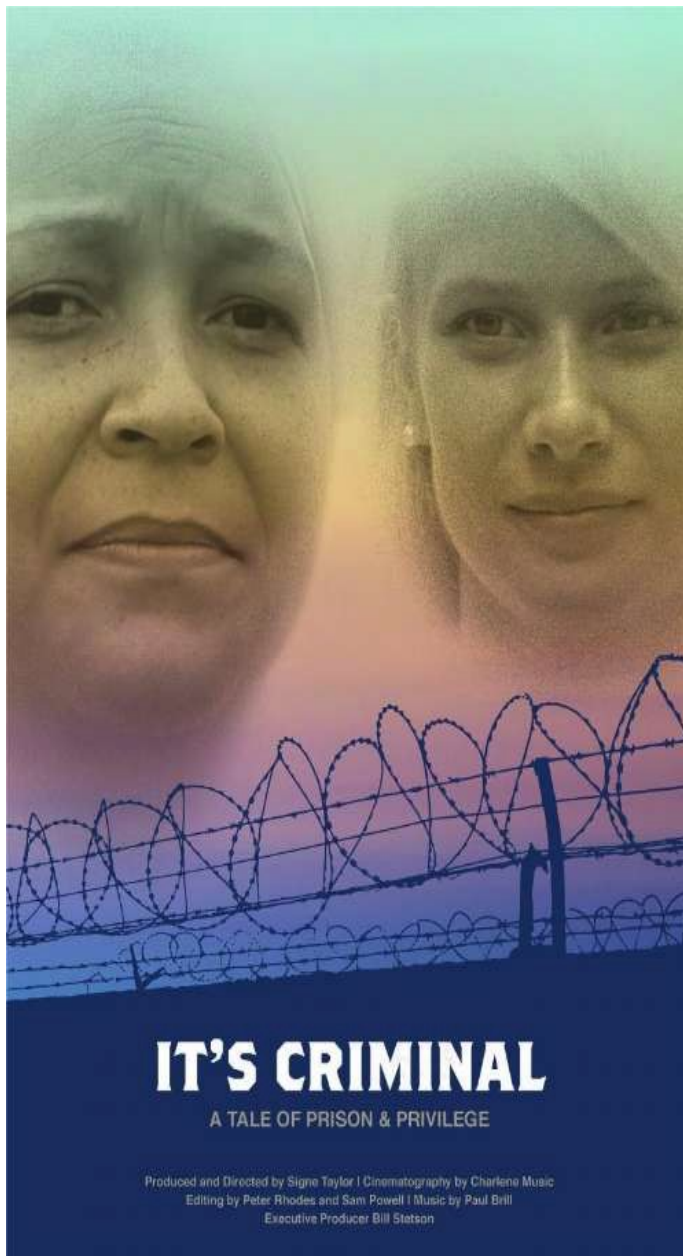
**Tenney Library
Rte. 5, Newbury, VT**

A feature documentary film exploring issues of privilege and injustice as a class of Dartmouth students and locally incarcerated women collaborate on a play about how the women came to be in prison.

A panel discussion will follow the film.

Panel members: Signe Taylor, Director; Ivy Schweitzer and Pati

Hernandez, Dartmouth professors; and two formerly incarcerated women who are featured in the film.





Community is not just a photo array on the wall;
it's the little ones playing on the floor!



Important Community Supper dates:
November 29
December 27