

EPISTLE

February, 2018



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**

Message from Pastor Jeff:

Lent reminds us of the cross. It should not rob us of our joy.

The cross and our joy and inexorable linked. At first blush, this may appear contradictory. How can the anguish and suffering of the cross be linked to joy? But I want to suggest that the linkage between the two is the expression of faith's power.

Let's begin by making a distinction between happiness and joy. One does not have to be happy to be joyous. It helps, but happiness is not a prerequisite to joy. The story is told of a young Jewish girl who was held prisoner in a Nazi death camp. All around her were reminders of her fate. Yet daily she found joy in observing the wonder of birds in flight or some small remnant of wonder in the camp itself. Was she happy? No. Was she joyous? Yes.

The problem facing many of us is our pursuit of happiness is linked to our discovery of joy. Like children at Christmas, we desire some trinket and link our acquisition of a thing to our joy. And it works – at least for a period of time – until the novelty of having the object of our desire is replaced by our desire for something new. I would suggest that this is the fleeting nature of happiness.

Let me clarify that neither I nor the Christian faith have anything against being happy. I sincerely hope we can live in such bliss. But the truth is more complex and life far more capricious.

I have shared with some of you this understanding of the cross shared by Joseph Sittler:

"A cross is a blunt and graceless form. It has not the completeness and satisfying quality of a circle. It does not have the grace of a parabola or the promise of a long curve. A cross is a straight-up line abruptly crossed by a counterline. The assertive yes of its vertical is crossed and broken by the no of its horizontal. A cross speaks not of unity but of brokenness, not of harmony but of ambiguity; it is a form of tension and not of rest....The cross is the symbol because the whacks of life take that shape. Our lives are full of abandonments, infidelities, tragedies. The affirmation is always crossed by a negation. The vitalities of life move toward death. And unless you have a crucified God, you don't have a big enough God."¹

The unfathomable depth of our joy given the reality of life is thus dependent on the central symbol of our faith. The cross is both the affirmation of life's struggle against "powers and principalities," and the promise of God's ultimate triumph over the evil we are called to combat. This is why Lent reminds us of the cross. It does not rob us of our joy.

Faithfully,
Pastor Jeff

¹Sittler, Joseph A., Grace Notes and Other Fragments, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1981, pp. 116 & 118.

Community Supper

The weather was volatile in February, one day hot and the next arctic, but all was warm and cheerful at the Community Supper.

**Reminder: The Community Suppers are now the
4th THURSDAY of each month**

We have made this change back to the original schedule of years ago in order for our own Pastor Jeff to join us! The sign for the supper will be placed out front several days ahead as a reminder to everyone.



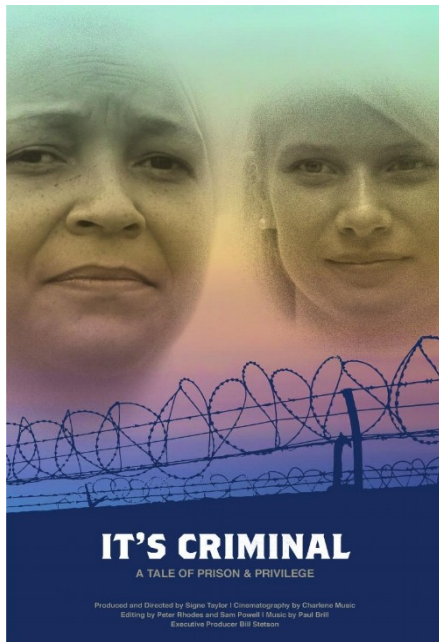
Always plenty for everyone at Community Supper

Board of Missions and Social Action

The Board of Missions and Social Action's February meeting had so much energy and excitement! We have some wonderful things coming up in the next few months.



On Sunday, March 18th, we will be taking the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. This offering helps support our neighbors around the world by providing relief to those affected by natural disasters, provide food for the hungry, and and help empower the poor and oppressed. The One Great Hour of Sharing website (<http://specialofferings.pcusa.org/oghs>) has a wonderful world map that shows the locations of recipients of this offering. For example, in Holyoke, Massachusetts, they received \$15,000 for their Neighbor to Neighbor campaign, which was led by community members to advocate for investment in jobs, education, and mental health reform instead of development of more prisons.



On April 5th at 6 p.m., the BMSA will be sponsoring the viewing of It's Criminal at the Bradford Academy. It's Criminal is a documentary that highlights the economic and social inequities that divide the U.S. and offers a vision of how separated communities can learn to speak to each other. This documentary follows the life-changing journeys of incarcerated women and Dartmouth College students working together to write and perform an original play about the troubled and painful paths that landed the women behind bars.

After the film, there will be a panel discussion. If you would like more information please go to: <https://www.itiscriminal.com/>

March 1st Council Meeting

We had a positive meeting with 10 members present including Charlotte Welch who clarified that the Palms have been ordered from Antique Rose which she will deliver. Also clarified that she will continue to provide flowers for every Sunday except Easter and Christmas. These two times are asking individuals to bring flowers to the kitchen by Friday with a note describing who is being honored and by whom. They will see that it is printed in bulletin and placed in Sanctuary.

In order to accommodate anyone with disabilities, Joe Button said they can drive into his driveway for the Easter Sunrise Service. Pastor Jeff is to discuss the service with the Methodist minister, as we were hoping for a joint service.

The Food shelf needs help as they lost a major contributor.

The Methodist church is holding free dinner every second Tuesday and ours is held on the 4th Thursday so they will not conflict, nor conflict with Maundy Thursday service.

Good Friday will be a joint service.

Decided that next Council meeting will be moved to April 15th so as not to conflict with Missions movie on the 5th.

Annual meeting reports by each organization need to be in Barbara Joslyn's hands by April 15.

Pastor Jeff wants to hold adult bible study "Who Wrote The Bible" Please contact him if interested.

Date for Annual Meeting set for 7 PM May 17th.

Daniel Perry

Easter Memorial Flowers:

This year everyone who would like to have a memorial plant on the altar for Easter Sunday is invited to bring it to the church kitchen on March 30th with a note that indicates:

for whom the plant is in memory,
from whom it is being given, and
to whom it is to be delivered after the service.

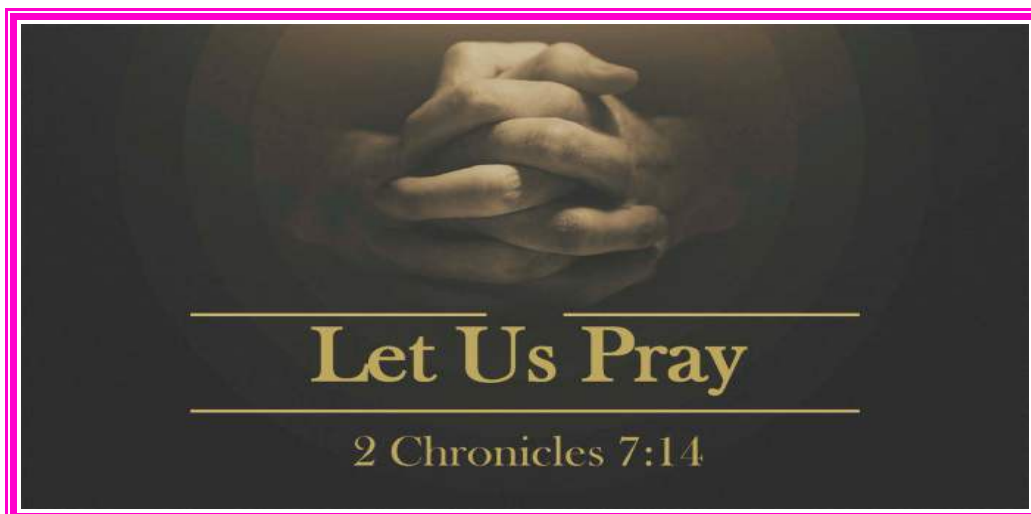
Bradford Congregational Church has been so blessed with the generosity and hard work of the Welch family. We may never be able to thank them enough, but we sure can try!

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



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.**



Lectionary Readings MARCH (Year B)

The theme hymns are linked to video performances ... click on each if you desire listening to hymns as you read your scriptures or meditate on them



March 4 - 3rd Sunday of Lent

Exodus 20: 1-17 (the Mosaic/Moses Covenant)

1 Corinthians 1: 18-25 (we are called to show God's love)

John 2: 13-22 (Jesus drove out entrenched evil)

Psalms 19 (the Law of the Lord is perfect)

theme hymn: [O God, What You Ordain is Right](#)

March 11 - 4th Sunday of Lent

Numbers 21: 4-9 (the role of judgment in redemption)

Ephesians 2: 1-10 (God is love ... and we are NOT self-made)

John 3: 14-21 (we can't conceal our deeds)

Psalms 107: 1-3, 17-22 (In God is the healing and the salvation)

theme hymn: [To God Be the Glory](#)

March 18 - 5th Sunday of Lent

Jeremiah 31: 31-34 (God WILL forgive)

Hebrews 5: 5-10 (Jesus was human and DID feel as we do)

John 12: 20-33 (want to serve Jesus? Be where He is)

Psalms 51: 1-12 (prayer for cleansing and pardon)

theme hymn: [O Jesus, I Have Promised](#)

March 25 - Palm Sunday

Liturgy of the Palms: Mark 11: 1-11 (Hosanna is called out)

Liturgy of the Passion: Isaiah 50: 4-9a (trust in God's help)

Philippians 2: 5-11 (God voluntarily assumed obedience to death)

Mark 14:1 - 15:47 (the Passion story according to Mark)

Palms theme hymn: [The Palms](#)

Passion theme hymn: [When I Survey the Wondrous Cross](#)

[Passion Week](#)

March 29 - Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12: 1-4, 11-14 (prepare and celebrate the Passover)

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (Paul passes to us the Last Supper tradition)

John 13: 1-17, 31b-35 (Jesus washed the disciples' feet)

Psalms 116:1-2, 12-19 (Love the Lord who hears your supplications)

theme hymn: [Let Us Break Bread Together](#)

March 30 - Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 ([he has borne our griefs, carried our sorrows](#))

Hebrews 10: 16-25 ([Christ's sacrifice is once and for all and forever](#))

John 18:1 - 19:42 ([the passion narrative](#))

Psalms 22 (God, our deliverer)

theme hymn: [Go to Dark Gethsemane](#)

Season of EASTER

April 1 - He is Risen

Acts 10:34-43 (Peter recounts his story)

1 Corinthians 15: 1-11 (this is the good news ... he died for us)

Mark 16:1-8 (tell them he is risen)

Psalms 118: 1-2, 14-24 (the Lord has become our salvation)

theme hymn: [Christ the Lord Has Risen Today!](#)

April 8 - 2nd Sunday of Easter

Acts 4: 32-35 (totally sharing community)

1 John 1:1 - 2:2 (God is light)

John 20:19-31 (Jesus appears to Thomas)

Psalms 133 (unity is blessed)

theme hymn: [Breathe on Me, Breath of God](#)

Back Story

Several times a month I write a “back story” for the weekly email and the website. These back stories expand on an element of the upcoming worship service. Sometimes the back stories are on the history behind a tradition, sometimes they go into the history of a hymn, and sometimes they are a biography of a composer or Saint or preacher.

All of these back stories can be found on the website's “Church News” page and to locate them you can [click here](#). (Soon there will be a separate link for these short extras.) Each month I will post one back story here for those without access to our website.

February's back stories:

4th – **Just What Are Hymns, Anyway?** A look into how hymns differ from psalms and spiritual songs (whole back story printed below)

9th – **How We Journey Through Lent** A look into what our church practices now or did in the past as it follows the 40 days of Lenten Season.

22nd – **Just As I Am** The story of composer Charlotte Elliott's “come as you are” moment which prompted her composition

Just What Are Hymns, Anyway?

Our hymnals contain three basic categories of congregational songs to be sung:

HYMNS: speaks to and of God, is one of praise and adoration. It is celebration of God, song directed to God (“Our God, Our Help In Ages Past”).

PSALMS: scripture set to music (“The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want”)

SPIRITUAL SONGS: testimony of a spiritual theme (“Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling”).

A hymn is a congregational song of praise directed to God. A hymn has stanzas, and its lyrics are a “metered” poem meant to be sung. The traditional “common meter” for English hymns is 8.6.8.6 (syllables per line). “O Little Town of Bethlehem” and “Amazing Grace” are just two examples of hymns whose lyrics could be interchanged because they share the same meter.

In scripture we read that people have sung hymns since the time of Moses. David sang hymns of praise and is credited with writing many. Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn together at the Last Supper. The early church sang hymns as part of their regular meetings. Paul and Silas, with their feet in stocks in a Philippian jail, were reported to be praying and singing hymns.

It's been said a Spirit-filled Christian is a singing Christian." In Ephesians 5 we read this advice, "...be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Just as whistling is a natural reaction to a stroll on a fine summer's day, so too is bursting out in exuberant congregational singing a natural reaction to being filled with the Spirit!

Marcia Tomlinson, Historian



Spring is in the air...and it's time to try some new things in Sunday school. We have started to include a mini service during our downstairs time together before the lesson.

The service includes a scripture reading, singing a hymn, taking offering/doxology and saying the Lord's prayer. We hope this gives them exposure to the elements of the service they miss when they come downstairs, helps build a collection of hymns that they know and gives them opportunities for participation.

On Easter Sunday, we will remain upstairs with our families to worship together.

Children's Sunday is scheduled for June 10th.

As always, we welcome new members to the Christian Education committee and anyone that wants to help out with teaching.

A note from our organist, John Atwood:

Music for March follows the Lenten tradition based on the North German Organ School with composers including Bach, Buxtehude and Pachelbel. The prelude on 11 March will feature "Ricercare in G minor" by Italian G. P. da Palestrina. On Palm Sunday morning, Betsy Alexander will sing the Afro-American spiritual "Crucifixion."

I thank all those who sent their prayers and best wishes for a successful surgery, which it was. Now has begun the slow but steady recuperation!

I'm thinking about Easter music also (1 April). I plan to work an organ fanfare at the beginning of the service entitled "Napolitana" by Marco Facoli (1540--1585). The rest of the service is yet to be settled.

I look forward to seeing you all Sunday, March 4th IF the weather holds. The last I heard is that we may get a foot of snow Saturday night.

Our Annual Lenten Series (Interchurch Council)

Lenten Services schedule – all Sundays at 7:00 pm – each Church hosting the services will provide refreshments:

March 4 Grace United Methodist Church

Piermont Pastor, speaker

March 11 Piermont Church

Rev. Cindy Batten of West Newbury Congregational, speaker

March 18 at West Newbury Congregational Church

Father from Our Lady of Perpetual Help, speaker

March 20 Palm Sunday Concert at Bradford Congregational Church

➤ (details on next page)

Palm Sunday Choir Festival
2018 Annual Palm Sunday Choir Festival
March 25th at 7:00 pm

Planning for this year's Palm Sunday Choir Festival is well underway and we hope you can attend or participate.

The combined chorus presentations will be:

O Lord, Hear Us/Kyrie Eleison by Marty Parks (**copies available now**)

Abide With Me by Victor Johnson (**copies available now**)

At the Foot of the Cross by Lee Dengler (**copies available now**)



Anyone who would like to sing with the combined chorus is very welcome!

To hear **O Lord Hear Us** by Parks click on:

<https://www.martyparks.com/Product.aspx?ID=130559>

To view and download the score click [O-Lord-Hear-Us](#)

To hear **Abide With Me** by Johnson click on:

<http://victorjohnson.voreldesigns.com/abide-with-me/>

To hear **At the Foot of the Cross** by Dengler click on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0ubhjmTdl>

Area choirs have begun to rehearse their individual pieces and we'll all meet up on Palm Sunday! Newbury, Haverhill, West Newbury, Piermont, OLPH, Grace UMC ... these are just a few who have already signed on.

It is a marvelous opportunity and honor to be part of this unique worship service.

Marcia Tomlinson

M3site@charter.net

802 449 4689 (please leave a message)

Some helpful links:

- Our website is <http://bradforducc.org/>
- Our church's email is bradfordvtucc@gmail.com
- Click on [EPISTLE](#) to read back issue of this newsletter
- Our Sunday School, Music and Missions are at [Programs](#)
- Past Sermons can be accessed at [News & Sermons](#).
- Our congregation's activities are listed on our [online calendar](#)
- Our Facebook page link is [Bradford Congregational Church](#)



The Diaconate's annual Sunshine Basket project ... always a smile maker!

Each was delivered by volunteers from the congregation.

Just in time for Valentine's Day

Can you represent our church at this year's Vermont Conference Annual Meeting?

WHEN

Friday, April 27, 2018 at 9:30 AM EDT
-to-
Saturday, April 28, 2018 at 4:00 PM EDT



WHERE

Lake Morey Resort Fairlee, VT 05045

Contact

Vermont Conference
Vermont Conference, UCC
802-728-4999
vtconference@vtcucc.org