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EPISTLE

July, 2016



**Bradford Congregational Church – UCC
Bradford, VT (802) 222-4034**

Our website:

<http://bradforducc.org>

bradfordvtucc@gmail.com

Dear Church Family,

A church's interim time is often compared to the journey of Moses and the Children of Israel through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

If I had to say where we are right now on that journey, I think I would choose the time when Moses went up Mount Sinai and received the Ten Commandments and entire law from God.

That was a defining moment in the history of Israel. This congregation is at a defining moment in its history in a few different ways. I need to be clear, though, that I am not playing Moses in this drama—the lay leaders of this church are the ones who are climbing the mountain.

The Pastoral Search Committee is in the process of forming a vision of the congregation to present in the Local Church Profile that every prospective settled pastor will see. The Search Committee is busy this summer preparing for a series of gatherings in the fall. You will be hearing more about this in the next two editions of the Epistle. The Committee is hoping that every active



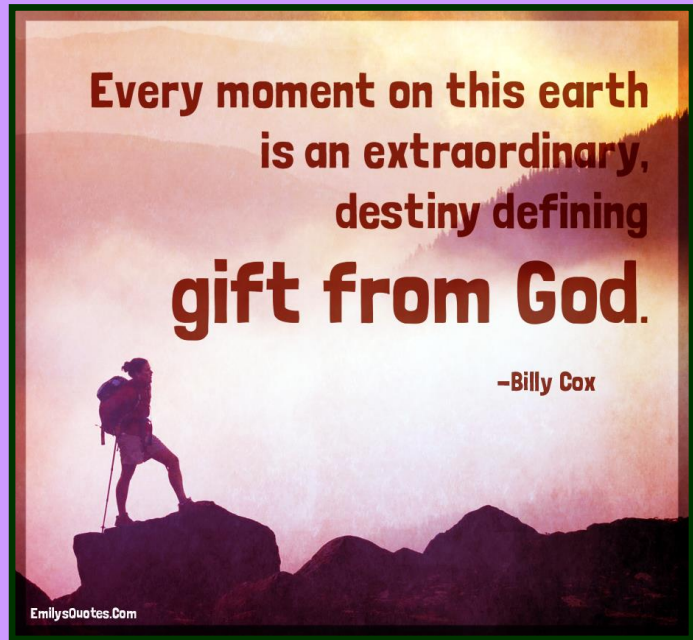
member of the congregation will attend one of the gatherings to help address some crucial, defining questions that the next pastor will need answered. The meetings will be a Moses-on-Mount-Sinai moment for everyone in the congregation.

The Search Committee sent out a questionnaire a few months ago as part of its profile research. One of the questions was, “Would you be in favor of participating in an Open and

Affirming study/discernment process?” “Open and Affirming” is the name of the United Church of Christ program whereby congregations declare themselves open to and affirming of people of all sexual orientations and identities. The Search Committee was surprised that three-quarters of the congregation said they would be in favor of participating in a study of whether to declare the Bradford Congregational Church Open and Affirming.

The church’s position on this issue will be of extreme interest to most if not all of the candidates for settled pastor, and it would be a strong attraction to many to see that the congregation was actively studying it. The Search Committee voted unanimously to ask the Diaconate to consider initiating a congregation-wide discernment process. The Diaconate in turn voted unanimously to proceed carefully in that direction.

This is another defining moment. You will be hearing more about this very soon. Once again, the leadership and entire congregation will be Moses on this mountain. I intend not to advocate for or against becoming Open and Affirming. This needs to be entirely your discernment of what Christ is calling you to do. My role will be to offer pastoral support to people of all perspectives, and to help the congregation go through this discussion maintaining healthy communication and beloved community every step of the climb.





Which brings up yet another way in which this church is redefining itself. In April of 2014, months before I arrived, a meeting of the congregation adopted a set of Communication Guidelines. The congregation pledged itself to healthy communication and beloved community at that time, and yet it did not lay out what it would do

differently in the future. The Diaconate and Board of Mission and Social Action hosted workshops this spring and will host more this fall to train our congregation (and others) in the skills and techniques of healthy communication and beloved community.

We will be producing a manual for committees, boards, the Church Council and the congregation to use in meetings when facing challenging, controversial and potentially divisive issues. Many of us have already been part of meetings where we put these new tools to work, and have been amazed and overjoyed at how they have transformed conflicts, disagreements or misunderstandings into a feeling of mutual care and respect, resulting in greater unity rather than division. I hope this will become a permanent redefinition of the way this congregation does business. I hope you will teach it to your future pastors in all the generations to come.

One other Mount Sinai experience is underway. Church leaders are beginning to read the book *Real Good Church*, one group at a time. I wrote about this in my May Epistle article (you can read it at <http://bradforducc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2016-May-Epistle.pdf>). The Diaconate hopes that the book will inspire us to think of many creative ways in which we can change or improve upon what we now do in order to encourage congregational growth.

The important lesson about the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai is that they were not the ones who made the difference, nor was Moses. God was the one who defined or redefined them. Our task is to listen as carefully as we can for the voice of God guiding our thoughts, feelings and deliberations. We want to be able to say when we come down from this mountain that it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us—that we are more truly now the Body of Christ, living, loving and serving in this world.



We have sung a few times lately the modern hymn that says,
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me!
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Let that be our prayer as we climb this mountain, and as we prepare for the next stage of the journey across the wilderness to the settled pastor and the Promised Land.

Peace, joy and love,
Tom



Submit a
Prayer Request

Prayer requests may be directed to
martinastever@yahoo.com

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.

PRAY

*Would you like the person(s) for whom we are
praying to receive a note saying we are lifting up
those prayers?*

Please let us know their address and we will mail it.

*We keep any names, concerns, and personal
information in strict confidence.*

A close-up photograph of a woven basket filled with ripe, bright red strawberries. The strawberries are the central focus, with their characteristic seeds and green leaves visible. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the basket and the surrounding environment.

Lectionary Readings JULY (year C)

July 3 – 7th Sunday after Pentecost

2 Kings 5:1-14 Galatians 6: (1-6) 7-16
Luke 10: 1-11, 16-20 Psalm 30

July 10 – 8th Sunday after Pentecost

Amos 7: 7-17 Psalm 82
Colossians 1:1-14 Luke 10:25-37

July 17 – 9th Sunday after Pentecost

Amos 8: 8-12 Psalm 52
Colossians 1: 15-28 Luke 10: 38-42

July 24 – 10th Sunday after Pentecost

Hosea 1: 2-10 Psalm 85
Colossians 2: 6-15 (16-19) Luke 11: 1-13

July 31 – 11th Sunday after Pentecost

Hosea 11:1-11 Psalm 107: 1-9, 43
Colossians 3:1-11 Luke 12: 13-21

Board of Missions and Social Action



After our exciting and music filled, JOYOUS celebration of combined worship with the West Newbury Congregational Church on June 5th, we mentioned on our Facebook page that since both our congregations like to support Help Kids India (<http://www.helpkidsindia.org/news-and-events/>), we decided to pool our offering as a contribution to this great organization.

Within just a few hours we heard back from Help Kids India, which posted this:

“Help Kids India is so astonished and grateful for the thoughtfulness and generosity of two small Vermont churches. They came together last weekend to make music, grab some joy, and then turned around and sent off a ton of it to India to care for little children in our crèches. You gave children with next to nothing loving and creative teachers, good food, medical care, and the sure knowledge that they are not alone in the world, that we are all worthy to share in the joy of God’s creation.”

It was the wonder of technology (they saw our Facebook posting the same day) and the absolute joy of two neighboring congregations worshipping together.

We also gathered for a joint potluck lunch in the vestry after the service and enjoyed making lots of new friends! The day was designated a great success to be repeated soon.

Stay tuned!

Game Supper notes

Hi All

Tracey and I are very excited to be able to help the church this year with game supper. We hope to measure up to all those that have put in countless hours in the past.

As is the case every year we have people getting done with a certain details and we need to bring in new recruits. So this email is for all those that have always wanted to take on a game supper detail, get back involved in game supper or want to do more!

We have everything from your own detail to just working a few hours. Give us a call or an email and we can discuss what might best fit your availability.

Tracey can be reached at [802-222-1800](tel:802-222-1800) and Dan at [603-443-7882](tel:603-443-7882) or email us at sixsmiths@charter.net

Thanks

Dan and Tracey Smith UCC Game Supper Chairs



"Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

(Matthew 25:37b-40)

Dear VTCUCC:

As I watch TV and listen to the news, I am becoming ever more concerned about the level of suspicion and distrust bordering on hatred that seems to be spreading throughout our neighborhoods and nation. I am especially troubled by rhetoric calling for a ban on receiving refugees from Syria and even expelling Muslims who already live here. This is contrary to the gospel we seek to live and the Christ we are called to follow.



As we live in this post-modern time, the need for the Church to have a clear public voice is crucial. We who say, "no matter who you are or where you are on life's

journey you are welcome here" must also be willing to say and live that radical hospitality in our towns, cities and nation.

There is a story from the Cherokee tradition that I am sure many of you have heard. A grandfather is talking with his grandson and says there are two wolves inside of us which are always at war with each other. One of them is a good wolf which represents things like kindness, bravery and love. The other is a bad wolf, which represents things like greed, hatred and fear. The grandson stops and thinks about it for a second then he looks up at his grandfather and says, "Grandfather, which one wins?" The grandfather quietly replies, the one you feed.

I hope that together we can continue to feed what is life-giving, loving and just instead of what is rooted in fear and mistrust. If you would like some resources to be used when talking with people about welcoming Syrian (and other) refugees, [here](#) is a helpful link

Now and in the days to come we may very well find ourselves at odds with people in our communities or even within our churches. This is a time for courage, compassion and clarity. Be not afraid! For when we welcome and minister to the "least of these" we surely welcome and minister to God.

As Betty Edson says, may we find "Courage in the struggle!"

Lynn Bujnak
Vermont Conference

Left: Mary Sanborn, right: Eris Eastman



Profile #11 – Mary
Martin Sanborn

Mary grew up in East Corinth, VT and the East Corinth Congregational Church. She later was a member of the 1st Congregational Church of Burlington, VT and the UCC in Essex Jct., VT. She transferred her membership by letter to the Bradford

Congregational Church of the UCC in 1973. With her came her husband, William Sanborn, Sr., two sons William, Jr. and Martin, and three beautiful daughters, Anne Marie, Rachel and Susan. (Historian's comment: what an addition those three girls were to the waitress staff at the Wild Game Supper. They always wanted to be on the same shift as my husband Ezra, and Rob Tomlinson! What fun they were.)

Some of the offices held by Mary: Chairman, Music Committee for many years; Jr. Choir Director for five years; member of Church Council for many years as well as Moderator for two terms (6 years); President and Secretary of Women's Fellowship. Committees she has served on: Organ Restoration as Secretary; two different shifts as Representative to the Grafton-Orange Association; with my husband as a delegate to the annual meetings of the VT Conference for five years (Brattleboro, Springfield, Rutland (2) and St. Johnsbury); arranged Palm Sunday Festivals; arranged Katrina Munn Memorial Concerts; sang in Choir 1972-2014; worked on Chicken Pie Suppers (co-chair for four years) and Wild Game Supper (waitressing and doing candy table).

I asked Mary to name a disappointment in the church. Her reply, "Can't think of any."

As for the activity of the church she has been most pleased with, she wrote "The high point of my week is Sunday morning worship – especially since having a stroke!"

For other comments, Mary mentioned, "I've never been involved in church controversies. I go to church to worship God! – not to criticize ministers, the music, other members, or the edifice!"

Eris, Historian



Music Team: it's official

The Music Committee met recently with Rev. Kinder and we mapped out what we think will be a great new path for living into our Identity & Aspiration statement, *“We value our music program, which draws from diverse traditions for worship and provides a vibrant local center of musical performance.”*

Because ALL music dedicated and performed for the glory and praise of God is special, we will no longer use the term “special music” but will instead use “interlude” for organ or piano pieces and “Diverse Tradition” for more modern music or pieces performed on diverse instruments.

On June 5th, thanks to the Diaconate, our church played host to a joyous Diverse Tradition worship service. We invited the West Newbury Congregational Church to come en masse to our worship service in order that we BOTH might enjoy and feel the Holy Spirit among us as the duo of Caleb and Bruce Freeburg lifted up

gospel sounds to the guitar and fiddle. The venture was a grand and glorious success and will definitely happen again!

We brainstormed at our meeting and came up with four broad hats for the team:

- 1) the minister
- 2) the organist/choir director
- 3) the choir administrator
- 4) the diverse traditions coordinator

1) Our worship services are at their most spiritually uplifting when the music has been carefully integrated with the message the minister will be presenting. Thus it is vital that the minister and the musicians work closely together.

2) When Pam Lucas filled the pulpit recently she stepped away for a moment to ask us, the congregation, if we knew how incredibly gifted a musician we have in John Atwood ... and oh yes, we certainly do know! He has brought in a level of expertise and knowledge we haven't experienced for a very long time. and our worship has been elevated from it! The organist/choir director is a vital and necessary co-partner in the formulation of the worship services.

3) This is a new concept, one designed to lift off the organist/choir director the minutia of choir duties such as sorting through the music files, assembling the folders, taking care of the robes, and listening to the preferences of the choir members! In addition, the administrator keeps an eye/ear out for what the congregation might be requesting.

4) The DT coordinator is the one who will in-gather all the many forms of talent and musicianship that our area is blessed to have in its midst, from soloists both vocal and instrumental, to music teams, even small bands. This person will also be the one who co-ordinates the (hopefully) many concerts to come such as North Country Chorus and Full Circle.

What we learned from the June 5th service was that our congregation loves great music, loves to sing and move and laugh and clap as the spirit bursts into our presence. Drums, piano, guitar, fiddles, violins and harps, trumpets and trombones, folk songs, American spirituals ... all manners and forms of uplifting music.

Stay tuned!

Randy Odell, Marcia Tomlinson

**Bradford Congregational Church of the United Church of Christ
Bradford, Vermont**

CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES

June 2, 2016

Present: Dan Perry, Barbara Joslyn, Patrick Peters, Joe Button, Tom Kinder, Rob Taylor, Charlotte Welch, Gloria Fox

We opened the meeting reading the Covenant together and Rev. Kinder leading us in prayer.

APPROVAL OF May 5, 2016 MINUTES:

- Storme Odell sent an e-mail to the clerk noting the following clarification:
 - In the Interchurch Council report, it was written that the Bradford UCC supports the pregnancy center and should read, “The Interchurch Council supports the pregnancy center”.

Motion: A Motion was made by Gloria Fox and seconded by Joe Button to approve the May 5, 2015 minutes with the above clarification. It was approved by unanimous vote.

TREASURER’S REPORT:

Bank Balances:

- Operating Account - \$ 4,489.39
- Game Supper Savings - 34,454.77
- Game Supper Checking - 938.51
- Memorial Fund - 2,936.19
- Act ‘n Spire - 11,739.49
- WF Fund - 6,894.49

The Treasurer’s Report will stand as approved until audited.

Gloria was asked when she could meet with the auditors. She will be in touch with the auditors and set up a date before the next council meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Charlotte Welch-reporting for the Minister Search Committee:

- The next meeting is set for June 23rd at 6:30pm. The committee will be working on setting up informal meetings for the congregation.

Joe Button - Trustees:

- Fourteen windows have been ordered. Windows on both sides of the choir area will be replaced (four), as well as ten more downstairs.
- The Methodists asked for permission to maintain the Labyrinth.
- Continuing to work on bids for the outside painting of the church and the theater.
- Members of the Easter Seals are done using the church.

Patrick Peters - Board of Missions & Social Action:

The following are areas of concern the BMS&A are working with:

- Refugees in VT/Resettlement
- Local families in Bradford
- Conservation Camp – our church can sponsor two campers.

Barbara Joslyn – Clerk/Publicity:

- Concern brought forward about the (unapproved) minutes being published in the Epistle as the Epistle is seen on our website and Facebook. For now, all present did not have any issues with them being published, so we will continue to do so.

Rob Taylor - Finance Chair:

- Nothing to report.

Dan Perry II and Rev. Tom Kinder- Deacons:

- Reminder of the joint service with W. Newbury UCC on June 5 at a later time, 11:00am. Rev. Kinder will be co-leading the service with W. Newbury's Minister and deacons. Both covenants will be recited. There will be a skit for the children; the Freeburg's will perform old-time music, and a potluck lunch to follow for all.
- The deacons went over Rev. Kinder's review.
- Some of our officers/committee people are reading the book "Real Good Church", and are giving good feedback.
- The search committee has asked the Deacons to explore our church becoming an "Open & Affirming" church. Marcia Tomlinson and Bridget Peters are working on a program that would be presented to the

congregation, and will present it to the Deacons for approval.

- A 'good' result of our Healthy Communications workshops is that the Haverhill Men's Group would like our men to join with theirs.
- Due to some concerns of why a few members were determined to be 'inactive', notification letters have not been sent. After a short discussion, the Diaconate will further review the Active/Inactive list before notification letters are sent.
- Rev. Kinder will be on vacation during the month of August. Rev. Harvey Bartlett will fill in for emergency pastoral care during this time.

Rev. Tom Kinder:

- To date, three people have enrolled in the 'new members' class.
- Working on fall workshops for continuation of our Healthy Communications. A handbook is being put together from the first three workshops held this spring for use in any situations that might arise.
- Encouraged by the direction our congregation is going.

Other Business:

- The Christian Education committee will be notified to let families know about the later church service time on June 5th.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50pm following a prayer by Rev. Kinder. The next meeting will be on July 7, 2016 at 7:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Joslyn, Clerk

These minutes are not official until approved at the July 7, 2016 meeting.