

# EPISTLE

April, 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](mailto:bradfordvtucc@gmail.com)

see us on Facebook: **Bradford Congregational Church**

Dear Church Family,

Wow! Writer Anne Lamott made that word part of daily Christian practice in her book, “Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers.”

So again I pray: Wow! Now you as a congregation have declared who you truly are.

You have chosen to have a clearly defined congregational culture. Its characteristics are nothing new to you. You have long had the essential elements of the culture, but you have also had competing, opposite impulses that have at times risen up to be a dominant counter-culture.

Now you have decided decisively and made official by a series of congregational votes that you will be one way and not the other. You adopted the Communication Guidelines in April of 2014 before I arrived, then the Identity and Aspiration Statement in 2015, then the Church Council approved the Healthy Communication Manual and now the congregation has voted to be an Open and Affirming congregation.



You have always had healthy communication, times when you listened and spoke with care and compassion, but you have also had times when communication was unhealthy and created wounds and divisions that severely damaged the church. Healthy communication is not easy to master, and in the heat of

emotion any of us can slip into unhelpful ways—we will never be perfect—but you have made a commitment to learning, practicing and quickly correcting any momentary mistakes.

You have long had a spirit of being open to and affirming of all. You have shown it to people of different races, sexual orientations and physical abilities, and you have intended to welcome every new person that way.

There have been times in the past, though, when that culture was compromised, when there were exceptions made. For instance, within the memory of some here, it was the policy of the church not to allow women to serve in certain capacities, like carrying a communion plate down the aisle to serve the congregation. We heard during our Open and Affirming process that some people here have been unsure whether their differences were affirmed, whether the congregation was truly open to them.

Now you have passed the Open and Affirming Covenant and an Implementation Plan that will assure people who are new here or who are considering coming for the first time that yes, this congregation truly is open to them and truly will affirm them as they are.

Open and Affirming passed by three-quarters of the vote—the same number that responded to the Search Committee’s survey indicating that they were interested in exploring it. The only criticisms we heard from the twenty-five percent opposed were that the church already was open to and affirming of all, and that the list of specific categories we would welcome into full participation was incomplete (examples of those left out ranged from nudists to refugees).

In other words, as far as we can tell, the congregation unanimously supports the concept of being open to and affirming of all. This is the culture you intend to have and uphold. This is who you are.

Wow! The 14<sup>th</sup> Century Persian poet Hafez wrote, “I wish I could show you, when you are lonely or in darkness, the astonishing Light of your own Being.” Dear church family, I wish I could help every one of you see the astonishing light you are shining out your lighted window. It is radiant with beauty and goodness! The more boldly you claim and celebrate it, the more brilliantly it will shine; and the more brilliantly it shines, the more you will attract new people who are drawn to your light; and the more you attract new people, the more powerfully you will serve this community and world and the more love will fill this beloved sanctuary and shine out the lighted window!



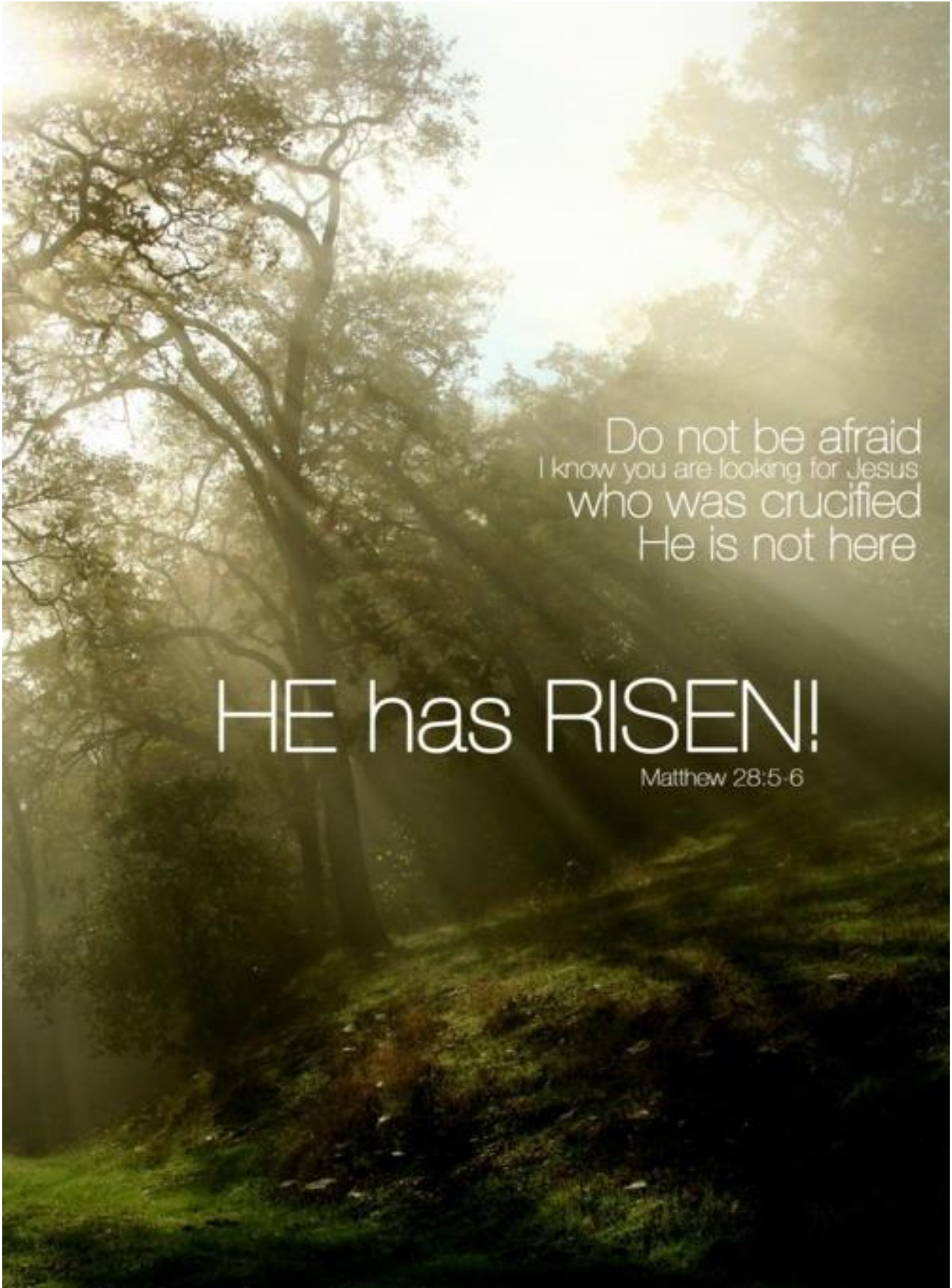
*Please do not think you need to dim down your light or be apologetic. That would be not only self-defeating but also violating the policies you have passed!*

Isn't that what the scriptures teach us? Loving boldly is Christ's way. Forgive, do not judge, and love as courageously and unconditionally as Christ. Your congregational culture is all about loving boldly. Do it and celebrate it with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and you will be amazed at the miracles that will happen here.

Wow! He is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah! And wow! *You* are risen into a new era of this beloved, historic congregation. I cannot wait to watch it unfold!

Let us live into the Easter light with joy in our hearts!

Blessings,



Do not be afraid  
I know you are looking for Jesus  
who was crucified  
He is not here

# HE has RISEN!

Matthew 28:5-6

**Please mark your calendars and extend invitations to family, friends and neighbors to these services.**

**Palm/Passion Sunday, April 9th at 10:00 AM**, a profoundly moving service that begins with jubilant children distributing palms and then travels with its readings and hymns all the way through the week to Gethsemane, the cross and the tomb.

**Palm Sunday evening, April 9th at 7:00 PM**, we will continue a tradition of 51 years and host the annual Palm Sunday Choir Festival for area choral groups and musicians. Choirs from Bradford and surrounding towns will present anthems, our own John Atwood will play the prelude and postlude and you will have five glorious opportunities to sing hymns. All donations go to the work of the Inter Church Council.

**Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service, April 13th at 7:00 PM** in our sanctuary—this service rivals Christmas Eve in drama and beauty, with beloved hymns, readings and candlelight. It is a joint service with Grace Methodist.

**Easter Sunrise Outdoor Service, April 16th at 6:00 AM** at 219 Summer Street, the home of the Buttons—a little singing, a little reading and reflecting, and a whole great big vista of God's resurrecting Creation!

**Easter Service, April 16th at 10:00 AM** in the sanctuary, full of the traditional joyous readings and music.



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.

---

*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.*

*The following email was sent out from the Rev. Rod Mundy-Haase of the (national) UCC Open & Affirming Coalition to celebrate our new status as well as to welcome us!*

Dear Friends,

Celebrate with the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ as we welcome our newest Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation: Bradford Congregational UCC, Bradford, VT.

The ONA church number indicates the position of this church in the chronology of all ONA churches listed since 1985. We all want and need to build stronger relationships with one another: getting to know each of the covenant partners in this relationship is important.

Please welcome and share information about yourself, get to know one another and be in ministry together seeking justice for all in Jesus' name.

TODAY'S DATE: March 28, 2017

ONA# 1430 -- CONGREGATION'S NAME: Bradford Congregational UCC

Date of adoption of their covenant: 3/26/2017

Method of covenant adoption: Congregational Vote

The Covenant:

We, the members of the Congregational Church of the United Church of Christ, Bradford, Vermont, regard all people as beloved children of God. We give thanks for the many and diverse gifts of God among us.

Jesus welcomed all. As First John says, "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.... The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."

We declare ourselves to be an Open and Affirming congregation, welcoming and accepting into full membership and participation people of every age, gender, race, national origin, faith background, marital status and family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, mental and physical ability, addiction, economic and social status, and educational background.

We affirm all lives and all relationships founded on the principles of God's love and justice. We pledge to work to end oppression and discrimination whenever we encounter them, and, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to help create the beloved community of God's realm.

Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

## News from the Board of Mission & Social Action

Our monthly community dinner will be on Wednesday, April 26th at 6:00.

Please join us for a potluck dinner made by many loving hands and always delicious.

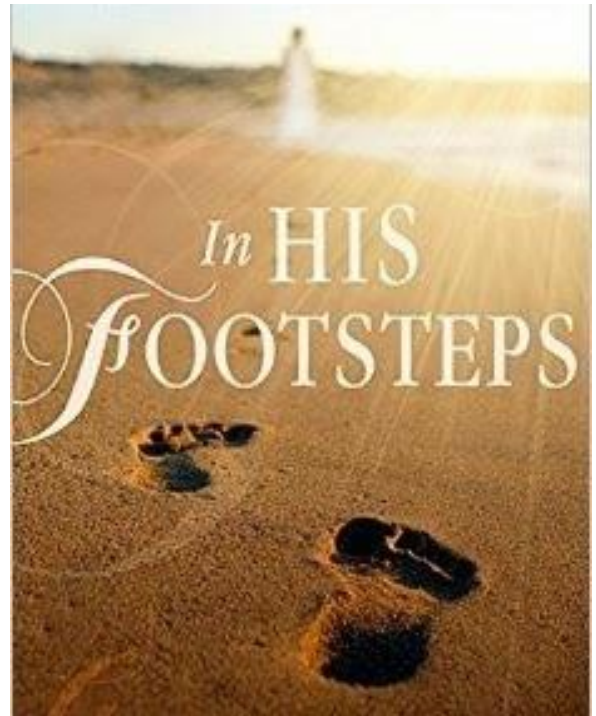
Even better is the warmth of conversation with our neighbors.

Always someone new to meet and break bread with. If you can join us for set up we usually begin around 5:15.



In our ongoing commitment to educating ourselves about refugees the BMSA has created a set of bulletin boards in the vestry entitled: Take a Walk Through the Bible to See How We are Called to Treat Refugees.

Follow the footsteps, literally, to read verses from the bible that reference how Jesus taught us to welcome and care for refugees.





## From the Vermont Conference



This Lent I am following a devotional based on five "marks of love/mission." One is sharing the Good News with others. This is not my strong suit because it conjures up images of knocking on doors and asking complete strangers if they are "saved." Nevertheless opportunities do come along.

Recently I was attending meetings in Cleveland. The hotel where we were meeting and staying had a large lobby area where many congregated to talk and share a beverage at the end of long days. I met two of my colleagues to do what we usually do - play Pinochle and talk. We were sitting at one end of a longish table near the pool table. Soon a group of twenty-somethings arrived to play pool.

One man sat at the opposite end of our table and pulled out his laptop, intent on finishing a work project. A woman sat opposite him and we heard her tell another of their gathering that the man is gay. The other guy laughed ... seriously, dude? He replied quietly, yes, I'm gay. Soon, the same woman turned to Gary, David and I and asked, "What brings you to our town?" There was a moment of silence as we looked at one another to decide who would try to explain what a Conference Minister is. David took the lead this time. The woman told us quickly that she was an atheist. And then was almost immediately challenging. We tried to explain about the UCC and "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here."



Before the words were out, the woman had looked up UCC.org. She started to read aloud some of the things she found there ... active in justice issues, LGBT affirming ... She looked up and said, "I don't believe it." Turning to me she said, "Who did you vote for in the last election?" I said, "There was choice?" She said, "I knew it! I knew it!" Then I told her who I had supported. Her jaw dropped. The man working at his computer told us he had seen some street banners in downtown Cleveland. He asked us, "Are you saying there would be a place for me in your church?" We assured him that he would be most welcome.

This is an encounter I can't get out of my head. First there was the immediate assumption that Christian minister meant closed-minded, judgmental and responsible for causing others pain. Second, the pain and hunger for community where one could be accepted and welcomed as who they are. These are some of the Millennials we rarely see in our churches, but who are there and who are seeking authenticity, connection, God.

Perhaps I can share the Good News in my own way and with integrity. I am thankful for this brief meeting between as Fred Buechner has named it, "the world's deep hunger and my deep joy." May this Lenten season continue to bring all of us to such crossroads and grace-filled meeting places. May it be so. May these

challenge  
not only  
meet but

Lynn



encounters  
and change  
those we  
us as well.

Bujnak

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**  
**Annual Reports are Due!**

From the Clerk:

The date for our church's Annual Meeting has been set for Thursday, May 18th at 7:00pm. All reports from Boards, Committees, and Officers for the Annual Report are due to the clerk by April 15th.

The reports can be e-mailed to [barbaraj33@gmail.com](mailto:barbaraj33@gmail.com) or USPS mailed to: Barbara  
Joslyn,  
PO Box 465,  
Bradford, VT 05033.

Thank you. ~Barbara Joslyn



## Memorial Lilies 2017 Order Form



Please place your order for this year's memorial lilies on or before **April 10th**.

**Easter Sunday is April 16<sup>th</sup>**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ \$15.98 each. 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
9. Copy of this form is also on our web site: [www.bradforducc.org](http://www.bradforducc.org)

In Memory of:

From:

Deliver to:

## Lectionary Readings April (Year A)



### April 2 - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent

Ezekiel 37: 1-14 (there is power in the word of God)

Romans 8: 6-11 (we are freed by the way of the Spirit)

John 11: 1-45 (live in Him)

Psalms 130 (plenteous redemption in Him)

theme hymn: *Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart*

### April 9 - PALM SUNDAY (6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent)

Liturgy of the Palms: Matthew 21:1-11

Psalms 118: 1-2, 19-29 (Blessed is the one who comes!)

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

Phil. 2: 5-11 (he assumed the form of a human servant)

Matt. 26:14 - 27:66 (the Passion according to Matthew)

theme hymn: *All Glory, Laud and Honor (the Palms)*

*Ah, Holy Jesus (the Passion)*

### **April 13 - MAUNDY THURSDAY**

Exodus 12: 1-14 (preparing for the Passover)

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (He took bread, broke it, gave thanks)

John 13:1-17, 31b-35 (washing of the feet)

Psalms 116: 1-2, 12-19 (He has inclined His ear to me!)

theme hymn: *There's a Wideness in God's Mercy*

### **April 14 - Good Friday**

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 (He hath borne our sins)

Hebrews 10: 16-25 (His sacrifice for us is once and for all)

John 18:1 - 19:42 (the Passion according to John)

Psalms 22 (we have not been forsaken)

theme hymn: *Go to Dark Gethsemane*

### **April 16 - EASTER SUNDAY**

Acts 10:34-43 (a life transformed)

Colossians 3:1-4 (the gift of resurrection)

John 20:1-18 (the tomb is empty!)

Psalms 118:1-2, 14-24 (He has become my salvation)

theme hymn: *Christ the Lord is Risen Today!*

### **April 23 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter**

Acts 2:14a,22-32 (start of Peter's Pentecost speech)

1 Peter 1:3-9 (we are born again)

John 20:19-31 (blessed are those who believe)

Psalms 16 (He is my chosen portion)

theme hymn: *Thine is the Glory*

### **April 30 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter**

Acts 2:14a, 36-41 (remainder of Peter's Pentecost speech)

1 Peter 1:17-23 (Christ's death has ransomed us)

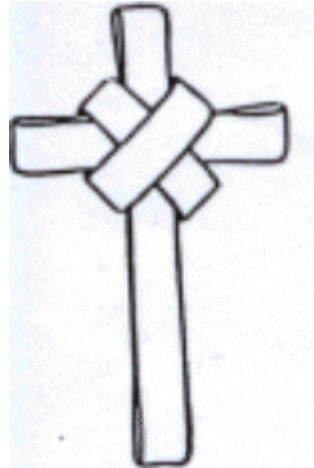
Luke 24: 13-35 (Jesus appears to the travelers)

Psalms 116: 1-4, 12-19 (call on the Lord as long as you live)

theme hymn: *That Easter Day with Joy was Bright*



## *How to make a cross from your palm on Palm Sunday*



Take a palm frond about 1/2 inch wide and 18 – 24 inches and hold upright.

1. Fold the top down, away from you, and the bottom up, away from you, to form the shaft of a cross of desired length.
2. Turn the end down and twist around to the right and across the front of the shaft to make a crossbar in proportion to the length.
3. Fold the end around behind the shaft.
4. Bring the end from behind, under the center. Fold from the bottom right to the top left and under again from the bottom left to the top right.