

EPISTLE

March, 2019



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

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Word From The Pastor

Is faith unchanging? Is it a possession to be claimed or a hope to be yearned for? Is faith left unmoved by the tragedies and joys of our lives? I think not. As Paul puts it, “*When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.*” Is the faith of a child the same as that possessed by those who have lived through the pain of loss, the suffering of those we love?

So let me begin my Lenten musings by citing from *Gravity and Grace* by one of my favorite theologians, Joseph Sittler.

I believe; help my unbelief!

Mark 9:24

*To be a Christian is to sail on perilous seas. We live by faith, and it's never a finished faith. Mine has been collapsed and lying around me in shambles time after time. I've had to stop and reconsider and slowly build it up again, inasmuch as one builds it by oneself. To build, we reinvestigate, see whether or not the new language can interpret more profoundly the old episodes and works. The task is never done. That 's exactly where we all stand - even Luther, for example. Time and again in his own confessions, Luther talks about moments of what he calls *Anfechtungen*, when he had the horrible fear that he might be wrong.*

We resist the notion that the struggle toward the light is lifelong, but that is the fact.¹

¹<http://betheludson.org/lenten-devotionals-2018/author/joseph-sittler-from-gravity-and-grace/>

And so we come to Lent, a unique season within the Christian year when we are afforded the opportunity to examine our walk with God. Hopefully, we will realize that each new-year our need has altered, our experience deepened, the complexity of our lives has changed. I suspect there are some who have lost their way, for whom God seems absent, aloof and unmoved. For those who may be living in the midst of this darkness, I pray that Lent will let you find in the midst of your groping, the hand of God and that you will come to a pathway that though rocky leads you home.

I want to close with some advice illuminated by a story I once read. It seems that a group of children were playing hide and seek. They had been at it for some time and many were growing weary of playing. One by one they stopped pursuing those still hidden. It came to pass that only little Sally was still at it – hiding in the closet of her home. She was still playing uninformed of the group’s decision to stop playing. She dutifully waited, expecting to be found but no one came. No one sought her out. Now one was searching for the child hiding in the closet and she began to weep knowing at last that she had been abandoned, too unimportant to be informed by the others that the game was over.

So this Lenten season, in some hidden closet of the soul, God desperately waits to be found. “Seek and ye shall find. Knock and the door will be opened unto you,” Jesus said. The game is still afoot. So we are left asking is the Lord we seek weeping because we have not cared to seek and to find?

Faithfully,
Pastor Jeff



March 24th ... Soup and Scripture gathering right after worship! This all-church event will be led by Pastor Jeff, a time not only to delve into the Lenten Word but also to share a meal together. Please let Pastor Jeff know if you intend to come! (The Diaconate will be providing the meal; if you have any food allergies, please let us know)

An age appropriate film will be shown for children in the Sunday School area, with games and toys set out for their use. Parents will be in full view.

Use of the sanctuary: just as a general rule, any use of the sanctuary is to be arranged with Pastor Jeff first. This is simply traditional protocol so that he always knows for what purpose the worship center is being used and when. He will work

with the Trustees on the scheduling. So, if you have a wedding or funeral or concert or speaker requiring the sanctuary, contact Pastor Jeff.

From your Diaconate Schedule of Lenten Services .. 7pm

The Lenten series has been organized by the Inter-Church Council for many years. Each Sunday in Lent one church is host and the clergy of another church gives the sermon. It remains one of the most enduring and endearing series of worship services in our area.

March 10th - East Corinth - Pastor Mal Kircher from Piermont.

March 17th - Grace Methodist - Pastor Kelly Ann Donahue from East Corinth.

March 24th - Bradford UCC - Father Oliver Seligan of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

March 31st - Piermont Congregational - Pastor Jeffery Long-Middleton

April 7th - Our Lady of Perpetual Help - Pastor Bumshik Min -of Grace UMC

*April 14th Palm Sunday Choir Festival at our church., **6:30pm**

In case you missed it on page 2, our first Soup & Scripture event will be on March 24th right after the worship service. We hope you'll come to this informal yet informative event. You'll be fed in body AND mind! Note that your kids are MOST WELCOME to be in the vestry with us, watching a movie and/or playing with the toys after they eat.

The Deacons are in contact with our new Conference Associate Minister Paul Sangee to arrange a Sunday when he will come preach in worship and join with us after, hopefully over a relaxed all-family lunch. Keep watching your Weekly email and Epistle for updates.

Blessings to you all, from your Board of Deacons.

***Palm Sunday Choir Festival** ... for more than 50 years our church has hosted this annual ingathering of local musicians to celebrate the Passion story in song, instrumentals and solos. There will be more detail in the April Epistle. This year's start will be at 6:30 instead of 7pm.

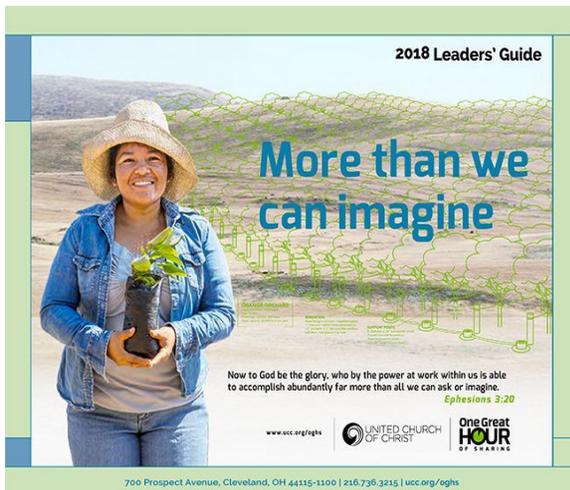
Community Supper March 28th

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



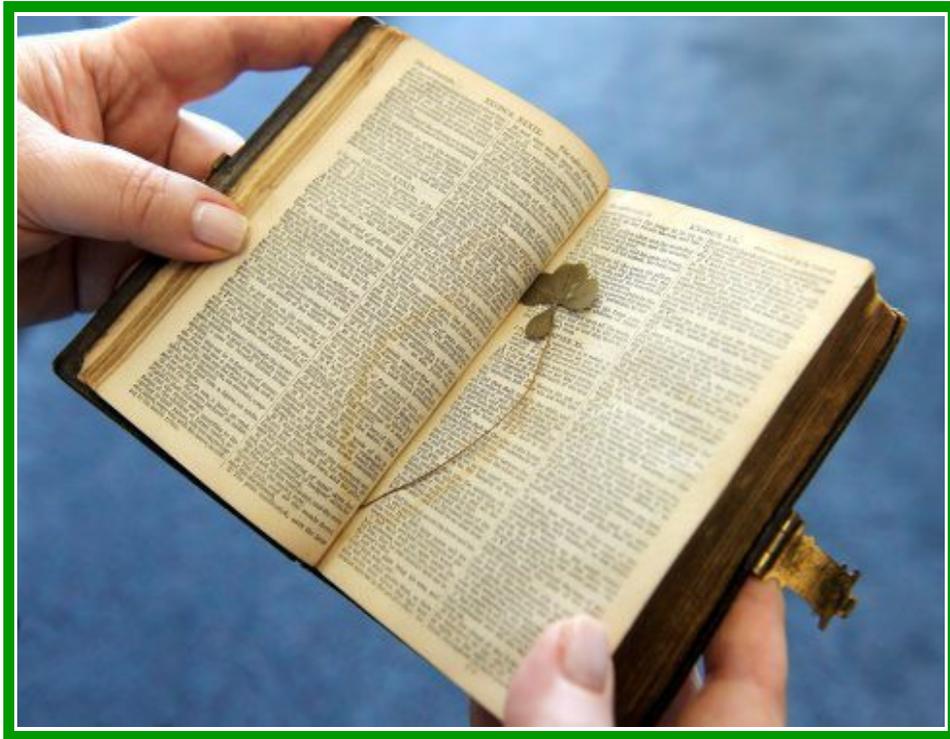
Board of Mission and Social Action

On **March 17th** we will have the **Church World Service Kits** ready to assemble. You have all been so generous in the past, purchasing supplies, giving us donations and helping to put the kits together. Our church children have been especially helpful in assembling the kits. Each year we have been able to increase the number of kits our congregation supplies. Please help us keep that trend going and **THANK YOU!**



March 31st is **ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING.** One Great Hour of Sharing® is the Lenten Offering of the United Church of Christ that supports disaster, refugee, and development activities.

Lectionary Readings MARCH (Year C)



March 3: Transfiguration

Exodus 34:29-35 (Moses' radiance is due to being in God's presence)

2 Corinthians 3:12 - 4:2 (the Holy Spirit frees us to turn towards God)

Luke 9:28-36 (Jesus is transfigured. "This is my son ...")

Psalm 99

theme hymn: *Holy Spirit, Truth Divine*

SEASON of LENT

March 6 - Ash Wednesday

Joel 2: 1-2, 12-17 (turn back with all your heart)

2 Corinthians 5: 20b - 6:10 (accept God's offered reconciliation)

Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21 (you devote energy to what you truly value)

Psalm 51: 1-17 (create in me a clean heart)

theme hymn: [*I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me*](#)

March 10 - 1st Sunday of Lent

Deuteronomy 26:1-11 (first-fruits .. rejoice in this unmerited love)

Romans 10:8b-13 (acknowledging the nearness of Christ)

Luke 4:1-13 (repudiating all temptations)

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

theme hymn: *O Jesus, I Have Promised*

March 17 - 2nd Sunday of Lent

Genesis 15:1-12,17-18 (a covenant with Abram)

Philippians 3:17 - 4:1 (abandon earthly pleasure seeking)

Luke 13:31-35 (nothing deters Jesus from His passion journey)

Psalm 27

theme hymn: *The God of Abraham Praise*

March 24 - 3rd Sunday of Lent

Isaiah 55:1-9 (you can't buy your way into the banquet)

1 Corinthians 10:1-13 (Paul recounts the exodus/wilderness events)

Luke 13:1-9 (we are all ultimately judged by our fruits)

Psalm 63:1-8

March 31 - 4th Sunday of Lent

Joshua 5:9-12 (a solemn ceremony at Gilgal)

2 Corinthians 5: 16-21 (we are entrusted with the ministry now)

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 (parable of unconditional love, no strings attached)

Psalm 32

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

April 7 - 5th Sunday of Lent

Isaiah 43:16-21 (...doing a new thing ...)

Philippians 3:4b-14 (model our life on Christ's sufferings)

John 12:1-8 (the poor will always be amongst us)

Psalm 126

theme hymn: *Be Thou My Vision*

April 14 - Palm Sunday

Liturgy of the Palms for Year C: Luke 19:28-40

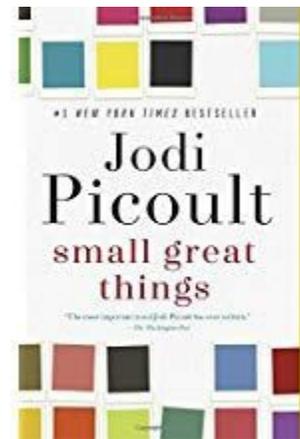
Isaiah 50:4-9a (God will vindicate us)

Philippians 2:5-11 (He divested Himself of divine glory for us)

Luke 22:14 - 23:56 (the passion narrative)

Book Group brunch

The BMSA book group will be on **March 10th**. Once again it will be a pot luck brunch and discussion of the book **SMALL GREAT THINGS** by Jodi Picoult. The books are all out being read but you can arrange for a copy through your local library. Please let Ginny or Holly know if you if you will be joining the brunch!
Thanks so much



Coming to our sanctuary May 4th NCC Spring Concerts
Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and Gabriel Faure's *Requiem*.
Performances will be held on

May 3, **4** and 5 in Littleton, **Bradford**, and St. Johnsbury.

NCC will be joined by The Hilltones and North Country Youth Chorus.

From the VT Conference Office No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. We believe in extravagant welcome. This is why we insist that God's communion table is open, not closed, and God's gift and claim in baptism are irrevocable. We advocate justice for all.

What in God's name is going on in Vermont?

The Vermont Conference Annual Meeting takes place on Friday & Saturday, April 26 -27, 2019 at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, VT.

Our keynoter is The Rev. Dr. Rob Voyle of the Appreciative Way and a leader in appreciative inquiry.

Visit our website for information for Annual Meeting (right click on VTCUCC.ORG)

Registration is now open!

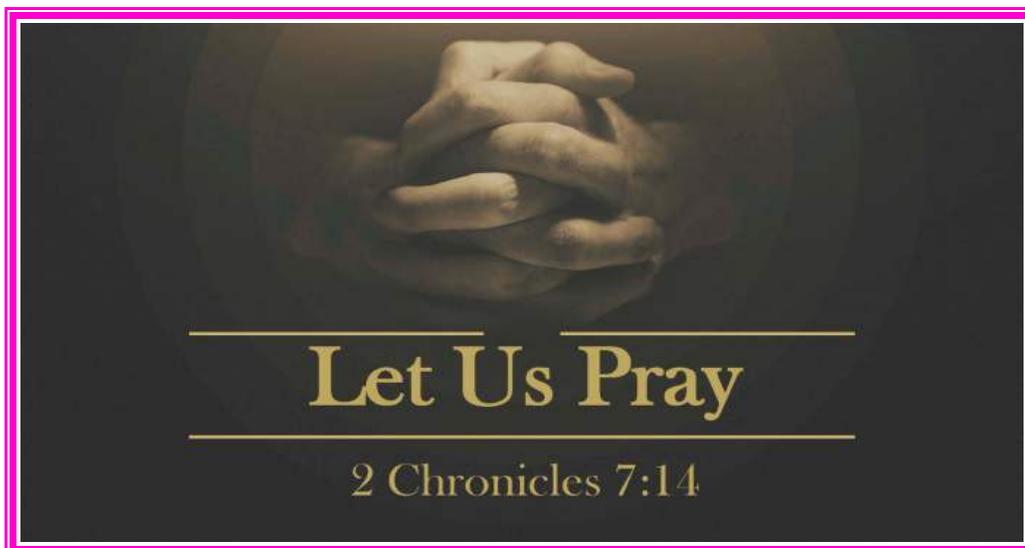
Right [Click here for Registration Information...](#)

**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.**



This Epistle is a monthly publication of the Bradford Congregational Church. It is uploaded just before the 1st of each month. Anyone wishing to receive the email notification of it may request it by emailing the church email below.

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](#)

