

EPISTLE

March 2020

The peace of God, which
surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and
your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

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**

Daylight Savings is March 8th

Word from the Pastor

Islam has Ramadan. We have Lent. During Ramadan, Muslims fast during each day of a given month. When the sun has set, they can eat. The purpose is to help the soul focus on Allah and to promote compassion for those who have less. Traditionally Lent, for Christians, serves much the same purpose. For a period of forty days, the same number of days Jesus spent in the wilderness and was tempted, Christians focus on the gift of redemption sealed by Christ's death.

In my sermon of February 23, 2020, I focused on the theme of holiness, on one's personal spiritual development. I confessed that I am not holy in my conduct. Indeed, those who meet me usually have no idea that I am a Christian. The difference between my conduct and demeanor from that those who are not followers of Jesus is, in many cases, indistinguishable.

For my Muslim neighbors, however, there are distinguishing characteristics woven into the practice of their faith. One of these characteristics is prayer five times

every day. This makes up one of the “five pillars of Islam”¹ and fasting during the daylight hours of the month of Ramadan is another.

Of course, it is my hope that folks would discern from my behavior that I am a Christian, but as Leslie D. Weatherhead pointed out, if I never mention God as the motivator of my actions, God gets none of the credit and I get it all.

Perhaps this is why Lent is so important. It affords us the opportunity to give expression to the uniqueness of our faith. Some use Lent as a means to deepen their spirituality. They “give something up for Lent.” This is not meant as some form of punishment. Rather, the deprivation reminds them of Christ’s ultimate sacrifice on the cross.

So, let me tell you what I have personally planned as a Lenten observance. I plan on fasting one day each week during Lent. As of this writing, I am planning on Monday being my fast day. But here’s the thing. I have never been noted as a disciplined person. I have great intentions which often go overlooked. I don’t want that to happen this year. So, I am asking a favor. As you leave worship each Sunday during Lent, remind me of my pledge to fast. That way we both can benefit from remembering the One who makes this season holy.

Faithfully,
Pastor Jeff

THE INTERCHURCH COUNCIL is sponsoring five Lenten services. Each Sunday evening in Lent, at 7pm, member churches are welcoming into their pulpits clergy from another member church. This is a long-standing tradition of ecumenicism we treasure, and there are many who always look forward to attending all five services each Lenten season.

Below is listing of the dates, venues and preachers of record. Please plan taking advantage of these events.

Interchurch Council Lenten Service Schedule

Date	Location (all Services @ 7:00)	Preacher
Mar 1	Grace United Methodist	Jeffrey Long-Middleton
Mar 8	Piermont Congregational	Amy Sawtelle
Mar 15	Bradford Congregational	David Pruitt
Mar 22	West Newbury Congregational	Father Andrew
Mar 29	Our Lady of Perpetual Help	Mal Kircher

¹Profession of Faith (shahada). The belief that "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God;" Prayer (salat); Alms (zakat); Fasting (sawm); and Pilgrimage (hajj).

April 5 Palm Sunday Choir Festival: Following the Lenten tradition is the annual Palm Sunday festival, a worship in music by the churches of the wider Bradford area. This is at 6:30 and is sponsored by our church. (see “Palm Sunday Choir Festival – April 5”)

Faithfully,
Pastor Jeff

Palm Sunday Choir Festival – April 5th at 6:30pm

For more than 50 years the Bradford Congregational Church has hosted this annual worship service of Passion praise featuring the choirs of surrounding town churches, instrumentalists and vocalists, and Combined Chorus (under direction of Marcia Tomlinson, accompanied by Linda Duxbury on the Steinway).



Many traditions have endured over the years, such as the singing of five hymns with descants and rousing organ embellishments by John Atwood. In addition, the final hymn is always the great "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." The sanctuary filled with singers resounds in 5-part majesty for every hymn and many attend to join in singing these hymns to life.

We hope you will mark this Palm Sunday evening musical journey through the Passion story on your calendar. You'll be glad you did!

This year's Combined Chorus will sing Mark Hayes' evocative arrangement of "[Fairest Lord Jesus](#)" (performed in this link by the Festival Singers of Florida in 2014). Anyone wishing to join this combined chorus is most welcome and the one rehearsal will be at 4:00 pm on April 5th. For the score contact Marcia Tomlinson.

Musicians and singers have come from Bradford, Corinth, East Corinth, West Topsham, West Newbury, Newbury, Groton, Wells River, North Haverhill, Haverhill, Piermont, Pike, Ryegate, Lebanon, Woodstock, and Fairlee. A glorious sound indeed!

For more information, contact Marcia Tomlinson at m3site@charter.net

An Incredibly Generous Musical Gift to our Church



At its February meeting the Diaconate was visited by organist John Atwood, who told us he would like to donate his Harmonium to our church! Much discussion ensued about how and when to move it into the sanctuary, so do stay tuned to learn about when it will arrive and can be debuted in concert.

Needless to say, the Diaconate on behalf of the entire congregation is astounded and so grateful to the Atwood's for this musical treasure. We are so very blessed. The following is John's description of this instrument:

Hello everyone:

You probably know that the North Strafford Church partially paid for the Moore pipe organ in 1970 with two reed organs, one from the Church in North Strafford, the other from South Strafford. David Moore took the Estey from South Strafford and I took the one from North Strafford. It became clear the the North Strafford organ made by Alexandre et Fils in Paris (1860) was very different from an ordinary reed organ, for one thing it is winded on pressure and not suction. When I repaired it to playing condition it was very loud, but could also be very soft owing to a unique stop called "Expression." Organ historian, Barbara Owen (and one of my organ teachers) examined it and believed it very important. Organists sent me music for this instrument. Barbara Owen gave me two volumes of harmonium music by Cesar Franck which includes the registrations (different stops) to be used with particular pieces. He wrote them at the end of his life, in fact he died before completing the second volume, but that is another story. Barbara Owen still resides in Newburyport, Massachusetts.

Ed Boadway, one of the founders of the Organ Historical Society (along with Barbara Owen), once told me that he was aware of just two music stores that carried the Alexandre harmonium: one in New York and one in Canada. I think it quite possible that

Justin Morrill (then a church member) purchased it on his way home from Washington around 1861, since I found that date on the table board. You may recall that Morrill is credited with establishing land grant colleges in the United States including Michigan State University and Alachua College (now University of Florida). Some of the reeds



were crystallized and were replaced with spurious American reeds, but I came across some Alexandre replacements, so the reeds are now complete. The case is of rosewood, some of it a thick veneer. The key naturals are of ivory and the sharps are ebony. The name plate is unusual for the Alexandre for being inlaid brass in rosewood. I restored the reeds, mechanism and refinished the case where needed, particularly the lid which was severely alligatored.

Now, as to its economic value there is an almost identical organ now offered in

England for comparison from the Finch Collection. The asking price is 3200 pounds sterling plus 28.8% or 4121.60 pounds sterling which is currently \$4945.92 in dollars (as of September, 2019), and it is offered in questionable condition. I note that there should be four turned posts in front of the organ, not two as is the case with some models. You can see the current posts are not centered revealing the missing posts. The Strafford organ originally had just two. As you can see, the Strafford harmonium is a museum quality piece, and I want you to have it, and historically it is good to keep it in the local area. If you should decide to sell it, I have no restrictions.

The history of this organ has increased since I acquired it 50 years ago. It was used by the Newburyport Choral Society in a production of "Solemn Little Mass" of Puccini, probably in 1972. I played four recitals on it in Florida in conjunction with a French Christmas exhibit at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. It give me great pleasure to donate this piece to the Bradford Congregational Church giving it expanded opportunities for concerts.

John Atwood

From the Diaconate:

A reminder: every Communion Sunday the small “**Diaconate Fund**” envelopes are placed in the pews. It is through your generosity that the Fund is available for helping those in need locally, be it heating oil, electricity, shelter, food, or medicine. Every donation, no matter its size, is graciously accepted!

If you know of someone in our area who is in need, please contact any Deacon, Pastor Jeff, or our church's Care Coordinator Carole Taylor. Thanks to the generosity of donors, the Deacons Fund is providing help to those in most need.

The upcoming “Deacons of the Month” are:

March – Angela Colbeth

April – Bridget Peters

Do you have a spiritual concern? We urge you to contact Pastor Jeff or any one of us on the Diaconate to listen to you, pray with you and for you in confidence.

Keeping warm: this is a reminder that if you ever feel chilly in the sanctuary there are fleece throws hanging on the coat rack near the entrance. Please use them!

Current **Food Shelf** donation needs are placed in the bulletin each week. The collection baskets are placed in the back of the sanctuary and also in the downstairs entryway. Any canned goods and other non-perishables are always welcome. Please support this vital local mission if you can. The Inter Church Council is always looking for volunteers to “sub” for the regular volunteers; our church's delegate to the ICC is Martina Stever.

Sunshine Baskets were dedicated and delivered on Feb. 16th. What an opportunity to share joy!



On **March 8th** our Association (Grafton Orange Sullivan) will meet at our church for an Ecclsiastical Council and Spring Meeting.

Blessings to you all, from your Board of Deacons

Board of Missions and Social Action

God invites each of us to lead by serving, to share freely of our gifts so that God may work through us. Indeed, the word translated as “servant” in 1 Corinthians 3:5 is diakonos, the root of the term “deacon.” Paul uses the term to describe someone whose work may be of benefit to others. Specifically in this context, he describes someone whose efforts God may use as a channel for good and growth. In choosing to humbly give their gifts, “servant leaders” become channels of God’s healing love, so that all may enjoy the powerful experience of shared value, worth, and investment. (from One Great Hour of Sharing informational booklet)

March is going to be a month of Mission opportunities!

CWS Kits The Board of Missions and Social Action will once again set up tables so all in the congregation can help assemble [school and health kits](#) for [Church World Services](#).



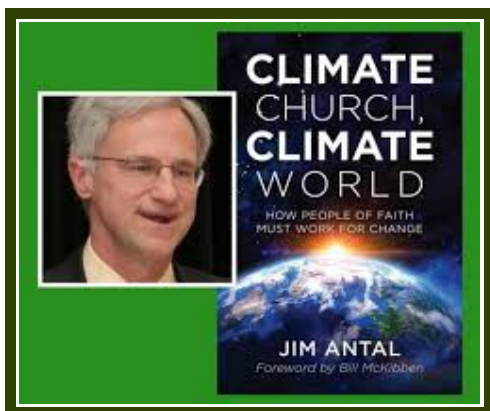
Last year CWS ran out of kits due to the large number of natural disasters in the United States. So it is more important than ever to make kits to help make a difference! Please plan to visit our table at coffee hour. A big thank you goes out to our Women's Fellowship because they donated \$300.00 to this effort. We purchased kit contents with these funds but donations will happily be accepted to make more kits or for the \$2.00 processing fee for each kit. Our goal is 30 school kits and 30 health kits.

One Great Hour of Sharing March 8 is designated as the collection date for One Great Hour of Sharing. Christians around the world will make donations to help communities recover from natural disasters or help in places lacking in health and educational resources. Information and envelopes will be in your Sunday bulletin on March 8. They will also be available on March 15 at the back tables.



April 22, 2020 will be the 50th Anniversary of EARTH DAY!
June 7, 7:00 - 8:30 Reverend Jim Antal speaks at Bradford UCC!

We will be sponsoring another book group and will read Reverend Jim Antal's Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Must Work for Change. His speaking engagement is sponsored by our church, West Newbury Congregational Church and East Corinth Congregational Church. From his website : *Climate Church,*



Climate World argues that climate change is the greatest moral challenge humanity has ever faced; it multiplies all forms of global social injustice: hunger, refugees, poverty, inequality, deadly viruses, war. Environmental leader Reverend Jim Antal presents a compelling case that it's time for the church to meet this moral challenge, just as the church addressed previous moral challenges. He calls for the church to embrace a new vocation so that future generations might live in harmony with God's creation. After describing how we have created the dangers our planet now faces, Antal

urges the church to embrace a new vocation, one focused on collective salvation and an expanded understanding of the Golden Rule (Golden Rule 2.0). He suggests ways people of faith can reorient what they prize through new approaches to worship, preaching, witnessing, and other spiritual practices that honor creation and cultivate hope.

Rev. Jim Antal has generously offered us a 30% discount on his books if we order 10 or more copies. Please let Ginny know if you would like to purchase a soft cover copy at \$18.50. Prepayment will be appreciated.

VirginiaMJMoore@gmail.com or 222-9675.

ADULT STUDY

REFLECTION TIME takes place each Sunday from 11:30 a. m. until 12:30 p.m. alongside the coffee hour following church. It is a time to share our reflections about the service that Sunday. It is very informal and open to anyone who wants to discuss the sermon or elements of the service that moved them.

The sessions are facilitated by the Pastor Jeff and are sponsored by the Board of Deacons.



Lectionary Readings March (Year A)

we are in the season of Lent,
the Passion, Easter

Mar 1 - 1st Sunday of Lent

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7 (when humans begin to focus on themselves)

Romans 5:12-19 (in Christ we are set free)

Matthew 4:1-11 (Jesus repudiates temptations)

Psalms 32

theme hymn: Forty Days and Forty

Nights

Mar 8 - 2nd Sunday of Lent

Genesis 12:1-4a (Yahweh chooses Abram)

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 (justified by grace through faith, not works)

John 3:1-17 (Nicodemus comes seeking an answer)

Psalms 121

theme hymn: The God of Abraham Praise

Mar 15 - 3rd Sunday of Lent

Exodus 17:1-7 (Moses strikes the rock)

Romans 5:1-11 (justified in faith, at peace with God)

John 4:5-42 (Jesus by Jacob's well)

Psalm 95

theme hymn: I to the Hills Will Lift My Eyes

Mar 22 - 4th Sunday of Lent

1 Samuel 16:1-13 (the least likely is the chosen one)

Ephesians 5:8-14 (living in Christ is living in the light)

John 9:1-41 (the one who was blind now sees more clearly than the sighted)

Psalm 23

theme hymn: Open My Eyes That I May See

Mar 29 - 5th Sunday of Lent

Ezekiel 37:1-14 (preaching to dry bones)

Romans 8:6-11 (the way of the Spirit frees us)

John 11:1-45 (Lazarus dies; Jesus is the resurrection and life)

Psalm 130

theme hymn: Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Musically Speaking: John Atwood

This year the Lenten Season is contained within the five Sundays of March. In accordance with the season, the music will be on the dark side with several chorale preludes based on Lutheran hymn tunes: "Our Father in Heaven," "Oh God, Look Down from Heave and View," "There Jesus stood at the Cross," etc. Composers include J. S. Bach, Heinrich Scheidemann, J. K. F. Fischer, Johann Pachelbel, Dietrich Buxtehude, etc. The German composers were particularly good at creating appropriate Lenten mood! For Palm Sunday (in April) the choir is working on "The Lord is My Shepherd."

Although this is liturgically a dark time celebrating events leading to the killing of Christ, I like to look at where we are in the calendar season. The days are now over two hours longer than they were at the solstice with the sun is noticeably higher at noon. Soon the male birds will stake their territories with song ("This Land is My Land") and the migrants will start returning in about two weeks. Day light savings time comes on 8 March. In short, the whole season is before us. Look forward to spring!

John Atwood

Passion Week

April 5 (Palm Sunday)

Liturgy of the Palms: Matthew 21:1-11 (prepare ye the way! Hosanna!)

Liturgy of the Passion:

Isaiah 50:4-9a (3rd of the 4 Songs of God's servant)

Philippians 2:5-11 (a primitive "christological" hymn)

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

Psalm 118:1-2,19-29

theme hymn: Ride On, Ride On, in Majesty (morning/palms)

Ah, Holy Jesus (evening/passion)

April 9 - 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)

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

theme hymn: *Let Us Break Bread Together*

April 10 - 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)

Psalm 22 (God, our deliverer)

theme hymn: Go to Dark Gethsemane



Season of EASTER

April 12 - 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)

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

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

**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.**

Sometimes events and/or changes come up after the Epistle has been uploaded. It's always good to check the Weekly Email for last minute updates.

To be added to the **Weekly Email** list, [click here](#). If you have an area event to list in the weekly Email's "Around Town" section, please let us know ... (send to mccmarciam3@gmail.com)!

This Epistle is a monthly publication of the Bradford Congregational Church. It is uploaded just before the 1st of each month. The deadline to submit news or articles to mccmarciam3@gmail.com is the 25th. Anyone wishing to receive the email delivery of the Epistle 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](#)