

EPISTLE

September, 2018



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

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our website: <http://bradforducc.org>

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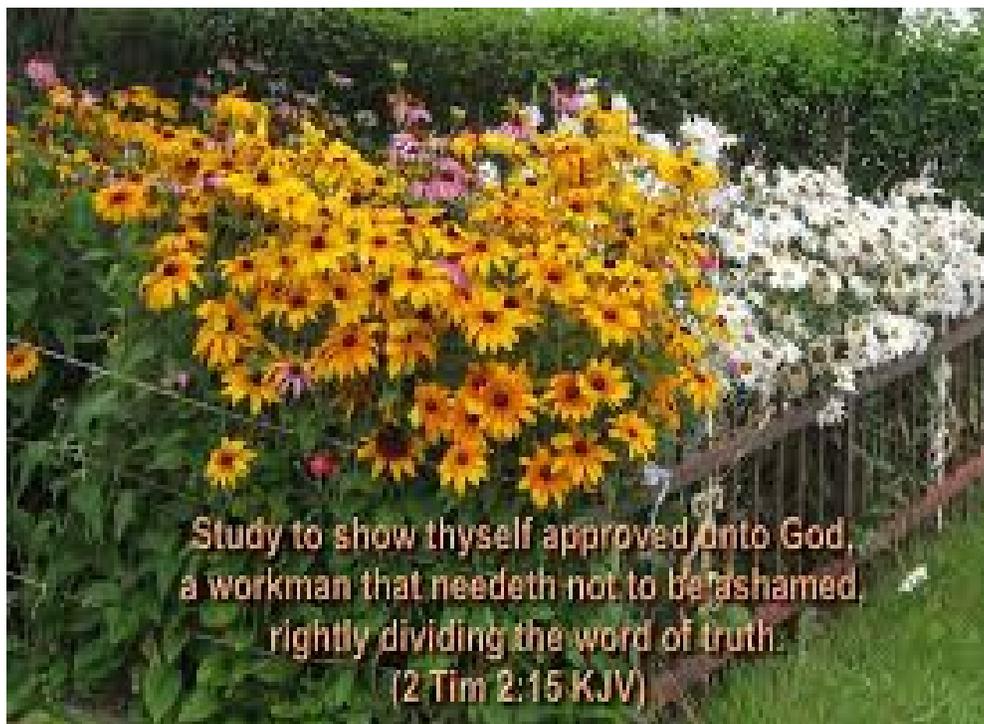
Message from Pastor Jeff:

I attend the Interim Ministers meeting held each month at the Vermont Conference Office in Randolph. The last meeting on Thursday, August 23rd seemed highly pertinent to our church. We were talking about Bradford and other churches – all of which are waiting to find a settled pastor. Pam Lucas, Associate Conference Minister for Search and Call and Small Church Ministry, shared what I thought were some very helpful insights.

Perhaps the most significant was her suggestion that we are living in the “in-between time” of having an interim minister while still searching for a settled pastor. This time is not totally dissimilar to the forty years Israel spent in the wilderness. Just like our ancestors long ago, God was at work even in the midst of the people’s wilderness wanderings. Why so long? What was God doing during that time of searching? What, if anything, was being jettisoned from the baggage of the past? As I pondered these questions it struck me that this extended time of uncertainty was essential for what came later. Perhaps they needed to be made ready. When the wait was over they would not be entering into a time of stasis and tranquility. Rather, they were being prepared to take on the task of being God’s witness to the world. Could they have jettisoned the baggage of slavery and servitude they had known in Egypt without the crucible of the wilderness? I think not. I’ve used this many times but it is a helpful insight: *It only took a day to get Israel out of Egypt but it took forty years to get Egypt out of Israel.*

I'll let you make your own parallels between Israel's forty years and this church's own long wait. The question before us is much the same as the question that confronted Israel long ago – namely, what is God doing in this “in-between time?” God has not abandoned this church and God is not wasteful. Something is intended by God for this time of searching – healing, openness to change, an acceptance of new leadership, a deepening of the church's sense of call, some of these, all of these? I truly do not know. But here's the thing – knowing what God is up to may be the height of presumption. Perhaps simply knowing that God is in the midst of what remains unknown is enough for us to find meaning even in not knowing. What is required is not scientific certainty but a trusting faith that God is not done yet, that a future filled with purpose awaits. We may be living in the in-between time but such a time may be required to move from where this church has been to where God intends this church to be. So remain faithful. Keep the search committee in your prayers. Be alert. God is at work.

Faithfully,
Pastor Jeff



Diaconate news: Blessings and Ice Cream



Welcome Back Sundae Sunday
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9TH, 2018
10:00AM

We invite you to join us as we
celebrate Fall & the new school year!

We encourage all students & school staff
to bring their backpacks as we share a special
blessing for the educational
opportunities in the coming year

**Special Fellowship Time Following The
Worship Service With Make Your Own Sundaes**

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ALL!

Calling all grownups and kids ... the Diaconate is once again in-gathering ice cream scoops and balloons for the annual Welcoming Sundae Sunday. And this year there's a very special extra to the day, the **blessing of students, educators and their school bags**. As they have before, it will be the children who carry the church's Bible forward to the lectern, with the acolytes and Pastor Jeff following behind with the light for the candles.

In the October edition of the Epistle we will present plans for Adult Christian Education and Bible Study. The probable focus will be Advent. We'll let you know!

The following is a devotional written by Jeff Japinga of Holland, Michigan. Jeff left his seminary deanship to become an executive for Presbyterian churches in Minnesota's Twin Cities and western Wisconsin:

In North America, the majority of churches don't have as many members as they did ten, twenty, or fifty years ago. Some experts say there's no hope for the church. My friend Bill is not one of them. Pastor of one of those small-and-getting-smaller churches in the Midwest, he never seems discouraged about that reality. So one day I asked him, 'How do you stay so positive when your membership keeps shrinking? Aren't you afraid you'll close?' Bill smiled, 'I don't know what you're

talking bout. We're not shrinking. We're growing. Up ten percent from last year!

“Can't be,' I said. 'I've seen your membership numbers. Down every year for the last ten.'

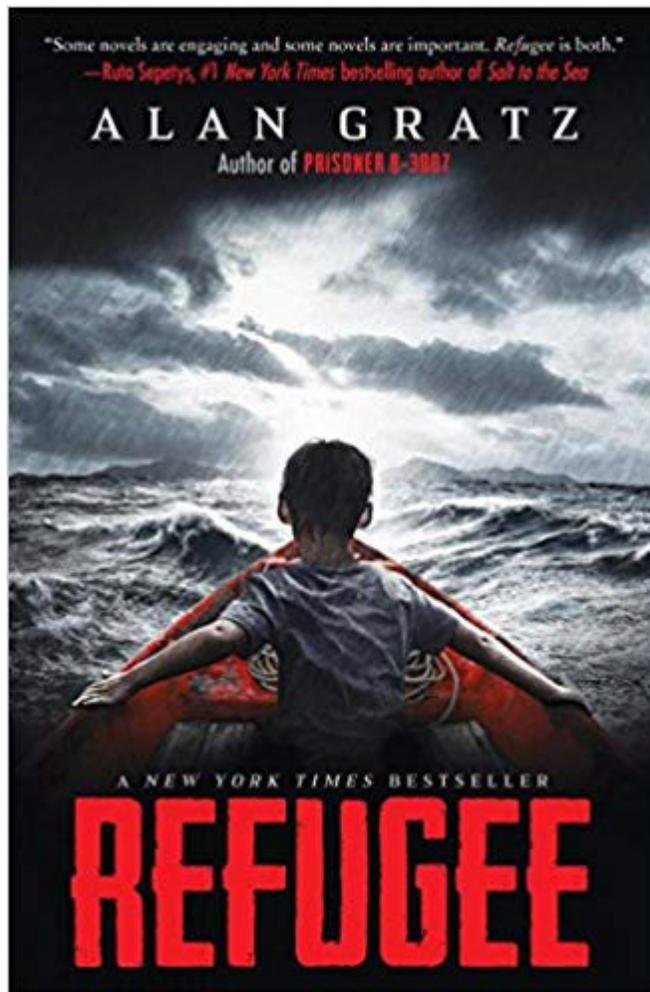
“You count members,' Bill said, 'but we count *touches*. Anytime anyone in our church does something for someone else in the name of Jesus, that's a touch: a card sent, a phone call made, a meal delivered, a donation to the food pantry. And our goal is to increase touches. In the five years that we've counted this way, we've grown every year.

Bill's wisdom has changed the way I live my life. My initial goal was one touch per day; too small. Now it's five. And here's what I've discovered: when my touches grow in number, I grow in faith.”

*“For surely I know the plans I have for you, say the Lord ...
to give you a future with hope,”* Jeremiah 29:11

News from the Board of Mission and Social Action

The Book Group has selected “Refugee” by Alan Gratz. On September 30th after church in the vestry, we will discuss the book, sharing our opinions over a potluck brunch. Please bring a brunch dish to share. Call Holly if you would like a copy: 222-4919. Ginny may also have an extra copy. Marcia Tomlinson has a copy and it will be



available after 9/15.

A brief synopsis:

JOSEF is a Jewish boy living in 1930s Nazi Germany. With the threat of concentration camps looming, he and his family board a ship bound for the other side of the world . . .

ISABEL is a Cuban girl in 1994. With riots and unrest plaguing her country, she and her family set out on a raft, hoping to find safety in America . . .

MAHMOUD is a Syrian boy in 2015. With his homeland torn apart by violence and

destruction, he and his family begin a long trek toward Europe . . .
All three kids go on harrowing journeys in search of refuge. All will face unimaginable dangers -- from drownings to bombings to betrayals. But there is always the hope of *tomorrow*. And although Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are separated by continents and decades, shocking connections will tie their stories together in the end.

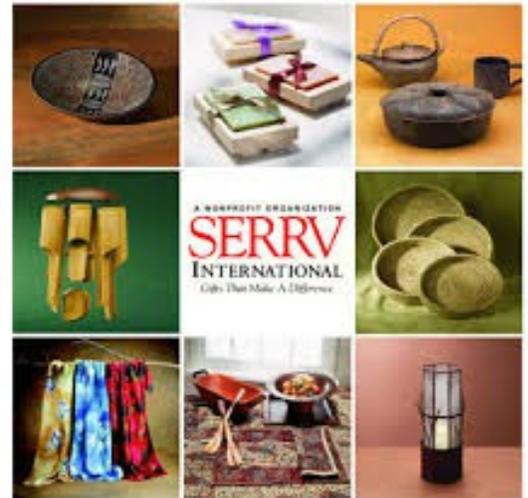
This action-packed novel tackles topics both timely and timeless: courage, survival, and the quest for home.



The **Neighbors in Need offering** will be on Oct 14th. Patrick Peters will do a special Children's Time. Offering envelopes will be in the bulletin on the 14th, but also available at the back of the church on the 21st.

Lucia and Ginny are excited to have new **SERRV** catalogs available to pass out in September. Just ask for your copy. They are having a wonderful time choosing items to sell at 3 events this fall:

- Church Bazaar in October
- Game Supper in November
- Giving Fair in December.



Here are some notes from John Atwood about special music.

Looking ahead to 2 September, for postlude your organist will play an "organ battle" from Spain or Portugal. Spain and Portugal musically followed their own direction incorporating cultural aspects of Moorish ancestry including the unique sound of horizontal reed pipes in the organ case. [Organ battles](#) represented the fight between good and evil. This will be fun!

I'm including two pieces by N. deGrigny: a Fugue on "Veni Creator" (prelude) and a Duo (offertory) and that rousing organ battle by Spanish composer, Juan Cabanilles composed the piece (Batalla Imperial) to represent the battle of good against evil. Some Spanish organists consider Cabanilles their Johann Sebastian Bach. A popular genre in its time, this piece is one of the most notable organ battles from the Iberian Peninsula.





This past week, the Sunday School kids learned about how other Christians worship around the world, and what is the same and what is different from what they've experienced here at Bradford UCC. Here, Shane Morse takes his turn to light a candle as he says a prayer.

Community Supper

We're looking forward to seeing you on September 23rd

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



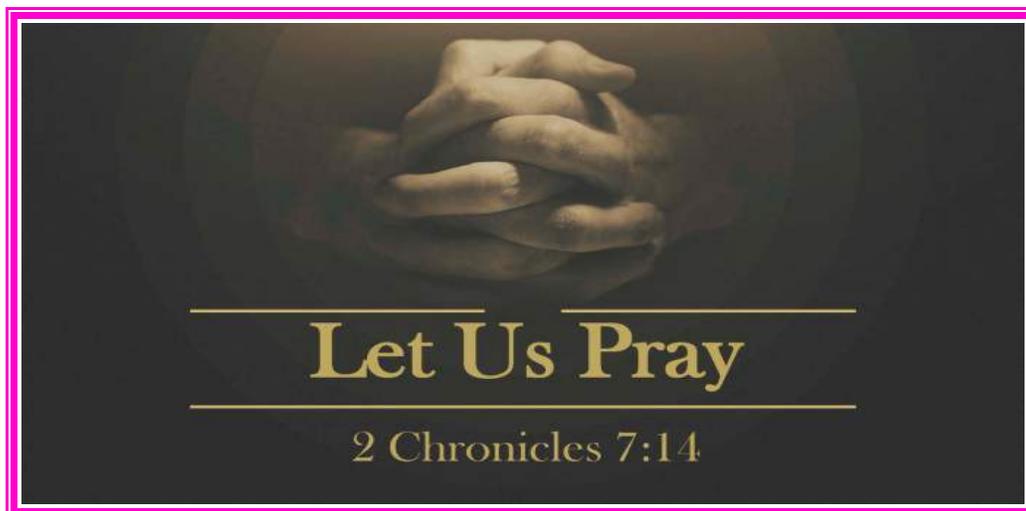
Hope you can join us!

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 SEPTEMBER (Year B)

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



Everywhere is where you can think on the Word

September 2

Song of Solomon 2:8-13 (a new life beckons)

James 1:17-27 (peer into the Word; act on it!)

Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23 (defining true uncleanness)

Psalm 45:1-2,6-9

theme hymn: *Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine*

September 9

Proverbs 22:1-2,8-9 (open your eyes to service, not riches)

James 2:1-10,14-18 (resist favoring the rich and powerful)

Mark 7:24-37 (Jesus responds to our faith)

Psalm 125

theme hymn: *O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing*

September 16

Proverbs 1:20-33 (beware scoffing at God's word)

James 3:1-12 (our speech needs to bless, not curse)

Mark 8:27-38 (deny yourself and take up your cross)

Psalm 19

theme hymn: [*Hope of the World*](#)

September 23

Proverbs 31:10-31 (a capable woman defined)

James 3:13 - 4:3,7-8a (God's wisdom is peace)

Mark 9:30-37 (Jesus defines "true" greatness)

Psalm 1

theme hymn: *Lord Make Us Servants of Your Peace*)

September 30

Esther 7:1-6,9-10; 9:20-22 (Ester's trap for Haman)

James 5:13-20 (our speech needs to bless, not curse)

Mark 9:38-50 (serving others is serving God)

Psalm 124

theme hymn: [*We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight*](#)

October 7

Job 1:1; 2:1-10 (Job remains faithful)

Hebrews 11-4; 2:5-12 (Jesus identified with all humanity)

Mark 10:2-16 (adversaries continue to test Jesus)

Psalm 26

theme hymn: [*The Lord Is My Light and My Help*](#)

October 14

Job 23:1-9,16-17 (Job asserts God's mercy and justice)

Hebrews 4:12-16 (approach God with confidence)

Mark 10:17-31 (follow Jesus along the Way)

Psalm 22:1-15

theme hymn: *O Master, Let Me Walk With Thee*

Vermont Conference



Exciting News!!!

Dear Beloved Community in the Vermont Conference,

With Fall just around the corner there are several transitions occurring as well as events planned to encourage the well-being of our clergy and congregations.

- On August 11th the **Rev. Paul Sangree** was unanimously elected to serve as our Associate Conference Minister. You can read his article below. Paul will begin work on December 4th. In the meantime we will be doing what we can to make him feel welcome and ease his transition.
- **Pam Lucas** will be concluding her many years of ministry with the Vermont Conference. We know many will want to have a chance to thank her for her ministry and share your good wishes for her in the next chapter of her life and ministry. The Board of Directors has set aside December 1st as the time for celebration and farewell. Watch for the place and time that will be set soon.
- We have entered into an agreement with the Leddy Group to find a temporary worker to assist with the **Ministries Coordinator** position. This is a temporary position and place holder while

conversations continue between the Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont Conferences toward the possibility of one person handling the administrative work for all three conferences.

- Conversations continue among the Northern New England conferences about the potential to share staff positions in the areas of: Search and Call administration, Financial oversight and/or bookkeeping, Outdoor Ministries and Communications.
- The registration is now open for our annual **Clergy Convocation** on **September 17-19**. Please see details in this issue of EKit. We're looking forward to a time of learning and sharing together.
- For congregations that have become self-led, Pam Lucas will be offering training in a **House Church** model on September 22nd. Times and place will be announced soon.
- On **October 12th** Pam and I will be leading initial training for Conference Search Consultants. The CSC's will assist individual congregations during their times of pastoral transition to supplement the work of our two Conference Ministers. All churches in transition will receive a visit from one of the Conference Ministers. CSC's enable more support and attention for our churches.

All this and four regional trainings for our clergy and churches in

Appreciative Inquiry as a tool to use in many areas of congregational life. We will be led by the experienced professional staff of the **David L Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry at Champlain College** as we explore this strength based methodology. These gatherings will be our Fall Vitality Event. The dates are:

September 20, 27 and

November 10 and 17. We will schedule the trainings to cover as much of our geographic areas as possible. More information to come!

Your Conference Board and Staff continue to look for ways to better equip our pastors and churches for Christ's ministry today and tomorrow. We invite your prayers for all parts of the Conference and beyond.

In faith and hope,
Lynn

This Epistle is a monthly publication of the Bradford Congregational Church. It is uploaded the last day of each month. Anyone wishing to receive the email notification to 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](#)

Have safe and wonderful Labor Day ... here are the lyrics of
“**Come, Labor On**” by Jane Borthwick:

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Come, labor on! Who dares stand idle, on the harvest plain While all around him waves the golden grain? And to each servant does the Master say, | Go work today. |
| Come, labor on! Claim the high calling angels cannot share— To young and old the Gospel gladness bear; Redeem the time; its hours too swiftly fly. | The night draws nigh. |
| Come, labor on! The enemy is watching night and day, To sow the tares, to snatch the seed away; While we in sleep our duty have forgot, | He slumbered not. |
| Come, labor on! Away with gloomy doubts and faithless fear! No arm so weak but may do service here: By feeblest agents may our God fulfill | His righteous will. |
| Come, labor on! No time for rest, till glows the western sky, Till the long shadows o'er our pathway lie, And a glad sound comes with the setting sun, | Well done, well done! |
| Come, labor on! The toil is pleasant, the reward is sure; Blessèd are those who to the end endure; How full their joy, how deep their rest shall be, | O Lord, with Thee! |