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EPISTLE

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



January, 2016

Our website:

<http://bradforducc.org>
bradfordvtucc@gmail.com

Dear Church Family,

Advent and Christmas were wonderful seasons of expectation and celebration of the light, and there has been much to celebrate in the church lately. Our website is full of the light we have been enjoying: <http://bradforducc.org/>. If you are new to the site, you may want to start by exploring the horizontal menu at the top just above the photograph. It will take you to pages on many aspects of the congregation's life. If you have already done that, then you will want to use the vertical menu in the left side column. It will take you to collections of entries on various topics that are updated as we post new material. For a burst of radiance, scroll through the photo albums: <http://bradforducc.org/category/photo-albums/>. Click on the arrows below the photos to see them all.

Epiphany is another church season that is full of light and we will continue to have special services basking in its glow. The word epiphany comes from Greek meaning manifestation or appearance. The season is all about the recognition of God manifested or appearing in Jesus Christ. It begins with the light of a star over Jesus and ends with the disciples seeing the light coming from within Jesus.



It seems fitting that we will announce the formation of the Search Committee during Epiphany. A search for a settled pastor begins by following a star across uncharted wilderness and ends by seeing the light the church is looking for within one candidate.

We celebrate Epiphany Sunday on January 3rd hearing the magical story of the Magi who saw the star and followed it to the Christ child. We will sing the last of the Christmas carols for the year that Sunday and reflect on the journeys we are making following our stars and dreams.

On January 10th we will celebrate the Baptism of Christ when the Spirit came down like a dove and filled Jesus, and the voice of God blessed him, and the Spirit led him into the wilderness for forty days. It will be the perfect Sunday to have a special ritual for the Dedication of the Pastoral Search Committee during worship. They will have their first meeting with Associate Conference Minister Pam Lucas after refreshments.

January 17th is Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday when we will celebrate the manifestation of Christ's spirit in prophets who have shone his light into the world and made it more like God's realm of mercy, justice and peace. Then the last two Sundays in January we will have prophetic voices from our own congregation speaking: Dan Perry on the 24th and the Board of Mission and Social Action on the 31st.

Watch the News page on the website for more information on upcoming services:
<http://bradforducc.org/news-sermons/>.

My covenant with you as Interim Minister includes five focus points. Here is how it describes what I will do:

Intentionally lead the congregation through appropriate processes that give attention to the Five Focus Points of:

- Heritage (Reviewing how the congregation has been shaped and formed)
- Leadership (Reviewing the congregation's needs and its ways of organizing and developing new and effective leadership)
- Connections (Discovering all the relationships a faith community builds outside of itself)
- Mission (Defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction)
- Future (Developing a congregational profile based on this clarified self-understanding)

Most of our work in the past year has been defining and redefining the church's sense of purpose and direction. We have also looked in various meetings and conversations at how the congregation has been shaped and formed, and we have continued to maintain the congregation's relationships outside itself the best we can. The Diaconate has spent much time thinking about the kind of leadership the church needs to strengthen its culture of positivity, healthy communication and loving community.

All these have laid a foundation for the focus on the future that we are now ready to undertake. We will continue the other foci, too, because we have farther to go with them each in order to prepare for the new era that is coming, but the work of the Search

Committee will naturally draw much of our attention and excitement in the months ahead.

The end of Epiphany comes on Transfiguration Sunday, which this year will be on February 7th. That is the day when we hear the story of Jesus going up the wilderness mountain with his disciples. It is a steep climb after a long road to get there, but at the top they are rewarded by a glimpse of the radiance of Christ in all his glory. Then they go back down to continue their ministry together with fresh vision and strength. It is a parable for the journey that this congregation is on—we are climbing, and we have that day of vision and glory to look forward to at the top when the next settled pastor has been named, and then the church will go back down the mountain for the next exciting stage in its history.

It is an honor to be making the journey with you. Thank you so much for all the light you have been shining! Every time I look at the website I am dazzled by it. What a wonderful congregation!

Thank you.

Grace and peace,
Tom



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.**





Our Church

**“The Church of the
Lighted Window”**

“The Friendly Church”

“The Community Church”

These are some of the favorite names of our church over many years. I think they are all appropriate in 2016. Let me enumerate the many members and/or parishioners who served our community in the 2014-15 year and many are still serving:

The Town of Bradford

- (1) Selectboard – Ted Unkles, Chair; Randy Moore, Carole Taylor, Daniel Perry III
- (2) Auditors- Erin Odell, Henrietta Powers
- (3) Trustee of Public Funds – Graham Gove, Martina Stever, Tony Brainerd
- (4) Justice-of-the-Peace – Daniel Perry III, Carole Taylor, Larry Coffin
- (5) Board of Adjustment – Carole Taylor, Janice Larabee
- (6) Planning Commission – Ted Unkles
- (7) Conservation Commission – Thomas Gray
- (8) Town Services Officer – Carole Taylor
- (9) Walter Lee Committee – Charlie Barton, Brian Schlager, Randy Odell
- (10) Emergency Management – Daniel Perry III
- (11) FAST Squad – Daniel Perry IV
- (12) Fire Department – Daniel Perry IV, Drazen Smith
- (13) Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Rep. – Bobette Scribner
- (14) Stagecoach Rep. – Bobette Scribner
- (15) Bradford Public Library Board of Trustees – Eris Eastman, Emerita; Shirley Conrad, Emerita; Tony Brainerd, Chair; Angela Conrad-Schlager, Sec’y; Shelly Blodgett, Dorothy Unkles, Larry Coffin
- (16) Road Commissioner – Daniel Perry III

- (17) Beautification Committee – Carolyn Coffin
(18) 250th Celebration Committee – Janice Larabee, Meroa Benjamin,
Martina Stever, Larry Coffin

UHSD #30 (Oxbow H.S. and Riverbend

- (1) School Directors – Angela Conrad Schlager, Chair
(2) Treasurer – Tracey Smith

Bradford Academy and Graded School District

- (1) Treasurer – Lou Chase
(2) Collector of Delinquent Taxes – Henrietta Powers

For many years our church has been the scene of dinners for local retiring public officials, the B.A. Alumni Banquet, Friendship Club (area social group that met monthly for a potluck dinner and entertainment), Red Cross blood drives, political candidates' nights, senior meals, community dinners, etc. etc.

Eris, Historian

Publicity

The sometimes-quiet publicity committee has kicked into high gear! As you may have already heard, we recently rebuilt the church's website, and if you haven't already visited it, please do! The address is www.bradforducc.com.

Besides being a resource for those who might like to know more about us, we hope that more and more people will use the website to see what's happening in our busy church on a day-to-day basis. We are regularly updating the site with photos and information about current church events, as well as constantly updating the calendar (<http://bradforducc.org/calendar-page/>) with church committee meetings, events by outside groups using our building, and special church events.

We have many ideas how to grow and improve the website, and will continue to work on it over the coming months. Please take a look and share your feedback with us!

Another upcoming project of the publicity committee is updating the bulletin boards. The church has many of them, and they offer another opportunity to share who we are and what we do with everyone who visits our building. The first bulletin board that we are planning is to show "Who We Are" and will be located in the entrance corner of the vestry. Bridget has been photographing members of the congregation each Sunday after church, and these portraits will hang up along with our Covenant and our new Identity and Aspiration Statement. Keep an eye out for this first bulletin board in January!

And there's more!

Our church's Facebook page is yet another form of our outreach, linking us and our programs with the wider community, our Interchurch Council members, our Association and our Conference activities, and area civic groups and events. It also has a following of "friends" from all walks of life in many parts of the country who enjoy seeing our pictures and reading about our activities.

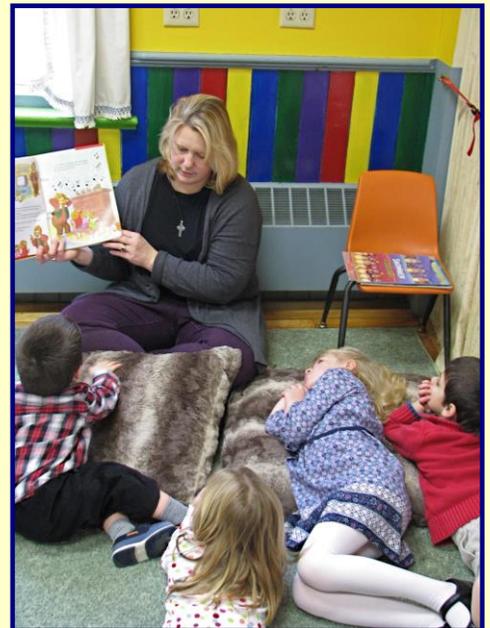
The name of this page is **[Bradford Congregational Church](#)**. Please do friend us!

Our Wonderful and Growing Sunday School

December has been a busy, fun, and exciting month for the children at church!

They performed the Christmas pageant and sang with the choir, they have lit Advent candles each week, created ornaments, and through it all, continued to build their understanding of God and their relationship with their church.

We are looking forward to continuing the story of Jesus' birth as we celebrate Epiphany on January 3rd.



We are also looking forward to our annual **Italian fundraising dinner** in February--stay tuned for more details on that!

Thank you all for your continuing engagement with our children. Your conversations with them and interest in their projects really help them feel great about their church!

Scenes from the Pageant



Getting ready



In Bethlehem



Wandering flock



Lighting the JOY candle

Our tree



Very special thanks to Jimmy Perry for finding this beauty and bringing it in to share with us all. And to the men on the first Sunday of Advent for putting on the lights and those high up trimmings!

The Sunday School students made individual angels ornaments and asked if they could put them on the big tree instead of taking them home!

And check out the pageant page of pictures to see the wandering flock spotted behind the tree!!

Fellowship ... Family ... Fun



**Coffee ... Tea ... Hot Spiced Cider
Christmas Cookies and Breads!**

**Coffee Hour is
Fellowship Fun!**



**And in the narthex the Victorian
Christmas Village welcomed
everyone**





**The 4 Sundays of Advent: Hope
Peace, Joy, Love and the Christ
Candle**

Each Sunday Pastor Kinder invited the children to light the candles as part of his message for them, and they led the congregation in the Lord's Prayer.



And our front our Crèche told the Nativity story to the community, thanks to the Sunday School and its many friends.

Community Album



On De. 16th we gathered for our monthly Community Supper ... great food and fellowship!

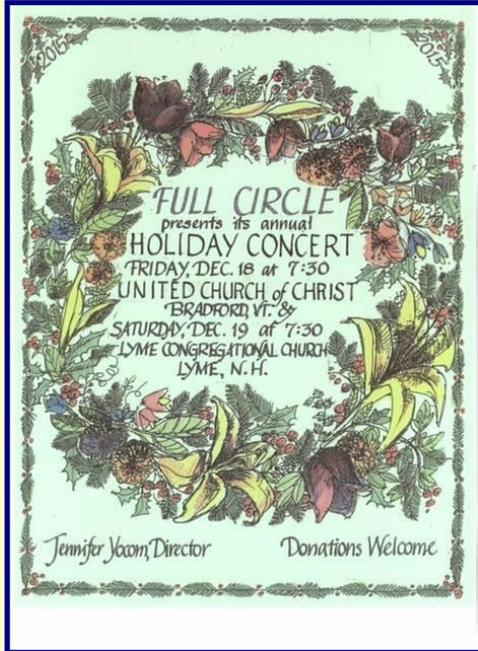
On Dec. 18th the Boy Scouts held their Spaghetti Supper ... a great success!



On Christmas Day we were again the site of the annual Community Christmas Dinner



Concert!



On Dec. 18th, Full Circle of Lyme treated Bradford to its annual Christmas concert of sacred and holiday songs, a delightfully funny organ rendition of Good King Wenceslaus, and even some sing-alongs for the audience.



Lectionary Readings for JANUARY (year C)

January 1 – New Year's Day

Galatians 4:4-7 or
Philippians 2:5-11 or
Ecclesiastes 3:1-13
Luke 2:15-21
Revelation 21:1-6a
Matthew 25:31-46

January 3 – Epiphany Sunday

Jeremiah 31:7-14 or Sirach 24:1-12
Psalm 147:12-20 or Wisdom of Solomon 10:15-21
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1:10-18

January 6 – Epiphany Day

Isaiah 60:1-6
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12
Psalm 72:1-7,10-14

January 10 – Baptism of the Lord

Isaiah 43:1-7
Acts 8:14-17
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22
Psalm 29

January 17

Isaiah 62:1-5
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
John 2:1-11
Psalm 36:5-10

January 24

Nehemiah 8: 1-3, 5-6, 8-10
1 Corinthians 12:12-31a
Luke 4:14-21
Psalm 19

January 31

Jeremiah 1:4-10
1 Corinthians 13: 1-13
Luke 4:21-30
Psalm 71:1-6

InterChurch Council

Here is a short recap of what we discussed this month.

ŠThe Thanksgiving Baskets were distributed and went well. Thank you for your donations.

ŠThe Coat Drive is going very well and we hope to help many families stay warm this winter.

ŠFather Daniel from OLPH is still looking for any kind of garden tool to go in the shipment to the Congo. I included a list in last month's Epistle.

ŠWe discussed the upcoming Lenten Program that will begin on February 14th this year. Our church will be the host on the 14th and also the Palm Sunday Choir Concert. Stay tuned for more details as we get closer to Easter.

Storme Odell

Act 'n Spire

We have sent out an annual appeal in late Fall and we would like to thank those who have donated to this wonderful project. We have received over \$65,000.00 towards our goal of \$200,000.00. If you forgot, we will be continuing our campaign into 2016 and would love to receive your donation at any time of the year. Perhaps you can share our request to your family and friends who would be interested in stabilizing and maintaining these two important Bradford landmarks.

We know there are people we have not reached and do not have addresses for them. Checks should be made out to Act' N Spire and sent to PO Box 16 Bradford VT 05033. The steeple looks wonderful but there are ongoing projects that we need to address to help preserve these two buildings for many years to come. Thank you for your support. If anyone is interested in joining our group please let Joe Button know. 222-4586

Storme Odell- Treasurer

Hello Everyone,

2016 will be my last year as chair of the buffet table and making the Gingerbread for Game Supper. It will be my 37th year as chair of the buffet table!! Tina Towle will try the buffet table with my help this year. Then she will be ready to go on her own for 2017.



We have not been able to find anyone to chair the Gingerbread. If you like to cook, it is really not that hard a job. We have a wonderful recipe and I have a step by step list of the making and baking directions.

Your responsibility is Friday afternoon before Game Supper from 2;30 to about 6:30. It works well to have 3 people help you up at the Oxbow kitchen.

If you might be interested in volunteering please contact me at 222-9655 or speak with Dan or Tracy Smith.

Storme Odell

To submit articles and photos for this online newsletter send to m3site@charter.net

This Bradford Congregational Church **Epistle** is posted on the first of every month, informing us of what is coming as well as celebrating what we just did. It's our combination of Honey-Do and Honey-Did!

