

See us on Facebook!

EPISTLE

August, 2016



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

Our website:

<http://bradforducc.org>

bradfordvtucc@gmail.com

Dear Church Family,

August is a good time for a more relaxed pace and some reflection on life. It tends to be one of the quieter months of the year, and September is coming with the start-up of school and the busy fall season in the church.

So I am inviting you and everyone in the church community to reflect together on a few questions this August. I hope you will write down your thoughts and send or email them to me so we may print them in the September *Epistle* either under your name or anonymously, whichever you prefer.

In our Identity and Aspiration Statement we say that we aspire to be a church “where people want to participate because the church makes a positive difference in their lives throughout the week.”

Here are the questions for your reflection:

1. What “positive difference” does the church make in your life throughout the week now, and what does the church do to make that difference?
2. What additional positive difference would your ideal of a church make in your life, beyond what our congregation is currently providing?

3. What do the non-church goers you know need that ideally could be met by their being a part of a Christian spiritual community? In other words, how could their being members of our church family make a needed difference in their lives?

Please send your reflections to the church address or email them to bradfordvtucc@gmail.com. Please let me know if I may share them under your name or if you would prefer to remain anonymous.

This fall our church leaders will be reading the book *Real Good Church*. We will be talking about how our congregation can increasingly make a positive difference in our lives, and how we can increase the number of people enjoying those benefits every week. I hope we will not just be talking, but also putting as many little and large ideas into action as we can to enhance our congregational life and stimulate growth. Your response to these questions will contribute significantly to that effort.

I look forward to seeing you in September after my break. Until then, I pray that you will have a wonderfully grace-filled month with ample time for relaxation and reflection in preparation for an exciting fall!

Peace, joy and love,
Tom



Submit a
Prayer Request

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.

PRAY

*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.*

Say It, then DO It!

At the 2002 Vermont Conference Annual Meeting, we voted to become an "Open and Affirming" (ONA) Conference of the United Church of Christ. The first "Be it Resolved" stated:

That we, the members of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ, declare that the Conference setting is open, welcoming and affirming of all persons in all aspects of its administrative, program and worship life. We covenant with God and one another to extend welcome and Christian fellowship to all followers and seekers of Christ without fear, prejudice or discrimination due to race, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, physical, mental or emotional condition, educational, financial situation, biblical or theological interpretation, or any other circumstance that has historically been a barrier to full life, participation, membership, mission, work and ministry in the Vermont Conference setting of the United Church of Christ. We embrace them as sisters and brothers and equal partners in the Body of Christ with unlimited access to every opportunity of service to God...

Next year's Annual Meeting will be the 15th anniversary of this declaration. Today 44 [ONA churches of the Vermont Conference](#) have completed a process resulting in [ONA status](#), and more are in process. I was thinking how awesome it would be to celebrate many more churches reaching this status at Annual Meeting next year. If you'd like to get started, or have questions about process or even what it all means and why you should consider doing it, please be in touch with our ONA Consultant, [Rev. Mark Pitton](#) here in the office. [ONA resources](#) are also available online.

But declaring your congregation to be ONA is a beginning, not an ending. To paraphrase Lillian Daniel, it's not enough to be a church of "resolutionaries", we must be a church of revolutionaries. Many ONA churches display rainbow banners as the Conference office does.



The rainbow is now a visual symbol of welcome in a way "ONA" *church-speak*

may not achieve for those left out of churches for decades. Some churches now have gender neutral bathrooms. Other congregations use intentionality to make sure that LGBTQ folks have opportunities to be included in church leadership. Others still serve as advocates for bullied LGBTQ youth, participate in Pride events and parades, or are a place where

marriage equality is not just legal but welcomed with joy. These actions are also symbols that can proclaim with greater clarity than any ONA Statement can.

Your Vermont Conference tries to live into our ONA declaration as well.



This year we are once again a proud sponsor of Vermont Pride Theater's sixth annual Summer Pride Festival held at [Chandler Center for the Arts](#) here in Randolph. Performances run through this weekend - follow this [Chandler link](#) to find out more. And we will keep trying.

As James tells us in his excellent Epistle, it's not enough to simply state you have faith. What you do with your faith matters, because faith without action is a dead faith. Grace is a great gift, but if we don't do anything with it, what's the point? How does it change anything?

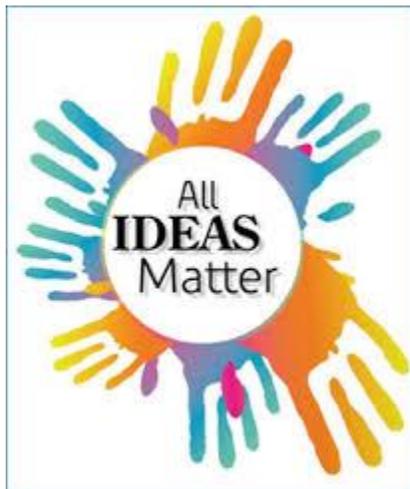
We are called to be an inclusive church, surely. So I invite you to consider how you might live into your faith statements: to act and express your faith beyond internal documents. How are you moving beyond the front door of your church to promote the change you proclaim? People outside have heard that they are not welcome, not valued, need to be "fixed" to be made right, and only matter if they are a part of someone's 'all'. People do not believe you if you simply say, you welcome everyone. If you're willing to be an ally, consider being an advocate. Let your actions (or lack thereof) speak in a way your words never will.

Someone once said that if you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything. Full inclusion of LGBTQ people in to the life of our church is something I will stand for. Will you join me?



Peace,
Jim
Rev. Jim Thomas
ONA
ADVOCATE

~~Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship, Church Vitality and Finance~~



- ✓ We hope you noticed after church on July 31st that there's a suggestion box on the vestry table. It's specific purpose is for members to note what they would like to learn in the upcoming educational series about issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity.
- ✓ Want terms explained?
- ✓ Want to know what discrimination is still occurring?
- ✓ Want accurate facts and figures?

We have just voted to be educated, to throw open the doors of our minds and hearts to what is happening around us. Let's take advantage of this opportunity! We want to gather your ideas for the next several weeks and then pull together a panel that can answer them in October.

Diaconate ad hoc ONA Committee



August 7th is the first annual Paddle to Church event

KAYAK SUNDAY!

Your intrepid guides are Holly Young and Marcia Tomlinson

This BYOB (bring your own breakfast) begins at the Bradford boat launch at 6 am with Holly in the lead and Marcia paddling the caboose. We'll glide along with the sunrise to Piermont rock or the first uninhabited beach to set in and eat our breakfasts, marvel at the calm and beauty, and then return just as leisurely to the launch. We'll have you back, all smiles and refreshed, in time for Sunday services at your church.

Please join us!



**There's a dazzling and exciting line-up of events coming this Fall.
Here's a sneak peek!**

Thursday, September 8th – 6:30 pm – Orientation/Identity Bible Study led by the Rev. Mark Pitton of the Vermont Conference

Wednesday, September 14th – 7:00 pm – one of three Search Committee small group meetings (members may choose one of the three to attend) at which we will share our wishes, dreams, and aspirations for the church as well as our next minister

Sunday, September 18th – 11:45 am – Search Committee small group meeting with a light lunch

Saturday, September 24th – 2:30 pm – final Search Committee small group meeting

Thursday, September 29th – 7:00 pm – Orientation/Identity movie ... one of the many very good presentations as recommended by the denomination. Part of the decision of which movie to show will be based on the suggestions and ideas placed in the suggestion box by the congregation

Sunday in mid-October TBA – 11:45 am – Orientation/Identity Panel discussion and information session with a light lunch served.

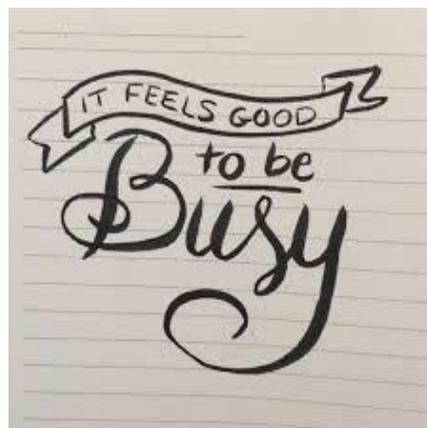
Saturday, October 29th – 8:45 am to 1:30 pm – Healthy Communication workshops and Nancy Brown return!

Sunday, November 6th – 11:45 am – Orientation/Identity Circle Conversation, an intentional sharing of personal experiences about loved ones and friends who have faced the issues we've learned about. This sharing experience will be carefully facilitated in the Healthy Communications circle format.

Note that this list does not include Board meetings, Church Council, the start up of the choir, Sunday School events, the Bazaar or the Game Supper!!!

Whew!

We are one busy and "doing" church!



From the Historian

This is a tedious report to write, and even more having to read. I have researched the records of the reports we have in the Archives for officers, boards and committees. I am giving you the latest dates I have. This does not mean I have all reports for earlier years. Please check your basements, attics and other storage places to see if you have “long forgotten” items that should be in our church archives. I would like to bring these up to date this year in preparation for the next historian.

Moderator and/or Asst. Moderator: Only in 2015-16 Annual Report

Clerk and/or Asst. Clerk: Minutes 2010-11. Minutes for 1962-64 are in current Membership Book.

Clerk and/or Asst. Clerk Membership Book – 1961

“ By-Laws and Constitution – 2005

“ Guest Book – 1993

Treasurer – 1995; A/R

Asst. Treasurer – Pledge Records – 2002

Historian – 2015-16; A/R

Finance Officer – 2015 A/R

Diaconate – 2007; A/R

Trustees – 1998; A/R

Trust Fund Committee – 2000; A/R

“ Minutes – 2003

Christian Ed – 1996; A/R

Inter Church Council – A/R

Music Committee – A/R

Publicity Committee – A/R

Auditors – A/R and/or Annual Meeting minutes

Board of Mission/Social Action – A/R

Flower Committee – A/R

Ushers – A/R

Nominating – A/R

Women's Fellowship Minutes – 2006

“ Treasurer – 2007

“ History – 1870-1995

“ Misc. - 1990

“ Directory – 1993

(if you have later ones, get them to me)

This has been tedious to write, and I'm sure boring to read, but written paper records are important!!

Eris, Historian

Who's Filling the Pulpit in August?

7th – Rev. Harvey Bartlett ... Communion Sunday

Do you have a favorite hymn you would like to sing? Let Harvey know!

14th – Marcia Tomlinson

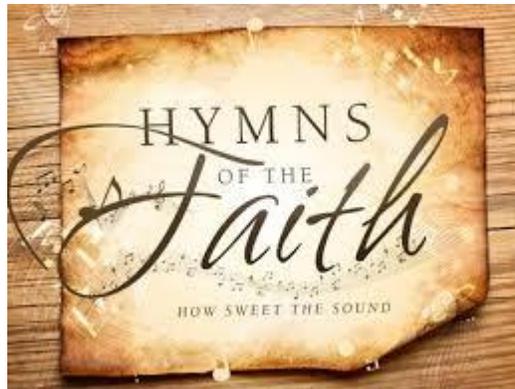
Diverse Tradition music will be an Interlude on the guitar by Don Sinclair

21st – Rev. Jay Sprout

Be ready for a message that comes straight from the heart

28th – Rev. Don Towle and the Jeremiah Ingalls Society

Be transported back to Bradford's worship music of 1803



For those who enjoy a lively Hymn Sing, the annual Sing at West Newbury Congregational Church will once again be led by the indomitable Don Saliers and friends. 7:30 pm.

NINTH ANNUAL ALL-CHURCH YARD SALE

Dear Parishioner:

We are having our all-church yard sale and it will be held in the Church Vestry again this year. Most items will be by donation.

Friday August 26 - 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Saturday August 27 - 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

We are soliciting items to be delivered to the church vestry (no clothing or bedding please). Items may be brought to the church any time after August 1. The Vestry door will be open.

Items such as but not limited to:

Furniture	Knick-Knacks	China
Pewter	Books	Small Appliances
Silver	Tools	Collectibles
Kitchen Items	Art/Crafts	

Co-Chairs – Dan Perry, Eris Eastman, Vida Perry-Munson, Linda Gross, Sue Eastman, Maryjane Krepper, Martina Stever



The Parish Paper - July 2016

Ideas and Insights for Active Congregations

When Charity Brings Anything But Relief

Is it possible that our best intentions can do more harm than good? Sadly, relief organizations tell us that well-meaning people don't think before they give. Some involved in humanitarian work after a natural disaster call the deluge of unwanted donations "the second disaster."



THE RESPONSE HAS BEEN AMAZING!
WE'VE ALREADY EXCEEDED LAST YEAR'S
"AIR CONDITIONERS FOR THE ARCTIC" MISSIONS PROJECT.

Juanita Rillig, director of the Center for International Disaster Information, described what happened after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004: So many donated clothes were piled on an Indonesia beach that workers had no time to sort and distribute them. The clothing pile became toxic and local officials had to destroy it all. They poured gasoline on it and sent it out to sea.¹ She related another example of unfortunate waste when contributors sent 100,000 liters of water to West Africa at a cost of \$300,000. Relief organizations with portable water purification units could have provided that same amount of water for \$300.

Following the December 2012 shooting tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, more than 60,000 teddy bears arrived from around the country, along with toys, bicycles, and clothes. Already overwhelmed, residents had to get a warehouse to hold it all.

Crisis Relief or Chronic Needs?

Because Americans are compassionate, they tend to respond initially with their hearts rather than their minds. Even Warren Buffett admitted that it is much easier to make money than it is to give it away wisely. The first step is assessing whether an event is a crisis or a reflection of ongoing chronic needs.

Crisis relief. Churches and people of faith offer the best immediate crisis relief when they make smart cash donations to trusted organizations. In most cases, sending supplies is simply not practical. Responding to a crisis with immediate relief is likely a month-long effort.

Chronic needs call for complex solutions, hard work, and long-term commitments. The commitment required when tackling these situations is likely an effort of years or decades. When well-meaning people behave as if they are addressing a crisis rather than a chronic need, the longterm results are dependency, deception, and disempowerment.² Churches need to engage strategically in both types

of charity efforts.

Making Meaningful Change through Mercy and Justice

Many congregations involve members in mission trips and volunteer opportunities in local service projects. Unfortunately, too many mission trips or local service projects are not a wise investment, do not significantly improve quality of life, and do not relieve poverty for the intended community. For example, the funds spent for one Central American ministry mission trip to repaint an orphanage would be enough money to hire two local painters, pay the salaries of two full-time teachers, and purchase new uniforms for every school student.³

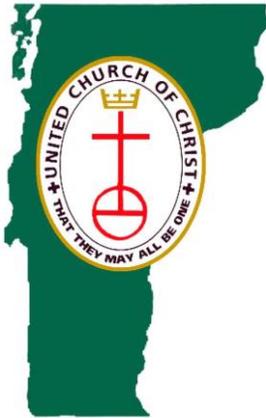
[The full article includes footnotes, a wise compassion oath to direct future mission, and questions to ask of your current mission work. (ed.)]

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Vermont Conference Brings You *the Parish Paper*



The Vermont Conference has subscribed to this resource on behalf of all Vermont UCC churches. This is made possible because of Our Church's Wider Mission Support.

Each monthly issue of *The Parish Paper* provides ideas, insights, research-findings, and practical methods that strengthen the effectiveness of congregations in accomplishing God's purposes through their various ministries. Not every suggestion included in *The Parish Paper* will be right for every church. But each issue is meant to be shared.

Lectionary Readings **AUGUST** (year C)

Aug 7 - 12th Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20 Hebrews 11:1-3,8-16 Luke 12:32-40 Psalm
50:1-8,22-23

Aug 14 - 13th Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 5:1-7 Hebrews 11:29 - 12:2 Luke 12:49-56 Psalm 80:1-2,8-
19

Aug 21 - 14th Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 1:4-10 Hebrews 12:18-29 Luke 13:10-17 Psalm 71:1-6

Aug 28 - 15th Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 2:4-13 Hebrews 13:1-8,15-16 Luke 14:1,7-14
Psalm 81:1,10-16

Sept 4 - 16th Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 18:1-11 Philemon 1-21 Luke 14:25-33 Psalm 139:1-6,13-
18

