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EPISTLE

June, 2016



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

Our website:

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

Dear Church Family,

My letter this month consists of excerpts from my Pentecost sermon. It serves as a sequel to my Epistle letter last month on what we can do to fulfill our congregation's aspiration to grow in numbers. The title of the sermon is taken from the Pentecost story in Acts, the whole of Chapter 2: "Day by Day the Lord Added to Their Number." You can see the entire sermon at <http://bradforducc.org/sermon-may-15-2016/> or pick up a printed copy in the bright yellow folder in the Vestry. Here is some of what the sermon said:

The Holy Spirit is like the wind, the Bible says. We cannot see the wind, and we cannot know what it will do next around us. The Holy Spirit is even more mysterious because when the leaves move we can say it was the breeze, but when something moves us, we cannot say for certain that it was the Holy Spirit.

So I can say only that I believe the Holy Spirit moved the members of this congregation to write our Identity and Aspiration Statement. We asked ourselves what God was calling us to do or become, and this was the answer that we found. I believe it was from the Holy Spirit.

The Statement in its original form says, "We aspire to grow in numbers as we make this an increasingly welcoming, loving, helpful congregation where we take the love we find here out into the world around us, and where

people want to participate because the church makes a positive difference in their lives throughout the week. We will seek to maintain healthy communication and a positive, hopeful attitude as we face inevitable challenges.” (You can find the whole Statement at <http://bradforducc.org/>)

That is a daunting set of aspirations. How can we hope to grow when almost every church around us is shrinking? How can we become increasingly welcoming, loving and helpful—aren’t we as welcoming, loving and helpful now as we can be? In our society today the challenges threatening every church’s survival are overwhelming, and those struggles often bring out our worst selves so that we spiral into negativity and hurtful forms of communication and conflict. How can we possibly maintain healthy communication and a hopeful attitude....?

We could throw up our hands and call our Identity and Aspiration Statement impossible, or we could rely solely on our intellectual and material resources to attack its challenges, or we could...open ourselves to the possibility that the same Holy Spirit that put these dreams into our hearts and minds will come again and show us how to make them real.

We can open to the Holy Spirit and let it show us how to grow in numbers. We can open to the Holy Spirit and let it show us how to become



increasingly welcoming, loving and helpful. We can open to the Holy Spirit and let it show us how to maintain healthy communication and a positive, hopeful attitude in the face of all our challenges.

We can open to the Holy Spirit to fulfill the rest of the Statement’s dreams, too, providing support and programs for children and

adults, growing our music program, shining like a lighted window into the world around us by working for social justice and serving those in need.

And guess what? The Holy Spirit has already been guiding and empowering us to do these very things! Look at how far we have come in the eleven months since we adopted that Statement. Look at the steeple and the clock

and all the ways in which the building is shining more brightly. We have had three extremely successful workshops on healthy communication. The feeling in the church has been positive and hopeful. Beautiful music has filled this sanctuary every Sunday and in concerts. Our Sunday School has grown and flourished and so have our mission and social action programs, and so have the Diaconate's activities caring for those in need.

Who would have thought two years ago that the church we are today was possible? Look at all the Holy Spirit has done through us!

We still face the calling to grow, and to become increasingly welcoming, loving and helpful. We still face the same social forces that threaten to kill every church.... Yet if we turn in faith and open to the Holy Spirit, help will come. Help will come from outside in the form of wise guides like Nancy Brown who led our workshops, or like the Rev. Molly Baskette whose book *Real Good Church* we will be reading. Help will come from inside, too, from within our own hearts, minds and souls, in the form of the insights and gifts that God has given us each for just these tasks, and just this moment.

The Holy Spirit needs us to fulfill our dreams. That is why it gave them to us. The Holy Spirit needs this church to flourish and shine its light like never before. The Holy Spirit needs us because the world needs us so desperately.

Throughout the ages the Holy Spirit has worked miracles, as the hymn we are about to sing says. It moved on the waters of Creation and formed the earth, it gave life to all living beings, it led the children of Israel on their impossible desert journey out of slavery to the Promised Land. The Holy Spirit gave us Jesus, and formed the first church.

The hymn "Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness" ends saying to the Spirit,

You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes,
From the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams;
Our women see visions, our men clear their eyes.
With bold new decisions your people arise.

We are the people the Holy Spirit calls to arise, and when we do, we can trust that day by day the Spirit will add to our number.

Peace, joy and love, Tom

Worship Time Change!



Please spread the word that
worship will begin at

**11:00 AM for one
joyous Sunday
June 5th**

when we will have three special treats:

1. a joint service with our friends from the West
Newbury Congregational Church here
in our sanctuary;

2. music provided by the gifted
Bruce and Caleb Freeberg who
played for us last summer to rave
reviews; and,

3. a potluck lunch after worship to which all are invited.





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.

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.

Board of Missions and Social Action



The Board of Missions and Social Action (BMSA) has been coordinating five special UCC offerings each year (Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour of Sharing, Christmas Fund, Our Church's Wider Mission, and

Strengthen the Church). The Board was considering whether we should partake in all five of these offerings or just a few of them, so we brought the question to the congregation at the annual meeting to ask for feedback. Based on the response of the congregation, we will continue to take all five offerings each year.

The BMSA will also continue our work supporting the refugees here in Vermont. In October, Rutland will be welcoming 100 Syrian refugees into their community. We are looking into how we can support the refugees that are coming. Some members of the Board visited Grace United Methodist church on Sunday, May 22 to talk to that congregation about the work that we have done and possibly how we might work with the Methodist church on this project.

Finally, the BMSA is thinking about how we can help local children and families, and are working with the Bradford Elementary School to identify community needs. We are looking forward to finding ways to use our resources to support kids and families in Bradford.

The Board of Missions and Social Action get to spend their time thinking about and acting upon ways that they can help people in need. It is a truly rewarding experience.

BRADFORD CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



Recently the Center for Analytics, Research and Data from the national setting of the UCC has issued a series of one page documents and graphs that are the result of some comprehensive research about UCC congregations and vitality, pastoral leadership, adaptive change and measures of vitality. You can find those summaries along with the research data for several other projects: <http://www.ucc.org/research>.

Here is the list of markers of vitality identified by research project participants:

1. This place helps people deepen their relationship with God.
2. This place encourages prayer inside and outside of worship.
3. This place helps build strong, healthy relationships.
4. This congregation is a close-knit family.
5. This place helps children and youth grow in their faith.
6. This place interacts with the local community.
7. This place equips people to share their faith.
8. This place accepts newcomers well.
9. This place uses the gifts of members of all ages.
10. There is excitement about the future here.
11. This place is spiritually vital.



After more analysis and factoring in indexes for pastoral excellence, the following items emerged as predictors of congregational vitality:

CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY INDEX

1. There is excitement about the future here.
2. There is a clear sense of mission here.
3. This place has lots of meaningful activities.
4. This congregation is always ready to try something new.
5. This place incorporates newcomers into the congregation's life.
6. This place seeks out and uses the gifts of members of all ages.
7. This place helps to build strong, healthy relationships among members.
8. This place manages disagreements in a healthy respectful manner.
9. This congregation equips members to share their faith with others.
10. This place interacts with the local community.

What do you think? Do these items describe your church? Do you consider your church to be vital, what do you mean by that and how can you assess this? Is there a correlation between meeting congregants' deepest longing for God and being a vital, thriving congregation active and engaged in the world?

Peace to you!
Lynn Bujnak
Vermont Conference



**Bradford Congregational Church of the United Church of Christ
Bradford, Vermont**

CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES

May 5, 2016

Present: Dan Perry, Barbara Joslyn, Carole Taylor, Angela Colbeth, Janice Larabee, Jim Perry, Joe Button, Storme Odell, Tom Kinder, Ginny Moore, Rob Taylor, Charlotte Welch.

We opened the meeting reading the Covenant together and Rev. Kinder leading us in prayer.

APPROVAL OF April 7, 2016 MINUTES:

- Storme Odell made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2016 meeting with the clarifications listed below. Motion was seconded by Jim Perry and approved by unanimous vote.
 - Gloria wanted the reports to read that there was a \$1000 credit from Perry's Oil added to the church's account (rather that it was 'omitted')
 - Under old business: should read 'Congregational (not annual) Meeting needs to be warned.....'
 - Under trustees report, 'Anonymous person has offered to pay for replacement of lighting for the 'lighted window' and the steeple.
 - Under Rev. Tom Kinder: omit "Tom is leading a new mentorship at another church".

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Bank Balances:

- Operating Account - \$ 1,063.11
- Game Supper Savings - 40,454.44
- Game Supper Checking - 345.03
- Memorial Fund - 2,811.17
- Act 'n Spire - 11,764.00
- WF Fund - 6,894.23

The Treasurer's Report will stand as approved until audited.

NEW BUSINESS:

Janice Larabee:

- Question from many parishioners, "Why are there so many pictures in the Epistle? Why aren't there more reports from committees and boards?"
- After a brief discussion of having the clerk send the minutes to Marcia Tomlinson for the Epistle so that the people can read about the church's business, Storme Odell made the following motion:

Motion: Storme Odell moved that the minutes of the Church Council be posted in the Epistle so that all can see the church's business. The motion was seconded by Joe Button and approved by vote.

Charlotte Welch-reporting for the Minister Search Committee:

- At the Congregational Meeting, members voted for the new pastor position to be a 2/3 position.
- The Search Committee is planning informal meetings to allow the people to talk/ask more about the pastoral search.
- The next meeting for the Search Committee is May12th.

Storme Odell – Interchurch Council:

- Today (May 5th) is the National Day of Prayer
- The council had a representative from Stagecoach speak to them. Storme made us aware that Stagecoach does, many, many things that many are not aware of to help those without transportation, mostly at a very affordable price or for free.
- Bradford UCC is supporting the pregnancy center based out of W. Lebanon, NH.
- Oxbow High School's Baccalaureate will be held June 5 at the Evangelical Free Church, Lower Plain, Bradford, VT. Refreshments can be delivered to our church that Sunday morning and Storme will deliver them or you can drop them off at the Evangelical Free Church before 7:00pm.
- The council is not aware of any Summer Bible School.
- The facilities and the Covenant Camp are available for retreat(s).

Storme Odell – Publicity:

- Has purchased and donated a storage container with a lid, organized it by officer, committee, board for the mail to be sorted into. This will allow for the container to be put away into a cupboard during events in the vestry.
- Added to the agenda of the church council minutes each month will be: Go through Mail and distribute any not picked up to the appropriate person representing an office, committee or board.

Joe Button - Trustees:

- Have received three 'reasonable' bids on the window replacement.
- Have received two bids on the painting – both were over budget. Joe asked if we knew of anyone to have them contact him.

Rob Taylor - Finance Chair:

- Nothing to report.

Christian Education – Angela Colbeth:

- Children's Sunday is May 22nd. The 3rd grade and older students will be presented with bibles. Books will be given to the younger children.

Jim Perry - Deacons:

- Nothing to report. The Deacons will be meeting on May 15th right after worship.

Carole Taylor – Deacons:

- More on Stagecoach – they will be setting up at the Bradford Fairgrounds for an Open House.....no date known at this time.

Rev. Tom Kinder:

- Attended the Vermont UCC Conference. One of the workshops he attended was one on the “Real Good Church” book that the Diaconate is recommending all the committees, boards, council and officers of our church read.

Ginny Moore- Diaconate and Board of Missions & Social Action:

- Talked about the “Real Good Church” book. The chapters are broken down by committees and boards similar to our church; this is why Diaconate thought it would be a good book for all of us to read, and then maybe get together on one day to discuss.
- The ‘Bakeless’ Bake Sale fundraiser was very successful this year, raising \$985. The Christian Ed committee asked for \$375; and the rest is available for church use. The Diaconate may be using some of it to purchase the “Real Good Church” books.
- Speaking for The Board of Mission and Social Action, Ginny reported that the donations for the refugees in Colchester have been delivered.
- May 22nd - One Great Hour of Sharing offering. Continuing with the topic of special offerings, Ginny was not aware that the Board of Mission and Social Action was responsible for deciding on the offerings and getting the information listed in the bulletin, etc. She would like to bring the offerings to the council and have a decision made there as to what offerings our church might be involved in.

Nominating Committee - Dan Perry:

- Dan Perry made a motion to nominate Ginny Crowe a member of the nominating committee. Seconded and approved by unanimous vote.

New/Other Business:

- Barbara received an email from Lucia Button for a request of a new portable sign out front. Storme Odell and Barb Joslyn, representing the Publicity Committee will take care of ordering a new sign.

Tom closed us in prayer and the meeting was adjourned at 8:05. The next meeting will be on June 2, 2016 at 7:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Joslyn, Clerk

These minutes are not official until approved at the June 2, 2016 meeting.

From the Historian
Profile #10 – Daniel Perry II

Dan joined our church in 1949. He says he followed his parents – Morris and Nancy – into the church. He had attended Sunday School and Youth Fellowship here so when it came time to join there wasn't any question. He married and he and Anita raised their five children in Sunday School and church.


He has been Finance Chair and Moderator and is now Assistant Moderator serving as Moderator. He has served on the Diaconate, Nominating Committee, Trust Funds, and By-Laws Committee. He has been an active member of Couples (Mr. & Mrs.) Club, has worked on Auctions, Game Supper, and Yard Sales. (Historian's note: I well remember when Dan and Anita owned their motel and could not work during the Game Supper, but offered to head up the "clean up and getting the vestry ready for Sunday School the next day. What a help and joy that was for me! I knew they'd do a great job without supervision, so I could go home at 10:00-11:00 p.m. instead of 1:00-2:00 a.m. I still thank them for that. Dan and Marcia now work at Oxbow with the vegetable crew).

A disappointment: "I had great expectations that a female Pastor would be accepted and I enjoyed her sermons and scripture. Like others before her, she was unable to find a comfortable place for her ministry and life style so chose a different career to follow."

Dan feels the church's greatest accomplishment is the Game Supper which "my parents helped with starting." (Morris and Nancy were never co-chairs, but they, Horace and Barbara Palmer, Bud and Dot Cole, and Charles Brainerd worked with Cliff and Helen McLam. I know Morris and Nancy went to Boston for that first interview with "Good Morning" show in 1975. Nancy appeared with Helen McLam and they cooked bear sausage, roast wild boar and roast coon while being interviewed).

Dan went on to say: "Our interim Pastor led us to accept where we are and ready to form a Search Committee."

Eris, Historian



Lectionary Readings May (year C)

June 5 – 3rd Sunday after Pentecost

1 Kings 17:8-16, (17-24)

Galatians 1:11-24

Luke 7:11-17

Psalm 146

June 12 – 4th Sunday after Pentecost

1 Kings 21:1-10, (11-14), 15-21a

Galatians 2:15-21

Luke 7:36 – 8:3

Psalm 5:1-8

June 19 – 5th Sunday after Pentecost

1 Kings 19:1-4, (5-7), 8-15a

Galatians 3:23-29

Luke 8:26-39

Psalm 42

June 26 – 6th Sunday after Pentecost

2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Luke 9:51-62

Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20

July 3 – 7th Sunday after Pentecost

2 Kings 5:1-14

Galatians 6: (1-6) 7-16

Luke 10: 1-11, 16-20

Psalm 30

For all you knitters and crocheters looking for a fun, new and so very helping project!



Help Kids India

SWEATER PROJECT



Help Kids India helps fund five crèches in South India for kids, ages 2-5, living in extreme poverty. Free crèches combine pre-school, kindergarten, and child care with three nutritious meals a day, health care, uniforms, shoes and sweaters. 250 kids a year, 15 years and strong... making a huge difference in their lives and in their communities.



New, hand-made or purchased, washable sweaters, for girls and boys, ages 2-5. Mail to:

Help Kids India Sweater Project

PO Box 143

West Newbury VT 05085 USA

Sweaters will be delivered to crèche children by **HKI** friends traveling to India.

Help Kids India, Inc. is a registered non-profit organization. Visit our website at helping-kids-india.org and find us on Facebook