

Dear Church Family, for the week of **December 16th**
3rd Sunday of Advent ... including the Christmas Pageant*
Sunday morning worship is at 10:00 a.m.

Pastoral Concerns: Pastor Jeff Long-Middleton 978-273-6399

pastorjeffuccbradford@gmail.com

Emergency Assistance: Care Coordinator Carole Taylor 802-222-4590

Pastor Jeff says: Philippians 4:4-7

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The assertion that the Lord is near – is this one we can make? If so, what does it mean? For Paul, it meant Jesus' return was imminent. I am not sure that I can conjure up that belief. If not, then how is this passage helpful?

It may well be that while we may not think Christ's return is moments away, we can assert that Christ has never fully left us. No, the kingdom has not come, but is it not in the process of becoming? Have we not glimpsed its contours? Indeed, we know it is not fully here because we are aware of its partiality in the present. We, like Paul, see through a glass darkly...but we do see. So while we may not be able to proclaim Christ's imminent return, we can claim that He has never fully left us. Is this enough? I hope so, because it is the only place I can stand with integrity.

So I will try to rejoice in the Lord always. I will look for Christ in the present moment of my joy and my despair. I will live knowing that God is not done yet, that the fullness awaits and in my longing I find my direction.

Lectionary readings for this coming week: (Year C) December 16-22

Zephaniah 3:14-20 (God will renew you)

Isaiah 12:2-6 (song of Thanksgiving)

Philippians 4:4-7 (demonstrate gentleness and forbearance)

Luke 3:7-18 (dispose of your greedy ways)

theme hymn: *"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist Cry"*

* the pageant will occur during the Children's Story

Pastor Jeff's office hours

Sunday afternoons

all day Mondays

978-273-6399 is his recommended number to use at any time;

calls to 802-222-4610 are only answered when he is in the parsonage, but you may leave a message

Full Circle winter concert Dec. 21 in our sanctuary at 7:30 p.m.

Directed by Jennifer Yocom, accompanied by Patricia Norton

2018 Advent Worship schedule

- 1st Sunday of Advent: December 2nd we light the **Candle of Hope**, 10 a.m.
2nd Sunday of Advent: December 9th we light the **Candle of Peace**, 10 a.m.
3rd Sunday of Advent: December 16th we light the **Candle of Joy**
and the children portray the nativity story, 10 a.m.
4th Sunday of Advent: December 23rd we light the **Candle of Love** for Christmas Sunday, 10 a.m.
And see the memorial poinsettias.

Christmas Eve ... when we light the **Christ Candle**
Candlelight Service ... 6:30 pm

2018 Christmas Memorial Poinsettias

If you would like your poinsettia(s) displayed on the altar platform
Christmas Sunday (Dec 23) and/or **Christmas Eve** (Dec 24) please:

- get the memorial details to Janice Larabee by Thursday, Dec. 20th (see below*)
- deliver the plant(s) to the church kitchen on Saturday, Dec. 22nd.

*The details Janice needs:

- in whose memory the plant is
- from whom the plant is being dedicated
- if you wish the plant to be saved for the Christmas Eve Candlelight service

How to contact Janice with the details:

- call her at 802 222 9920 or
- mail her at PO Box 216, Bradford VT, 05033 or
- email to bradfordvtucc@gmail.com (reply to this email) with "Memorial Poinsettias" as the subject line

If you do not live in our area and wish to order a memorial poinsettia through a florist, please let us know now via the above email address, with "florist poinsettia" as the subject line. A Deacon(Marcia Tomlinson) will work with you.

- **Volunteers are needed** to host the Fellowship Time following the worship service. The sign-up sheet is displayed in the vestry. Please find the Sunday(s) you will help!

Community Christmas Dinner

The annual Community Christmas Dinner will be held on Christmas day at Bradford Congregational Church. We are seeking volunteers to assist with the following tasks:

If you have questions or are interested in helping in any way, please contact Bethanne Tillotson (bandgtillotson@gmail.com). Thank you.