

EPISTLE

April, 2019



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

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Word From The Pastor

Easter is a time for bold affirmations. But before we get to that I think confession is in order.

Ever since the ascendancy of science as the portal to truth, we in the religious community have been faced with a problem. We live in the same world and know the power and truth that science commands. Yet we also bear witness to the inexplicable power of faith. Our conviction is not groundless. We have seen how faith can lead to the miraculous – not only in our own lives but in the lives of countless others. Is our faith based on science? No, but it is not without its own evidence. Nevertheless, I find myself attempting to rationalize the inexplicable miracles portrayed in the Bible. Many of the healing miracles could be seen as psychosomatic. The feeding of the five thousand could be attributed to folks deciding to share what they had wrapped up in their tunics for lunch. This attempt to make my faith fit in with my cultural biases is, at least for me, unavoidable. It is within this tension between a scientific worldview and religious conviction that I do my daily living and I suspect the same is true for all of us.

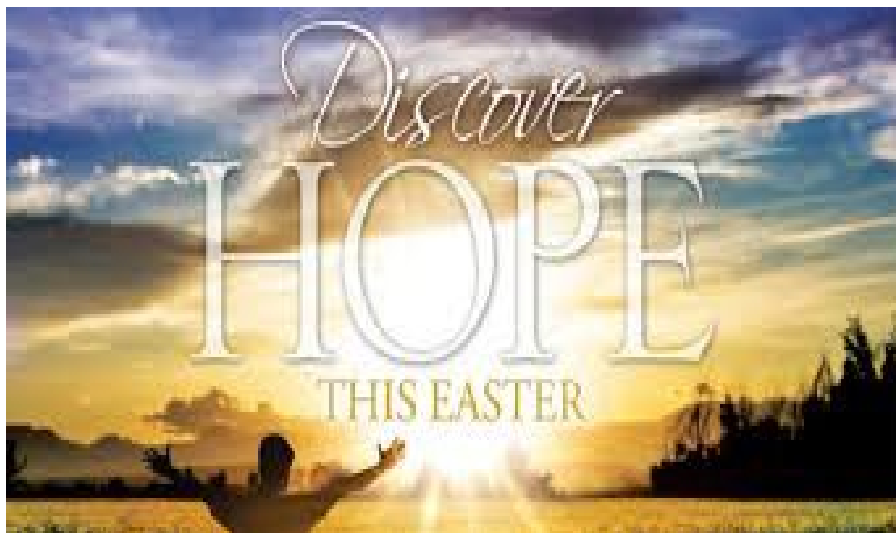
Then Easter comes. Three days dead. Rising from a sealed tomb. Appearing before the eleven disciples meeting in a locked room. Scientifically

absurd. Thus Easter presents us with two alternatives. We can cling to reason, embrace science and cede our faith to our culture or we can see beyond reason to the transcendent purposes of God. Those are the options as I see them. But there might yet be another way.

We begin with a question. Is human knowledge best served by limiting our avenues to truth or by expanding them? The answer seems clear, especially when we admit that reason is not the only litmus test for truth. Ask a parent if it is true that she loves her children. If she uses reason to provide proof of her love, she will convince no one. To limit truth to what is rational is to exclude those areas of human existence that matter most. If we can only affirm what reason reveals, we will go through life partially blind. We need not deny the truth of either science or religion. To do so is to diminish the scope of human knowledge.

So this Easter when the world so desperately needs a “hope beyond hope,” the church proclaims, “He is risen,” and by so doing proclaims the ultimate power of life and goodness over death and the forces of evil. No, this is not science but it is the very foundation of hope.

Faithfully
Pastor Jeff



Use of the sanctuary: just as a general rule, any use of the sanctuary is to be arranged with Pastor Jeff first. This is simply traditional protocol so that he as Pastor always knows for what purpose the worship center is being used and when. He will work with the Trustees on the scheduling. So, if you have a wedding or funeral or concert or speaker requiring the sanctuary, contact Pastor Jeff, or the Diaconate if he is not available.

From your Diaconate

The final Lenten evening service will be:

April 7th - Our Lady of Perpetual Help - Pastor Bumshik Min -of Grace UMC

April 14th Palm Sunday Choir Festival at our church., **6:30pm**

Pastor Jeff fell and broke a bone in his elbow, which will require a cast once the swelling subsides. His doctor said he may not drive until then, so the Diaconate is at work to be sure the pulpit is filled until Pastor Jeff's return.

If you would like to send him a card his mailing address is 9 West Shore Road, Grand Isle, VT 05458.

Please keep his full recovery and speedy return to our pulpit in your prayers.

Blessings to you all, from your Board of Deacons.

Palm Sunday Choir Festival 6:30pm April 14th ... for more than 50 years our church has hosted this annual ingathering of local musicians to celebrate the Passion story in song, instrumentals and solos.

Choirs and musicians are in rehearsal now for their individual presentations and the three scores for the combined chorus have been distributed. This year's "something new and wonderful" will be a djembe, a rope-tuned skin-covered goblet **drum** played with bare hands, originally from West **Africa**. ... The **drum** is very loud, allowing it to be heard clearly as a solo instrument over a full chorus mournfully telling that "even the heavens are weeping." Other additions to the combined chorus this year will be the introduction of a recorder in one piece pastorally accompanying an April evening's walk, and a soloist descanting the palm strewn "way for the Lord."



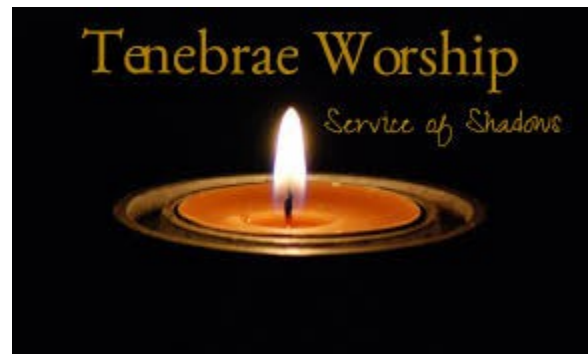
Another addition this year will be the Grace UMC bell choir. For them, 2 tables from downstairs will need to be brought up and placed in front of the altar platform after morning worship that day.

Our organist John Atwood is also busy practicing for his Prelude, Interlude and Postlude, a large part of what makes the festival so wonderful. He also plays for the five hymns, each of which he ends with the final verse being astoundingly re-harmonized.

Something YOU can do to help with the festival, is to bring some finger foods such as fruit, cheese & crackers, small sandwiches. The wonderful hospitality crew can also use your help in setting up in the vestry, serving the beverages, plating the foods, and of course, cleaning up afterwards. This refreshment time after the festival has a hundred or more people, many famished, coming downstairs!

Maundy Thursday ... service of Tenebrae ... 7pm

On April 18th, we will once again hold a Tenebrae (Latin for darkness or shadows) service at our church with the members of Grace UMC joining us.



Tenebrae is a solemn progression of extinguishing one candle for each portion of the Passion story. At first the table of readers is awash in the gentle glow of the many candles. One by one they are extinguished as the emotional weight of the story descends upon readers and congregation alike. It is one of the most powerful experiences a congregant can experience.

Look to the Weekly Email for details on these upcoming services:

Good Friday service at Grace UMC details to be announced

Easter Sunrise Service details will be announced soon.

To be added to the Weekly Email list, [click here](#).

EASTER family worship ... April 21st ... 10 am

Once again we will be festooning the Easter altar with our own blossoming plants. Bring your (labeled with your name) plant to the church kitchen the day before Easter so the Flower Committee can arrange it with all the others. Let's make THIS Easter the most colorful ever!



Tell Janice by email jplarabee216@gmail.com or p.o.box 216 Bradford with info. Need to bring by April 20th

Community Supper is taking a hiatus



it's been such fun for the group of volunteers to be there every month ... thank you all for this opportunity to have served our community!

Lectionary Readings APRIL (Year C)



April 7 - 5th Sunday of Lent

Isaiah 43:16-21 (...*doing a new thing* ...)

Philippians 3:4b-14 (model our life on Christ's sufferings)

John 12:1-8 (the poor will always be amongst us)

Psalm 126

theme hymn: *Be Thou My Vision*

April 14 - Palm Sunday

Liturgy of the Palms for Year C: Luke 19:28-40

Isaiah 50:4-9a (God will vindicate us)

Philippians 2:5-11 (He divested Himself of divine glory for us)

Luke 22:14 - 23:56 (the passion narrative)

Passion Week

April 18 - Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12: 1-4, 11-14 (prepare and celebrate the Passover)

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (Paul passes to us the Last Supper tradition)

John 13: 1-17, 31b-35 (Jesus washed the disciples' feet)

Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19 (Love the Lord who hears your supplications)

theme hymn: [Let Us Break Bread Together](#)

April 19 - Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 ([he has borne our griefs, carried our sorrows](#))

Hebrews 10: 16-25 ([Christ's sacrifice is once and for all and forever](#))

John 18:1 - 19:42 ([the passion narrative](#))

Psalm 22 (God, our deliverer)

theme hymn: [Go to Dark Gethsemane](#)

April 21 - Easter!

Acts 10:34-43 (Peter recounts his transformation)

1 Corinthians 15:19-26 (all who belong to Christ will also rise)

John 20:1-18 ("Tell them I am ascending")

Psalm 118:1-2

theme hymn: **Christ the Lord Is Risen Today**

April 28

Acts 5:27-32 (the apostles respond to the Sanhedrin)

Revelation 1:4-8 (John's greeting to the 7 churches)

John 20:19-31 (the risen Jesus appears)

Psalm 118:14-29

theme hymn: **Breathe on Me, Breath of God**

May 5

Acts 9:1-6 (Saul becomes Paul)

Revelation 5:11-14 (John's metaphor of the flock leader)

John 21:1-19 (Peter, do you love me?)

Psalm 30

theme hymn: **Take My Life**

May 12

Acts 9:36-43 (God stands beside the powerless, the hopeless)

Revelation 7:9-17 (a New Age vision)

John 10:22-30 (Jesus answers the questions of the opposition)

Psalm 23

theme hymn: **Blessed Assurance**

From our Organist, John Atwood

April promises to be an active month musically for the church, especially for the Palm Sunday Choral Festival headed by Marcia Tomlinson who will send out more information.

For the morning services there are two organ pieces planned of note. As Gathering Music for Communion Sunday, "In nomine" by John Bull (~1562-1628) will be featured, so remember to arrive by 9:50 on 7 April! John Bull is a famous early Baroque composer who emigrated to Belgium.

Two pieces by de Grigny will be heard during the Palm Sunday Choir Festival.

The Easter Sunday (April 21) prelude will be a robust work of three parts headed by the title "Te Deum" (Anonymous, published by Attaignant, Paris 1531). More information will be included with the weekly emails.

Coming to our sanctuary May 4th NCC Spring Concerts
Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and Gabriel Faure's *Requiem*.
Performances will be held on

May 3, 4 and 5 in Littleton, **Bradford**, and St. Johnsbury.

NCC will be joined by The Hilltones and North Country Youth Chorus.

What in God's name is going on in Vermont?

Will you represent Bradford Congregational?

The Vermont Conference Annual Meeting takes place on Friday & Saturday, April 26 -27, 2019 at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, VT.

Our keynoter is The Rev. Dr. Rob Voyle of the Appreciative Way and a leader in appreciative inquiry.

Visit our website for information for Annual Meeting (right click on VTCUCC.ORG.)

Registration is now open!

Right [Click here for Registration Information...](#)

**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.**



This Epistle is a monthly publication of the Bradford Congregational Church. It is uploaded just before the 1st of each month. Anyone wishing to receive the email notification of 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](#)