

EPISTLE

November 2019



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

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Word from the Pastor

In 1863, Abraham Lincoln declared the fourth Thursday in November to be a national holiday of Thanksgiving. The Civil War was raging. Our nation divided.

“From 1861 to 1865, it is estimated that 620,000 to 750,000 soldiers died, along with an undetermined number of civilians. By one estimate, the war claimed the lives of 10 percent of all Northern men 20–45 years old, and 30 percent of all Southern white men aged 18–40.”¹

In the face of such carnage, the establishment of Thanksgiving Day as a national holiday may seem incongruous. And yet.

Is it not darkness that makes us thankful for light? Is it not sickness that makes us thankful for health? And was it not the resurrection that made the Friday of Christ’s crucifixion “good?”

When Paul was writing his first letter to the church in Thessalonica, he began and ended with giving thanks. As Linda McKinnish Bridges notes in her commentary of 1 Thessalonians,

“First and last words are often the most significant ones in human relationships as well as in literary documents. Saying hello and goodbye are sometimes more important than what is said in the middle.”²

So it is that giving thanks frames both the beginning and end of Paul’s letter. At the end

¹ [Civil War Casualties](#)

² Linda McKinnish Bridges, *Smyth & Helwys Commentary: 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, (Macon, GA, Smyth & Helwys, 2008) 147.

Paul states: “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (5:18) Paul is instructing the church on how to wait for the inevitable triumph of God.

It is in this promise of victory over the forces of evil, the corruption of justice and the loss of truth that we must finally rest. It is not an easy thing to do. So much of modern life is lived in the moment. Gratitude is hard to come by if it is not delivered immediately. In the pressing crisis before us as a nation, when division and deception seem rampant, it is hard to heed the admonition of Paul:

“give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Yet the fourth Thursday of November will come upon us and we will be called as a nation to give thanks. We within the church seem to be in a unique position to do just that; for we know that on the darkest of Fridays when Christ was stretched on the gibbet of shame, Sunday is coming and He will rise. The real genius of faith is not found in lamenting the darkness that is before us but in giving thanks for the light that has been and is yet to come.

Faithfully,
Pastor Jeff

From your Diaconate

ADVENT DEVOTIONALS, sponsored by the Board of Deacons, will be offered following our service of worship on **December 1st and 15th** in the vestry and will feature a potluck meal and a program for children. During Advent, Pastor Jeff will develop a sermon series with the overall theme of “Living In The Midst Of The Wait.” Our sessions will build on this theme. Please plan on joining us as we seek to bring a spiritual understanding to the four Sundays in Advent.

A reminder: every Communion Sunday the small “Diaconate Fund” envelopes are placed in the pews. It is through your generosity that the Fund is available for helping those in need, be it heating oil, electricity, shelter, food, or medicine. Every donation, no matter its size, is graciously accepted!

If you know of someone in our area who is in need, please contact any Deacon, Pastor Jeff, or our church's Care Coordinator Carole Taylor.

Keeping warm: this is a reminder that if you ever feel chilly in the sanctuary there are fleece throws hanging on the coat rack near the entrance. Please use them!

Do you have a spiritual concern? We urge you to contact Pastor Jeff or any one of us on the Diaconate to listen to you, pray with you and for you in confidence.

Blessings to you all, from your Board of Deacons

BMSA (Board of Mission and Social Action)



Our Fall Book Group will read **The Hate You Give** from Oct. 6 - Nov. 3. The Hate U Give. The Hate U Give is Angie Thomas's first **novel** about a teenage girl who grapples with racism, police brutality, and activism after witnessing her black friend murdered by the police. The **book** became an immediate young adult bestseller and was adapted into a movie shortly after its release. Our book group brunch will take place after church on Nov. 3.

Musically speaking ...

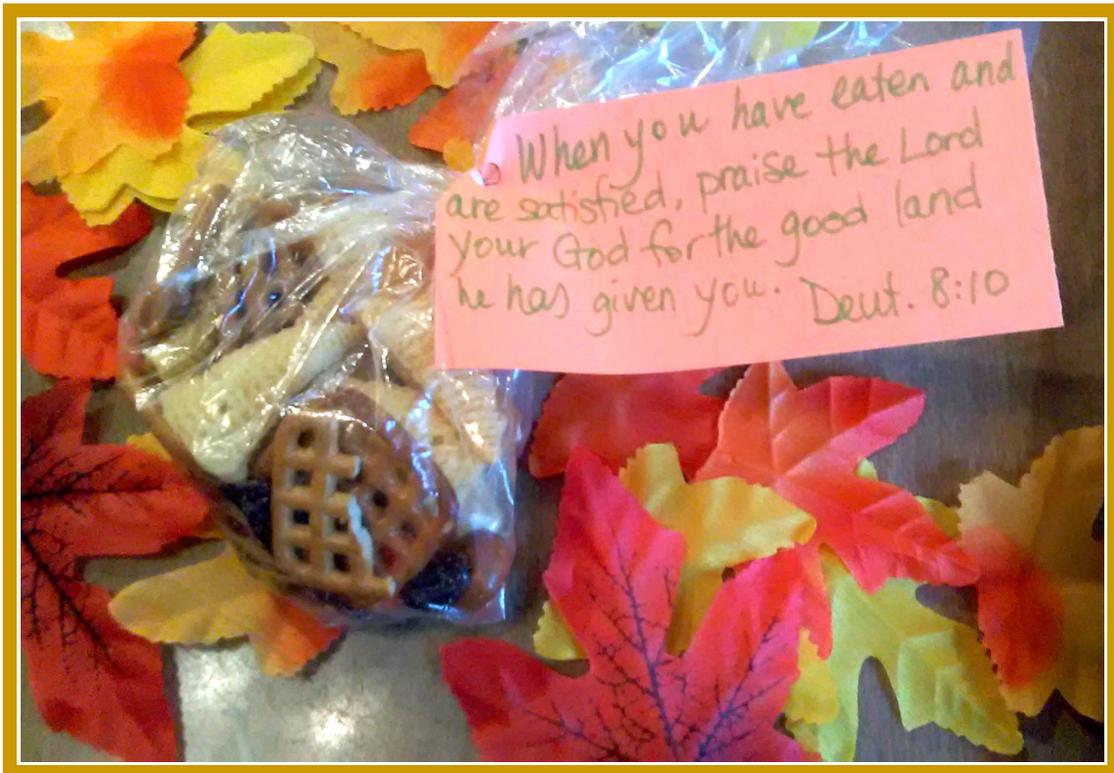
November takes us down the path to winter softened by the warmth of the holidays! The gathering music will feature at least two compositions I learned many years ago. One of them by French composer Benjamin Godard entitled "Au Rouet" (At the Spinning Wheel) was originally introduced to me as a piano role! This is the style of composition that was so loved by our rural communities. Communion Sunday will feature pieces from the French Classical tradition of the 17th and 18th centuries, followed on subsequent Sundays by music anticipating Thanksgiving. Finally on the last Sunday the postlude will look forward to Advent, which Marcia has informed me begins on 1 December this year! This will be a nice full organ piece!

John Atwood

ADULT STUDY

REFLECTION TIME takes place each Sunday from 11:30 a. m. until 12:30 p.m. alongside the coffee hour following church. It is a time to share our reflections about the service that Sunday. It is very informal and open to anyone who wants to discuss the sermon or elements of the service that moved them.

The sessions are facilitated by the Pastor Jeff and are sponsored by the Board of Deacons.



gift bags made by the Sunday School for everyone during Fellowship Time on October 27th

Lectionary Readings NOVEMBER (Year C)



November 3

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4 (the just know to wait and live by faith)

2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12 (a struggle of a paradox)

Luke 19:1-10 (Jesus really shocks the status quo)

Psalm 119:137-144

theme hymn: Take My Life

November 10

Haggai 1:15b - 2:9 (God reassures: I am still with you)

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17 (Thanking God for prior grace)

Luke 20:27-38 (a soap opera of trick questions for Jesus)

Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21

theme hymn: Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above

November 17

Isaiah 65:17-25 (vision of a new earth ... this calls for joy!)

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 (persist in doing well)

Luke 21:5-19 (all that glistens really, truly is not gold)

Isaiah 12

theme hymn: Christ, whose Glory Fills the Skies

November 24 Christ the King

Jeremiah 23:1-6 (neglectful shepherds will be dealt with harshly)

Colossians 1:11-20 (intercessions for the Colossian church)

Luke 23:33-43 (unconditional forgiveness from Jesus ... wow)

Luke 1:68-79 (Benedictus)

theme hymn: O Worship the King

end of Year C in the Lectionary

Search Committee

The committee continues to meet and discuss candidate profiles. Meanwhile, it is examining our church's profile to see where our improvements and program additions need to be updated! For instance, when we all helped write the profile we had only a small and fledgling Sunday School. It is now a thriving year-round gathering of children and has grown to include its own Youth Group. And there are now book groups that meet over a lunch to discuss what they read. And the beautiful Steinway has been fully restored.

So, while we await candidates to contact us, we are all but idle!

Sunday School & Youth Group

It wasn't that many years ago when there were few children who regularly attended our church and there wasn't even a Sunday School! So we know how blessed we are to now have a regular year-round Sunday School with steady attendance, and even a new Youth Group.

Additional teachers are needed for Sunday School. Would you be willing to teach a lesson to our wonderful kids just once? Or maybe a few times a year, or perhaps even on

a monthly basis? Please talk to a Sunday School teacher, we would love to help you work with our kids!

In October, we put out a call to the congregation for donations to help support our Youth Group, and the congregation rose to the challenge! Thank you to those who helped raise \$135 so far, which paid for the group's trip to the Great Corn Maze, and will fund their other activities and projects in the months ahead. If you would like to make a contribution, checks can be made to "Bradford UCC" with "Youth Group" in the memo line.



Youth Group: heading into the corn maze

Thank you for your support of the children in our church. By giving them your love and showing interest in them and their projects, you are helping them build a relationship with God, with their church family, and with their community, and they in turn are building the future of the church.



Morgen taking a spin on the hay wagon at the Great Corn Maze

The Sunday School & Youth Group Teachers
Angela Colbeth, Kim Frydman, Bridget Peters, & Patrick Peters

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.**

VERMONT CONFERENCE NEWS

Take the UCC Climate Survey

Each year the UCC partners with **Blessed Tomorrow** to conduct a climate survey. This survey helps us know what our members are thinking, how opinions change from year to year, where future possibilities for collective action reside, and how our denomination compares with the broader population.

[Take this 15-minute survey now!](#)

Sometimes events and/or changes come up after the Epistle has been uploaded. It's always good to check the Weekly Email for last minute updates.

To be added to the **Weekly Email** list, [click here](#). If you have an area event to list in the weekly Email's "Around Town" section, please let us know (send to mccmarciam3@gmail.com)!



It's Game Supper on November 23rd

This Epistle is a monthly publication of the Bradford Congregational Church. It is uploaded just before the 1st of each month. The deadline to submit news or articles to mccmarciam3@gmail.com is the 25th. Anyone wishing to receive the email delivery of the Epistle 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](#)