

EPISTLE

February 2020



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

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see us on Facebook: **Bradford Congregational Church**

Word from the Pastor

This year, Lent starts on February 26th, Ash Wednesday. Lent always come quicker than I expect. We just celebrated the birth of Jesus and now we are going to focus on His death. Yet these two events are inexorably linked. If birth had not occurred, death would not be inevitable. Yet it is not the inevitability of Christ's death which makes the Lenten season unique. No, death being inevitable hardly merits our attention. Lent is meant to do more than focus on the death of Jesus. It calls us to accountability.

At first blush, this may seem rather farfetched. How can one be accountable for an event that happened roughly two-thousand years ago? We had no hand in the decisions that were made on that good Friday so long ago. But Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit lives in the present moment. Born again in the heart of each believer, Jesus lives and, as I have suggested, for Christ to live means Christ's death is possible. This may help explain why Luther said we all have the nails of the crucifixion jangling in our pockets. Lent is both a reminder of what happened long ago and a recognition of Christ's daily crucifixion on the cross of expediency.

So, I offer a word of warning. Do not come to Lent thinking it is only an act of

remembrance. It is a reminder of our desire to escape the cross, to make life less of an obligation of obedience to God's moral code and more a hedonistic adventure, to ignore the plight of the less privileged and to bask in the cultural benefits we have not rightly earned, to cling to our self-righteousness and to justify what is wrong by proclaiming it to be right. In the end, it is not the betrayal of Judas that should shock us. It is our own.

Faithfully,
Pastor Jeff

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. Thanks to the generosity of donors, the Deacons Fund is providing help to those in most need.

The upcoming "Deacons of the Month" are:

February – Marcia Tomkinson

March – Angela Colbeth

April – Bridget Peters

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.

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!

Sunshine Baskets will be assembled on Saturday, Feb. 15. Help is always needed and most gratefully accepted! The completed "baskets" will be delivered after worship on Sunday the 16th.

Current **Food Shelf** donation needs are placed in the bulletin each week. The collection baskets are placed in the back of the sanctuary and also in the downstairs entryway. Any canned goods and other perishables are always welcome. Please support this vital mission if you can.

Blessings to you all, from your Board of Deacons

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.



Lectionary Readings FEBRUARY (Year A)

Feb 2

Micah 6:1-8 (do justly, love, mercy, walk humbly with God)

1 Corinthians 1:18-31 (the epitome of God's love)

Matthew 5:1-12 (the Beatitudes)

Psalm 15

theme hymn: What Does the Lord Require

Feb 9

Isaiah 58:1-9a (liberate others instead of boasting of your fasting)

1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (not oratory, but the Spirit converts hearers)

Matthew 5:13-20 (let your light shine before you)

Psalm 112:1-9

theme hymn: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Feb 16

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 (will Israel love Yahweh?)

1 Corinthians 3:1-9 (God's people are to work together)

Matthew 5:21-37 (become one in love, and speak the simple truth)

Psalms 119:1-8

theme hymn: Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty

Feb 23

Leviticus 19:1-2,9-18 (part of the "Holiness code")

1 Corinthians 3:10-11,16-23 (Christ, the sole foundation of the Church)

Matthew 5:38-48 (love and serve your enemies)

Psalms 119:33-40

theme hymn: The Church's One Foundation

Transfiguration

Exodus 24:12-18 (Moses sees the glory of the Lord)

2 Peter 1:16-21 (remember, Peter was a witness to the transfiguration)

Matthew 17:1-9 (the transfiguration)

Psalms 2

theme hymn: From All That Dwell Below the Skies

LENTEN SEASON – Year A

Feb 26-Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1-2,12-17 (Yahweh manifests *hesed*, steadfast love)

2 Corinthians 5:20b – 6:10 (Let God transform you)

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21 (do not broadcast your piety to the world)

Psalms 51:1-17

theme hymn: Forty Days and Forty Nights

Mar 1 - 1st Sunday of Lent

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7 (when humans begin to focus on themselves)

Romans 5:12-19 (in Christ we are set free)

Matthew 4:1-11 (Jesus repudiates temptations)

Psalms 32

theme hymn: Forty Days and Forty Nights

Mar 8 – 2nd Sunday of Lent

Genesis 12:1-4a (Yahweh chooses Abram)

Romans 4:1-5,13-17 (justified by grace through faith, not works)

John 3:1-17 (Nicodemus comes seeking an answer)

Psalms 121

theme hymn: The God of Abraham Praise

Mar 15 - 3rd Sunday of Lent

Exodus 17:1-7 (Moses strikes the rock)

Romans 5:1-11 (justified in faith, at peace with God)

John 4:5-42 (Jesus by Jacob's well)

Psalm 95

theme hymn: I to the Hills Will Lift My Eyes

Musically Speaking

Ours may be small, but the choir at [Bradford Congregational Church - United Church of Christ](#) sings every Sunday thanks in large part to its organist/director John Atwood who is always giving us new challenges and honoring old favorites. Recently,, in honor of Rev. Dr. MLK he had us sing "Were You There" (New Century Hymnal version) and "We Shall Overcome" ... impactful! And we continue to host the area's "Palm Sunday Choir Festival" (planning already underway) instituted back in the 60s, an evening for all the church choirs and individuals to come together in one big celebration in song.

The following link is to an interesting blog entry by Vance Wilcox about the importance of choirs in worship.

The Importance of Choirs

... and speaking of the importance of singing ... is there one amongst you who has ideas (or a volunteering spirit!) for a youth choir? The Diaconate would like to hear your ideas.

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!

**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.**

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)!

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](#)