

EPISTLE

January 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

It all seems so stable and still. It is hard to imagine that in marking the passing of another year, we are bearing witness to some rather incredible facts. “Our orbital speed around the sun is about 67,000 mph.” And then, of course, there’s the fact that the globe we live on is not only travelling around the Sun but is spinning at the equator at 1,037 mph.

I remember when I was a child playing in playgrounds that had spinning platforms. You got it spinning by grasping one of its railings and running in the circle prescribed by the platform’s circumference. Then you jumped on and held on for dear life as the centrifugal force wanted to throw you from the platform. This was supposed to be “fun.” It was, I guess. But I remember feeling terribly nauseous and my balance was so thrown off that I struggled to walk in a straight line. I mention this because I am largely unaware of earth’s spin. I stand upright and remain capable of going from point A to point B.



Stay with me. I am about to make a leap that seems unrelated. As I was traveling home on Christmas Eve, I stopped at the Williston Rest Area on I-89. The attendant asked if I had had a good Christmas Eve. I told him I had, that I was a minister and was returning home from the service we held earlier that night. That got him to talking. He said that when he was about eighteen, he had wanted to become a minister but as he matured it became difficult to comprehend how the infinite God of heaven could become incarnate and dwell on earth taking on all our human limitations. That is, I admit, a rational conundrum. He was, I would guess, in his fifties and like us all, he lived in the world of rational understanding where we apply the scientific method to verify truth and postulate the possible. So, I understand his skepticism. Yet here we are celebrating another revolution around the Sun. We will wait for the ball to drop in Times Square and then make all kinds of noise meant to mark the end of one year and the beginning of the next. Few will marvel at the speed of our travel or the spinning of the world that marks the passage of each day. No centrifugal force works to cast us off into the darkness of space. We live in the midst of a miracle that we do not perceive.

Could it be that the birth of Christ, the fact that the infinite God of heaven took on the limitations of human existence, is as invisible to our rational minds as the speed at which we journey through space? Just because we cannot perceive the movement of our world does not mean that it is sitting still. Just because we cannot rationally perceive how God could become human does not prove the impossibility.

So as we bid the old year adieu and usher in a year waiting to unfold, I ask that we ponder the speed at which we are traveling and find room for the humility to wonder where and how God may visit us again.

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.

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

Musically speaking ...

With Epiphany January 5 signals the last day of the Christmas season. We enter a period of ordinary time in which much of the music will be up-beat in contrast to that of Lent which arrives in March. Look for pieces by Handel, John Stanley, and (of course) J. S. Bach and J. Pachelbel. The choir will continue to introduce new anthems.

John Atwood

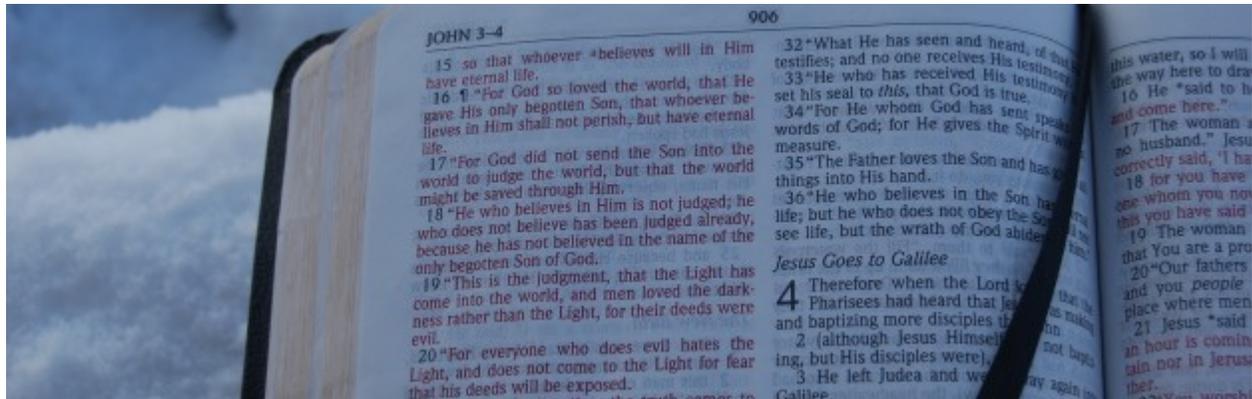
By the end of January, the combined chorus pieces for the Palm Sunday Choir Festival will be selected and distributed to all choirs and individual singers. This year, Palm Sunday is April 5th. One of the highlights this year will be a special interlude showcasing the newly restored Steinway.

Marcia Tomlinson

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 January (Year A)

Jan 5

Jeremiah 31:7-14 (Shout for joy ... blessed with abundant life)

Ephesians 1:3-14 (may God continue giving us discernment)

John 1:10-18 (the Word and its power)

Psalms 147:12-20

theme hymn: O word of God Incarnate

Jan 12

Isaiah 42:1-9 (he will bring *mishpat*/justice)

Acts 10:34-43 (Peter describes his transformed life)

Matthew 3:13-17 (Jesus is baptized)

Psalms 29

theme hymn: When Jesus Came to Jordan

Jan 19

Isaiah 49:1-7 (so that salvation may reach the ends of the earth)

1 Corinthians 1:1-9 (enriched by spiritual gifts)

John 1:29-42 (this is the Son of God)

Psalms 40:1-11

theme hymn: Behold the Lamb of God

Jan 26

Isaiah 9:1-4 (people have seen a great light)

1 Corinthians 1:10-18 (disunity is not to be church life)

Matthew 4:12-23 (abandon everything and follow)

Psalms 27:1,4-9

theme hymn: The Church's One Foundation

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

Sunday School & Youth Group



Reverse Advent boxes prepared and distributed by the Sunday School and Youth ... which were all returned filled to overflowing with donations for the Food Shelf. They were dedicated Christmas Sunday.



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](#)