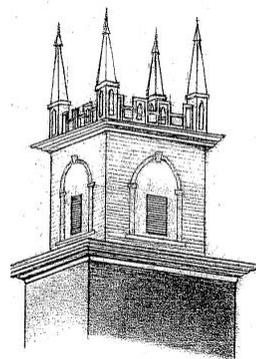


+ **N.E.W.S. CONNECTION**
Pittsford Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
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Message from the Pastor

My first year with you has been marked by anguish, suffering, pain, sorrow, and emotional deprivation here in our community, elsewhere in the country, and throughout the world. Yet, as April unfolds comes a feeling of hope long rooted in springtime's return to life. We are not alone. After enduring such a difficult season of our lives, who doesn't derive joy from seeing the daffodils and crocuses poking their way out of the ground?

The month of April also calls to mind this learning experience from my college days. Boston College's English major were required to take a course in *Middle English*, an early stage of the English language we know today, and for untrained readers, it looked like a foreign tongue. In addition to the course's written examinations and papers, we also had to check into the Language Lab [individual booths, headsets, and microphones] and make a twenty-minute cassette recording of a recitation from one of the required texts. Once completed, my cassette went to a locked box with the professor's name. Like many other students, I wondered if this exercise was a worthwhile or relevant lesson. Would it ever have a practical application? Certainly, it required intense concentration and the self-discipline. Little could I have imagined how more than forty years later that I would again dip into the reservoir of this knowledge.

My recitation came from the Prologue of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, one of the first great books printed in England in the 15th century. (What about the Bible, you may ask. Before the Reformation, public reading of the Bible was prohibited.) In Middle English, the beginning of the text looks like this:

Whan that aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of march hath perced to the roote...

Translated:

When in April the sweet showers fall
And pierce the drought of March to the root...

The frame for the Chaucer's book is composed of stories that travelers tell as they awake from winter doldrums and plan to travel from London to the city of Canterbury. Instinctive to the end of hibernation, "Then people long to go on pilgrimages." Pilgrims of Chaucer's time hoped that by visiting the tomb of the murdered archbishop, Thomas a Becket, they would receive some spiritual or physical boon, like being cured for illness. On a more elemental level, they were ready to get up and go. In teaching English literature, I reached into back to the memory bank many lines and recited those opening lines in Middle English.

The *Canterbury Tales* has returned again, with a novel dimension. Of the various characters who tell their stories in rhyming verse, most of them church folk—the monk, the nun's priest, the abbess, the pardoner—do not live in accordance with Christ's example and thus become the object of satire. The exception—the country parson, who has the last word:

Jesu in mercy send me with to your guide way one further stage
Upon that perfect, glorious pilgrimage called the celestial to Jerusalem

Some years ago, George bought me a "Canterbury Tales" tie, long a favorite, even when widths go in and out of style. As I looked carefully among the illustrated characters, all from Chaucer's time, I found the



country parson! Not having paid attention to him before, I do now. See how some worthwhile things boomerang back to us? A parson in Pittsford! Echoing the country parson of *The Canterbury Tales*, I invite you, after a long winter, to join me and your fellow travelers on a pilgrimage back to the Pittsford Congregational Church where we may all worship together. See you soon!

With the blessings of the parson above who lifts and inspires us all,

Michael F. Dwyer, Interim Pastor

P.S. Look for the tie after Easter.