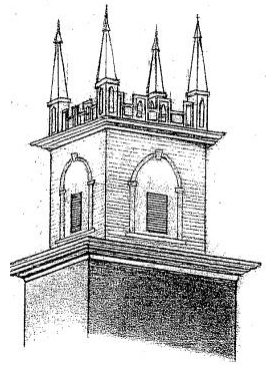


**+ N.E.W.S. CONNECTION**

Pittsford Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ  
121 Village Green  
Pittsford, VT 05763

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**Message from the Pastor**

It is a great honor for me to have accepted your heartwarming call to serve now as your settled pastor. When we are open to the workings of the Holy Spirit, it leads us to unexpected places and opportunities. That characterizes my experience with you and this church over the last year!

The term “settled pastor” has a long history to differentiate it from interim status. Only a few years ago, the United Church of Christ advised interim pastors could not be considered to move into the settled pastor positions because interims, already on the inside track, would have an unfair advantage over other candidates applying from elsewhere. A variety of changing circumstances has led to rethinking this guideline. First, many churches can no longer afford a full-time pastor, and second, there is a clergy shortage.

Of course, for me and for George, living here in Pittsford for the last twenty-two years is a wonderful advantage in already being members of this community. Some of my friends from afar, surprised at how full my “retirement” has become, asked, “How did this happen?” One answer that only scratches the surface, “Being in the right place at the right time.” God works in mysterious ways.

As you have heard me often say, one of greatest challenges in embracing our future together is growing our membership. Like every other church community, beloved church members with long records of service pass away every year. Other stalwart and steadfast members are no longer able to attend church. While some of our committees exist on paper, they no longer have any members! How do we respond to a shrinking parish workforce?

We have already begun to turn in a more confident direction. We should be encouraged by new faces and families joining us for worship on Sunday morning. But we all know people, starting within our own families, for whom setting aside Sunday morning is neither practical nor desirable. Some friends have said they do not find belonging to a church meaningful, relevant, or having any positive impact on their lives. Let us not give up on those responses! All that disconnection and indifference, however, can change, and it will change if we all work together.

In future Sundays, during the time slated for announcements, I am creating an opportunity for more dialogue that goes beyond joys and concerns. We need to hear and listen to one another. In returning and rekindling initiatives already started, let me propose some ideas that need to become actions:

- Evaluating and updating our existing by-laws.
- Expanding our presence on the web and social media.
- Creating a brochure that outlines how new worshippers might become church members.
- Launching Bible studies.
- Invigorating mission and outreach.
- Exploring a weeknight opportunity to come together as church for folks that cannot make it on Sunday morning.
- Growing our Christian Education program.

Let us continue to walk together in Christ, and thank you for your affirmation of me as your pastor.

Michael F. Dwyer