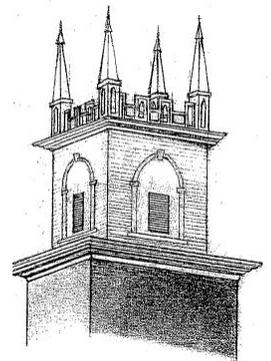


+ N.E.W.S. CONNECTION
Pittsford Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
121 Village Green
PO Box 570
Pittsford, VT 05763



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Message from the Pastor

Often, in the spring, we cease to remember the winter that preceded it. The clouds and the rain are of no consequence at all. We look to each other for our sunshine. And that light is all there is. Love is just like a merry-go-round... Where there was isolation, there is togetherness. Where there was silence, there is music... And where there was tribulation, there is peace of mind. Every season passes, in the end. Sharp shoots become soft leaves, and the fruit we wait for tastes the sweetest. Endure the grief, embrace the joy. All things come. This is how the world turns. This is life itself.

—Heidi Thomas, from “Call the Midwife”

With the news that fills us with sadness and gloom as we continue to watch the unfolding horror of the Ukraine crisis, you may ask why I chose to begin my message with this reflection. These words come from Heidi Thomas, a brilliant screenwriter who continues to dazzle with new episodes of the television series, “Call the Midwife.” This immensely popular program, produced in the U.K., is now in its eleventh season. The program started by bringing to life the memoirs of Jennifer Worth, a real nurse-midwife in London’s poverty-stricken East End during the late 1950s. On TV show, young Jennifer Worth serves at Nonnatus House, community headquarters for the team managed by Anglican Sisters of St. Raymond Nonnatus —similar to but not Roman Catholic nuns.

After several seasons, Worth’s memoir simply ran out of material for the show, and Jennifer’s television character moved on and was replaced by other nurses and nuns training to be midwives. In its current season, plots of “Call the Midwife” take us through 1967, into history that many of us can remember. For everyone, all over the world, it was a time of upheaval and change. I look forward to watching this show on Sunday evening for several reasons. First, at its core, is a dedicated group of people, grounded in faith, who actively minister to a wide range of people, to serve their needs at a vulnerable for mothers, many of whom never experienced pre-natal care. Women, children, and families needed accurate medical information as well as a healing touch. This program is not everyone’s cup of tea. Viewer discretion comes with each episode for sometimes intense scenes of labor and delivery and for the impact of disease, epidemics, and medical tragedies like thalidomide babies. Watching these nurses interact with their patients and their families inspires me with the courage and compassion with which daily challenges are met, one mother, one child, and one family at a time. Kindness unfolds in simple acts. Just think of how much nurses and midwives will be needed in the escalating refugee crisis!

Thus, as we approach Easter, you do not need me to remind you of what’s wrong with the world. We see people suffer from afar, and we seem powerless. What we can do, however, is to remember the light, life, and love Jesus brought to cruel world— then, and now. We celebrate anew the Resurrection, a life over which death has no power. As well as our constant prayer, we continue to respond with generous financial support to the victims of this war. As we continue to witness unrivalled horror, let us affirm all that we have—the many gifts we sometimes take for granted. We truly have little to complain about when we see people fleeing for the lives. This humanitarian crisis has no end in sight. May we continue to be open to doing what we can, when we can.

There is one more deeply personal reason I love the show. My grandmother, Anne (Cassidy) Dwyer (1892–1964) was a nurse-midwife, trained during the time of World War I. She carried her bag into the slums of Providence, Rhode Island, in conditions similar to and much more primitive than what we see on the television show. Remember there were no antibiotics in my Nana’s time! How I wish she had lived further into my lifetime; there are so many questions I would ask. Nana also brought me as a toddler to church. I wandered from my pew [imagine that!], so when she caught up to me and returned me to my seat, she made sure that I no longer sat on the end.

I am not alone in recognizing the love and influence of grandparents, so apparent in our church community. Their love and nurturing will always live in our hearts!



Michael’s grandmother as a young midwife, circa 1916, and keeping him in tow on the church steps, 1963. Ladies, remember those church hats?

As Heidi Thomas wrote, “Endure the grief, embrace the joy” as we journey towards Easter.

With shared blessings,

Michael F. Dwyer, Pastor