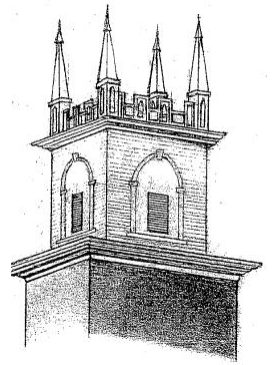


+ **N.E.W.S. CONNECTION**
Pittsford Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
121 Village Green
PO Box 570
Pittsford, VT 05763



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Message from the Pastor

“With the Flock”



You have heard me say from the pulpit that congregational means with the flock. We gathered for a photo, thanks to Bruce Douglas, before our service on April 30. Can you spot our two guests? Michael Walsh and his mother Wendy (Wright) Walsh. Following an orderly and efficient Annual Meeting, Nicha McCuin and her team served a maple-themed dinner in the Fellowship Hall.



Our church community works in different overlapping circles. Church members who also serve on the Pittsford Cemetery Association who invited a group of Otter Valley students to work in Evergreen Cemetery under the patient supervision of Brian Provin. In the photo at left, Advisor Mr. Anthony Peduto does his fair share of filling holes and repositioning monuments. I could not help but notice the flowers for Mary Bushey's parents, Robert and Ida Patch and the flag to mark Robert's service as Pittsford's fire chief. These students gained valuable experience on the work it takes to maintain a cemetery in excellent condition.

The Brandon-Pittsford Reporter offers me and other area clergy to write guest editorials from the pulpit. Below is my reflection for Memorial Day, published in the May 24 issue of the paper.

“We observe Memorial Day as a secular holiday but sometimes forget deeply felt religious convictions permeate its origins, especially for the generations who lived through the Civil War. It has long been a Christian imperative, known for some of us as a corporal work of mercy, to bury the dead. Our national holiday, originally known as Decoration Day, arose from the magnitude of deaths, combatants and civilians, many of whom had no proper burial. Over 620,000 soldiers died between 1861 and 1865—proportionate to today's population, that equates to six million. Numbers tell only part of the story on the local level: Fifty-three men from Brandon alone perished in the conflict. Pittsford sent 155 to war, 21 died. Similar towns have significant tolls. Think of the hole this left in towns where everyone knew their neighbors.

Civil War monuments such as our beloved one in Brandon list the names of those soldiers who died during the conflict, but that list should extend much further in recording those who came back physically maimed and psychologically scarred. Proof of ongoing disability manifested itself in the thousands of later Civil War pension files of veterans, widows, children, and parents who sometimes lost a son who was their only means of support. As our communities coped with loss, they sought reasons to create meaning out of the sacrifices made, and that these sacrifices were not made in vain. Those participating in Memorial Day rituals often sought consolation and support from their churches.

With uncanny prescience, Abraham Lincoln stated the challenges that lay ahead in his second inaugural address delivered a month before his assassination:

With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to find the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and all nations.

Where is our just and lasting peace? We today, in the United States of America, remain a nation deeply torn and in need to healing. As we place flags and markers on the graves of veterans, we also honor the memory of loved family members and friends. May we take the time to mourn, as well as to heed the admonitions of past orators on Memorial Day. History does unfortunately repeat itself. Let us pray that the divisions that tore the Republic asunder do not happen to us again.”

Concluding Memorial Day observances, I was honored to give the invocation and benediction at Pittsford's Memorial Day parade.



Ivy Dixon took this photo, with Bill Powers behind me in his uniform. Bill gave a moving speech about some history of Memorial Day and those who have fallen in battle.

Summer days will continue to be busy at church as we do some minor repairs and work on renovating the nursery.

Stay safe everyone!

With shared blessings,

Michael F. Dwyer, Pastor