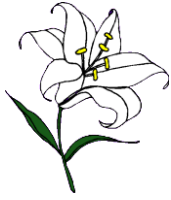




Rev. Carrie Bail,
Interim Senior Minister

Rev. Sally May,
Associate Minister



*“When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
Christ’s warm touch can call us back to life again.
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again like wheat that rises green.”*

(v.4 “Now the Green Blade Rises” by John M.C.Crum)



Dear Members and Friends of the First Congregational Church of Burlington, UCC:

“Love is come again like wheat that rises green.” Perhaps the ancient French melody is what captures my heart in this hymn, but regardless of song these are some of my favorite Easter words as well.

Love is come again. Of course, God’s Love *never* leaves us, but some moments are darker than others, and then it is easy to forget that truth. **“Wintry, grieving, and in pain”** covers most of those life events which may mask Love and even seem to make it disappear. Just as unfailingly as the sun rises, though, the season of spring with its long days of light comes again. Easter arrives just in time! The once-in-history event of Christ’s life, death and Resurrection dovetails easily with our joy at the arrival of Spring. Every year, though, we are called to remember the specificity of God’s love in the gift of Jesus the Christ.

- Christ’s love is unconditional. We will always be beloved children of God, no matter how many times we fall into the trap of individual or corporate sin.
- Christ’s love is forgiving. Because our sincere repentance is always accepted, we are moved to bring such forgiveness to those who have sinned against us.
- Christ’s love is compassionately human. As a human being, Jesus suffered just like any other person. The ability to “suffer with” (Latin verb *compati*) is born in this experience we share.
- Christ’s love is sacrificial: Love is above all for the other, for those in need. It’s not about US as individuals; it’s about the huge universal presence of Love at the center of everything.
- Christ’s love is eternal. There is nothing we can do or say which will make it disappear. Love will always “come again.” Its power over sin and death is what Easter is all about.

As you feel the vast Love pouring into you and your souls at this time of year, please be willing to return some of that vast gift into the beloved community of which you are a part. As you know, this is also our Stewardship Season, and soon we will be “closing out” the old year: help us climb back into the black with this Easter offering. Let **“Christ’s warm touch call us back to life again”**, both as individuals and as one of the beloved churches of Jesus Christ.

From the bottom of my once-again opened heart, I wish you a most blessed Easter.

Your pastor,

Carrie

The Rev. Carrie Bail