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## May 2024: Outlaw's Bridge Universalist Church

*Welcoming Congregation*

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### The Bridge

You are encouraged to join us for 11:00 a.m. church services.

No Sunday School programs and no childcare.

The playroom is clean and open for parents who wish to use it.

**May 5: "Flip Sides of the Same Coin"** – Jimmy Merritt – How some versions of eternal Heaven could well be Hell.

**May 12: "Coming Home"** – Reverend Claudia M Frost – The ache for home lives in all of us. For many people, home is a safe space. It's that place where we can arrive just as we are and know they will take us in. Yet every homecoming has some sense of estrangement as well as welcome. On this Mother's Day 2024, let's explore what it means to come home, both for the one returning and for those who stay home and "keep the light on" as Tom Bodet used to say.

**May 19: "Life is Lived in Groups"** – Reverend Brian Clougherty – I'm studying to get certified as a Group Psychotherapist. As I study, I think about who we are and how we are with others. We can seem to be different people in different relationships – a parent, a sibling, a co-worker, a friend – the possibilities are endless. Let's look at what happens when a group of people get together, not a therapy group, just a group of people, for instance, a church meeting.

**May 26: "Memorial Day Service"** – Ann Malpass– This is Memorial Day Weekend. Ann will share readings and quotes from Military Chaplains and Service Members expressing their feelings and ideals developed because of their military service.



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#### Dates to Remember

**May 9: Lunch and A UW Meeting. Meet at the church at 11:45 a.m. for lunch; meeting at 1:00 p.m.**

**May 12: HOMECOMING! With Reverend Claudia M Frost! Covered dish lunch following services.**



## “Yes, You Can Go Home Again – But Expect Renovations”: John Pavlovitz

A few days ago, we started making plans to spend Christmas week in Central New York with my extended family. It's been a long time since we made the trek up North to my hometown, with both of our kids probably eight inches taller now.

With the flurry of activity, I'd started getting really excited for our return when I was blindsided by a frigid gust of reality: things are going to be very different when we get there.

**Our family will be different.** My dad won't be there. He died suddenly three years ago, and as with loss that profound, I don't think your brain ever really fully resigns itself to that truth. You actually forget at times, and every once in a while, you're reminded that the one you love is still gone. I remembered that I won't get to hug him or laugh with him or watch him marvel at my children this trip. My aunt and uncle won't be there. They both left in the past two years after bravely enduring long illnesses. They were the elders of our family, and the ones whose presence always signaled that heart muscle memory that told me that I was home; that it was the holidays and that despite all that had changed, some things were still the same.

**The house will be different.** I was looking forward to seeing our home again until I remembered that it is no longer our home. Someone else is living there now, with different decorations and different smells floating in from the kitchen, and I can't place my feet there or lay my head down to breathe it in one more time. That house and every room and moment in it will be relegated to photographs and memories.

**The neighborhood will be different.** Some of the favorite places we'd gathered for dinner will have closed down, and new unfamiliar storefronts replaced them. Some parts of the landscape will be as I left them, but some will be unrecognizable. I'll be able to picture some spots perfectly in my head and some will be elusive – and those times will be frustrating. And for every bit that isn't the same about home; for every altered part, for every notable absence, for every loss – there will be grieving.

That's the thing about life and how insensitive it is. It doesn't freeze for your convenience. It keeps moving even when you wish that it wouldn't. You hope that whenever you return to the place you once called Home, that somehow everything could be perfectly preserved and hermetically sealed so that you could open it up and step right back into it and feel the familiar safety of that place and of the person you were when you were there. You wish all the things that made it feel like Home could remain forever just as you remember them – and the fact that they don't is one of the cruelest truths of this life.

Yes, you'll have some of the glorious, unfiltered *déjà vu* you want when something is just the way it was in your mind; the light in the sky, the smell of the woodwork, the sound of a familiar laugh coming from the next room, the pizza that you'd die for. For brief moments you'll feel like you were able to go back in time and observe your life like visiting a museum to something beautiful. You'll recover the pristine artifacts of your soul there untouched and for a few golden seconds you'll be transported back there.

But for much of the time you'll sit in the frustrating tension of attrition and addition; losing some things and embracing new arrivals, simultaneously trying to relive the past and residing in the altered present. You will seek familiar comfort, but it will always be interrupted by the disorienting intrusion of difference.

I'm still really looking forward to being with the people I love in the place where I come from and making new memories together there, but I'll be carrying the heavy, invisible grief of the parts of Home that will be missing and that I can only have back in my memory; the parts I can't reproduce or resurrect or save.

I suppose that's the truth here: You really *can* go home again – you just need to expect renovations.