

United Congregational Church, UCC
6 Institute Road
Worcester, MA 01609



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UNITED VOICES

A Newsletter of the United Congregational Church, UCC
6 Institute Road, Worcester, MA 01609

508-752-3785 staff@ucc-worcester.org Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.

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God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult... the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." (Psalm 47: 1-3, 11)

The earth has changed! The mountains have shaken and trembled! And there is devastation, death, sorrow, and pain! In an instant, life changed forever – for those who went swiftly into God's eternal embrace, and for those who survived! As much as we desire it to be so, life is ultimately unpredictable, uncontrollable! And in those times of utter terror and loss, we have a choice. We can turn away from God in anger and despair – or we can turn to God with hope, as fragile and tentative as that hope might be. We can turn to God, trusting that God will provide comfort and courage in facing the days ahead. We have seen images of people in Haiti – afraid, confused, desperate, grieving. We have seen images of people in Haiti - helping and supporting others; praying to and even praising God! Many from around the world have chosen to be signs of God's love – through volunteer efforts, financial support, and prayer.

While our attention is focused on the tragedy and enormity of suffering in that country, we are equally aware that there are events in our daily lives - events that are not of such cosmic proportion, but that can still shake us to the core. In those more intimate encounters with suffering, we can choose to turn away from or to entrust ourselves to our beloved Companion with hope and confidence that Christ will provide what we need in order to persevere..

It is in that same Spirit of choosing to trust that God is always with us and is leading us in a holy and faithful direction that we have engaged in discussion about the future of this congregation. The decision ahead is about the earth trembling and changing in the depths of our United soul! If we vote affirmatively for the motions presented, United Congregational Church UCC will not be what it once was. Some would argue that United has not been what it once was for a long time now, but this vote will make that fact real and irrevocable. And there is sadness and loss in the realization that church in the way we have always known it will die.

Yet, our faith tells us that resurrection; that new life is always possible. Our faith tells us that Jesus reassures us that we need not be afraid, even as Jesus calls us to bold risk-taking. *Easy? Of course not!* For those in Haiti who have endured such devastation and death, rising up from those ashes will take months and years, if not a lifetime. For those of you have experienced personal pain and sorrow, rising up to new life takes no less time!

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An Open and Affirming and
Just Peace Congregation
of the United Church of Christ

Please be considerate...

Many of us are involved with projects, ministries and events sponsored by United, and it is tempting to just "ask a simple question" or "say a few words" pertaining to church business to others on Sunday mornings. It has been brought to our attention, however, that some feel interruptions of this nature before and/or during the worship service disrupt the flow of the service and their personal thoughts and prayers. Please be considerate of your fellow worshippers and speak to them at another time.



PASTOR'S SCHEDULE

Terry Fitzgerald is usually at the church Tuesday through Friday. (508-752-3785 ext. 106) She is also available evenings and Saturdays for appointments as needed. Monday is her day off. Her home phone number is 508-753-5867, e-mail: tfitz47@charter.net.

If you need to contact the church on Sunday morning, you may now leave a message on the church answering machine. Follow the instructions contained in the greeting to leave a message. The Sunday Host, Ed Bourgault, will be checking for messages frequently on Sunday mornings.

Please call the church office directly if you or a loved one is in the hospital. We recently learned that we are not always informed when a church member is hospitalized. We need you to help us as we try to respond to the needs of our members and friends.

For this congregation, rising up to new life, new ways of being the church, new ways of bringing people in and sending people forth will take effort and vision. It will take dedication, and ongoing commitments of time, energy, and financial support through pledges.

Ultimately and blessedly – in the world, in our personal lives, in our community of faith – God never, ever stops loving, guiding, holding, lifting, uplifting, opening minds and hearts and souls to new ways of experiencing God, especially through connection to others! As we realize that life holds no guarantees; that life can change in a moment, we can do no other than to reach out and grab hold of Jesus – and trust that Christ will lead us – individually and corporately - to the new life promised to us.

Let us pray that those who are devastated can hold on to Jesus until they can someday know peace and new life. Let us pray that those among us who suffer privately will feel God's tenderness caress them, and the love of others surround them. Let us pray that this congregation will be filled with God's grace, be led by the Holy Spirit, and be faithful disciples of Christ.

Terry

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE
FEBRUARY 17
Noon and 6:30 p.m.
Large Parlor



Add to
your
prayer
list

- Prayers of comfort for Larry Iannetti on the death of his father, Ugo.
- Prayers of healing for Joan Kielinen who has pneumonia.
- Prayers of healing for Stan Porter, undergoing medical tests.
- Prayers of comfort for Julie Page and her family on the death of Julie's grandmother. She died just short of her 102nd birthday.
- Prayers of continued healing for Norma Holmes, recovering from heart surgery.
- Prayers of strength and comfort for all those whose lives have been devastated by the death and destruction in the earthquake in Haiti.
- Prayers of hope and healing for those living with HIV/AIDS.
- Prayers of courage and strength for all men and women who are serving in our Armed Forces, especially in areas of conflict.
- Prayers of courage and peace for the families of soldiers who have died and have been injured.
- Prayers of peace and hope for the people of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, especially in the wake of increased violence.
- Prayers for the people of North and South Korea, the Congo, the Sudan, Iran, Kenya, Tibet, and for the people of the Middle East.
- Prayers of hope for all whose lives have been devastated in our struggling economy.
- Prayers of strength and clarity for this congregation in the midst of the discussions about our future.

**ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL
FINANCIAL MEETING
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7
After Worship**