



United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

December 2016



Message from the Pastor

*This is no time for a child to be born,
With the Earth betrayed by war and hate
And a comet slashing the sky to warn
That time runs out and the sun burns late.*

*That was no time for a child to be born
In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;
Honor and truth were trampled by scorn –
Yet here did the Saviour make his home.*

*When is the time for love to be born?
The inn is full on planet earth,
And by a comet the sky is torn –
Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.*

Madeleine L'Engle

This is the season for poets and for those who can see the Light and Love of God shining steadily – no matter what is happening in the world around us. It is easy, in these days, to be overwhelmed by fear and anxiety as we look at all that is unsettled in our country and world; it is easy to wonder if we will ever be able to reconcile all that divides us – religion, race, values, nationality – and live in peace; it is easy to worry about our fragile earth and what can be done to protect it from further damage.....

...and into our worry and fearful wondering: Christ comes! A baby is born and heaven and earth rejoice at the promised Emmanuel ~ *God with us*. We hear the familiar story of Jesus' birth; we sing carols we know by heart – and we remember that Love still takes the risk of being born into our world: God's Light shines in the darkness and nothing can ever overcome it.

With shepherds and angels, we come to the manger and are blessed with God's promise of love, born again this day in our hearts!

Christmas blessings,
Nancy



CHRISTMAS EVE

We will gather for a traditional candlelight service of Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve at 5:30 in the Sanctuary (*Sarah Wyman Whitman Gallery*). Please join us for this lovely evening service as we welcome the newborn Christ Child into our world!

Please note that there will be no Sunday Service on Christmas Day, December 25th. There will be Sunday worship as usual on New Year's Day.



THE MITTEN TREE

Friends,

The Mission and Outreach Ministry elves have put up the **Mitten Tree** in Merriman Chapel. We are looking for donations of mittens, gloves, scarves, hats and socks. White socks are always welcome for Worcester Fellowship. Please bring in your donations and place them by the tree. The ministry will be distributing them to Worcester Fellowship and the Homeless Outreach Program of Community Healthlink.

There are many in the church that have developed expertise in knitting or crocheting items for our tree. Ginny Woodbury and Mary Collins have simple patterns for mittens, hats, and

scarves if you need a pattern. Plenty of yarn is available in the file cabinet in the storage closet; each drawer has color designated on front. There are also some donated beads; however those should not be used in items for infants and small children. Also available are bags to carry the yarn and finished products, some instruction manuals. Check with Mary if you need something you do not see in the closet.

Of course, we are happy to receive purchased items! Thank You all for your generosity.

Missions and Outreach Ministry



MEMORIAL GIFTS FOR WENDELL WRIGHT

This past August, Wendell Wright was remembered in a funeral service at United. Wendell was a long time and faithful member of United, and he and his wife Dorothy have greatly missed being able to come to church in recent years. Wendell was a strong advocate of education and he and Dorothy have asked the Rotary Club in Sturbridge to establish the Wendell L. Wright Educational Memorial Fund to provide scholarships for students at American International College (the alma mater of Dorothy and Wendell). If you would like to contribute to the Memorial Fund in Wendell's name, please send a check made out to the Rotary Club of Sturbridge, with the notation "The Wendell L. Wright Educational Memorial Fund"; checks can be mailed to Dorothy's home; please contact the church address if you need her address.



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Thank you to all who donated poinsettias this holiday season! If you would like to bring your poinsettia home, please take it after the Christmas Eve service or after worship on January 1st. Poinsettias not taken will be given to our less mobile members.



Poinsettia Plants have been given to the Glory of God and in Memory /Honor of by the Following:

IN MEMORY OF:

*My mother, Dorothy Drum
Both our parents
My mother, Lee Anderson
Betty & Roy Bourgault
My beloved wife, Marilyn
Joan Cushman
Enberg-Day Family Loved Ones
Vincent A. Droser, Jr. and III
Judith Quinn
Hennig & Beaudry Loved Ones
G. Everett Holmes
Loved Ones
James & Muriel
My wife, Josephine
John & Althea Orcutt
The Page & Kay Families
Family & Friends*

BY:

*Jeri D. Babinsky
JoAn Bott & Elise Kreiger
Faith Bourgault
Ed Bourgault
Emerson Brooks
Walter Cushman
Ann B. Day & Donna Enberg
D.A. Droser
Dorista & John Goldsberry
Joy Hennig
Norma Holmes
Pat & Peter Keck
Marilyn Kerr
Guy Metcalf
Katherine Orcutt
Judy & Warren Page
Joanna Pickering*

IN HONOR OF:

*Father, Charles Anderson, and thanks
For grandson, Greyson W. Noel
Karen & Greg Wilfrid
George Blanchard & Emerson Brooks*

BY:

*Faith Bourgault

Nancy Elder-Wilfrid
Elisabeth & Darrell Hyder*

May the Peace and Joy
of Christmas
Live in your heart
all year long



*WISH YOU A BLESSED CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR*



UNITED'S THANKSGIVING BLESSING

Last month our congregation was asked to share Thanksgiving with others by making a food donation to the Carty Food Cupboard. Carty assists hundreds of people in downtown Worcester, and has been supported by our church for the past 5 years. The response of United members was overwhelming! Over 500 pounds of nutritious, non-perishable food items were donated, and sent to Carty during November (that's 5 full collection hampers)! Many families will enjoy good meals during the holidays, instead of an empty cupboard, thanks to the generosity of United Congregational Church members. We are very proud of how our congregation always shows its compassion for others, and we wish all of you happiness during the coming holidays!

Sincerely,

United's Missions & Outreach Ministry



Pick Up Sunday: December 18th ~ You won't want to miss it!!!

Our service will begin with a special, jazzy Pick-up choir: little children, big children, babies and adults ~ anyone who likes to sing and make a joyful noise! Gather at the piano at 9:45 and we'll start singing!! (Instruments *might* be involved!!)

As our worship unfolds, we'll all be part of our Pick-up Pageant ~ with special surprise roles for anyone (*hopefully, everyone!*) who can't resist the fun of being in a pageant!! If you want to be part of the pageant (and who wouldn't?!?!?) you can pick-up your role (and costume!) on the way into church and help tell the Christmas story like never before! Plan to come to church *early* – no later than 10:00 so you'll have plenty of time to pick-up your costume and find out who you will be in the Pick-up Pageant!!

After church, plan to stay for our Pick-up Fellowship Hour, and decorate a Christmas cookie or two to enjoy right then and there or bring home to enjoy later! If you're willing to bring some unfrosted Christmas cookies or frosting, please add your name to the sign-up sheet.

How better to celebrate the 4th Sunday of Advent, pick-up our spirits and prepare for the joyful coming of the Christ Child than joining in Pick-up Sunday?!?!?

United Calendar

Dec 18	Pick Up Sunday
Dec 24	Christmas Eve Worship Service in SSW Gallery
Jan 8	Spiritual Life and Diaconate Ministry Meeting
Jan 8	Community & Fellowship Ministry Meeting
Jan 25	Board of Ministry Meeting

Resources

UCC Lectionary Information (<http://www.macucc.org/pages/detail/220>)
United Congregational Church (<http://www.ucc-worcester.org>)
UCC Mass Conference (<http://macucc.org/>)
National UCC Web Page (<http://www.ucc.org/>)



Human Trafficking Awareness Month

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month and in the UCC **we recognize January 11** which marks Human Trafficking Awareness Day in the United States – a day to bring awareness to the world-wide crisis also known as modern day slavery. To raise awareness about human trafficking and kick off a year full of justice advocacy and faithful witness, you and your congregation are invited to engage.

Trafficking in persons is a crime against humanity and ultimately a sin. Human trafficking denies the values of human life, exposes victims to serious health risks, endangers the mental well-being of victims, and impedes the ability of victims to reach their full God-given potential. As Christians, we believe that every human being is created in the image and likeness of the divine Creator, of God. The prophets cried out against the exploitation of the poor and of laborers who are not treated fairly and compensated justly (Job 24:1-12, for example).

The United Church of Christ has consistently upheld the rights and dignity of workers and of women and children, believing that God calls us into community with each other as sisters and brothers, not as exploiters and exploited. The violence done to the physical, psychological and spiritual wellbeing of children and women who are forced into prostitution, the pornography industry, sex tourism and other forms of exploitation are violations of the call of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to love our neighbors as ourselves. The kin-dom of God among us requires us to provide protection for those most vulnerable and to seek conditions which support wholeness and health for everyone.

In a resolution of witness entitled “**A Call to Awareness and Action to End the Practice of Trafficking in Persons**,” the 27th General Synod of the United Church of Christ called on UCC members, congregations and various settings to of the church to engage in education about the issue of trafficking in persons and advocacy efforts to end this criminal and abusive practice.

Respond & Pray

If you need help or have a tip, call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-373-7888. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) is a national, toll-free hotline available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. The NHTRC is not a law enforcement or immigration authority and is operated by a nongovernmental organization funded by the Federal government. In an emergency, call 911. Contact this website below for more information:

http://www.ucc.org/justice_womens-issues_human-trafficking