



United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

February 2020

Message from the Pastor



*We shake with joy, we shake with grief.
What a time they have, these two
housed as they are in the same body.*

Friends,

A friend recently sent me this poem by Mary Oliver, and I've been holding these words close to my heart as 2020 has been unfolding with so many losses of dear and faithful people. Marilyn Kerr ~ a life-long member of United (and its predecessor Chestnut St. Church) died early on Sunday morning, January 5th. It was a gift to begin worship together, lifting up all the ways she shone the Light of God for us; her memorial service will be May 2, when her family is able to be together here. Elise Kreiger died in the early morning hours of January 13th, with D.A. Droser by her side so that she would not be alone when she breathed her last breath. Elise's memorial service will be March 28th. And then, on a more personal note, my mother in law died on January 27th, also in the early morning hours.

I find myself giving thanks for these lives that have so touched my own, and I include among them Jo-an Bott, whose life we honored on December 14th, and Coralie O'Connor, who died early on New Year's Day; some of you might have met Coralie, a member of All Saints, but with the heart of a congregationalist, who never missed a Sunday at United when any of the Jolly Beggars were here.

...and isn't this true: that joy and grief can fill our hearts at the same time? We give thanks for these saints in light ~ Jo-an, Marilyn, Elise ~ rejoice that they are fully at peace in God's heart where pain and sorrow are no more ~ and at the same time, we miss them, and ache for words unspoken and times we can no longer share with them.

I can't imagine what it would be like to not have a church community with which to share these joys and griefs ~ to not have people praying for us, holding us in their heart when we go through a time

of loss; to not have people rejoicing with us when we celebrate. I think of the joy and laughter when we baptized Thea Weise ~ the Christmas angel who watched over the baby Jesus so tenderly ~ yet quite clearly did not want the baptismal water anywhere near her! How wonderful to have a whole community promise to support and love and care for your child, shine for her the Light of God? And how joyfully I anticipate the weddings of Erica Eckensberger and Pam Gurney, and of Ann Rokosky and Alisa Villarreal! How wonderful to celebrate the gift of love and bless these unions!

And I am also so very aware that I will be retiring on May 17th and leaving this church and ministry and people I love so very much ~ grief and joy are so much in my body and heart as I look toward that day.

We hold both grief and joy in so many ways and times in our lives, and always: we are held in God, who carries us through all the ups and downs, griefs and joys each day brings us ~ giving us grace and strength and hope for the journey.

Blessings,
Nancy



SCHEDULE NOTE:

Please note that Nancy will be on retreat beginning **Sunday afternoon, February 9th**, through **Monday, February 17th**. Helen Bross will be providing pastoral coverage during that time. Please contact her or the church office in the event of any pastoral concerns or emergencies.



GUEST PREACHER MARCH 1ST: THE REV. MARK BECKWITH

We welcome Mark Beckwith to United on **March 1st**. Mark is the former rector of All Saints Church in Worcester and most recently the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark. Mark retired from that position two years ago, and is now active in several different ministries, including ecumenical dialogue, "Better Angels" (an organization engaging people of divergent political views) and ending gun violence. Mark brought Nancy onto the staff at All Saints (and promptly left to become bishop of Newark!) and she has been plotting for a long time to show him how much better worship is at United than at All Saints ~ or at least, what a wonderful community of faith we are!



IN MEMORIAM:

We give thanks for the life of Elise Kreiger, faithful Light of God and beloved member of United, even as we grieve her passing into God's peace. Elise died on January 13, after a long period of being cared for in Knollwood. While she was becoming less able to be "in this world" in recent months, she never lost the sparkle in her eye nor her deep faith nor her love for her beloved partner, JoAn. While we will miss her humor and her "reverent irreverence", and her generous heart and spirit, we are glad she is joined now for all time with JoAn. We hold in our prayers her family and all whose lives were touched by her own. Her memorial service will be on Saturday March 28th.

WORDS MATTER... MLK DAY OF SERVICE

On **Monday January 20, 2020**, several members of United, WAMS, and the Worcester community gathered to sort books and pack them into literacy kits here at 6 Institute Road.

The MLK Day of Service planning committee would like to extend a huge thank you to all members of United who showed their support of our first (hopefully annual) day of service in honor of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Thank you to everyone who donated a book, or came to help volunteer.

The MLK Day of Service resulted in the distribution of 255 literacy kits and over 300 books to students of the Worcester Public Schools. ~ **SUBMITTED BY ANN ROKOSKY**



ANNUAL MEETING

FINANCIAL ANNUAL MEETING: SUNDAY MARCH 1ST

Plan to stay after church for the Annual Financial Meeting of the congregation. This will be a time to vote on the 2020 budget and address any financial questions or concerns about our church. The snow date is March 8th.



ASH WEDNESDAY: FEBRUARY 26TH

We begin the holy season of Lent with a simple, contemplative service on Ash Wednesday, February 26th, at 7:00 pm. The service will include the distribution of ashes, a sign of our repentance and human frailty. Please join us as we begin our journey through Lent together.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TASK TEAM

Our "United children" are growing older and busier ~ a wonderful challenge to have! And we are looking for ways to grow our children's ministry along with our children. We are in the process of creating a Children's Ministry Task Team, which would consider the needs of our children and the best ways to provide a strong faith community for and with them. Several people have been meeting with the children for 10 minutes or so during worship, sharing with them a favorite Bible verse or story; this is a wonderful way of helping the younger ones meet the older ones - and vice versa; if you are interested in doing this, please speak to Ann Rokosky or Alisa Villarreal. We are forming a Children's Ministry Task Team, and looking for people to be part of planning for our children. If you are interested in being part of this group, please speak to Becca Williams or Nancy.

United Calendar & Prayer Intentions



CALENDAR:

February 24 Carty Food Cupboard (Wesley Methodist Church)
March 1 NOTE: Financial & Membership ANNUAL meeting
March 9 Carty Food Cupboard (Wesley Methodist Church)
March 18 Board of Ministry meeting

FEBRUARY PRAYER INTENTIONS:

We are a community of faith: praying for and with each other! Each week in our Sunday bulletin, we list several members of United for whom we pray during the coming week. We are including that list in Voices so that those who are unable to come to church will know who is being prayed for, and can join their prayers with ours.

For Sunday, Feb 2nd: Arline & Fred Kimball, Meri Kruse, Ann Lewis

For Sunday, Feb 9th: Sandra Johnson, John MacWade, Scott & Nate Malia, Harry Manoogian.

For Sunday, Feb 16th: Doug McAllister, Michael McAuliffe, Nancy & Tom McMillan.

For Sunday, Feb 23rd: Linda & Bob Michel, Gerry Miller, Ingrid & Tim Miller.

We pray for them to feel the blessing of our prayer as deeply as they feel the loving presence of God.

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/>)