



# United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

February 2015



## Message from the Pastor

Dear friends,

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and restore a right spirit within me.*

...so writes the Psalmist (51:10), offering one of the simplest prayers I know. And truly ~ doesn't the Psalmist give voice to our own deep prayer ~ asking God to cleanse our hearts of anything that keeps us from living and loving as God created us to live and love ~ and as we long so much to do?

When I was looking for a book the other day, I noticed that a **lot** of my books have the word "heart" in their title...so just out of curiosity, I counted: **18**. These books include *A Path With Heart*, *Listening Hearts*, *The Way of the Heart*, *The Awakened Heart*, *The Grateful Heart*, *The Wise Heart*, and, of course, *Heart Speaks to Heart*. **And**, I might add, I am currently taking a 6-week on line course entitled "Living From the Spiritual Heart". **And**, lest you are now wondering, as I was, how many times the word "heart" appears in the Bible – according to Wikipedia: 827.

The heart has often been considered the place where our soul resides and where we meet God. More than just the source of our emotions, our heart, then, is a holy place within us ~ our true center. Is it any wonder that we talk about our heart aching when we empathize with someone who is suffering, our heart being crushed when we are hurt or rejected, our heart breaking when someone we love dies or leaves us....? Our hearts are so vulnerable to being hurt that we talk about putting a shell around our hearts so that we won't be hurt. When we know that we have caused pain or done wrong, one of the first things we do is to harden our hearts so that we won't experience the pain of guilt.

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and restore a right spirit within me.*

I offer these words for us as we move into the holy season of Lent (and also as we approach Valentine's Day!). What would it be like for you to ask God to clean your heart ~ to soften your heart, ease the pain you carry, open your heart to anyone you have closed out? As you pray these words, know that God's own desire is for your heart to be healed and whole, and that God is holding our hearts tenderly in God's own.

Blessings,  
Nancy

**WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!**



We are delighted to welcome the following people into membership at United, and give thanks for the gift of their presence and participation at United. We pray that we might grow together in loving God and loving God's people, in serving God and serving God's people, and in praising God and praising God's people! Please take time to get to know:

**Karen Dorshimer-Chaplin** joins us by re-affirmation of faith; she is an ordained UCC pastor and serves as a chaplain for the UMass hospitals in Worcester. Although she is from Longmeadow, MA, she lived in Minnesota before returning to New England, which is probably why she enjoys exploring back roads of New England and visiting the National Seashore. She likes trout fishing and cooking (her catch of the day?!) and leading worship...hopefully we'll hear her preach at United in the not to distant future!

**Lorraine Silva** comes to us from Forest St Union Church in Methuen. When she recently moved to Worcester, her pastor suggested she visit United ~ and she quickly decided, to our good fortune, that United is "home". Lorraine was very active in her former congregation and hopes to become active here. She is an avid knitter, and enjoys beading, crocheting and embroidery as well.

**David Lamontagne** had been looking for a church home when he first visited United, and, like Lorraine, knew he'd found a faith community here. His husband, George, works many Sundays and so isn't able to be here as often as they would like, but we are grateful when he can join us. David enjoys being outdoors, travelling, exercise and reading, and is especially interested in diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

**Nancy McMillan** has recently moved here from Andover to be closer to family (read: grandchildren). While she is interested in knitting (as a beginner, she'll be happy to connect with other knitters!), yoga, walking (with and without her dog) and cards, she is especially looking to become involved in outreach ministries in the Worcester area.

**Tom McMillan** has recently retired from ministry, serving UCC churches in Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut; he says he doesn't yet miss working in the church, so we'll wait a while before we ask him to preach! Tom enjoys photography and reading (mysteries now that he doesn't have to read sermon help books), and is volunteering as an English language tutor.

**Johanna Spencer** found her way to United via the women's locker room at the Jewish Community Center (evangelism can happen just about anywhere!) and immediately joined Bible study and came on our fall retreat. She works as a counselor and energy healer, and has long been interested in spiritual direction, Reiki, walking, nature and reading...oh, and the water aerobics that led to that JCC evangelism moment!

## Lent Madness 2015



**Nancy wonders: *Which saint will win the Golden Halo?***

For the past three years I have gotten a big kick out of taking part in "Lent Madness" ~ the so-called "saintly smackdown" in which thirty-two saints do battle to win the coveted Golden Halo.

Lent Madness was started by the Rev. Tim Schenck in 2010 as he sought a way to combine his love of sports with his passion for the lives of saints. Starting in 2012, he partnered with Forward Movement (the same folks that publish *Forward Day by Day*), to bring Lent Madness to the masses.

The Rev. Canon Scott Gunn, Schenck's Lent Madness co-conspirator, says, "Throughout Lent, as we're having fun with the competition, we are also inspired by how God used ordinary people to do extraordinary things."

Here's how it works: on the weekdays of Lent, information is posted at <http://www.lentmadness.org> about two different saints. Each pairing remains open for 24 hours as participants read about and then vote to determine which saint moves on to the next round. Sixteen saints make it to the Round of the Saintly Sixteen; eight advance to the Round of the Elate Eight; four make it to the Faithful Four; two to the Championship; and the winner is awarded the Golden Halo.

If you're looking for a Lenten discipline that is fun, educational, occasionally goofy, and always joyful, consider this your invitation to join in the Lent Madness journey. Saints include well and lesser-known Biblical characters, traditional saints of the church, and people who live bravely and faithfully ~ not all of them Christian and often people I've never heard of! I look forward to Lent Madness every year, to the daily email updates about the different saints...and of course to the suspense of wondering if the saint I vote for will move to the next round!

If you're interested, you can learn more and sign up on the website listed above!

## Ash Wednesday Service

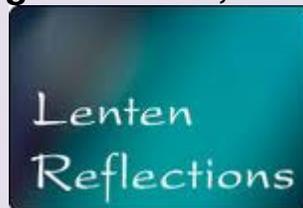


We begin the holy season of Lent with a simple, contemplative service on Ash Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 pm. The service will include the distribution of ashes, a sign of our repentance and human frailty. Please join us as we journey through Lent together.

## Tuesday Morning Bible Study

Bible study will begin meeting again on Tuesday **February 24<sup>th</sup>**. We will meet from 10 – 11:30 in the Meeting Room. Please note that if Worcester schools are closed because of storms, we will cancel Bible study that day.

## LENTEN WORKSHOP "Discovering Your Gifts, Vision and Call"



"From the wisdom of our Christian tradition we learn that God calls us to collaborate in extending God's love. A way to discover the focus for this call is to reflect on God's vision and the piece of that vision that is given to us. To implement vision we are given gifts. Through reflection on our gifts, and call, we find focus and direction for our lives."

Have you ever asked yourself any of these questions:

- What are my unique gifts?

- What is God calling me to do?
- How can I work together with those who share my call?
- How can I call forth another's gifts?

If so, and you are still seeking the answers, join us for a four-week workshop on March 1, 8, 15 and 22 after worship. We will look at what the Bible has to say about gifts and call and discuss what they mean for each of us in today's world. Through discussion, meditation and prayer we will try and discern what gifts God has given us and what God wants us to do with these gifts.

Workshops will begin at 11:50 am and by 1:15 pm. Snacks will be available or you are welcome to bring a brown bag lunch.

Please be sure to sign up so we have the appropriate materials available. It is not required to attend all four workshops, but to get the most out of the series it is recommended. If you have any questions see Serena (sleiser1@verizon.net; 508-870-3242).

## The Board of Ministerial Aid

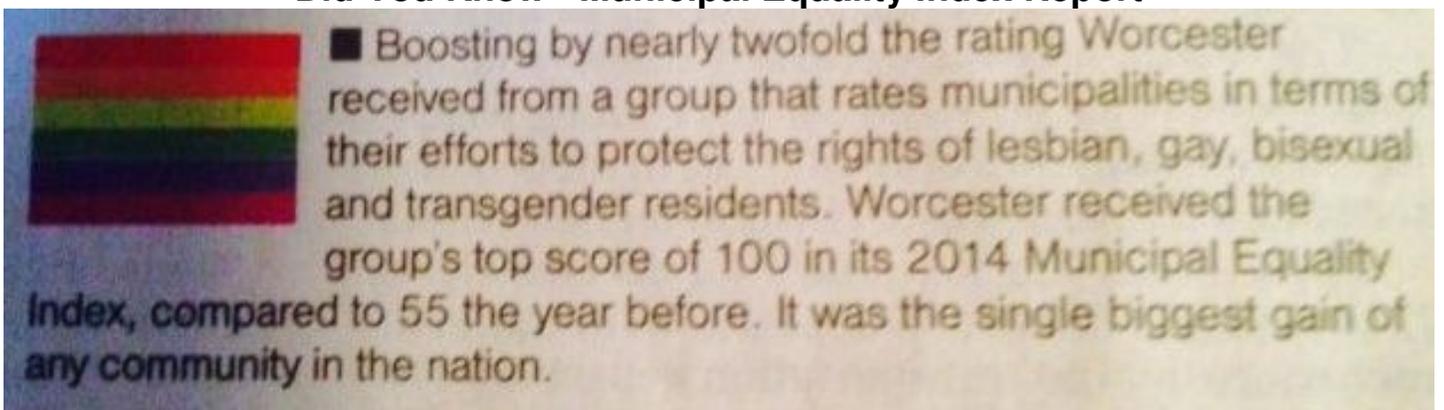
The Board of Ministerial Aid is an independent non-profit organization, incorporated in 1869, partnering with the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ. Since inception, it has provided financial assistance to active or retired members of the ordained clergy and their families who have served in the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ or other congregational churches. Assistance is provided in many forms, such as emergency grants, educational grants, quarterly grants, Christmas gift checks, and pastoral or financial counseling.

Our church enjoys the fellowship and membership of thirteen members of the ordained clergy for whom any of the services of the BMA might apply and be available. Pamphlets which more fully provide information concerning the activity and responsibilities of the board are available here in our "sanctuary".

Applications are available through our pastor or board member Harry Manoogian. All inquiries are personal and confidential.

H.M.M.

## Did You Know - Municipal Equality Index Report



## Welcome to Chloe Grace MacGillivray!

On January 11<sup>th</sup>, the day we celebrate as the Baptism of Jesus, we welcomed Chloe Grace MacGillivray into the church through the sacrament of baptism. We pray that she grow in faith and love, and be a blessing to her parents, Mike and Tiffany, and her brothers Cole and Chase...and, of course, to her very proud grandparents, Judy Casalnuova and Keith Rexford!

## Save the Date:

February 22 – Annual Congregational Financial Meeting

October 24-25 – Church retreat at Glastonbury Abbey

## Calendar

February 14 – Ed Fenner Funeral

February 15 – TCP Meeting

February 15 – Homelessness Discussion Group

February 17 – Women's Religious Book Group

February 18 – Ash Wednesday Service

February 20 – Stewardship and Communication Ministry

February 22 – Mission and Outreach Ministry

February 22 – Annual Congregation Financial Meeting

February 24 – Tuesday Bible Study Resumes

March 1 – Community and Fellowship Meeting

March 1 – Lenten Workshop – Discovering Your Gifts, Vision and Call

March 3 – Bible Study

March 8 – Spiritual Life and Diaconate Ministry

March 8 – Lenten Workshop – Discovering Your Gifts, Vision and Call

March 9 – Carty Food Cupboard

March 10 – Bible Study

March 10 – VOICES Deadline

## 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/>)

## UCC News

### Central Association

#### *Worcester Fellowship Needs*

We have a NEW Prison Ministry as part of Worcester Fellowship. We are looking for volunteers to come to the support group for those who have been in prison. Visiting the prison support group is a great way to get to know people who are transitioning out of prison and rebuilding their lives. Our new prison Ministry Director, Noelle Dattilo, would love to preach about the intersection of prisons and homelessness. You can email her at [prison@worcestrfellowship.org](mailto:prison@worcestrfellowship.org) to schedule a date or to contact her to volunteer for the support group at 831-521-1380.

Other ways you can help:

- **We need** to bring (5) gallons of prepared hot chocolate, 100 cups, and 60 pairs of socks.
- **We need** dark colored hats, scarves, and warm gloves for the winter months! If you have other clothing or coats, please give them to [The Corner Shop at FCC Holden](#). They are willing to donate items to WF members as needed and we do not have storage space or the capacity to match items with those in need.
- **We are also** available to preach and/or visit with your youth or outreach team.

Thank you for all you do to support our Ministry

**WAMS WORKS.ORG**

**WAMS is the mission arm of the Central Association. Check out there website!**

**The following events take place at: WAMS  
6 Institute Road, Worcester, MA 01609**

**Youth Workshop on Family Homelessness  
February 28th  
10:00AM - 12:30PM**

**Nonviolence Conflict Resolution Training for Youth  
March 28th  
10:00AM - 3:00PM**

**And at: St. John's  
44 Temple Street, Worcester, MA**

**Reachout Worcester**

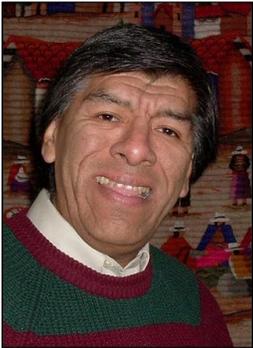
**April 10th - 11th  
7:00PM Friday - 3:00PM Saturday**

## **Massachusetts Conference**

### **Super Saturday 10**

**March 21, 8:00 AM - 3:45 PM**

**Ludlow High School, Ludlow, MA**



A day of worship, workshops and networking for lay and clergy leaders with an address by Ruben Duran, Program Director for New Congregations for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

This is the 10th Super Saturday, and will be the biggest yet with more workshops than have ever been offered before. Register early to reserve your spot!

### **Youth Workshop on Family Homelessness**

**Sat., Feb. 28, 10:00 AM**

**Worcester Mission Society, Worcester**

An all-new interactive youth workshop on family homelessness designed to give youth a better understanding of the decisions families stuck in the seemingly endless cycle of poverty face every day, and what the youth can do both to help families in need, and to put an end to family homelessness.

### **End Family Homelessness Forum**

**Sun., Mar. 1, 2:30 - 4:30 PM**

**First Parish In Bedford**



The 11th annual Concord area family homelessness forum of the Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness provides an opportunity to learn how others in our communities are helping struggling families who have no place to call home.

[Ecumenical Lenten Carbon Fast](#)

**Feb. 18 - Apr. 5, 2015**

Sign up for the annual carbon fast to receive daily emails with opportunities to fast from carbon as a Lenten discipline. Individuals and congregations are encouraged to participate.

