



United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

January 2017

Message from the Pastor



Dear friends –

*For where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there among them.” (Matthew 18:20)*

Jesus began his ministry by calling people to follow him – to join him in the work he came to do. He depended upon his group of disciples, friends and followers to support him; he charged them to teach, preach and heal in his name, and when he prepared to leave them for the last time, he assured them that they would never be alone –

he would be always with them, guiding and supporting them through the power of the Holy Spirit. He promised his friends that any time even just two or three gathered in his name, he would be with them.

We have all heard people say things like, “*I don’t need to come to church – I worship best when I’m walking in the woods...or by the ocean...or on the golf course...*”and I don’t doubt for one minute that we can’t feel God’s presence in any one of those places (although perhaps a bit less on the golf course!) – but when we choose to follow Jesus, we become part of a community – the living Body of Christ. We are baptized into community and we see the face of Christ in and through one another; we are supported in difficult times, held in prayer, blessed along life’s journey and we celebrate together the joys life holds.

The church is the one institution that engages us from birth to death – and it is such a huge gift to see people of all ages worshipping together on Sunday mornings! I love that we have babies and toddlers now at United, as well as people who have been part of this church for over 70 years! We have a wide range of experiences and beliefs and hopes – a diversity which can deepen and strengthen our community.

We are offering two opportunities this winter for doing just that – deepening and strengthening our community: “**Food and Fellowship**” (an opportunity to gather in small groups over dinner in one another’s homes) and “**Faith and Response**” (a three week program in which we will talk about how our faith influences our response to political and social challenges before our county); there is more information on both of these offerings in this issue of Voices. I hope you will join us as we share worship, meals, and conversation about how our faith guides us in our daily lives and commitments.

Blessings,
Nancy



FAITH AND RESPONSE

How does our faith inform our response to events in our country and world? What basic beliefs do we draw upon, what scripture do we turn to, who are the spiritual leaders and prophets who inspire us as we try to be faithful Christians in this time and place?

In the UCC Affirmation of Faith, we proclaim:

God calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be servants in the service of the whole human family, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil...

Many people have been expressing concern and fear about what has been happening in our country since the election, and what the coming days will bring. As a community of faith, we want to understand how we are to live and respond as Christians to what happens in our country and world.

We are planning a three-week program, ***Faith and Response***, in which we will talk about how our faith guides us, and what we believe God is asking of us. We will have several articles to read, and will develop a reading list as well. If you are interested, please join us on after church in the meeting room on **January 22, 29, and February 5**. A copy of an article published on the UCC website, "*Biblical Foundations for Advocacy*" is available on the sign up table; it will be helpful to read it for our first session.



SUNDAY WORSHIP

IN CASE OF SNOW CANCELLATIONS:

A message will be placed on the Church's phone. Call **508-752-3785** and the opening message will direct you to extension **152** for inclement weather information. (Let it ring/does not pick up right away). The message should be on the phone by 7:30 am for Sunday Worship.



IN MEMORIAM

We hold in prayer the family of Warren Page, whose memorial service was held at United on January 4th. Warren was a life-long member of United and served this church in many leadership and volunteer roles; he loved this church and its people deeply. We give thanks for his life, and pray for God's comfort for his wife, Judy, and his children, Christina and John and their families.

Please hold in your prayers the family and friends of Geraldine Hansen, who was known as "Dean". Dean was a member of United, especially active in the '50s and '60s, when she and her children were part of many activities at United. A service remembering and celebrating Dean's life was held on January 13th. We give thanks for Dean's life and ask God's comfort and peace for her beloved family.





FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP!!

...what could be better?! And how better to enjoy both food and fellowship than in an evening with other United folks, gathered around the table and enjoying a delicious potluck supper?! The Community and Fellowship Ministry is forming “Food and Fellowship” dinner groups ~ small groups of no more than eight people ~ who will gather at least three times between March and June. Each group will have a convener who will connect with others in the group to arrange a date, time, and menu for the dinner. If you like food and like fellowship (and who doesn't?!), sign up by January 29th; the sign-up sheet will indicate if you can host a meal, and how many you can fit around your table; if you can't host a meal – sign up anyway and don't worry! Each group can plan their gatherings so that it works for everyone!



THIS YEAR AT CARTY FOOD CUPBOARD

One of the many ministries supported by United Congregational Church is the Carty Cupboard, one of the largest food pantries in the Worcester area. And we certainly do support this mission! A recent letter from Carty Coordinator Nancy Spencer notes that in the year just ended, members of our congregation donated a total of 87 bags of groceries! As Nancy Spencer wrote, the generosity of United and several other downtown churches is very much appreciated, and the reason why the Cupboard is able to feed hundreds of families each month.

This letter also mentions that in year 2017, there will be a couple of changes at Carty Cupboard. First, the Cupboard will seek to distribute healthier food to its clients. To this end, donors should consider contributing foods like Pasta or Minute Rice (both brown & white), instead of Canned Meals. Canned vegetables should be of the low sodium variety, and Canned Fruits packed in fruit juice or light syrup. And as always, items like Cereal, Peanut Butter, Jellies, and Pasta Sauce are welcome. In addition, Carty can also use personal care items like Toothpaste, Shampoo, and Diapers (in sizes 1-6).

The monthly volunteer schedule of United Congregational members will be changing too. For 2017, volunteers from United will distribute food at Carty Cupboard on the last Monday evening of each month. Our next shift will be on Monday, January 30th, at the usual time of 5:30 to 7:30 pm. Monthly reminders will be placed in Voices and United's Google Group about this change, which is being made to better accommodate the needs of the Cupboard's clients.

Anyone wanting more information about donations or volunteering can contact Tim Camp anytime at 508-798-6997, or at timbcamp@aol.com. We also thank everyone who has fed the hungry through their involvement with Carty Cupboard, and hope all have a Blessed New Year!

United's Missions & Outreach Ministry



GUEST PREACHER: JANUARY 29TH

On January 29th, we will welcome the Reverend Bob Bachelder to our pulpit. Bob is the minister and president of the Worcester Area Mission Society (WAMSWorks), the agency to which United "gifted" our building and endowment in March of 2011. We are partners in ministry with WAMS, and are grateful for the opportunity to hear more about the work WAMS is doing in our community.

United Calendar

- Jan 25 Board of Ministry Meeting
- Jan 30 Carty Cupboard Volunteer Day/Wesley United Methodist Church
- Feb 12 Spiritual Life and Diaconate Ministry Meeting
- Feb 26 Community & Fellowship Ministry Meeting
- Feb 26 Annual Financial Meeting (snow date of 3/5)

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/>)

God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



Moral Monday rallies people of faith, kicks off month of justice advocacy

January 06, 2017

Written by Anthony Moujaes

In the month of January when a new Congress convenes, a new president is sworn in and Cabinet members are confirmed, voices from the United Church of Christ are joining others devoted to justice to demonstrate their love of neighbor — regardless of race, religion or gender — attempting to build a just world for all.

Civil rights leaders and clergy are hosting an interfaith "Moral Monday March against Trump's cabinet of bigotry" in Washington, D.C., on Monday, Jan. 9, a day before the U.S. Senate begins hearings to confirm Sen. Jeff Sessions (Ala.) as Attorney General. The appointment deeply troubles Sandy Sorensen, as well as other faith leaders, because of Sessions' history of making racially-charged comments — which cost him a seat as a federal judge in 1986.

"As people of faith, we hear a clear call echoed throughout Scripture to work for the just and fair treatment of all people, especially the most vulnerable among us," said Sorensen, director of the UCC office in Washington, D.C. "The just and fair treatment of all people under the law is the responsibility that Sen. Sessions is being asked to carry out as Attorney General, and his record raises grave concerns about his ability to bear that responsibility."

"The United States Attorney General is often referred to as 'the Peoples Lawyer,' responsible for ensuring the fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans," Sorensen added. "It is a position with broad powers to impact civil and human rights in a number of significant areas." The Moral March, the first of many **justice-related actions** this month, is taking place at Lutheran Church of the Reformation, organized by the Rev. William Barber, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who founded the Moral Monday movement in North Carolina. During those rallies, tens of thousands of people gathered weekly at the state capitol to oppose the legislature's actions.

The Rev. Traci Blackmon, acting executive of UCC Justice and Witness Ministries, has **criss-crossed the nation** with Barber and other religious leaders in a "moral revival" tour across 22 states that calls for principles of love, justice and mercy for all. The most recent stop, in the nation's capital on New Year's Day, was where Barber called for an agenda that is anti-racist, anti-

poverty, pro-justice, and pro-labor.

"Because the 115th Congress has convened with a political agenda that does not have at its core the well-being of all of God's creation, and the proposed Cabinet appointments of the president-elect promise more of the same, those who are committed to peace and justice for all must remain diligent in our resolve to speak and act on behalf of the poor, and the targeted, We participate in this Moral Monday witness to call for the U.S. Senate to practice due diligence and carry out its constitutional responsibility to carefully and thoughtfully review each nominee before it," Sorensen said. "The American people deserve nothing less."

Said Blackmon, "Our participation in this Moral March is not contingent upon political affiliation, but rather is rooted in what we believe to be at the heart of the Gospel: the care of the poor, the protection of the vulnerable, and the inclusion of all humankind. Unless and until these moral principles became the guiding force of the incoming administration, the United Church of Christ will continue to show up and stand for justice for all."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.ucc.org/news>
