



# United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

June 2017

## Message from the Pastor



Friends,

If you have been at church recently, I hope you saw two signs that are now placed on our lawn on Sunday mornings:

*No matter where you are from,  
We're glad you're our neighbor.*

...and:

*We believe  
Black lives matter  
No human is illegal  
Love is love  
Women's rights are human rights  
Science is real  
Water is life  
Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere*

The first sign is written in Spanish, English and Arabic, and proclaims words of welcome that – sadly – are radical in these times. What does it mean to say that we are glad someone is our neighbor? And do we really mean it ~ or are there some people we would rather “love from a distance”? I hope this sign will be more than just a statement of welcome...I pray it will also challenge us, each time we see it, to ask ourselves how welcoming we really are, and to honestly reflect on whether there are some people we would rather not have in our neighborhood or our church. This sign can be a touchstone for our prayer as we pray to be the kind of church where – truly – we are glad to see everyone who comes to our door!

The second sign brings together the signs we have seen in rallies, marches and demonstrations over the past few years – naming places in need of our prayer and action. It makes clear that at the heart of our faith as people of God, is our responsibility to care for this world God has entrusted to our care. We are partners with God, which means we are

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called to be God's hands and heart in the world: caring for the environment, which we know is threatened by those who deny the impact of human activity; breaking down walls designed to keep people out based on their nationality, ethnicity, religion or sexual identity; recognizing that we do not exist in a vacuum, but are deeply connected to one another, and thus share a responsibility for ensuring that all of God's people are treated with respect and compassion.

We can be ~ and we are ~ a much needed Light for those who are our neighbors here in Worcester, as well as a Light for the larger world....and for that I give thanks!

Blessings,  
*Nancy*

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## **COMMUNITY MUSICIAN: FAREWELL AND WELCOME!**

On June 4<sup>th</sup>, we thanked **Jannatha Coffin**, our Community Musician, for her three years in that position. Because of time commitments, Jannatha has resigned as our musician, but, I am glad to say, will continue along with her family to be a member of United. We are grateful for all that she has done during the past three years ~ for her faithfulness, her willingness to share her musical gifts with us, her spirit! We have been greatly blessed to have had her as our musician ~ ~ and are grateful that we are not losing her as a member!

And so ~ on June 18<sup>th</sup>, we will welcome back Suzie Hager as our Interim Community Musician! Suzie was a guest musician several times before Jannatha joined our church, and we are delighted that she is available and willing to be with us while we discern who we are looking for to lead our music. Suzie has a rich background in music and brings us her many gifts; she plays the piano and guitar and is also a composer. Our hope is that Andrew Bellesis will be joining her on many Sunday mornings and they will share leading our music! Please join us in welcoming Suzie!

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# MACUCC ANNUAL MEETING



On Saturday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, Nancy, Katherine Orcutt and Karen Dorshimer-Chaplin will be attending **the MACUCC Annual Meeting** in Hartford, Ct. This is a momentous meeting, at which the Connecticut and Rhode Island conferences will join with us in discerning whether we will join together to become a new conference – the Southern New England Conference. Please hold all who are gathering for this meeting in your prayers.

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## ***CHURCH DIRECTORY***

If anyone has any **UPDATES OR CORRECTIONS** to add to the Church Directory, please submit any of 3 ways: 1) send to church email any time, 2) leave a message on church voice-mail, or 3) update the clipboard-sheet on Walter's table. Thank you!

EMAIL: [staff@ucc-worcester.org](mailto:staff@ucc-worcester.org) or phone 508-752-3785.



## LETTER FROM GRETCHEN SWITZER

June 8, 2017

Friends,

It is my great honor to be teaching three of our young men in Confirmation Class. Typically, United Church of Christ congregations offer Confirmation to kids in their eighth grade year. However, because we have three young men, ages 10-13, this year, I offered to begin their confirmation training now and will be teaching them for 18 months, at which point they will each decide if they wish to become "adult" members of our church or not. The class includes Harry Gill, Karry Gill, and Steven Pietriowicz.

For those who have not grown up in the United Church of Christ tradition, the Rite of Confirmation is offered to teenagers who wish to become official "members" of the church. The Rite typically takes place at the end of one year of weekly instruction. In our case, we are meeting for Confirmation instruction only once a month for 90 minutes on the third Sunday of the month, so we will extend the classes to cover 18 months. Training will also include some field trips and projects which you will be hearing about as they occur. I also hope to include the boys in worship leadership as we move forward.

It is customary to have adults in the congregation serve as mentors for Confirmation students. I am so grateful to have four wonderful church members who have agreed to take the journey with our students: Darrell and Elizabeth Hyder, Gloria Beaudry and Katherine Orcutt.

As we begin the confirmation journey together, we are studying the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith and learning what our

congregation believes. This is just the beginning, but everything we do beyond this, will relate back to the Statement of Faith. My initial focus is on how we live as Christians in the world, how does what we believe about God and Jesus inform the way we understand other people and how does our faith affect how we treat others.

Sometime this summer, on a Sunday afternoon, I am planning to take the boys and their mentors out to Overlook Farm, the Heifer Project farm in Rutland, to learn about how Heifer project is caring for people around the world and how local congregations support their efforts.

Please keep Harry, Karry and Steven, as well as their mentors - Katherine, Gloria, Elizabeth, and Darrell - in your prayers as they make this journey together.

Thank you! ~ Gretchen Switzer



### SHARING FELLOWSHIP

As we begin enjoying the warmer weather, there will once again be some changes to United's Fellowship Table. Starting July 2<sup>nd</sup>, we will not have any assigned hosts for the after-worship Fellowship that we all enjoy. Beverages will still be provided every Sunday, but we are asking all members to consider occasionally bringing in some snacks to share. This informal system has worked well the last few years, while allowing our hosts to enjoy a well-deserved break. Our regular Fellowship schedule will resume September 10<sup>th</sup>, but meanwhile we hope everyone will enjoy the relaxed conversations and sharing every Sunday this summer



## **THANKS FOR SUPPORTING THE WALK!**

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, United Congregational Church participated in the Walk for the Homeless, an annual event supporting local organizations working to prevent homelessness. In addition to raising awareness about the lack of affordable housing in many of our communities, the funds generated by the Walk help support the Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance, which assisted over 9,000 households last year. Other beneficiaries include the Hope for Housing Program, Friendly House, the Interfaith Hospitality Network, and St. John's Food for the Poor services.

Our congregation has supported the Walk generously for many years, and 2017 was no exception. A team of 6 from United traveled the three mile course, and just as impressive, almost \$800 was donated to the Walk by church members. The Missions & Outreach Ministry has voted to match these donations, which will bring our church's total giving to \$1,600!

We thank everyone who supported this vital ministry that offers help and hope to so many right in our own neighborhoods. The kindness and concern for others that was displayed on May 21<sup>st</sup> was truly amazing, and yet another example of the faithfulness of United Congregational Church members. Thanks to all of you!

~ **United's Missions & Outreach Ministry**





### United Calendar

- June 26 Carty Cupboard Volunteer Monday / Wesley United Methodist Church
- July 3-10 Pastor Nancy's vacation
- July 26 Board Of Ministry Meeting
- July 31 Carty Cupboard Volunteer Monday / Wesley United Methodist Church

### 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 LEADERSHIP: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR WHICH THE CHURCH WAS BORN**

June 02, 2017

*This statement from the leadership of the United Church of Christ condemns President Donald Trump's decision to abandon the Paris Climate Accords.*

President Trump's decision to abandon the Paris Climate Accord violates the values and vision that are basic to Christian faith. Our Judeo-Christian heritage teaches that the Earth and its web of life are precious in God's sight (Genesis 1-2:3), that the Earth belongs not to us but to God (Psalm 24), and that we are entrusted with loving the Earth as God loves it (Genesis 2:15). As followers of Jesus, we are committed to God's mission of reconciling people with each other and with the whole of creation.

Withdrawing from the Paris Climate Accord is a tragic mistake, and we applaud the [Parliament of the World's Religions strong condemnation](#) of the President's decision. We concur that this decision is scientifically, economically, medically, politically and morally wrong. With heartache we recognize the devastating toll of suffering that will be exacted by this Administration's refusal to address the climate crisis. We are appalled by the Administration's unwillingness to join with other nations in protecting and stabilizing the atmosphere upon which our species - and so many other forms of life - depend.

Even as we grieve the death-dealing trajectory of this decision, we rejoice that many people and institutions are taking creative steps locally, regionally, and nationally to build a more just and sustainable future. For example, we applaud the [mayors of 30 American cities, governors of numerous states and leaders of hundreds of American companies](#) who are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

This historic moment provides Christian communities with a powerful opportunity to bear witness to the sacredness of God's creation and the urgent call to preserve it. This is our chance to be the church. Episcopalians and other members of the Anglican Communion recognize [Five Marks of Mission](#). The Fifth Mark is "to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth." The United Church of Christ affirms this vocation in its new mission initiative known as [the Three Great Loves](#), one of which is love of creation. If we listen carefully, the voice of our still-speaking God resounds above the jeers and cheers in response to Trump's decision. God is calling our congregations and clergy to rise to the occasion and to become bold witnesses to the creative power of God.

Now is the time to bear witness to the Christ who rises from the tomb and who proclaims that life and not death will have the last word.

We call upon our congregations and clergy to embrace this moment of opportunity in three ways:

- **Accept the mantle of moral leadership**  
Now the time for clergy to speak from their pulpits about the moral obligation of our generation to protect God's creation. Let the world know that whatever the current American administration may say or do, the Jesus movement will not back away from God's call to protect our common home.



- **Incarnate change**

Now is the time for congregations and for every person of faith to set a moral example through our own words and actions. As individuals and as communities, we can commit to making decisions of integrity in our energy choices, and to holding our leaders accountable to do the same.

- **Proclaim truth in the public square**

Now is the time for communities of faith to be bold and courageous in proclaiming truth in the public square. It is now abundantly clear that the Federal Government will not address the greatest moral challenge that the world has ever faced. It is up to us.

Let us commit to resist all expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and demand new sources of renewable energy that are accessible to all communities. As people of faith, we can and we must change America's understanding of the story that our generation is writing. We must begin a new story - a story that is not dependent on fossil fuel or on wealth for the few and misery for the many.

In the streets, at the State House, with our phones and emails, by committing our time, financial resources and prayers - it is up to us - we the people - to bend the moral arc of justice. And we will.

Faithfully yours,

The National Officers of the United Church of Christ

*The Rev. John C. Dorhauer, General Minister and President*

*The Rev. Traci Blackmon, Acting Executive Minister, Justice and Witness Ministries*

*The Rev. James Moos, Executive Minister, Wider Church Ministries*

The Council of Conference Ministers of the United Church of Christ