



# United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

June 2019

## Message from the Pastor



Dear friends,

On Pentecost we gathered – a wonderful service of celebration: giving Bibles to our older youth, baptizing Xander Williams, annual meeting woven through the service ~ and the coming of the Holy Spirit into our lives and world! Pentecost was the perfect time to lift up and celebrate the ways in which the Holy Spirit inspires and empowers our many ministries. Truly – we are blessed!

We also celebrated the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MACUCC voting to become an Open and Affirming conference. United was one of the first congregations to become ONA, and we are grateful for those whose faithful witness and commitment to justice and inclusion opened hearts and doors to God's people in the LGBTQ community. Truly – we are blessed!

It was wonderful to present Bibles to our three older youth – Harry and Karry Gill and Steven Pietrowicz, all of whom we have watched grow up. As we baptized Xander – our youngest member – we celebrated our growing children's ministry; you'll see children taking part in worship more often now – helping light candles at the start of worship and serving as liturgist; you'll notice, too, the children's reading corner we have arranged outside my office,

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creating an inviting space for children during worship and fellowship. Truly – we are blessed!

Several people had asked for copies of Sunday's sermon, so it is included in Voices. **[See below]**. It is formatted for preaching – and so that the rhythm of the sermon is obvious.....if you read it, you will see why that is necessary!

I told our moderator, Tim, that the one thing I wanted to make sure he said in our annual meeting/worship service is that “What happens at United doesn't stay at United!” ~ and that is my prayer: that we carry the gift of the Spirit that we experience at United out into our community and world ~ spreading the grace and power, the life and love of the Holy Spirit far beyond our doors!

Blessings,  
**Nancy**

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**SERMON: June 9, 2019 ~ Pentecost, Baptism, Bibles, Annual Meeting...**

Acts 2:1-21; John 14:8-27

*On Pentecost they gathered quite early in the day,  
A band of Christ's disciples, to worship, sing and pray.  
A mighty wind came blowing, filled all the swirling air,  
And tongues of fire a-glowing inspired each person there...*

We, **too**, have **gathered** this **morning** ~ but **later** in the **day**...  
We've **baptized**, we've **sung** ~ given **Bibles** and **prayed**,  
**Seen God's Light**, heard **God's word**,  
Shared **Christ's peace** ~ ~ yet we're **barely** a **third**

Of the **way** through our **service!** And **so** you **may think**,  
Can I **weave this together?!** I **smile**, and I **wink!**  
This **poem** will serve as my **sermon today**  
I **hope** you'll **forgive me** ~ I **hope** that you'll **stay!**

**Today** we sure **celebrate**: God's **Spirit** on **each one!**  
And **it's only fitting** to **have us** some **fun!**  
In a **world** that's **so troubled**, a **time** of **such fear**  
**We come proclaiming**: God's **love** ~ present **here!**

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On **Pentecost** they gathered ~ from countries **far** and **near** ~  
through the **gift** of **Holy Spirit**, each one **able** now to **hear**  
The **Word** of God's **great power**, the **Word** of God's **great love** ~  
Poured **out** on **all** who gathered: **rushing wind** from heav'n **above**...

**There were doubters** – aren't there always – quite **sure** that folks were drunk...  
**Always eager**, more's the pity, to **mockingly** debunk  
The **myst'ry** of God's **presence** ~ ~ thus **inspiring us** to be  
Faithful **witnesses**, **embodying**: God's **grace** for **all** to see!

In the **chaos** of *that morning* ~ rushing **wind** and **tongues of fire** ~  
Came God's **Spirit** to a **people**, who **feared** that **things were dire**;  
For **though Jes-us now** had **risen**, thru God's **strength** and **pow'r** of **life**

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In the **world** there *was* *division*, among **nations** there *was* *strife*....

The *people of those days* – some were **Gentiles**, some were *Jews* –  
**Were not always happy** to hear the *great good news*

That **Jesus Christ** had *risen!* He'd been **seen**, he'd *blessed* and **dined**  
With his *friends* and his **disciples** ~ who now *eagerly sought to find*  
**Ways to spread word** of his *power*, to *spread word* of his *grace*,  
To **show** the *world* Christ's **gift of love**, *reflected in each face*....

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And *isn't that why* ~ we have *come here today*:  
Hoping **God's Spirit** will *now find its way* ~  
And rest *lightly upon us*, its **blessings** *bestow*  
On *us now* and *each day*, and **help us** to *grow*

In **kindness** and *faith*, **under-standing** **God's call**  
To **serve God** with *love*, as we **serve one and all**.  
We're **from different places**, with our **own different needs**  
But we **all have within us**: *holy wonderful seeds*

Of poss-i-bilities **beyond** *imagining*, **God's gift** at our *birth* ~  
So we **bring** *Light and Love* to **God's people** on *earth!*  
We **blessed** and we *baptized* **Zoe's brother** ~ *Xander Chen*,  
His **life in Christ beginning** ~ he'll grow **up so soon** and *then*

Like **Karry**, **Steve** and **Harry**, he'll **learn** and *he will grow*,  
He'll have **love** and face **challenges** ~ like **them: come to know**  
**Whatever** *life gives him*, he **never need doubt**  
That he's **always surrounded** by *God's love* about.

So **here** at *United*, we **plan** and we **dream**  
Of **ways** we can **witness**: we **faithfully** *scheme*  
How to **care** for *God's people*, to **serve those in need**...  
To **shelter** the *homeless*, the **hungry** to *feed*....

Through *Mission and Outreach* **we** make our **mark**  
The *light* of our **ministry** **shines** in the *dark*;  
We **walk**, we *make lunches*, we *spend the night* ~  
Our **care** for *God's people*: **spirit-filled**, **shining bright!**

We **delight** in the **children** now *filling our space*;  
We **all** do our *best* to **show them God's grace!**  
We **bring** them to **worship**, we **read** them *new books*,  
We **welcome** *each one* with **warm hugs** and *kind looks*...

Our **Spiritual Life** and **Diaconate team**  
Over-*sees* **children's ministry**, and *continues* to **dream**  
Of **ways** we can **be** both **creative** and **bold** ~  
In our *worship* and *learning*, lest we **tire** and *grow old!*

**Advent** and *Easter*, **Lent**, *Christmas* and **more**  
Couldn't **happen without them**, *believe me* ~ *I'm sure*:  
For **they** are the *ones* who **plan** and **prepare**  
And **all that they do** is *done* with **such care** ~ ~

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As is **true** for the *team* who knows **just what to do**  
When we **need special luncheons** ~ for **they** are the **glue**  
Who **hold us together** when it comes to **fun**:  
Planning **fellowship**, taking *photos* ~ their **work never done!**

**Community and Fellowship**: we **bow before you!**  
You **feed us, retreat us**, your **smiles always true!**  
With **Emerson Brooks**, you plan **picnics each fall** ~  
**Where all are welcomed**, great **fun had by all!**

We **couldn't survive**, we'd **be up a tree**  
If it **wasn't** for *Stewardship* ~ such a **great ministry...**  
**Budgets and contracts**, urging **us each to give**  
What we **faithfully can**, so **our church can live**

As a **witness to grace**, to be **vibrant** and *grow*,  
And **reach out** to **those** who are **longing to know**  
There's a **place of inclusion**, a **place** where *God's love*  
Is **freely poured out** as from *Heaven above!*

There's a **place in our world**, I **firmly believe**  
For the **ministry of United** ~ the **ways we conceive**  
What it **means to be church** ~ in **this** time and **this** place:  
We **seek to embody** the **spirit of grace**

Christ **lived** and Christ **taught** ~ and then **sent us the Spirit**  
So **even today** – our **hearts open**, we'll *hear it*:  
God's **Word** to God's *people*: "**Fear not**, I am here ~  
You **are my Beloved** ~ you **never need fear**

For I'm **always with you**, giving **power to do**  
The **work I've entrusted** – with **great hope** – to you!"  
The **gift of Christ's Spirit empowers us all**  
To **live lives of faith**, and to **answer God's call**

To **serve one another**, as we **serve God** ~ with **love!**  
Give **thanks every day** ~ and **praise God above!**  
To **open our hearts**, our **minds** and our **doors**,  
Live **humbly**, with *justice*, with **peace evermore!**

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On **Pentecost** we've *gathered* ~ what a **gift it is to praise**  
The **One** who **did create us**, and **blessed us all our days!**  
May the **Holy Spirit fill us** with **power, grace**, and **then** ~ ~  
**Send us forth rejoicing!** All God's *people say*: **Amen!**

## PASTOR NANCY'S SUMMER VACATION



Nancy will be on vacation **July 15-29**. Tom McMillan will provide pastoral coverage from July 15-21, and Emily Castner will provide pastoral coverage from July 21-29. Please contact them with any pastoral concerns or emergencies.

# ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES!



This June we celebrate the ministries of Jeri Babinski, who has been ordained for 45 years, and Celsa Ayala-Coloma, who has been ordained for 30 years! We give thanks for their ministries, and for all the ways they have responded to God's call to serve God and serve God's people.

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JOIN US JUNE 30<sup>TH</sup> FOR OUR WORCESTER FELLOWSHIP GUEST

On June 30<sup>th</sup> we are delighted to welcome the Rev. LyAnna Johnson as Guest Preacher. LyAnna Johnson runs the warming-shelter and Thursday Café as part of the ministry of the Worcester Fellowship. We look forward to hearing more about this ministry we support.



## LETTER FROM SUSAN CUSHMAN

*Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.  
-- Nehemiah 8:10*

Dear Beloved United Congregation,

The above words in the Book of Nehemiah truly remind me that when we enter the Lord's House, whether it be for solitary prayer or at a Sunday worship service—or anywhere in between when the Lord is in our hearts—any grief we may feel will soon turn to strength and grace. This past Pentecost Sunday, when I visited United to commemorate the memorial service of my father, Walter Cushman, exactly one-year prior, I experienced just that: I discovered that your celebratory, Spirit-filled service brought “the joy of the Lord” right into my grieving heart—and I thank you for that. Overcome with the emotion of missing my father deeply and sitting at the welcome table which he so loved (thank you, Alisa and Ann), I found myself in a rare—but precious—state of silence, as if I needed to take in the Holy Spirit's presence—and my Dad's spiritual presence—without words or announcement. I could not let this week pass by, though, without thanking all of you for lifting me up—as you did a year ago and, frankly, always did when I visited United with Dad. For you are a special community, indeed, and always will be to me. You are always in my heart. That said, I would like to share UNITED's love for peace and justice with the larger church at General Synod when I attend later this month (June 21-25—appropriately, during Walter's birthday on the 24th). Since I serve on the church-wide Just Peace steering committee, I am joining a group of clergy in presenting a workshop and exhibit table about Just Peace theology, ministry, and advocacy. At the exhibit table, we will display several collages of photos of Just Peace congregations (including United and my own Broadway UCC, NYC, among others) so that newer UCC churches or non-Just Peace churches may learn more about what being or becoming a Just Peace church looks like. Based on Alisa's and Ann's moving words last Sunday, I know they and many of you participated in PRIDE-Worcester and Boston, so I will share those photos, and any others you may have from similar peace and justice events, at General Synod (you may send digital photos to my e-mail below). It's the least that I can do for a church community that meant so much to my father and still does to me.

Always remember, United: you are a bright light in a city on the hill, an example to others; keep shining your faith and comfort to those who need you—for, knowing and acting on the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Yours, in Christ,

Susan Cushman / [Susan.Cushman@ncc.edu](mailto:Susan.Cushman@ncc.edu)

## United Calendar & Prayer Intentions



### CALENDAR:

June 19 Board of Ministry Meeting ~ 7pm  
June 24 Carty Food Cupboard ~ 5:30pm  
July 15 - 29 Pastor Nancy's vacation

### JUNE 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, June 2ND: Tim Camp, Judy Casalinouva & Keith Rexford, Emily Castner, Diana Coffin. We pray for them to feel the blessing of our prayer as deeply as they feel the loving presence of God.

For Sunday, June 9TH: Jannatha Coffin, Nate Malia, Mary Collins, Michelle Collins, Michael Comer.

For Sunday, June 16TH: Dee & Dave Cote, Debra Cottis, Ann Day & Donna Enberg.

For Sunday, June 23RD: Carolyn Dik, Karen Dorsheimer-Chaplin, Carolyn & Andy Dzaugis, D.A. Droser, Mary, Matt & Peter Dzaugis.

For Sunday, June 30TH: Mary Flynn & James Eakin, Olive Eakin, Nancy Elder-Wilfrid, Ruth Evans.

## 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/>)