



United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

March 2020

Message from the Pastor



Dear friends,

This past February I spent a week at Mercy by the Sea, a retreat center run by the Sisters of Mercy. As with my past retreats there, it was a time of deep and graceful silence, a time for being still and present with God without the distractions of calendar and clock. There is a small beach there – perfect for walking as the sun rose each morning, especially after a high tide, when shells were washed up from the ocean and hadn't yet been found by other beach walkers.

The beach was always littered with an abundance of small shells, the ones we used to call “lady slippers” and “hat shells” when I was little, and oyster, mussel and the occasional large clam shell. One morning, after a stormy night, I found these five conch shells (well, four conch shells and one large fragment) – truly amazing! The shells were all broken from being tumbled for who knows how long in the ocean, except the smallest one; the fragment has a stone embedded in it and deep grooves where sea animals have burrowed in it over time (it's actually my favorite). What I realized as I looked at the shells is that much of their beauty – the deep rose and peach color and the way the colors blend, the smoothness shininess – is

only visible when the shell is broken. At first, I was tempted to pass by the shells that weren't "perfect" – then I began to look at them more closely and saw how much beauty there was inside. The fragment shell is – to me – the most beautiful of all, because I can see the way the inner shell winds so intricately, and so much of it is left to my imagination.

I think often of the image we (!!) present to people, and how often we worry about maintaining the image we think will make us most acceptable to others. One of the unique gifts of this church is that I don't think we do a whole lot of pretending here – a whole lot of creating and maintaining an image that isn't really "us". When my friend and colleague, Mark Beckwith, preached here on March 1st, he was moved by the honesty and vulnerability of the prayer requests people offered up, seeing in us what church can be.

No matter what image we create or who we pretend to be, God sees us as we are – sees our inner beauty, all the twists that make us who we uniquely are. I find this comforting! Lent offers us an opportunity to not run from our brokenness – for aren't we all broken in some way? – and to know that within us there is beauty, and gifts, and wonders that can only be found when our facades are broken open.

Lenten blessings,
Nancy



EASTER FLOWERS!

On Easter morning, we fill the sanctuary with all the glorious colors of spring flowers! If you would like to contribute to our Easter flowers in memory or honor of loved ones, please either call the church office or fill out one of the Easter flower inserts in the bulletin on March 22 and March 29. Cost for each flower is \$15.



Greetings, Friends!

As we follow in Jesus's footsteps during Lent, we'll turn to meditative music such as simple Taize chants and familiar hymns. I invite the Pickup Choir to sing during March, and also the Sunday School children and their parents. If you would like to share your musical talents during worship, please feel free to chat with me after worship or contact me at:

musicladymae@gmail.com

Musical blessings,

Mae Stroshane

Music Minister



MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR ELISE KREIGER

We will gather for a service honoring the life of Elise Kreiger on Saturday March 28th at 11:00. We gather to thank God for all that Elise was – by nature and by grace – and to give thanks for all the ways she was part of our lives.



CONFIRMATION GATHERING

Young people who are part of our confirmation program, and who plan to join the church on May 10th, will meet at United on Saturday March 21st, from 1-3 in the afternoon.

UNITED FACEBOOK PAGE!



Did you know that United has its own FaceBook page? If you are on FaceBook, you can easily link to it at: United Congregational Church UCC in Worcester. Check it regularly for updates about Sunday worship and ~ during Lent ~ More Meatless Recipe.



HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES:

During Holy Week we join the crowds surrounding Jesus on his triumphant entry into Jerusalem; we gather around the table as he did with his friends, sharing one last meal together; we come to the foot of the cross, keeping watch during his final hours....and then ~ we come to the empty tomb: proof of God's power of life over death! Please join us for worship and in prayer:

Sunday April 5th is Palm Sunday; we gather for worship in Merriman Chapel to at the beginning of Holy Week.

Thursday April 9th at 7:00 in Merriman Chapel is the quiet, contemplative, candle-lit service for Maundy Thursday.

Friday April 10th at noon in Merriman Chapel is the solemn Good Friday service.

Easter Sunday on April 12th will be joyously celebrated at 10:30 in the Sarah Wyman Whitman Gallery (the former sanctuary) with music of trumpet and organ.

Climate Actions for the Curious AND/OR the Committed Notes from United's Creation Justice Task Force

~Submitted by Althea C. Williams

We are thrilled to report that there were 19 pledges to participate in Meatless Mondays during Lent. By switching to vegetarian meals, one person could save up 6.6 lbs of CO₂ per meal (Center for Sustainable Systems, 2019).* Multiply that reduction by 19, and you can see that even small efforts add up quickly to a big effect! So thank you! If you would like to read more on this, visit

Center for Sustainable Systems, University of Michigan. 2019. "Carbon Footprint Factsheet." Pub. No. CSS09-05. <http://css.umich.edu/factsheets/carbon-footprint-factsheet>

Ritchie, H. Less meat is nearly always better than sustainable meat, to reduce your carbon footprint. Website: Our World in Data. February 4, 2020. <https://ourworldindata.org/less-meat-or-sustainable-meat>

We will continue sharing vegetarian recipes through our email group and this newsletter. Let Althea or Mary know if you have a favorite vegetarian recipe you'd like to share, and we'll broadcast it to the world via our Facebook page.

Mark your Calendars! There's always something you can do or learn.

REC's Annual Earth Day Cleanup on Saturday, April 18, from 8a-12p; this year, United will be participating as a group. Details will be coming soon.

Timmons Wallace and Cong. Jim McGovern will speak on the climate crisis. Wallace co-authored "Warheads to Windmills." Event will take place at WSU, Blue Lounge, Student Center. April 14, 7:00pm.

*Based on approximate Carbon Footprint of 4 oz of: Chicken 1.7 lbs CO₂eq, Pork: 1.7 lbs CO₂eq; Beef: 6.6 lbs CO₂eq. In contrast: Cheese: 2.5 lbs CO₂eq. Eggs: 0.89 lbs CO₂eq. Peas, Beans: 0.11 lbs CO₂eq.

ZOE's FAVORITE VEGGIE CHILI RECIPE :

Ingredients:

2 tbsp Cooking Oil
3/4 cup diced onion
1 bell pepper any color
3/4 cup corn kernels
2 cloves garlic
28 oz can diced tomatoes with juice
15 oz can kidney beans
2 bay leaves
2 tsp chili powder
1 tsp ground cumin
1/8 tsp cayenne (optional)

Try these Toppings:

Shredded Cheddar or Mexican Blend cheese
Cilantro
Chives or scallions
Avocado chunks

- 1) In a quart pot heat oil on medium. Saute onion, bell pepper, and garlic until onions are soft, 5 minutes.
- 2) Add tomatoes *with liquid,* beans, corn, bay leaves, and seasonings.
- 3) Give the pot a quick stir; simmer for at least 30 minutes.
- 4) Top with any or all toppings. Round out the meal with crusty bread, corn bread.

United Calendar & Prayer Intentions



CALENDAR:

March 18	Board of Ministry meeting
March 28	Elise Kreiger Service ~ M Chapel
March 30	Carty Food Cupboard (Wesley Methodist Church)
April 13	Carty Food Cupboard (Wesley Methodist Church)

MARCH 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, Mar 1st: Kit & Tom Murray, Katherine Orcutt, Lisa, John, & Laura Owanisian

For Sunday, Mar 8th: Judy Page, Joanna Pickering, Barby-Jean Porter, June & Steve Quarfordt.

For Sunday, Mar 15th: Carissa Rodriguez, Ann Rokosky, Robin Rosinsky, Nancy Schoonover.

For Sunday, Mar 22nd Sue Stevens, Mae & Rich Stroshane, Gretchen, David, Sabrina & Parker Switzer.

For Sunday, Mar 29th: Susan Tarantino, Kevin Testarmata, Monica Thomas-Bonnick.

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/>)