



United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

May 2020

Message from the Pastor



Dear friends,

What a time we're living through ~ trying to adjust to being "together-apart", to changes in schedules, and cancellations of weddings, birthday parties, memorial services and meetings (maybe those we don't miss so much!); some of us worry about staying safe while we are leaving the safety of our homes to work ~ others have been laid off or furloughed and worry about how to support themselves. We have been kept apart from one another in the most heart-breaking ways and times – unable to be with loved ones when they are sick or hospitalized or dying. Parents are trying to work with at-home children ~ with the added complication of also having to home-school their children; adult children who are used to caring for at-risk parents are unable to see them so worry even more that they are getting the care they need.....it is an understatement to say that these are hard, hard times.

When we first made the decision to not worship together in person (does it seem possible that was just over a month ago?!?!), several people said what many of us felt: that this is a time to *come together* as a church, not be apart – time when we especially need the companionship and support of our *community*, rather than the isolation of our own

homes....and I agree: this being apart from one another during this crisis may be necessary, but it is overwhelmingly hard! Going into the church alone on a Sunday morning, to lead worship via Zoom is so very, very lonely ~ I don't like being there without you!

But we're learning...and we're coping, and we're mastering technology some of us had never heard of before now! Zoom!?! Never heard of it, except when my kids were little and "Zoom" was the sound they made when they ran around the house pretending to be airplanes....Now we know that Zoom is a wonderful way to be "together-apart", and all we need is a computer (or smart phone or tablet) and an internet connection. Thanks to Linda Michel, we have been holding times for "Gathering and Prayer" every Tuesday evening at 7:00 via Zoom, and Sunday morning worship at 10:30 via Zoom....Thanks to the magic of Zoom, we can see each other when we're "together" (the photo above is from our first "Gathering and Prayer"), we can hear music, we can talk to each other and "mute" ourselves when we don't want to be heard. Thanks to Ed Bourgault raising the altar and moving the pulpit, I can preach in Merriman Chapel and see your lovely faces and hear you when we share the peace!

We've been emailing the entire worship service (complete with announcements, so if you thought you wouldn't have to listen to announcements – you were wrong!) so that people who aren't able or don't want to join the Zoom worship can read through the service (complete with prayers and sermon, and thanks to Mae, links to the hymns we are singing that morning).

We have been using the google group email list to communicate with each other, as that is the easiest way to reach as many people as possible. ***If you are not on the google group email list, but would like to be, please contact the church office and Karen Brough will get you included;*** all you need is an email address! Ann Lewis has been emailing the weekly birthdays and sending cards on our behalf. If you are aware of pastoral needs or concerns – or celebrations – please let me know; I especially depend on everyone to help us stay connected.

One of the wonderful things about "Zooming" (and I will never get used to saying that – and, to be honest, look forward to the day when I can retire the word from my day-to-day vocabulary!) is that friends who have moved away are able to join us...if you look in the photo above, you'll see at least 3 of people who are too far away to be with us in person, but thanks to the magic of Zoom are now worshipping and praying with us!

Last week, I "Zoomed" into a conference on ministering during this crisis, and the presenter said that she doesn't like referring to "social distancing", because it implies that we are "socially distant"; she prefers the term "physical distancing". I agree with her – while we aren't able to be *physically* together, we are still finding ways to be *socially* together, to maintain relationships that are important to us. So call one another and send cards ~ what a gift that personal touch is these days! And continue to pray for each other ~ nothing prevents us from taking time to think of one another and the community we share and love, and lifting us up in prayer.....while we also pray that it won't be long until we are together – in person as well as in spirit!

Blessings,
Nancy



TUESDAY EVENING "GATHERING AND PRAYER"

All are welcome to join us at 7:00 on Tuesday evenings for a time of "Gathering and Prayer" via Zoom. This is a lovely way to stay in touch with one another, to lift up our concerns and prayers and ways we have experienced the presence and light of God - even in the midst of this challenging time. An "invitation" to the gathering is sent around through the google group each Monday; if you are interested in being part of it but haven't been getting the invitation, please let Nancy know.

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## **GOING FORWARD....AN UPDATE FROM NANCY**

As you know, I had planned to retire on May 17<sup>th</sup>, and we had such a wonderful retirement celebration planned ~ complete with all five Jolly Beggars and my daughter playing the organ and friends and family and all of you joining us in the Gallery (formerly the sanctuary) with a reception following.....what do they say about best laid plans?!? Because of the unique challenges of this time, I told the Board of Ministries I would stay until June 28<sup>th</sup>, which will be my last Sunday as your pastor. We hope (really really really hope!) that we will be able to be together by then - but it is impossible to know at this time when we will be able to gather. If we are unable to be together by June 28<sup>th</sup>, I will come back in September for a celebration/farewell Sunday. We will you know of the date and plans as soon as we do!



## THE CARTY CUPBOARD

The Carty Cupboard (located at Wesley Methodist Church, 114 Main Street in Worcester) has reopened after a two week shutdown, and is now distributing food at curbside on Wednesdays. With unemployment soaring, feeding programs are now experiencing increased demand. Fortunately, Carty Cupboard is currently receiving enough staple foods to meet this increased need, but two specific types of donations would be much appreciated.

Many of Carty's clients need personal care products (such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste etc.), as well as children's diapers in sizes 1-5. Carty can also use grocery gift cards (in \$10 or \$20 amounts) to distribute to those with special dietary needs. Obviously Hope For Housing gift cards would be best, as these also support efforts to prevent homelessness, but any gift card sold by a local super market is also fine.

Because the large amount of vehicle traffic (and general busyness) at Carty during distributions, it is best NOT to drop these donations off there. Cards should instead be mailed to me at the address below, or a time arranged with me to meet at United to accept personal care donations. I will then make sure the cards and donated items get to Carty

Please contact me if there are questions. Thanks also to those United members who have already shown the generosity of our church by donating. God bless, and stay safe!

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## **CMHA VIRTUAL WALK FOR THE HOMELESS**

We at United have traditionally been strong supporters of the annual Walk for the Homeless sponsored by CMHA to combat homelessness and housing issues. Due to social distancing requirements, CMHA is taking a novel approach this year with a Virtual Walk for the Homeless. The idea is for folks to walk anytime between now and May 31, practicing safe social distancing.

Due to your generous donations, we've already exceeded our initial goal of \$500. Let's now target raising at least \$1000 in support of this important cause by May 31.

Donating is simple (link below to United fundraising page) and involves only clicking the "Donate Now" button and entering relevant payment info. If you wish to join our team as a walker, that involves clicking the "Become a Fundraiser" button where you will need to create an account by entering your Email address (or link to a Facebook account) and create a password. There are no official rules for the virtual walk. You can choose to walk around your backyard, the entire Appalachian Trail, or something in between, concluding by May 31.

**[www.walkforthehomeless.org/ucc](http://www.walkforthehomeless.org/ucc)**

Thanks for your support. Safe walking.

**~ FROM YOUR MISSION OUTREACH MINISTRY**



## PASTOR SEARCH UPDATE ~MAY 2020

There have been several new developments regarding the Pastor search at United Congregational Church. The first is the recent announcement by our current Pastor, The Reverend Nancy Elder-Wilfrid, that she is delaying her retirement until June 28<sup>th</sup>. Nancy's willingness to stay a while longer to guide us through the COVID-19 crisis is deeply appreciated by our congregation, and very generous, as it will diminish the time she and her husband have to prepare for their move to New Hampshire.

The second development is that we now have three ordained candidates for the temporary position of Bridge Pastor. United members Ann Rokosky, Bob Michel, Tom McMillan, Emily Castner and Rebecca Williams will jointly interview the candidates (probably via Zoom) this month, and then make a recommendation to the Board of Ministries. We hope to have a Bridge Pastor selected by the time of Nancy's departure, to conduct our worship services in cooperation with the Spiritual Life & Diaconate Ministry, and also to visit our less mobile members. Obviously the exact timeline and duties may be subject to change (as is the case with everything else during this unprecedented time), but our church is determined that there will be no interruptions in its main pastoral duties.

Preparations are also underway for the coming search for United Congregational Church's next Settled (permanent) Pastor. Board of Ministries members are presently filling out some of the Church Profile that must be completed before our church begins looking for a Settled Pastor. These portions of the Profile pertain to the history, demographics and finances of United. The parts asking for the qualities desired in a Pastor, and the collective visions for our church and its many ministries, will be done by the entire congregation. We hope to start this church-wide survey sometime during the summer or early autumn. Please know that the selection of the Bridge Pastor, and the future search for a Settled Pastor, will not be secret processes. There will be regular updates, and anyone with questions or concerns should always feel free to contact me, or any other Board of Ministries member. I realize too there is always a lot of anxiety that accompanies the departure of a loved Pastor, which is now being compounded by the uncertainties faced by the larger world.

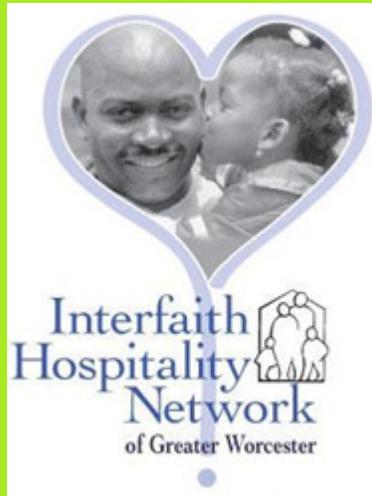
However, we should always remember two facts. The first is that whenever United Congregational Church has encountered challenges, its members have always pulled together, and pulled through. The second is that we are a congregation which seeks to follow God's will. And there is no doubt that God WILL guide us through this process successfully, and into greater ministries and a better future!

**May God's blessings and peace be upon you,**

**Tim Camp**

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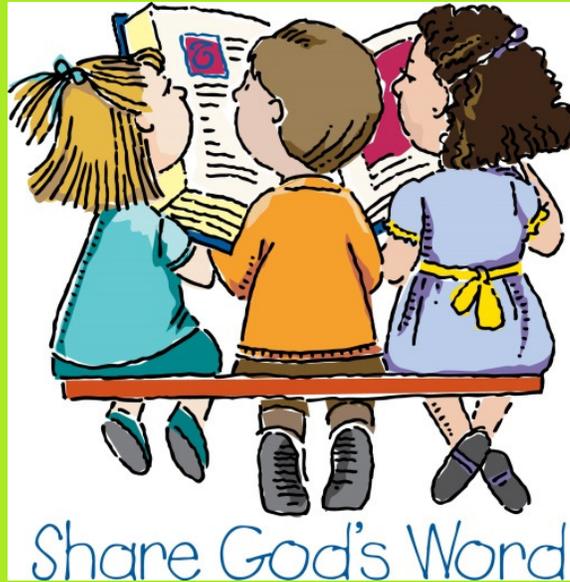


## **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AT I.H.N.**

**Our congregation has been a long-time supporter of the Interfaith Hospitality Network, a faith-based program offering temporary shelter and services to homeless families. I.H.N. is currently looking for qualified individuals to fill two salaried, part time positions. The first is a Case Manager, to work with the families residing at the I.H.N. residence on June Street in Worcester, to help them obtain housing, employment and necessary social services. The second open position is that of Program Director, whose duties include the overall management of the program, solicitation of donations, and community outreach.**

**The Interfaith Hospitality Network has helped many families get back on their feet during its twenty-some years of existence, and its residence has always had a very affirming and comfortable atmosphere. I think these positions would be great for anyone who likes helping people, and is seeking employment in Human Services. For a detailed job description, please contact Joanne Alley at [www.ihnworchester.org](http://www.ihnworchester.org), or 508-755-2212. You can also call me (at 508- 798- 6997) to find out more about this organization, and its vital ministries.**

**~ Tim Camp**



## **TIME WITH CHILDREN**

**Though we cannot be together at the moment, United continues to think of its littlest members and send the warm wishes of love during this time. Recently, United sent care packages that included a book, coloring book, and other activities to each child. We look forward to the day when we can all be together again!**

**~ Submitted by: Alisa Villarreal**

## United Calendar & Prayer Intentions



### CALENDAR:

### MAY 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, May 3rd: Nancy & George Blanchard, Faith & Ed Bourgault, Danielle & Elizabeth Brooks.

For Sunday, May 10th: Emerson Brooks, Helen Bross, Tim Camp, Judy Casalinouva & Keith Rexford.

For Sunday, May 17th: Emily Castner, Diana Coffin, Jannatha Coffin & Nate Malia.

For Sunday, May 24th Mary Collins, Michelle Collins, Celsa Ayala-Coloma & Cesar Coloma.

For Sunday, May 31st Ricardo Coloma, Michael Comer, Dee & Dave Cote, Debra Cottis.

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/>)