



United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

March 2015



Message from the Pastor

Dear friends,

It's been a long winter....

....I know: an understatement if you ever heard one! And to say we can't wait for spring – REAL spring, with warm sun, flowers and green grass – is also an understatement! But spring will be here, and in the meantime, we try to be patient, mind our tempers and look for glimpses of grace (and parking spaces) where we can find them.

We will be walking through the last days of Lent while we are (hopefully) walking through the last of the ice and snow, and I urge you to take part in Sunday worship during Lent and for the special services of Holy Week. Just as spring will be especially welcome when it finally comes this year, Easter will have even more meaning when we have experienced the Passion of Palm Sunday, the communion and betrayal of Maundy Thursday and the darkness of Good Friday.

As we walk these last weeks of Lent, to the cross and then to the empty tomb, I offer these words, prayed by Jan Berry (Bread of Tomorrow):

*Jesus invites us to a way of celebration,
meeting and feasting with the humble and poor.
Let us walk his way with joy.*

*Jesus beckons us to a way of risk,
letting go of our security.
Let us walk his way with joy.*

*Jesus challenges us to listen to the voices
of those who have nothing to lose.
Let us walk his way with joy.*

*Jesus points us to a way of self-giving,
where power and status are overturned.
Let us walk his way with joy.*

*Jesus calls us to follow the way of the cross,
where despair is transformed by the promise of new life.
Let us walk his way with joy.*

Blessings and God's grace,
Nancy

Holy Week and Easter Services



Please join us for the special services of Holy Week:

March 29th Palm Sunday: our Sunday worship will begin with a spirited procession with palms and end with the solemn music of "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" while the cross is processed.

Mauddy Thursday April 2, 7:00 pm (Merriman Chapel): we gather around the table, as Jesus did with his closest friends on his last night with them. We share bread and cup, and then, as the light is gradually extinguished, we hear the words of scripture that tell of Jesus' betrayal and death. Serena Leiser will preach.

Good Friday April 3, 12:00 (Merriman Chapel): we gather at the foot of the cross for this simple and solemn service, remembering the hour when Jesus was crucified. Special music will be offered by Greg Wilfrid and Dave Uhl; The Rev. Karen Dorsheimer-Chaplin will preach.

Easter morning April 5 (Sanctuary): we celebrate the joyous Good News of Easter: Jesus Christ is risen today! With the music of trumpet (Chris Vece) and organ (Karen Wilfrid) we sing "Alleluia!" and rejoice that life and love have triumphed over death!

Give and change the world



is the theme for this year's One Great Hour of Sharing. By the Grace of God, all of us have the power to give, and the gifts we give make the world more the way God intended it to be -- a place where everyone has what they need. Together, we can achieve a fair balance in our world by giving back to God what God has so richly bestowed upon us.

One Great Hour of Sharing offering reaches those near and far, changing the life of someone in distress in our community and at other times impacting the lives of those we may never meet but who are in desperate need of our compassion and generosity.

Last year the United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries received funds to assist in the Philippines when Typhoon Yolanda hit hard to reach villages. In the U.S. relief came from OGHS to Baxter Springs Kansas which was hit by a tornado. The funds helped the disaster response in Colorado when homes and communities were destroyed by floods. They supported refugee services to settle and transition families from South East Asia, Iraq, Syria and African communities in the U.S.. Your donations help build schools in Honduras. To find out more, check out the website www.ucc.org/oghs.

The OGHS offering will be taken on March 29th. Every contribution helps. Please **Give and change the world**

Mission and Outreach Ministry



In Loving Memory

It is never easy to lose long-time members of our community, and we have held in prayer three of our members as they have reached the end of their days on this earth. We celebrated the life of **Ed Fenner** on February 14th, giving thanks for his many years of loving service to both the building and the people of United. On February 28th, we honored the life of **Dorothy Davis**, who died just a few months short of her 100th birthday. On March 4th, **Priscilla Young** was welcomed into the loving arms of God after many years of being cared for by her devoted daughter, Candy.

Please hold the families and friends of Ed, Dot and Priscilla in your prayers, as we give thanks for the gift of their lives and ask God's comfort for those who mourn.

Save the Date:

April 19 – Soup Sunday: Community and Fellowship

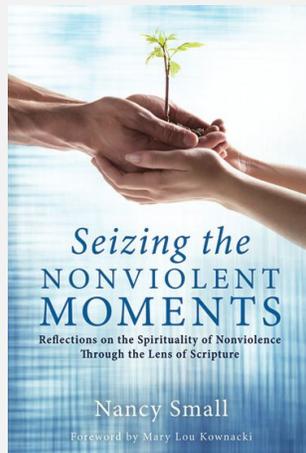
May 17 – Plant Swap: Community and Fellowship

May 19 – Evening with Nancy Small: Mission and Outreach

September 13 – Church Picnic: Community and Fellowship

October 24-25 - Church Retreat: Community and Fellowship

Seizing the NONVIOLENT MOMENTS



May 19th – 7:00 pm Nancy Small will be speaking on her book *Seizing the NONVIOLENT MOMENTS*

Reflections on the Spirituality of Nonviolence _rough the Lens of Scripture Life is filled with opportunities to practice nonviolence. If we kept track, we'd be surprised at how open we get to choose a violent or nonviolent response to a given situation. Seizing these moments is a spiritual practice that shapes a nonviolent heart. Many people doing this together shapes the heart of a nonviolent world.

This book is a humble and accessible approach to nonviolence based on the belief that no one is perfectly nonviolent. We are all works in progress. Each chapter presents an imaginative interpretation of a Scripture story about seizing a nonviolent moment that sheds new light on nonviolence and its spirituality.

Stories of contemporary peacemakers woven throughout offer lessons for living a spirituality of nonviolence for our times. Prophetic words from the U.S. Catholic bishops emphasize the essential role of peacemaking in renewing the earth. Questions following each chapter inspire personal reflection and make the book a welcome resource for classrooms, parishes, and small groups. we more we seize the nonviolent moments in our lives, the more we are transformed by them. And the more we experience the power of nonviolence within ourselves,

More information to come – Mission and Outreach Ministry

Calendar

March 15 - Discovering Your Gifts, Visions and Call Workshop
March 17 - Bible Study
March 22 - Discovering Your Gifts, Visions and Call Workshop
March 24 - Bible Study
March 25 – Board of Ministries
March 29 – Palm Sunday
March 31 – Bible Study
April 2 – Maundy Thursday Service
April 3 – Good Friday Service
April 5 - Easter
April 15 - Bible Study
April 12 - Spiritual Life and Diaconate
April 12 – Mission and Outreach
April 13 - Carty Food Cupboard
April 14 - Bible Study
April 19 – Soup Sunday
April 22 – Board of Ministries

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 News

WAMS is seeking an Administrative Assistant

WAMS is seeking an experienced Office Manager to join our team. Worcester Area Mission Society (WAMS) is known and respected for its innovative programs which enjoy national recognition as good works that really work. WAMS works with congregations, social welfare agencies, civic groups, neighborhood associations, public schools, business and government to accomplish its goals. It is located in the newly renovated 6 Institute Road WamsWorks.org building. To learn more about WAMS go to: www.wamsworks.org. To apply send a resume and cover letter to office@wamsworks.org. This is a part-time position - 15 hrs. per week.

UCC, ONA Coalition Petition Supreme Court On Marriage Equality Written by **Anthony Moujaes**



In pursuit of equal treatment for all couples under the law, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ and the Open and Affirming Coalition of the UCC have joined an interfaith effort of religious groups, organizations, and leaders in an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court. The UCC General Synod and the ONA Coalition are two of 20 participants "united in the belief that, in our vastly diverse and pluralistic society, particular religious views or definitions of marriage should not be permitted to influence which couples' marriages the state recognizes or permits," according to the brief filed late last week. The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments for four cases from the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals on April 28.

The brief includes signatories from the UCC, ONA Coalition, Episcopal Church and Unitarian Universalist Association, as well as LGBT-supporting ministries from Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Jewish, Muslim and Quaker communities. In addition, more than 150 ordained UCC ministers from the wider church are among the 1,900 individual petitioners in favor of reversing the Sixth Circuit's ruling that upheld marriage equality bans in Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Tennessee. "Faiths embracing same-sex couples—both theologically and with respect to the distinct issue of equality under civil law—participate in the mainstream of American religious observance," the brief reads.

The UCC and ONA Coalition also reminded the Supreme Court in the brief that the General Synod passed a resolution almost three decades ago in 1985, calling on the UCC congregations to become open and affirming of all persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The brief also points out that overturning same-gender marriage bans would not force any specific faith community to adhere to the ruling. "All religions would remain free—as they are today with [37] states and the District of Columbia permitting same-sex couples to marry—to define religious marriage in any way they choose," the brief reads.

The Supreme Court announced in January that it would hear arguments on the four marriage equality cases. The Sixth Circuit ruled in November that the bans against same-gender marriages were constitutional, creating a split among the federal rulings. This circuit is the only appeals court to uphold state same-sex marriage bans since the Supreme Court in 2013 struck down part of the federal Defense of Marriage Act. The Fourth, Seventh, Ninth and Tenth circuit courts all have ruled that same-sex marriage bans violate the U.S. Constitution.

The Supreme Court's ruling on the issue is expected sometime in late June.