



United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

March 2018



Message from the Pastor

Dear friends,

When I was in seminary, a colleague gave me the book, *Signs, Sacraments, and Seasons* by Arnold Kenseth, a UCC pastor. It's a lovely book, with reflections and prayers for each week of the year, and I have turned to it often when I was looking for something to speak to my heart.

We are nearing the end of Lent and moving into the season of Easter ~ somber reflection giving way to joyous acclamation; hibernation waking to new life; snow and ice melting to warming earth....

and so I offer you this Spring Canticle from *Signs, Sacraments, and Season* ~ a glimpse of the promise unfolding in this season:

*Now God sends forth the springtime,
All things are new.*

*God covers the earth with the south winds
And soaks the fields with warm rains.*

*God opens the air with sunlight,
And the leaves shelter the trees.
Our hearts are made glad,
And God leads us into the world with rejoicing.*

*The dark winter tales,
The stories of sadness are over.
God walks on our land
Shouting God's word of redemption.*

*God calls us to follow,
To praise, forever and ever. Amen.*

**Blessings,
Nancy**

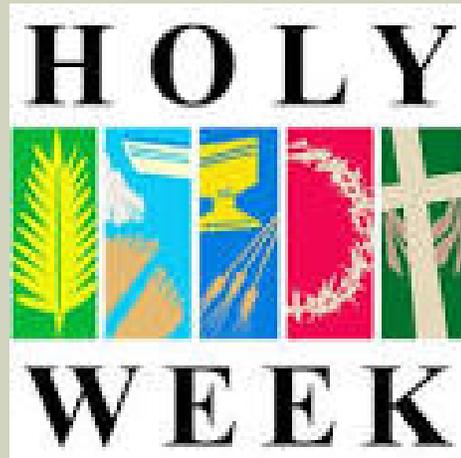


EASTER FLOWERS

We will worship in the SWW Gallery on Easter morning ~ our Easter celebration made even more joyous with an abundance of spring flowers!

An order form will be in the bulletins on March 18th and March 25th, or you can call the church office to order flowers; cost for Easter flowers will be \$15. Please order your Easter flowers by handing in the order forms as soon as possible to ease placing the flower order!

If you would like to give a flower for Easter, please contact the church office by March 22nd to place your order.



LOOKING AHEAD TO HOLY WEEK AND EASTER:

Holy Week 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 March 25th is Palm Sunday; we gather for worship in Merriman Chapel to at the beginning of Holy Week.

Thursday March 29th at 7:00 in Merriman Chapel is the quiet, contemplative, candle-lit service for **Maundy Thursday**.

Friday March 30th at noon in Merriman Chapel is the solemn **Good Friday** service.

Easter Sunday on April 1st will be celebrated on 10:30 in the Sarah Wyman Whitman Gallery (the former sanctuary) with music of trumpet and organ.



**“OUR HEART, OUR HANDS, OUR CHURCH!” ~
APRIL 8TH SPECIAL LUNCH AND PROGRAM!!**

Details to follow, but put April 8th on your calendar and plan to stay after church for a delicious lunch of vegetarian chili ~ and potluck desserts ~ with a special program, “Our Hearts, Our Hands, Our Church” after lunch! Fellowship, food, fun and faithful conversation – what could be better!?!?



IHN -- Interfaith Hospitality Network Evening of Hope

The Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Worcester recognized their 20th anniversary with an *Evening of Hope* fund raising event on March 3. The fund raiser combined wine tasting with a silent auction.

IHN brings hope to homeless families each day at its 91 June St. location. The IHN staff and volunteers from area congregations provide support for parents and children in their greatest time of need. Over the past 20 years, IHN has helped 378 families when there was nowhere else for them to find hope and receive help.

The Evening of Hope was a success and raised several thousand dollars in support of IHN's critical mission. Our congregation was a sponsor for the event and through our collective effort we donated a basket of chocolate themed items for the auction. The Mission and Outreach Ministry is investigating options for how we can strengthen our partnership with IHN. Further information will be shared as details become clearer.

The prayer below appears near the front entrance of IHN's June St. house:

*“Dear God, Source of all our truth, and hope and compassion,
we gather in order to serve your children...*

those whose worth and dignity is absolute...

families who are in need of our help and encouragement.

Allow us to see the privilege of our calling.

Allow us to know that this small effort of ours ultimately matters.

*Allow us to warmly and intentionally invite others to share in this labor,
in order to make our community a more hospitable place.*

May those who come to us seeking shelter, find much more.

*With our churches and synagogues may they find companionship and comfort,
and strength for their journey.*

May we also.

In the name of all that is holy, Amen.” — IHN of Greater Worcester Prayer of Hope (or prayer of Journey)

Anyone interested in learning more about IHN should contact : Andy Dzaugis or John Owanisian.

Submitted by United's Mission and Outreach Ministry

United Calendar



- March 26 Carty Food Cupboard ~ 5:30 pm (Wesley Methodist Church)
March 29 Maundy Thursday Service ~ Merriman Chapel ~ 7:00 pm
March 30 Good Friday Service ~ Merriman Chapel ~ Noon
April 1 Easter Sunday Service ~ SWW Gallery (former sanctuary)
April 4 Pub Theology ~ 7:00 pm at Sahara (143 Highland St, Worcester)
April 18 Board of Ministry Meeting ~ 7:00 pm

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/>)





Ad Hoc Safety Task Team

You may not know that such a task team exists, and so a little history. After several incidents of mass violence last year a program was put together called “Government Resources for Houses of Worship and Faith Communities”. Nancy, Sandra Johnson, Peter Keck and Ann Lewis attended the session at Anna Maria on Dec 6, 2017. This was an all-day event with a ton of information and acronyms to decipher! Since it was December we did not have a chance to get back together and decide what to do with this information until the end of January. A couple of weeks ago Nancy, Ann and Peter met – Sandra had left for Florida but did weigh in on our discussion.

We identified 2 major areas of safety for which we felt policies/processes were needed. We also felt the full congregation should be aware of the policy/process. Did you know that there is one in place already? Ann did not, nor what it entails. The Board of Ministries set it up some time ago, and the point people are Ed and Tim, but do not have specifics to share at this time. With all of this in mind we asked about having the Fire Department come to speak to us about fire safety and another professional to help us understand how to react to personal violence issues. Since we are a tenant, and Sandra is on the task team it was noted that this is a WAMS responsibility and they have been looking into a way to bring all of the tenants together for such discussions.

This does not mean we are going to just wait for the meetings, but are going to review the current policy, and update the congregation as appropriate. We want to have a plan in place that would best prepare us for incidents including medical emergencies, intruders, fire or other safety concerns. The meeting being organized by WAMS will probably not occur until after Easter, and since it includes CMHA will most likely be a weekday. That said the task team would like as many people as possible to be in on it, and in on our discussion. There will be a sign-up sheet for people who are interested in this process, so please sign up if you are interested. We will keep you informed and if there is enough interest may hold a session to get all of the questions/concerns out there that the congregation would want addressed.

~ Submitted by Ann Lewis