



# United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

November 2019



## Message from the Pastor

Dear friends,

This past October, Tom McMillan led a three-part conversation on what it means for United to declare itself a “Just Peace Church”. The conversation grew from an awareness that while we have often discussed and focused on our decision to be Open and Affirming, we have not revisited being a Just Peace church in recent memory. In light of global tensions, injustice and violence and the always present threats of war, it seems important for us to consider how we embody our faithfulness to Jesus – the one who came to us as the Prince of Peace.

I wasn't all that surprised that no one seemed to remember exactly when United voted to become a Just Peace church...everyone agreed it was a long time ago, and probably around the time the vote to be ONA was taken; it had been a long time since anyone really thought about being “Just Peace”. So Tom and I ventured in to the archives and the dusty stacks of binders containing minutes and records going back many years

(and I would be remiss in not thanking George Blanchard for his faithful diligence in organizing said records!). After a few false starts, we found what we were looking for: the “Resolution on a Just Peace Congregation” and the “Resolution on Calling on United Congregational Church to Declare Itself – Open and Affirming”. At the Sixth Annual Meeting of United (remember: this was after the merger of Central and Chestnut Street churches) on February 7, 1988, votes were taken on these two resolutions; the Just Peace resolution “passed, but not unanimously” and the ONA resolution “was accepted by voice vote with some opposition.”

It was fascinating to look through these old minutes ~ and even more fascinating when I went back into the archives the next day and skimmed through the three volumes of “File Copy: The Minister of Music”: every bulletin from 1950-1953, bound into hard cover books....how worship has changed! How United has changed!

...so I've been thinking about change: the changes that the long ago congregations merging to form United went through, the changes United has gone through in its 37 years, the changes when the building and endowment were gifted to WAMS, and the changes we are going through as I prepare to retire and you begin the work of envisioning who you are called to be as you go forward...I'm aware of and grateful for the faithful constancy of the many people who have been “United” throughout these many changes.

I often say ~ and I believe this with my whole heart ~ that this community of faith is greatly needed in this time and in this place...our witness to the radical grace and love and inclusion of Jesus, our

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commitment to justice and peace and to serving as the hands and heart of Jesus, our willingness to continually ask if we are living our faith as best we can: all this is what keeps us vibrant and alive, and continues the faithful legacy of those who came before us.

In the words of the hymn we often sing, "Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place...". Thanks be to God!

Blessings,  
**Nancy**



## IN MEMORIAM ON ALL SAINTS DAY

On All Saints Day, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, we lifted up the life of **Ruth Evans** with gratitude and love. Ruth's deep faith, and her wise and discerning spirit were an inspiration to all who knew her, and her contributions to United were a blessing.

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### ...ADVENT BEGINS THE SUNDAY AFTER THANKSGIVING: DECEMBER 1<sup>st</sup> !!

Hard to believe, I know!! But **December 1<sup>st</sup>** is the first Sunday of Advent! Our Advent banners will replace our Thanksgiving banners, and we will light the first candle – the candle of "Hope" – as we begin this holy season.

### NEIGHBORS IN NEED SPECIAL OFFERING!

Many thanks to United's children who collected a **GRAND TOTAL** of \$56.74 for Neighbors in Need!! They received the little blue NIN boxes in mid-September, and brought them back on October 6th, heavy with nickels, dimes, quarters and many, many pennies! Their gifts will be added to our general collection for NIN, and will be gratefully used to support children and their families in need of food and shelter and times of emergency.

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## FIRST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NEW SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE OF THE UCC

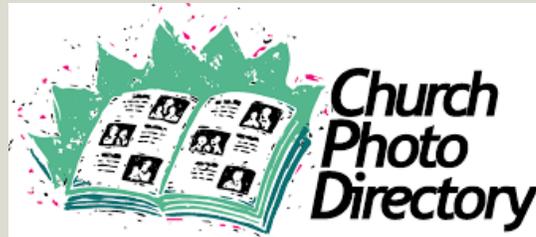
14 members of United gathered with 800 others from RI, Ct and MA on November 1-2 at the DCU Center for the first time as the newly formed Southern New England Conference. The theme of the annual meeting was "Unbound", using the story of Lazarus to reflect on the things that bind us from living our lives as faithful, whole people of God ~ and then what it might look like to be "unbound". Three of our members had these reflections on the annual meeting:

- 1) One of the highlights for me was the very lively presentation about the Silver Lake Conference Camp. It delighted me that camping is alive and well in the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ! My own experiences at camp as a youth at Craigville Conference Center, biking at Arcadia National Park, and leadership camps at Deering, NH were transformative for me. In many ways these experiences led me to ordained ministry within the United Church of Christ. I will be forever grateful for these experiences.
- 2) I was really impressed by the way the meeting was run with such precision that everything was done and we ended a few minutes early! I also was helped by talking to the vendors in the hall.
- 3) For me the worship is always a highlight and this year's did not disappoint. Mark Miller and his group provided such an inviting background for the services. I loved visuals and especially appreciated the way the theme "Unbound" was made real on Saturday morning when we wound strips of muslin that had been knotted together around our hands, reflecting upon the ways we have been bound, then loosened and unknotted them so that we could carry this symbol to Communion.

## CHRISTMAS CRAFT

On Sunday December 15<sup>th</sup> after church, you have a chance to fold a transparent-paper window star. Elisabeth Hyder will be your guide and provide materials.

## JUST A REMINDER ABOUT THE NEW CHURCH DIRECTORY:



Dear Members,

Our church directory is available to view on any web browser! Instant Church Directory — the program we use to build our church directory — has a free website for church members to view our directory online.

To view the directory online, go to <https://members.instantchurchdirectory.com/> to log in.

The first time, click on the "Create a login now" under the Sign In button. Enter your email address and set up a password to be sent an email confirmation. Click on the link inside that email to confirm your email and log in with the password you just created.

Our church directory is also available to view on your mobile device! Instant Church Directory has a free app for church members to download on their Apple, Android and Kindle Fire devices. The app is available through the app store for your type of device.

You will be asked to enter your email address as it's listed in our directory. If your email address isn't listed in the directory, let Tom Murray (or someone in the Community and Fellowship Ministry) know, so it can be added. Once you enter your email address follow the directions on screen to complete the login process. After you login, the directory will be downloaded to your device. Anytime updates are made, they will update on your device too. In the app you will be able to search for families and members and call, email and text right from the app.

More information can be found at [www.InstantChurchDirectory.com/app](http://www.InstantChurchDirectory.com/app).

If you need a hard copy of the church directory, please add your name to the sign-up sheet on the small table as you enter Merriman Hall.

~Thank you - Community and Fellowship Ministry



## MUSIC NOTES

*Hello Friends,*

*Happy Autumn one and all!*

*Thanksgiving Sunday will mark my second anniversary with all of you here at United, and it's been wonderful. Each Sunday we join our voices together in a "joyful noise" of praise.*

*Throughout the year, we've enjoyed the musical talents of Audrey White, Althea Chan, our reliable Pickup Choir, and the sweet voices of our Sunday School children.*

*I look forward to more musical adventures as we move into Advent and Christmas.*

*Perhaps a singing sheep or a dancing donkey? As always, you're welcome to contact me at [musicladymae@gmail.com](mailto:musicladymae@gmail.com) or speak to me at Fellowship Hour if you'd like to participate in our services.*

*With musical blessings,*

*Mae Stroshane*

*Minister of Music*



## WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!!



We were delighted to welcome five new members into United on November 10<sup>th</sup>! Please take a moment to welcome and greet the following:

**Erica Eckensberger** adds to the number of ordained clergy here at United! She has been working as a clinician for the past several years, and is preparing to return to parish ministry; she is going onto the supply preacher list for the Central Association, so we will be grateful for the weeks she is able to worship with us! Erica enjoys time with friends, music, walking her dog and crafting. She and her partner, Pam Gurney, will be married (here at United!) in April.

**Pamela Gurney** is joining United with her mother Nancy, and with her partner Erica; how wonderful is it to welcome this new family to United! Pam works as a home health aide. She is an artist who enjoys painting and crafts; she has a grounding in wholistic healing, which she practices through energy healing and spiritual reading. She also enjoys fishing and day trips.

**Nancy Gurney** comes to us along with her daughter Pam. She is retired and currently lives in Oxford; the community and welcome she received at United is one of the main reasons she is joining this church. Nancy enjoys knitting, reading, and doing word search puzzles.

**Suzanne (Sue) Stevens** moved to Worcester from Maine and quickly found her way to United thanks to our very own "Briarwood Contingent"! She was active in the Maine Conference of the UCC and so comes to United with insights and understanding into how churches "work". We are already grateful for her faithfulness, compassion, and commitment to United!

**Carissa Rodriguez** is a life-long "Worcesterite", and has been active and served several UCC churches in the Worcester area. She is currently attending seminary in Halifax – taking classes both remotely and in residence once a year. Carissa is In Discernment with the Central Association and preparing for ordination. She works as a nanny and a customer service manager, and when she isn't studying or working, enjoys camping in her family's RV, reading and spending time with her family, especially her nieces and nephews.

# GIVING THANKS

On Thanksgiving Sunday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, we will collect non-perishable food (canned goods, pasta, etc.) for the Carty Food Cupboard and new socks (white, adult) for Worcester Fellowship. Please bring your contributions to church on the 24<sup>th</sup>, and place them on the altar – filling our altar to overflowing with our Thanksgiving gifts for others!



## THANKSGIVING POTLUCK ~ NOVEMBER 24

Join us after church on November 24<sup>th</sup> for our annual Thanksgiving Potluck! We will transform Merriman Chapel into a lively dining experience, feasting on all the Thanksgiving favorites (prepared by our resident chefs in the Community and Fellowship Ministry) ~ and whatever we all contribute as side dishes. A signup sheet is out for you to help us plan. Thanks.

## United Calendar & Prayer Intentions



### CALENDAR:

November 20 Board of Ministry meeting  
November 24 Stewardship & Thanksgiving Potluck  
NOTE: NO Carty Food Cupboard for November

### NOVEMBER 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, Nov 3rd: Celsa Ayala-Coloma & Cesar Coloma, Jeri Babinsky, Gloria Beaudry & Joy Hennig.

For Sunday, Nov 10th: Mae Stroshane, Gretchen, David, Sabrina & Parker Switzer, Susan Tarantino, Kevin Testarmata.

For Sunday, Nov 17th: Faith & Ed Bourgault, Elizabeth & Danielle Brooks, Emerson Brooks.

For Sunday, Nov 24th: Helen Bross, Tim Camp, Judy Casalinouva & Keith Rexford.

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/>)