



# United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

October 2020

## Message from Pastor Julie L. Cedrone



Dear United friends,

The landscape is a brilliant cascade of colors: crimsons and golds, orange hues that are magnificent against any sky color. I relish this bright palette of color just before the shedding begins, knowing that nature calls us to savor this season and gather it all in. Soon, the leaves will shed, and the bare branches will sway in the breeze, the textured, barky bones of the trees remind us of the necessary autumn with each of us: our need to let go, surrender, release all that we don't need, and prepare for the needed inside work of the spirit. I have always thought of All Soul's Day, November 1st, as a milestone to begin this season, when we remember those who have passed from this world to the next. It's such a powerful time to look back at the people who have shaped us, and move forward with those learnings close to us.

I am abundantly aware that United has said farewell to a number of saints this year without an adequate opportunity to say goodbye: the pandemic has stalled all of those events that allow us communal opportunities to grieve, to hold each other, to sing together, to share stories. I am praying on this, trying to create a way to honor those who have died that brings more holistic healing than is found over a Zoom worship. As the holidays approach, grieving tends to intensify,

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and although the pandemic has stalled our ability to grieve in a worshipful, communal way, it hasn't stalled our grief. We still need these opportunities to be together, and move through grief as a community with God's healing at the core. Somehow, I will find a creative way to honor all the saints!

I do have hope; hope that this church will remain woven together. We celebrated All Saint's Day on October 4th with a grand, outdoor worship, transforming our parking lot into an outdoor sanctuary with jazzy music, bring your own communion, kids whizzing around on scooters, and smiles all around. The spirit was alive! The spirit IS alive. I am sure that Saint Francis would be thrilled to know that we had beautified a scrap of pavement in downtown Worcester...with our laughter, our bodies, our presence, our excitement at worshipping together for the first time since March (and my first time ever!). The church isn't a building, we know that by now, and yet, wasn't it marvelous to worship in view of our building? That building and our togetherness do have sacredness, and it felt like we were just that bit closer to being inside Merriman Chapel again. And, even if Merriman Chapel isn't a worship place for United for months to come, the spirit of community remains powerful and strong.

As you know, I am a bridge pastor serving a six-month contract, a position that is more like being Mary Poppins and trying to fuse together the church with God's joy in between beloved Pastor Nancy and the mystery of who will come next. Believe it or not, I am half-way through this adventure with all of you, and I am so grateful to be called here to keep this church vital and engaged during the in-between. Can I tell you how liberating it is to be working with a congregation with such freedom to move with the spirit, unbound? I do pray for United to find just the right pastor to carry the hopeful momentum. I have verbally accepted a settled pastor position at another local church after my contract ends, a calling that has been tugging at my heart for an entire year.

Before that time, there are three more colorful months ahead! I am dreaming of a Tailgate Picnic Thanksgiving, plenty to celebrate with thanksgiving, and a food drive. I envision Advent care packages for our kiddos, Advent wreaths, and a pageant parade. We have so many costumes - let's wear them and make the nativity store real! Christmas Eve in the sanctuary will be dreamy and introspective - Mae and I have been brainstorming about a candlelight experience that will leave you in meditative holiday bliss as we celebrate Jesus's birth.

For now, we finish with the parables of the Gospel of Matthew, discerning authority and power, the small amount of faith needed to spark a big movement. We're moving into Thessalonians, with some special Sundays devoted to Mary and then Advent in its fullest and finest. Cozy up, friends, God is working in you and through us. There is so much to learn, to give, to heal.

**Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Julie**

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## **HOPE FOR HOUSING CARDS**

I am pleased to announce that Hope For Housing cards are once again available for purchase! When these cards are used at participating stores, a percentage of the store's profits from the purchases are donated to the Central MA Housing Alliance, where they help provide shelter and housing services to people in need. Buying these cards is a great way to support the CMHA and its mission to ensure that all local residents have adequate and affordable housing.

Currently there are cards in \$25, \$50 and \$100 denominations for many local supermarkets, including Shaws, Hannaford, Big Y and Stop & Shop. There are also \$10 and \$25 cards available for Dunkin Donuts, CVS and Panera. These cards can be used for their full face value in any store in that particular chain, and are easily purchased by contacting me anytime.

United Congregational Church has always been a big supporter of Hope For Housing, and it is great to again have this opportunity to do good in our communities. Do not hesitate to call me for more information, as we work together to support this worthy ministry!

**Tim Camp**

E-Mail: [timbcamp@aol.com](mailto:timbcamp@aol.com)

Home Phone: 508- 798- 6997



**PLEASE SUPPORT THE COMBINED ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING (OGHS) AND NEIGHBORS IN NEED (NIN) OFFERING**

We've combined the OGHS offering originally scheduled for March (delayed due to covid-19) and the upcoming NIN offering into a single offering.

Invest in Futures is the theme for One Great Hour of Sharing this year. One Great Hour of Sharing offers domestic and international support to people in crisis. Financial support of the New Life Center in Thailand is one example of the power of One Great Hour of Sharing. The New Life Center provides support for young girls that are survivors or at high risk of sexual abuse, domestic abuse and human trafficking. When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you invest in the futures of these girls and countless others like them. Your gifts go to provide education, vocational training, basic necessities, and much-needed community support. <https://www.ucc.org/oghs>

Neighbors in Need is part two of our combined offering. Neighbors in Need is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. When LGBTQ individuals in upstate South Carolina unexpectedly find themselves without a home or a place to feel safe, Peace Congregational United Church of Christ will be ready to help. Congregation members and Clemson University are working side-by-side in the design and construction of a tiny house, a mobile residency for a person in the LGBTQ community who is no longer welcome at home. The NIN funded project is in progress and the first occupant could be ready to find refuge there in January. <https://www.ucc.org/nin>

Please give generously by sending a single check to our treasurer, Peter Keck (50 Dolan Rd., Millbury, Ma. 01527). Proceeds from your donation will be split evenly between the two causes. Please make checks out to United Congregational Church, referencing OGHS/NIN in the memo field.

Thank you,

**The Mission Outreach Ministry**



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**Please notify the church office by phone (508-752-3785) or at: [staff@ucc-worcester.org](mailto:staff@ucc-worcester.org) of any change of your address. With the New-Pastor-Search physically mailings are being sent out, and it is more important than ever now to have your current home address on file in the system.**

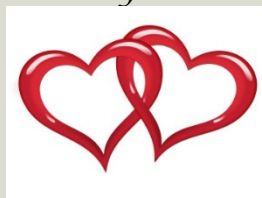
**Thanks very much!**

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*With joyful hearts, we celebrate the marriage of Alisa Villarreal and Ann Rokosky on Saturday, September 12, in Merriman Chapel. In spite of all the complications and restrictions of COVID, their wedding was a joyous blessing and celebration of their love. We wish all the best to Ann and Alisa Villarreal as they begin their new life together ~ blessed by God ~ as wife and wife!*

*~Submitted by Pastor Nancy Elder-Wifrid*





### **IN MEMORIAM:**

## **REMEMBERING GEORGE AND NANCY**

United Congregational Church fondly remembers *George and Nancy Blanchard*, long time members who both passed away recently. They were a couple extremely devoted to each other and their large family, and very active participants in many of our church's ministries. Nancy was active for many years in the Women's Fellowship, helping organize church dinners and many other welcoming events. After retiring as United's Sexton, *George* joined the Building Committee, and served many years as our Church Historian, managing the church archives.

Anyone who knew *George and Nancy Blanchard* remembers their friendliness, and how they welcomed everyone who came through our doors. And who can forget *George's* sense of humor, and his love for the Red Sox? Our condolences go to the Blanchard family, as we cherish our own memories of a couple who were such a blessing to our community of faith!



## **CHURCH SURVEY UPDATE**

Hopefully every member of United Congregational Church has received a letter inviting them to take part in a church survey. This survey is being done as part of our search for a Settled Pastor, and will allow us to present a complete and clear picture of our congregation to candidates. The Board Of Ministries wants to know everyone's vision for United, and the qualities we should look for in applicants for the Settled Pastor position.

Members lacking computer access should have received a printed survey and a return envelope along with the letter. Members who participate in United's Google Group, or are on the church's e-mail list, should have received an e-mail titled "Church Survey", which contains an electronic copy of the survey accessible through the embedded link. If you have not received a survey in either the printed or electronic version, please contact me at my Home Phone (508- 798- 6997) or E-Mail ([timbcamp@aol.com](mailto:timbcamp@aol.com)) to obtain one.

In addition to the Survey, there will also be opportunities for everyone to voice their opinions, or ask questions. Zoom sessions are scheduled for immediately after worship on Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup>. If you would like to participate in one of these, please stay on line at the conclusion of the service, and you will automatically be connected to a survey discussion group. If you are unable to take part in the Sunday discussions, you can register for one of the Zoom sessions scheduled for the following Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings by contacting Alisa Villarreal at: [villarreal.alisa@gmail.com](mailto:villarreal.alisa@gmail.com). United members without e-mail will be contacted by phone.

I hope every member of United will answer the survey, and take part in the discussions. Our church does its best ministering, and chooses the wisest course of action, when we work together. Your thoughts count, and need to be heard! If you have questions, or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me anytime.

Your Fellow Disciple in Christ,  
**Tim Camp**

## United Calendar & Prayer Intentions



### CALENDAR:

#### OCTOBER 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, October 4th: Suzanne Stevens, Mae Stroshane, Gretchen, David, Sabrina & Parker Switzer.

For Sunday, October 11th: Susan Tarantino, Kevin Testarmata, Monica Thomas.

For Sunday, October 18th: Alisa Villarreal & Ann Rokosky, Elsie Wanerka, Audrey White, Aaron & Elizabeth LaBranche.

For Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>: Sally Whitman, Rachel, Thea & Cleeve Wiese, Althea, Becca, Xander & Zoe Williams.

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/>)