



United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

October 2016



Message from the Pastor

Dear friends,

The southern tip of the Isle of Iona is wild and rocky. There are trails – I think – but it's often hard to tell what are trails and what are paths made by the sheep and highland cattle. When you walk this part of the island, you have to be careful: the stones can be slippery because of frequent rain, the ground can be unexpectedly boggy, and – as I said – the paths are shared by the sheep and cattle who do what sheep and cattle must do without any thoughts for the people

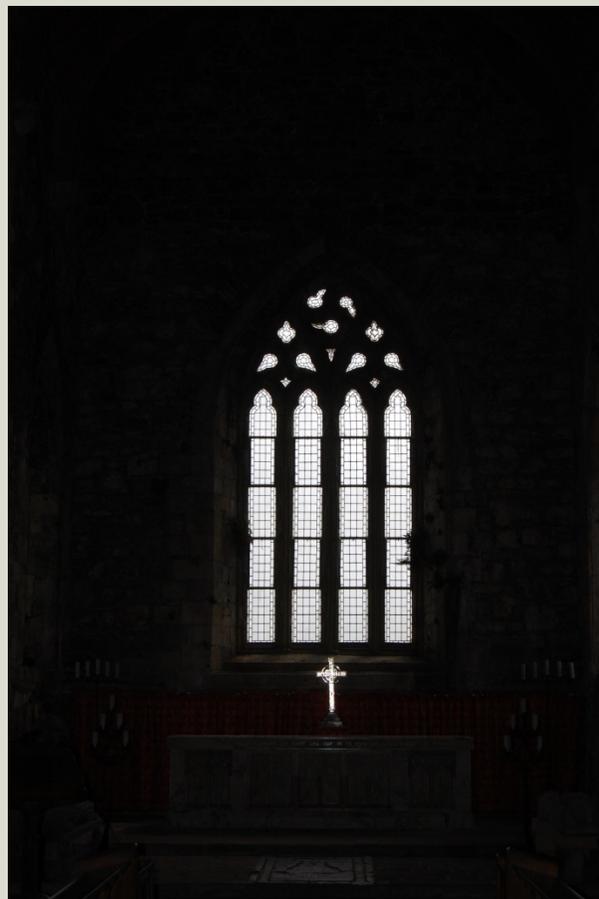
who hike the island! While other parts of the island are lovely pastures and sandy beaches, this part is rough and rugged and treacherous.

This past election cycle has been, to say the least, also been rough and rugged and treacherous. Moments of genuine dialogue and thoughtful vision have been far fewer than insults and attacks – at least as of this writing! We are all aware that this election is an especially challenging and important one for the future of our country and our world; I am not alone in thinking that it seems more divides than unites us these days. As people of faith, we believe in the importance of prayer – opening our hearts and our minds to truly hear the Word of God, and then praying for the understanding and wisdom and courage to be faithful to that Word.

We will be offering an opportunity to gather in prayer on election eve – Monday November 7th – to pray for ourselves, our country, our world and our church; I hope you will be part of this time of prayer. There will be a simple prayer vigil at church from 7:00 – 7:30/8:00, when we will gather in guided silent prayer. If you are unable to come to church that evening, the prayers we will be using will be available at church the week before; if you would like them sent to you, please let me know. We will also have a sign-up sheet with hourly blocks of time beginning at 8:00 pm on Monday November 7th and continuing through 8:00 pm on Tuesday November 8th, and will invite people to sign up to pray for our country and its people during one or more of the blocks of time; while it may be difficult to fill the wee hours of the morning, some of us may know that we are awake at 2 or 3 or 4 in the morning, and can covenant to pray during that time! We hope to have prayers offered during much of these 24 hours.

Please join us as we pray for God's guiding and blessing upon our country and our leaders.

Blessings,
Nancy



HEALING PRAYER MINISTRY

The Spiritual Life and Diaconate Ministry has begun a ministry of offering healing prayers on communion Sundays. Anyone wishing to receive healing prayers is invited to go to one of two healing prayer teams on their way to their seat after receiving communion.



ALL SAINTS DAY NOVEMBER 6TH

On November 6th, we will honor the lives of the saints who have gone before us, lifting up especially those who were members of United (Chestnut St and Central St churches as well) who have died in the past year. We give thanks for the lives and faithful witness of:

*D. Gordon Warman
Thomas Sweeney
Fred Gibb
Wendell Wright
Kay Janner
Barbara Andersen*

We pray God's comfort for the friends and family of all who have died in this past year.

As part of our All Saints Day remembrance, special music will be offered by Greg Wilfrid, Chris Vece and Dave Uhl (3/5 of the Jolly Beggars!).



Thanksgiving Potluck

Our Thanksgiving Potluck will be held after church on Sunday, November 20th. This popular annual meal and get-together draws a happy crowd, some 50 of us last year, so save the date for yourself this year.

~ **Community & Fellowship Committee**



SHARING THANKSGIVING

As Thanksgiving approaches, we need to remember that there are many people right in our own communities who are NOT guaranteed a decent holiday meal. According to statistics from Feeding America, a national anti-hunger organization, millions of Americans experience days each month when there is literally no food in their homes.

The Carty Cupboard is one of the many local ministries working to remedy this situation by providing food for all. Carty, which has been supported by our church for the past 5 years, is one of the largest food pantries in Worcester. Right now Carty is looking for particular items to finish filling the hundreds of Thanksgiving baskets being assembled by its volunteers. Especially needed are large cans of gravy (no glass jars, please), boxes of turkey stuffing, any bread or muffin mixes, and canned pie fillings and pie crusts. In addition, for every day distribution, Carty is also accepting canned meals and hearty soups or stews. Food donations can be placed in the collection hamper in Merriman Chapel, and the items needed specifically for the Thanksgiving Baskets should be brought to Church by Sunday, November 6th. United member Tim Camp can be contacted anytime at 508- 798- 6997, or at timbcamp@aol.com, for more information.

As we approach a holiday where we reflect on the many blessings God has given us, we hope everyone will consider sharing some of their good fortune by donating food to this tremendous ministry. In the meanwhile, we wish everyone a happy and blessed Thanksgiving!

~ **United's Missions & Outreach Ministry**



Sunday October 30: A Sacred Conversation on Race

This past year has seen far too many incidents of racial discrimination and violence. We hear about young men of color being stopped by the police for “DWB” – *driving while black*, and almost weekly – too often daily – there are stories of African American men being killed by police who fear the men are a threat. Demonstrations and retaliatory violence against police continue to create conflict and fear and mistrust.

The MACUCC offers trained facilitators to come to churches to lead “Sacred Conversations on Race”: looking at racial tensions through the lens of our faith. Our Mission and Outreach Ministry has arranged for the Rev. Cindy Maybeck, a MACUCC facilitator, to come to United on Sunday October 30th, to preach during worship and to lead our conversation in a program after church. Mission & Outreach Ministry will provide a simple lunch after church, and we will move quickly into the program.

The program is best described as follows:

Through the narrative of a recent event, we will seek to engage the conversation of race in our society. We will begin with feeling - humanizing the often dehumanized story that is stripped by media of its very real content and relationship to our lives. Only then will we move into thinking about the circumstances and realities of race today. Finally, we will open the door to action - briefly beginning a conversation that will then be yours to bring into your life.

We welcome Cindy to our pulpit on the 30th as well as being our facilitator for the program. Cindy is the founder of Spirit Story ministry, and designs original presentations blending scripture telling and storytelling as a way to bring God’s word to life and to inspire the church to move forward in faith with hope and joy. She served as pastor for 14 years at Trinity Church in Northborough and 10 years at Bethany Christian United Parish in Worcester.

Please plan to be part of this important conversation!



MESSAGE FROM PASTOR NANCY

Remember to set your clocks BACK an hour on Saturday night, **November 5th**, as Daylight Savings Time end!!

United Calendar

- Oct 22-23 Church Retreat ~ Glastonbury Abbey
- Oct 25 Book Group Meeting
- Oct 26 Board Of Ministry Meeting
- Oct 30 Luncheon ~ Racial Justice Speaker
- Nov 7 Election Eve Service
- Nov 13 Spiritual Life and Diaconate Ministry Meeting
- Nov 14 Carty Food Cupboard ~ Wesley Methodist Church
- Nov 20 Thanksgiving Pot Luck
- Nov 23 Board Of Ministry Meeting

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/>)

God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



UCC Hurricane Matthew response, from Caribbean to Carolinas

October 12, 2016

Written by Carol Fouke-Mpoyo

Want to help? Money's best: Go to this site: [http://www.ucc.org/donate to disaster relief](http://www.ucc.org/donate%20to%20disaster%20relief)

Hundreds of thousands of lives have been uprooted by Hurricane Matthew, from the Caribbean to North Carolina where flood waters have yet to crest, let alone recede. UCC Disaster Ministries, which has been present to the affected areas since long before the storm, is responding with support for survivors - first, emergency food, water, shelter and sanitation, then early recovery and livelihood restoration, then long-term recovery. "The needs are great," said UCC Disaster Ministries Executive Zach Wolgemuth. "We are appealing to our donors to contribute generously to our Hurricane Matthew appeal. The more you give, the more needs we will be able to meet."

Here are some vignettes from early response work by UCC Disaster Ministries and its partners. **HAITI:** Hurricane Matthew, the first Category 4 storm to strike Haiti since 1964, has caused extensive damage. Current reports state that over 750,000 people are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance and some 90,000 people were displaced by the storm. Homes have been destroyed, food security threatened, and water and sanitation compromised.

UCC Disaster Ministries has sent a series of solidarity grants to partners in Haiti who, in this initial phase of the emergency, are providing food, water, shelter, and sanitation for people displaced by Hurricane Matthew.

Contributions to UCC Disaster Ministries' Hurricane Matthew Appeal will help partners extend that help to thousands, along with non-food items, emergency preparedness, psychosocial support, education, early recovery and livelihood restoration. **UNITED STATES:** Hurricane Matthew affected the Southeastern coastal regions of the United States, including Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Phone communications remain out in some affected areas, and power outages continue, contributing to concerns about food security and health. Multiple rivers have yet to crest in North Carolina, so additional flooding is a continued risk. The UCC Florida Conference is a member of Florida VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), coordinating and collaborating in disaster response and recovery. Last weekend, in response to a request from the American Red Cross, the conference supplied 50 cleanup buckets and "a whole bunch" of hygiene and baby care kits to an evacuation shelter in a Bunnell, Fla., elementary school, inland from the Palm Coast area, which suffered significant damage, said David Heald, the conference disaster coordinator for North Florida.

The conference also supplied hygiene kits for 125 Bethune-Cookman University students sheltering in place in the Daytona Beach school's performing arts center. The school's Dean of Chapel the Rev. John Baldwin said it was "phenomenal" to see the UCC and others in the community "respond to our needs."

At least one congregation served as a shelter for nearly a dozen congregation members. Union Congregational UCC in Holly Hill, Fla., retrofitted its classroom building as a shelter and provided several nights' shelter for 11 members who were mandated to evacuate their homes.

There was no electricity, Heald said, but the gas stove worked, and evacuees cooked up beef stew and other tasty dishes. The flush toilets and shower worked - but the water was cold.

Hurricane Matthew adds great need to that left by Hurricane Hermine just over a month ago. Florida Conference Disaster Coordinator Bill Wealand said that more than 4,000 Florida households were affected by that storm, with "probably close to 400 in need of volunteer labor and donated materials to make their homes safe and habitable again."

The UCC's Southern Conference, which includes North Carolina, is struggling to measure the hurricane's impact, which is still being felt as flood waters have yet to crest, let alone recede in

some areas.

One immediate impact: Hurricane Matthew forced the postponement of the African American Women in Ministry Conference, which was to have taken place at Franklinton Center, N.C., this week.

The Washington Post, on Oct. 12, reported that the flood is dealing "a direct blow to the poorest section of North Carolina, a tract of farmland and towns struggling after losing manufacturing jobs. More than 4,000 people have been forced from their homes into shelters at high schools and recreation centers, many lacking flood insurance, health insurance, or stable employment."