



United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

September 2016

Message from the Pastor



Dear friends,

In the Iona chapel is this lovely prayer corner: [picture below] the windows look out on a meadow rolling down to the sound that separates the Isle of Iona from the Isle of Mull; three very friendly highland cattle roam the meadow. In front of the window is a notebook with daily prayers and readings for contemplation; next to the notebook are a wooden chest and bowl, along with paper and pencil for writing prayer requests,

which are gathered every Tuesday and offered during evening worship in the Abbey, along with prayers requested from the worshipping community that evening and by email from around the world.

Every Tuesday, worship in the Abbey focuses on healing, and the evening service ends with an invitation for anyone who chooses to come forward to receive laying on of hands and healing prayers, either for themselves or another person or situation. As they say, *"...each person and situation is known to God, not as a problem to be solved, but as a focus for God's acceptance and love....we trust God that our prayers will be answered, although we do not know when or how healing will happen."*

For three Sundays in September, our sermons have focused on the theme of healing – lifting up our belief that God's purpose and desire for us and for all creation is a life of wholeness; the ministry of healing is central to our faith, and has been since Jesus' first act of compassion and healing.

We regularly send "google group" emails, asking for prayers for members and friends of United and for situations in the world that need our prayer. We lift up different members of United each week (have you noticed this?! Each Sunday in the bulletin, different members/families are named for our prayers – we go alphabetically through the directory so that everyone is prayed for regularly!) and we name our prayers concerns and celebrations as we begin our Prayers of the People.

The Spiritual Life and Diaconate Ministry is offering a new ministry – a healing ministry that will invite anyone who would like to receive healing prayers to do so after they receive

communion on the first Sunday of the month. Five members of the SLDM (Itiel Febles, Katherine Orcutt, Joy Hennig, Megan Farrar and Peggy Israelian) will be available in two "stations" near the communion table, so that after you receive communion, you can go to them on your way back to your seat, and they will offer words of healing prayer for you or a person or situation for whom you would like prayers offered. There is no need to specifically name what your prayer is – we believe God knows all that is in our hearts and minds without us ever having to voice it aloud – you can simply ask for a prayer of healing, or, if you choose, be more specific in your request...it is up to you!

We will begin offering healing prayers on October 2 – which is also World Wide Communion Sunday; it seems appropriate to begin this intentional healing ministry on the day we join our sisters and brothers around the world at Christ's table.

Know that you are welcome to come for a healing prayer – or to return to directly to your seat after communion – either way, God hears our prayers and blesses us!

Blessings,
Nancy



VACATION COVERAGE

Nancy will be away from the office for her final vacation week **October 3-10th**. Dave Cote will be providing pastoral coverage for her during that time. Please contact Dave or the church office if you are aware of any pastoral concerns or emergencies.



Annual Fall Retreat ~ Coming October 22nd!
Mark your calendars NOW!

*“Generally speaking,
if you want to know who you really are as distinct from who you like to think you are, keep an eye on where your feet
take you.”*

Frederick Buechner, Wishful Thinking

Plan to join us for our annual fall retreat at Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham, October 22-23! The theme this year will be *“Where are your feet taking you!?”* We often find ourselves rushing through each day from task to task, following routines and habits without ever stopping to consider whether this is really what we want to be doing ~ whether this is the life we *want* to lead. What do the patterns of our lives say about us? Are our feet taking us where we want to go ~ and if not, how might we change direction? And if we looked up from our feet toward where we would like to be headed ~ what would be different in our lives? Our retreat will begin at 11:00 on Saturday October 22 and end with lunch on the 23rd. Cost for the retreat (overnight and 4 meals) is \$100/person; scholarship aid is available – just speak to Nancy. A sign-up sheet and registration forms are available on the “Sign-Up Table”; please speak to Nancy if you have questions.

Please note: the deadline for registering for the retreat is Sunday October 2nd ~ so put the retreat on your calendar now ~ and sign up!!



CONGRATULATIONS WAMS!!!

ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE

Worcester County Mechanics Association

Held At: **MECHANICS HALL**
Tuesday, September 27, 2016 * 5:00 pm

Master Mechanic Award ~ Honoring examples of excellence that inspire us to greatness.

WORCESTER AREA MISSION SOCIETY / WAMSWORKS

Guest Speaker:
REV. ROBERT (BOB) BACHELDER
Minister and President

~ WAMS partners with congregations, community-based organizations, public schools, universities, social services agencies, foundations, businesses, government and individuals to advance the efforts of all people looking to achieve sustainable economic independence and success in Massachusetts.



CROP WALK FUNDRAISER!

What could be better than an evening with the Jolly Beggars AND supporting CROP – helping provide food for hungry people around the world!?! Absolutely nothing!! The Jolly Beggars will be playing a CROP benefit concert on **Friday October 14th** at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Holden at 7:00. Come for an evening of great music and fun for a good cause!



CARTY CUPBOARD UPDATE

One of the most successful ministries supported by United Congregational Church is the Carty Food Cupboard. Located at 114 Main Street in Worcester, Carty provides hundreds of families in need with safe, nutritious food. For many downtown residents, this collective ministry by several area churches has often been the difference that allowed them to put meals on the table.

For several years now, our congregation's members have given the Cupboard non-perishable groceries, which can be left in the Collection Hamper at Merriman Chapel's entrance. Foods such as Peanut Butter, Jellies, Cereal and canned fruits/vegetables are always welcome. In addition, now that cooler weather is finally here (sorry!), there is an increasing demand for canned meals and hearty soups or stews. Some families coming to Carty also ask for baby diapers, so any donations of these in sizes 1 through 5 are also welcome.

Please contact Tim Camp at 508- 798- 6997, or at timbcamp@aol.com, if you have questions about items needed, or want to join the group of United members who volunteer at Carty

one Monday evening each month. Most importantly, we thank all whose donations of food or time have helped Carty Cupboard, and allowed our church to continue the tradition of the earliest disciples, who “were always doing good, and helping the poor (Acts 9:36)”. May God bless you!

With Gratitude,
United’s Missions & Outreach Ministry



MESSAGE FROM TOM MCMILLAN

Faith and Politics...

You undoubtedly know there's an election coming up. There's a good chance you've decided which candidate you're going to vote for. Even if you have, how people of faith relate to the political process is always relevant. So plan to join us three Sunday's in October (10/2, 10/9, and 10/16) right after worship as we explore Separation of Church and State, Faith and Patriotism, and Principles That Inform How We Vote. It should make for some lively conversation. Questions? Call Tom McMillan at 978-886-3528 or Katherine Orcutt at 978-884-2466.

United Calendar

Sept 28	Board Of Ministry Meeting
Oct 2	“Faith & Politics” by Tom McMillan
Oct 9	“Faith & Politics” by Tom McMillan
Oct 16	Spiritual Life & Diaconate Meeting
Oct 16	“Faith & Politics” by Tom McMillan
Oct 17	Carty Food Cupboard
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

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/>)



What We Believe

TESTIMONIES OF FAITH

We believe in the triune God: Creator, resurrected Christ, the sole Head of the church, and the Holy Spirit, who guides and brings about the creative and redemptive work of God in the world.

We believe that each person is unique and valuable. It is the will of God that every person belong to a family of faith where they have a strong sense of being valued and loved.

We believe that each person is on a spiritual journey and that each of us is at a different stage of that journey.

We believe that the persistent search for God produces an authentic relationship with God, engendering love, strengthening faith, dissolving guilt, and giving life purpose and direction.

We believe that all of the baptized 'belong body and soul to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.' No matter who – no matter what – no matter where we are on life's journey – notwithstanding race, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, class or creed – we all belong to God and to one worldwide community of faith. All persons baptized – past, present and future – are connected to each other and to God through the sacrament of baptism. We baptize during worship when the community is present because baptism includes the community's promise of 'love, support and care' for the baptized – and we promise that we won't take it back – no matter where your journey leads you.

We believe that all people of faith are invited to join Christ at Christ's table for the sacrament of Communion. Just as many grains of wheat are gathered to make one loaf of bread and many grapes are gathered to make one cup of wine, we, the many people of God, are made one in the body of Christ, the church. The breaking of bread and the pouring of wine reminds us of the costliness of Christ's sacrifice and the discipleship to which we are all called. In the breaking of bread, we remember and celebrate Christ's presence among us along with a 'cloud of witnesses' – our ancestors, family and friends who have gone before us. It is a great mystery; we claim it by faith.

We believe the UCC is called to be a united and uniting church. "That they may all be one." (John 17:21) "In essentials—unity, in nonessentials—diversity, in all things—charity," These UCC mottos

survive because they touch core values deep within us. The UCC has no rigid formulation of doctrine or attachment to creeds or structures. Its overarching creed is love. UCC pastors and teachers are known for their commitment to excellence in theological preparation, interpretation of the scripture and justice advocacy. Even so, love and unity in the midst of our diversity are our greatest assets.

We believe that God calls us to be servants in the service of others and to be good stewards of the earth's resources. 'To believe is to care; to care is to do.'

We believe that the UCC is called to be a prophetic church. As in the tradition of the prophets and apostles, God calls the church to speak truth to power, liberate the oppressed, care for the poor and comfort the afflicted.

We believe in the power of peace, and work for nonviolent solutions to local, national, and international problems.

We are a people of possibility. In the UCC, members, congregations and structures have the breathing room to explore and to hear ... for after all, God is still speaking. ...
