



United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

September 2017



Message from the Pastor

*Lord Christ,
you are the still centre of every storm.
In you is calm,
whatever the wind outside.
In you is reassurance,
however high the waves.
In you is strength,
however contrary the tide.*

Eddie Askew (Iona Community member)

Dear friends,

We have been through many storms these past weeks – storms of wind, fire, rain and violent floods, and storms of hate, anger and violent words. Our country has been through – and continues to be in the midst of – great vulnerability to threats against our country's economic stability, to our safety from war and terrorism, and to our values of justice, equality and inclusion. And so we pray, we rally, we speak out of our grounding as people of faith, even as challenges to the values we claim as most important continue...and at times, we feel overwhelmed, and wonder how we can make a difference.

The prayer above is from a little book I treasure: *"An Iona Prayer Book"*, and is offered as an evening prayer for healing. In the midst of so many challenges, it is good to be reminded of the presence, strength and calm of Jesus – with us, within us, and surrounding us always.

So ~ we pray...we pray for healing, we pray for strength, we pray for those who have lost everything in hurricanes or fires, earthquakes or floods. We pray for those who are marginalized because of their nationality or race or gender. We pray for those who fear being deported because they were not born here. We pray for those who are living in refugee camps, unable to return to the homes they fled because of war, terrorism, oppression or natural disaster. We pray for those who struggle to make it through each day, for whom our country is not one of opportunity but one of injustice.

And while we pray, we also act as citizens of our country and world: standing up and speaking out against injustice; giving of our resources to help those in need; practicing environmental stewardship; discerning ways we can – every day – embody our faith.

The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, *"We must build dikes of courage to hold back the flood of fear."* We at United are a strong community ~ gifted with courage, faithfulness, compassion, grace,

and with a willingness to take chances and to risk listening for God's unique call to us – in this time and in this place. As we face the challenges before our country, I pray that we remain grounded in the one who truly is our center: Jesus the Christ, who lived love and forgiveness and justice.

Blessings,
Nancy



NEW MEMBER GATHERING

Are you interested in learning more about United, and possibly becoming a member? We are planning a gathering on Sunday October 15th, immediately after church, for anyone interested in joining United. We will receive new members on Sunday October 29th. Please speak to Nancy if you are interested.



ANNUAL FALL RETREAT....

...save the date: Saturday October 27th at St. Francis Episcopal Church in Holden! This will be a one day retreat (time to be determined, but plan on 9:00 – 3:30) with the theme, "A Time Such as This", helping us reflect on how we are called to live as people of faith in these days. More details to follow – but consider yourself invited!!

WELCOME TO DEBBIE DUVAL



Debbie Duval began her year of field ed with us on September 10th. She is a student at Andover Newton Theological School and preparing for ordination in the UCC. We are delighted to welcome her and look forward to her year of ministry with us!

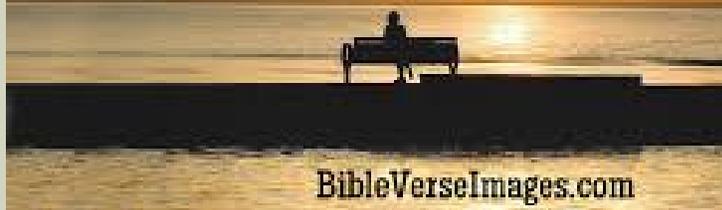
PASTOR NANCY'S VACATION



Nancy will be on vacation from October 5 – 12. The Rev. Helen Bross will be providing pastoral coverage during that time; please contact her or the church office in case of any pastoral emergencies or needs.

Come to me, all you who are
weary & burdened,
& *I will give you rest.*

Matthew 11:28



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CHURCH PICNIC!

Many thanks to all who helped with our annual picnic! Thank you to the Community and Fellowship Ministry who organized the picnic, to all who helped shop, grill, set up and take down...all who contributed food and fun and all who enjoyed it! Special thanks to Emerson Brooks for hosting us!!

United Calendar



- Sept 20 Board of Ministry Meeting
- Sept 25 Carty Cupboard Volunteer Monday / Wesley United Methodist Church
- Oct 1 Neighbors In Need
- Oct 15 New Members Gathering
- Oct 28 One Day Fall Retreat ~ in Holden

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/>)



SUPER OPPORTUNITY

Saturday, October 21, 2017

Connect with friends from around the MA Conference UCC for a full-day of worship, workshops, and networking at the Keefe Regional Technical School in Framingham.

Cost of \$54 includes morning worship, 2 workshops, an optional lunch activity, continental breakfast, buffet lunch, marketplace and closing worship. Participants will be able to choose two 90-minute workshops related to various aspects of church life, mission, and ministries, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

The marketplace gives participants a chance to learn about a variety of ministry opportunities and to shop their favorite vendors.

Sounds Super? More info including listing of workshops at macucc.org.



Neighbors in Need Special Mission Offering



Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the UCC that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry(CAIM). Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants.

Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. Funding is provided through donations to the Neighbors in Need offering.

Most UCC congregations will receive the NIN offering on October 1, 2017 as part of their World Communion Sunday observance.

The 2017 theme for the NIN offering is "**Protect the Sacred: In a Just World, Clean Water is Life.**" Most UCC congregations will receive the NIN offering on Sunday, October 1, 2017 as part of their World Communion Sunday observance, but local churches may also select a different date.