

September 08, 2013

The Reporter

Vol. 63 No.34

A weekly collection of news, reflections and announcements from the
Congregational Church of West Medford
an Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

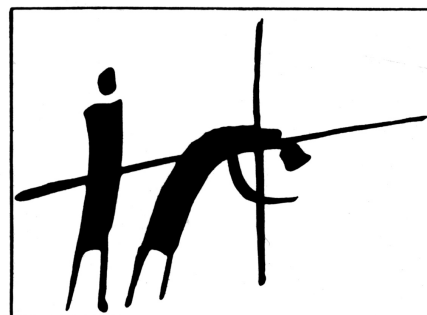


PASTORAL REFLECTION

*"Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.
For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost,
to see whether he has enough to complete it?" —Luke 14:27-28*

What? Me Sacrifice?

The Gospel lesson for this week (Luke 14:25-33) is one of those lectionary texts that pastors might be inclined to turn away from, what with Jesus' radical teaching about discipleship. In it, Jesus uses what is referred to as hyperbolic (or extreme) language to make his point—that in order to follow him one must make some serious sacrifices—sacrifices as extreme as giving up one's family, possessions, even one's life.



David Lose, one of my favorite theologians (and Professor of Preaching at Luther Seminary), writes a weekly reflection designed to encourage "Working Preachers." This week Dr. Lose tackled this text and the demand Jesus makes of us as disciples. Interestingly, Dr. Lose acknowledges that while we mainline churches tend not to expect this kind of sacrifice of our already over programmed, overworked, over-stressed parishioners—we may do so at our own peril.

Because church has become one of the many options folk have for how they spend their Sunday, because we are shy to claim our discipleship as followers of Jesus in this post-modern, post-Christian era, and because we believe we have to compete with all of the other ways that people "consume"—we have set the sacrifice bar pretty low. We think that in order to keep people coming (or to get new people to come) we have to be the easy-access-good-guys who make church participation uber-easy. We think that people today aren't willing to make sacrifices.

Dr. Lose writes, "And so we emphasize God's grace and work our schedules for fellowship, education or youth group around school calendars, [kids sports], and community activities as much as possible. Yet this [bible] passage makes me wonder whether we've missed something essential about the Christian faith. This isn't about our eternal destiny. This is about the character of our Christian lives. Christianity, I've come to realize, is a way of *being*, a way of *living*, a way of *doing* things differently because of living "in Christ" (to borrow Paul's favorite phrase). Yet for much of my ministerial career I've preached and written as if it's primarily a way of *thinking*....sometimes I wonder if part of our decline is that we've spent so much time stressing what we need to think and believe instead of talking about what we can and should -- indeed, are called to -- *do*."

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The truth is postmodern or not people make sacrifices all the time. They sacrifice for their children to play sports or cheer or dance or play an instrument or (insert your child's extracurricular activity). They sacrifice to save money for college. They sacrifice to get the next promotion. They sacrifice favorite treats and time at the gym to stay healthy and exercise. And there are people who sacrifice a great deal to help to lead the church. We are willing to sacrifice for the things that are important to us, putting 'our money where our mouth is', so to speak. Or as Jesus said elsewhere in scripture, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."



Psychologists have determined that the more we sacrifice for something the more we value it. Some would suggest that we have made it too easy to be a part of our churches. Jesus certainly did not suggest it was easy to be a follower. On the contrary, he asked us to do things like love our neighbors (all of them), pick up his cross, forgive seven-times-seventy-times, sell everything and give to the poor, dine with windows and tax collectors. You get the picture. Being a follower of Jesus is not the same as being a member of a church.

Are we expecting too little of ourselves if the travelling soccer team or the job-we-do-not-love but which puts food on the table is sacrifice-worthy and following Jesus is not? What Jesus is saying in this text is that the life he calls us to, the beloved community we are encouraged to create, the call of God on our time, talent and treasure should be the priority (or, at least have equal priority to the other stuff of our lives).

Dr. Lose in his blog post suggests that we might look at the long arc of our lives and ask ourselves, "What is important to me, what do I hope for myself and my family." Not simply because we should, but because the "abundant life and way of discipleship that Jesus both promises and announces also takes sacrifice -- not to earn God's grace but to live into the discipleship life that grace makes possible. This isn't about our eternal destiny...God has already taken care of that. This is about the caliber and character of our Christian lives. And, like anything else worth doing, discipleship takes time, energy, work, and practice -- in a word, it takes sacrifice." May it be so for you.

Rev. Wendy Miller Olapade (revwdmiller@comcast.net)





In Our Prayers

Concerns: Thelma T headed to rehab for two weeks to gain healing for a wound; Anita N prays for her mother with health concerns; for the family and friends of Marion D. who passed away last week; for the folk who smoke on the church's steps and the grace to separate anger towards the tobacco industry vs. victims suffering from various addictions; for our congregation as we enter the Crossroads phase this fall and for our future; for children and those who might hurt them; for students of all ages starting school this fall; for educators and administrators that they might have

the resources to teach; for victims of the Colorado wildfires; for the environment; for President Obama and Congress regarding our present times of strife—may God's intentions prevail as they make decisions; for the people of Syria and Egypt; for the St. John's Baptist Church in South Boston who lost their church in a fire; Bev C's friend John who is ill.

Joys: Jeff S. celebrates his training as a peer counselor; our summer picnic last week; the Goodland Korean church and their barbecue; Bev and Michael C. celebrate a wedding anniversary and a wonderful music concert; Vina celebrates the return of Tripp and Drew; prayers for all parents.

We continue to pray for Jennafer and Jamie H. recovering from medical procedures, for Kerry's sister recovering from a procedure and for grace and energy for Kerry and Patti; for Peggy B. as she settles into her new home in Connecticut; for Lorna S. still hopeful for full recovery; for Dick S's friend Ed with Lou Gerig's Disease; for Diane P's friend Joe who has been diagnosed with an additional cancer site; also for Diane's son for wellness; for a loved one struggling with mental illness and for all who struggle emotionally; Kathy W. prays for her sister Annette struggling to recover from an injury due to a work-place incident.

We continue to pray for Mary B. recovering from broken leg at home; Eva W. recovering at home who suffered another fall; and June L. receiving care at home. We remember fallen soldiers and Veterans and those serving in our military. We lift up all of the children of our congregation and those we bless in Bright Stars.

Please send prayer requests to office@medfordchurch.org by noon each Wednesday

OUR CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS



Pastoral Care Concerns: "Deacon of the Month" for September is Brenda Briggs. Please let us know if there is someone who could use a visit, phone call, card, or prayer. The Deacons (aka: Spiritual Life) rely on your input about the well being and needs of our members and friends.

Empty your Pockets in the Pennies from Heaven Jar: The "Pennies from Heaven Jar" will be in the Narthex for you to empty your pockets of the loose change you may have. This jar is just one way to help support the church in a very easy way. The jar easily takes coins and paper money.



Volunteers Always Welcome: Worship Leaders/Readers, Ushers, Greeters, Fellowship Café—sign up in the book on the table in Barnes Chapel (or see the deacon of the month)!

Fellowship Café “Lite” Continues Through Crossroads: As it has been through the summer months, our fellowship time will remain a simple affair through October 20. Basic snacks will be purchased by the church staff and volunteers will bring cold drinks, set-up and clean-up. If you haven’t had a turn in a while, please call and/or email the office at office@medfordchurch.org and let us know if you might participate. Thanks in advance.

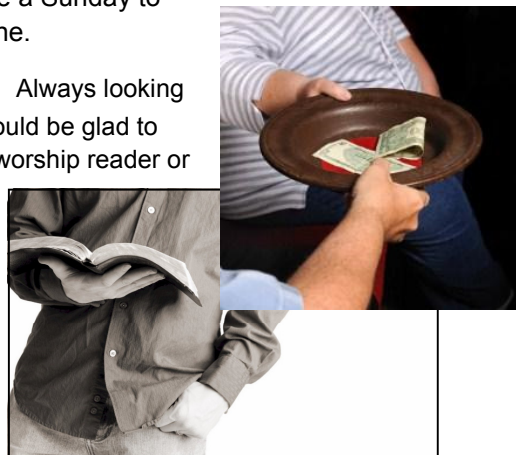
Happy September Birthdays



Brenda Briggs	September 04
Patty Hutchinson	September 09
P. Alexander Olapade	September 16
Holly Maloney	September 19
Kerry Hutchinson	September 20
Jenna Nackel	September 21
Shawn Wittington	September 22
Rev. Wendy Miller Olapade	September 23
Alyson Roche	September 24
Patrick Coughlin	September 25
Joy Roberts	September 29
Joe Luongo	September 30

Altar Flowers Always Welcomed: As the summer wanes, you may still have some zinnias to share from your garden!! Please contact Brenda Briggs bbriggs51@gmail.com (or the church office@medfordchurch.org) to make arrangements to schedule a Sunday to bring flowers or order them in honor or memory of a loved one.

Seeking Volunteers for Worship/Readers-Ushers: Always looking for folk to participate in worship, the Spiritual Life Committee would be glad to guide you to a volunteer opportunity. Whether it is being a lay worship reader or an usher one of the Deacons can teach you how to help. We are currently recruiting readers for worship (adult or youth) for October and November. Please contact Robin Baker (robinb12@verizon.net) or Kathy Williams (kathypricewilliams@yahoo.com) to find out more or ask any questions. You are also welcome to call the church office to get connected to the Deacons. Our church works better when we all pitch in and participate! Your help is appreciated.





Youth Faith Formation (aka: Confirmation) begins this fall. Rev. Wendy is planning an exciting program of Faith Formation for our youth ages 13-16 year olds using a fabulous, progressive curriculum entitled Re-Form which includes 40 hilarious animated short films that frame the theological questions that youth really ask and an Anti-Workbook that's chock full of individual and group activities. You can see a bit about the curriculum here: <http://reform.wearesparkhouse.org/>. We hope to do some shared mission and worship experiences with kids from the UU Medford church. If you have neighbors or friends in this age group, who you think might be interested in discovering their faith—please let Rev. Wendy know so that she might send an invitation. Watch for more info,

A STEWARDSHIP REFLECTION



Stewards of Peace and Justice: Our Amistad Story

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.

— Hebrews 13:2-3

I'm one of your national staff who gives tours of our Church House in Cleveland. I start in the Amistad Chapel by telling the story of 53 captives who were wrenched from their homeland in Sierra Leone, routed to Cuba, then sold and transported on a ship named La Amistad (Spanish for "friendship") to be illegally sold into slavery in the United States. The captives mutinied and gained control of their vessel. In their attempt to return to Africa, they were re-captured and jailed in New Haven, Connecticut in 1839.

There our ancestors in faith, Congregational abolitionists, did as Jesus had taught. They befriended these strangers, visiting them in prison and defending them in the courts, all the way to the Supreme Court where they won their freedom. Every step involved fundraising to support these efforts and finally charter a vessel to return the captives home to West Africa.

To this day, remaining funds are held in an endowment which supports the UCC's justice ministries. UCC congregations also give to the Neighbors in Need special mission offering each October to build a more just, compassionate, and peaceful world.

A message by Doris Powell, author of Stewards in the Household of God: a Resource for Holistic Year-round Stewardship. (September 2013, God is still speaking.) This resource is a free service and is made possible by our gifts to the United Church of Christ, Our Church's Wider Mission.

MISSION AND OUTREACH

Join in the CCWM Boston Urban Outreach In-Service Project Friday, November 8--Saturday, November 9 - RSVP Please

Once again, we will participate in an overnight mission event to learn about and to help relieve homeless and hunger in Boston. **The program will take place Friday, November 8, 5 pm through Saturday, November 9, 3 pm.** *Those not interested in sleeping overnight are still welcome to participate in the evening and day programs only.* This is our third year hosting this mission. Those who have participated in the past know what an enriching experience this is!



During the event we will: have dinner with and hear directly from those who have experienced homelessness; share time together preparing meals and sandwiches; participate in conversation, games and music before a sleepover at a church in Charlestown. The next day we'll distribute the sandwiches we've made at Boston Common, and then head to the Boston Rescue Mission to make and serve lunch to the homeless and hungry there. *(note to those who have helped before: This year we will be helping at Boston Rescue Mission in downtown Boston instead of Pilgrim Church because that is where the need is at this time)*

We hope that everyone can make this wonderful event! WE also hope that you might invite friends and neighbors who are interested in the kind of spiritual growth that comes from mission work. The costs of the event will be fully covered by our Outreach Mission fund, but we need to know now how many spaces to reserve.

Please RSVP by Sept 10th to Susan D'Arcy Fuller (susandarcy@hotmail.com) indicating how many from your family will attend, and please indicate if you plan to sleep overnight at the church in Charlestown. Children 12 and up are welcome with an adult chaperone. Note that our confirmation class will be required to participate as they are able. Thank you!

The Pine Ridge Reservation Volunteer Team is back from a successful trip, filled with hard work, learning, and reflection. A big thanks to everyone in the congregation and the community for the many ways you have supported these efforts, from driving to the airport to volunteering at the silent auction. Check out photos from the trip, here: <https://pineridgerezstrawbailhome.shutterfly.com/>

Pine Ridge Potluck, Friday, Sept 20 7:00 pm! Interested to learn more about our Ministry to Pine Ridge Reservation? All are welcome to gather for a Pine Ridge Potluck on Friday, September 20th at 7pm in Fellowship Hall. This will be an informal fellowship opportunity for 2012 and 2013 trip volunteers, as well as anyone else who is interested in learning more about the trip or participating in the future. Bring a dish to share!

Sandwiches for Outdoor Church, Sunday, Sept 29, 9:00 am: Join us to make sandwiches for the Outdoor Church on Sunday, September 29th. Because of the Crossroads programming after church, we will gather before church, at 9am in the kitchen, to assemble the sandwiches.

NEWS AND EVENTS FROM THE UCC

Join Rev. Wendy for MACUCC Super Saturday. Registration is now open. Saturday, October 26, 2013. Come spend the day! Enjoy a variety of workshop offerings, marketplace and net-working. Tri-County Regional Vocational High School, 147 Pond Street, Franklin, MA. Keynote Speaker: The Rev. James Moos, Nominee for Election as Executive Minister of Wider Church Ministries, UCC and Senior Pastor of Bismark (ND) UCC.

Here are some of the workshop titles which may pique your interest:

- Whole Church Evaluations
- Reality Check
- From the Ground Up: Creating Sustainable Systemic Change in Congregations
- Discipleship: A Model of Church for the 21st Century
- Practical Ideas for Youth Ministry
- Christian Educator Resources and the Web
- Website 101 - Tips and Tools for Developing a Robust Web Ministry
- Money Matters: Our Faith and Our Finances
- We Believe in One Baptism
- Worship with a Twist
- Let Your Fingers do the Healing: Tapping Prayer
- End of Life Conversations
- Divestment from Fossil Fuel Companies – Update & What's Next
- End Homelessness for Youth and Young Adults
- The Spirit Moves (yoga and Christian worship)
- Faith - Grow it, Deepen it, and Live it Through a Holistic Approach to Adult and Intergenerational Faith Formation
- Seeking Common Ground: an introduction of the commonalities of Islam & the Abrahamic faiths
- Faith Formation Family Style: Equipping Parents
- Next Steps in Mission
- Centering Prayer, Centered Living
- Transforming Stewardship into Joyful Celebration (Jena Roy is presenting this one!)
- Called to Care Ministry (Rev. Wendy is presenting this one!)

For details, workshop descriptions and more about registering—<http://www.macucc.org/events/detail/1165>



THIS WEEK AT YOUR CHURCH

September 08-13, 2013

September 08, 2013 Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Homecoming Worship Service and Blessing of the Backpacks (Sanctuary) 10:00 am

Crossroads Session 1 (FH) 11:00 am—1:00 pm

Crossroads Children (LR) 10:45 am—1:15 pm

Goodland Church Worship (in Korean) (Sanctuary) 12:30 pm

Monday

(3) Boot Camp Sessions: 5:45 am--6:15 am;

8:15 am--9:00 am; 5:30 pm--6:15 pm (FH)

Peer Group--10 am (LR)

Yoga— 6:30 pm (FH)

Tuesday

Gamblers Anonymous—7:30 pm (BC)

Gam-Anon—7:30 pm (YR)

Wednesday

(3) Boot Camp Sessions: 5:45 am— 6:15 am;

8:15 am--9:00 am; 5:30 pm--6:15 pm (FH)

Alcoholics Anonymous- 8:00 pm (YR)

Thursday

Food Addicts—6:00 pm (YR)

Friday

(3) Boot Camp Sessions: 5:45 am--6:15 am;

8:15 am-- 9:00 am, 5:30--6:15 pm (FH)

Saturday

Alanon - 9:00 am (YR)

Yoga- 9:00 am (FH)

Boot Camp- 12:15 pm (FH)

September 15, 2013 Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Worship Service (Sanctuary) 10:00 am

Crossroads Session 2 (TBA) 11:00 am—1:00 pm

Crossroads Kids (LR) 10:45 am—1:15 pm

Goodland Church Worship (in Korean) (Sanctuary) 12:30 pm

Weekdays

(M—F) **Bright Stars Afterschool Enrichment Program**, www.BrightStarsKids.org

((M-F) **Gentle Dragon Co-op Preschool**, www.GentleDragonPreschool.org

(M-F) **English at Large** (ESOL/ESL Programs), www.englishatlarge.org

Room Legend: (FH) Fellowship Hall; (BC) Barnes Chapel; (YR) Youth Room; (LR) Living Room

The Congregational Church of West Medford, United Church of Christ

Ministers: All of us!

Pastor and Teacher: Reverend Wendy Miller Olapade

Organist and Choir Director: Dr. Herman Weiss

Church Administrator: Diane Petrelis

Moderator: Paul Roberts

Deacon of the Month: Brenda Briggs

Treasurer: Beverly Roche

Clerk: TBD

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