

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

Living the Season of Advent

It is hard for me to choose between Advent and Lent as far as which is my favorite season. I guess for today, I have to say Advent is my favorite (in a couple of months I will change my mind ;-). There is something about the minor key of the music of the season (Advent music, not Christmas music) that moves me deeply. (Our New Century Hymnal has some wonderful new Advent Hymns.) As I was preparing the bulletin for this Sunday's Hanging of the Greens Worship and it hit me that we are crossing over into a new liturgical year (It is Year A and Matthew is "The Man") I found myself whooping for a moment with the sense of hope and anticipation of that crossover. It doesn't hurt that we, as a faith community hit a very significant crossover moment this past Sunday in our unanimous decision to move forward to market our property to see what that might mean for the future of our mission and ministry! I am fluttery with anticipation, happy about our sense of commitment and connection and delighted by the not-so-coincidental synergy of this happening just as the church-calendar turns a page and we set our sights on the coming of Jesus! Again!



I am headed off for a few days of rest and renewal and am keeping it simple this week as it relates to my reflection. I offer the following considerations from one of my favorite theological and worship tools—Seasons of the Spirit Fusion—about how to living the season of Advent. A core spiritual practice is the be active in your waiting! Each week, this resource offers a recommendation for living the season and I will include it here on my reflection page/blog. I know you will have a wonderful worship service this week, Hanging the Greens and getting into the spirit. So get ready—'cos John the Baptizer and I will be back with you next Sunday!

Blessings, Rev. Wendy Miller Olapade, revwdmiller@comcast.net

Actively Waiting

Advent is about actively preparing for and anticipating God coming into our lives – not only preparing for the celebration of Christ's birth in a few weeks but actively preparing for God to come into our lives EVERY DAY! God's presence with us – and our presence with those who are precious to God – brings us closer to God. We grow spiritually, love deeply, and work for peace and justice for all God's people.

During this Advent season we hear God's message of love, peace, and justice from the Prophet Isaiah.

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Living the Season of Advent

December 1: Isaiah 2:1–5

Isaiah's message for the people of Judah – a message that can still teach us today – proclaims peace to a people who were surrounded by war and conflict. Isaiah explains that peace is not just an absence of fighting, but peace is working together with our enemies. It's the kind of peace that requires our participation and attention. It's peace made of justice and the well-being of all people. Just as Advent is a time when we wait expectantly for the coming of Christ in the world, peace requires the same watchfulness and involvement.

This week replace three habits with new ways that lift up the well-being of others.



Isaiah challenges us with a message of peace that demands us to work for the well-being of everyone, not simply to set aside our weapons (Isaiah 2:1–5). God's peace requires our participation and energy – just as much energy as we might have spent fighting. Isaiah also shares a vision of power that's up-ended, reversed – “And a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6). But how can this be? This is the hope-filled vision of a new world, a world of peace and harmony. A world we'd like to live in today.

Mary herself becomes a prophet – proclaiming a message of liberation to the poor and marginalized (Luke 1:47–55). She carries the great Liberator in her womb and following God's will she'll nurture and protect that hope for us all. And along with Mary, Joseph responds to God's message, received in a dream, to welcome and care for Jesus (Matthew 1:18–25). Joseph and Mary gave up their own lives and desires for God. Their example helps us lean into God's will for us in today's world.

Advent can be a very busy time of year. It's a time when the church says, “Wait,” and savour these four weeks of preparation for the coming of Christ into our lives. But many people find themselves rushing to parties, shopping malls, Christmas plays, and family gatherings. During this hurried season, it's important to pause and get ready for Emmanuel, God with us, to actually *be with us*. Advent prepares us for the message that Jesus will bring – peace, love, hope, justice, and liberation for all people. Now that's something to celebrate!

A Pastoral Invitation—Let's Talk? Let's Pray.

As our Crossroad discernment process moves from the theoretical to the real, from church the way it has always been to “Oh my goodness, does it mean that we might...?”, from “I baptized my children there” to “Where would we worship?” we are all experiencing a wide range of feelings and responses—including me! I want to extend an invitation to any and all who might want some one-on-one time with me or other members of the leadership team to check in and talk. You may want to talk

about the process, concerns you have, questions you need to ask but may not want to bring up in a public setting. Please, allow me to walk with you through this time as your pastor and spiritual guide. Of course as we make decisions we will build in time for processing along the way, but if you want time now, please say so.

OUR CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS



In Our Prayers

Concerns: We pray for Charlotte's mother, Janie who needs to give up driving; Ernestine S. in rehab; for the situation in Iran; for the family who was murdered in Arlington; Joy's friend Sheila having surgery; for the people in the Philippines who are suffering from the aftermath of the typhoon; Mayor McGlynn and his family at the death of his mother, Helen; Patty H. struggling with Asthma; George F. great-grandson of Mary B who has had a recurrence of cancer; Venessa facing medical tests.

We continue to pray for Lucy diagnosed with Lou Gehring's disease; Frank as he cares for Lucy; Thelma as she returns home; our congregation facing so many questions; Joy's friend Sheila having chemo and surgery; we pray for our church's ongoing process of discernment and for the leaders who are guiding our conversations and discovery. We pray for all the MACUCC churches engaged in Crossroads.

Joys: Louise celebrates the middle school production of Cinderella; Ose is thankful for our church—now her church as she joins in membership; Joy and Bruce celebrate the Mystic Chorale concert with Bev R.; Kathy celebrates her new job! We celebrate the many gifts of food and money being collected for Medford's Food Pantries; ANTS as they choose their new President, Martin Copenhaver; Kate, approved for the Girl Scout Gold Award; and Thelma's new hearing aids; the unanimity with which our congregation was able to come to a decision this past weekend at the Congregational Meeting; the careful work being done by the Strategic Planning Team.

We continue to pray for all those struggling with cancer and addiction; June L. in treatment and recovering at home; all those dealing with Alzheimer's disease including Elizabeth's father, Ose's friend Alma's husband; Joy's friend Sheila being treated for cancer; for the environment; for President Obama and Congress regarding our present times of strife—may God's intentions prevail as they make decisions; for Lorna S. still hopeful for full recovery; Eva W. recovering 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*

Pastoral Care Concerns: "Deacon of the Month" for December is Joy Harris. 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.

pennies
from
heaven



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.

Happy December Birthdays

Janice Willson	December 7
Timothy Roche	December 13
Joyce Henson	December 15
Melanie Whittington	December 28
Tom Campbell	December 29



Altar Flowers Always Welcomed: Please contact Brenda Briggs bgbriggs51@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.

Fellowship Café: During the month of December, Building and Grounds and Stewardship Committees are sponsoring coffee hour with the help of the children of the Sunday School and all of you are invited to bring treats to share! Big thanks to Karen McCune Barca who has taken on the responsibility of setting up and cleaning up the coffee weekly!! ***If you can bring some goodies or veggies or fruit to support, they would be very much welcomed.***

Worship Volunteers Always Welcome: We are always looking for folk to participate in worship as ushers and readers. Youth and Children are always welcomed to participate. The Spiritual Life Committee recruits readers. Kathy Williams is the contact at this time. (kathypricewilliams@yahoo.com)



If you would like to usher, please see Rev. Wendy to find out more or ask any questions. You are also welcome to call the church office to volunteer. Our church works better when we all pitch in and participate! Your help is appreciated.

Can You Make Crafts and/or Other Things to Sell for Pine Ridge Fund Raiser?



Response needed asap! The Pine Ridge Team is considering renting a table at a craft fair in Medford to be held on December 7 in order to raise funds for the volunteer ministry and the next volunteer trip. If you are artistic and have crafts that you are willing to donate to the table, please contact Kathy Williams at kathypricewilliams@yahoo.com. If there is an enough interest we will rent the table, sell Kathy's Southern Cookbook, HOKA Coffee and your offering! Thank you for your support.

Surprise! Your Pledge is Always Welcome: Thanks to everyone who made last week's Thanksgiving and Pledge Sunday such a grand success. We worshipped and sang and blessed our commitments to each other and our ministry. Your pledge cards are always welcome. Just put them in the offering plate or get them to the Treasurer via the church office.



Advent Wednesday Worship

Advent Wednesdays—December 4, 11, 18 at 7:00 pm

**A time of reflection, healing and renewal
for the journey as we birth something new.**

We will join Joseph and Mary on the road to Bethlehem as they answer Herod's mandatory call to travel home and be counted for the census.

We will worship, create community, and wait for the birthing of a new thing. The service will include a message, prayer, meditation, and the healing act of laying-on of hands. Come and sit in stillness.

In collaboration with our pastor, the Rev. Dr. Susan Corso will lead these mid-week sessions. Dr. Corso is the head of the Spiritual & Energy Medicine Departments at Visions HealthCare, and has been a Spiritual Director for over thirty years.



MISSION AND OUTREACH

Dec. 1 Deadline for Pine Ridge 2014: To express your interest in participating in a trip to Pine Ridge in 2014 to allow for a decision about proceeding with a 2014 trip. If a decision is made to do a 2014 trip, a \$78 deposit will be required on December 15th. Either way, we will have a series of small fundraisers this year to maintain and fund our Pine Ridge mission. Our hope is that all past and future CCWM Pine Ridge trip participants as well as our church supporters will join in planning, organizing and attending these fundraisers. It takes a community to continue and grow our mission to Pine Ridge! December 7, we are participating in the Grace Church craft fair from 9 to 12 and are accepting donations of any crafts that you can give for us to sell as well as volunteers to sit at the table. December 15, we are gift wrapping at Bestsellers Cafe where we can spread the word about our work at Pine Ridge as well as accept donations. Kathy and Karen have volunteered for this and could use one more person. We hope that through fundraising, community awareness events, political advocacy and possibly a 2014 trip to Re-Member, we will continue this work into the future. We need your support to continue this mission! Thank you for all you have done and all that you plan to do. Kathy and Joy

Thanks to you and the Outreach Ministry of CCWM who made gifts this week of:
\$ 100.00 to the Medford Clergy Interfaith Food Pantry Collection
\$ 100.00 to the Girls at Indigo House for Thanksgiving
And many, many bags of food from individual members!
Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

**CCWM Mission
and
Support
of
The Pine Ridge
Indian Reservation
Continues**



Support Pine Ridge **AND** get some holiday shopping finished!!

Buy delicious Hoka Coffee right from Pine Ridge!

Hoka! Coffee Company is a Native American owned coffee company based on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Hoka! has two missions—to create a coffee/roasting company that provides jobs and economic growth for The Reservation and its community; and to buy beans from indigenous smallholder farms who are guaranteed fair working conditions and a fair share for their product.

Hoka! Coffee was started by Native American Sharice Davids in September, 2013. Sharice relocated from Kansas to Pine Ridge to start her small business—and is passionate about coffee and economic development on the reservation—marketing Hoka! at pow wows, local events and on the internet.

When you buy a bag or two of Hoka Coffee for yourself and/or as a gift for someone, you are contributing to the economic viability of a community and providing an opportunity for a small Native American owned business to succeed and grow. Proceeds above the cost of the coffee and shipping will go directly into the CCWM Pine Ridge Mission Fund.



Orders can be placed through December 1st for
12 oz. bags @ \$ 14.00 per bag
light or dark roast ~~ ground or whole bean
No decaf at this time
Delivery by December 20th
Pick up will be at the church.

Also needed for a future fundraiser: Coffee cans of any size
(please bring them to church) Many thanks in advance

To sample a cup of Hoka coffee or to order,
please contact Joy Harris at
brujoy2@comcast.net or 617 852 2941.

FROM OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Halleluia Chorus in East Somerville:

An Invitation from our friends at First Church Somerville

Dear Friends, Some of you may know that music is my work, my passion, and my play; I run an orchestra program in East Somerville. This program provides high-quality, daily, music education and academic tutoring to 66 young people and also seeks to unite and solidify the community around the positive actions of its youth. Last year, some of you came out on a cold December night to sing with us in a very special concert. We will be presenting our second annual "Community in Harmony" concert again this year and closing the evening with Handel's Hallelujah Chorus.

Please consider joining us at the East Somerville Community School auditorium, 50 Cross Street, on December 17th, 2013 at 6:30 PM. We hope to bring a little more cheer and warmth to an otherwise normal Tuesday night with other holiday favorites including: Ukranian Bell Carol, Jingle Bells, Pachelbel's Canon, Bach's Minuet 2, Ode to Joy, and Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker. **We are also ALWAYS accepting more voices and instrumentalists for the Hallelujah Chorus. Please let me know if you'd like to join!** Musically yours, *Diane Cline, Director.*

Christmas Caroling in Harvard Square (or your neighborhood!)

Cambridge Historical Tours will be providing extravagant Victorian costumes and classic carols in four-part harmony. Please come see our professionally trained, costumed, caroling quartets every Sunday in December as we sing for our community in Winthrop Square in Harvard Square. In addition to the Sunday performances, beginning Black Friday (11/29), we will also be available for bookings of all kinds. A great form of entertainment for your annual office Christmas party, brightening up a crowd of shoppers, or giving your neighbors the gift of Christmas music on their doorsteps – we'll come to you and we'll be ready to sing! While we book events for a living, we always remember that sharing holiday cheer is priceless. Please contact Daniel Berger-Jones for more information at dbj@cambridgehistoricaltours.org. We hope that you'll join us this winter!

SEASIDE PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS		THE HAPPY HOLIDAY SHOW	
WHEN:	DECEMBER 6, 7 and 8, 2013		
TIME:	DECEMBER 6 and 7 @ 8:00 p.m.; DECEMBER 8 @ 3:00 p.m.		
WHERE:	WEST MEDFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, 400 HIGH STREET, WEST MEDFORD		
Ticket/Show Information: 781-249-3480		Purchase Tickets: 781-424-4284	
TICKET PRICES:	IN ADVANCE: \$22.00/ADULTS; \$20.00/ SENIORS (65+) and CHILDREN (UNDER 16) ALL TICKETS \$25.00 AT THE DOOR		

A STEWARDSHIP REFLECTION

Stewards of the Gospel: God Is Still Speaking... Through Us

*And [Jesus] said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."
– Mark 16:15*

For Christians, being stewards of all life is grounded in the gospel where we find the meaning and purpose of our lives. The word "gospel" comes from the Greek word meaning "good news:" the great announcement by Jesus of what God is doing for humanity.

A church that is alive with the joy of God's love made known in Jesus, experiencing God's intended shalom, is commissioned by Jesus to share that joy. In hope-filled worship we sing it; then go out to proclaim it. The church is filled with this spirit as we anticipate the celebration of Christ's birth. As we say with the evangelist, "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us" (2 Corinthians 4:7), we claim our vocation as stewards of the gospel. We cannot keep it to ourselves.

As centers of hope and transformation, local churches celebrate the good news through the seasons of Advent and Christmastide by sharing it and by honoring those who have served the church through giving to The Christmas Fund.

A message from Stewards in the Household of God: a Resource for Holistic Year-round Stewardship available from United Church of Christ Resources. God is still speaking,

