

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

The Jesus Way

It has been said that most pastors have one sermon in them – and that through the years it just gets presented in many different forms. I guess mine has something to do with The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:35-40/Mark 12:28—31/ Luke 10:25-28). On my pushy days I will sprinkle in The Great Commission. But because I say it so much, I am confident that you have heard me suggest that we really only need to know five little words in order to understand the basics of Jesus' Way. And I say it over and over and over again. You can probably guess it by now, but I won't keep you in suspense—for long. The foundation of all that Jesus said and did--the ground of his teaching--is quite simple. It is the Sparknotes (or Reader's Digest) version of the Ten Commandments and it forms the basis for Christian Ethics. When asked what was most important, Jesus said these two were the greatest of the commandments to "Love God and love your neighbor." For my nickel, I find almost everything that Jesus said and did comes down to those five little words, Love God and love your neighbor, including the Sermon on the Mount (do you think Jesus had more than one sermon?).



On the surface, this week's text from the Sermon on the Mount is almost as challenging as last week's. Last week the text had Jesus teaching about how to be in the image of God when dealing with difficult ethical topics like anger, adultery, divorce, and how we speak about each other. You might say that this part of Jesus' sermon is inviting us to understand in as expansive a way as possible, what it means to love our neighbor; how to be and live in 'right relationship' with others. Just as (last week) we are being invited to be in the image of God when we are angry or lusting after something that is not ours, here, we are called to love the way God loves--choosing to act with compassion and to love without discrimination

The Torah was the revelation of God to the people of Jesus' day. It contained instruction about how to live in relation to God and one another. Matthew's gospel uses the term *law* to refer to the whole content of this teaching. In this portion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses a rabbinic form of teaching – "You have heard it said...but I say..." – to examine some teachings of the law and expand their boundaries.

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Exodus 21:23–24 (“eye for eye, tooth for tooth”) said that an injury could not compel unlimited revenge, but only compensation in direct proportion to the offence. **Jesus goes beyond this to counsel non-retaliation.** Disciples can fulfill the requirements of the law, and also choose to give more than the law requires. Jesus encourages his hearers to go behind the literal words of the law to discover the love that lies at its heart.

Deuteronomy 24:10ff describes taking a person’s cloak as pledge for a loan. The law required that the cloak be returned at night so that the borrower would have some cover. Jesus calls for generosity: “Give to everyone who begs from you.” In fact, do more than is asked of you. Matthew’s community lived in a hostile society in which a Roman soldier could compel someone to carry his pack for a mile. There were many who demanded revenge for this oppression. Jesus tells his followers that they have the power to choose to do more than is required, to go the extra mile.

Leviticus 19:18 says “love your neighbor as yourself.” Again, Jesus invites disciples to go shockingly farther, loving enemies as well. Love of enemy is a revolutionary idea, especially in an occupied country. Jesus unfolds a deeper understanding of God’s ways--reminding his followers that God’s nature is to love without discrimination.

So okay, it is one thing to hear Jesus’ encouragement to go further than the original teaching. But, then we hear this crazy Word that a) God sends blessings on both the just and the unjust and b) we should “be perfect.” Isn’t this an enormous, maybe even impossible burden? How can one be perfect? Especially when we are talking about loving our enemies and going above and beyond that which is required? Interestingly, the Greek word used here does not mean to be without fault or never to make a mistake. The word means “complete” or “mature.” **Christian maturity means showing compassion to all, as God does.** This ‘perfection’ actually happens for us when we do the loving that Jesus calls us to. When we love God and neighbor extravagantly, when we are able to expand the boundaries of our concern, we just grow into maturity and wholeness. We become complete and these seemingly impossible expectations for loving our neighbor, this Way of Jesus becomes our way. It becomes second nature (or at least it becomes what we try to be).



What a wonderful challenge for us to consider. How do we live into these ways? How do we live without retaliation while prophetically seeking justice? How can we be examples of Jesus’ Ethics to our society? Will people know we are Jesus’ followers by the way we follow Jesus’ teachings and expand the boundaries of our love and care for others? I pray that it may be so.

With blessing and prayer,

Rev. Wendy Miller Olapade/
revwdmiller@comcast.net/617.592.5853

IN OUR PRAYERS AND PASTORAL CARE



Concerns: We pray with Diane P. at the sudden death of daughter-in-law Lisa; for all suffering from addiction; Anita N. for Muriel now in assisted living, as well as her son-in-law and daughter who have been ill; Joy R. having shoulder surgery next week after cancellation due to the flu; for June L. in continued treatment who would welcome cards and phone calls.

We continue to pray with Joy and Bruce R. and all who are caring for elderly parents; Dick S.' friend Ed is now battling cancer in addition to Lou Gehrig's disease; for growth and learning from the stories of Black History.

Joys: We pray in gratitude for Albert's ministry this past Sunday; in celebration for the kickoff of the Joint Ministry Team; for Julie's visit with June L for Valentine's Day and for June's good spirits; Susan D.'s sister-in-law Rachel and brother Ed getting ready for their first baby to arrive (we pray for healthy delivery); continued celebration that Gail's brother has left Afghanistan (thank you Lord for keeping him safe); in gratitude for all those in military service for our country; the joy of the Olympics.

We continue to pray with June L. in active treatment and for her family as they care for June; those affected by the weather extremes; for Bruce R.'s brother Bill in early recovery; Charlene C's brother Lou in the final stages of Alzheimer's; our sexton Steve's daughter and grandson; 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; for all those struggling with cancer, addiction and Alzheimer's; for the environment; for President Obama and Congress regarding our present times of strife—may God's intentions prevail as they make decisions; for our beloved elders at home: Eva W., June L. Thelma T. We remember fallen soldiers, 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 requests to office@medfordchurch.org by noon Wed.**

Pastoral Care Concerns: The Deacon of the Month for February is Robin Baker who can be reached at (robinb12@verizon.net). Please let the deacon of the month 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. Rev. Wendy can be reached: revwdmiller@comcast.net.



Happy February Birthdays

- 1 James Grubb, Jr.
- 17 Karen Morey
- 17 Paul Roberts
- 17 Aaron Olapade
- 21 Tom Roche
- 23 Matthew David Kromm
- 28 Johnny Maloney

OUR CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

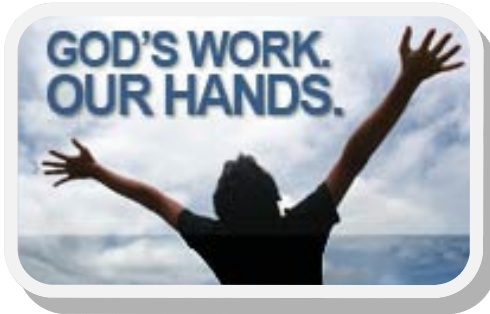
Empty your Pockets in the Pennies from Heaven Jar: The "Jar" will be in the Narthex for you to empty your pockets of the loose change you may have. This jar is just one way to help support the church in a very easy way. The jar easily takes coins and paper money.

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. Robin Baker is the contact at this time (robinb12@verizon.net). 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.

Altar Flowers Always Welcomed: Please contact Brenda Briggs bgriggs51@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.

Cleaning Our Closets!! Volunteers are needed for cleaning out the church closets: As we place the church building on the market and consider our future, Kathy Williams is leading this effort to "clean out our closets." You would be amazed at how much stuff has accumulated and is stuck in corners. We will donate, trash, recycle as is called for. **Cleaning will take place weekly from 9:30-10 am before church and 11 am–noon after church until completed. Volunteers are particularly needed to drive boxes of unneeded items to charity donation sites.** If you would like to join Kathy on this mission, please contact her at kathypricewilliams@yahoo.com.

What is next for our 'Outreach' Ministry? The action oriented ministries imagined & organized by our Outreach Committee have been foundational to the turnaround and re-energizing of spirit that our congregation has seen over the last couple of years. Think Pine Ridge Reservation and our passion for economic and racial justice; Sandwich making for Outdoor Church and City Mission Society Urban Outreach Mission Projects and our growing concern for the homeless, the chance to express our generosity through gift giving to the Angel Tree, holiday collections for the Indigo Girls of Medford and Heifer Project International. We are in need of a couple of souls who feel called to consider how we will continue to live out our call to walk humbly, care for the least of these and work for justice. If you are interested in these concerns, think about joining the newly formed "Joint Ministry Team" to represent our Outreach Ministry. Contact Rev. Wendy or Karen McCune Barca.



CROSSROADS PHASE II

Did you see the Mini-Explorations we have offered?
There has been great interest and good conversation afterward!

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Here are the two we have watched to date:

1) St. Lydia's Dinner Church in Brooklyn, New York.

<http://www.stlydias.org/>

2) LuthersTable.org [and the video here of Luther's Table in Renton, WA](#)

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### **Sunday Weekly: Prayer for our Process**

Each Sunday from 9:15 - 9:30 am,

Rev. Wendy will lead a time of prayer in Bean Chapel for our discernment process.

### **Wednesday Weekly**

**2nd Wednesday Worship and Study from 7:00-7:30 PM and**

**Joint Ministry Team Meeting from 7:30 to 9:00 pm.**

All are welcome.

**1st, 3rd, 4th Worship and Study: Being Jesus Followers.**

7:00 pm-8:00 pm, Rev. Wendy will lead a weekly worship, study and dialogue designed to consider what Jesus asked of us when he said, "Follow me," and what that suggests to us about what God is calling us into for the future.

***This Week, Wednesday, February 26***

We will consider Jesus' admonition to take up our cross and "Follow" from Luke 9:18-26.

### **Experimentation and Exploration**

As a rule, we will experiment in worship with music and other worship practices. As time progresses, we will go out from our own sanctuary experimenting with new spaces and new forms of worship. Each week—we will have 15 minutes of exploration during fellowship time—offering up examples of vital and viable ministries with unique models for worship and community.

This time is designed to spark ideas and creativity in us.

***This week, Sunday, February 23***

**The Crossing: an Emerging Faith Community in Boston**

<http://www.thecrossingboston.org/>

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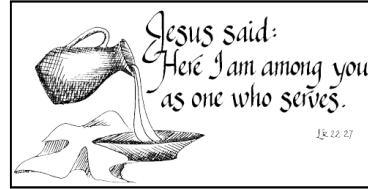
We really want to encourage you to like us on facebook -- there is a lot that gets posted on our facebook page that will help us to understand the changing landscape of our ministry and the influence those changes need to have on our choices.

MISSION AND OUTREACH

Urgent Note Regarding 2014 Re-Member Trip to Pine Ridge

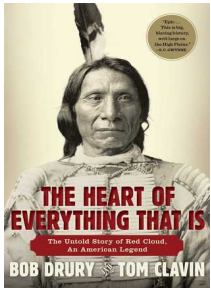
The First Congregational Church of Winchester has agreed to take over the CCWM Re-Member reservation for the 2014 mission trip planned for July 26– August 1, 2014. If anyone from CCWM is interested in joining this summer's trip, they are welcome to join the trip. The leadership and planning for the trip s being led by our former student, Winchester member, Jena Roy. **The deadline for deposits to Re-**

Member has been extended to 2/30/14 so if you have a desire to participate, be in touch with Jena ASAP, jenaroy@aol.com. Due to many other questions we are facing this season, the Pine Ridge Ministry Team determined that planning and raising funds for a trip this summer would divert us from our objective of discerning God's call for our future.



CCWM to Sell Hoka Coffee on March 1 at Super Saturday: The Pine Ridge Ministry team is looking for a few folk to help with staffing a table at Super Saturday to sell Hoka Coffee to raise funds for our ministry with the Reservation. If you can help, please contact Joy Harris (brujoy2@comcast.net). Folk attending super Saturday may be able to help during breaks.

Heifer Farm Rutland: Pancakes at the Farm—Saturday, March 8, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm: Tour the farm, visit the sugar shack, spend time with the animals and enjoy a hearty pancake breakfast with Heifer Farm maple syrup and sausages. Advanced reservations are required so check with Susan D'Arcy Fuller to see if openings still available. Carpool is arranged.



Sunday, March 09, 11:30—2:00 pm: Book Discussion: “The Heart of Everything That Is” Susan D'Arcy will lead this first book in book series/discussion group. “The Heart of Everything That Is” is written by Bob Drury and Tom Clavin – and tells the untold story of Lakota Sioux chief, Red Cloud. There are ten copies in local libraries or you are encouraged to purchase the book yourself. We are open to suggestions for other Indian themed books for future book discussion groups. Contact Kathy or Joy suggestions or questions.

Save the Date: Sunday, March 30: Outdoor Church Sandwich Making: Join the outreach effort for our standing 5th Sunday ministry with the Outdoor Church in Cambridge. Sandwich Making before worship at 9:00 am in the kitchen. Can you take a drive to Cambridge to deliver the sandwiches? Contact Elizabeth Bennett. Watch for more information.

Artist Reception
March 8, 2—5:00 pm

Photography by Ose Manheim

Bestseller's Cafe
24 High Street, Medford, MA 02155
Refreshments served

Exhibit is at Bestseller's from
February 19 to March 31, 2014

For details about the exhibit, visit [http://
manheimphotography.smugmug.com](http://manheimphotography.smugmug.com) or



MYSTIC CHORALE

led by Jonathan Singleton

mystic
GOSPEL

*Join us for our eagerly anticipated
annual Gospel season with 250+
voices in two joyful and spirit-filled
concerts, featuring an inspiring and
uplifting program of traditional
and contemporary gospel music.*

Saturday, March 1, 2014
7:30 pm

Sunday, March 2, 2014
3:30 pm

\$18 adults / \$15 students and seniors

Converse Hall, Tremont Temple, 88 Tremont Street, Boston, MA

For information or tickets: (781) 316-2500
www.mysticchorale.org
www.brownpapertickets.com

C O N C E R T A N D S I N G

**Our Confirmation Class and
Mentors
are
attending the
Sunday March 2
Mystic Gospel
Concert and Sing**

**Others are welcome;
contact Rev. Wendy.**

**Choir members Bev Roche
and Susan D'Arcy singing.**

**Bev can offer discounted
tickets if you contact her by
Tuesday, Feb 25.
(bevroche@comcast.net).**

NEWS AND EVENTS FROM THE UCC

More about Super Saturday: Here is a taste of the exciting topics being covered on March 1. Discount registration available to five or more from same church. For more: <http://www.macucc.org/events/detail/1458>

Please let Rev. Wendy know if you are able to attend.

14. Sacred Conversations on Race Training: An introduction to the Sacred Conversations on Race "TARASC Training" ...introduce the six stages of the Multi-Racial/Multi-Cultural Spectrum: Tolerance, Acceptance, Respect, Affirmation, Solidarity and Critique (TARASC). ...will reflect ...

17. What do Pastors and Church Leaders Really Need to Know to Create a Thriving Church: ... We will reflect on the wisdom and creativity that are needed in all aspects of parish ministry that will lead a church to a more enthusiastic and vital witness and look at practical ways...

10. Fluid Christianity: Welcoming the 'Spiritual but Not Religious': Responding to the changing spiritual landscape requires new ways of worship, spiritual practice, preaching, theological reflection and faith formation. Taught by a spiritual guide, pastor, and process theologian, this workshop provides a positive vision and effective spiritual practices for affirming and responding to self-described 'spiritual but not religious' persons and spiritual seekers in our communities.

11. Holistic Faith Formation for Small Membership Churches: An introduction to a new intergenerational, contextual model for faith formation ministry which is particularly adaptable for meeting the needs of families and children in small membership congregations and their surrounding communities. The overall vision of this paradigm is for all ages to journey together as pilgrims (not experts) in life-long formation of faith through head knowledge, heart experience and hands-on-engagement.

18. Social Media 101: Nine Media in Ninety Minutes Facebook, Twitter, and Yelp...

29. Recovering From Our Cultural Addictions...

33. How to Become a Green Congregation - Solutions to Practical & Financial Issues...

34. I Am The Church: Developing Local Church Leaders...

40. Think Outside Your Church: Cooperative Ministry Possibilities: ...10 ways to share staff/facilities and identify successful cooperative ministries people have already experienced. ...

41. Transformative Worship: This experiential, conversational workshop will explore practices and ideas for creating worship that is heart-centered, devotional, and transformative. Learn why many people, young adults in particular, are not drawn in by worship in UCC churches, and what church leaders can do about it. ...for inspiration.

And much much more: <http://www.macucc.org/events/detail/1458>

