

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



## FROM THE CROSSROADS PHASE II TEAM

*But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" —Exodus 17:3*



### Thirsty Voices: Gushing God

"Is God among us or not?" What a poignant question—and don't we find ourselves asking it—a lot? Whether we are crying out in the midst of a dark and lonely valley in our personal lives, trying to make a challenging decision between two seemingly positive paths, or find ourselves part of a congregation seeking to discover their future—we want to hear from God for guidance—or at least a sense that God is with us in the midst of the struggles and wilderness times. We thirst for answers and reassurance. At least internally, we acknowledge a sense of desperation for direction. And as we all know, God is not always as direct and clear as we would like. Nor does God always provide us with the counsel we seek when we seek it! You know that old saying, "Not in my time, but God's time?"

The "Are you there, God?" question runs throughout this Season of Lent. The Gospel Lesson for this Sunday is the story of the Samaritan woman who comes to get water at Jacob's well and finds Jesus, the bearer of 'Living Water'. In this week's lesson from the Hebrew Bible, when trouble comes on their journey out of Egypt to the land that God had promised, the thirsty descendants of Abraham and Sarah quarrel with Moses and question God's presence.

You see, their journey had lead them through the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula – inhospitable and threatening territory. Initially, they were excited about escaping their enslavement in Egypt. But the discomforts of the wilderness caused them to question the leadership of Moses and the journey into the unknown. When there was no water to drink at their camping place, they turn on Moses and ask why he brought them from the security of life in Egypt only to die from lack of water. They want to know if God is with them on this journey: "Is the Lord among us or not?" (v. 7).

Moses, in despair and fearful for his life, asks God what he should do. God tells Moses to strike the rock on which God stands and water will come from the rock. A gushing God cares for the thirsty people and gives abundantly. And Moses' relationship with God becomes a blessing to the people. There is a simple pattern to this story that is found in other biblical stories – the people name their need, the leader prays to God, God gives instruction, the leader obeys. It is a pattern that is expressed

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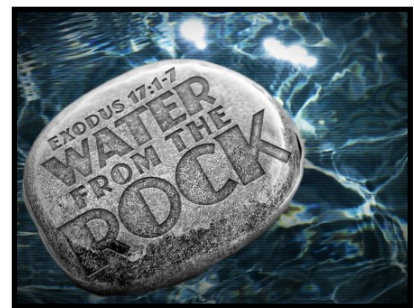
throughout the Psalms as well—the composer cries out to God in lament, God hears the plea, God acts, there is transformation, and the composer responds in praise and thanksgiving.

In Hebrew, there is a word that cannot easily be translated into English that suggests this pattern. It is a theological term that describes the nature of God's covenantal relationship with us—God's *Chesed* (or *Hesed*). When translated, *Hesed* looks like "loving-kindness," but even that does not seem to be enough. Maybe it should be translated "action-oriented-loving-kindness-faithfulness." The closest single word we have in our Christian tradition is "Grace."

In the story of the Hebrew people, it is that sure love which will not (and did not) let Israel go. Not all Israel's complaining and fighting and persistent waywardness could ever destroy it. No matter what God remained faithful still. This steady, persistent refusal of God to wash God's hands of wayward Israel is the essential meaning of the Hebrew word *Hesed*.

When I find myself in the wilderness (which happens a lot), when I thirst for a Word from God (which I need more often than I realize), when I need the direction of the Holy Spirit (to find my way) I have the idea of God's *Hesed* as a touchstone of my personal faith. This is what it means to me: God cares, God is present and available AND God acts. This is a powerful tool of our faith—it is a given that God loves us and is with us, and God can be counted upon to never give up on us no matter what—no matter what!

Like the Israelites, we may feel that we wander in the wilderness, thirsting for the water that gives life. Yet we do believe that God provides for our needs and helps us to help each other. I pray that in this Season of Lent, you might know for what your soul thirsts and that you give it over to God in prayer. I pray that you find the things and people right now that are life-giving for you. And I pray that together, with God's guidance and direction, we might respond to the needs of other thirsty voices in our congregation and community. Our hope is the living water of God's love (aka: action-oriented-loving-kindness-faithfulness), poured into our hearts.



With blessing and prayer, Rev. Wendy Miller Olapade/[revwdmiller@comcast.net](mailto:revwdmiller@comcast.net)/617.592.5853

## IN OUR PRAYERS AND PASTORAL CARE



Concerns: We pray for patience and decisions for Jeff S as he continues to wait to hear about a job opportunity; college students looking for summer jobs and internships; the situation in the Ukraine; all affected by the missing airplane; Joy H's brother Paul; those caring for the elderly; all affected by memory loss and dementia a growing concern in our country; a client of Kathy W's released from prison and facing the inevitable challenges—may he remain on the path of wellness; Dick S's friend Ed who is now diagnosed with stage 4 cancer; Mary B. who had a fall and is short term rehab.

Joys: Joe L. celebrates many accomplishments of art students in a regional competition; we celebrate the value of the arts for at risk kids; we celebrate wonderful teachers; Bev R. celebrates Abby's first

birthday; Charlotte W. celebrates family and her mother's visit; we celebrate Tom C. being able to be with us in church; Jenny B. celebrates a "shout out" received; Karen M. for traveling mercies for a son's first spring break journey; we pray for all young people on spring break.

We continue to pray with all who are hearing about and struggling with the property being for sale; Joy's recovery from surgery; the family and friends of Susan Coleman who passed away; Kathy W's sister Annette in recovery; for those preparing for the Marathon, especially Stephanie's cousin; Joy and her family at the loss of an aunt; Anita's family as they negotiate her mother's transition; Patty H. for continued recovery; Charlene C. and her family as they walk with her brother Lou who is in hospice care; Sheridan, who is recovering from surgery and Susan caring for her; the people in Ukraine to find a peaceful solution; for June L; our congregation, as we experiment with new possibilities; for all suffering from addiction; all who are caring for elderly parents; Bruce R.'s brother Bill in early recovery; our sexton Steve's daughter and grandson; the UCC 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., Tom C. 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](mailto:office@medfordchurch.org) by noon Wed.*

**Pastoral Care Concerns:** The Deacon of the Month for March is Ose Manheim who can be reached at (photose@comcast.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.

## OUR CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Happy March Birthdays

10 Olivia Celeste  
13 Clarisse Coughlin  
15 Charlotte Wilensky  
16 Kathy Williams  
27 Eva Wagner



**Empty your Pockets in the Pennies from Heaven Jar:** In the Narthex.

**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.

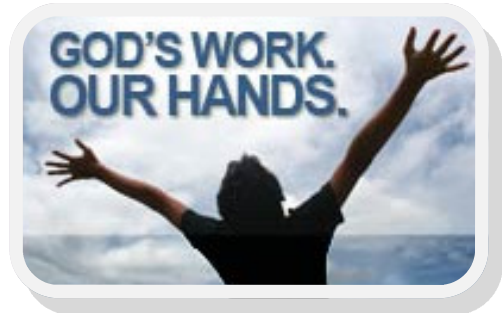
**Altar Flowers Always Welcomed:** Please contact Brenda Briggs bgriggs51@gmail.com (or the church office@medfordchurch.org) to make arrangements to schedule a Sunday to bring flowers or order them in honor or memory of a loved one.

**Cleaning Our Closets!!** Volunteers are still needed for cleaning out the church closets: Kathy Williams is leading this effort to “clean out our closets.” 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](mailto: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 Elizabeth Bennett or Rev. Wendy.



**Lenten Wednesday Worship and Study: Online Via Fuze Meeting  
‘Nooma®’ Films and Discussion**

Nooma is a series of short films, (10 minute-ish) about God and our lives.

Like parables, they use the experiences of our lives to teach about the fullness of life through Jesus, tackling issues like forgiveness, discipleship, and unconditional love.

The study materials accompanying each NOOMA encourage meaningful discussion with relevant questions and biblical references.

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**Wednesday, March 26: “Sunday”**

*Do we get so wrapped up in religion that we miss out on what's important to God? God is not happy when we call ourselves Christians but ignore all the things God really cares about.*

*God doesn't want meaningless rituals. God wants our hearts.*

**Wednesday, April 2: “Noise”**

*Why is it so much easier for us to live our lives with a lot of things going on all the time than to just be in silence? Maybe there's a connection between the amount of noise in our lives and our inability to hear God. If God sometimes feels distant to us, maybe it's not because he's not talking to us, but simply because we aren't really listening*

## DID YOU SEE THE SHARED VALUES WE DEFINED?

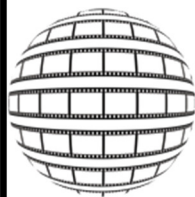
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unity in Essentials, Diversity in non-essentials, Charity in all things</li> <li>2. Transparency and Healthy Communication</li> <li>3. UCC – Centered in the people, congregational polity, non-creedal, leadership is decentralized</li> <li>4. Our Theology is Progressive; and that means:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God is Still Speaking</li> <li>• We are engaged in the “Emerging/Converging” conversation</li> <li>• Is a theology that invites questions</li> <li>• Experiential and Experimental</li> <li>• Includes diverse and wide ranging spiritual practices; including practices from other faith walks and traditions</li> <li>• The Pastor is coach and teacher and empowers others to use their gifts to achieve our mission</li> <li>• You can discover your faith here</li> <li>• Worship and Relationships are heartfelt</li> <li>• Worship and Ministry are Interactive</li> <li>• Everybody is welcome at the table</li> <li>• We do not: Judge, Exclude, Consider scripture to be inerrant or the absolute truth, Tell you what to believe</li> <li>• As congregationalists we are not: Hierarchical, “Evangelical” with an upper-case E, focused on Doctrine</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Open and Affirming</li> <li>6. Jesus Followers – we Love God, love neighbor as yourself</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Action, Mission and Justice Oriented (Local AND Non Local (Pine Ridge)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental, economic, racial, gender, sexual, educational, ability</li> </ul> </li> <li>8. Committed to Community, Connection and Collaboration             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing the load</li> <li>• It takes a village</li> <li>• Seeking and Building Partnerships across the City and the World</li> </ul> </li> <li>9. Micah 8: Seek Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly with God</li> <li>10. Multicultural, Multiracial</li> <li>11. Worship needs to be about:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sacred – Experience God/The Holy</li> <li>• Considers the mystical, mystery and beauty of God</li> <li>• Include Threshold moments that move us from our lives to experience of the Holy</li> <li>• Forgiveness-Reconciliation</li> <li>• Beloved-ness</li> <li>• Everybody included, everybody involved</li> <li>• Moves us from head to heart (18”)</li> <li>• Music opens the soul to God, includes multiple genres and is easy to sing</li> <li>• Reflects our context - neighbors</li> <li>• Joyful</li> <li>• Includes Story and Witness</li> <li>• Includes Confession</li> <li>• Includes Communion</li> <li>• Is Challenging and Intelligent</li> </ul> </li> </ol> |
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## MISSION AND OUTREACH

**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.

**Worlds of Change: The Outdoor Church: Don't forget to collect your pocket change!**

During Lent we are participating in the Outdoor Church's "Worlds of Change" fundraiser. We simply ask that at the end of each day to take your spare change and place it in the box we passed out a couple of weeks ago. It may not feel like a lot, but when combined with the contributions of hundreds of individuals from other congregations, these small daily contributions can make a world of change for the chronically homeless men and women of Cambridge. After Easter, someone from the Outdoor Church will pick up the boxes, count the change, and send us an announcement celebrating how much we as a congregation raised. Thank you for your commitment to the homeless men and women in our community.



arlington  
international  
film  
festival

Presents...

### KIND HEARTED WOMAN

*by acclaimed filmmaker David Sutherland*

who will be present for a discussion following the screening

**Sunday, April 6, 2014, 4:00 P.M.**

The Congregational Church of West Medford  
United Church of Christ, 400 High Street, Medford

'Where Arlington and the World Converge'

An unforgettable portrait of Robin Charboneau, a 32-year old divorced single mother and Oglala Sioux woman living on North Dakota's Spirit Lake Reservation. Sutherland follows Robin over three years as she struggles to raise her two children, further her education, heal herself from the wounds of sexual abuse she suffered as a child and fulfill her goal of returning to her reservation to help prevent the abuse of women and children. This personal story allows us entree into the process of the tribal court and sexual abuse on the reservation. "As in my other films profiling rural poverty," says Sutherland, "I was trying to reach out to another forgotten corner of the American landscape, this time to put a face on a Native family so that we could see them close-up with all the detail that illuminates the rich reality of their lives." <http://itvs.org/films/kind-hearted-woman>

Tickets sold at the door \$10.00

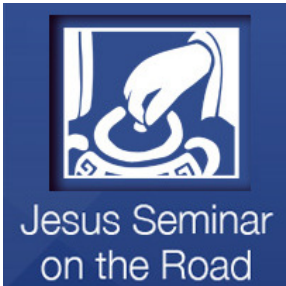
Dinner will be available for a nominal fee—to support the church's ministry with Pine Ridge Reservation

*A partnership with Medford Arts Center & CCWM, UCC*

*Please invite your friends and family to this wonderful opportunity*



## NEWS AND EVENTS FROM THE UCC



### **“Competing Gospels”**

**Jesus Seminar on the Road: May 9-10, 2014**

**Trinity Church in Northborough, MA ([trinitynorthborough.org](http://trinitynorthborough.org))**

The MACUCC is hosting the *Jesus Seminar on the Road* program of the Westar Institute which brings scholars of the Jesus Seminar into conversation with interested people across North America and around the world. Designed to address significant issues in current biblical and theological research and scholarship, the program comprises a Friday evening lecture and four hours of presentations and discussions on Saturday. Arthur Dewey, Professor of Theology and Bernard Brandon Scott, Professor of New Testament will give a lecture that explores the *Imperial Images in Stone and Song* and offer four workshops on Saturday that consider the implications for contemporary Christianity. For registration: [westarinstitute.org](http://westarinstitute.org)

### **Adult Music Camp, July 24-27, 2014: Craigville Conference**

**Center:** Join other musically minded Christian adults for the opportunity to spend a long weekend making beautiful music together. We will worship, rehearse, relax, and enjoy fellowship with one another. On Sunday afternoon we will share our talents in a concert. All participants are expected to sing in the choir. And all of this takes place at the beautiful setting of Craigville with access to the beach, walking trails and a peaceful environment. Come alone or bring a friend. Minimum age is 18. Cost per person \$360.00 (includes 10 meals and linens); \$70.00 additional for the extra night (7/29). There will be a charge for music, to be determined, that will be collected during camp. A minimum non-refundable deposit of \$75.00 is required at the time of registration. For registration: <http://www.macucc.org/events/detail/1545>



### **Save the Date! 215th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference:**

June 13 - 14, 2014, at the Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conference Center. The theme of this year's meeting, inspired by John 14:12; is “Greater Works than These.” The Keynote Speaker will be **Yvette Flunder**, Founder and Senior Pastor of **City of Refuge United Church of Christ** in San Francisco. Flunder founded the City of Refuge UCC in 1991 in order to unite a gospel ministry with a social ministry. City of Refuge is a thriving inner-city congregation that celebrates the radically inclusive love of Jesus Christ. Preaching a message of action, the church has experienced steady numerical and spiritual growth. In June 2003, Bishop Flunder was consecrated Presiding Bishop of **The Fellowship**, a multi-denominational fellowship of 110 primarily African American Christian leaders and laity representing 56 churches and faith-based organizations from all parts of the United States Mexico and Africa.

## FROM OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS



Running,  
running,  
running  
to support  
the  
**Krystle  
Campbell  
Memorial  
Fund**

### A note from Susan Carle

Hi all! I'm running again...this time an even bigger challenge: THE Boston Marathon—in memory of my friend and Medford High classmate, Krystle Campbell. Krystle was one of the victims of the Marathon bombing last year. To honor her memory her family and friends have put a team together to run and raise money for the fund to establish annual scholarships for students from Medford High School for post-secondary endeavors!

Krystal and I marched in the band and bonded over hot chocolate and freezing temperatures during football games. More recently we reconnected when we discovered we shared a mutual best friend. I was fortunate to host both of them in Chicago, just a year prior to last year's marathon. I will always remember Krystle for her kindness, generosity and fun-loving personality.

Please consider donating through the link below. Your donation will be in support of my fundraising efforts.

<https://www.tbf.org/giving/make-a-gift/krystle-campbell-memorial-fund>

Thank you in advance! Love, Susan

### **Project Bread's 46th Annual Walk for Hunger Sunday May 4, 2014.**

The 20 mile walk is the largest walk event in the state, bringing more than 40,000 people together each year to raise more than \$3.5 million to support Project Bread's Work to end hunger in Massachusetts. Registration is now open—you can walk, volunteer, and donate at [www.projectbread.org/walk](http://www.projectbread.org/walk) or call 617-723-5000 for more information.

*Project Bread: A  
Fresh Approach to  
Ending Hunger*



### **American Red Cross**

This Spring, renew hope.  
Donate blood. Each donation  
can help save up to three lives.

[redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org) | 1-800-RED CROSS



## **Medford Community Blood Drive**

Sponsored by  
Hallmark Health System's Lawrence Memorial Hospital

Saturday, April 12, 2014  
9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Hallmark Health System's Lawrence Memorial Hospital  
Classrooms A & B  
170 Governors Avenue  
Medford

For an appointment please call 1-800 RED CROSS (733-2767) or  
visit [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org)