

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



Dear Friends,

In the days since our “field” trip to North Prospect Union, UCC I have found myself whistling with delight and energized by possibility. The warmth and comfortable feeling we all had walking into the sanctuary and fellowship spaces at NPU has warmed my heart through the week. The marvelous sound of our singing together in a space that is right-sized for us continues to make melody in my spirit. All week, I’ve caught myself humming the lovely anthem presented by Alex and Jonathan—*“You alone are my strength and shield.”* And your participation in creating our beautiful worship center, your smiles and hopeful responses to our worship, your happy energy during the fellowship time and your hopefulness about our possibilities have truly inspired my ministry! Thank you for being open and thank you for taking these risks together.

On Monday, as I was cruising through my facebook feed I stumbled upon this blog post (*printed on next page*) by a young UCC pastor from Pennsylvania and my heart was truly blown wide open by his reflection. As with so many of my colleagues, I was saddened and even shocked by the news that The Alban Institute was closing—and doing so abruptly. As this author reflects, it leaves one wondering if it is yet another really scary sign for ‘The Church’. Yet, Williams observes that there are new and vital ways of doing what we do—and there is great need for faith communities that can be places of connection and formation while meeting the culture and flexible people where they are. Once you read the post, you will see why I am SO excited by the possibilities about which we are speaking and planning. If you believe the conventional wisdom about what Christian Churches need to be—we are leading the charge. We are out on the edge and doing the stuff of transformational ministry. This is what we are imagining ourselves doing! Praise the Lord and the Congregational Church of West Medford.

With blessing and prayer, Rev. Wendy Miller Olapade/
revwdmiller@comcast.net/617.592.5853



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The Canary in the Coal Mine by Rev. Trent Williams

<http://ancientfuturefaith.net/2014/03/20/the-canary-in-the-coal-mine/>

This week, some pretty big news (at least in the world of mainline Protestant Christianity) broke: The Alban Institute announced that it was closing its doors, and turning over its remaining resources to Duke Divinity School. Alban has provided important and valuable resources to churches and faith communities for forty years, including consulting, publishing, and continuing education. Their closure will definitely be mourned by many. Some people have expressed surprise, unaware that Alban was this close to the brink; but if you've been paying attention, this shouldn't really come as that big a surprise. The statistics are there, for anyone who's willing to look.



Religion in America is undergoing a radical (and rapid) transformation—what seemed solid and unchanging just a generation ago is becoming something very different today—if it survives at all. And mainline Protestantism, the core audience for Alban's products and services, has taken the biggest hit. Denominations across the board—Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, United Church of Christ, and more—have seen steep declines in membership, in money, and in influence in the wider community and culture. My own denomination, the United Church of Christ, has lost more than half its members since its creation in 1957.

Around the country, congregations, regional denominational bodies, and seminaries are struggling to survive; and increasingly, they can't. Closed church buildings are being redeveloped and turned into housing, or restaurants, or simply torn down. Denominational offices are being sold off. Cokesbury, the mainline book store chain, closed all of its brick and mortar stores last year, and shifted its operations exclusively online, in an effort to keep up with the threat from Amazon. And this week, Alban announces its closure.

As one of my colleagues pointed out on social media, what does it say that the institution dedicated to growth, health, and the future of the mainline church, with supposedly all the best consultants, strategists, and thinkers, is itself closing shop? For my part, I would suggest that the closing of Alban is a canary in a coal mine for mainline Protestantism in America; it's a warning, that unless taken seriously, will eventually result in the same fate befalling the rest of us—congregations, denominations, and seminaries alike.

Although Alban, like many congregations, was inventive at the time it was founded, it simply hasn't kept up with the rapidly changing world we live in. They had high overhead, an expensive staff, and a revenue stream that relied on an outdated model that was no longer sustainable today. In contrast, an upstart organization that's doing much of the same work around consulting and education that used to be Alban's sole domain, has positioned itself to fill that market niche. The [Center for Progressive Renewal](#), based out of Atlanta, is doing a number of things differently, and I think there are lessons for the larger church in the model that they have created. CPR delivers most of their educational content online, through webinars and online classes, supplemented occasionally with conference calls. The only

in person event they host regularly is the annual New Church Leadership Institute. They don't have large office space or a top-heavy staff; their staff and consultants are dispersed, working from home or their church offices. And they don't publish any books themselves.

I believe that if we in the Protestant mainline are going to have a future, it will have to look more like CPR's model rather than Alban's. That means:

- ◆ **Low overhead:** the days of large and costly facilities are over. Some congregations will share space, some will transform their space into multi-purpose use, and some won't have dedicated space at all.
- ◆ **Dispersed networks:** churches will be less single places where we go once a week, and more dispersed networks of people in communities.
- ◆ **Digital ministry:** a robust digital presence online and in social media is essential in our networked, wired world. If you're not using all available digital tools, including video, podcasts, and online gathering places like Google hangouts, you might as well not exist, as far as many people are concerned.

So the question for those of us who are still standing is a simple one: will we heed the warning of the canary, or will we follow it into extinction?

IN OUR PRAYERS AND PASTORAL CARE



Concerns: We pray for the Boston Firefighters lost on duty and all affected by the fire; Jenna N. and friends who lost their beloved friend Ashish at age 25 to cancer; Bruce R's sister going through eye surgery on both eyes; a friend Willie going through cancer surgery on April 5; for Jeff facing continued uncertainty about getting a job, may there be answers soon; Joy's friend Sheila who undergoes her second cancer treatment; Joy's aging parents who struggle with physical and emotional issues and her brother Paul and his wife's struggles; for students with applications for college; for Louise W. who has been invited to the National honor society); for those lost in the Malaysian airplane disaster; Tom C. who suffers from chronic pain.

Prayers of concern continue for college students looking for summer jobs and internships; the situation in the Ukraine; 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: We celebrate a wonderful field trip to North Prospect Union and the hospitality offered by our sister congregation; the crystalizing of our future that seems to be taking shape; the gift of beautiful music offered by Alexander, Jonathan and Herman.

We continue to pray for both the joy and grief associated with our decision to sell our building; Joy's continued recovery from surgery; Kathy W's sister Annette in recovery; for those preparing for the Marathon; Joy and her family at the loss of an aunt; Anita's family as they negotiate her mother's transition; 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 by noon Wed.**

Pastoral Care Concerns: The Deacon of the Month for March is Ose Manheim who can be reached at (photose@comcast.net). The Deacon of the Month for April is Julie Roberts who can be reached at (heronjulie@yahoo.com). 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.

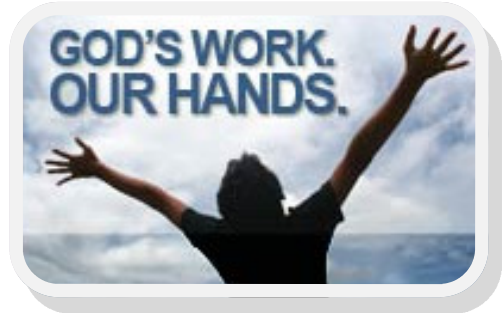
Altar Flowers Always Welcomed: Please contact Brenda Briggs bgriggs51@gmail.com (or the church office@medfordchurch.org) to make arrangements to schedule a Sunday to bring flowers or order them in honor or memory of a loved one.

Cleaning Our Closets!! Volunteers are 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.

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



**Wednesday Worship and Study: Online Via Fuze Meeting
'Nooma®' Films and Discussion
Led by Rev. Wendy, reflection by Rob Bell**

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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**This 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*

*Wednesday April 9—No Online Worship, Join Ministry Team Meeting at Church*

*Wednesday, April 16—Online Worship and Discussion*

**Note: Thursday, April 17—Maundy Thursday Worship at Church**

*Wednesday, April 23—Online Worship and Discussion*

*Wednesday, April 30—Online Worship and Discussion*

*For more information about this exciting online ministry, contact Rev. Wendy.*

*ALL are welcome, tell your friends.*

## MISSION AND OUTREACH

**Today!! 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 after worship at in the kitchen. Contact Elizabeth Bennett.

**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

'Where Arlington and the World Converge'

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

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 re-connected 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)