

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

*When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house
where the disciples had met were locked for fear...,
Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' —John 20:19*

The Three P's of Easter

This Sunday we hear the much beloved, post-resurrection appearance story best known as that of "doubting" Thomas. Theologians acknowledge that it is one of the more famous ones in all of the gospels because it speaks to a deep human condition. In the face of confusion, conflicting evidence and a world that requires empirical evidence before making a decision, doubt seems to be the norm for many people. In fact, doubt can be useful—when we operate from a "prove-it-to-me" presumption, we demand things like attention to detail and rigorous policies that protect us. But doubt can also lead to atrophy and emptiness, especially when it causes us to neglect the hope that is ours when we make faith our foundation.

Of course, humans being human, doubt permeates the whole situation after Jesus' crucifixion and the discovery of the empty tomb. But you have to wonder, given their experience of the life and ministry they shared with Jesus, how they became holed up in fear with their doubt? Where was the evidence of their experience of everything Jesus had been and done with them the past three years? *What had they forgotten that caused them to turn away from the Way?*

First, they forgot the **peace of Christ**—a peace that is at the heart of the meaning of Easter. Four times in this meeting, Jesus repeats this reminder of something he said to his disciples earlier: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (14:27). The peace that "the world gives" is peace that seeks to alleviate fear by relying on the security of wealth, the protection of armies or the isolation of a locked door. But we know that these things do not last. When we stand in the material and forget the peace of Christ, we tend to become gripped by fear and doubt, and our sense of hope does not have the air it needs to breathe and fill our spiritual lungs with grace. Jesus' life, death and resurrection made a new future possible -- a future that's ready for us to move into right now through faith in him. We don't have to live in fear because we have a savior who has guaranteed us peace and our future



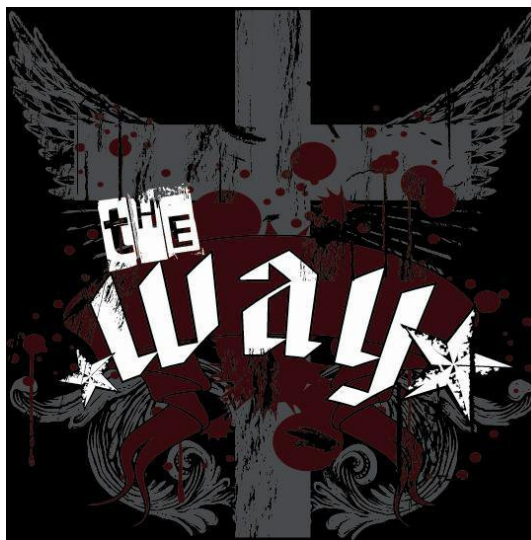
through an empty tomb. We can be so bold as to begin anew, resurrected to be peace makers and kingdom builders in our city because Jesus promised the kind of peace that passes all understanding.

The second key element in the spiritual architecture of Easter is the ongoing **presence of Christ**. Jesus "breathed" on the disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit, the very presence of the Triune God in their lives (v. 22). The Spirit would give them the power to do "even greater things" than Jesus had done (14:12) and provide the comfort, advocacy and peace that enabled them to carry out God's mission in the world. When doubt and fear creep into our lives, we must rely on the witness of the Spirit to remind us that our lives matter and have purpose in God. It's the Spirit that enables us to be people who forgive sins, who speak boldly and who demonstrate the teachings and the Way of Jesus (v. 23). It's the Spirit that enables us to plant new ministries and be Jesus' hands and feet in the community. The Holy Spirit provides us with the internal check of the presence of Jesus, which reminds us that our lives will never be useless when he is working within them.

The third design feature that doubters like Thomas (and us) need to remember is that our faith isn't in an idea, or a concept or a principle -- instead, our faith is in the **person of Christ**. Jesus shows up in person and invites the doubtful disciple to touch his body, to touch his wounds. Jesus is more than a concept, but a person who was "in the flesh" like us; who suffered as we suffer; who was tempted like we are tempted; who dwelt among us and gave his life for us (1:14). Thomas' confession in the person of Christ, "My Lord and my God!" provides a foundation for our own faith (v. 28). Known to us in the breaking of bread, present wherever two or three are gathered, seen in the face of our brothers and sisters, and served in the giving of a cup of water or a warm coat—the person of Jesus is with us every day, encouraging and guiding us in being his presence in our city.

Beloved, unlike our culture's worldly view, a Jesus-brand faith reminds us that "believing is seeing." God has come to us in Jesus Christ, who continues his mission through doubters and misfits like Thomas and us. We are the resurrected body, we are the new life, and we are the presence of Jesus. A Jesus-brand faith is a willingness to follow him, even when we're not sure where it will lead us. A Jesus-brand faith is a willingness to build a new thing even when we are not sure what we are supposed to build, because we know The One who holds the peace, the presence, the person and the future of the world in hand! Yes, we know The One who is calling us out and showing us a new path. We know The One who has resurrected us for a bold future. We know the One who will fill in the blanks that scare us and carry the doubt that at times might leave us too skeptical to move. Beloved, we can do this because we know the living God who absolutely knows the Way.

Happy Eastertide
Rev. Wendy Miller Olapade/
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IN OUR PRAYERS AND PASTORAL CARE



Concerns: We pray for Steve S.'s father who lost a toe due to diabetes, may he be focused on recovery; the families in Korea who lost loved ones in the ferry accident; the death of Jack Brigg's sister, Susan D. of cancer (fighting cancer since 1992); Willie who is recovering from surgery; David, a teen and his family and friends after learning he has leukemia—may his treatment and recovery be complete; one who is struggling with envy, jealousy and forgiveness; Clarisse for finals and final week, a job search, her future plans; Danielle recently diagnosed with cancer; for full recovery for one who has fallen; for God to make a way for reconciliation where there seems to be no way; for beloved friends who are not with us; for relief for Jeff from too many calls and emails and patience about relationships and from support team members; for all those remembering the violence and struggles from last year's marathon and those who are facing fear to run this year; Joy's parents' move for gentle transition to their new situation; all who struggle with addictions; for the churches who want to purchase our property as they discern their future; for our own process of discernment.

We continue our prayers for Tom C. for relief from chronic neck pain and successful cataract surgery May 1; the firefighters, police and first responders who served extra duty for marathon security; comfort and strength for June, as she deals with her illness; Sheila in treatment; a brother Paul and his wife's struggles; the situation in the Ukraine; those caring for the elderly; all affected by memory loss and dementia a growing concern in our country; Dick S's friend Ed who is now diagnosed with stage 4 cancer.

Joys: The progress we have made as a congregation toward our resurrection—and the many possibilities in our path in regards to the sale of the property; Tim R. home from military for vacation; Williams/Hill family prays in gratitude for opportunities for the family; Joy's parents moving this week and travelling mercies for Bruce and Joy; Clarisse C. prays in gratitude for a successful freshman year; Gratitude for the ministry of the Kromm family – and for Randall's beautiful message of community and love; gratitude for the many, many people who made Easter Worship so special – the guest musicians, Herman, Karen, Julie, Brenda, Ose, Robin and Steve Smith.

We continue to celebrate all those pending graduation; Albert's progress towards a call as a Military Chaplain; Old South Church's ministry to the Marathon; the Peace Garden proposed in Medford; our church's courage and willingness to consider making a Bold Decision; Diane's vacation to Disney with daughter and granddaughters; gratitude for the volunteers and help in the church office (Heather, Julie, Charlene, Brenda); all the wonderful worship we have experienced over the last month.

We continue to pray for Charlene's family as they walk with her brother Lou who is in hospice care; Bruce'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.***

OUR CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pastoral Care Concerns: The Deacon of the Month for April is Julie Roberts who can be reached at (heronjulie@yahoo.com). The Deacon of the Month for May is Karen McCune Barca who can be reached at (karenmccunebarca@gmail.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.

Don't forget to empty your Pockets in the Pennies from Heaven

Jar! Lots of coins make for many gifts!



Fellowship Hour Help Needed: Can you bring some goodies to support our time to “break Bread” and connect? Karen McCune Barca has take on the organization of this beloved time—and all are welcome to help. Please be in touch with her about signing up for a Sunday to bring snacks! Immediate help needed for 5/4, 5/18 and 5/25. Please contact Karen (karenmccunebarca@gmail.com).

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 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.

Happy May Birthdays

- 5 Meghan Grubb
- 6 Elinor McDowell
- 7 Heather McLaughlin
- 7 Pam Kromm
- 12 Lorna Stockbridge
- 18 Bruce Roberts
- 22 Anita Nackel
- 23 Jessica Nackel
- 23 Brett Williams



Packing and Closet Cleaning! Now that the holiday worship season is past, we are getting ourselves ready for the big move! There is much to be considered (what are taking, what will we sell, what will the new owner want to buy from us, whew!) and there remains much to be donated, recycled and trashed. Kathy Williams is leading the effort to “clean out our closets.” **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. And if you can help with inventory/assessment efforts during the week, please advise Rev. Wendy.

Sunday, May 4: MBA Spring Meeting, Congregational Church of Needham, 1154 Great Plain Ave. Keynote Speaker, Rev. Molly Baskette, Lead Pastor of First Church Somerville—presenting themes from her soon to be published book: *Real. Good. Church. How Our Church Came Back From the Dead and Yours Can Too* (Pilgrim Press), will talk about First Church Somerville UCC's growth in spirit and numbers, and particularly about how a culture shift around money in the congregation helped with their dramatic renewal. Through visionary spending, and a risky but life-giving movement from Yankee 'privacy' to transparency, vulnerability and testimony about money and giving, this congregation has seen a six-fold increase in pledged giving in the last 10 years.

The Faith Formation/Confirmation Class is asked to attend the MBA Spring Meeting with worship at NPU to follow as a group with Rev. Wendy. Mentors, Chaperones and Drivers invited. Please contact Rev. Wendy.

Our Own Jeff Smith to Walk in NAMI Walk: Saturday, May 10, 2014 - The 11th Annual NAMI Walks Massachusetts; Artesani Park in Boston along the Charles River (9 am registration, 11am Walk starts). Can you help Jeff to raise funds for NAMI? Please contact him at JSmitt2000@hotmail.com.

Help Louise Wilensky and her classmates head to National History Day in Washington. Louise and her fellow actors, "The MV Pentagons" were awarded 2nd place in the the MA State Competition, for Group Performance. They will present their play, "The 9th Commandment: Rights and Responsibilities in the Salem Witch Trials" at the National competition in Washington DC...but not without your help! Travelling and dorm fees add up to \$3000 for our entire group. Help these young folk get to DC and perform! All donations, no matter how small or big, are greatly appreciated. Each donator who leaves their e-mail will receive a unique heartfelt message from the Pentagons. 1. Shop our online store filled with 1500+ amazing items -- we'll receive up to 40% of every purchase! my.fundraising.com/PentagonsinDC/LouiseWilensky 2. Share our fundraiser with your friends + family by posting it to Facebook + Twitter. Your show of support will make all the difference... Thank you!

Embracing All Abilities through Arts: An Art and Film Festival celebrating the creative process within everyone: April 25-27 at Hyatt Place, 116 Riverside Ave, Medford A collaboration of Medford Arts Center, Outsides the Lines Studio, EMARC and the Medford Human Rights/Disability Commission. Numerous Films and Arts and Crafts exhibits. For details see: <http://hosted.verticalresponse.com/1396237/3debd29d9c/545154613/05b6a2890e/> and for more information, email embracingthrougharts@gmail.com.

MISSION AND OUTREACH

Worlds of Change: Due Today!!! Please bring next week if you have forgotten your banks. The Outdoor Church: Don't forget to collect your pocket change!

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.



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.



Save the Date: ONA Churches at Pride Weekend, June 14

The 44th annual Boston Pride Parade and Festival is Saturday, June 14 (same day as the MACUCC Annual Meeting in Sturbridge). MA Conference ONA churches typically march as a delegation. Spectators enjoy our rhythm band, welcoming chants AND big numbers. They are excited to see so many churches that welcome LGBTQ/same gender loving people. This year's theme is "Be Yourself - Change the World." Sounds very UCC, don't you think? We register as one marching delegation—with **one large parade banner (no individual church banners)** and each ONA church carries a small, commercially made sign bearing the name of the church. Volunteers needed to represent our congregation for this important witness! Deadline to sign up to March with the Conference group is May 8. See www.bostonpride.org. **Can you volunteer to represent CCWM??**

The Fabulous and Ecumenical Pride Morning Worship at 10am at Old South Church UCC, will celebrate 10 years of Equal Marriage!!!

NEWS AND EVENTS FROM THE UCC



Jesus Seminar
on the Road

“Competing Gospels”

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

Trinity Church in Northborough, MA (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

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 Con-

ference: 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. **Registration deadline: May 23**

FROM OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

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 or call 617-723-5000 for more



UCC's Silver Lake, CT Summer Camp Registration Now Open



SPEND A WEEK AT CAMP IN GOD'S BACKYARD



GET REAL: FINDING YOUR TRUE SELF IN JESUS

2014 Edward Mark Lecture on Radical Love: Queer Theology for Reconciling Churches:

Churches: Lecture will take place on Thursday, May 15th at 7:00pm at the Harvard-Epworth Methodist Church, 1555 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138. This lecture is free and open to the public. To make reservations contact: harvardepworth@verizon.net or call 617-354-0837, ex. 5.

MELROSE ARTS will sponsor the 9th annual Melrose Arts Festival at his- toric Memorial Hall:

at 590 Main Street between Friday April 25 and Sunday April 27, 2014. The three day festival is an exhibition and sale which displays original fine arts and fine crafts by over 40 juried artist exhibitors; **including our own Ose Manheim.** All art will be for sale throughout the three opening days. FREE ADMISSION. For more information please visit <http://www.melrosearts.com>

The 15th annual West Medford Open

Studios: will take place on Saturday and Sunday, May 10 and 11, 2014, from 12 noon to 5 pm. Attendees may pick up WMOS site maps from many local locations. The maps include names and locations of the artists' sites as well as a schedule of readings and performances. West Medford Open Studios "gives you the chance to see the artists in our midst, to celebrate the creativity and enthusiasm that so many of us take for granted in our city." For more information please visit: www.wmos.org