

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

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.
This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.
You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. —John 14:16-17*



Never Abandoned

As I was preparing for this weekend's worship I kept coming back to these words in the gospel lesson wherein Jesus promises the arrival of the Holy Spirit. "I am leaving you—but I will not leave you orphaned." He tells the disciples that God will "send the Advocate" (from the Greek Paraclete which also means Counselor) and therefore they "will never be alone."

I suppose these words of reassurance that God, through the guidance and presence of the Holy Spirit, is always with me really ought to leave me feeling confident and strong—happy even. But as I was studying the text this week and preparing for this reflection, I found myself sinking into a melancholy and slightly fragile place instead. This is a familiar place and it is pretty achy, for it is a deeply lonely place. Then, as I acknowledged the melancholy, I pulled out my judgment-ridden-baseball-bat and swung a few upside-my-own-head as I told myself that it is a place from which I find myself looking way too often. "What is the matter with you?", I asked myself. "You have everything you need, you're better off than most, you have people who love you and work that fulfills you... Get a grip. You are not alone."

Yet, loneliness can and does hit us—even in a room full of people, even as we worship with others, even when we are a part of a wonderful faith community. The loneliness is grounded in an awareness of abandonment and it is just the nature of being human and being in human relationships. Human beings often feel let down. However well we have been nurtured, by virtue of being human there have been disappointments, losses, rejections, and betrayals: our trust has been at best tested. Some of us have experienced repeated or profound abandonments and we live on the lookout for and in fear of the next abandonment. Even when the abandonment is not profound, fear can stalk our relationships.

These experiences can lead to a state of disconnectedness from God and from each other and our fear of being hurt and/or abandoned again makes it worse. This sense of emptiness that can haunt and unsettle us creates a vacuum that we often try to fill with food, alcohol, drugs, sex, or possessions.

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Ironically, it has been said that addictions are a search for community. Yet, the fear makes us resistant to the kind of sharing and connection in community that would fill the void—thus begins a vicious cycle. Out of fear we “orphan” ourselves by choosing to cut ourselves off from God and God’s people, by running away from God and turning away from community, by lacking the humility and the trust to accept that we do not see the whole picture, by acting as though we are God. We can orphan ourselves by not feeling worthy of God’s love, by failing to accept that we cannot earn God’s love—it is already there.

All of these very human feelings and reactions are based in fear—and it is this fear that Jesus addresses when he says, “I shall not leave you orphaned.” This achy place of human hurt is the place that Jesus promises is filled by the presence of a perfectly loving, runs-out-to-greet-the-returning-Prodigal, leaves-the-ninety-nine-to-find-you, never-will-fail-you-or-abandon-you God—who we come to know intimately through the Holy Spirit. Fundamental to Jesus’ life was trust in God, dependence on God, and faith in God and he invites us into the same kind of dependence. That kind of dependence is surely easier said than done for we scared-all-the-time human beings—but it is a promise we can count on and it is a promise we try to live out in our communities of faith.



Beloved, I am here to tell you that it is not uncommon for people of any age, including the most committed Christians, to experience times of feeling abandoned, orphaned, powerless. We are all in need of help, comfort, encouragement, and for someone to stand with and on our behalf. The good news is that no matter what happens, God’s Spirit is with us offering help, direction, comfort, guidance, and encouragement. The better news is that God’s Holy Spirit is also creating beloved community—community that sees as her mission connectedness and care; and embodies the very guidance and counsel, comfort and connection that we human beings crave. From the youngest to the oldest, we experience “more God” through Spirit-filled community where love is given free expression.



This is one of the reasons we are so excited about the future vision of our new model for ministry. We are seeking to be that beloved community that witnesses to God’s love and helps people to recognize and experience the Holy Spirit’s enduring presence through worship, formation, and service. We are going to build that kind of community where God’s love is made real and palpable and is lived out in the city through our actions and through our love. May it be so.

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

IN OUR PRAYERS AND PASTORAL CARE



Concerns: We pray for the many forms of stress and anxiety of which we are aware as we face our June 1 decision—especially for our confirmands who will be the last class to be confirmed in 400 High Street sanctuary; a family dealing with a difficult week; Thelma T. recuperating at Aberjona; June L. settling into home from a hospitalization and seeking to get back on her feet; Ernestine S. back in hospital; Dick S. missing his wife's presence; for Kim caring for so many; for Jeff S.'s transition; for Eva W.; the girls kidnapped in Nigeria and their mothers; for all whose lives are effected by the sex

trade and other forms of slavery; Meckenzie recovering from surgery; Patti's asthma and an infected pic line. We continue to pray for a friend, Marlin who lost his husband to depression; the anxiety we feel as we face our decisions; Kathy W. in her prison work and keeping the balancing act it requires; a brother Rich in financial struggle; for sexton Steve S. caring for his father and grandson; patience for all who are working so hard on our transition; for God to make a way for reconciliation where there seems to be no way; for beloved friends who are not with us; all who struggle with addictions; for our own process of discernment; Tom C. for relief from chronic neck pain; 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.

Joys: We celebrate our wonderful confirmation class and their powerful witness and ministry during worship; in gratitude that Tom C's cataract operation went well; Jenny's friend's child turning one and Kate's Gold Award (Girl Scouts) to be presented at the State House on June 27; and the progress we are making toward the future—including a very generous offer on our property.

We continue to pray for Charlene's family as they walk with her brother Lou who is in hospice care; all in recovery; 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 May is Karen McCune Barca who can be reached at (karenmccunebarca@gmail.com). The Deacon of the Month of June is Brenda Briggs who can be reached at bgriggs51@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.

Fellowship Hour Help Needed: Can you bring some goodies to support our fellowship time? 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 5/25 and the last three Sundays in June. 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



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. 3. A Direct cash/check donation to Louise would be very helpful. Your show of support will make all the difference... Thank you!



Issued May 14, 2014
Call to a Congregational Meeting of the Governing Body of
The Congregational Church of West Medford, United Church of Christ
on
Sunday, June 1, 2014 (10:00 am)
at 400 High Street, Medford, MA

The Officers and Church Council of the Congregational Church of West Medford issue this call to a Congregational Meeting to:

1. Vote on a 2014 budget correction (a subtotal of \$ 45,150.00 itemized but not included in the total approved at January, 2014 Annual Meeting);
2. Vote on Church Council's recommendation to sell the property at 400 High Street, Medford, MA to the Evangelical Haitian Church of Somerville for the sum of \$2.9 Million (See Addendum I);
3. Vote to approve a special draw down of up to \$100,000 from CCWM's invested funds to cover financial obligations incurred between June 1, 2014 and Jan 1, 2015. The actual spending will be approved by church council and may include (but not be limited to):
 - a. expenses required to close the sale of the property; (i.e.: remediation of any environmental concerns, surveyor and attorney's fees);
 - b. moving and storage expenses;
 - c. capital expenses to open the ministry center (should you approve the model for ministry);
 - d. additions to the operating budget to implement (should you approve the model for ministry).
4. Vote to approve the "Vision for a New Model for Ministry" (See Addendum II) The proposal includes:
 - a. A Mission Statement and Vision for our Future;
 - b. A New Model for Ministry—which will entail the development and eventual implementation of new Bylaws, Name, Location/Operation, Mission, Worship, Partnerships, Leadership Development and Income, all of which are to be determined going forward;
 - c. A Plan to Establish Measureable Goals and Milestones for the New Ministry;
 - d. A Budget to Support the Model for Ministry.
5. Present a Proposed Time Line for the Implementation of the Decisions Made (See Addendum III);
6. Consider other new business as brought forth by members or friends of the congregation.

Signed,
Rich Carle, Co-Moderator
Paul Roberts, Co-Moderator

More Important Dates

- Sunday, June 8 (11:00 am)—Shared Blue Grass Worship and Barbeque after church at North Prospect Union UCC, 144 North Street, Medford. Pot Luck Sides, Drinks and Desserts. Watch for more details. If you need a ride, please advise a deacon!
- Sunday, June 15—Celebrating CE Programs, Senior Scholarship Awards, Music Sunday
- Sunday, June 22—Honoring our History—the Stories of our Stained Glass
- Sunday, June 29—??Taking Leave of the Sanctuary??



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

*www.nooma.com: a series of short films,
(10 minute-ish) about God and our lives.*

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

**Wed., May 28—Online Worship and Discussion; 7:00 PM
via Fuze meeting <http://fuze.me/23459647>**

Our Online Worship and Study this Wednesday with the Rob Bell Nooma Film entitled "Luggage" This film asks the question: "Why is it so hard to forgive?" We all have wounds and we end up carrying around these things that people have done to us for too long. It isn't easy to forgive but God created us to be free...

*For more information about this exciting online ministry, contact Rev. Wendy.
ALL are welcome, tell your friends.*



MISSION AND OUTREACH



Donations Needed for the Lakota Sewing Circle:

Donations of fabric, thread, needles, beads, ribbons, scissors, tape measures, etc. for the Lakota Sewing Circle. Copy the links for inspirational stories. <https://www.facebook.com/LakotaSewingCircle> As well as

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aC64PK14pCc&list=UUcOHBWkJJea6ssmyl_wk-5A&feature=share

Donations can be left in the dining room at church or at Joy' Harris's home at 23 Gleason St, Medford,. Thank you in advance from Joy Harris,

PARTY FOR A GREAT CAUSE!!! Friday, May 30 -- 6:30-8:30 pm; *at First Congregational Church in Winchester, 21 Church Street jointly sponsored by the Congregational Church of West Medford* Please join us for an awareness and fundraising event to support our summer adult mission trip to the Lakota Reservation in Pine Ridge, South Dakota! The evening will include:

- tasty food prepared by mission trippers
- moving stories and slides from CCWM members who have been to Pine Ridge
- sponsorship opportunities to help cover the cost of vans, program fees, airfare, etc.
- social time, including fun and games for all

The purpose of our trip is to meet and learn about the history, culture and spirituality of the Lakota people, and to offer our hearts and hands in fellowship and service. We will be bringing your love with us. We also need your financial support. Please come on the 30th prepared to have a good time – and don't forget your checkbook. Thank you!!! RSVP/questions: Jena Roy (jenaroy@aol.com, 781-729-2520)

ONA Churches at Pride Weekend, June 14

Can you volunteer to represent CCWM??

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.

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

Outdoor Church Sandwich Making, Sunday, June 29: Save the Date!!

NEWS AND EVENTS FROM THE UCC



Register Now—Deadline Approaching! 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. **Registration deadline: May 23**

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.



Save the Date: The Next Super Saturday—October 25, 2014

New Location!! Keefe Regional Technical High School, 750 Winter Street, Framingham MA
Super Saturdays began in Massachusetts a number of years ago, and were similar to events held in Connecticut. This is the first time the two conferences worked together on such an event, drawing workshop and worship leaders from both states. "We look forward to many more cooperative adventures with the Massachusetts Conference," said Siladi, who has spoken increasingly of nurturing interdependence among congregations and expressions of the UCC. "We share a commitment to making our voice known and living out of the core values of our beloved church.

To read about this last Super Saturday, which drew 650 attendees—see this reflection: <http://www.macucc.org/news/detail/270>