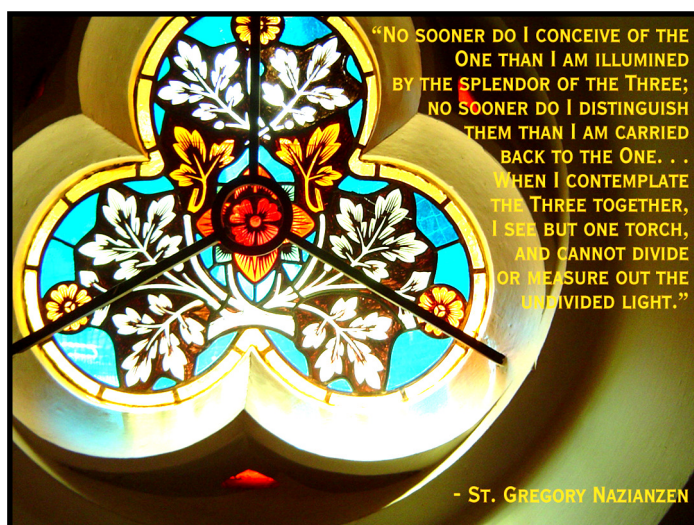


A weekly collection of news, reflections and announcements from the
 Congregational Church of West Medford
 an Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ



PASTORAL REFLECTION

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name
 of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.
 And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." —Matthew 28:18-20*



Commissioned for Greatness

This Sunday is Trinity Sunday, and as many a colleague and theologian has admitted, it strikes fear in the heart of most preachers. The Trinity. What is it? How is it? Who is it? Will someone ask me about it during coffee hour? However do you explain this heady doctrine that mystified the church for centuries and why should I even care?

I often quote Rev. Dr. David Lose (who recently was named President of the Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia) as a favorite theological guidepost for preaching

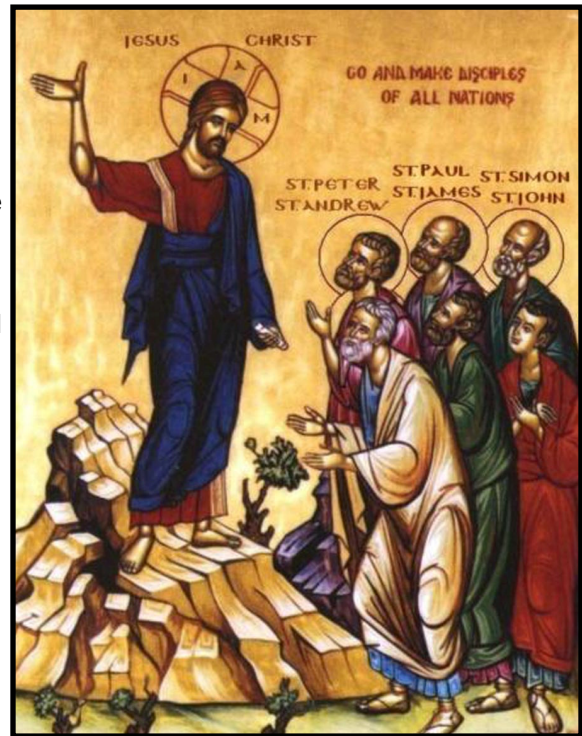
and Lose has nailed it yet again this week in his blog, "Dear Working Preacher." He suggests that rather than trying to explain the inexplicable concept of the Trinitarian "one God in three persons" that we would do better to preach about what a faith community look and acts like when it is living as a Trinitarian congregation. Lose's "short definition of a Trinitarian congregation is one that sees itself as *called and sent by the Holy Spirit to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed for the sake of the world God created and loves so much.* (... "the Trinity backwards." We believe that God the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to recognize and believe the good news of God the Son who, in turn, reveals to us the loving heart and mission of God the Father...) So a Trinitarian congregation is, in essence, one that sees itself called into mission by the Trinitarian God we confess."

This make so much sense to me—and I pray that it helps you to get your head wrapped around this theological notion. How wonderful then that the authors of the Revised Common Lectionary (that system by which we follow a series of assigned texts through the church year) offer us the "Great

...continued next page

Commission” text from the gospel according to Matthew. Here as Jesus is getting ready to leave them, the disciples are called and commissioned into mission and sent by the Holy Spirit for the sake of God—with Jesus’ promise to be with them (in the form of the Holy Spirit) guiding, energizing, and encouraging them ‘to the ends of the age’.

As followers of Jesus we too are called and commissioned, we too are sent for the sake of God, and we too can be assured that the Holy Spirit is with us – there before us beckoning us forward setting the direction for our calling like a GPS; behind us watching our back so that we do not fear the challenges of discipleship; over our heads offering a vision of what God needs from us; and under our feet providing the courage and energy to propel us into the mission – the Holy Spirit with us...every step of the way, to the ends of the earth, to the ends of the age. What a blessing it is to know this given the risks and challenges of being a follower! What a blessing to know this given the bold decision that we have just made as a congregation!



Beloved, we have been commissioned for greatness, to be a Trinitarian congregation that goes OUT into the streets, shares the good news in order to witness to God’s love and forgiving grace, and encourages others to know of this amazing grace. We have been commissioned for greatness, to be a Trinitarian congregation that teaches everyone the things that Jesus taught us so that the everyone might see that God loves them and the Earth. We have been commissioned for greatness, to be a Trinitarian congregation that lives God’s love through worship, community and mission – not to grow a church, not to gain members or pledges, but to form faith in people’s hearts. We have been commissioned for greatness so that we might be a channel for faith, growing in God’s beloved people the knowledge and assurance that the Triune God can be trusted to love them unconditionally, be with them through thick and thin and forgive them to the ends of the age. May it be so.

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



IN OUR PRAYERS AND PASTORAL CARE



Concerns: We pray for Louise's teacher and teacher's daughter who died within months of each other; Jeff and others whose journey to NPU was a challenge; Phil M. for healing from cancer; Ernestine S. and her family as she transitions to nursing care; a member of Karen's family; the many emotions we are experiencing as a congregation as we move forward with our bold decision; Rev. Wendy's family as they face her father's cancer diagnosis and treatment; light and love to prevail in a broken situation; a hurt soul who is lashing out; friend of Joy's, a coworker who passed away; all affected

by gun violence in our country—including the perpetrators; for June L. for strength, courage and recovery; for Kim G. and her family for strength for the challenge of caring for June. We continue to pray for Thelma T. recuperating at Aberjona; for Eva W. at home; Kathy W. in her prison work; for our 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; our continued discernment about worship and our new ministry; Tom C. for relief from chronic neck pain; Sheila in treatment; a brother Paul and his wife's struggles; those caring for the elderly; Dick S's friend Ed..

Joys: We celebrate our bold decision and the unanimity that was evident in our voting; the new congregation that will join the City of Medford in our building; that so many were able to participate in our June 1 meeting, including those with us via electronic communication—Thelma, Kerry, Patti, Margot and Joyce; Louise's friends who are graduating and going on to great colleges; all who are graduating and moving on; the members of our congregation who were away last week with the girl scouts and their wonderful ministry with the girls (Joy, Brenda, Jenny, Kathy, Susan); Bruce and Joy celebrate the birth of a grand-niece; We continue to celebrate the courage with which we are facing the future and the hand God has had in it all.

We are grateful for the UCC and all that it has stood for though her history—and honor those who gathered this weekend for the 215th Annual Conference of the Mass Conference of the United Church of Christ.

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 June is Brenda Briggs who can be reached at bgbriggs51@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.

OUR CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 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. Ose Manheim and Julie Roberts are the contacts at this time. You are also welcome to call the church office to volunteer.

Altar Flowers Always Welcomed: Please contact Brenda Briggs bgbiggs51@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 June Birthdays

- 2 Gregory Cox
- 2 Kylie Baker
- 8 Jack Briggs
- 9 Rebecca Adriana Luongo
- 10 Karen McCune Barca
- 11 Peggy Bennett
- 11 James Lee Grubb, III
- 15 Chris and Philip DiSciullo
- 19 David Luongo
- 21 June Livingston
- 28 Constance Wescott
- 29 Jessica Coughlin



Workshop on church growth and renewal: Craft Church. Monday, June 16, 6:30-9:30pm (Join Rev. Wendy): Michael Piazza, a national expert in church renewal, will lead a



workshop that offers specific and practical insights into how to attract people to your church, then get them to come back, then get them to stay and become a part of your community. Well-established churches can grow again if they learn to *craft* services, programs, and systems in ways that are congruent with the local settings values, mission, and vision. Reverend Piazza is the Director of Congregational Vitality for the Center for Progressive Renewal and the former senior pastor of Cathedral of Hope UCC, Dallas, Texas. While senior pastor of Cathedral of Hope, the congregation grew from 280 to 3,500 members. The United Parish in Brookline, 210 Harvard Street, Brookline. upbrookline.org. For more information and to RSVP, please contact office@upbrookline.org or call 617.277.6860.

MISSION AND OUTREACH



The Lakota Sewing Circle in So. Dakota has donated a Star Quilt for us to raffle. The purpose of the raffle is raise funds to cover the shipping costs of all the sewing materials generously given and to be sent to the Pine Ridge Fund.

Tickets are \$10 each or 3 for \$20. Please contact Joy Harris at brujoy2@comcast.net.

<https://www.facebook.com/LakotaSewingCircle> As well as
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aC64PK14pCc&list=UUcOHBWkJea6ssmyl_wk-5A&feature=share

Joy Harris is organizing a group to attend the Mashpee Wampanoag Pow Wow—either July 4th or July 5th. We will car-pool to the event.

Those interested please contact Joy at brujoy2@comcast.net.

Outdoor Church
Sandwich Making
Sunday, June 29

If you can help with transportation, please contact Elizabeth Bennett via reianfans@yahoo.com



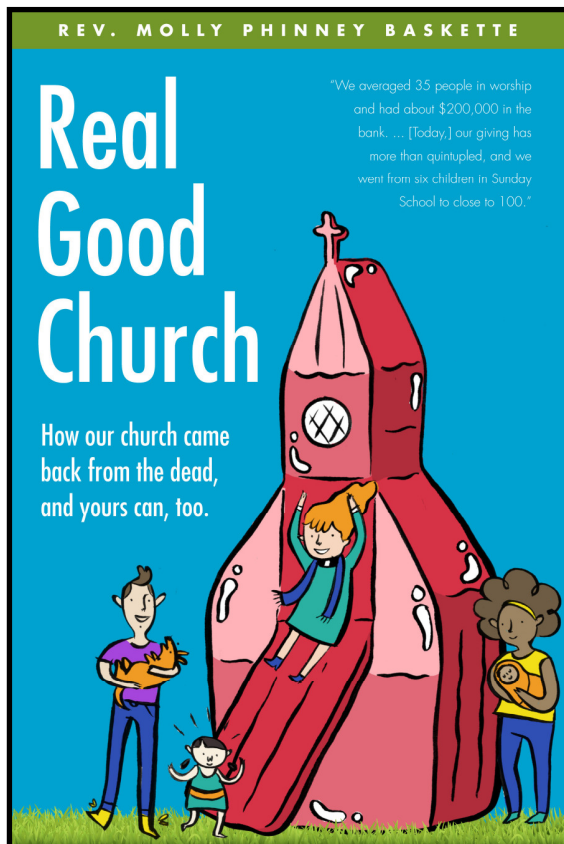
NEWS AND EVENTS FROM THE UCC

First Church Somerville goes National!!! This week, Pilgrim Press began distribution of Molly Phinney Baskette's book, entitled *Real Good Church* wherein she tells the story of the ten year turnaround of our sister UCC congregation, First Church, Somerville (FCS). While we have decided to "re-start" our church, rather than "re-new", I am confident there will be a great deal to be learned from FCS's experience and 'Molly's Manual'. Emerging Church leader, Brian McLaren, has been wowed by the book and has been posting quotes all month on his facebook page.

Brian D. McLaren praises *Real Good Church*. . .

"OK, folks: it's here: the practical, encouraging, field-tested book to help pastors and lay leaders turn declining churches around. Really. This is it! It names the skills you need and books to help you get them, gives you samples of job descriptions and letters and lots of other super-practical stuff. As a veteran pastor, I can tell you that Molly has packed these pages with the guidance you need."

The Mass Conference of the UCC recently offered this blog post of Molly's invitation. Maybe we should read it together this summer and mine the pages for our future?



Molly Phinney Baskette: Blog Post from the MACUCC Web Site:

One of your sister churches, First Church Somerville UCC, where I have pastored since 2003, has enjoyed a remarkable degree of growth during the last decade: from 30 to 150 people in worship (351 on Easter!). Our pledges have nearly sextupled—multiplied like rabbits. I would guess that 80% of our people are under age 50, that 60% are under 30. Yes, we have actual twentysomethings in our church: many of them.

Part of our 'luck' is derived from the blessing of having a church building on a busy urban street in one of the youngest communities in Massachusetts. But our growth is no accident. As one of our members put it, "we worked really hard to get into a position to receive the gifts that God wanted to give us."

I wrote a book—an instruction manual, really—that the Pilgrim Press is about to publish. It's called [*Real Good Church: How Our Church Came Back from the Dead and Yours Can Too*](#).

continued next page...

I wrote it because I was fielding so many emails and phone calls from people who wanted to know “the ONE thing you all did to turn your church around.”

It wasn't one thing. It was 200 things: about signage, about stewardship, about advertising, about staffing, about creative worship. I didn't have time to tell every person all 200 things that they wanted and perhaps needed to know, so I wrote down them all down. Now everyone can know what we have learned from others, invented ourselves, tried, tested, failed at, adapted and brought to fruition.

I also wrote this book because I am huge church nerd. The church saved my life—multiple times. The first time was when I was 4 years old, the daughter of a single mom on welfare in a new community without many supports. The most recent time was when I underwent chemotherapy for an aggressive cancer discovered accidentally that should have taken my life. It would have taken my life were it not for excellent medical care—but, just as importantly, the kind of care that churches are great at providing: casseroles and child care, meaning-making in a difficult world, and most importantly, space to pray and grieve and rail at heaven and experience everyday joys no matter what is going on.

I love the church, and as our mainline churches close by the score, I want to do whatever I can to make sure more of them stick around for the long haul, because there are people who need us. Most of those people are not inside our walls, but outside of them. Renewal means a fundamental reorientation toward the people who are not here among us yet—and it's not necessarily intuitive to us how we will reach them, welcome them, assimilate them.

This kind of adaptive change is not easy. It can be very frightening, and the work at times is discouraging. But it's so worth it. If you don't believe that it's possible, come on down and worship with us some Sunday, and see for yourself. Light your candle from ours, and bring it home to your own community.

Blessings and peace,

Rev. Molly Baskette and the entire community of First Church Somerville UCC

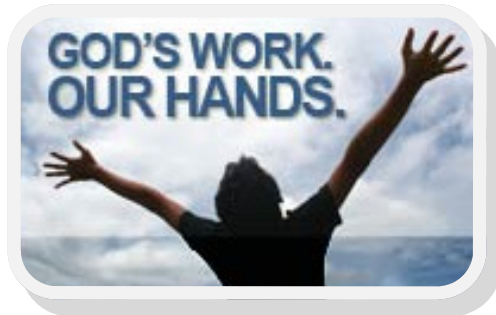
Book excerpts:

“Often in churches we are stationed at the back door, anxious about and attending to one or two or a few people who have decided to leave, and nobody's paying any attention to the front door, where (perhaps many) people just coming in are looking for orientation and nurturing assimilation. Don't privilege the people who have been at your church over the people outside your community who don't even know about you yet—these are *all* God's people, and if you are a pastor you took vows to “minister impartially to the needs of all.”

Your work, as a pastor or lay leader, is to build up your own tolerance for disappointing people. Learn how to evaluate criticism for what it can teach you, don't take it personally, and don't let it slow you down or hijack God's work.”



“I’ve read everything, and know that in the bibliography of church renewal, there’s a lot of plain old junk, and there’s also a lot of stuff that is great but falls under the category of what I call “swirly talk.” That is, it



provides a great theological rationale, but it doesn’t tell you What To Do.

I’m not going to tell you what to do, but I will tell you what we did, and let you, who know your communities best, decide what applies. I’m writing this manual because our church is alive and well, *and* yours can be, too. Our demographics may be different from yours, our leaders are different, but many of the things we did to survive and thrive can be replicated in any church, anywhere.”

Molly will be selling and signing copies of Real Good Church at the Marketplace at the MACUCC Annual Meeting, on Friday June 13, from 2 - 6 pm.



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>