

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



THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger."

—from Genesis 25:19-34

And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow.

And as he sowed, some seeds fell ...

—from Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

God's Love is Not "Either/Or"

Binary opposition is one of the powerful storytelling features of myths from oral cultures. Many of the great stories of the Hebrew Scriptures have binary elements. The Genesis 25 story of Esau and Jacob is no exception. Consider the contrasting elements in verses 23–28. They establish the tension in the brothers' relationship, beginning with the fact they are twins, but non-identical:

stronger	weaker
older	younger
red (a dark colour)	a lighter, contrasting colour (implied)
Hairy	smooth (implied)
letting go, pulling away	holding on, pulling down
manly (skillful hunter, of the field)	womanly (quiet, living in tents, cooking)
loved by father	loved by mother

Humans are prone to binary or dualistic thinking. We think in terms of day or night, right or wrong, tall or short, masculine or feminine, able-bodied or disabled, black or white. Young children are "naughty or nice." What parents haven't compared their children or their grandchildren in "either/or" terms? Vivid contrasts of appearance, character, and behaviour not only engage a story's audience, but also help us maneuver daily through a world that might otherwise be complex and demanding. But, acting on such rigid thinking can obscure real life and the range of possibilities between the opposite extremes.

When the identities of people and cultures are described in binary terms, power imbalances have followed. Think of the common pairing of doctor and patient, teacher and learner, or social service worker and client. In each binary, one person is considered capable, competent, knowledgeable, authoritative; and "the other" is not. As certain status and privileges are associated with the one, "the other" can experience the loss of status and disempowerment. This has commonly happened with respect to people of different race, ethnic origins, and culture.

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Palestinian-American professor Edward Said articulated a theory of “othering” in his book *Orientalism* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978). This theory explains how things Western or European are associated with superiority, demeaning all other people and cultures, creating tension between peoples and breakdown in relationships. For example, the binary world view in Canada in the 1900s led to the residential schools system for Aboriginal peoples. Everything Aboriginal – language, culture, ways of knowing, music, spirituality – was deemed inferior to the dominant European culture. Colonization and imperialism have followed “othering” throughout the world and continue in the 21st century. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 tragedy, binary thinking plainly affected people’s way of identifying themselves in relationship to others who were racially and ethnically different.

In the Genesis 25 story, the binary elements create a tension between the two brothers that leads to the breakdown in their relationship. The longing for the privileges of the first-born drives Jacob cleverly to take advantage of Esau to obtain the birthright and, later in Genesis 28, Isaac’s blessing. The dualism in this story contrasts with the reading of the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3–9). Indeed, Franciscan priest, Richard Rohr believes that Jesus was the first non-dual religious teacher of the West. Jesus’ parables and teachings often defy binary opposition; they not only obscure easy, unanimous interpretation, but instead they create confusion and ambiguity.

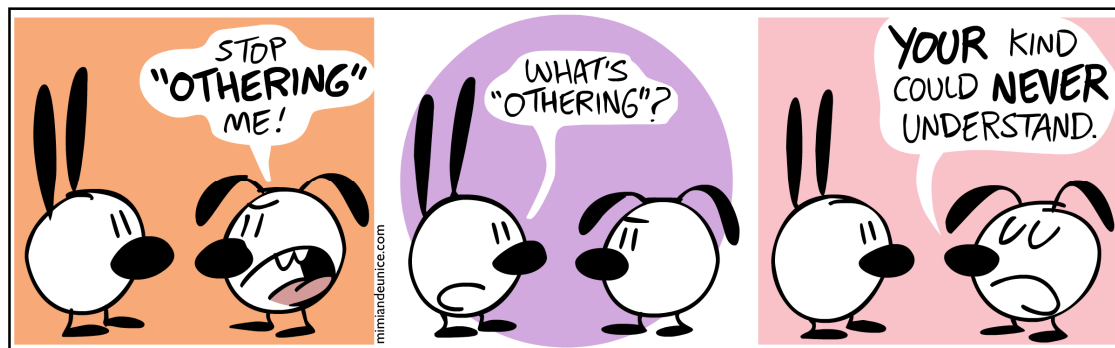
Perhaps the greatest challenge underlying Jesus’ parables is to go beyond binary thinking to create new relationships in new ways, relationships where we respect and value each other no matter how different our appearances, behaviours, life situations; rather than treating people as “the other.” Rohr believes this is his challenge: *I’ve looked at the patterns of my life and when I surrender to that simplistic, either-or, all or nothing thinking, it’s made me make my worst mistakes. It’s allowed me to hurt people unnecessarily without even knowing I was hurting them. It has allowed me to not be compassionate, to not be patient, to not be merciful, to not understand situations, to read them wrong. The dualistic mind operates by reading everything by what I like and by what I prefer. It reads everything egocentric.* From “Tapestry,” CBC Radio, Monday, September 20, 2009. There is no easy “either/or” in relationship-building or reconciling with others in God’s realm. As in the Parable of the Sower, real-life relationships span a range of situations, all of them falling within God’s creation and love.

For Your Reflection: Read Rohr’s words again.

- When have you fallen into a pattern of binary thinking about others? When have you “Other-ed” someone? How did it prevent you from showing God’s inclusive love?
- When has our congregation fallen into a pattern of binary thinking about others?
- What efforts could be taken so that this doesn’t happen?

Beloved, won’t you pray for God’s help to reveal God’s love inclusively—for each of us and for all of us.

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IN OUR PRAYERS AND PASTORAL CARE



Concerns: We pray for the friends and family members lost in yet another act of violence; for Patsy a friend of Brenda's for grace and courage; for another friend of Brenda's struggling with the symptoms of Diabetes; for Ernestine's adjustment to her nursing home and her families adjustment to the change—including for Dick and Jeff; Carol asks prayers for Israel and Palestine and for people to treasure their teenagers; Julie asks for prayers and help for June while Kim is on vacation; and Carvina prays for guidance when dealing with family situations. We continue our prayers for the loneliness that elders often experience; for Joy for relief from foot pain; for Rev.

Wendy's father Philip for healing from cancer; grace from the system for a member of Karen's family; 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; for Thelma T. recuperating and settling in Sunrise in Alington; for Eva W. at home; Kathy W. in her prison work; 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; all who struggle with addictions; 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 who will seek a nursing home while his housemate goes in for surgery.

Joys: We celebrate summer vacations; with Karen who prays in gratitude and joy about her son's girlfriend who is a church goer; the council's decision to hire Rev. Tom to lead new ministries; the Heifer Gobal Village Trip with Rev. Tom, chaperones and our youth; Contractor's Vinny and Deno and their staff who are building our new home with love and creativity; Drew and Tripp's grandmother's summer visit; our future; the courage with which we are facing the future and the hand God has had in it all.

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 July 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.

Fellowship Hour Help Needed: Can you bring some goodies to support our easy-peasy summer fellowship time? 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.

OUR CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.

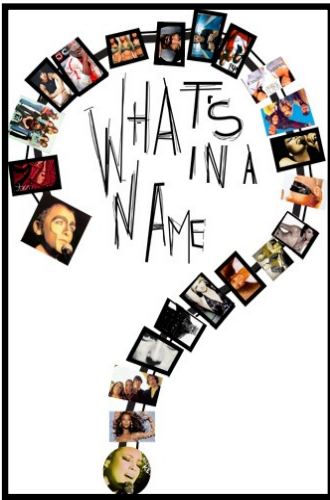
Happy July Birthdays

- 7 John Maloney
- 10 Louise Wilensky
- 28 Jamie Hutchinson
- 28 Jennafer Hutchinson
- 30 Mary Beal
- 31 Stephen Baker



Do you have any wild ideas for our new name?

Guided by experts in branding and the wisdom of people experienced at planting new ministries, we will soon enter into a deliberate process to decide about things like our church's new name/brand and how and when and where we will worship...but in the meanwhile... we welcome your ideas!



Many of you will be travelling this summer and we encourage you to be on the lookout for images and ideas that might be good for us too. Watch for church names and words in the world that evoke images of the vision to which we believe God has called us... remember the words from the shared values and the vision (see page 4 and 5 of this document:

<http://medfordchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/2014.04.13-Draft-Proposal-to-Congregation-for-Bold-Decision-for-Ministry.pdf>)

Send your ideas to Rev. Wendy with "What's in a name" in the subject line; you know the address: revwdmiller@comcast.net

Here are some "expert" suggestion on how to make a "Brand" work for a church:

- 1) **Good branding in your church is more than a good feeling:** It's not only our job to help connect with people on an emotional level, but it is truly our job to help people connect on a spiritual level. Good branding goes past the emotion and truly brings color to someone's life in a spiritual way.
- 2) **Complexity to simplicity:** It's very easy to make things complex, but you have to work very hard to make things simple. If you had to define your ministry in one word, could you do it?
- 3) **Design consistency:** If you don't stay consistent, you might as well tell your audience you really don't know what you're doing.
- 4) **Be relevant:** This does not mean play Lady Gaga in your church because she's the most followed person on Twitter. Being relevant to your community may mean you teach them to be better parents or how to help out a neighbor.

- 5) **Great companies and brands tell stories:** God has given everyone a story. Every great story has a story of redemption, a story of grace. Tell your story, and then tell the greatest story.
- 6) **It isn't about you:** What does this all mean? Grasp what your community wants and needs, and you can become a great brand. What problems are you solving for your community? On a practical level? It's been too long since the church has asked this question.

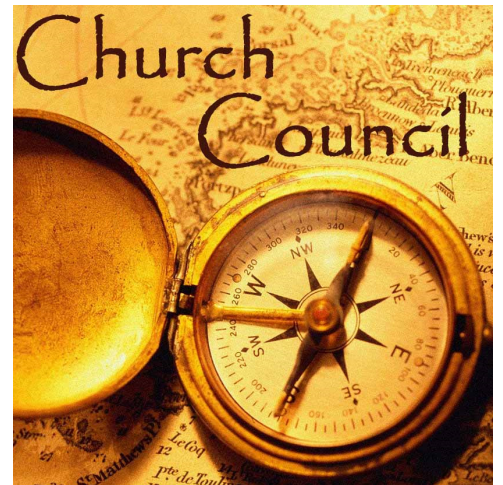
If you want to make your brand successful, remove YOU from the center and put your focus on what your community's needs are. They are speaking louder than words. Through their art, their dance, their protests, their crimes.

Report from the Church Council About Our Ministry and our Future

Church Council met Wednesday, June 25 and made several important decisions about the future which will keep us moving forward! These include the confirmation of spending that the congregation approved at the June 1 meeting.

We wanted to let you know about these big steps forward asap!

- As of Sunday, October 5, 2014 our 10 am Sunday Worship will move to the new ministry center at 458 High Street, Medford. We will continue to worship there on Sundays at 10 am until further notice. We will begin a deliberate congregational conversation about worship and music models that are called out of our vision, but will not try to complete that over the summer. That conversation will consider both the worship hopes and expectations of our current members, and those of the people who we seek to do ministry with who are not yet here; and we will prioritize the needs and preferences of those who are not yet here.
- Church Council approved a partnership arrangement with Rev. Tom Hathaway for a 5 Month "Consulting Contract" (July, Sept-Dec, 2014) to work with our congregation in three ministries areas. These include in partnership with North Prospect Union a) new, web based faith formation ministry; b) youth ministry and c) Mission and Justice Ministries. The proposal, Tom's CV/Statement on Ministry and other details can be found here: <http://medfordchurch.org/ministry-partnership-with-rev-tom-hathaway-and-north-prospect-union-ucc/>
- Church council affirmed initial spending for Construction and Furnishings for the church offices and ministry center in the amount of \$ 25,000.00. The design of the secure, air conditioned and handicap accessible space includes: a small office for the pastor, a church office, a small hospitality area with refrigerator and microwave, a handicap accessible restroom, a large basement storage area and a multipurpose meeting/gathering space which will seat 40 in cushioned "church chairs". Further proposals are forthcoming for the costs associated with high quality Audio Visual System, Keyboard for worship, exterior signage and computer and other electronic upgrades. Watch for an invitation in mid July to take a field trip to the new digs!!



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- Church council commissioned a By Law Team to address a new church organizational model and a complete revision of our bylaws—with the objective of being completed by Sept 1 and voted upon at a meeting of the governing body on Sept. 14. 2014.
- Church Council was advised that the sale of the building is progressing and is still scheduled to complete on September 30, 2014.

Save the Date:
Sunday, August 24
10 am Outdoor Worship & Pot Luck Picnic Brunch
All at the Parsonage!



MISSION AND OUTREACH

September 2014—final date TBD

Blessing of the Back Packs

CWS School Kits for Kids—Service Project

Ice Cream Social & Family Networking for

“Faith Formation at Home”

Church World Services is in need of School Kits for children around the world. School Kits give children in impoverished schools, refugee camps, or other difficult settings some of the basic tools for learning.



We are planning our first new ministry center moment during the first week of school! We will invite families all over Medford to collect items for CWS School Kits and ask them to bring their donations to our ministry center over the course of an afternoon where kids will have a chance to “build a kit”, craft a note to include in the kit (we will send them to CWS); have their own backpacks, laptops, tablets and school year blessed and share in an ‘Ice Cream Social’.

We will use the opportunity to network and connect with families and share our Faith Formation in the Home ministry/Web Site based offering.

For your planning, see the next page for the content of the kits:

<http://www.cwsglobal.org/get-involved/kits/school-kits.html>

Check out more details about the School Kit packing and shipping.

To assemble a CWS School Kit you will need:

- One pair of blunt metal scissors (rounded tip)
- Three 70-count spiral notebooks or notebooks totaling 200-210 pages (**no loose-leaf or filler paper**)
- One 30-centimeter ruler (12")
- One hand-held pencil sharpener
- One large eraser
- Six new pencils with erasers
- One box of 24 crayons (only 24)
- One 12" x 14" to 14" x 17" finished size cotton or lightweight canvas bag with cloth handles. (**Please, no reusable shopping bags or backpacks.**)
- Pack all items inside the cloth bag (pattern for bag is on website)

We will also need to raise the \$ 2.00 per kit for shipping to send along to CWS!

Note this Urgent Appeal issued in June: *"With the latest shipment of CWS School Kits to our partner IOCC in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, CWS is now down to about 60 cartons of School Kits at the New Windsor Warehouse and 120 cartons at the warehouse in Ferncliff. We need to replenish these supplies immediately. In the case of Syria, IOCC supports one of the largest established networks to deliver life-saving humanitarian aid inside Syria, where more than 9.3 million people are currently in need of assistance. In November 2013, some 3,000 CWS School Kits were shipped for distribution in Syria. CWS School Kits include some of the basic necessities for learning, including notebooks, pencils and crayons. These kits help children return to normalcy faster, helping them avoid the long-term effects of trauma."*



Lakota Sewing Club



Lakota Sewing Club
At the Oyate Community Center
We meet every other Fridays from
6pm-8pm & Saturdays from 11am-2pm
Providing the community with a space to be creative- An outlet
to express, support, and inspire one another through all
mediums of Arts and Crafts.
<https://www.facebook.com/LakotaSewingCircle?ref=hl>

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



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, Rev. Tom or Rev. Wendy.

Thank you—all around!!

A sweet summer celebration expressing gratitude to God for the miraculous work and big visioning we have done!! Thanks to all who made it happen!!

