

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

O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you. Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. —Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24

Searched, Known, Sought, Lead, Held—God's

As I head out for a couple of sorely needed weeks of respite, this, my favorite Psalm, breaks my heart right open and settles the anxiety and worry in my spirit. I am so glad for it and want to leave it with you as I go away from you for a bit.

Would you pray it with me again? "Amazing, grace-giving God, You have searched me and known me, even when I am trying to hide from you! You know everything: every want and need and fear and fuss; every hurt and joy and frustration and fabulousness; every selfish and selfless moment; the stuff I cannot admit to myself and the stuff that I wish I didn't remember. No matter where I go or where I try to run to or hide, no matter the substance or shopping or status seeking with which I try to fill that hole that only you will fill—there you are—waiting with open arms, loving with grace and gratitude, smiling knowingly, guiding me back, leading me away from harm, holding me, always holding me—even when I struggle to get away. No matter what, there you are transforming the unknowable into understanding, changing the dark into light, making a way where I thought there was no way and turning the angst in my spirit into an attitude of gratitude and peace. So search me now Lord—again—know my heart, know my need, know my brokenness, know my fear, know my desire to love and be loved and my hopes for meaning and purpose. If I am headed in the wrong direction, turn me around and lead me in Your Way that I might be a agent of your grace, a giver of your Love, and maker of Justice. In the name of Love, Amen."

See you in a few weeks — Rev, Wendy (revwdmiller@comcast.net)

IN OUR PRAYERS AND PASTORAL CARE



Concerns: We pray for Paul's best friend's daughter Rebecca, who just started to receive chemo therapy; Mark F. and Susan and family at the death of Mark's father; Ernestine S.; Dick's friends Ed and Paul; Anita's mother who is living alone and facing her mortality; Karen M. B. for losses in the family; Jeff S. for job opportunity and new openings; the people in Lowell and their losses; the children flooding the borders from south America, humane decisions about their (legal) future and problem solving in their home countries about the violence and conditions in their countries; Wendy's father and

her family; Thelma moved to Sunrise in Arlington; that members would visit and send cards; 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; for Israel and Palestine and for people to treasure their teenagers; 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; 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 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 with gratitude the "Thank You" party held for Rev. Wendy at Joy and Bruce's; 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 Global Village Trip; 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.

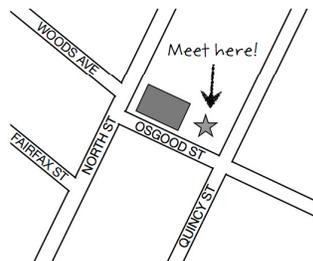
OUR CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS



On **Saturday, July 19th** at **1:00 p.m.** North Prospect Union United Church of Christ will be hosting a blessing of the animals ceremony.

We invite you to bring your pet (on a leash or in a carrier for our four-footed friends, please) to receive a special blessing as we celebrate together the joy of God's good creation and recognize the special role animals play in our lives.

We will gather in the yard directly behind North Prospect Union church. In the event of rain we will move inside. We hope to see your pet (and you) there. **All species are welcome!**



NORTH PROSPECT UNION UCC
144 North St.
Medford, MA 02155
781.396.8453
npchurch@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.

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.

Happy July Birthdays

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

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



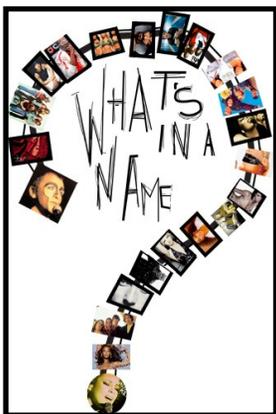
Do you have any wild ideas for our new name?

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.

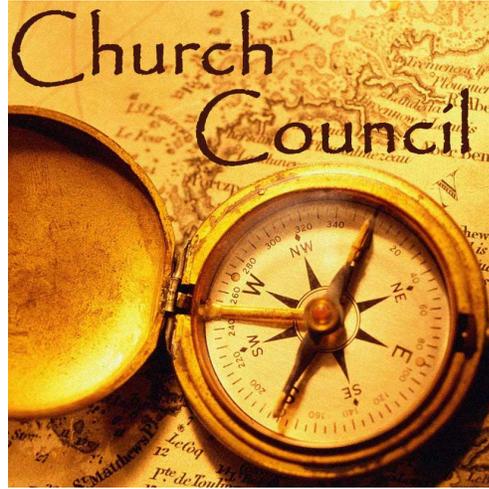
If you want to make your brand successful, remove YOU from the center and put your focus on what your community's needs are. They are speaking louder than words. Through their art, their dance, their protests, their crimes.

July Update from the Church Council About Our Ministry and our Future

Church Council met Wednesday, July 16 and continued to do the work of managing our move, deciding about construction and furnishings and the future of our ministry. Progress is being made and additional spending has been confirmed.

- Update on the Faith Formation in the Home Ministry: Tom and Rev. Wendy are working with a branding consultant to choose a domain name for the web site; Tom is working with a web design consultant to insure the site is easy to work with, effective, simple to navigate and beautiful to look at. Tom has begun to acquire subscriptions and curricula to offer to the network and develop the social networks to which we will offer the product.
- Church council affirmed an updated spending amount for Construction, Furnishings and Audio Visual System for the church offices and ministry center in the amount of \$ 60,000.00. 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, a multipurpose meeting/gathering space which will seat 40 in cushioned "church chairs", and a high quality HD Audio Visual System. Details are available upon request. Further proposals will be addressed in August for a Keyboard for worship, exterior signage and computer and other electronic upgrades. Watch for an invitation in mid August to take a field trip to the new digs!!
- The By Law Team will do research through Mid August and meet 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. Rev. Wendy will provide some "informational" documentation for the congregation regarding the philosophy behind the model being proposed in late August.
- Church Council was advised that the sale of the building is progressing and is still scheduled to complete on September 30, 2014. The process has been more challenging than has been expected, signatures for the P&S are planned for the week of July 21.

Reminder that 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



MISSION AND OUTREACH

We are on a mission! Lakota Nation at Pine Ridge, South Dakota July 26 – August 1

A group of fourteen members and friends of First Congregational Church in Winchester and the Congregational Church of West Medford will be traveling to Pine Ridge, South Dakota next week 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. The focus of the Re-member program is building understanding and relationships. We anticipate that this experience will be life-changing and are deeply grateful for the congregation's spiritual and practical support. We'll be taking your love and over \$1000 in donations with us. If you would still like to make a contribution, please contact Joy Harris.

Joy and Bruce welcome everyone's thoughts and prayers while on their trip. If anyone would like to donate twin sheet sets or new children's clothes or culturally appropriate children toys, that would be super. Folks can contact Joy by 7/23 if interested.

We look forward to sharing stories and reflections with you upon our return.

Yours in faith, love and service, Susan Navien, Cindy Wankowicz, Gabby Wankowicz, Fred Greene, Lisa Loughlin, Alex Rohall, Roger Marian, Cathy Crabtree, John Crabtree, Laurie Roby, Jena Roy, Greg Mobley, Joy Harris, and Bruce Roberts

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
Helping the community with a special focus on women for women
to learn, support, and inspire one another through all
mediums of Arts and Crafts.
<https://www.facebook.com/LakotaSewingCircle/>

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!!

