



Homecoming Sunday Worship

The Congregational Church of West Medford

**An Open and Affirming Congregation
of the United Church of Christ**

September 08, 2013

10:00 am

WELCOME

The Congregational Church of West Medford, United Church of Christ, is a community that strives to live according to the teachings of Jesus Christ and to share in the costs and joys of discipleship. We unconditionally welcome and affirm people of every age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, race, culture, ability, and economic circumstance, and invite everyone into full participation in our church life and ministry.

If you're visiting for the first time, feel uncertain about church, find yourself here infrequently, or attend weekly, there's a place for you here. There are many ways to be involved and if you'd like to know more about our many activities, please speak to a greeter or the pastor.

**We ask that you wear a name tag to help us know each other.
Blank name tags are available by the door for anyone in need.**

Please be sure to sign the Pew Register which you will find on the center aisle.

GATHERING TO PRAISE GOD

Prelude

Andante

— Mozart

Welcome and Prayer of Praise

***Gathering Song**

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You

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***Call to Worship**

Karen McCune Barca

One: In every one of us there is a longing for home.

All: *It's a longing for a place where we are known, accepted, and loved for who we are.*

One: It's a longing for a place where we are nurtured, guided, and challenged to become more than we are.

All: *It's a longing to belong, and to create a home where more and more of God's children know they belong.*

One: God calls to us, "You can come home now. There is a home for you in my forgiving love. There is a home for you in my living Word. There is a home for you in my church, the fellowship of my servant people."

All: *And our hearts respond, "We are coming. Open the door wide. We are coming home."*

A Time of Confession

Preparing our Hearts

“Hush, Hush,

—African American Spiritual

Somebody’s Calling My Name”

Hush, hush, somebody’s calling my name.

Hush, hush, somebody’s calling my name.

Hush, hush somebody’s calling my name.

Oh my Lord, Oh, my Lord, what shall I do? What shall I do?

Prayer of Confession (Unison)

We live in the shadow of your peace O God, but too often we face the shadow and not the light. We pray for peace today because we know we are not a whole people without it. Forgive our warring madness, our abuse of power, and our disregard of the rights of others. Lift us from the burden of the need always to be in control, Teach us the ways of mutual love for all people.

Help us to give peace a chance.

Silence

*The Good News of God’s Grace and Presence

*Passing of the Peace

One: May the peace of Christ be with you all.

All: And also with you.

*Sung Response

“Hush, Hush,

—African American Spiritual

Somebody’s Calling My Name”

Sounds Like Jesus, Somebody’s calling my name. (X3)

Oh my Lord, Oh, my Lord, what shall I do? What shall I do?

I’m so glad, Trouble won’t last always (x3)

Oh my Lord, Oh, my Lord, what shall I do? What shall I do?

Church Life and Mission

Prayers of the People and Pastoral Prayer

One: God in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer

The Lord’s Prayer (You are welcome to pray in the language most familiar to you)

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD

From the Bible Deuteronomy 11: 1, 8-9, 11-15, 18-21 Karen McCune Barca

Blessing of the School Year, Children, Youth, Educators, Parents and Backpacks

All children, youth, college students, teachers, educators and parents of students are invited forward.

One: Let us give thanks to God our Creator for all the gifts so freely bestowed upon us. For the beauty and wonder of creation, in earth and sky and sea,

All: *we thank you, Lord. For our daily food and drink, our homes and families, our teachers and parents and our friends, we thank you, Lord.*

One: For minds to think, and hearts to love, and hands to serve,

All: *we thank you, Lord. For health and strength to work, and leisure to rest and play, we thank you, Lord.*

One: For the brave and courageous, who are patient in suffering and faithful in adversity, for leaders and followers,

All: *we thank you, Lord. For all valiant seekers after truth, liberty, and justice, we thank you, Lord.*

Let us pray. (*Silence*)

One: Almighty God, heavenly Father/Mother, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children and youth: Grant those who teach and lead them—calm strength and patient wisdom, that they may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good.

All: *Amen.*

One: Into your hands, O God, we place these learners. Support them in their successes and in their failures, in their joys and in their sorrows. As they grow through this year, may they grow in grace, and knowledge and wisdom.

All: *Amen.*

One: O Eternal God, bless all schools, colleges, and universities, that they may be lively centers for sound learning, new discovery, and the pursuit of wisdom; and grant that those who teach and those who learn may find you to be the source of all truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: *Amen.*

One: Holy Spirit, bless parents, grandparents, mentors and friends who support the learning of others. May they tutor and hand hold, may they guide and encourage in ways that energize and create grace.

All: Amen.

One: God of all wisdom and knowledge, give your blessing and guidance to all who teach and all who learn, send your blessing upon these tools of learning (backpacks, satchels, briefcases, Ipads, laptops, pencils, pens, note books) that all who use them may share in your creative power and come to the joys of wisdom and grace.

All: Amen. May it be so.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S GRACE

*Song of Praise

"We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table"

—traditional African American

I'm gonna sit at the welcome table,
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days—Alleluia.
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table,
Sit at the welcome table one of these days.

I'm gonna feast on milk and honey...

All God's Children gonna sit together...

We're gonna sit at the welcome table...

Offering

Invitation to Joyful Stewardship

Offertory

Prelude in B Minor

—Chopin

***Doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Christ all creatures here below;
Praise Holy Spirit, comforter; One God, triune, whom we adore. Amen

***Procession of Gifts and Prayer of Dedication**

***Closing Hymn**

"I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me"

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Blessing and Sending

Postlude

Second Kyrie

—Raison



All are welcome to join in a Homecoming Luncheon and time of fellowship and connection immediately after worship in Fellowship Hall.

Exit the sanctuary in the front through the door to the left of the pulpit.

WORSHIP AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WEST MEDFORD

In conjunction with our 'Crossroads: A New Beginning' dialogue, our worship this week (and for the next few weeks) is intergenerational and designed to last 30-40 minutes.

Nursery Care is provided during the worship 'hour'.

School aged children will remain in worship with their families.

A values oriented children's program will be provided on Crossroads Sundays while parents are in the Crossroads conversations. The Children's program will be staffed by teachers from our Bright Stars Afterschool.

Today, Sunday September 8, 2013, Homecoming Sunday

10:00 am—10:40 am

Blessing of the Backpacks

Homecoming "Picnic"— Fellowship Hall (CE and Potluck meal)—10:45 am

Crossroads Session 1—11:00 am—1:00 pm, All-Church in Fellowship Hall

Crossroads Kids—10:45 am—1:15 pm, Lower Level Classrooms

Our worship is centered in the blessing of our students and teachers as they head back to school. Be sure to bring the children and their backpacks for this special blessings.

We celebrate Homecoming Sunday with a potluck meal after worship and begin our Crossroads conversations.

Next Sunday, September 15, 2013, 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

10:00 am—10:40 am

Crossroads Session 2 —11:00 am—1:00 pm

Blue Group House Meeting—Living Room

Red Group House Meeting—to be announced (off site)

Crossroads Kids—10:45 am—1:15 pm, Lower Level Classrooms

Rev. Wendy begins a worship series entitled, "Why Church?" As we seek answers in our Crossroads conversations as to what it is that God is calling us to be and do—we will wonder aloud together as to why we would 'do' church.

God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



**A Message from our
UCC Leadership**

Pray and Act for Syria

As the Obama Administration and Congress responds to use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime in Syria, you can take action by calling on our leaders to avoid any military response now. Urge the U.S. to use all diplomatic and humanitarian means at our disposal for a resolution to this crisis.

The administration released its assessment of the Syrian regime's harrowing use of chemical weapons this week- attacks that killed close to 1,500 civilians including children. Although the case has become clearer that chemical weapons were used by the Assad regime, it is not clear that a U.S. led military strike on Syria is justified in response to these actions. We grieve this loss of life and the indiscriminate killing of civilians and we are called to speak out against these attacks.

As people of faith we call on our leaders to avoid any military intervention now. We call on them to use all diplomatic and humanitarian means at our disposal for a resolution to this crisis.

The global community has unequivocally condemned the use of chemical weapons and indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians. The regime's use of these weapons is a clear violation of international law, and those responsible should be brought to justice. A U.S. military response to these actions, however, would risk further enflaming the violence in the country and destabilizing the region. Limited strikes rarely remain so.

We grieve for the more than 4 million people who have been displaced from their homes within Syria. We grieve for the 1.7 million who have been forced to seek refuge in nearby countries. The United Church of Christ and other faith and humanitarian communities are committed to increasing humanitarian aid to Syria to help. We also grieve over the loss of 1,500 lives to chemical weapons and the more 100,000 lives which have been lost throughout the war in Syria.

Amidst this grief, we call on our leaders to exercise moral courage and fully exhaust all diplomatic and humanitarian solutions. A military solution would eliminate the potential for what is needed most- a politically negotiated settlement led by the U.N. with U.S. support that seeks to contain the violence, restore stability in the region, provide humanitarian assistance, and encourage the building of an inclusive society in Syria that protects the rights of all its citizens.

**You are invited to pray and act—go to the UCC website
and send a message to our president and legislators:**

**[https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Advocacy?
cmd=homepage&page=UserAction&id=1181](https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Advocacy?cmd=homepage&page=UserAction&id=1181)**

Crossroads: A New Beginning

The conversation begins in earnest today. All are welcome.

*This is what the Lord says:
“Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is,
and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.
—Jeremiah 6:16*

Dear Friend,

It is time! ‘Crossroads: A New Beginning’ is designed to enable our congregation to make a decision that will allow the church to reach sustainable levels for our future witness.

Everyone is welcome to this imperative and meaningful conversation about the future of our congregation—whether ‘member’ or friend, whether you have been here 50 years or 50 days, if you have an interest in the Congregational Church of West Medford’s mission and ministry—you are urged to participate.

Today we will eat together and cover Crossroad Session I as an “All-Church” event. The remaining five sessions will be done in small group “House Meetings” which are being offered either Sunday after worship or Monday evening. If you have not already signed up, please see Rev. Wendy about being assigned to a small group.

For the duration of Crossroads, Sunday Worship will be 30-40 minutes and Intergenerational. There will be a Fellowship Café Lite for those who are not participating in Crossroads on Sunday. Following worship, the Crossroads small groups will go to their House Meetings and children will remain at the church to participate in a children’s program offered concurrently with the Sunday Crossroads Sessions (and led by professional child care providers).

We welcome and encourage teens from Confirmation age and above to participate in Crossroads at the discretion of their parents/guardians.

Any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact the church office, Rev. Wendy, Paul Roberts or one of the facilitators (Stephanie Miller, Jenna Nackel, Julie Roberts, Kathy Williams, Karen Barca McCune, and Charlotte Wilensky).

