

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 when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." —Matthew 3:16-17*

### See How Much God Loves Us...

This Sunday we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus. It is a wonderful opportunity to remember our Baptisms (and the meaning of Baptism). In fact, I will take a liturgical moment this Sunday to do just that. Granted, some may find themselves perplexed by the ritual while others may experience an out-and-out-negative response to the experience—for the meaning of Baptism can remain a mystery to the average Protestant church goer. Splashing oneself with water may make no sense or it might be reminiscent of that act our Roman Catholic brothers and sister do when they walk in and out of their church. So it is a risk I take, creating a liturgical moment to remember our baptisms and get you all wet... but I am willing to rise to the challenge!



In fact, in the midst of the post-modern church a pastor is regularly presented with the challenge of Baptism. "So why," you ask, "would you call Baptism a challenge? We love it when you sing 'Jesus loves me' and present those beautiful babies to the congregation after they have been sprinkled and proclaimed a child of the church." But more often than not, given the growing number of 'Nones,' SBNR's and those disillusioned by Religion/Christianity/The Church, when a family calls to ask about baptizing a child there is a paucity of awareness about the meaning of baptism or why and how we do it. Usually at least one member of the family is reticent (at best)—imagining some hocus pocus or indoctrination into a system in which they are not really a part—and are only willing to go along in order to get the grandparents to back off from the pressure they are exerting to "get that baby done."

I can even admit to you that when I listen to the questions and wonderings of post modern parents who cock their heads and ask, "Why should I even do this when I am not sure what I believe myself," I understand the questions and concerns. Why do we do this? What does it mean? Does anything really happen when we bless that water and pour it over the baby's head? And in our day and age, when so many folk are themselves questioning the traditional church—does infant baptism make sense or should we let our kids make their own choice when they come of age?

*Continued on next page*

At times, I wonder where the line is between administering and honoring the sacrament and meeting people where they are so that we can connect them to a faith community for all the positive reasons that connection offers. Some would say baptism are an opportunity for evangelism, while others believe we should only do it if the family is ready to sign up for new member classes. I have had many a theological conversation with colleagues in which we have wondered aloud, “Do we somehow devalue the sacrament when we adjust the language and/or open the sacrament to those who may not be planning to raise their children as Christians?” I know what some of my seminary teachers and mentors would say.

Yet, I think there is a place to stand, straddling the line, where one can both honor the meaning of the sacrament and meet folk where they need to be in the hopes that through the education one gives a family and the experience of the Holy Spirit and community that takes place each time we celebrate the sacrament—people’s lives are changed (even if only a little) and the sacrament it becomes more than a reason for a pretty white garment and a party for the family after church. (At least I hope this is true, because I practice a wide open stance when it comes to standing on the line).

So—how might we remember our baptism? We begin with the meaning of baptism. Baptism seals God’s promise of love and acceptance. Baptism is a spiritual birth out of which we take our place in God’s world and God’s children. Baptism is a sacred obligation through which we promise to love and rear our children to be what God wants for them: lovers of life, makers of peace, and instruments of justice. Baptism consecrates our bond to family—our family of origin and our family of faith. Baptism is an act of worship in which the whole faith community participates, promising to help raise-up followers of Jesus, and nurture and support those people in their prayers and actions. In other words, baptism is a covenant through which the baptized is embraced by the whole household of God. And finally, baptism is an act of faith and a confession of faith. When you bring a child or yourself for baptism, you come declaring your hope and offering yourself, by God’s grace, to seek a better world for all.

In the liturgy of the sacrament we trace the sign of the cross on the forehead with these words, “The Holy Spirit be upon you, child of God, disciple of Christ, member of the church.” And then, the best part is next. We present the newly baptized and say, “See how much God loves us that we should be called the children of God.” See how much God loves us that we are sealed with a kiss and called ‘beloved’.

As you remember your baptism this week, take some time to remember the ways your faith walk has caused you to be seekers of peace and justice and lovers of all of creation. Remember the many people and faith communities that have nurtured you and supported you through all of the ups and downs of life and faith. Remember the covenantal ways you have been connected—large and small to the triune God, to God’s people and to God’s creation and celebrate those ties. And most importantly, remember how deeply and thoroughly God loves you and your children—God said it to Jesus and God says it to us—“this is my child, my beloved, in whom I am well pleased.”

With blessing and prayer, Rev. Wendy Miller Olapade/  
revwdmiller@comcast.net/617.592.5853



## IN OUR PRAYERS AND PASTORAL CARE



Concerns: June L. who is facing Chemo treatment and a challenging prognosis; Ose's friend Wolcott and his wife dealing with Alzheimer's; Bev R's friend Rosemary is pregnant and suffers from a rare disease which affects carrying to term, but she's doing well; Dick S. A meeting about Ernestine coming home and prayers for Jeff, who is discouraged right now; Charlene and Rich's neighbor, Joe who lost his daughter recently and is dealing with pneumonia. Continuing to pray for Bruce R.'s brother Bill in treatment for addiction; Carol L. at the passing of Joe's Aunt "Pete"; Charlene C's brother Lou in the final stages of Alzheimer's; our sexton Steve's daughter and grandson; Diane's mother Anne; Mary and Max Beal's great-grandson, George with seizure disorder; for all with cancer; Dick's

friend, Ed, who is returning home from the hospital; a member of our community struggling with family matters.

Joys: Thelma's trip to Florida, Stephanie's delight in volunteering for Christmas in the City, serving over 4,000 homeless children and families; Jenny B being with friends and having a giggling baby on Christmas in their house; Paul R's work with a loon trapped in the ice and for all the volunteers and Tufts' Animal rescue league who worked to free and care for the bird; Bev R. celebrates having Tim home; all families who celebrate having family with them during the holiday season; having Albert with us in worship; Emma K. early acceptance to Harvard University next fall! Continue to celebrate Kerry H. call back to work for 90 days; and the finalized adoption with Mackenzie Rose Siobhan!

We continue to pray for our church's ongoing process of discernment and for the leaders who are guiding our conversations and discovery. We pray for all the MACUCC churches engaged in Crossroads.

We continue to pray for all those struggling with cancer and addiction; all those dealing with Alzheimer's disease; for the environment; for President Obama and Congress regarding our present times of strife—may God's intentions prevail as they make decisions; for Lorna S. still hopeful for full recovery; Eva W. recovering at home. We remember fallen soldiers and 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 prayer requests to [office@medfordchurch.org](mailto:office@medfordchurch.org) by noon each Wednesday.*

### Pastoral Care Concerns

The "Deacon of the Month" for January 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.

**The Altar Flowers today are a gift from  
Jean Hinds-Johnson, in memory of May S. Hinds.**

## OUR CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

pennies  
from  
heaven



### **Empty your Pockets in the Pennies from Heaven Jar:**

The "Pennies from Heaven Jar" will be in the Narthex for you to empty your pockets of the loose change you may have. This jar is just one way to help support the church in a very easy way. The jar easily takes coins and paper money.

### **Happy January Birthdays**

2	Julie Roberts
6	Alisha Saulnier
19	Tom Nackel
22	Grace Helen Kromm
24	Emma Louise Kromm



**Altar Flowers Always Welcomed:** Please contact Brenda Briggs [bgbriggs51@gmail.com](mailto:bgbriggs51@gmail.com) (or the church office [medfordchurch.org](mailto:medfordchurch.org)) to make arrangements to schedule a Sunday to bring flowers or order them in honor or memory of a loved one.

**Fellowship Café:** During the month of January the Outreach Ministries Committee is sponsoring coffee hour. You are invited to bring treats to share! Big thanks to Karen McCune Barca who has taken on the responsibility of setting up and cleaning up the coffee weekly!! ***If you can bring some goodies or veggies or fruit to support, they would be very much welcomed.***

**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 (robin)

If you would like to usher, please see Rev. Wendy to find out more or ask any questions. You are also welcome to call the church office to volunteer. Our church works better when we all pitch in and participate! Your help is appreciated.



**Cleaning out the Closets!!** Volunteers are needed for cleaning out the church closets: As we place the church building on the market and consider our future, Kathy Williams is leading this effort to "clean out our closets." You would be amazed at how much stuff has accumulated and is stuck in corners. We will donate, trash, recycle as is called for. **Cleaning will take place weekly from 9:30-10 am before church and 11 am-noon after church until completed. Volunteers are particularly needed to drive boxes of unneeded items to charity donation sites.**

If you would like to join Kathy on this mission, please contact her at [kathypricewilliams@yahoo.com](mailto:kathypricewilliams@yahoo.com).



**Bravo! Our 2014 Stewardship Campaign was met with generosity and a strong commitment despite the uncertainty of our future.**

Thanks to everyone who has already made a financial commitment to the faith community. We are so glad to see the same level of commitment as last year and consider that a powerful statement about the congregation's commitment to the ongoing discernment process and the future of our faith community! Your pledge cards are always welcome. Just put them in the offering plate or get them to the Treasurer via the church office.

**Offering Envelops:** For all those who have made a 2014 pledge, your envelopes are ready and can be picked up after the service. They will be in Barnes Chapel at coffee hour.

**Tax Documentation:** If anyone would like a letter from the church to verify your pledge/contribution for 2013 tax purposes, please contact Tom Roche at [thomasroche@comcast.net](mailto:thomasroche@comcast.net) or call him at 781-281-1000.

**Join our Confirmation Youth for  
City Mission Society Martin Luther King Day of Service**  
<http://www.cmsboston.org/Martin-Luther-King-Day-2014.html>

**Sat., Jan 18—9:15 am arrive at work site  
1:30 pm end of celebration at 12th Baptist**

The Confirmation Class will attend City Mission Society's MLK, Jr. Day of Service and all are welcome to join in. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" Each year on the Saturday of MLK weekend, over 200 volunteers of all ages take part in an effort to honor the memory of Dr. King by offering their services to nonprofit agencies in the Greater Boston Area. Following a morning of service, the groups convene for a celebration luncheon and closing ceremony. Their efforts impact the lives of over 3,000 individuals.

***Make it a day on, not a day off!***

DEADLINE is today: You can register as an individual (via link above) or let Rev. Wendy know by end of today and she will submit a church registration

**FROM OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS**

**Hallmark Health VNA and Hospice: Chronic Pain Self-Management Program** presented by Hallmark Health System and Mystic Valley Elder Services are sponsoring a Free Program on Chronic Pain Self-Management for six sessions on Wednesdays, beginning January 22, through February 26, from 9:30 am - noon at Saltonstall Building at 121 Riverside Ave in Medford (Edgerly Hall). The Program is a "must attend" for those who want to learn how to manage their chronic pain, leading to a more satisfying and fulfilling life. Open to adults of all ages who have a primary diagnosis of pain or care for someone who does. This program is free, however registration is required as space is limited. To register or for more information, call (781) 338-7823.



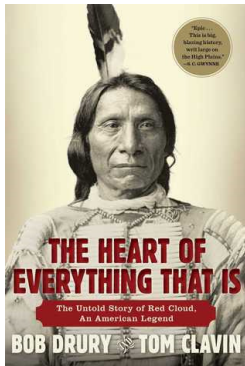
## MISSION AND OUTREACH

### **CCWM Ministry with Pine Ridge Reservation 23rd Annual Bedford VA Hospital Mid-Winter Powwow**

Saturday, January 18th  
Bedford VA Hospital Gymnasium  
200 Springs Road  
Bedford, MA 01730

This event kicks off GLICA 2014 series of public events. Here you will have the chance to dance, hear native drumming and singing. This event is open to the public and traders are present so you can browse and purchase their unique native items.

CCWM will participate in this fundraising/awareness event to support our ministry with Pine Ridge. We are looking for one or two people to staff our vendor table and sell Hoka coffee, mugs, totes at this event as well as display information about our volunteer trip, Re-Member, conditions on Pine Ridge, etc. We are not sure of the exact hours yet but probably noon – 4pm on January 18<sup>th</sup>. Please let Kathy Williams or Joy Harris know if you are available and willing to volunteer for at this fun event. Thanks!



**Sunday, March 02, 11:30—2:00 pm: Book Discussion: “The Heart of Everything That Is”** Susan D’Arcy will lead this first book in book series/discussion group. “The Heart of Everything That Is” is written by Bob Drury and Tom Clavin – and tells the untold story of Lakota Sioux chief, Red Cloud. There are ten copies in local libraries or you are encouraged to purchase the book yourself. We are open to suggestions for other Indian themed books for future book discussion groups. Contact Kathy or Joy with suggestions or questions.

**Anniversary of the Massacre at Wounded Knee:** If you missed worship last week, check out Kathy’s sermon on the CCWM website, here:

<http://medfordchurch.org/the-anniversary-of-the-massacre-at-wounded-knee-december-29-1890>

**Leadership Needed for Ongoing Ministry to Indigo House and Outdoor Church Sandwiches:** The members of Outreach are being called to other ministries as we come to the end of our terms on the committee. We have loved serving as your Outreach Committee, and are grateful for the ways we have been transformed by serving you and serving our wider community. We are hoping to ensure "project-based-leadership" for two of our long-term ministries - the Indigo House (Medford) and the Outdoor Church, Cambridge. We hope you'll pray about whether you feel called to be a leader in either of these ministries. If you're interested, or have questions, please be in touch with Jenna or Rev. Wendy. Blessings, Charlene, Susan & Jenna

**SAVE THE DATE:**  
**CCWM ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**  
**SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING WORSHIP**

Watch this space for the official “Call to the Congregational Meeting.”

**We expect to vote on the following matters:**

- 2014 Budget;
- 2014 Nominations;
- Proposed Bylaw addition: “Members who are connected to a meeting of the governing body via technology such as Skype or Tele-Conference and are able to listen and speak via said technology will be considered “present” at said meeting of the governing body; thereby providing those connected via technology the opportunity to participate in the meeting and vote on decisions per the practices of said meeting. Remote members who desire to be present via technology will be required to provide for themselves the equipment, network connection and a “technology-partner” who is physically present in the meeting and able to facilitate both the electronic connection and the remote member’s interactions with the meeting.



**In addition, we expect to share updates and provide for Q & A in regards to:**

- The marketing and sale of the property at 400 High Street.
- The discernment of the bold decision called for from the Crossroads process.

*We hope you will plan to participate.*



**Congregational Nomination Process for 2014**

Happy New Year!

Final plans are underway for the election of committees members and officers at the January 26 Annual Meeting. Despite the possibility of organizational change that may come as a result of our Crossroads discernment process—we have wonderful ministry to do right now. We will continue to do ministry in and with our community and there is a place for folk who want to serve in ministry with elders, children, youth, and with our mission projects. There are places to serve as committee members, on projects, for events and in our discernment process.

Let us know what interests you.

If you are looking for ways to get involved, if we haven't spoken yet, or haven't finalized plans, please take a moment to call or email regarding your interests. Thank you.

Karen McCune Barca, [karenmccunebarca@gmail.com](mailto:karenmccunebarca@gmail.com), (857) 888-2984

Rev. Wendy Miller Olapade, [revwdmiller@comcast.net](mailto:revwdmiller@comcast.net), 617-592-5853

## **THIS WEEK AT YOUR CHURCH**

**January 12-19, 2014**

### January 12, 2014 Baptism of Jesus

Cleaning Out The Closets—9:30 am-10:00 am; 11:00 am--12:00 pm

Sunday Worship Service (Sanctuary) 10:00 am

Goodland Church Worship (in Korean) (Sanctuary) 12:30 pm

Faith Formation/Confirmation (LR/DR) 4:00 pm

#### Monday

(3) Boot Camp Sessions: 5:45 am--6:15 am;

8:15 am--9:00 am; 5:30 pm--6:15 pm (FH)

Peer Group—10 am (LR)

Yoga— 6:30 pm (FH)

#### Tuesday

Spiritual Life— 7:00 pm (LR)

Gamblers Anonymous 7:30 pm (BC)

Gam-Anon—7:30 pm (YR)

#### Wednesday

3) Boot Camp Sessions: 5:45 am--6:15 am;

8:15 am--9:00 am; 5:30 pm--6:15 pm (FH)

(Alcoholics Anonymous— 8:00 pm (YR)

#### Thursday

Youth Champions-5 pm (FH)

Spiritual Meeting—5 :45 pm (LR)

Food Addicts—6:00 pm (YR)

#### Friday

(3) Boot Camp Sessions: 5:45 am--6:15 am;

8:15 am-- 9:00 am (FH)

Strategic Planning—9:30 am (LR)

#### Saturday

Alanon - 9:00 am (YR)

Yoga—9:00 am (FH)

Boot Camp—12:15 pm (FH)

### January 19, 2014 Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Cleaning Out The Closets—9:30 am-10:00 am; 11:00 am--12:00 pm

Sunday Worship Service (Sanctuary) 10:00 am

Goodland Church Worship (in Korean) (Sanctuary) 12:30 pm

Faith Formation/Confirmation (LR/DR) 4:00 pm

## **Weekdays**

(M—F) **Bright Stars Afterschool Enrichment Program**, [www.BrightStarsKids.org](http://www.BrightStarsKids.org)

((M—F) **Gentle Dragon Co-op Preschool**, [www.GentleDragonPreschool.org](http://www.GentleDragonPreschool.org)

(M—F) **English at Large** (ESOL/ESL Programs), [www.englishatlarge.org](http://www.englishatlarge.org)

**Room Legend: (FH) Fellowship Hall; (BC) Barnes Chapel; (YR) Youth Room; (LR) Living Room**

### **The Congregational Church of West Medford, United Church of Christ**

Ministers: All of us!

Organist and Choir Director: Dr. Herman Weiss

Moderator: Paul Roberts

Treasurer: Beverly Roche

Pastor and Teacher: Reverend Wendy Miller Olapade

Church Administrator: Diane Petrelis

Deacon of the Month: Brenda Briggs

Clerk: TBD

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