

Our Mission

By God's Grace, West Parish Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, is committed to Nurturing and Celebrating God's Love in our lives, in the Church Family, in the Community and in the world

November, 2022 newsletter

Steeple View

West Parish Congregational Church

United Church of Christ



Pastor's Perspective

As I write this, I am preparing myself for the fact that my team, the Philadelphia Phillies, are getting ready to play in the World Series for the 6th time in my lifetime. My dad, who was a huge Phillies fan and who passed that fandom on to me and my brothers, would have loved this. So, in a way, it is bittersweet.

Sitting through these postseason games has really put me through the wringer – they are so tense and nerve-wracking to watch! I know that my blood pressure has been through the roof (OK, maybe I'm taking the games too seriously!). But I think, in many ways, all of us are feeling rather tense and fearful these days, especially as we near another election.

Recently, I was sent a devotional by Rev. Tara Humphries, a UUA pastor in Portland, about what to do with fear. I share portions of it with you now: *Be not afraid. Do not fear. What's that all about? How would we NOT be afraid in this world? Well, as a character in the biblical stories, God would say - have faith in ME! I got your back! But it's a bit more complicated than that. We as Unitarian Universalists have many different understandings of faith, of scripture, and of God. So what, then, do we do with fear?*

When I was training as a hospital chaplain at a level 1 trauma center, I spent long days and nights with people facing serious illness, dealing with crises, and preparing for death. Many of them were not religious. Yet I still offered to say a prayer or share a reading when I sensed they were looking for comfort. I was shocked by the number of patients who asked me to read the 23rd Psalm. So many that I had it memorized by the end of my time there.

Even though I was weary of biblical language at the time (the number of people telling my patients that everything happens for a reason left a bitter taste in my mouth...), I did fall in love with Psalm 23. And the funny thing is, the reason I find it comforting is that although the psalmist writes "I will fear no evil", I actually find that it invites me to accept my fear. Not get rid of it.



Perhaps what our Unitarian Universalist faith offers us is not a God who takes our fear away, but a community where we can bring our fear and still be accepted. Still be cherished. Still belong. Perhaps it is not God's rod and staff that comfort, but those metaphorical ones in the hands of those we see on Sunday mornings. Those who send us cards and drop off soup. Who offer us a moment to check in before the meeting starts.

What she writes about her UUA tradition and church is so very true for us as well. "No matter who you are and where you are on life's journey...you are welcome here." And we truly live that out in so many ways.

As we continue to navigate our way through these complex and often fearful times, we are being called to look again at the question of "who are we as a church and what are we being called to do?" We've spent time on those questions in a spring retreat, a "What if?" exercise in church, and many conversations in groups and committees. Now, we will have a chance to really delve into these questions at an **all-church retreat on Saturday, November 12th, from 1-4 PM** at the church. Our retreat leader will be Karen Kilty, a spiritual director, retreat and yoga leader and faith formation educator who is a graduate of the Soul of Leadership program, through Executive Soul and the Shalem Institute. I hope that as many of you as possible will be able to join us for this important retreat as we listen for how God is calling us in this new time!

May God be with you and may you know God's hope and peace in new ways in this and every season.
Tim

Christmas Fair and Tea planned for December



After two years with alternative Christmas Tea events, from Christmas in a Bag to Christmas in a Bag plus crafts and tiny treasures, the Christmas Fair and Tea is going to happen. It is such a great tradition for our church and a gift to our community. The Christmas Fair and Tea is scheduled for Saturday December 3 from 1 – 4 PM.

This is an all hands on deck as the Fair is complicated. Sharon Lyon and Ellen Marshall are in charge of the tea portion (upstairs). Diane York and Gretchen Motts are in charge of the food table downstairs including cookies in a bag. We will not have a traditional cookie walk. Lynn Mason and the World Service Committee are in charge

of the tiny treasures. Linda Davis and Melinda Remington are in charge of the crafts table. And the men are in charge of set up and decorations.

Volunteers are needed on Wednesday for set up and church decorating, Thursday at home baking, and Friday for the final set up. Naturally we will need volunteers for Saturday, the day of the fair. And lest we forget, it isn't over until the clean-up is done.

Please contact any of the above people to offer to help or put your name down on the sign up on the sheets in the chapel.

Christian Education

Our Christian Education program is off and running. We haven't seen a lot of children or youth in worship yet this fall, but the fall tends to be notoriously busy for families, and the Covid pandemic really shifted a lot of schedules and routines for individuals as well as families. So it's going to take a bit of rethinking, and creative alternatives to find a way to bring faith formation to our young families and reconnect them to the larger church community. But we're on it!

We were very glad to see several families at our first potluck this season, which happened at the end of September. The theme of that potluck was "What did you do over the summer that you want to share?" Many, many people spoke, including all of the children who were present, and it was a wonderful and warm inter-generational event. Tim, the Christian education committee, and I are all hoping for many more inter-generational times of faith formation and fellowship.

Our upcoming events are following:

November 4, Friday – after school 2:45-4:30 at church - Youth group for ages fourth grade through eighth grade – this will be our first youth group gathering since May, and it'll be a time to share food and fellowship, and talk about what we might like to do with our youth group time; it'll also be a chance for the children and youth to get to know each other and the grown-ups present, play some games, and make Christmas ornaments for the Christmas fair with Melinda Remington! We are encouraging all of the youth to bring a friend along.

November 18 or 20th (final date will be known soon!) 6-7:30 pm – – a full church potluck, with a Theme of "You are the light of the world." We will have a lantern walk outside, time to talk about what being the light of the world means to us, food to enjoy together, and other light-themed activities for those who aren't comfortable walking in the dark with a lantern. (Photo from last year)



December 3 – this is of course the afternoon of the Christmas Fair 1 - 4 PM, and we will have some Christmas ornaments to sell that the youth have created with Melinda; we have also invited youth and families to help at the fair selling crafts or tiny treasures, or helping to clean up, etc.

December 9, Friday - after school 2:45-4:30 PM – youth group gathering – we will spend time around the theme of advent, and we will be creating a garland of fresh greens that will become our advent spiral for the next week's full-church event.

December 16 – full church potluck and our second annual Advent Spiral 6-7:30 PM - This meditative walk was a beautiful time, introduced and led last year by Jenn Doyle and her two students in the WPC school. This year the CE committee as a whole is taking this project on, and those in our youth group will be setting up the spiral and helping to guide us all in it. There will of course be food and fellowship to share that evening as well - it's a potluck after all!

On a personal note, it's wonderful to be back working with the Christian education committee, and the families of the church. My three month leave of absence was very fruitful and I'm glad to be back with my church community.

We are also looking for some assistance with little ones when families come to services. If you are interested in help out occasionally Let Jim or Patricia know. Feel free to reach out to Jim Chandler or myself with thoughts, ideas, questions, or a desire to volunteer to help our children, youth, and families in any way.

Blessings to you all,
Patricia

Welcome to our new Administrative Assistant

Kathy McMahon would love to get to know you. This is what she says about herself.

"I am originally from Massachusetts, I moved to Maine seven years ago after commuting back and forth for many years. When my daughters went off to college, I jumped at the opportunity to permanently move up here. I grew up in a large family, I am an only girl with five brothers. I have worked in many fields over the years, from retail, to accounting and bookkeeping, investments, fundraising consulting, human resources, compliance and photography.



I hope my past experience will be useful working here for the Church. I love to spend time with my dog, paddleboard, kayak, hike, play my guitar, read and practice my photography, to name a few hobbies.

I will be working from 9-4 on Tuesdays and Fridays. If I am not in the office and you need to reach me, please feel free to call or text me on my cell, (207) 418-7297. You may also email me at kmcmahon.wpcc@gmail.com

Giving Sunday November 27

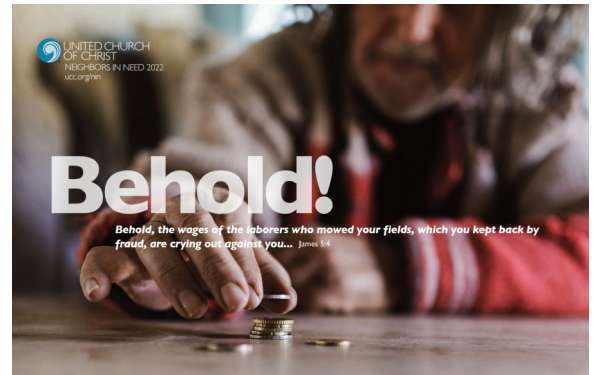
Very soon you will be receiving a pledge form and accompanying letter from your Stewardship Committee asking you to pledge dollars to meet church expenses in 2023.

The trustees and the stewardship committee have set a goal of \$85,000 in pledges to meet next year's needs. We recognize that it is a hard time to ask for money as our economy struggles, but without resources we cannot provide the basic services - utilities, building upkeep, and staff salaries from which our spiritual support and work in the community is based.

As you make a decision about how much to give, we will be asking you to ponder two questions. "What are the elements of church life that are essential to you?" and "What motivates you to give of your time and resources to the church?" Please return your pledge by Nov. 27 which is Giving Sunday.

Love Bowl for November is Neighbors in Need

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry(CAIM). Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants.



The 2022 theme is "Behold!" focusing on economic justice. Our church is collecting Neighbors in Need offering throughout the month of November, as our Love Bowl offering.

Flower List for November

November 13	Steve Lovejoy in memory of his mother Marion
November 20	Marshalls in memory of Art's mom
November 27	Melody Bonnema

Annual Conference Resolution

The Maine Conference Annual Meeting met virtually and adopted several budgetary items for the ongoing work of the Maine Conference UCC. The theme for the conference was “Where the River Flows, Life will Flourish.”

Prayerfully the group adopted the resolution to support Wabanaki Nations and **Tribal Sovereignty** in Maine: A Call for the Maine Conference UCC to Support the Sovereignty of Wabanaki Nations. This report by the 2020 State of Maine Task Force recommended changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement specifically to support land and water rights and tribal sovereignty.

In addition the Conference gave thanks to Rev. Jonna Jenson, Transitional Conference Minister; and Rev. Ron Beard, head of the Maine School of Ministry; and welcomed new Conference Minister Rev. Marisa Laviola, who was called at the special conference meeting in August.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

November 1 – Liz Smith	November 11 – Ivan Cooper
November 1 – Wendy Youmans	November 13 – Hannah Pierce
November 7– Laura and Dan Johnson	November 19 – Lisa Maliska
November 7– Peggy Wight	November 30 – Amy Scott
November 9 – Andee Alford	

Equal Exchange Coffee, etc.

The next coffee order will be Sunday, November 13. Each cup of coffee is drinking a Cup of Justice for local small farmers. And now you can bite into that delicious chocolate and thank the small cocoa grower for the rich chocolate flavor.



And good news for you chocolate lovers, I can take chocolate orders this month. Just email Jane with your coffee, tea or chocolate order.

Jane will let you know the amount for your order. Checks can be made out to the church with coffee in the memo line.

Calendar of events

- Tuesday, November 1 - All Saints Day
Prayer Group at 8:45 AM at church/on ZOOM
- Wednesday, November 2 - Men's Breakfast at 8 AM at church/on ZOOM
Session # 2 of "Understanding Christian Nationalism" study
on ZOOM, 4-5:30 PM
- Friday, November 4 - Middle School Youth Gathering at Church, 2:45-4:30 PM
- Sunday, November 6 - Worship with Communion at 10 AM at church/live streaming
- Tuesday, November 8 - Election Day
Prayer Group at 8:45 AM at church/on ZOOM
Trustees at 6:30 PM on ZOOM
- Wednesday, November 9 - Christian Education Committee at 12 PM on ZOOM
Session # 3 of "Understanding Christian Nationalism" on ZOOM, 4-5:30 PM
- Thursday, November 10 - Pastoral Relations Meeting, 1 PM
Choir rehearsal 7 PM
- Saturday, November 12 - All Church Retreat, 1-4 PM at church
- Sunday, November 13 - Worship at 10 AM at church/live streaming on YouTube Live
Coffee and chocolate orders due
- Tuesday, November 15 - Prayer Group at 8:45 AM at church/on ZOOM
Deacons at 10 AM at church/on ZOOM
Music Committee at 7 PM on ZOOM
- Wednesday, November 16 - World Service Committee at 3 PM at church/on ZOOM
CE Potluck/Lantern Walk (either Friday Nov. 18 or Sunday Nov. 20, tbd)
- Sunday, November 20 - Worship at 10 AM at church/live streaming on YouTube Live
- Tuesday, November 22 - Prayer Group at 8:45 AM at church/on ZOOM
- Thursday, November 24 - Happy Thanksgiving!
- Sunday, November 27 - Worship at 10 AM at church/live streaming on YouTube Live
- Tuesday, November 29 - Prayer Group at 8:45 AM at church/on ZOOM
- Wednesday, November 30 - Set-up for Christmas Fair/Tea and Sanctuary 9 AM



Book Group

We haven't met this fall, taking a pause to reflect on how we do book group, what we like and what is missing. I have heard from several saying they really miss the coziness and fellowship of meeting in people's homes.

Yes, I miss this as well but we also need to be respectful of COVID and how many people are getting it now, even when boosted.

Let's meet in person at church Tuesday, December 6 at 7 PM. we can spread out at church and use the filters. I am suggesting each of us bring a favorite Christmas poem or story to share. If you want to bring snacks, go ahead.

And bring your ideas about going forward regarding book group. I am looking for someone to take over the management of the group.