



Concern In Action
Union Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
East Walpole, MA

September 2019



Pastor's Message

“God alone holds the secret of a charity by which we can love others not only as we love ourselves, but as God loves them. The beginning of this love is the will to let those we love be perfectly themselves... If in loving them we do not love what they are, but only their potential likeness to ourselves, then we do not love them: we love only the reflection of ourselves we find in them.

Can this be charity?”

—Thomas Merton

Ubi Caritas

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We are officially entering the “getting to know you season” in earnest. September is a month when children and educators are getting back into the classroom, when vacation season winds down and “activities” wind up. It is both an exciting and daunting time; meeting new people is funny that way. Of course, there will also be plenty of friendships renewed after a summer away, picking up right where they left off. But the challenge of being surrounded by new people is part of what makes the “back to school” season so significant for many.

Of course, this is also the “back to church” season as well (or so I’ve been told). I’ve long been familiar with the tendency of church attendance to dwindle a bit in the summer months; when I moved to Massachusetts, however, I learned that summers away is sacrosanct for many churchgoers! I even heard of some churches that close their doors for a few weeks in July and August, just to make sure the time-honored tradition of summer vacationing doesn’t hurt the churches’ bottom line.

Here at Union, we’ve enjoyed a summer that was highlighted with two new beginnings: a new pastor (that’s me!) and a new baptism. Our chapel has been more and less full on Sunday mornings, but no matter how many are gathered, smiles, laughter, songs, and prayers have been plentiful. As Christ said, it only takes two or three gathered to “have church”. By coming together to tend these blessed ties of compassion and faith each week, we are ensuring that

whoever comes through our doors in the coming weeks, they will know that God is among us. As the words of the ancient Gregorian Chant remind us: *Ubi Caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*—“where charity and love prevail, God is there.”

Even with the relative calm around Union these last few weeks, there has been a steady simmer of activity bubbling just beneath the surface. That quiet energy is the charity and love of this congregation in action, supporting one another week in and week out, preparing with anticipation the arrival of a new season in the life of the church. Agendas have been set, worship services have been planned, Sunday school teachers have been recruited, and preparations for the Apple Harvest fair are all well underway. Even as we look forward to meeting and greeting, we know that all that we do rests upon the grace of God, which is already a well-tended trust here at Union.

So let us enter this “getting to know you season” heeding the advice of Thomas Merton not to seek to see ourselves in others, but to appreciate and care for them as we find them: unique, beloved creations of God. For me, the next few weeks will involve seeing 147 new faces in classrooms at UMass Lowell and trying to put names to them as quickly as possible. It will also involve seeing new faces in the pews on Sunday mornings, as well as a whole host of our neighbors and community members at the Apple Harvest Fair. I look forward to all these chances, as I hope you do, to live out the commandment of Christ to love our neighbors. For where there is love and charity, there shines the light of God in the world.

Your Pastor,

Rev. Dr. Aaron P. Shepherd



Rally Day



Come one, come all! Rally Day breakfast will be held September 8th at 8:45 a.m. Children and adults are invited.

Children are encouraged to bring backpacks and/or sports equipment for a blessing during the service with Rev. Shepherd.

So come hungry and bring friends and family. We promise to fill your belly and give you a great start to the new year!



Calling all Kids/Youth: Be an Acolyte!

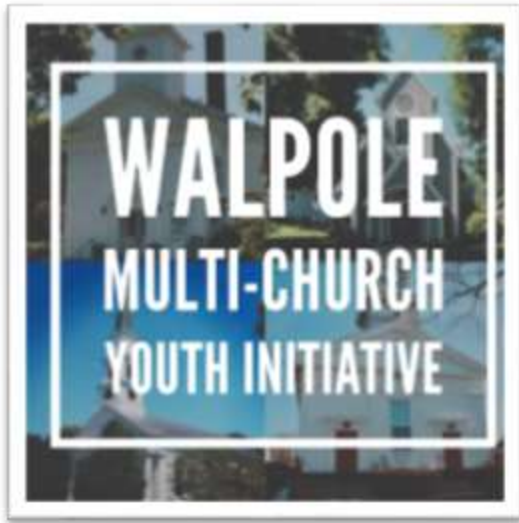
Like to play with fire? How about making a lot of noise? Being the center of attention? Being a part of a team? Then you should sign up to be an Acolyte!

What the heck is an acolyte? "Acolyte" is an ancient word that means "helper." Since the beginning of the Christian church, acolytes have helped make worship a special experience for everyone. They traditionally wear a special robe too, kind of like the pastor and the choir, so everyone knows they're important!

In our church, acolytes help in a few ways. First, they get to ring the church's big bell to announce the beginning of the service. Then they help by carrying a candle lighter to the front of the church and lighting the candles on the table with the big silver cross. This symbolizes the light of Christ coming into our sanctuary. At the end of service, they put out the candles, and carry the light out of the sanctuary. In between, you can participate in the service and Sunday school as usual.

That sounds complicated! What if I mess up? Don't worry: this is **church**, where we remember Jesus's teaching to love one another, encourage one another, and forgive one another for mistakes we make. Pastor Shepherd and others will be able to help you if you're not sure where to go or what to do. Once you get the hang of it, being an acolyte is actually pretty easy.

If you're interested or curious about being an acolyte, you or your parent can sign you up for a Sunday on the sign-up sheet in the Narthex. Any questions about the acolyte program can be directed to Pastor Shepherd.



Walpole Multi-Church Youth Initiative – Youth Group Launches October 6th!

Parents and middle- and high-school-aged young folks: Your new youth group is here! Our multi-church youth group for 6th-9th/10th graders (made up of young people from Union Congregational, United Congregational, Epiphany Episcopal, and South Walpole Methodist Churches) will meet for the first time on **Sunday, October 6th, at 5 pm at the Epiphany Parish hall** (62 Front Street in Walpole). The idea to combine forces to build a new relational ministry for young people in our community has been in the works for a few months now, and is just about ready to become a reality.

Union was well-represented by a couple of members and Pastor Shepherd at the Interest Meeting on August 18th, where there was a robust discussion of the goals, mission, and logistics of this new endeavor. A few highlights:

- As a “Multi-Church” Youth Group, the focus of this program is “relational ministry”: building a sense of community and friendship among young people who are, in this day and age, increasingly isolated, over-programmed, and under-churched. Rather than competing with other churches to get numbers, the young people and organizers will be collaborating to build something new and fairly unique in youth ministry: a place where groups from different Christian traditions can interact and be changed by one another. This youth group is not meant to be another “activity” on a teen or tween’s to-do list, but a place where they can connect with other people their age in a caring, compassionate community that is connected and grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The group will be Open and Affirming, meaning no one will be excluded or made to feel unwelcome because of their race, class, gender identity and expression, or sexual orientation.
- Each week of the month, the group’s activities will take a different form. The first and third Sundays of the month will be traditional “youth group” meetings at Epiphany Parish, with fun, games, crafts, and a time to talk together about what’s on the members’ hearts. The content of these meetings will be planned by the four clergy, who will rotate in leading different meetings on topics like stress, friendship, spiritual practices, etc. On the second Sunday of the month, the focus is on a service project, which may be completed at Epiphany or somewhere in the community. On the fourth Sunday of the month, the youth

group will have a fellowship activity (bowling, ice skating, flag football in Bird Park, etc.). In all of these different activities, the goal is to build relationships between the youth, clergy, and volunteers.

- The meetings and activities will be led by the clergy of the four participating churches, as well as two to three committed non-parent “Youth Lay Ministers.” So far one person has committed to the role of Youth Lay Minister: we are still looking for more volunteers who commit to being at all meetings on the first and third Sundays for at least the first five months of the program, as well as any of the other events they can come to. Parent and non-parent volunteers who would like to serve as chaperones for service projects and fellowship activities should contact Pastor Shepherd.
- While the four pastors of the participating churches will be doing the program planning, there will also be input from a parent advisory board, and a youth advisory board (made up of the older members of the group) to make sure that this ministry is serving the needs of all its various constituencies.
- The group’s “pizza budget” and activities will be financed collectively by the four participating churches, and will start out relatively small. Down the road, if the program gets some traction, we hope to hire a ten-hour-per-week Youth Minister specifically for this program. At this point, the best way to support the program is by **showing up!** The biggest question that remains for the organizers is: *who’s going to come?*

If this sounds like something you want to be a part of, set a reminder now for October 6th at 5 pm in your calendar. Those who are interested in volunteering for specific roles/dates in the program should contact Pastor Shepherd. If you have ideas for service projects or fellowship activities, please share them! And if you’d like more information about the program, you can also talk to Pastor Shepherd

A Note from Christian Education Committee



Another fall is here and with it, the beginning of Sunday school, or as some call it, Faith Formation, on Rally Day, Sunday, September 8th.

This year we will be having two classes, not due to the masses of children, (we wish!) but rather to their ages. We plan to have a group of sixth grade and older and a class of kindergarten through fifth grade. Due to the paucity of teacher volunteers, we are forced to have one teacher in each room, keeping the

door open, and having a “hallway helper” as a set of hands to accompany a learner to the restroom, get extra supplies, etc. Certainly we would love to hear from you if you would like to

volunteer for either of these positions. As we all know, you learn a lot more teaching. We continue to use the curriculum titled Deep Blue, a one-room/multi-aged resource for the younger class and a variation for “Tweens called Submerge.

In an attempt to integrate the children into worship a little more, we will be trying a new timing for Sunday school for the next several weeks. We will be having all children participate in the service until the “Time for All Ages,” at which point they will go to their Sunday school rooms. Children will then rejoin the congregation during the offering, in order to participate in the remainder of the Service, (including Communion, when applicable). We will also be seeking more ways to integrate young people into worship leadership as acolytes and lay readers. Getting used to these changes may take some time, so please be patient! Any feedback should be directed to Pastor Shepherd, Margie Shirosky, or Laurie Kerns.

Our Lent book discussion was well received, we read and discussed both Mitch Albom’s *Have a Little Faith* and Elie Weisel’s *Night*. We would like to offer another opportunity for discussion, sharing, learning and fellowship and plan to have a group beginning by September 26th or October 3rd. This would run six to eight weeks, until Advent, when we all get extra busy with the holidays. We have found three DVD based studies entitled Miracles of Jesus, Parables of Jesus and Jesus’ Forgiveness. If you are interested, please contact Margie Shirosky or Laurie Kerns with your interest and preference of subject.

Summer Mission Recap



work at were just a few houses away.

It was a great week. We had a snag or two but that always happens. The first was before we left. The Maine Ministry had double-booked groups coming in for the week. There was another church from upstate NY and us. They received the housing at the Ministry, and we received the parsonage in the Town of Kingfield, which turned out to be a good thing, as the two sites we were to

We had a small group this year (12); five from Union and seven from South Walpole

One job was to scrape and paint the lower half of a house and repair the screens in all the windows. This was not an easy task as the screens could not be taken out of the windows, but we got it done. The crew coming in the following week was to paint the top half. The house’s crawl space also had exposed styrofoam which needed to be covered with plywood, including a drip edge. In addition, wood trim needed to be replaced around an access door to another crawl space where bees lived. All this carpentry work then needed to be painted.

The other house was a bit of everything: repairing, scraping and painting a ramp, re-glazing two windows, blocking up two other windows and replacing a kitchen faucet.

One nice thing about having the work sites very close is we all came back to the parsonage for lunch. The weather was good, we had one early day of rain on Tuesday. We couldn't paint or do other work, so we all headed back to the Ministry to work there. We met up with the other group from NY and did some sorting of school supplies and other small jobs. In the meantime, Ken and Joe went off to get supplies so they could get back to work on our sites in the afternoon.

We had vespers after supper each night. One time we hiked down to the river, after which one of the boys decided he was going to enjoy the water and took a dip. Another night we drove up to Ira Mountain, which we have gone to in the past, to watch the sun set, and this time we had an Agape meal. Two other enjoyable times were one day for lunch we went to the Wire Bridge, which is a local swimming hole. Unfortunately, the water in the river has receded some since we were there two years ago. I am not sure if Maine hasn't had much rain or the water is being held back further upstream. The other time was Wednesday evening when the Ministry holds a cookout for the workers, staff and clients of the week. We had an enjoyable evening meeting others, including the group from New York. They were quite impressed we had matching T-shirts.

This is the first time we finished the week early. We were done by lunchtime Friday. We cleaned the parsonage and most of us left by two. In the past, we stayed through Friday night and left sometime mid-morning on Saturday.

We want to thank you for the prayers and treats you gave us.

Super Saturday, October 5, 2019

Several folks will be attending Super Saturday, October 5th. It is an invigorating day of workshops, shopping and worship for UCC churches in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. You can find a list of workshops offered at the UCCMA website. Please speak with Aaron if you would like to give Super Saturday a try.

This year attendees are asked to bring items which will fill hygiene kits for Church World Service. This way everyone in the congregation can participate whether or not you are able to go. There will be collection baskets by the office and by the Sanctuary during the weeks before the event.

Please consider donating some of these items:

Washcloth

Hand towel (16x32)

Fingernail or toenail clipper, out of package

Bath size bar of soap

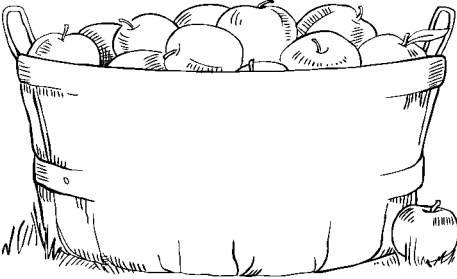
Toothbrush in package

Ten standard size Band-aids

Thank you so much for your help



Apple Harvest Fair



Some things you can do to get ready for the Fair:

1. Make sure your calendar is marked to be at the fair September 14th.
2. Let Michael Keimig (mkeimig@gmail.com) know where you'd like to volunteer this year.
3. Reach out to friends, children and grandchildren about volunteering.



Please bring in garden veggies, homemade jams and jellies, and any country store type items for the Union Country Store at the Apple Harvest Fair. Thank you!!!



Each month we are emphasizing a particular item, for our food collection. For **September**, we are requesting **personal items such as shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, shaving items, toothpaste, toothbrushes, liquid soap etc.** Thank you

Prayer Circle



If you have a prayer request, you are invited to contact Pam Doty at 508-660-1063 or email her at alan.doty@comcast.net.

She will pass on the request to the UCC Prayer Circle. All prayer requests are kept confidential. Please pray every morning between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m.



3	Alan Doty	18	Sophia Wassel (08)
6	Dyan MacLean	26	Crosby MacLean (97)
7	Barbara Talmade Keimig	29	Bill Wassel
8	Sarah Feeley (99)	30	Paul Doolan
15	Mia Damaso (05)		
	Erica Doolan		

ANNIVERSARIES

September 10, 1989	Karen and Ron Lichtenstein
September 14, 1962	Peter and Phyllis Nixon

SEP2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07
10:15 a.m. Service/Chapel		7:30 p.m. Cabinet Meeting		7:00 p.m. Diaconate Meeting			
	08	09	10	11	12	13	14
10:15 a.m. Service/Sanctuary Rally Day Communion							10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Apple Harvest Fair
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
10:15 a.m. Service/ Sanctuary							
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
10:15 a.m. Service/ Sanctuary							
	29	30					
10:15 a.m. Service/ Sanctuary							