



The United Congregational Church of Holyoke
An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ
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OCTOBER 2019



UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF HOLYOKE
TOWERS
N E W S L E T T E R



A boy from Cambridge, Massachusetts was a poor student and often got himself into trouble. He wrote: "During freshman year, I did nothing. During Sophomore year, I did nothing. During Junior year, I did nothing, and during Senior year, I have thus far done nothing in the way of college studies." Almost two centuries later, however, James Russell Lowell is recognized as a notable American poet. His verse is embedded in one of the great hymns of the 19th Century, "Once to Every Soul and Nation:"

*New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth;*

Lowell confounded the predictions of the Harvard faculty. He became a published poet, graduated from the Harvard Law School, became a Harvard professor, and served his country as ambassador to the Court of St. James. A shaky passage in one part of his life did not determine his achievement later. That's an important lesson for any of us who have experienced difficult passages.

By some measurements, the protestant churches of New England are experiencing a shaky passage. A recent study by the Barna Group revealed that Holyoke is, by far, the LEAST "churched" city (along with Springfield) in the entire nation! Such distinction! We may remember fuller pews and active youth groups – and long for their return. When we fix our gaze on the past, the barriers are great. But the past is not the end of the story.

"New occasions teach new duties;" this is a key foundation upon which the "New Beginnings/Church Vitality" program stands. We are looking toward a new future. Before we know where we are headed, however, we may ask about what "ancient good" has time made "uncouth?" Is it our style of worship? Our pattern of belief? Our physical and financial assets? I don't think any of these by themselves are the biggest challenge. I think it may also have to do with our ability to communicate hope within the wider community.

James Russell Lowell may have been a lazy troublemaker at one stage of his life, but he didn't allow himself to dig a hole in which to hide. Instead, he moved forward and wrote "They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth."

This United Congregational Church of Holyoke has genius buried within its heart and soul. We have allowed it to rise from time to time – and great things have happened. Our challenge with the New Beginnings/ Church Vitality program is to see the road ahead as filled with *new occasions teaching new duties*. There is great hope in our mission statement: we are "Inspiring Community Toward Justice, Peace and Creativity." In how many new ways can we build that vision?

Summer is over; let's "upward, still, and onward!"

Chuck

9am Seekers Group

New Encounter with Spirit. The study and discussion of the new book, *The Universal Christ* by Richard Rohr, begins on September 29, at 9:00am in Parlor A. Come join the Seekers Class to discover the everyday miracles through the experiences of the indwelling of the Divine Presence, the Universal Christ. The author promises to have us know "How a forgotten reality can change everything we see, hope for, and believe." He challenges us to acknowledge that "our understandings have been limited by culture, religious debate and the human tendency to put ourselves in the center." Instead, we can learn to recognize the Creator's presence all around us in everyone we meet. This will make for an exciting spiritual journey for those who are courageous, visionary and trusting in God-ness. I anticipate it to be a blessing to all. Discussion leader, Muriel Griffin

Rebekah's Closet Book Drive

Give the gift of reading!



Rebekah's Closet Book Drive

Rebekah's Closet is requesting donations of **New Children's Hard Board Books.** These books are sturdier, especially designed for infants and toddlers. Children learn the love of reading at an early age if they are provided with the books to enjoy.



Rebekah's Closet is in need of **NEW HARD BOARD BOOKS.** Books create warm emotional bonds between caregivers and kids when they read books together. So while you're out Christmas Shopping, please consider purchasing a couple Hard Board books to donate. Your contribution is greatly appreciated by the many parents who visit Rebekah's Closet for assistance each month.

What's Happening?

Roast Pork Dinner tickets still available.



Roast Pork Dinner



The dinner consists of Roast Pork, mashed potatoes, butternut squash, homemade applesauce, rolls & butter, homemade apple crisp, coffee and tea.

Saturday, Oct. 19, 2019
Doors open at 5:00pm
Dinner served at 6:00pm

TICKET \$12.00pp.

Please see Karlene Shea for tickets or call the church office for reservations.
 United Congregational Church of Holyoke
 300 Appleton Street
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 Phone: (413) 532-1483

BAKE SALE

There will be a bake sale, & 50/50 raffle. All proceeds will benefit Rebekah's Closet, and the Fellowship Committee for awarding college scholarships.

50/50 RAFFLE

Pizza, Film & Talk Thurs., Oct. 10 @ 5:30pm



Thursday, October 10th
 5:30pm
Pizza, Film, & Talk
 Donations welcomed for the pizza.

Community Meal & Family Movie Night

Join us on Friday, Oct., 11th for our Free Community Meal. Dinner is served at 5:00 pm and the family movie will start at 6:00pm. Bring a neighbor or a friend.



Offering of Letters

10 am, Sunday, Oct. 13

Worship/Brunch in the Parlors



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Want to do something important? Be part of a letter-writing campaign to reduce world hunger. Paper and writing tools will be available.

As people of faith, we are called to care for one another and speak out for those in need. Bread for the World's 2019 Offering of Letters: Better Nutrition, Better Tomorrow urges our government to accelerate progress toward ending hunger by increasing funding for global child-nutrition programs.

When I Was Completely Satisfied

My completely satisfying day was Saturday, September 28, 2019. I was in Westfield, MA at the Genesis Spiritual Retreat Center. The weather, from 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., ranged from upper 60's to 82. The sun was shining brightly and there was welcoming shade for walking among the well-cared-for grounds. I loved the giant evergreens and the deciduous trees of the many kinds and colors.

We were a group of eleven people from UCCH, The United Congregational Church of Holyoke, having a Spiritual Retreat with the theme: The Cup of Our Life. We each had brought a cup that had some special meaning for us. We held our cups as we told stories of our lives, and the reasons why we had chosen them. There were stories of work, of travel, of grandmothers, of childhood fun, happy occasions, and of life's purpose. These were expressions of profound experiences as well as of treasured memories.

We had meditation exercises and shared about the filling and the emptying of our cups. We talked of times of joy and sorrow and recognized the two as the way of life and wholeness. We shared the times when our cups held blessings being received and being given. We interjected free times between meditations for visiting, art activities, singing, dancing, journaling, walking the labyrinth, quiet walking and with companions to enjoy the trees and gardens. The cup became the symbol of our lives.

We felt the wonder of silence and solitude. In the leaving of our daily work and concerns, we found space for spiritual renewal. Drinking from the cup was refreshing and renewing. Sally had decorated a talking stick beads, feathers and seed to move the conversations from one to another.

I especially appreciated the sharing times when I received new ways of seeing things. There was laughter, nods and silence as we talked of the ways we grow spiritually. In the meditation of Joy and Sorrow, I felt the closeness and love of one another. Participants spoke words of thanks to each other for the gifts their lives bring. I can say with David, "My cup overflows."

The two meals served from the kitchen included roast pork, baked potatoes, green peas (maybe grown there), salad, whole wheat breads, and carrot cake for our noon meal. Soup, salads, sandwiches and ice-cream satisfied our evening meal. Snacks of cupcakes and chocolate cookies with coffee and tea added to delight of our day.

This was a day when I can say that I was completely satisfied. I had worked with Sally for over two months to prepare for this day. I led the meditations and she created and led the activities. Paula, Myra and Tim read poetry, led songs, dance, art and prayers. When any issues of concern showed up, they were quickly and peacefully handled. Everyone and everything cooperated and enriched the day's experiences. Wow, all of it was good, very good.

Muriel C. Griffin, Sept. 30, 2019



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SECOND OFFERINGS

First Sunday Margaret’s Pantry

Please bring non-perishable foods OR monetary donations for Holyoke’s food pantry.

Third Sunday Rebekah’s Closet

Please bring diapers, wipes, OR monetary donations to assist young Holyoke families.

Pastoral Team’s Phone Numbers & Emails

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Birthday Wishes

10/9 Edie Beal

10/9 Kathy Shea

10/10 Martha May

10/ 10 Roger Thouin

10/12 Russell Slocomb

Anniversary Wishes

10/14 Kathy & Paul Shea