

An Invitation To Tell the *Stories of Peace*

from the Rev. David Pattee, pastor

The PUCC Moderators join me in asking all members of our church to participate in telling the ***Stories of Peace***, your stories of creative difference and common cause through which we would build up the community of faith and its witness to the love of God in whom we are One. Specifically, we are asking you to join one of the ***Peace Pods*** that will meet once a week for an hour and a half, three consecutive weeks in the month of May. Online registration starts next Thursday. The link will appear on our website, www.PeaceUnited.org, and be sent to you in next week's e-newsletter.

From the beginning, Christian community has been built around the telling of stories: stories of hope and disappointment, setback and success, hurt and healing, weaving into the story of our faith that God's love redeems all things. Coming together in Christian community to offer our experience and to receive in good faith the stories of others, we invite the guidance of God's Holy Spirit leading us toward justice and peace. With all the upheaval in this church and our world over the last several years, creating sacred space for such sharing has been difficult. Recent discussion of mission and budget priorities, the Housing Implementation Project, when and how to restart in-person worship services, and a variety of other issues have brought to my attention unsettled feelings and frustrations that probably have been simmering among our members for a long time. Right now, entering a new season of life with Peace United Church, we have a blessed opportunity to share in good faith the stories that we bring to this moment, to hold them lovingly in the light, and to pray together for the leading of God's Holy Spirit.

Peace Pods will be scheduled midday, afternoon and evening throughout the week, so you'll have a chance to find a time that works for you. It looks like we'll be able to have a good number of the daytime groups meet in person here on the church campus; the rest will be on Zoom. *Peace Pods* will begin the week of May 9 and continue through May 29.

The aim of the *Peace Pods* is to create a sacred space of trust for sharing your *Stories of Peace* within the pod and with the wider congregation, which means that each participant and the group as a whole will be asked to offer and receive, listen and tell. Here's how it goes...

- Each *Peace Pod* will have a trained facilitator and gatherings will begin and end with prayer, engaging the deepest meanings of our lives and exploring our connection with each other in relationship with God.
- The **first gathering** focuses on getting acquainted, building trust, reviewing and owning a covenant that will guide your time together. (You'll receive a draft Covenant when you register.)
- The **second gathering** builds on the first, devoting nearly all of its time to sharing *Stories of Peace*. Each participant will be encouraged to share a story, speaking in the first person, not making an argument but offering a meaningful experience of Peace United Church of Christ. All participants will be committed to receiving what is shared and honoring the person who shares it. (*Ten Commandments for Good Listening* will be sent to you after registration.)

- The **third gathering** of your pod will build on what has gone before, inviting and encouraging participants to offer a *Prayer for Peace*. All prayers will be received with respect for the person who offers it. Prayers which elicit an “Amen” from the group, a consensus response of “me too,” may be recorded in writing to share with the whole congregation. (You’ll get lots of guidance and encouragement on prayer through your *Peace Pod* facilitator.)
- Any *Prayer for Peace* coming from a *Peace Pod* to be shared with the whole congregation will be delivered to Pastor Dave and posted on a *Peace Prayer Wall* in the sanctuary narthex. These prayers will be incorporated into the Prayers of the Church in Sunday worship.
- At the end of May, all prayers posted on the wall will be collected in a document that is delivered to the church council and to PUCC’s pastoral care team for further consideration.

Be sure to check next weeks e-newsletter for more information and for the registration link.