



October 16, 2016

Israel—Palestine and the PSEC - Rev. Worley, Conference Minister

I've just returned from eight days in Jerusalem as a pilgrim to holy sites and a tourist to war torn lands. The purpose of the trip was to become more familiar with the dynamics of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Images of Cain killing Able kept coming to mind as I walked through towns and refugee camps in and around the West Bank. The adults of my growing up years would often express their hopelessness for peace in the Middle East by saying, "Those people have been killing each other for 5,000 years. No need for us to get involved."

But we (Americans) are involved. Congress passed a \$38 billion aid package to Israel on the same day I listened to a Palestinian journalist lament the impossibility of peace. The United Church of Christ has called all settings of the church to participate in the BDS (boycott, divestment and sanction) movement to boycott US companies whose businesses profit from the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The problems of the Middle East may be a long way from the challenges of living in Southeast Pennsylvania but that does not keep many of us from harboring strong opinions about who is to blame and what changes are required for peace.

Two of most interesting change agents I met were business leaders Eyal Waldman, CEO of Mellanox Technologies (an Israeli) and Bashar Masri, President and CEO of Massar International (a Palestinian). Both hold the animosities that most Israelis and Palestinian's have for each other and both are hampered by the policies and practices that keep their respective governments stuck. But they have found creative and entrepreneurial work arounds to build enterprises that serve the needs of the global community—Israeli's and Palestinians included. Eyal and Bashar are not waiting for political and economic stability so they can do business. They are doing business and creating economic stability—I am anxious to see what political stability might follow.

There is a message in there for the church. Many of us are stuck in congregations and associations of decline and apathy. But there are others, both in and outside our churches, who are finding creative work arounds to serve the needs of all people not just those in our pews and local communities—and not just those outside our doors (though that is a great place to start).

At the end of the day we are all in this together. We will make the world a better place when we start acting like it.

Getting to Know:

Community United Church of Christ

3330 St. Lawrence Ave., Reading, PA 19606

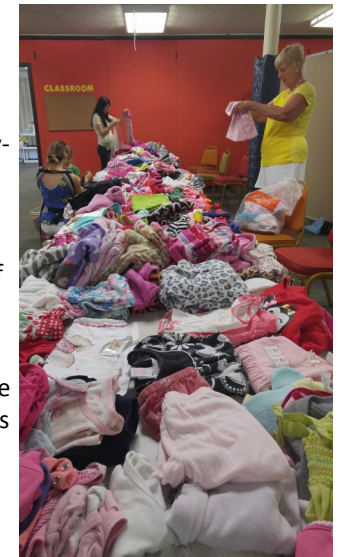


Community UCC was formed in 1951 by members of Schwarzwald Church who felt called to plant a church in St Lawrence (a borough of Reading). Our name, "Community", is both a result of getting started in the St Lawrence Community Center as well as our commitment to creating an open and loving community of faith.

Despite being only 1.5 miles from our original home at Schwarzwald UCC, Community and Schwarzwald had very little interaction and common ministry for the first 60 years of our existence. That all changed in 2012 when our two churches decided that we could do more the further the Kingdom of God together than we could separately. Each church elected five members to join the pastors on our Ministries Council, and together, we have coordinated combined Bible studies, small groups, confirmation classes, holiday services, fundraisers, outreaches, events, and important conversations about difficult issues.

Our most recent event was a free Children's Clothing Swap in which parents could donate clothing that their kids don't fit into anymore and take as much as they need for their kids today. We started with some donations thanks to our VBS and ended up with twice as much left over even after giving away dozens of bags filled with clothing! God's love is being spread by simply asking,

"How are we uniquely situated to serve God's beloved people?" Would you pray with us as we grapple with that question and continue to explore and experiment with ministry in the 21st century?



Prayers are requested for Community UCC in Reading and Rev. Zachary Jackson.