



**MESSENGER**  
of the  
**First Congregational  
Church**  
**United Church of Christ**  
121 W. Foster St.  
Melrose, Massachusetts

*An Open and Affirming Congregation*

*Rev. Dominic Taranowski, Pastor*  
*Mariko Matsumura, Interim Music Director*  
*Maureen Willis, Sunday School Administrative Assistant*

**OFFICE 781-665-2111 - FAX 781-665-8824**

**E-MAIL [info@fccmelrose.org](mailto:info@fccmelrose.org) Website [www.fccmelrose.org](http://www.fccmelrose.org)**

**Rev. Dominic's Cell phone: 781-526-3428**

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### Where's the Line?

I don't know if you realize this or not but there are committed Christians who believe that Jesus was an alien (hopefully you didn't just spill your coffee).

That's right, the "star of Bethlehem" was actually a UFO and Jesus was an alien sent by aliens to help humanity evolve. Sure he looked like a human but that is just because he was altered to look that way. His being an alien helps explain his ability to heal (advanced technology), angels (more aliens) and the resurrection (you can't kill an alien—at least not in the way you can kill a human).

As theology goes, this is, well, "way out there" to say the least! But it does raise an interesting question. When does an interpretation of Christianity stop being Christian?

Consider this: there are those whose faith would crumble completely without the notion of the virgin birth (that Mary was born of a virgin mother so as to be pure enough to give birth to Jesus). This is a foundational truth of Christianity for many people and dearly held by millions. What if it were proven to be not true?

In a less than doctrinal tradition such as ours, however, that may not be a good example. Take a bigger possibility. What if the resurrection of Jesus was proven false? That is, Jesus died on the cross and there was no Easter morning. Where would your faith be?

How many things can you take away from or add to the Christian narrative and still call it Christian? This is not a new question, mind you. Remember, in the early days of Christianity, immediately following the death and resurrection of Christ, there were committed followers of Christ who believed that he was a demi-god and not actually human at all. There were also those who felt Judas was a hero for triggering the redemptive sequence of events that lead to our reconciliation with God. Were they Christian?

Today it continues to be a relevant question. There are those who use the bible and Christian history to exclude and judge while others use it to include and welcome. Are they both right? Where is the line?

## Sunday, December 11, 2016

9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal  
10:00 AM – WORSHIP and Sunday School  
11:15 AM – Coffee Hour  
3:00 to 5:00 PM – Middle and High School to Winchester to help with CMS Christmas Shop

*THE STEEPLE is lit with joy for the birth of our granddaughter, Franziska Elise Klemm, by Sallie and Hans Klemm.*

### DURING THE WEEK

#### Tuesday, December 13

7:00 PM – Deacons and Trustees, Library  
7:15 to 8:15 PM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal

#### Wednesday, December 14

7:15 PM – Bells rehearsal

#### Thursday, December 15

4:00 PM – Bread of Life Dinner, American Legion, 368 Pleasant St., Malden

#### Friday, December 16

3:00 PM – Staff Meeting

#### Sunday, December 18 – Baptism Sunday

Pageant, no Sunday School – Caroling post worship  
Coffee Hour hosted by Circle 10 - CMS gifts due in  
7:30 PM – Music Director Search Comm. Meeting, Music Rm

#### Saturday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

7:00 PM – Candlelight, Caroling and Communion Service

#### Sunday, December 25 – Christmas Day

10:00 AM – Worship Service, No Sunday School

#### The following groups meet here regularly:

**Boy Scouts** – Tuesdays at 7:00 PM in the basement

**Girl Scouts** – Sundays, 3:00 to 5:00 PM

**Al-Anon** – weekdays at 12 noon, Sunday at 1 & 7 PM – Rm. 8

**Blue of a Kind** – Mondays at 7:00 PM in the Music Room

**S.A.R.P.** – Mondays and Tuesdays at 6:30 PM, Lounge

**Tai Chi for Arthritis** – Wednesdays at 10:00 AM, Room 8

**A.A.** – Mondays at 4:30 PM, & 7:00 PM (men), Tuesdays at 4:30 PM,

7:30 PM (Women's AWOL), Wednesdays at 4:30 PM & 7:30 PM,

Thursdays at 4:30 PM and 7:00 PM, Fridays at 8:00 PM and

Saturdays at 9:00 AM (men) and 3:00 PM – Rm. 8

It is, of course, much easier to pose questions like this than to answer them. Advent is a good time of year to consider where the line is for you but I will say this:

While I am *fairly* sure that Jesus was not an alien, I am *completely* sure that I don't know the mind of God. Consequently, I give a wide berth to Christian interpretation. That said, however, when Christianity separates and judges, puts down and abuses, and places rules and regulations over the freedom to evolve and find God in new ways, it becomes the faith I know in name only.

See you in church,

*Rev. Dominic*



Sally Pollack, Mary Sakata and Becky Faro (Trish Faro's daughters), Ginny Niles, Nyal Fuentes, Bryan Mc Allister-Grande, Claire Griffin, Herb Gray, Bill Albright, Barbara Wellington, Bill Copeland, Gem Colvin, Dot Allen, Bob Pierce, Anne Wing, Ella Boyle, Scott Chisholm.



**Christmas Pageant:** There will be a rehearsal this Sunday at 9:20 am for everyone who signed up to play a role in this year's pageant - and everyone who didn't, but would like to get involved! Please make every effort to attend - costumes will be distributed at rehearsal. The Christmas Pageant will be performed during Worship on December 18th.



**GIVING ENVELOPES**

✉ Giving Envelopes for 2017 are now available in the Narthex. If your Giving Number is between 001 and 048, we have a set of envelopes for you. If you do not need envelopes anymore or would like a set, please contact Rick Mockler at 781-690-2058 or [fccmelrose@gmail.com](mailto:fccmelrose@gmail.com)

**Mission Opportunity – Bread of Life**

**December 15th** is the Third Thursday of the month... so the FCC volunteers are heading to **Bread of Life** in Malden! We would love to have a few more people join us. Bread of Life provides the food, we prepare and cook it, then serve the clients. Our team from First Congregational Church volunteers from 4pm – 7pm. You can make a difference, even if you can only spare an hour during that time!

The location for the meals is: **The American Legion Post 69, 368 Pleasant Street, in Malden**—one block from the Malden MBTA station, near the intersection of Rte 60 and Pleasant Street. (There is a parking lot!!!)

If you can't make it to the dinner but would still like to help, we can always use donations of dessert. If you have questions about this mission of our church, please speak with Sallie Klemm [shklemm@verizon.net](mailto:shklemm@verizon.net) or 781-665-0159.

**SUNDAY SCHOOL:**

This week is the last regular Sunday School class before Christmas! Toddler through grade 5 children will have a lesson on "Jesus in the Temple". Middle School will continue their Advent lessons. High School youth are invited to meet with Jen Crain in the Spollett Youth room for a discussion as part of "Your Faith ... Your Way".

Please note the following changes to the December Sunday School schedule:

There will be no Sunday School on December 18th, due to the Christmas Pageant.

There is no Sunday School on December 25th. However, for children too young to remain in Worship, we will have a Christmas video set up in Room 8. Parents who choose this option should plan to remain with their children.



**Youth Mission Event!**

**Share the Joy of the Season!**

The Middle School and High School Youth will be helping the City Mission 2016 Christmas Shop on December 11th, from 3:00 – 5:00 pm. Our youth will help receive donations, organize, pack, and sort gifts at a Church in Winchester. Youth interested in participating should text Nancy Brincheiro at 781-521-9130 or email her at [nbrincheiro@gmail.com](mailto:nbrincheiro@gmail.com). Feel free to bring a friend!



**“Potato Men” at the Fair**



**CITY MISSION HOLIDAY DRIVE  
Now to December 18<sup>th</sup>**

Each year, City Mission Society, a UCC MA Conference mission activity, organizes a Christmas Shop, where needy families and individuals are invited to come and select gifts for themselves and their children.

Circle 10 is proud to be organizing our Church's collection efforts again this year. Look for our drop-off table before service in the Narthex on December 11 and 18. Donate now through Sunday, Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>.

City Mission recommends the following **new/unused** donations:

- ❖ Winter coats, sweaters and sweatshirts (child, teen, and adult-larger sizes especially needed!)
- ❖ Hats, mittens, gloves and scarves
- ❖ Socks and underwear
- ❖ Blankets, and backpacks
- ❖ Gift cards – Grocery, Target, Marshall's, Walgreen's, CVS or other Merchants or generic VISA
- ❖ Toys, games, and books for all ages

Contact Jen Crain at [jcrain1@gmail.com](mailto:jcrain1@gmail.com) or 503-806-1338 with any questions or to arrange a pick-up of a donation.



Kate Tigelaar with Morgan, and Gideon decorating their Gingerbread House at the Fair



**Winter Wonderland Fair**

What a weekend!! The fair was packed, and we surpassed our fund raising goals!!!

This year's fair was not only a financial success, but it was a chance for people to work together and form new friendships! Many people, both long-time members and people new to our congregation shared this time together.

We'd like to especially acknowledge the tireless efforts of Circle 4 in making the fair possible. And to everyone else who generously contributed their time, talent and treasure to make the fair a success—thank you, thank you, thank you!

**FAIR FEEDBACK!!!**

While the Winter Wonderland Fair is fresh in our minds, we'd like to hear from the congregation about what people observed that went well, and what ideas people have to make improvements. If you could jot down your thoughts and email them to us, it would be very helpful! We'll have a "De-Brief" meeting later to discuss things that are brought to our attention. You can send emails to Sallie at [shklemm@verizon.net](mailto:shklemm@verizon.net) and/or Nancy at [ngift@mit.edu](mailto:ngift@mit.edu)



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**CHRISTMAS FLOWERS - \$15.00 per plant**

Send your order form by Sunday, December 11 to: Darby Drafts, 25 Adams St., Melrose MA 02176

Ordered by: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

IN MEMORY OF:



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# of plants ordered \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to *First Congregational Church*.**

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## **Special Offerings**

**On December 18 will be for Veterans of the Cross**

**On December 24 will be for the two Melrose food pantries and Bread of Life**