



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

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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Actualizing the Realm of God in 2017

The general sentiment seems to be that people are pretty happy that 2016 is over. This feeling is generally connected to the toxic nature of the presidential campaign and, for many people in our church, the outcome of the election. One would then think that people are then pretty hopeful about this New Year, 2017. At this point, at least, that does seem to be the case.

An Associated Press survey found the 55% of people feel that 2017 will be a more positive year than 2016. I, for one, am glad to hear this. There are many uncertainties and fears about 2017 and beyond but it helps nothing to start the new year on a pessimistic note.

Here's the thing about 2017 and beyond: Our faith teaches us that we have a role to play in shaping our world. That is why Jesus spoke so often about the Kingdom of God or the Realm of God. In some instances, he spoke as though this "Kingdom" or "Realm" is already here and at other times he spoke as though it is our responsibility to bring it about. I believe it is a little of both.

The coming of Christ into the world both reminds us that creation is a gift of God (we live in the midst of holiness) and that a new era has arisen in which God's presence is tangible. That's the "Kingdom is already here" good news.

The "we have a responsibility to build the Kingdom" side of things is an acknowledgment that the redemptive work of Christ is not complete. The "Kingdom" is not fully manifest. It doesn't just happen; we need to help make it happen.

Either way you look at it, this is good news for 2017. In the first place, the miracle of Christmas means that the Realm of God *is* here and cannot be taken from us. Christ's birth, death and resurrection mean that the intersection of the temporal and the divine cannot be erased. God is going to be with us in 2017 no matter what happens. Our abandonment is an impossibility. Comfort, guidance, inspiration, and grace *will be* provided.

Sunday, January 8, 2017
Communion Sunday

9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal
9:00 AM – Confirmation Orientation Breakfast
10:00 AM – WORSHIP and Sunday School
11:15 AM – Coffee Hour
11:30 AM – New Member Class, Library

DURING THE WEEK

Tuesday, January 10

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

Wednesday, January 11

6:00 to 9:00 PM – Racial Justice Ministries Meeting at the Garrett's
7:15 PM – Bells rehearsal

Sunday, January 15

10:00 AM – Worship
11:30 AM – New Member Class, Library

Monday, January 16

5:00 PM-8:00 PM – MLK Jr. Potluck Dinner/Program, narthex

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

In the second place, we are not bystanders. That means that we do not simply exist at the whim of circumstance but instead can respond to and shape the course of our lives and our society. In doing so, we build the Kingdom of God. This is empowering beyond measure. 2017 will therefore be a year of active discipleship in which we grasp the hand of Christ in order to be engaged, co-creators with God in the on-going work of redemption.

Actualizing the Realm of God is not a straight path. It is not even a clear path. Some would say there is no path at all! But there is. As confusing as things may sometimes be, there is always a way forward. The bottom line is this: We are here and God is here.

That is all we really need in 2017 and, thanks to Jesus Christ, we already have it!

See you in church,

Rev. Dominic



Scott Chisholm.

Connie Robinson, Bob Hughes, Ray Luebbe (Betsy Garrett's father), Mary Sakata and Becky Faro (Trish Faro's daughters), Ginny Niles, Nyal Fuentes, Claire Griffin, Herb Gray, Bill Albright, Bill Copeland, Merle Copeland, Gem Colvin, Dot Allen, Bob Pierce, Anne Wing, Ella Boyle,



SUNDAY SCHOOL:

We are opening the new year with the theme "What is your story?" We will start with the story of Jonah. Talk about how he was resistant to following God's plans and then how one man with God's help changed the direction of a whole city. In the following weeks leading to Easter, the lessons will focus on stories about Jesus life and encourage them to ask people in their lives "What's your story?"

Women's March on Washington on January 21st!

The Burlington United Church of Christ has chartered a bus, which will depart from Burlington late Friday evening and arrive in D.C. early Saturday morning. We will march from approximately 10:00 am - 3:00 pm, at which time we will get back on the bus and head back to Burlington. We should be back in town late Saturday night, or early Sunday morning. The cost is \$90.00 per person. If you would like additional information, please contact Rev. Dominic or the Pastor of Burlington UCC, Rev. Angela Wells. RSVPs are needed soon.

All are welcome!



Music Committee

Hello friends,
The Music Hiring Committee would like to hear your input on the role of music in our church.

Please complete our short survey, either online (<https://goo.gl/f8B1Ed>) or using the paper version.

This survey is anonymous, and can be completed in as little as 5 minutes. Your input is very valuable to us as we craft an updated position description for our Music Ministry Director.

You are welcome to share this survey with any young adults in your home, and include any comments from younger children as well.

Please share your response **by Sunday 1/22/17**.

Thank you,
Music Hiring Committee: Ann Ahlin, Tom Foth, Betsy Garrett, Beth Grzegorzewski, Bob and Lisa Jamison, Michael Leskiw, Jaime McAllister-Grande and Rev. Dominic

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Music Ministry Survey for FCC Melrose

*The Music Hiring Committee would like to hear your input on the role of music in our church. In addition to sharing your thoughts, please share this survey with any young adults in your home, and include any comments from younger children as well. **Please respond by 1/22/17.***

1. What parts of our music ministry do you think are going well?

Your answer:

2. What parts of our music ministry do you wish were different?

Your answer:

3. Why is a music ministry important to you?

Your answer:

4. What would you like to see in our music ministry in the future?

Your answer:

5. How long have you been attending FCC?

- 0-1 years 1-5 years 5-10 years 10-20 years
 20-30 years 30 years or more

6. What is your age?

- 5-12 13-18 18-24 25-34 35-44
 45-54 55-64 65-74 75 and older

7. What is your gender?

- Female Male Other:

8. Do you have children currently living with you?

- Yes No Other:

9. If yes, ages of children?

- 0-5 6-12 13-18 18+

10. Please share any thoughts or reflections on your child(ren)'s experiences with the music ministry at our church.

Your answer:

*Please place completed surveys in the manila envelope taped to the church secretary's office door by Sunday 1/22/17.
Thank you for sharing your thoughts about the music ministry at FCC Melrose.*