



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

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Major Changes to Regional UCC

Since the inception of the United Church of Christ in 1957 with the union of the Congregational Christian Church and the Evangelical Reformed Church, the Massachusetts Conference has been in the forefront of our denomination's ministry. As of last week, our Conference will begin the process of reformation as we evolve into one, combined Conference with the Rhode Island and Connecticut Conferences.

In other words, these three Conferences will cease to exist and will be replaced with a new, single, regional Conference.

This move has been approved by the Boards of Directors of each Conference but, true to our democratic structure, must be approved at a joint meeting this spring and again by delegates to the following, combined Annual Meeting in June 2018.

The benefits of this move are numerous. As stated in the notice given by the Boards of Directors: "Guided by the grace of God, we see a new Conference as our means to affirm and strengthen the mission and alignment of our three UCC conferences, increase access of local churches to more resources, bear witness to people who have an impulse to make the world a better place, create and reimagine the church of the future as a vital organization with a distinct, recognizable voice, increase our prophetic vision, and be the launch pad for a revived and strengthened progressive church in America."

At the same time, this decision is also admittedly being made in light of the changing landscape of American Protestantism and the UCC in particular. In the latest statistical report of the UCC, it is noted that in the last 10 years our denomination encountered a loss of 696 churches and 318,897 members. A growing percentage of our churches (now at 41%) have memberships of less than 100 people. In short, in light of decline, steps must be taken to not only rally resources but also to reinvent ourselves even as we continue to proclaim the gospel in our own, unique, inclusive way.

How will this change impact First Congregational Church? At the moment, because of our

vitality, we are not reliant on the Conference for any direct support so it is unlikely that we will see much of a difference in the operation of our parish.

If anything, new doors will be opened to combined work with our Rhode Island and Connecticut neighbors and that can only be beneficial.

See you in church,

Sunday, February 5, 2017 Communion Souper Bowl and Food Pantry Sunday

9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal
10:00 AM – WORSHIP and Sunday School
After worship - Souper Bowl of Caring Soup Luncheon

DURING THE WEEK

Friday, February 3

6:00 PM – Music Director Search Committee meeting,
Spollett Youth Room

Saturday, February 4

11:00 AM – Memorial Service for Arthur Whitman at FCC

Tuesday, February 7

2:00 PM – Circle 4, Lounge
7:00 PM – Deacons and Trustees, Library
7:00 PM – RIM Meeting
7:15 to 8:15 PM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal

Wednesday, February 8

7:15 PM – Bells rehearsal

Sunday, February 12

10:00 AM – Worship and Sunday School
7:00 PM – Confirmation Class

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 4:30 PM and 8:00 PM

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



**FOOD PANTRY
AND SOUPER BOWL COLLECTION SUNDAY**



Brian Johnson, 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, Scott Chisholm.



Circle 4 will meet at the Church on **Tuesday, February 7th at 2:00 P.M.**



RACIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

A group of us have been meeting once a month at the Garrett's home to discuss racial justice issues. We have been reading the curriculum *White Privilege: Let's Talk—A Resource for Transformational Dialogue*, put out by the United Church of Christ. You can download the curriculum for free at <http://privilege.uccpages.org/>.

At our last meeting, on January 11, we discussed the cash value of whiteness and how that impacts our education and housing opportunities. Read Part Three of the curriculum to find out more about that. We also started discussing what we as a church can do to work toward social justice in our community and beyond.

We hope you will join us! The meetings are open to all in our church who are interested in this issue. Our next meeting is February 13 at the Garrett's home. (We have been meeting alternately on Mondays and Wednesdays). We begin at 6:30 with a social time so that we can start the meeting promptly at 7:00 PM.

For more information and to be added to our email list, please contact

Betsy Garrett - betsy.luebbe.garrett@gmail.com
Beth Hampson - bkashatus@gmail.com

We hope that you can join us at our next meeting!
~ Betsy



SUNDAY SCHOOL:

The Toddlers thru 5th grade have started learning about Jesus' ministry.

Middle School and High School will be prepping and serving the church Souper Bowl of caring.

We are in need of a 2nd adult for February 12 in the K to 2 class. If you are interested in helping please contact Lisa at mlwarner98@verizon.net or call 617 794 2641.



CHILI AND CORNBREAD COOK-OFF

2017 CHILI COOK-OFF & CORNBREAD CONTEST! FEBRUARY 26, 2017

To Be Held In Memory of Connie Robinson – Frequent Chili Cook-Off Champion and Loyal Supporter of Fellowship Events

INTHE NARTHEX, RIGHT AFTER THE WINTER CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Everybody mark your calendars, the Annual Chili Cook-off and Cornbread Contest are not far off! Just three weeks from this Sunday! The signup board will be in the Narthex this Sunday, and there will be two Sundays to sign up, so take a look at the categories and see if one seems just right for your culinary expertise - or just your sense of fun! There will be some new categories this year, just to stir things up a bit! So indulge your enthusiasm for cooking and your competitive spirit and sign up!

Meet our newest members that joined January 29th!
Watch for more in the weeks to come.



Jim Connolly and Kristen DeVoe

Beth and I are pleased to introduce you to Jim Connolly and Kristen DeVoe who you have likely seen sitting over there (left side, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way back) for the past 6 months. And to introduce Eliot – the little guy who seems to tag along with them an awful lot.

Jim and Kristen live in Malden with Eliot, who is nearly 3 months old. While in the end they found each other and found us at FCC, they took very different paths getting here.

Kristen is still relatively new to Massachusetts, having moved here less than 4 years ago from Tennessee to take a job at Brigham & Women's Hospital. She is a social worker serving heart transplant patients and their families. She was raised in New Orleans and Tennessee and did academic stints in South Carolina and Chicago.

Jim was raised in Medford and has lived as far away as, well, Lowell. His passion for editing and history gelled beautifully into a job as Editor for the Massachusetts Historical Society. He has had a role in some very interesting projects, including involving the papers of a couple of folks whose names you may recognize – John Adams and John Quincy Adams.

Like Beth and I, their history as a couple began on the Internet (a topic about which I don't think they are particularly shy – at least I hope not), and involved a search for a welcoming community that just felt right. We were not the first stop on their search journey, but are thankfully their last. We are really pleased to introduce you to Jim Connolly, Kristen DeVoe and Eliot.



Feb. 5th is Souper Bowl of Caring time!

A reminder that February 5, 2017 is both a Food Pantry collection AND the Souper Bowl. We know we are asking you to “double dip” into your pantry closet to sustain our monthly giving and help boost food shelter supplies but we know the need is great and donations are warmly welcomed. A reminder that for the Souper Bowl we also take cash and credit card donations. The kids have set a goal above last year's total so let's help them make it. After all, we have “local” interest in both the Souper Bowl AND the Super Bowl thanks to the Patriots victory over the Steelers!

Make 2017 the year we break all kinds of records for local support!”

We Need Church Photos!



If you have any digital photos of events or people at our Church that you would be willing to share with our Website Development team, please email them to melrosefcc@gmail.com. We're looking to display pictures that illustrate the many wonderful facets of our Church. Pictures of Baptisms, weddings, fellowship events, Sunday school, our outdoor worship service, choir, mission or fundraising events, Rev. Dominic giving a hug – or anything at all, please send them! We will also be asking each parent to give us official permission to use photo that includes their children. Please see Nancy Brincheiro to give your approval.

BRAHMS REQUIEM

SATURDAY, MARCH 18
7:30 PM

FIRST PARISH CONGREGATIONAL
1 CHURCH STREET
WAKEFIELD, MA

MURRAY KIDD - CONDUCTOR

SUNG IN GERMAN WITH ORCHESTRA
FEATURING SOLOISTS:
DANA LYNNE VARGA, SOPRANO,
AND DANA WHITESIDE, BARITONE

TICKETS
GO TO: WWW.POLYMNIA.ORG
CALL: 617.633.5006
VISIT: MITER BITER, 479 MAIN STREET,
MELROSE

ADULTS - \$25
STUDENTS & SENIORS - \$20
CHILDREN 12 & UNDER - \$5



See Rick Mockler for tickets.