

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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VOLUME 99

February 17, 2017

Number 23

Getting Mom Involved

In the midst of all of our attempts to be inclusive in the United Church of Christ, it is interesting to note that, as a consequence of our Protestant forebears, we abandoned one very important tool in uncovering the feminine face of God: Mary the mother of Jesus.

There is still relatively little interest in the role of Mary in the modern Protestantism and, in a way, that makes sense. The Protestant reformers of the 1500s jettisoned Mary along with the other traditional Saints of the Catholic Church. Mary, in particular they said, had grown to be on par with Jesus in terms of intercession with God and it was and is strongly felt that only Jesus should have that role.

Trouble is, along with removing statues and paintings of Mary, they also removed an avenue for a more inclusive role for women in the church and in our devotional life.

Of course, there are no barriers to women's participation in all aspects of the UCC, but without Mary there remains a predominately masculine understanding of God and the divine. Most people still refer to God almost exclusively as "He" and Jesus was, obviously, a man. Celestially speaking, there is no feminine divine in the UCC (apart from angels who are typically depicted as women; save the arch angels who are all male—then again, angels and ranks of angels are not typically part of UCC theology).

Consequently, Mary has been "plasticized"—relegated to the kneeling figure in our manger scenes. That's it. The woman with the highest profile in Christian history (with Mary Magdalene coming in a strong second) has little role in our tradition. I think we have lost something.

Not only is Mary a symbol of acquiesces to the presence of God in our lives through her acceptance of God's call to bear Jesus, she is present (albeit in the background) throughout the gospel stories. She comes back strongly during the crucifixion story as a symbol of divine anguish—what could be more terrible than watching your child die on the cross? She is also mentioned in Acts as an active figure in the early church.

The aversion to Mary is still because she feels "too Catholic". However, theologically and, yes, even devotionally, we need a feminine counterpart to the male-dominant characters in the story of our faith.

I believe that if we can say that Jesus is our brother, maybe it is time to get "mom" involved. After all, Mary as the mother of Jesus not only made the incarnation possible, but by extension gave birth to the church. She is still available and can help us access the divine, nurturing, powerful feminine in the Christian faith.

God's encounter with us is truly multifaceted and by recovering Mary in our understanding of Christianity, we open new doors to faith enrichment. At the very least, it is worth some consideration.

See you in church,

Sunday, February 19, 2017

9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal

9:30 – 9:45 AM - Treblemakers rehearsal, Music Room

10:00 AM – WORSHIP and Sunday School

11:15 AM – Coffee Hour

11:30 AM – Reflect and Respond, Library

DURING THE WEEK

Thursday, February 16

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

Tuesday, February 21

7:15 to 8:15 PM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal

Wednesday, February 22

7:15 PM – Bells rehearsal

Sunday, February 26

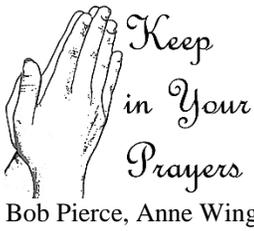
10:00 AM – Worship and Sunday School

After worship – Winter Congregational Meeting
Followed by the Chili and Cornbread Cook-off



Reflect and Respond

Rev. Dominic will be hosting a Reflect and Respond session after worship on Sunday, February 19th. This will be held in the Library and will be a time to discuss the themes of the worship experience. All are welcome to ask questions, share, and benefit from the reflections of others. Please let Rev. Dominic know if you would like child care. It can be easily provided if needed.



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.



SUNDAY SCHOOL:

We hope you enjoy the heart banners the children made based on 1 Corinthians 13:4 to 7. We sure had fun making them!

K to 5. Lisa Warner will teach a lesson on Jesus asking his disciples to follow him and how we grow our faith. We will also measure ourselves on our growth chart!

Middle and High school are invited to remain in service

Opportunities:

We are looking for a person willing to teach for 1 week a month in the 3 to 5 class in February thru April. This group is usually 5 children very attentive and responsive to the lessons. The lessons are all planned and craft supplies are provided for every class

Want to be a kid again? We are in need of a second adult in the K to 2 class on 2/26 and 3/01. This is a position to support the teacher by helping the kids stay focused on the story and completing the craft

We appreciate your support especially during the search period for a new CE admin

Thank you so much!
Sherri and Lisa

FREE CHRONIC PAIN PROGRAM

Is living with chronic pain affecting your life? Chronic pain may cause sleep loss, increased stress and loss of motivation around everyday activities. Learn to manage pain and continue living a fulfilling life through this FREE six-session program. On Wednesdays, March 8 – April 12, 2017 from 9:30am to 12 noon at the Stoneham Senior Center; 136 Elm Street, Stoneham MA; Sponsored by Hallmark Health. Registration is required **SPACE IS LIMITED.** Please call 781-338-7823



THE CHILI COOK-OFF/CORNBREAD CONTEST - FEBRUARY 26TH!

A great number of chili chefs have signed up and a fair number of cornbread bakers as well. It seems that we are set for another fun Chili Cook-off/Cornbread Contest.

Those who have signed up: please make sure that you have reviewed the guidelines. If you still have any questions, call Donna Miner at (781) 662-6697. See everyone on the 26th!

WARRANT FOR THE WINTER CONGREGATIONAL MEETING OF FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH in MELROSE, UCC February 26, 2017

To the Members of the First Congregational Church in Melrose, United Church of Christ:

In accordance with the by-laws, there will be a congregational meeting on Sunday, February 26, 2017 immediately following the worship service to receive and act upon the following Articles:

Article 1: To receive and act upon the Clerk's Report for the calendar year 2016;

Article 2: To receive and act upon the Report of Invested Funds for the calendar year 2016;

Article 3: To receive and act upon the Report of Operating Income and Expenses for the calendar year 2016;

Article 4: To adopt a budget for calendar year 2017;

Article 5: To transact such other business as may come before the meeting.

Rebecca Fuentes and Darby Drafts
Trustees of Human Resources and Congregational Records/Clerk

SHARING PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Each week during worship, Reverend Dominic invites the congregation to share moments of concern or celebration for people they know. A candle is lit from the Christ candle signifying the light of Christ's love surrounding them. This is a very special and meaningful part of our worship together.

Names of friends, relatives, and co-workers outside of our congregation are often raised during Prayers of the People. It would be comforting for these people to know that their name was raised in prayer here at our church.

If you would like the person(s) whose name you raised during worship to receive a note to this effect, we invite you to write their name and address in the purple notebook on the Card Ministry table in the narthex. Notes will be sent for concerns, not celebrations, and will be signed by Reverend Dominic on behalf of First Congregational Church.

We also invite you to visit the Card Ministry table after the service to sign cards for members of our church family.

We thank you for your help in reaching out to others.

Ginny Altmann and Becky Foth
Co-Deacons of Spiritual Care



**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

Massachusetts Cultural Council

See Rick Mockler for tickets.

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



Love your neighbor as yourself

Valentine's Day is the perfect opportunity to live out God's love.
How does Jesus say we should treat other people?

*Directions: Find a hidden word in each sentence. For example, "the" is hidden here:
(12) "It's Harry's hat he stole." The (12) means the hidden word starts on the 12th
letter (ignore punctuation). Use the answers to complete Matthew 19:19, NIV.*

(1) You really like ice cream! _____

(16) Carly has a really fat hermit crab. _____

(21) My favorite animals are moth, ermine and eels. _____

(4) "Hello, Vera!" called Joseph. _____

(11) When horses neigh, boredom reigns. _____

(17) Their daughter, Kara, sat patiently. _____

(6) "That's yours, elf!" the fairy yelled. _____

"Honor _____ and _____
_____, and _____ your _____"

Matthew 19:19, NIV

Answers: "Honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 19:19, NIV