



First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

in Melrose

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Messenger

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Authenticity in Imperfection

Anne Lamott, in her classic book *Traveling Mercies*, describes a time when a fellow church member told about adopting her son through an organization called ASK, Adopt Special Kids.

Part of the adoption process included filling out a questionnaire and checking "yes" or "no" to one's willingness to adopt babies that had been born addicted, terminally ill, with physical "defects," or mental challenges. She and her husband had checked down the list.

Lamott's comment is that God, too, is like an adoptive parent who says, "Sure, I'll take the kids who are addicted, or terminal. In fact, I pick all the behaviorally challenged kids and of course the emotionally scarred. The selfish ones, the liars--I choose them. I choose the disobedient ones and the terrified ones. The self-indulged ones and the trouble-makers? I'll take those too. The damaged ones and the unlovable ones. In love, I choose them all. I will be a parent to them all. I will end their separation and bring them home to me."

As you, with intentionality, uncover your shortcomings and weaknesses this Lenten season, you may be tempted to wonder why God doesn't just abandon you. It is important to remember that such a thing is an impossibility for God.

Of course God loves your success and your good judgment, your helping those who need help and your giving beyond what is asked. But God doesn't stop loving you and empowering you when you fall short, when you mess things up, when you hurt yourself or others. In such times, God's love only grows more intense; longing to bring you to wholeness once again.

Your Christian identity is not found in your perfection but in your imperfection. It is from there that your humanity is admitted and authenticity is found. The search for God is the journey of life and you cannot search for wholeness if you believe you are already

completely whole. You cannot reach and stretch for God's help unless you admit your need for it.

This is the power of Lent: that God's grace is available to all and in all circumstances of the human condition. It is also available regardless of one's station in life: the poor and the rich, the citizen and the immigrant, the gay and the straight, the moral, immoral and amoral. None of that matters in the eyes of God as much as God's longing to be a loving parent to each one of us.

See you in church,

Sunday, April 2, 2017

Food Pantry Sunday

- 9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal
- 10:00 AM – WORSHIP and Sunday School
- 11:00 to 11:15 AM – Treblemakers and all interested children, Palm Sunday rehearsal
- 11:15 to 11:30 AM - Treblemakers and all interested children, Easter Sunday rehearsal
- 11:15 AM – Coffee Hour
- 11:30 AM - Lenten Adult Education Class, Library
- 7:00 PM – Confirmation Class

DURING THE WEEK

Tuesday, April 4

4:00 PM – Circle 4 will meet at the LongHorn Steakhouse in Reading for their Annual Out-to-Dinner Meeting

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

Wednesday, April 5

7:15 PM – Bells rehearsal

Friday, April 7

1:00 PM – Staff Meeting



Chisholm.

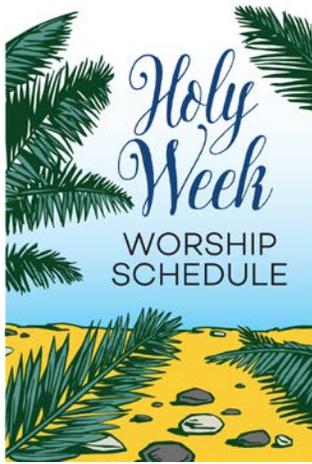
Brian Johnson, Bob Hughes, Ray Luebbe (Betsy Garrett's father), Mary Sakata and Becky Faro (Trish Faro's daughters), Nyal Fuentes, Claire Griffin, Bill Copeland, Merle Copeland, Gem Colvin, Dot Allen, Bob Pierce, Anne Wing, Ella Boyle, Scott



FOOD PANTRY

SUNDAY – April 2

This mission of our church is a great way to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors! You can involve your whole family by talking about the food you are donating and discussing how it will help others.



The Music Director Search Committee is happy to announce that it has selected three candidates to interview.

In the first 45 minutes of each interview, we are asking the candidates to perform some hymns and provide sample music instruction to those present.

We invite you to be part of this important element of the interviewing process. We ask that you participate only if you can attend ALL THREE interviews so that you'll be able to provide feedback for all candidates.

The candidates are being interviewed:

- Saturday, May 6 at 2:00 pm
- Sunday, May 7 at 1:00 pm
- Sunday, May 7, at 3:00 pm

If you have any questions, please contact one of the committee members:

Ann Ahlin, Tom Foth, Betsy Garrett, Beth Grzegorzewski, Bob Jamison, Lisa Jamison, Michael Leskiw, Jaime McAllister-Grande, Rev. Dominic Taranowski.

Sunday, April 9 – Palm Sunday

8:30 AM – Breakfast at First Baptist Church followed by
9:00 AM – Palm Procession to the Gazebo at Ell Pond for
9:15 AM – Blessing of the Palms at the Gazebo
10:00 AM – Worship at First Congregational
11:00 to 11:15 AM – Treblemakers and all interested children, Palm Sunday rehearsal
11:15 to 11:30 AM - Treblemakers and all interested children, Easter Sunday rehearsal
11:30 AM – Lenten Adult Education Class, Library

Thursday, April 13 – Maundy Thursday

7:00 PM – Worship Service of Tenebrae at First Congregational, joint with Melrose Highlands

Friday, April 14 – Good Friday

Noon to 3:00 PM - First Congregational will be open to anyone who wishes to come and pray or spend quiet time in the sanctuary.

Sunday, April 16 – Easter Sunday

5:45 AM - Sunrise service at Mt. Hood
10:00 AM - Worship



Congratulations to Erin and Topher Smith upon the occasion of the baptism of their son, Benjamin Graham Smith, on Sunday, March 26th. Hattie is his big sister. As an expression of the church's love, support, and care, Common Threads was pleased to present a handmade gift to Benjamin.



Inviting all children to join Treblemakers to perform for Palm Sunday and Easter.

If you are interested, contact Interim Music Director at marikouma@yahoo.com.

Rehearsal schedule

Palm Sunday rehearsal

3/31 – 5:15-6:00pm
4/2 – 11:00-11:15am *
4/7 – 5:15-5:30pm
4/9 – 9:20-9:50(Palm Sunday)

Easter rehearsal

4/2 Sunday – 11:15-11:45am *
4/7 – 5:15-6:00pm
4/9 – 11:00-11:45am rehearsal starts immediately after the service
4/14 – 5:15-6:00 pm
4/16 – Happy Easter! 9:20-9:45

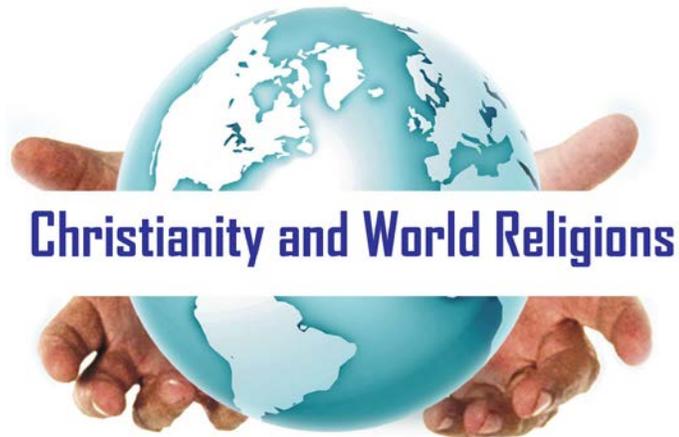


Circle 4 will meet on **Tuesday, April 4th** at the **LongHorn Steakhouse** in **Reading at 4:00 PM** for our Annual Out-to-Dinner Meeting.



SUNDAY SCHOOL:

High School class will be a Coaching Session: A faithful approach to coaching and working with others. This interactive unit will challenge our high school youth to focus on character development when working with others and will include hands-on application with our church's children.



**LENTEN ADULT EDUCATION CLASS
CHRISTIANITY AND WORLD RELIGIONS**

After worship each Sunday of Lent

Join Rev. Dominic in the Library after worship during Lent for a discussion based class that will look at world

religions through the lens of our own faith tradition. The classes are not built upon each other so you are welcome to join at any point. The classes will be group discussion based and all are welcome. Each class will begin with a starter video from Adam Hamilton outlining the topic of the day. These will include and Introduction Session on how questions around world religions are framed, followed by sessions on Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

While Christianity is the largest religion in the world today, there are billions of people who practice other faiths. In this series we will learn the salient features of these other major religions from a Christian perspective in order to lift up points of similarity and difference. Doing so will allow us to better own what it is we believe about our own faith, approach other religions with reverence and respect, and build bridges by learning from other traditions while sharing our own.

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, 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
- Makam Music Group** – Fridays 7:00-9:00 PM – Lounge and Rm. 1

Easter Memorial Flowers - \$15 per plant

Send your order form by April 7th to: Darby Drafts, 25 Adams St., Melrose MA 02176, (Last minute orders may be handed to Darby on Sunday, April 9th.)

Ordered by: _____

Phone #: _____

IN MEMORY OF:

of plants ordered _____ Amount enclosed \$ _____

Please make checks payable to First Congregational Church.



EASTER FLOWERS