



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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A Case to Watch

There are many things that people say are “enshrined” in the Constitution. The Separation of Church and State is probably one of the most important. It is there to prevent the development of a theocracy—something that was a real possibility in Colonial America and, some would argue, is equally a possibility today.

The biggest practical outcome of this separation is the fact that churches are not to involve themselves directly in political advocacy/endorsements, and the government (federal, state, and local) cannot assess taxes on religious institutions.

This is why a current case before the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court is one to watch. It is expected to be decided this summer and involves the city of Attleboro assessing property taxes on the Roman Catholic Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette.

The Shrine is run by the La Salette Brothers monks and sits on 200 acres in Attleboro. Three years ago, the city decided to increase its tax revenue base by taxing those parts of the property it decided were for “non-religious use”. This included 110 acres of land (despite retreats being held on this acreage) and the Welcome Center which includes a cafeteria, gift shop, a display of crèches, a coffee shop and conference rooms.

The city’s argument is that religious tax exemption should be extended only to “houses of worship” and only the physical space in the building used for active worship or religious instruction; that is, not for ancillary activities.

This is a case that is being closely watched not only by churches everywhere, but other religious institutions, non-Christian worship facilities, retreat centers as well as other cities and towns. It raises a variety of questions. Here are just a few:

What is the litmus test for deciding if a property (or a part of a property) is being used for religious purposes?

Spiritual formation often happens through communing with nature. Is it necessary that the land on

Sunday, April 24, 2016

8:45 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal

9:30 AM – Treblemakers, Room 1

10:00 AM – WORSHIP and Sunday School

11:15 AM – Coffee Hour

11:15 AM – Praise Band Rehearsal

DURING THE COMING WEEK

Wednesday, April 27

7:00 PM – WPCR, library

7:15 PM – Bells Rehearsal

Thursday, April 28

7:00 to 8:30 PM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal

Saturday, April 30

9:00 AM to Noon – Spring Clean-up Day

Sunday, May 1 – Walk for Hunger

After worship - *Wildtree Tasting* Fundraiser, see page 3

The following groups meet here regularly:

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

Girl Scouts – Sundays, 2:00 to 4:15

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, Rm. 1), Tuesdays at

4:30 PM, Wednesdays at 4:30 PM, & 7:30 PM, Thursdays at 4:30

PM, Fridays at 8:00 PM and Saturdays at 9:00 AM (men) and 3:00

PM – Rm. 8

which this happens be non-taxable for it to be a religious experience?

Most religions have a mission component to how they live out their faith. Is space used for service projects taxable?

When does a church-sponsored event stop being religious?

Many churches, ours included, rent to day cares which are not religiously based. Does this mean that those spaces are potentially taxable? Who gets to decide this?

Rev. Laura Everett, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches said: “The idea that secular tax officials would come in and parse what is religious and what is not for religious institutions gives us grave concerns about the entanglement of government bodies acting to decide how a religion should be practiced.”

Agreed. When it comes to the separation of Church and State, this is certainly a case to watch.

See you in church,

Rev. Dominic



Steve Anderson, Flo Hall, Ralph Revesz, Bill Albright, Barbara Wellington, Becky Faro, Bill Copeland, Gem Colvin, Dot Allen, Bob Pierce, Anne Wing.

Congratulations to Kate Tigelaar on the birth of her son, Gideon Robert, born April 12, weighing in at 9 pounds 12 ounces and 21 3/4 inches long. Big sister, Morgan is very happy with baby "Giddy."



SUNDAY SCHOOL

This week, our Nursery and Kindergarten through Grade 5 class lesson theme is the story of Lydia. The children will sing "Oh You Can't Get to Heaven". Parents, you and your children can sing along to this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0xUse6mQLU>

Our Middle School youth will continue their lessons on the Beatitudes.

High School youth will remain in Worship or are welcome to congregate informally in the Spollett Youth Room.

High School youth and families are reminded to "Save the Date" for Graduation Sunday, June 5, 2016. Invitations will be mailed soon!



Middle School and High School Youth:

Register to join the FCC Melrose Team at this year's Walk for Hunger on Sunday, May 1st! The FCC Melrose Youth Group page can be found using this link: http://support.projectbread.org/site/TR/Walk/General?team_id=78285&pg=team&fr_id=1310

Contact Catherine Dhingra with any questions: Catherine.dhingra@gmail.com, 617-306-6508 (call or text)

YARD SALE – Saturday – May 7, 2016

*Volunteers are needed to join in set up Monday 5/2 thru Friday 5/6 from 10am-12noon and 7-9pm.



*Donated items may be dropped off in the Narthex (on the tables between the music room and room 1) between Sunday 5/1 following the worship service and Friday 5/6 at noon. **Donations cannot be accepted on Friday night or Saturday.**

Another Yard Sale Request

When you begin to see signs of spring you know the famous (or is it infamous) Yard Sale of the First Congregation Church is about to happen. A couple of items we always request early are collectibles and jewelry. It is helpful to have these donations early as it takes time to get them ready for sale. If you decide it is time to part with any or all of your collections, they can be brought to the church office anytime now or if you need a pick-up, call 781-665-2247. **Please note**, this request is just for collectibles and jewelry to come in early.

NEWS AROUND THE CHURCH



As part of the ongoing Essex Street Revitalization Project, the City will be changing Willow Street between Essex Street and West Foster Street

permanently to one-way traffic. Traffic flow will only be allowed from Essex Street proceeding southerly toward West Foster Street. This change was approved in 2015 by the Traffic Commission after a detailed public outreach effort and public discussion.

This change is scheduled to take effect on the morning of Monday, April 25, 2016. Sign boards will be posted in advance of the change to make neighbors and motorists aware of the effective date. One-way and Do Not Enter signage will be erected and will take effect on the morning of April 25, 2016.

If you have any questions, please contact Larry Erikson in the Engineering Division at [781-979-4172](tel:781-979-4172).

The Mayor's blog said that with this, there will be an added 8 parking spaces on Willow between W. Foster and Cherry St.



Spring Church Cleanup –
Saturday, April 30 – 9 AM to Noon
 Come prepared to freshen up the church, both inside and out. Winter is done, spring is here. Let's make the church look refreshed!



Healthy & Easy Meal Preparation is in your future!

Attend our Church's first **Wildtree Tasting** and/or **Wildtree Freezer Meal Workshop** to learn how serving healthy dinners in your house can be a breeze. These events are also fundraisers that will help to defray the cost of sending our Youth to the UCC National Youth Event.

Wildtree Tasting - May 1st after Worship, we will have a Wildtree Tasting in the Narthex where you can sample food made with Wildtree products. These organic, low salt spice blends can be added to your food to give you a healthy way to prepare dinner. Purchase the products that you enjoy and 20% of the proceeds will go to our Youth Trip. Stop by and check it out!

Wildtree Freezer Meal Workshop - Tuesday, May 24th at 7:00 pm, attend a freezer meal workshop at our Church. At this workshop, using the all-natural Wildtree spice blends, along with meat and veggies you supply, you can assemble 10 healthy meals for you to freeze at home. Advance sign up is required and details of what you will make will be available in the Narthex. 15% of all workshop proceeds will go toward our Youth Trip and your summer meals will be a whole lot easier.

Sounds great but can't make these dates? Host a Wildtree Freezer Meal Workshop at your home with your friends in June and proceeds can still help our youth! Curious to see what Types of products Wildtree has to offer? www.mywildtree.com/jackson4
 Questions? See Sherri Jackson or email her at jackson4wildtree@hotmail.com



The Fourth Annual RIM Refugee Walk

Saturday May 21, 2016
at 10 AM
rain or shine!

Lake Quannapowitt in Wakefield, MA



Funds raised will help to pay for basic living expenses for asylum seekers in eastern Massachusetts who have no alternatives for survival, aside from relying on the generosity of others.

Building a Human Chain of Hope
www.r-i-m.net

