The Decline of Halloween

Last Sunday I preached about the downside to our well-intentioned lessons to our kids about avoiding strangers. While we all want our kids to be safe, the decades long mantra to avoid “Mr. Stranger Danger” has taken a toll on everything from helping our neighbors and welcoming refugees to remembering that at the center of the Christian faith is welcoming the stranger.

With Halloween fast approaching, I have discovered an additional way in which this is finding expression. Did you know that the celebration of Halloween is in steep decline? Not only do national surveys say that this is the case, but it also fits with what I’ve heard many people say: “Where are all the trick or treaters? We used to get piles of them. Now, hardly any.”

The reason for this is a bit of a mystery. For some, religious reasons cause some people not to celebrate Halloween. It is seen, incorrectly I would argue, as a celebration of paganism at best and Satan at worst. But that is a small number of people. Another reason is that the children of baby boomers are now largely past the trick or treating age so there are fewer kids out there to trick or treat. Again, though, that is only part of the answer.

A significant reason, I think, is that trick or treating used to be just an extension of kids’ daily wandering about their neighborhoods; riding bikes or playing whiffle ball in the street. Kids don’t do that anymore. Going out into the neighborhood is a foreign concept. Why? Because it may not be safe. Kids do get hurt trick or treating. Why take the chance?

More importantly, the virtual world that most kids inhabit is where they are more at home celebrating Halloween. A lot of the computer games kids play today have “mods” for different holidays including Halloween. I would not doubt that while public celebrations of Halloween have seen a decline in participation, online celebrations have increased.

Call me old fashioned, but I love Halloween. I mean the get out there and knock on doors kind of...
Ginny Niles, Tom McLoughlin (Judy Murphy’s brother), Nyal Fuentes, Bryan Mc Allister-Grande, Claire Griffin, Herb Gray, Bill Albright, Barbara Wellington, Becky Faro, Bill Copeland, Gem Colvin, Dot Allen, Bob Pierce, Anne Wing, Ella Boyle, Scott Chisholm.

Circle 4 will meet in the Church Lounge on Tuesday, November 1st at 2:00 p.m.

SUNDAY SCHOOL:
This week our middle school and high school youth will be hosting a Halloween party for our children!

Everyone is invited to wear their costumes to church this Sunday, and plan to join us in the basement after Sunday School for some ghoulish- but not too scary - fun!

Middle school and high school youth are reminded to proceed directly to the basement upon arrival at church at 10 am.

Youth Reminder: Next Sunday November 6th youth are reminded to come to church in their “raking clothes”. The raking brigade will be setting out shortly after 10 am.

Children are invited to sing for the Thanksgiving Service on November 20th
companied by Morning Star Voices and the Bell Choir! The rehearsals to be followed immediately after service on 10/23, 10/30, 11/6 and 11/13. Please see Mariko for more information.

Halloween Party
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30

All children are encouraged to wear Halloween costumes to church and join our Middle School and High School youth for a Halloween Party directly following worship in the church basement. We’ll have games, crafts, snacks and pizza. New this year, instead of a Haunted house, the youth are planning a glow-in-the-dark game room. Be sure and join the fun!

Winter Wonderland Fair
December 2 – 6:00-8:00 pm
December 3 – 9:00 am-2:00 pm

Please mark your calendars and get ready for our Annual Fair, which is not only an important fund raiser for our church but also a wonderful opportunity to work together and strengthen our ties. The following areas need your help now:

Lois Gauvreau (781-665-2247) is asking all of us to donate costume and fine jewelry now to replenish our supply for this popular table. Small jewelry boxes are also in demand. Donations can be left in the church office or given to Lois directly.

Call David Gauvreau (781-665-2247) if you have questions or need pick up of your collectibles. Vintage pieces of paper, china, figurines, and miniatures are all highly desirable to fair goers, so donate your items now!

Jim and Lisa Oosterman (781-662-7445) are ready for your contributions to the silent auction. Items, events, adventures, getaways are all a draw to fair goers. The wide variety of goods and services make this a busy and successful locale.

More to follow in the next weeks - and don’t forget to sign up for a work shift on Fair days. Volunteers make this annual event a success!
On November 20th, right after the service, our church will have its 6th Annual Thanksgiving Dinner! It is always a meaningful time in that we all can gather in the Narthex, share in a delicious potluck meal and visit with one another.

As in the past, there will be turkey for everyone, and members of the congregation bring their choice of a side dish, salad, or dessert. A signup board is now in the Narthex on one of the front windows. Take a moment when next you are at church and sign up to join us, and think about what you might like to bring to share.

Please plan to join us on November 20th. We hope to see you there!

Donna and Ron Miner

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**Refugee Immigration Ministry**

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**30th Anniversary International Dinner**
November 6, 2016
First Congregational Church
121 west Foster St., Melrose MA
Tickets: $40 ($35 if you buy before October 15)
Mail check to RIM at 6 Pleasant St., Suite 612, Malden, MA 02148

**Sharing the Gifts of our Diverse Cultures**
5:30 PM Hors d’oeuvres
6:30 PM Dinner: An International Buffet
Silent Auction and Awards Ceremony

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**MEMORIAL WREATHS**

Four beautiful Christmas wreaths will be placed around the church during the coming holiday season. If you would like to donate a wreath in memory of a loved one, please call Susan at the church office, 665-2111. The wreaths are $50.00 each. They will be hung before the beginning of Advent (November 27), to be enjoyed throughout the Advent season.

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**The Big Bad Ugly Bread of Life**
**Yard Sale, Flea Market & Boutique Thrift Shoppe**
**Oct. 29 & 30, 10 am - 6 pm**

Furniture, lamps, cookware, small appliances, office supplies, photocopier, rugs, computers & monitors, new & gently used quality clothing & footwear, office tables, chinaware, toys, blahblahblah!

Where? Bread of Life Office/Pantry, 54 Eastern Avenue, Malden, MA
Why? All proceeds help Bread of Life feed our neighbors & friends in need
No early birds!
Mission of Deeds
Small Household Items Drive
Saturday, November 5, 2016
10 am – 2 pm
Sponsored jointly by the Melrose Rotary Club and the First Congregational Church of Melrose

Please bring your new or clean and gently used items to the parking lot of the First Congregational Church on Saturday, November 5. A Mission of Deeds truck will be parked to receive donations between 10 am – 2 pm. The following small household items are greatly needed by Mission of Deeds:

**Linens:**
- New bed pillows
- **Twin size sheets**
- **Twin size blankets**
- **Twin size comforters**
- Full/Queen blankets
- Full/Queen comforters
- Towel/face clothes

  **especially needed**

**Kitchen:**
- **Pots and pans**
- Silverware/utensils/knives
- Glasses
- Mugs
- Baking Pans
- **Mixing bowls**
- **Coffee makers/tea kettles**
- **Toasters/Toaster ovens**
- **Blenders/mixers**
- Dish Towels/pot holders

  **especially needed**

**Children’s items:**
- Books
- DVD’s
- Clean stuffed animals
- Pack n’ plays

**Household:**
- Lamps
- Microwave ovens
- Vacuums
- Framed artwork
- Clocks/alarm clocks
- Irons/ironing boards
- Fans

A receipt for tax deduction purposes can be provided.

Your donations to Mission of Deeds will be used to help set up households for men, women and children of all ages, including: veterans, disadvantaged families, the previously homeless, survivors of domestic abuse, refugees, the elderly, survivors of fire and other disasters, and those with disabilities.

**Reflect and Respond**
Rev. Dominic will be hosting a Reflect and Respond session after worship November 13. 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.