



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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More Than One Christmas

Have you noticed that there are really two Christmases at play in the world today?

One is secular expression of Christmas characterized by hyper-commercialization and the other is the religious Christmas where Christ is at the center.

In fact, some would say that there are *three* Christmases in the modern world. Here's what C.S. Lewis once wrote (in a moment of what sounds like humbug-ery):

"Three things go by the name of Christmas. One is a religious festival. This is important and obligatory for Christians...The second (it has complex historical connections with the first, but we needn't go into them) is a popular holiday, an occasion for merry-making and hospitality. If it were my business to have a 'view' on this, I should say that I much approve of merry-making. But what I approve of much more is everybody minding his own business...But the third thing called Christmas is unfortunately everyone's business. I mean of course the commercial racket."

Whether it is two or three, the problem is that the secular Christmas is overshadowing the religious one. This is to the detriment of everyone because without the religious truth of Christmas, we can forget why we are doing what we are doing at this time of year.

How do we solve this? Some would say that in order to restore the holiness of Christmas we need more manger scenes in public squares, Christian hymns instead of Christmas carols, and the abandonment of "Happy Holidays" in favor of "Merry Christmas" when greeted in a store. That should do it.

To me, it is less about doing battle with the secular Christmas than it is turning up the volume on the religious Christmas.

Trying to get the secular Christmas to look more like the religious one is a good and lofty goal. In reality, however, Christmas is made holy by a *devotional* appreciation for the near unbelievable truth that God loved us so much that God embraced the human condition. God became one of us; full of laughter and



Sunday, December 25, 2016

9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal
10:00 AM – WORSHIP (No Sunday School)
11:15 AM – Coffee Hour

THE STEEPLE is lit this week in memory of Cynthia Hussey, Nancy Decker and Flo Hall with a gift given by Circle 4.

DURING THE WEEK

Saturday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

7:00 PM – Candlelight, Caroling and Communion Service

Sunday, December 25 – Christmas Day

10:00 AM – Worship Service, No Sunday School

Sunday, January 1 – New Year's Day

10:00 AM – Worship

Tuesday, January 3

7:15 PM – RIM Meeting, Library

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

Wednesday, January 4

7:15 PM – Bells rehearsal

Sunday, January 8 – Communion Sunday

10:00 AM – Worship (note change of date for communion)

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 8:00 PM and

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

tears and anger and heartache and celebration and grief.

What does that mean for your life? What does that mean for our world?

Those questions are not answered by more manger scenes, fewer "winter carols", or saying "Merry Christmas" instead of "Happy Holidays". And they certainly aren't answered by Amazon prime or next day delivery.

Those questions are only answered in your own heart when, in your mind's eye, you enter a stable on a dark night and behold God as a baby; a baby that changed everything.

See you in church,

Rev. Dominic



NOTE: There will be no Messenger the week after Christmas. Messenger will resume January 3rd, with cutoff date for items of submission being December 30th. Merry Christmas!

Christmas Services coming up:

Saturday, December 24

7:00 PM - Christmas Eve Candle Light and Communion Service. The offering this evening will be for the two Melrose Food pantries and Bread of Life.

Sunday, December 25

Christmas Day Service will be at 10:00 AM.



Temple Beth Shalom of Melrose invites you to the **29th Annual Christmas Day Dinner**

Green Street Baptist Church
179 Green Street, Melrose, MA

Thursday, December 25, 2016

****Turkey dinner with all the trimmings****

****Delicious desserts****

****Traditional holiday music * Surprises for all****

Doors open at 12:30 PM

Dinner served at 1:30 PM

RSVP 781-662-6886 – Milano Senior Center
(even if you're *not* a senior!)

*Please request transportation if you need it,
and specify if you require special accommodations.*



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.

Additional poinsettias were

In Memory of Those who have touched out lives From The Ahlin/Krueger families



SUNDAY SCHOOL:

There is also no Sunday School on December 25th. However, for children too young to remain in Worship, we will have a Christmas video set up in the Library. Parents who choose this option should plan to remain with their children.

On Sunday, January 1, 2017, there will be an Open Classroom activity for children in the K-2 classroom. Older children are invited to remain in Worship.

***There is no admission charge
All are welcome!
Singles, Friends, Families***

**Compliments of
Temple Beth Shalom
Green Street Baptist Church
Melrose Council on Aging**