



**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*

*Mariko Matsumura, Interim Music Director*

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**Crèche and Cross**

As many of you know, I love holidays. So much so that Christmas decorations (including the tree) go up the morning after Thanksgiving. Our whole family loves this tradition but by the time Christmas rolls around there is the feeling that it would be good to “get our house back”. Consequently, the same decorations come down the morning after Christmas (to make way for the New Year’s decorations, of course!).

One “decoration” that does not come down with the Christmas stuff is our crèche or manger-scene. That stays up through January 6<sup>th</sup> in order to honor Epiphany.

In some ways, it is something that should stay up all year in our homes and in our churches. Like the cross, it is one of the most powerful messages of the Christian faith; and it is told without words.

From the barn animals to the Wise Men to the Holy Family, the manger-scene tells the story of why we are Christians: We believe in a God who had both the humility and audacity to be born as one of us in the worst possible conditions. It is a timeless message God’s solidarity with us in times of darkness and struggle. It is a message of new life.

Not only does the scene call us to witness God in human form, it is also the culmination of the Wise Men’s searching-adventure to discover a new king. The fact that he was not born in a palace did not dissuade them from offering their gifts and paying homage—testimony to a trust we should all emulate: that God can appear in the most unexpected places.

The crèche is a poignant reminder of the universality of God’s love. Since the Wise Men were gentiles, we can be sure that no one is excluded from divine grace.

It makes sense that the simplicity of the cross (its shape, not its meaning) caused it to be the central symbol of our faith. The manger-scene, however, is filled to overflowing with the redemptive message of God in Jesus Christ: That we are accompanied, we are valued, we will not be abandoned, that light shines in the darkest of times.

**Sunday, January 15, 2017**

- 9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal
- 10:00 AM – WORSHIP and Sunday School
- 11:15 AM – Coffee Hour
- 11:30 AM – New Member Class, Library

**DURING THE WEEK**

**Monday, January 16**

5:00 PM-8:00 PM – Martin Luther King, Jr. Potluck Dinner and Program, narthex

**Tuesday, January 17**

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

**Wednesday, January 18**

7:15 PM – Bells rehearsal

**Thursday, January 19**

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

**Friday, January 20**

1:00 PM – Staff Meeting

**Sunday, January 22**

10:00 AM – Worship and Sunday School

11:30 AM – New Member Class, Library

7:00 PM – Confirmation Class

**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

It is a message I pray you will carry with you into this Epiphany season and throughout this coming year.

See you in church,



Chisholm.

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

*Our prayers and sympathy go to the family and friends of Connie Robinson, who passed away on Wednesday, January 4<sup>th</sup>. Connie was a very active member of First Congregational and especially Circle 4.*

**THE MELROSE COMMUNITY  
CELEBRATES THE LEGACY OF  
THE REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**



**22ND ANNUAL POTLUCK DINNER AND PROGRAM**

- The First Congregational Church, 121 West Foster Street
- Dinner at 5:00 p.m. (please bring a main dish or desert to serve 4-6 people with ingredients identified)
- Family Program from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

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## Music Committee

### SUNDAY SCHOOL:

K thru 8 will be making Souper Bowl posters in rooms 7/8. High School is invited to stay in service.

Hello friends,  
The Music Search Committee would like to hear your input on the role of music in our church.

Please complete our short survey, either online (<https://goo.gl/f8B1Ed>) or using the paper version.

This survey is anonymous, and can be completed in as little as 5 minutes. Your input is very valuable to us as we craft an updated position description for our Music Ministry Director.

You are welcome to share this survey with any young adults in your home, and include any comments from younger children as well.

Please share your response **by Sunday 1/22/17**.

Thank you,  
Music Hiring Committee: Ann Ahlin, Tom Foth, Betsy Garrett, Beth Grzegorzewski, Bob and Lisa Jamison, Michael Leskiw, Jaime McAllister-Grande and Rev. Dominic