The End Times

“‘The end is near!’” That tag line has been used in a host of comics to depict a religious fanatic wearing a sandwich board and urging people to “repent”.

Funny thing is, while we might relegate the idea of the end times to comic strips, it was more conviction than speculation in biblical times. In fact, if you rummage through the bible, you will find a large quantity of what biblical scholars call “apocalyptic literature”. Visions, stories, predictions and signs. There is a surprising amount of it in both the old and new testaments.

That might seem sort of morbid to us moderns—this strange fascination with doom and gloom—but here’s the thing: it is almost always the case that “the end of days” was looked upon with enthusiastic anticipation. It was good news, not something to be dreaded. People rejoiced at the notion!

Why? Because, biblically, any apocalypse is less about the destruction of what is and more about making way for what is to come.

It is this little, enlightened crack in the otherwise nonsensical views held by Armageddon-ists that can allow us to pull this tradition into our modern lives.

Think of it this way: what person of faith doesn’t yearn to stop playing by the world’s rules and start playing by God’s rules? We all want that because it is impossible to “win” by the world’s rules. We are never going to be young enough, thin enough, pretty enough, fit enough, rich enough, happy enough, or famous enough by the world’s standards because as soon as we even approach one of those things, the target moves. The overarching rule of the world is that there is no such thing as “enough”.

So, yes, as faithful people we want that world to end. We want to get off the treadmill and out of the maze and live a new way. A way that matters and is fulfilling.

To me, that is all that apocalyptic literature is. Sure there can be some pretty intense images of cataclysms and retributions conveyed, but at its core it is simply a validation of that desire; a desire to see and live in a better world.

At the very least, it is a world worth imagining. At most, it is a world worth working for.

See you in church,
LENTEN ADULT EDUCATION CLASS
CHRISTIANITY AND WORLD RELIGIONS
After worship each Sunday of Lent beginning March 5th.

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.

SUNDAY SCHOOL:
We hope you check out the "steps" we are making to follow Jesus on the bulletin board!

During this search period for another admin we are in need of second adult volunteers. This week we will need a second adult. The following Sunday's 2/26, 3/5, 3/19, we are in need of a second adult volunteer in K to 2. With the Chili cook off there is sure to be a big class.

We are looking for a 3 to 5 teacher to host 1 class a month in March and April. If you have thought about teaching this is a great opportunity with no big commitment. We have the lessons and crafts all pre planned!

Thank you
Lisa and Sherri!

WARRANT FOR THE WINTER
CONGREGATIONAL MEETING OF
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH in
MELROSE, UCC
February 26, 2017

To the Members of the First Congregational Church in Melrose, United Church of Christ:

In accordance with the by-laws, there will be a congregational meeting on Sunday, February 26, 2017 immediately following the worship service to receive and act upon the following Articles:

Article 1: To receive and act upon the Clerk’s Report for the calendar year 2016;

Article 2: To receive and act upon the Report of Invested Funds for the calendar year 2016;

Article 3: To receive and act upon the Report of Operating Income and Expenses for the calendar year 2016;

Article 4: To adopt a budget for calendar year 2017;

Article 5: To transact such other business as may come before the meeting.

Rebecca Fuentes and Darby Drafts
Trustees of Human Resources and Congregational Records/Clerk
Meet our newest members that joined January 29th!
Watch for more in the weeks to come.

Sally Ann Watt
It is my pleasure to introduce Sally Ann Watt to her new spiritual home. Sally Ann is currently living in Wakefield with her husband, Bill, and her granddaughter, Eden. She and Eden have been looking for a church that satisfied their spiritual needs and have found this in the First Congregational Church of Melrose. Sally Ann expresses great pride and love for her granddaughter. Her eyes light up when she talks of her. Eden is in the process of taking the confirmation classes. Sally Ann describes her granddaughter as a deep thinker and very spiritual. Sally Ann grew up in Wakefield and spent most of her adult life living there. She and her husband, Bill, have been married for 39 years. They have raised three boys. Sally Ann was a loving caregiver of her sons but her caring and conscientious nature did not stop there. She has also spent her adult life as a teacher; first as a teacher in the Tall Spire Nursery School in Wakefield for 18 years. In this preschool program she worked with our own Joan Chetwynd.

Later she decided that she wanted to work with Special Needs children. She went back to school and received her Master’s Degree in Special Education from Lesley University. After graduating she taught at the Learning Center in Reading. She specialized in teaching Reading and Math to children with learning challenges. Sally Ann particularly loved this area of teaching because she knew first-hand what it felt like to have learning challenges. She, herself, grew up with dyslexia, and developed a passion to help children with the same learning difficulties. Sally Ann was particularly interested in teaching Reading. She worked in this capacity for nineteen years.

Although she retired in 2013, her service to others has never stopped. She likes to volunteer and has already committed herself to helping with the Bread of Life and participating in the Racial Justice Ministry group. Sally Ann considers her volunteer work and making crafts to be her lifelong hobbies. And I imagine that Sally Ann will become a familiar figure in our church community, buzzing around helping in whatever way she can.

Ginny Altmann

SHARING PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE
Each week during worship, Reverend Dominic invites the congregation to share moments of concern or celebration for people they know. A candle is lit from the Christ candle signifying the light of Christ's love surrounding them. This is a very special and meaningful part of our worship together.

Names of friends, relatives, and co-workers outside of our congregation are often raised during Prayers of the People. It would be comforting for these people to know that their name was raised in prayer here at our church.

If you would like the person(s) whose name you raised during worship to receive a note to this effect, we invite you to write their name and address in the purple notebook on the Card Ministry table in the narthex. Notes will be sent for concerns, not celebrations, and will be signed by Reverend Dominic on behalf of First Congregational Church.

We also invite you to visit the Card Ministry table after the service to sign cards for members of our church family.

We thank you for your help in reaching out to others.

Ginny Altmann and Becky Foth
Co-Deacons of Spiritual Care

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 4:30 PM and 8:00 PM and Saturdays at 9:00 AM (men) and 3:00 PM – Rm. 8

FREE CHRONIC PAIN PROGRAM
Is living with chronic pain affecting your life? Chronic pain may cause sleep loss, increased stress and loss of motivation around everyday activities. Learn to manage pain and continue living a fulfilling life through this FREE six-session program. On Wednesdays, March 8 – April 12, 2017 from 9:30am to 12 noon at the Stoneham Senior Center; 136 Elm Street, Stoneham MA; Sponsored by Hallmark Health. Registration is required SPACE IS LIMITED. Please call 781-338-7823
Men, Women & Children are cordially invited to attend this annual gathering of World Day of Prayer (WDP) which is sponsored by Church Women United (CWU). In particular, the area celebration will be hosted by the Northeastern Massachusetts CWU Unit.

Women of the Philippines wrote this year's program. It's entitled, "Am I Being Unfair to You?" The Biblical basis is Matthew 20:1-16. What a timely theme!

Join with over 170 countries/regions participating annually in this ecumenical tradition. It begins at sunrise in the pacific, following the sun across the globe, until the end of the day. Come help promote peace, justice, healing & wholeness, as the WDP motto indicates, "Informed Prayer, Prayerful Action."

Where:
The Parish of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ Our Lord & Savior, downstairs
429 Upham St., Melrose MA 02176

When:
FRIDAY March 3rd, 2017 - 1 to 3 PM
Program at 1pm, followed by refreshments, concluding by 3 PM
Please Come, Learn, Pray & Share! See You There!