



First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

in Melrose

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Messenger

Rev. Dominic Taranowski, Pastor

Mariko Matsumura, Director of Music Ministry

Dunia Velez, Administrative Assistant for Youth Programs

OFFICE 781-665-2111 - FAX 781-665-8824

E-MAIL info@fccmelrose.org Website www.fccmelrose.org

Rev. Dominic's Cell phone: 781-526-3428

VOLUME 100

November 17, 2017

Number 11

How Long, O Lord?

The mass shooting at the First Baptist Church in Southerland Springs, Texas can be added to a long list of such shootings that are not only tragic but leave us weary. Yet such things continue to happen in the context of our call to discipleship in Jesus Christ. How are we to respond?

Below is a pastoral letter released by the Conference Ministers of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. I commend it to you with the additional prayer that beyond our grief, we utilize this news to fuel our work to create a new, better normal than the one that is emerging.

See you in church,

--Rev. Dominic

Dear Friends in Christ,

We live in a violent world where people kill each other. We live in a world where hate and injustice often seem to go unpunished. We live in a world where innocent victims are shot, or run over, or blown up by a pressure cooker. We have grown weary of the phrase, "Our thoughts and prayers" when we know that prayer is important but this madness calls for resolute action. We have seen statements made by our own church leaders that witness to their frustration by saying simply: "I don't know what to pray for or say right now." We feel helpless and afraid and angry with our nation's rhetoric and division around gun control and the embrace of hatred and violence and the lack of adequate mental health treatment in our communities. "How long O Lord" seems to be the right lament for the living of these days.

As leaders of our three Conferences we do not have easy answers or quick solutions. We feel the same frustration and anger that the cycle of violence in our country seems to never end. We do believe that the purpose for which we are joined together is to make this world more just, more loving and more compassionate. We do believe that our purpose is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We embrace the vision of the United Church of Christ that says, "United in Christ's love, a just world for all."

We weep with those who weep. We must work for change and address the systemic causes of violence in our world. We must call on our lawmakers to put into law sensible gun control and to provide stronger mental health resources. We must speak up against hatred and violence and xenophobia in all forms. We must not allow division and differences of opinion to divide us. We must speak the truth in love.

"How long, O Lord"

It's not the Lord's "fault" that we pose this question. The "how long" is how long will we be silent and thus complicit in the hate and violence that now engulfs our country.

"If not us, who? If not now, when?"

We are stronger together. Let us strengthen our resolve to love and action.

The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, Minister & President, Massachusetts Conference

The Rev. Barbara Libby, Interim Conference Minister, Rhode Island Conference

The Rev. Kent Siladi, Conference Minister, Connecticut Conference

Sunday, November 19, 2017

9:00 AM – Joint Morning Star Voices and Bells Rehearsal

10:00 AM – WORSHIP and Sunday School

11:15 AM – Caroling Practice, Sanctuary

11:30 AM – Annual Thanksgiving Dinner

DURING THE WEEK

Wednesday, November 15

7:15 PM – Joint Bells & Morning Star Voices rehearsal

Saturday, November 18

9:00 AM to Noon – Fall Cleanup Day (inside and out)

Thursday, November 23

Happy Thanksgiving

Friday, November 24

Office closed

Sunday, November 26 – Baptism Sunday

10:00 AM Worship and Sunday School

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
- Makam Music Group** – Sundays 4:45-6:30 PM – Lounge
- 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 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, 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



Barbara Krol-Sinclair, Sam Lynch, Emelie Burnham, Marilyn McCommas, Bill Albright, Anne Wing, Bob Hughes, Mary Sakata and Becky Faro (Trish Faro's daughters), Nyal Fuentes, Claire Griffin, Bill Copeland, Merle

Copeland, Dot Allen, Bob Pierce, Michael Connelly, Francoise.



Congratulations to Jaime and Bryan McAllister-Grande upon the baptism of their daughter, Eve, on Sunday, November 12th. As an expression of the church's love, support, and care, Common Threads was pleased to present a handmade blanket to Eve.

**Fall Clean Up: Saturday, November 18th!
9:00 a.m. to Noon**

Join us as we rake up the leaves and prepare the grounds for winter. There may also be some interior jobs. Hope to see you there!



Thanksgiving Dinner

The Thanksgiving Dinner will be held this Sunday, November 19th. If you haven't signed up but wish to attend, just bring something to share (a salad, cookies from Shaw's, some cranberry sauce?) And if for any reason you can't do that, please come anyway, we want you to join us!
- Your Fellowship Deacons



The 2018 FCC Stewardship Campaign is drawing to a close. So far we've heard the pledge intentions of about 85% of our Congregation. To those who have responded already, **THANK YOU!**

But maybe we haven't heard from you yet. If your household is anything like mine it's not because you don't mean to. Like many, I can only focus on the most urgent issues in front of me, and all else has to wait until I can make time to focus on it (usually when THAT becomes urgent). With that in mind, we have tried to make renewing your pledge as quick and easy as possible, while avoiding the stress of URGENT.

Long gone are the days when troops are rallied and house calls are made. And we no longer send out pledge mailings – they've become cost prohibitive. Instead, we've focused on sharing Stewardship moments during service on Sundays. And we've heard from a number of people in our Congregation sharing stories of why they pledge and the causes that their pledges help support.

The formal Stewardship campaign wraps up this Sunday, November 17 – Thanksgiving Sunday – so that we can begin the process of planning the 2018 budget. There's still time for you to let us know your Stewardship intentions for 2018:

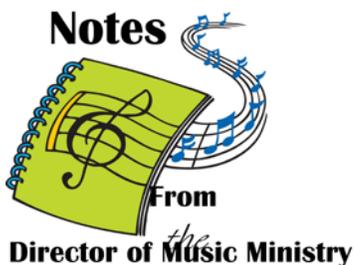
1. You can fill out a Stewardship form online here: <https://goo.gl/forms/s90g4FMmfKZ1CTRE3>
2. You can send a quick email: rdurantjr@gmail.com
3. You can fill out a form in the Narthex on Sunday.

Thank you for your continued support of the FCC.

Rob Durant
Co-Deacon of Finance



By Lighting our Church Steeple in memory or in honor of loved ones, you can help our church financially. Contact the church office (781-665-2111 or info@fccmelrose.org) to sign up for a week beginning on a Sunday. Your gift will be announced in the Sunday Bulletin and "The Messenger". A \$25.00 per week contribution is suggested.



Hello FCC friends,

On behalf of Music Ministry Committee, thank you so much for signing up for the traveling caroling troupes.

We are going to work up our appetite for the annual church thanksgiving dinner by staying in the sanctuary immediately after the postlude to do a run through of the songs we will be singing and very, very info meeting led by Michael Leskiw.

Please be advised that by the time you are done practicing, the line for the food will be short and you will be ready for the nice hearty meal!

Looking forward to seeing you all!
Happy Caroling!

Mariko Matsumura
Director of Music Ministry



SUNDAY SCHOOL:

This week the Toddlers through 5th graders will be talking about God helping us when we are hurting, and about kindness. The older group will be making cards to send to our homebound members and give to friends and strangers on Melrose Random Act of Kindness Day on Monday.

The Middle School class will be making centerpieces that we will enjoy at the Thanksgiving dinner after church. After our dinner, we encourage you to take a centerpiece and give it to someone for the Melrose Random Act of Kindness day on Monday November 20.

The High School class can choose to remain in worship or help make centerpieces with the Middle School class this week.

Volunteers: We are always looking for volunteers to help out in our K-2 Sunday School class! There's no preparation required...just be ready to help out with crafts and keeping the children focused on the discussion. Please talk to Lisa, Sherri, or Dunia at church, or email Sherri at sltjmtj@hotmail.com.

****We are continuing to collect any Halloween candy** you'd like to donate to be sent to the troops! Please leave your donations on the small table outside the office and library. We'll collect donations through Sunday November 26.**

Family Worship: As a reminder, we will be having a Family Worship service on Sunday November 26. There will be no Sunday School classes this day (Nursery care is always available!), and families are invited to worship together.



Winter Wonderland Fair
December 1 – 6-8 pm
December 2 – 9am-2pm

Hear ye! Hear ye!

Bakers, remember that gluten free baked goods are always welcome and this year, more than ever, we encourage everyone to contribute to this very popular table.

Jewelry! Collectibles! Gifts! Christmas items! All of these tables are gratefully accepting your contributions.

Gently used toys, games, puzzles and books will be accepted the week before the fair.

Silent Auction: Please see Jim or Lisa Oosterman with your contribution to the Auction. This is a very popular table and a variety of creative choices generates interest.

Raffle Baskets: There is still time to pick a theme, choose a container, and fill it with intriguing items for the raffle. "Basket Elves" will wrap, tie with a festive bow and tag your basket if you would like this help. Bring your basket to church by the week of November 26 for this service.

Gingerbread Houses: Join the builders of gingerbread houses on Tuesday Nov. 28 or Wednesday Nov. 29 from 6:30 - 8:30 pm in the basement. Great fun, no experience needed.

Candy Cane Cafe:

Friday, Baked Potato Bar (with all the toppings)
Hot Dog and Bun
Mac n Cheese

Saturday, Mini meatball sub
Festive frankfurter
Chicken Nuggets
Grilled Cheese
Variety of soups

Please check out the Fair Board in the narthex and sign up:

to decorate the church (Friday after Thanksgiving 8:30 - 11:00 am)
to set up
to work a shift (or 2)
to break down and clean up
to enjoy fellowship and a common goal with old and new friends!

Stewardship CAMPAIGN

It seems like kindness has taken a holiday. Let's give it one back.

That's the hook I used in an editorial I wrote for the Free Press. If you don't know, a hook is the first line of an essay or editorial. Something to keep you reading.

I created a social media campaign in 2016 to designate November 20th as Melrose Random Acts of Kindness Day. I just felt as if we could use a little more kindness in our community and I, for one, decided to take November 20th to consciously practice kindness throughout the day. The campaign was a success and I was so gratified to see people sharing and celebrating kindness. But not everyone knew about it so this year, I've started spreading the news earlier.

This November 20th 2017 will be the second annual Melrose Random Acts of Kindness Day. There will be a banner across Main Street. The mayor will publish in his blog 100 ways to be kind. The chamber of commerce has alerted local merchants. The schools have been encouraged to participate. My hope is that it will be bigger and better and there will be electricity in the air, as each of us finds new and unusual ways to celebrate kindness.

So that's why I wrote the editorial in the Free Press. Because I want to get the word out there: Kindness. November 20th. Be there. Participate. Embrace it.

It seems like kindness has taken a holiday. Let's give it one back.

Reverend Dominic offered me the opportunity to tell all of you about the day so here I am. But here's the thing. In this church, with this group of people sitting here before me, there is no lack of kindness. In fact, I could probably walk down the aisle, put this here microphone up to each set of lips and have each of you call out what you've done to be kind today. And it isn't even noon.

It is amazing, you are amazing. From the many choirs who sing for us to Reverend Dominic's children sermon, to food pantry collections and clothing collections and simply smiles and hugs and constant affirmations that "no, you're not late! We just started," when we walk in late each week, there is no lack of kindness shared in this church.

So how do I talk about Melrose Random Acts of Kindness Day (November 20) to a group of people who are randomly kind every day? I am not sure.

So, instead, I am going to tell you a story. Because I am a storyteller and you are a captive audience. Lock the doors.

This is a story about Bread of Life and before I get started let me just give all of you an open invitation. Join us at Bread of Life. You will meet amazing people, on both sides of the serving table. You will feel empowered that you have made a teeny tiny difference in this world. If you come often enough, you will remember names and smiles and that some people don't like pork and others like lots of butter on their potatoes. You are so very welcome to join the army led by Sallie Klemm to fill bellies that need to be filled and have fun doing it. Join us.

When my sons were young, we volunteered once each month at Bread of Life. My boys don't come nearly as often anymore; life seems to have gotten in the way. They still come sometimes and are always greeted as if they have not missed a day. I love that.

Anyway, after probably a year of fairly committed volunteering, I was walking down Main Street in Melrose with one of my sons. All of a sudden, he calls out, "Mom, there's one of our people!" I looked in the direction he's pointing and I see a man who is a regular at Bread of Life. We smiled and waved and he walked on and we walked on.

But I am thinking to myself, well, that's a great a hook. "Mom, there's one of our people!" I started to mull over ways I could use it in a story. My son had identified this man with such urgency, as if one of our chess pieces had jumped off the board and started running free. As if we should have grabbed him and hauled him back to Bread of Life where he belongs. I wondered if my son would have had the same reaction if he saw one of his teachers out on the loose, not in the school where she belonged. Or if he had run into Reverend Dominic at Starbucks, in regular clothes, would he have called out, wondering how this preacher had escaped from church and was masquerading as just a regular old guy.

I just loved it. The world through the eyes of a child. I forgot about it for a while, tucked it in the back of my brain where I keep my stories. But the next time we were at Bread of Life, I saw this same guy again. He talked to me a little bit. He used to live in Melrose, played baseball at Pine Banks. He thanked me for keeping the sidewalks clean (still not sure why, but I took the compliment). He ate the meal that we served and thanked us again as he left.

As we cleaned up from the meal, I decide to try out my angle for a story. Debbie Anderson, another Bread of Life regular, and I were cleaning up. I told her about "Mom, there's one of our people!" I was looking for a laugh, really. I was crafting my story, making sure it worked. Well, Debbie didn't laugh. She did smile. She said to me, "He's right, you know. They are all our people."

Well, with my apologies to Reverend Dominic, this was the most powerful, shortest sermon I have ever heard. I do believe I have thought of Debbie's statement every day since, because I love that, the devotion to all people as ours. It's a story that took a different route than I expected. Instead of seeing the world through the eyes of a child, it is a story of a commitment to all people as our own. That's better.

And the thing is, although Debbie is a wonderful person and a fabulous Bread of Life volunteer, these words could just have easily have come from any of you. Because each of you, well, you get it. They are all our people.

So, November 20th. Melrose Random Acts of Kindness Day. While the rest of our great city is finding a random stranger and being especially kind -- buying a cup of coffee, cleaning up a sidewalk, giving up a much-sought after parking spot -- well, this is what I want you to do. Keep taking care of our people, all of our people. Keep lifting them up, keep feeding them, and clothing them, and laughing with them, and smiling with them, throwing in the occasional hug. Embrace our people, all of them, with your kindness, with your love. Spread the word.

Because it really is time for Kindness to have a holiday.

Maribeth Darwin

ADVENT
Kindness Calendars



Advent Workshop

Everyone is invited to our annual Advent Workshop after church on Sunday, December 3rd. This year we will build on the theme of Random Act of Kindness, started in Melrose on November 20th last year, by our own Marybeth Darwin. We will be making Advent Kindness Calendars to encourage our kind acts each day during the Advent season.

As always, this is an intergenerational get-together, for all ages, families, couples and singles.

Come and join the fun. Hope to see you there.

**CHRISTMAS FLOWERS -
\$15.00 per plant**

Send your order form by
Sunday, December 10 to:
Darby Drafts, 25 Adams St.,
Melrose MA 02176



Ordered by:

Phone #: _____

IN MEMORY OF:

of plants ordered _____
Amount enclosed: \$ _____

**Please make checks payable to
First Congregational Church.**



**Christmas
Pageant**

**Christmas Pageant
Sunday December 17th
During church service**

We are going to have a Christmas Pageant again this year on December 17th during service. We are looking for children, middle and high school youth and adults to participate. The Narrator will do all the speaking. Other roles will dress up in costume. The entire congregation will participate in songs throughout the pageant.

There will be one brief rehearsal Sunday December 10th.

Please sign up on the poster in the Narthex or email Heidi Buser.

Roles:

- Narrator -Tom Foth
- Mary - Jaime M. with her new baby
- Joseph - Middle school, high school or adult
- 3 Kings
- Shepherds (children, youth or adults - multiple parts)
- Angels (children - multiple parts)
- Star
- Animals (children - multiple parts)

We will need adult help to manage the costumes the day of the pageant.

Finally, we would like a core group to commit to the pageant, but will take walk on roles the day of.

Thank you
Heidi