



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

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Independent of Place

Have you ever visited the site of the Pilgrims landing: Plymouth Rock? We did when we first moved to Massachusetts. It seemed the appropriate thing to do—a way of paying homage to the place where it all began.

If you, too, have visited this icon of American history, you will understand when I say that it is probably the most underwhelming historical site you can imagine. The rock, enclosed in a kind of cage and surrounded by Greek columns, barely visible above the sand at the harbor. Like most people who were visiting at the time we were there, our first reaction was: “That’s it?”

More than this, there is no real historical evidence that the passengers and crew of the Mayflower ever set foot on the rock. They first disembarked on Cape Cod in November of 1620 and only came to Plymouth the next month to find a safer harbor. In fact, if it wasn’t for 94-year-old Thomas Faunce, we would know nothing about the rock.

Faunce claimed, in 1741—121 years after the Mayflower dropped anchor, that his father got off the ship with the others at the rock. Since he was a church elder no one questioned him. One of the reasons the rock is so small today (and enclosed) is because once Faunce announced this, people began chipping away at the rock to take some home. The Town of Plymouth itself broke the rock in two twice while trying to haul it to the center of town.

So, what remains of the rock is there in the sand. Stamped “1620”. Up to a million people visit the rock each year—many of them this week. And most probably say: “That’s it?”

I find the rock interesting not just because of its questionable provenance but because of our need to have a physical connection with the past. This is important. It is one of the reasons that people find visits to “the Holy Land” even today to be so valuable. Even though the actual locations of, say, Christ’s birth and resurrection

are agreed to be hearsay, people are overwhelmed when visiting these sites. There is something about being in the same location where things that define us today actually happened.

There is, though, a difference between historical events and faith. They are linked, of course, because our faith is based on events that happened to real people in real places. And yet, in the end, what we hold dear, what shapes us as Christian people is independent of place. I think it would be a powerful experience to visit the site of Jesus’ crucifixion. But not having that experience doesn’t make the importance of what happened there any less real or impactful to me.

There is a long history, particularly during the era of the Crusades, of people needing to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land at least once in their life time. You may not realize it, but you continue that tradition every week on Sunday. Instead of visiting holy sites in Jerusalem, you enter our sanctuary and find a connection with your creator. That is something far more important than touching the (supposed) actual stone of the empty tomb.

It is a little like prioritizing an appreciation for the freedoms we enjoy over a trek down to Plymouth to see what remains of the rock that the Pilgrims may or may not have used to step off of the Mayflower.

See you in church,

--Rev. Dominic

Sunday, November 26, 2017 Baptism Sunday

9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal

10:00 AM – WORSHIP and Sunday School

11:15 AM – Coffee Hour

DURING THE WEEK

Fair set-up Monday to Friday – November 27 to December 1

Tuesday, November 28

6:30-8:30 PM – Building Gingerbread Houses, Basement

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

Wednesday, November 29

6:30-8:30 PM – Building Gingerbread Houses, Basement

Friday, December 1

6:00 to 8:00 PM – Winter Wonderland Fair

Saturday, December 2

9:00 AM to 2:00 PM – Winter Wonderland Fair

Sunday, December 3 – First Sunday of Advent

10:00 AM Worship and Sunday School

11:30 AM – Advent Workshop

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



Dhingra family, 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.



Winter Wonderland Fair

December 1 – 6-8 pm

December 2 – 9am-2pm

Many hands are needed!

Sign up and pitch in for the Fair!

CAN DO LIST...

- **Decorate church (Nov. 24)**
- **Donate Gingerbread supplies (Nov. 26)**
- **Bring toys, books, Christmas decorations to church (Nov.26-29)**
- **Bring Raffle Basket to be wrapped and ready (Nov. 26)**
- **Wrap baskets (Nov. 27-30)**
- **Make Gingerbread houses (Nov. 28 & 29)**
- **BAKE (Dec. 1)**
- **Sign up to work a shift or two!**
- **Sign up to break down and clean up**

See YOU at the Fair!



SUNDAY SCHOOL:

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

This is the last Sunday to donate any leftover Halloween candy.



Also, in the spirit of thanksgiving, we would like to thank all those who donated their time to make the SS Fall Session meaningful for the children of FCC.

ADVENT Kindness Calendars



Inter-generational 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 Maribeth Darwin. This unique calendar will allow you to insert notes on the random acts of kindness you and your loved ones have done on each day of Advent. The calendar will also tell the story of Christ's birth through scriptural texts from the Gospel of Matthew. By the time Christmas arrives, you will have more fully taken part in the true meaning of this holy time of year. A special thank you to Trish Faro for organizing this annual event and for designing this new craft for this year.

Join us in the Narthex directly following worship on the First Sunday of Advent, December 3rd! All supplies provided. Donations to defray costs welcome.

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.

CMS Christmas



Gifts

The 2017 CMS Christmas Shop – Share the Joy of the Season!

The City Mission Gift drive collects clothing, toys, and toiletries, to be distributed to the homeless or near homeless in the greater Boston area each year. Circle 10 and our Youth

are partnering up again this year to support the City Mission Christmas Shop.

Circle 10 will be collecting donations on Dec. 3rd, 10th and 17th, Narthex.

GIFT SUGGESTIONS

- We accept only NEW items. These are listed by priority:
- Winter coats, sweaters and sweatshirts (large sizes especially)
- Hats, mittens, gloves and scarves
- Socks and underwear
- Gift cards from Target, Marshalls, Walgreen's, CVS, Kohl's, Walmart, Stop and Shop, Shaw's and other merchants
- Blankets and backpacks
- Toys (culturally relevant dolls), games, and books for all ages

On Dec. 10th our Youth will go to the Christmas Shop from 4:00 – 6:00 PM to inventory, sort, and help prep for distribution.

With our congregation's support, the Christmas Shop brings hope and joy to those most in need during the holiday season.



First United Methodist of Melrose cordially invites the women in your Church to the
United Methodist Women's Annual Christmas Tea
Wednesday, December 6, 2017

*at 1:00 PM - refreshments
 2:00 PM - Musical Program*

*at the First United Methodist Church of Melrose
 645 Main Street, Melrose MA*

Reservation is required by November 27, 2017. There is limited seating so please respond as soon as possible.

Their church office – 781-662-7060

Contact person - Beth

Monday thru Thursday 8:45 AM – 1:45 PM

The Mission Deacons want to thank one and all for supporting the Puerto Rico food drive to benefit the Gomez Family. The need was identified, filled and delivered within a 2-week period which is a testament to the commitment we have as a community of faith to help one another. A special thanks to Phyllis Lanni for identifying the need and getting the boxes to UPS and to the Middle School who baked LOTS of muffins to help raise the postage to send 2 X 50# boxes to the Gomez Family. We encourage others to please let us know of other urgent needs to serve and be served.

Peace. – Kris and Barbara

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.



Saving our planet one city at time

In the coming weeks, Melrose citizens have a unique opportunity to act locally to help protect God's Creation.

The Board of Alderman will be considering an **Ordinance Regarding the Reduction of Plastic Bags in Melrose.**

This Ordinance will protect our waterways, minimize litter and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Please contact your ward Alderman and the Aldermen at Large to let them know you support the ordinance.



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

Heifer Farm Holiday Open House in Rutland, MA
December 2 & 3 and 9 & 10, 2017| 10AM - 4PM

Take your photo with a goat and honor family and friends with a purchase of a special gift at the Living Gift Market! Warm yourself with hot chestnuts at the bonfire; take a hayride; enjoy homemade soup; and a visit to Santa. Decorate a gingerbread cookie and don't miss the Gift Shop! Free admission! Canned good donations accepted for the Worcester County Food Bank. For more information, 508-886-5000 or heifer.farm@heifer.org. Want to make an online donation? www.heifer.org/catalog. We greatly appreciate your support!