



First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

in Melrose

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Messenger

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Advent? Magnificent!

Advent is, of course, all about anticipating the birth of Christ. It is a time of preparation, contemplation, and waiting.

But really, it is about so much more than that. It is worth remembering that Advent is also a time to appreciate the radical nature of Christ's coming into the world both personally and socially.

That radical nature of Advent is found in "The Song of Mary" or "The Magnificat" (Luke 1:46-55). It is a text that can act as a strong antidote to the commercialism of this time of year.

It is called the Magificat because Mary begins by saying: "Magnificat anima mea Dominum" or "My soul magnifies the Lord..." What follows is her response Elizabeth's recognition that she is carrying a holy child, fulfilling what the angel Gabriel called her to do.

This "song" is not just about how great it is that Christmas is coming. It is an affirmation of what God's dream for humanity—a reorganization of society:

"God has shown strength with his arm and scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. God has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. God has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty."

God was about to come into the world as the son of an unwed, teenage peasant girl. Her response? "God has looked with favor on the lowliness of God's servant." Any apprehensions that she surely must have had were overcome by the excitement of God coming into the world to turn things upside down.

God is still in the business of turning things upside down. This is mostly because humanity has an ugly habit of turning things back the other way (downside up) once God is finished flipping things. Injustice is an ongoing conundrum for God's children despite the blueprint offered us in the conditions of Christ's birth and in the Magificat itself.

This Advent season, may we recover an excitement of what is possible when we truly allow God to be born into our hurting, warring world. May we feel an impending hope for a new tomorrow in which social harmony is more than a pipedream and is instead a vision of who we can be as we stand poised on the threshold of a New Year.

This Advent season, may you discover how you can "magnify God" in your life and be part of what God is creating out of our as-yet-unlived tomorrows.

I believe that starts by asking what Christianity would look like if our focus was more on birth than death, flourishing instead of suffering, and this world instead of the next.

"The Mighty one has done (and will do) great things for us and Holy is God's name"!

See you in church,

--Rev. Dominic



1ST SUNDAY OF *Advent*
Sunday, December 3, 2017

9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal

10:00 AM – WORSHIP and Sunday School

11:15 AM – Coffee Hour

11:30 AM – Advent Workshop

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

DURING THE WEEK

Tuesday, December 5

2:00 PM – Circle 4, Lounge

7:00 PM – RIM Meeting, Library

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

Wednesday, December 6

7:15 PM – Bells rehearsal

Sunday, December 10 – Second Sunday of Advent

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



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.



Circle 4 will meet in the Church Lounge on **Tuesday, December 5th at 2:00 P.M.** for our Christmas/Winter Yankee Swap.

MANY, MANY THANKS TO ALL

We would like to thank the FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE for their invaluable help in putting on the church Thanksgiving Dinner last Sunday. The members of this committee are always ready to be called upon to help with any aspect of Fellowship events, and whether their task was planned long ago or a last-minute one, they always come through!

We had a record attendance of 150, and we did not have to say, "Oh, sorry, no food left" to anyone because of the generosity of YOU the CONGREGATION in preparing and sharing your delicious dishes. We count on you to provide a wonderful feast every year and you always do! Thank you!

We are grateful for our church, which gives us the place to gather together and celebrate, with thanks, our relationship with God.

~Donna & Ron Miner, Fellowship Deacons



SUNDAY SCHOOL:

There will be Sunday School for all ages this week. Nursery care is always available!

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



See YOU at the Fair!

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.



Memorial Wreaths that adorn the church this year are

<u>In Loving Memory of:</u>	<u>Given by:</u>
Marjorie E. Thayer and her parents, Harry & Eula Gilbert	Her Family
Mother, Betty Crane	Nancy Schurian
Husband, Bill Hayward	Rae Hayward
Our parents,	Hans and Sallie Klemm
Karl & Maria Klemm	
Francis & Helen Lathrop	

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

**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