



## First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

in Melrose

*An Open and Affirming Congregation*

# Messenger

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**VOLUME 100**

**December 15, 2017**

**Number 15**

## Compassion Fade

I came across a new phrase today: "Compassion fade".

It is a term for the phenomenon in which people's compassion diminishes in proportion to the size or complexity of the problem.

For example, people will more likely give to help a local resident whose home has been lost to a fire than to people dying of a pandemic in another part of the world. It is easier to compassionately support a person whose loved one has died than to confront genocide.

It may be that this is because the reward of our compassionate involvement is more immediate with something close to home. It may be that the larger problems feel too daunting and hate-filled atrocities are too ugly to look at. It may also be that we stand in need of a leap in consciousness evolution. That is, our minds, hearts, and mentalities remain ill-equipped to deal with things too far beyond ourselves.

Enter the Holy Family.

The Children's Sermon series this Advent is focusing on the importance of Nativity Scenes and the characters in them. Specifically, the universality of God's coming to all people regardless of race or culture as expressed in the Holy Family.

There is an added benefit to Nativity Scenes that I believe can help us combat Compassion Fade. They can assist in our spiritual awakening not only to Christmas, but the place and role of God in the world.

The message of Christmas is that God wants to save the world—not just you and me and our closest neighbor, but the world. That would be a recipe for Compassion Fade if not for Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus. Because God is uniquely in them, when we embrace this Holy Family we embrace God and we embrace the world.

Think of it this way: Just as the internet has shrunk the world and caused "our neighbor" to not only be the one living next door but also the one living on the

other side of the world, the Holy Family does the same for our spirituality and service. In these simple people, who are the foundations of our faith, there is every rejoicing person, every hurting person, every blessed person and every rejected and included person. When we connect with them, when we love them, we connect with and love everyone.

What follows is a recognition that *all of humanity is the Holy Family*.

My mantra with the Children's Sermons is "God looks like what God creates"; meaning that God's presence is found in the diversity of God's creation; the many manifestations of humanity. God creates us so we are a reflection of God.

But it can't stop there. It turns out that everyone is a reflection of God. It turns out that this holy family is a whole lot bigger than we first thought and it includes people who are awesome and people who are downright awful. It includes people we admire and people we despise.

What are we to do with this? We are to approach it all with the same *unfading* compassion that we feel for Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus. We are to listen for God's direction in our lives and in our church as to how we are called to respond to people an arm's-length away or a world away and to conflate whatever distance separates us.

We are to remember that the stable in Bethlehem is the world itself.

See you in church,

--Rev. Dominic



3RD SUNDAY OF *Advent*  
**Sunday, December 17, 2017**

**9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal**  
**10:00 AM – WORSHIP – Christmas Pageant**  
**11:15 AM – Coffee Hour**

## DURING THE WEEK

### Thursday, December 21

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

### Sunday, December 24 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

10:00 AM Worship and Sunday School

Postlude Christmas Caroling

11:15 AM - Special coffee hour, Circle 10

**7:00 PM - Christmas Eve Candlelight, Caroling and Communion Service**

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#### **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



Candy Brower, Barbara Krol-Sinclair, 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.

### **CHRISTMAS TEA IS DECEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup>**



This Thursday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, Fellowship will be hosting its first Christmas Tea for senior members and friends of the church – those recently retired, and those retired some time ago. The tea will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. and will feature traditional tea

sandwiches, cakes, and pastries and, of course, tea! (and coffee for those who prefer it) There will be plenty of time for people to visit and “catch up,” and there will be live Christmas music as well.

Our church did have Christmas Teas years ago, but this is the first to be put on by the current Fellowship group. Our hope is that those invited will have an enjoyable afternoon visiting, enjoying foods made just for them, listening to Christmas music, and feeling appreciated as an important part of the congregation.

Donna Miner

**If you received an invitation to the Christmas Tea and have not yet RSVP'd, please call Donna Miner today at (781) 662-6697. Thank you!**

**NOTE: There will be no Messenger the week after Christmas. Messenger will resume January 2<sup>nd</sup>, with cutoff date for items of submission being December 29<sup>th</sup>. Happy Holidays!**



### **SUNDAY SCHOOL:**



This week students from PreK through High School will be participating in the Pageant during the Service.

**Teachers:** Please bring your binders to church Sunday and give them to Dunia, so that she can update them for future months.

**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](mailto:sltjmtj@hotmail.com).

**We would like to thank** all the children and their families for supporting our troops. 15 pounds of candy and chocolate was mailed to them.

**Family Worship:** As a reminder, we will be having a Family Worship service on Sunday December 24<sup>th</sup> and on December 31<sup>st</sup> There will be **NO** Sunday School classes those days (Nursery care is always available!), and families are invited to worship together.



### **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.

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

### CMS Christmas



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 final donations on Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>, in the 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

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

### CITY MISSION UPDATE

The Middle School and High School delivered a carload of donations to the City Mission Society Gift drive in Winchester on Sunday. The youth then stayed for a few hours helping with the inventory and sorting of donations. Included in this year's donation were blankets made by our youth during Sunday School earlier that day.

Next week will be the last week for the congregation to donate to this important cause. They are in most need of children's clothes as they have received many requests from shelters for children's clothes. Our group was surprised to hear the average age of a homeless person in Massachusetts is 7 years old.





**Christmas Flowers are**

<b>In Loving Memory of</b>	<b>Given by</b>
Our parents	Emelie & Bud Burnham
Our circle sisters	Circle 12
Loved ones	John Curtis
Bob & Dianne Snyder, George & Eugenia Miner, Robert G. Miner, & Richard A. Miner	Donna & Ron Miner
Loved ones	Barbara Dannbauer
Becky & Rick Mockler	Sarah Mockler
Loved ones	Nancy Schurian
Marjorie E. Thayer, Harry & Eula Gilbert, & Helen L. Thayer	Donald F. Thayer & Family
Parents, Annie G. & Leonard W. Stevens, & Nanna Boyington	Nancy A. Mader
My son, David R. Wing & niece, Mickala Taylor	Anne Wing
Doug & Connie Robinson	Andrew Robinson & Susan Lefave & family
Loved ones	Jim & Penny Muschett
Ray Luebbe, Dorothy Luebbe, Nancy Morgan, & Roxanne Jones	Betsy Garrett
Those who remain in our hearts forever	The Ahlin/Krueger families
Muriel & George Burrell, Neil & Betty O'Leary, & Valerie George	Dede O'Leary
The George W. Potter Family	Joan Potter
Our parents, Betty & Charlie Anderson, Prilla & Dick Williams	Steve & Debbie Anderson
Loved ones	Circle 4
My mother, Sandra Dillon	Stephen Taylor
Our mothers—Pearl & Thelma, Aunt Emma & Aunt Phyllis	Joan & Bill Chetwynd
Bruce & Elsa Jay	Carol Bergeron
Taylor Liske	Jennifer Gillette
Loved ones	Karen Friedman & Bill Albright
My grandparents, Warren & Emily Taylor, Clyde & Jessie Faye Drafts	Darby Drafts