

## First Congregational Church



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

in Melrose

*An Open and Affirming Congregation*

# Messenger

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## A Vision: God's Gift

When the bible says: "where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18), it may mean different things to different people, but one thing we can all agree on is that it means that we should be looking forward, not behind.

As people of faith, we are to be looking at what is to come, not reminiscing about the past. Mind you, the past has many valuable lessons to teach—that's undeniable—but our focus should be on what is coming down the pike.

And what is coming down the pike? Well, in many ways God gives us the free will to decide. That is where the "vision" comes in. What is our vision for the future of God's creation? What is your vision for your life?

A vision is different than just making things up. It has somehow become fashionable in government today to not admit that things happened or were said but rather to simply say that they didn't and thereby create a new truth. Reality can be erased simply by saying it didn't happen. Convenient, yes, but hardly true (or perhaps is true but only for those who are still struggling with "object permanence" from toddlerhood). In any case, that is not visioning.

In biblical terms, a vision is a gift of God. Well, how do you get such a gift? First, by being in relationship with God and listening for God's direction in your life and in the world. To be honest, you already operate out of a vision given to you by God; even if you don't know your bible all too well!

For example, you go about your day understanding that murder is wrong (at least I hope you do!). Farther along that continuum are greed, pride, wrath, lust. These are among the "deadly sins" that we are taught by tradition to avoid but are also part of the vision from God given to us for healthy living. (Again, there are those in power who, ironically and dangerously,

seem to find these last four to be virtues to be practiced unabashedly).

Still farther down that continuum of God's gift of a vision is living not only for the good of ourselves, but for the good of others. Jesus was, of course, the greatest example to us of this. The good news of the gospel stresses concern for the poor, refugees, the sick, the forgotten, and the broken (i.e. those whom some consider the "losers" of society).

With those three ingredients in mind: 1. A relationship with God that allows for listening, 2. Characteristics that foster our best and healthiest selves and, 3. Outreach to those who are rejected, what is our vision? What greater gift is God trying to bestow upon us? Upon you?

I would say that now, more than ever, the Christian faith is countercultural because the vision given to us by God stands in opposition to the current direction we are heading in. That is less because of conflicting visions, but rather because of the absence of a vision on the part of those charting our course.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish". God wants no one to perish. God wants us to "have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). For that to happen, we need to define God's gift of a vision and, most importantly, act upon it!

How? It starts with our daily interactions and ends with public advocacy work. It means remembering what defines God and asking "does this opportunity, relationship, or legislation amplify welcome, wholeness, health, and equality?" and let that be our vision-litmus test.

Anytime (NOW comes to mind) is a perfect time to start!

See you in church,

--Rev. Dominic



**FOOD PANTRY**

**SUNDAY – February 4**

This mission of our church is a great way to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors! You can involve your whole family by talking about the food you are donating and discussing how it will help others.

**Sunday, February 4, 2018**  
**Local Food Pantry Sunday**  
**Souper Bowl of Caring**

**9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal**  
**10:00 AM – Worship and Sunday School**  
**11:15 AM – Coffee Hour**  
**11:30 AM – Souper Bowl Soup Luncheon**

**DURING THE WEEK**

**Tuesday, February 6**

2:00 PM – Circle 4, Lounge  
 7:00 PM – RIM Meeting, Library  
 7:15 to 8:15 PM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal

**Wednesday, February 7**

7:15 PM – Bells rehearsal

**Thursday, February 8**

1:00 PM – Staff Meeting

**Friday, February 9**

7:30 PM - Heidi Breyer Debut Album Concert to Benefit  
 Refugee Immigration Ministry

**Sunday, February 11**

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.** – Sundays 5:30 PM, Library, 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



Ryan Chisholm, 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.



**Circle 4 will meet at the Church on**  
**Tuesday, February 6<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm.**



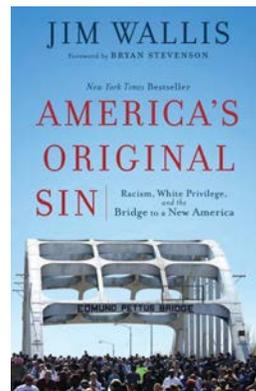
**SUNDAY SCHOOL:**

**This week the children from PreK-5th** will be learning about Jesus and his joy. We will learn how his joy is in us and that helps us bring peace to our homes, to have a welcoming attitudes and to care for the sick. When Jesus felt joy he stopped to praise and thank God. Let us remember to do what brings joy to God and to thank and praise Him for our joy.

**The Middle School class** will continue to learn about hunger in our world by preparing and serving soup on SouperBowl of Caring.

**The High School class** continues with Dismantling Racism with Beth.

**Racial Justice Readers**



Interested in learning more about white privilege and the history of racism in America?

Join us for the first in a series of periodic book discussions open to the greater-Melrose community. Together, through exploring various texts on racism, we will look at the role faith-based communities can play in dismantling racism. All are welcome!

**FIRST BOOK:** America's Original Sin by Jim Wallis

**WHEN:** Sunday, March 4  
 12:00-1:30 PM

*Bring your own lunch and an appetite to share your thoughts on the book. We'll have sweet treats to share!*

**WHERE:** First United Methodist Church, 645 Main Street, Melrose

**RSVP** (for space and sweets planning):  
[melroseracialjusticereaders.eventbrite.com](http://melroseracialjusticereaders.eventbrite.com)

*Co-sponsors: First United Methodist Church, First Congregational Church, Melrose Highlands Congregational Church & Temple Beth Shalom*

Each house of worship has a few copies of the book to lend out. To get a book or with any other questions contact:

**FUMC:** Jane Allen ([janeappleyardallen@gmail.com](mailto:janeappleyardallen@gmail.com))

**FCC:** Beth Hampson ([bkashatus@gmail.com](mailto:bkashatus@gmail.com))

**MHCC:** Julia Motl Lowe ([juliamotl@yahoo.com](mailto:juliamotl@yahoo.com))

**TBS:** Sue Herz ([susaneherz@gmail.com](mailto:susaneherz@gmail.com))



***February 9 at 7:30 pm –  
Heidi Breyer Debut Album Concert  
to Benefit the Refugee Immigration  
Ministry program of Greater Boston***

The net proceeds of this debut performance of Heidi Breyer's new album "Moonlight in Empty Rooms", will benefit the Refugee Immigration Ministry (RIM). Tickets are tax deductible: adults \$25; children under 18, \$15. Tickets can be purchased at <http://moonlightalbum.com/event/first-congregational-church/>

In a surprisingly private corner of the very public worlds of music and art, you will find the eminent Russian realist Alexander Volkov and his wife, award winning pianist-composer Heidi Breyer in their respective studios, working alone on their inextricably connected art forms. They have pushed the boundaries of collaboration beyond synergy to synonymity through sharing their lives, their observations of the world, and their love of art as a nourishing life ingredient. Alexander and Heidi have arrived at "Moonlight In Empty Rooms" an art and musical immersion that speaks to anyone looking for an opportunity for deep contemplation.

The collection of 12 piano and violin pieces were written specifically in response to Alexander's paintings of the same name. In this event, the two artists collaborate in live performance. Alexander speaks philosophically about art and life and Heidi plays solo or ensemble and pitches in with lighter comment as if steering at the helm of the ship. It is a rare and unique thing.

Join us for a bowl of soup!

at the annual

**SOUPER BOWL  
of CARING**

Bring your Friends for  
Worship and Soup



February 4th, 2018 The First Congregational Church Middle School Youth team will prepare and serve up soup at their annual **Souper Bowl of Caring** luncheon immediately following the worship service.

**Souper Bowl of Caring** is a national movement of young people working to fight hunger and poverty in their own communities around the time of the Super Bowl game.

Join us for 10 am Worship and delicious soup following the service at 11:30. Donations will be accepted and 100% of the proceeds will go to local food pantries.



# 500<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary OF THE REFORMATION

**Lenten Adult Education Class—  
Living our Reformation Heritage  
Beginning after worship on Sunday, February 18  
Led by Rev. Dominic**

The Protestant Reformation began 500 years ago. Some of the life-threatening, flabbergasting ideas that exploded out of those years are now part of the air we breathe. 500 years ago, people died for them. But time turns the revolutionary into the everyday. We take key Reformation claims for granted. They are just part of who we are. Other Reformation claims are covered in dust, obscured and stuck away in a neglected corner of the church, like a long-forgotten Van Gogh languishing under wraps in someone's attic.

In a lively, engaging, discussion-based way, this class will explore where we come from and some of the basics of what makes us who we are as Protestant people. Topics will include:

Guess what? You're a Priest!  
Got Bible? Which do you like? An angry God or a cheap gospel?  
Predestination  
Luther's Sins--and Ours  
Fundamental Protestant principles

Come own your often over-looked heritage as we clear the dust off of 500 years of history and make our Reformation identity relevant for today! Classes will be held after worship on Sunday February 18th, March 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th. All are welcome and child care is available upon request.



## **CHILI AND CORNBREAD COOK-OFF**

**SEVENTH CHILI COOK-OFF IS ON  
FEBRUARY 25<sup>TH</sup> THIS YEAR!**

It really does not seem possible, but this year's Chili Cook-off will be our seventh! The first year that we held the Cook-off was in 2012! And in that first Cook-off our congregation met the challenge and created some unique and delicious chili recipes. Each following year we have had some of the same chili chefs and new ones making the chili and, since last year, cornbread!

**This year the Chili Cook-off and Cornbread Contest will be on February 25th, right after the Congregational meeting, which is right after our church service. A signup board will be on the windows in the Narthex starting this Sunday, February 4<sup>th</sup>.**

Help us celebrate one of the newer traditions of our church and sign up to make chili, or bake cornbread, or be one of the expert samplers the day of the Cook-off (that's pretty much all of us, right?) If you have any questions about being in the Cook-off/Contest, see Donna Miner at the Coffee table.