



First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

in Melrose

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Messenger

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A Spiritual Practice for Lent

A 12th c Carthusian French monk, Guigo II, described the spiritual life as climbing a ladder. The steps were Reading, Meditation, Prayer, and Contemplation. Or *lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio*.

This "ladder" evolved into a spiritual practice called "Lectio Divina" or "Divine Reading" of scripture. It is still practiced by both Catholics and Protestants today and is something I commend to you for the remaining weeks of Lent.

Lectio Divina is about reading passages from the Bible in a way that lets them dwell in the heart. It's not about parsing some theological meaning or historical context out of the passage, but instead is about directly *experiencing* it.

The passage is read aloud four times, each followed by a time of meditation. This is followed by a prayer asking God for inspiration. This is then followed by contemplative prayer in which the focus is on listening to God.

"Contemplatio" is the goal: A state of mindful Christian prayer in which one has an awareness of the union of one's soul with God.

Here is an opportunity to give it a try! First, find a bible and a quiet place to sit. Begin by reading the following passage:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that

you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him." Matthew 4 (NRSV)

Lectio: Read this scripture passage aloud, slowly. Release any interpretation or opinion you may have about this passage, as you read it.

Meditatio: Let the passage "sink in" for two minutes. Sit with the passage. Hold it lightly--don't force any attempt to interpret it.

Repeat "lectio" and "meditatio" three more times.

Oratio: Pray aloud: "May I receive from the scripture what my soul needs for today."

Contemplatio: Pray in the desert with Jesus. Go to a quiet place--a metaphorical desert--and get into a physical position in which your body will be comfortable but you'll be unlikely to fall asleep. Close your eyes, and in silence, observe whatever arises to take your attention. The object of your observation can be anything at all. A thought. An idea. A sensation--something your body feels, something you hear. A memory. An urge to get up and do something. Just watch it all. Let it be. Watch all that arises and passes, observing with non-judgmental, caring attention. Be a quiet presence, like a friend who stays close in silence with a loving attitude toward you. Do this for ten minutes.

I will be providing additional texts here to practice this ancient spiritual discipline to aid in our shared journey toward the crucifixion and the resurrection.

See you in church,

--Rev. Dominic

Sunday, March 4, 2018 Food Pantry Sunday

9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal

10:00 AM – Worship and Sunday School

11:15 AM – Coffee Hour

11:30 AM – Lenten Adult Education Class—

Living our Reformation Heritage

12:00-1:30 PM - Racial Justice Readers, First United Methodist Church, 645 Main Street, Melrose

*THE STEEPLE is lit this week in loving memory of
"my husband, Bill" by Rae Hayward.*

DURING THE WEEK

Tuesday, March 6

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

Wednesday, March 7

7:15 PM – Bells rehearsal

Saturday, March 10

Daylight Savings begins –
Remember to set your clocks
AHEAD one hour tonight.



Sunday, March 11 – Bible Sunday

10:00 AM – Worship and Sunday School
11:30 AM – Lenten Adult Education Class—
Living our Reformation Heritage

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, Marilyn McCommas, Bill Albright, Anne Wing, Bob Hughes, Mary Sakata and Becky Faro (Trish Faro's daughters), Claire Griffin, Merle Copeland, Bob Pierce.

Prayers and sympathy to the family and friends of Dot Allen, who passed away on Thursday, February 15th.



Circle 4 will meet at the Church on **Tuesday, March 6th at 2:00 pm.**



FOOD PANTRY

SUNDAY – March 4

Non-perishable food is collected the first Sunday of each month, which is delivered alternately to the First Baptist's "Pantry of Hope" and Faith

Evangelical's "A Servant's Heart Food Pantry".

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.

A Growing Church!



We have much to celebrate in our congregation! Here is a great example: Looking back over 2017, our church welcomed the following people through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Benjamin Graham Smith March 26, 2017
Adam Drafts-Johnson May 21, 2017
Eve McAllister-Grande November 12, 2017
Justin Wonoski November 26, 2017
Terrie O'Brien November 26, 2017

This is just one of the many ways our church is such a dynamic place to be! In a world that stands in such need of joy and new life, First Congregational Church is a beacon of the Holy Spirit's activity among the gathered people of God. We hope you will invite others to join us on our journey!

500TH Anniversary OF THE REFORMATION

**Lenten Adult Education Class—
Living our Reformation Heritage
Resumes after worship on Sunday, March 4
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 March 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th. All are welcome and child care is available upon request.



***Our Sunday School classes will be preparing care packages for the homeless. If you have hotel-size toiletries, or any other items listed below that you'd like to contribute, please be sure to bring

them to church before March 11.

We will be assembling the bags during Sunday School classes on that day.

We are accepting donations to buy supplies for the care packages during coffee hour on Sunday!

- Socks
- Band-Aids
- Anti-bacterial wipes (not sanitizer as it has alcohol in it)
- Small soaps
- Small shampoo (from your hotel stays)
- Wash cloths
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Combs
- Shaving cream
- Deodorant
- Gallon size zip lock bags
- Packets of crackers (no peanut butter)
- Granola or breakfast bars
- Individual packets of trail mix

With Gratitude from Refugee Immigration Ministry



Thank you to FCC for the numerous ways our members and friends have supported RIM over the years. In addition to church members, the recent Heidi Breyer debut of her album "Moonlight in Empty Rooms" was enjoyed by many others in Melrose and

surrounding communities. The evening was a unique blending of Heidi's music and her husband, Alexander Volkov's art. Heidi and Alexander both moved to the United States from other countries and feel a connection to RIM's mission. Alexander donated three of his enhanced giclees to be raffled off at the concert to benefit RIM, and the Vogel family were the lucky winners of "Beyond the Turning." The \$1804 raised from the concert will go to client support. A special thank you to Tom Foth for making this event possible by connecting Heidi Breyer and Alexander Volkov with Refugee Immigration Ministry!

If you're interested in volunteering or learning more about RIM, our Metro North Cluster meets at 7 pm on the first Tuesday of the month in our church library, and all are welcome.

Debbie Anderson



SUNDAY SCHOOL:

*This week in the younger classes we will continue exploring Jesus' emotions and the actions he took as a result of those emotions. We hope the Children will find a closer connect with God as they recognize Jesus had feelings just like they do! We will read the story of Jesus feeding 4000 people, and will discuss how his love and compassion led him to feed and heal the people. In turn the people and Jesus left feeling satisfied both spiritually and physically.

***The Middle School class** will begin a new unit in March called "What Gives: Using God's Money", where we will challenge our youth to examine how we value and prioritize money, and will introduce the concept of stewardship.

***The High School group** will begin a new unit in March focusing on environmental issues, and will discuss what role our faith plays in honoring God's creation. The first week, the class will hear from someone from the Melrose recycling committee about the reasons behind the recent plastic bag ban in Melrose and other communities.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

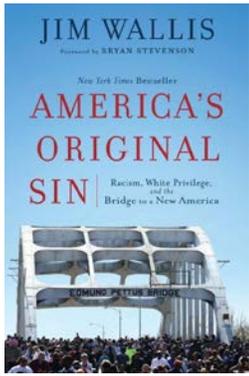
Third Grade Bible Sunday is coming up quickly on March 11! We look forward to sharing this special day with the third graders and their families. Third graders: in class this week, we will be talking about preparing for Bible Sunday and what to expect, so please be sure to come to class on March 4!

Graduation Sunday will be on June 3 this year. High School Seniors and families-mark your calendars!

We want to extend a huge Thank You to all those who donated at the Chili Cook-off!***



MARCH



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

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)

FCC: Beth Hampson (bkashatus@gmail.com)

MHCC: Julia Motl Lowe (juliamotl@yahoo.com)

TBS: Sue Herz (susaneherz@gmail.com)

Easter Memorial Flowers - \$15 per plant

Send your order form by March 23rd to: Darby Drafts, 25 Adams St., Melrose MA 02176, (Last minute orders may be handed to Darby on Sunday, March 25th, Palm Sunday.)

Ordered by: _____

Phone #: _____

IN MEMORY OF:

of plants ordered _____ Amount enclosed \$ _____

Please make checks payable to First Congregational Church.



EASTER FLOWERS