



## First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

in Melrose

*An Open and Affirming Congregation*

# Messenger

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## Crisis and Opportunity

Every year, I rediscover how odd some of the scripture lessons for the Sundays of Advent really are.

For example, the gospel lectionary text for the First Sunday of Advent this year is Luke 21:25-36.

That is all about Jesus talking about the end times. Hardly a Christmas text. It is Advent-ey in the sense that Jesus urges us to “prepare” for such calamities, and Advent is about “preparation” for Christmas, but beyond that it is a real stretch to connect this text to the birth of Christ.

That’s no accident, though. You see, there are really two kinds of Advents. The first one is about anticipating Christmas. The second is about preparing for Christ’s return—the Second Coming. The scene that Jesus paints in the Luke passage is the apocalypse that will precede his physical return. And most progressive Christians hop off the train here.

And I see why. The end times and the Second Coming of Christ aren’t really part of our lexicon and we certainly would prefer that it not to be mixed in with Christmas. We want Christmas to be cozy and pretty. People “fainting in fear and foreboding” is NOT what we want under the tree.

And yet, if nothing else, this should be our take away: Jesus, in this text and elsewhere, says that our anxiety is a sign of our help drawing near. And there’s a vital kernel of Christmas in that outlook.

The circumstances of that first noel were not cozy and pretty. The stable where Jesus was born was cold and dark. Yet that is when and where God chose to enter our world. That’s a powerful message to us and should be a source of divine comfort.

When things in your life or in our world feel like they are coming apart at the seams, when distress and anxiety fill your days, when things aren’t going according to plan and you feel like you are drowning, Jesus would say “Take heart. Your anxiety is God’s opportunity. Be alert. Keep awake because God’s help is nearer than you think.”

You may know that the Chinese symbol for “crisis” is the same as the symbol for “opportunity”. That is the spirit in which we should take apocalyptic texts. That is also the spirit we should bring to the hardships of our lives. When things go off the rails, that is precisely the time to be on the lookout for God to do something dramatic—just as God did on that very first Christmas.

See you in church,

--Rev. Dominic

### **Sunday, December 9, 2018: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent**

9:20 AM – **Morning Star Voices Rehearsal**

10 AM-- **Worship**

11:15 AM – **Coffee Hour & Advent Workshop**

### **During the Week:**

#### **Tuesday, 12/4**

- 2 PM - Circle 4 meets for their Yankee/Winter Swap
- 5:30-6:30 PM - Treblemakers Rehearsal and Junior Choir, Music Room
- 6:30-7:30 PM - Morning Star Voices Rehearsal

### **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

## Memorial Wreaths

Memorial Wreaths that adorn the church this year are:

### In Loving Memory of:

Loved ones

Bill Hayward

Becky and Rick Mockler

Karl & Maria Klemm and

Helen & Francis Lathrop

### Given By:

Nancy Shurian

His wife Rachael & the  
Hayward/Wolley families

Sarah Mockler

Hans and Sallie Klemm



- Filled baskets and decorated them...
- Constructed gingerbread houses and bagged candy...
- Planned crafts and worked in Santa's Workshop...
- Made decorations and decked the halls with them...
- Put up signs and hung lights...
- Wrote and published Messenger and newspaper articles...
- Spread the word with posters and social media...
- Carried boxes up the stair, and brought them back down...
- Moved tables and chairs and books, swept, and counted money...
- Cooked and served and cleaned up...
- Sold and bought...

...THANK YOU!!!!

T.R. Lewski & brother, M.J. Warner, Michael

Watt, Phyllis Lanni, Jackson

Foltz –infant relative of Beth

Grzegorzewski, Bud Burnham,

Emelie Burnham, Marilyn

McComas, Bill Albright, Anne

Wing, Bob Hughes, Mary Sakata

and Becky Faro (Trish Faro's daughters), Merle

Copeland, Bob Pierce.



**By Lighting our Church Steeple** in memory or in honor of loved ones, you help our church financially. Your gift will be announced in the Sunday bulletin and the Messenger. A \$25.00 per week contribution is suggested.



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

## Winter Wonderland Wrap-Up

The Winter Wonderland Fair was a smashing success! We couldn't have done it without the contributions of the entire congregation! We'd like to thank every person who helped!

To those of you who:

- Asked for donations and did the donating...
- Arranged the treasures and baked goodies...

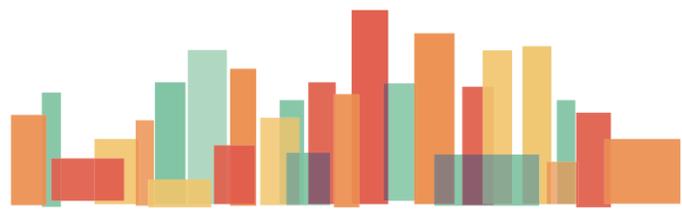


### Our Congregational Christmas Card Collection

On December 2nd, we will introduce a new/old\* idea: Our Congregational Christmas Card Collection! A tree on the Library windows will be ready for you to post a Christmas card from your family to your church "family!" Then you are invited to donate the money that you have saved on cards and postage to a mission of the church. This year we have chosen the First Baptist Church in

Wakefield to receive your donations. A donation box will be under the tree to receive your donation (cash or checks made out to First Congregational Church) from which we will send one check to our neighbors at First Baptist. We also hope you will use the time that you would have spent sending individual cards to truly enjoy the simpler traditions of the season and to reflect upon the meaning of Christ's birth in your life.

\*We are excited to bring this idea back that we did way back in the 1980s!



## CITY MISSION

— A good 200 years of good —

City Group Mission

Share the Joy of the Season:

### Donate to the **City Mission Christmas Shop!**

The annual City Mission Gift drive collects clothing and toys to be distributed to the homeless or near homeless in the greater Boston area.

Please bring your donations to the Narthex on Dec. 2, 9, and 16. **NEW** items only. Needs are listed in order of priority below:

- 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), small games, and books for all ages

The Christmas Shop brings hope and joy to those most in need during the holiday season. Thank you for your support!

-Circle 10

## Mission Team:

### Heifer Project Living Gift Market

We will hold a Heifer Project Living Gift Market in the Narthex on Sundays during Advent with the Heifer gift catalog, and a laptop set up for their online marketplace selling such items as handmade ornaments crafts, and for online donations. This is a great gift alternative that provides lasting support for families in need. You can browse the gift catalog in advance: <https://www.heifer.org/gift-catalog/index.htm>



*The simple act of shopping on Amazon can benefit our church!*

AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice. Go to AmazonSmile ([smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)) instead, where you will see eligible products marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages.

### Select First Congregational Church in Melrose:

On your first visit to AmazonSmile ([smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)), you are prompted to select a charitable organization from our list of eligible organizations. You can change your selection at any time:

1. Sign in to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) on your desktop or mobile phone browser.
2. From your desktop, go to **Your Account** from the navigation at the top of any page, and then select the option to **Change your Charity**. Or, from your mobile browser, select Change your Charity from the options at the bottom of the page.
3. Select **First Congregational Church in Melrose**.

Please note, the deadline to submit any information to be included in the Messenger is **Friday**. For the bulletin, please send all announcements to the office by **Thursday**.



Thank you!

*First Congregational Church UCC  
121 West Foster Street  
Melrose MA 02176*

December 4, 2018 Messenger

**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS - \$15. 00 per plant**

Send your order form by Sunday, December 9 to:

Jim Oosterman, 54 Ellis Farm Lane, Melrose MA 02176



Ordered by: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

For Listing in Bulletin and Messenger:

Circle One: In memory of / In honor of:

\_\_\_\_\_

Given by: \_\_\_\_\_

# of plants ordered \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to *First Congregational Church*.