



MESSENGER
of the
**First Congregational
Church**
United Church of Christ
Melrose, Massachusetts

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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An Act of Evil

We are all aware, perhaps too aware, of the brutality of the modern world but when it happens close to home it can raise not only our fears but also important questions about our understanding of God.

“Shock” is the reoccurring word that is used to describe Mount Vernon, New Hampshire after the brutal home invasion there that left a mother dead and her daughter barely alive. It is also a word that best describes all of us who have heard of this story. Four teenagers entered the home, which they chose at random, with the express purpose of killing its occupants and robbing the house.

As we grieve for this family, we are also aware that this event confirms our deepest fears—that we are never truly ever safe. Not even in our own homes. The shock and fear we feel is compounded by the fact that there is no background story here. That is, this was not some argument gone wrong, some act of revenge, some drug induced carnage. As horrific as those factors would be, they would at least add context and provide a reason for what happened. Here there is none of this.

What occurred was an act of evil. I have noted before that we progressive Christians often shy away from the notion that there is objective, personified evil at work in the world. We prefer to talk about sin rather than evil—people’s poor choices rather than a malevolent force in the world. And yet what happened in that Mount Vernon home, that random home, seems to me to be less about bad choices or the consequence of an abusive childhood than it is about the manifestation of evil in the world. After all, there are many people who sin (all of us, in fact) and many who come from abusive backgrounds who exhibit nothing akin to the psychopathology of these killers. Even the clinical diagnosis of an absence of a conscience might explain the behavior of one person, but four? Hacking a woman, a stranger, to death with a machete and repeatedly stabbing her daughter is not explained by any of these factors. The only true explanation can be an act of objective evil.

Now, that may sound like a cop out. Saying it is simply evil is just an easy way of dealing with the illogic of what happened. When science or ethics cannot explain something, blame the supernatural. Well, yes and no. Our faith teaches us that there are indeed forces beyond our human realm of knowing that impact our lives. We tend to focus on the positive influences of those

Sunday, October 18, 2009
Neighbors in Need Offering
Renewing the Covenant

- 9:00 AM – Senior Choir Rehearsal**
- 9:15 AM – Youth Groups gather to make Apple Crisp to be sold at Coffee Hour**
- 10:00 AM – WORSHIP –**
and Church School Pre-K – 12
- 11:15 AM – Coffee Hour, Narthex`**
- 11:15 AM – Sabbatical Presentation**
- 11:15 AM – Senior High youth and leaders Mission Trip meeting**

DURING THE WEEK

Wednesday, October 21

7:15 PM – Bells Rehearsal, sanctuary

Thursday, October 22

7:30 PM – Pastoral Relations Committee at the Griffins`

7:30 PM – Melrose Historical Society, 7/8

Saturday, October 24

9 AM – 1 PM – Day Care Children’s` Clothing Sale

Sunday, October 25

9:00 AM – Youth Groups arrive to set up for Halloween Party

11:30 AM to 1 PM – **Halloween Party** – young children are invited to wear their costumes to church.

The following groups meet here regularly:

Boy Scouts – Tuesdays at 7:00 PM in the basement

Girl Scouts – Sundays at 5:30 PM, Rm. 1 and lounge, Mon. at 7 PM, Rm. 7/8, Wed. at 6PM, Rm.7/8, Fridays 2:30 and 5PM, 7/8

Pre-PAL – 9 11:30 AM – M, T, Th, Fri, Room 7

PAL – 3:00 PM, Room 7/8

Cub Scouts – Wednesdays, 3rd Thursday

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. – Tuesdays at 6:30 PM, lounge

A.W.O.L. – Tuesdays at 7:30 PM, 7/8, lounge, Rm. 1

Mothers’ Group meets Wednesdays 9-11 AM, lounge, 1, 7/8

CODA – Wednesdays at 7:30 PM, lounge

Vital Cycles - Thursdays at 7:00 PM, lounge

O.A. – Fridays at 7 PM, lounge

A.A. – Wednesdays at 7:30 PM, Fridays at 8:00 PM and Saturdays at 3:00 PM – Rm. 8

forces—angels, happy coincidences, grace. Yet here, starkly, is evidence that there are dark forces outside of our knowing that influence our lives. While not “blaming the supernatural”, I am saying that something else was at work in this event that we should pay attention to. Not out of fear but as a means of drawing us closer to our God of goodness, healing and grace.

The truth is that, as much as we would prefer it otherwise, we are, in fact, never really safe in this world. Instead, the power of our faith is that our lack of safety is erased by the truth that we belong to God who, through the resurrection of Christ, demonstrates that evil cannot defeat us. Our job is to trust that resurrection power even in the face of objective, random darkness and be instruments of God’s objective, random light in the world.

See you in church,

Rev. Dominic



Jennie Way, Flo Hall, Kay Bemiss, Marilyn McComas, Betty Crane, Kate Watson, Anne Wing, George Burrell, Bud Pendleton, Barbara Jones.

Sabbatical Presentation

Rev. Dominic's recent sabbatical will be the topic of an open forum with the Deacons and Trustees after worship this coming Sunday. Rev. Dominic will share his observations on the purpose and place of the local church as it relates to our own church in the Melrose community. It is hoped that this will be a springboard for a church dialog on a strategic plan for our parish as we look to the future and assess our ministries. All are welcome!



LOOK WHAT'S COMING!.....SOON!

What: Winter Wonderland Fair
Where: First Congregational Church
When: Friday, Dec. 4, 6-9pm
 Saturday, Dec. 5, 9am-2pm
Who: The entire congregation and wider community are invited.
 How to get involved: Come to the next planning meeting. Sunday, November 1st in the Lounge.



Congratulations!

Our church congratulates Jeneen and Paul Sasso on the birth of their daughter Mia Amalia Sasso on October 2nd. Mia arrived at 5 lbs. 5 oz. and 19 inches. Both mom and baby are doing great!



Youth Ministry News

Our youth ministry has gotten off to a great start this fall. There have been several organizational meetings and events already. Most recently, the youth have gone apple picking and will be making apple crisps on Sunday, October 25th to sell in order to raise money for this year's mission trip.

Speaking of that, the youth are exploring various options for this year's trip and hope to reach a decision on a destination soon. A lock-in and a Christmas Party are also being planned. A special thanks to Martha and Jason Jancaitis for their great leadership as Deacons of Youth Ministry!

Children's Clothing Sale



Melrose Day Care Gently Used Children's Clothing Sale

Saturday, October 24, 2009 – 9:00 AM – Noon
 Narthex
 Most Items \$1.00 Each!
 Fill one of our shopping bags for \$15.00!
 Visit the "Boutique" for that special item that

costs a tiny bit more. Donations of Gently Used Children's Clothing (no holes, tears or stains please) gratefully accepted. Please drop items at Melrose Day Care Center and Preschool, Cherry Street entrance prior to October 22.

Proceeds to benefit Melrose Day Care Center and Preschool, a not-for-profit, NAECY-accredited day care center and preschool serving Melrose and the surrounding communities. 781-662-6539

melrosedaycare@verizon.net
www.melrosedaycarecenter.com



MELROSE ALLIANCE AGAINST VIOLENCE

14th Annual Walk and Candlelight Vigil

Step it Up! For MAAV

Sunday, October 25, 2009

Melrose Veterans Memorial Middle School
 Lynn Fells Parkway in Melrose
 3:15 PM – Walk registration
 4:00 PM – Candlelight Vigil
 4:30 PM – Walk around Ell Pond

Please join us to commemorate the lives of those lost to domestic violence in Massachusetts over the past year and rededicate ourselves to preventing violence in our community.

For more information or to register a, please call MAAV at 781-662-2010 or visit www.maaav.org

HALLOWEEN PARTY



**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM**

The Youth Groups will be hosting a Halloween Party for the younger children after worship on Sunday, October 25th.

Youth Groups will arrive at 9:00 AM to set up for the party.

Young children are invited to wear their costumes to church.

Come and enjoy the fun!



2009 Neighbors In Need

The Neighbors in Need offering, will be received on October 18th. It supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to fund a wide array of local and national justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects.

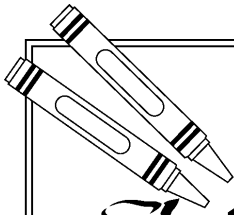
NEWS FROM HALLMARK HEALTH

Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice, Inc.

A Caregivers Support Group geared towards adults taking care of a parent, family member, or friend is being held on the first and third Monday of every month from 6:00 to 7:30 PM at the Dutton Adult Day Health Center at 1117 Main St. in Wakefield. The first meeting is on Monday evening, October 19, and will feature a talk, "Legal Checkup," by Stephen Spano, Esq., a well-known elder law attorney. Registration is suggested, as seating is limited. Light refreshments will be provided. Call 781-338-7902 for more information or to register.

Compassion Fatigue CEU Program Offered

In recognition of Home Health and Hospice Care Month, HHVNA and Hospice will be sponsoring a talk on Compassion Fatigue on Monday, November 9, 2009 at Lawrence Memorial Hospital School of Nursing – 170 Governor's Ave., Medford. Registration is from 4:30 – 5:00 PM, Dinner from 4:45 – 5:30 PM, and the Compassion Fatigue Program from 5:30 – 7:00 PM. Guest speaker Kathleen J. Rusnak, B.A., M.Div., S.T.M., PhD is an international speaker known for her warm, humorous, and engaging speaking style, and will focus on transforming compassion fatigue into compassion-energized care. 1.5 Nursing CEU's and 1.5 Social Work Contact Hours will be awarded. No fee. Registration is required. Please call 781-338-7902 or email jpereault@hallmarkhealth.org.



Just for

KIDS

A harvest of...

Autumn brings many visible changes. God makes lots of foods and grains ready for harvest. He also tells us that if we sow in peace, we, too, can raise a harvest.

Find and circle the bold (dark) words from James 3:17-18, NIV.

"But the **WISDOM** that comes from **HEAVEN** is first of all **PURE**; then **PEACELOVING**, **CONSIDERATE**, **SUBMISSIVE**, full of **MERCY** and **GOOD FRUIT**, **IMPARTIAL** and **SINCERE**. **PEACEMAKERS** who **SOW** in **PEACE** raise a **HARVEST** of **RIGHTEOUSNESS**."

C	S	P	E	A	C	E	L	O	V	I	N	G	F
O	U	E	X	W	C	E	Y	T	P	R	W	R	
N	B	A	U	L	T	J	C	O	R	E	I	I	U
S	M	C	P	R	X	K	F	W	I	A	G	S	I
I	I	E	M	E	R	C	Y	I	I	C	H	D	T
D	S	T	C	E	R	U	D	M	Z	E	T	O	S
E	S	I	V	X	J	C	U	P	W	M	E	M	D
R	I	H	E	A	V	E	N	A	W	A	O	H	P
A	V	M	P	J	M	K	L	R	T	K	U	V	W
T	E	O	C	G	O	O	D	T	G	E	S	S	L
E	H	A	R	V	E	S	T	I	B	R	N	Y	O
X	H	D	D	R	Q	Q	E	A	Z	S	E	D	B
S	I	N	C	E	R	E	E	L	S	Y	S	O	W
G	I	P	U	R	E	S	O	Y	C	E	S	E	F

Cookies for Friends

Autumn is the perfect time of the year to sow kindness and reap a "harvest" full of friendships. Make this special treat to share with someone.

What you need:

- An adult to help
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 cup cooked or canned pumpkin
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 1/2 cups diced, roasted almonds
- 1 cup chocolate pieces
- Raffia or fall-colored ribbon (optional)

What you do:

1. Cream butter and sugar together until light and fluffy.
2. Beat in egg, pumpkin and vanilla.
3. In separate bowl, mix flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, nutmeg and cinnamon.
4. Add dry mix to creamed mixture.
5. Add almonds and chocolate pieces; mix thoroughly.
6. Drop by teaspoons onto well-greased cookie sheets.
7. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes or until lightly browned.
8. Cool on racks. Makes about six dozen.
9. Stack two cookies on top of each other. Then tie them like a present with the raffia or ribbon. Give the cookies to friends and family to thank them for their friendship.