



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

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Rev. Dominic Taranowski, Pastor

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Angelic Awareness

One of the things I love about the Christmas story in the bible is that it is filled with visitations from angels. Mary, Joseph, the Magi, the shepherds—all receive visitations from angels either in person or through dreams.

The word “angel” means “messenger”. Angels are, of course, messengers from God. In the Christmas story, they come on the scene to announce, direct, warn, and help (and sing a little too, as in the case of the shepherds!). Traditionally, angels have been thought of as intermediaries between humanity and God. Of course, the ultimate intermediary is Christ himself who, being the divine in human form, eliminated any notion of a gap between ourselves and God. Still, angels play an important, on-going role in connecting us to God.

Do you believe in angels? Surveys show that a majority of Americans do. There are countless stories of people being provided direction or warning from a source beyond their understanding of this realm. Sometimes it comes in the form of a dream, sometimes it comes during conscious, day to day living but the outcome is a change in the direction of that person’s life and a deeper sense of connection to God. The stories that attract my attention the most are those in which a person encounters a stranger who provides some sort of help and then cannot be found afterward. Was this a real person or an angel at work? Ultimately, does it really matter?

There is a real sense in which we are all called to be angels to one another. You can strap on a pair of wings if you want but that’s not exactly what I have in mind. Rather, when we consider what angels actually DO, we can certainly all replicate those qualities a little more in our daily interactions. Remember, angels Announce, Direct, Warn, and Help. During this holiday season of hustle and bustle, we can increase our faith by looking for ways in which we can remind people of the “reason for the season” (Announce), invite people to worship at our church (Direct), highlight what may happen if improvements are not made to our lives and our communities (Warn), and look for ways to let people go ahead of us in line—literally and figuratively (Help).

I’m betting that these days God’s angels could use all the help they can get. This week, why not consider how you can be a messenger of God to those around you. You just might be surprised at what happens when you do!

See you in church,

Rev. Dominic



Fourth Sunday
OF ADVENT

Sunday, December 20, 2009

Renewing the Covenant

9:00 AM – Senior Choir Rehearsal

10:00 AM – WORSHIP

and Church School Pre-K – 12

11:15 AM – Coffee Hour, Narthex

11:15 AM – Youth Yankee Swap Christmas Party

*THE STEEPLE is lit this week in loving memory of
M. Douglas Robinson through a gift given by Connie Robinson
and family – Andrew, Susan, James, James Jr. and Jessica.*

DURING THE WEEK

Thursday, December 24

7:00 PM – Christmas Eve Service – Carols, Candlelight and Communion

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 – Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays

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

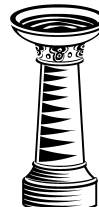
Vital Cycles - Thursdays at 7:00 PM, lounge

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

PLEASE NOTE: There will no Messenger between Christmas and New Year’s Day. Any events to be advertised for January should be in the office by Monday morning, December 21 to be included in next week’s Messenger.

HOLY BAPTISM



Our next Baptismal Sunday will be January 17, 2010. If you would like to partake in our sacrament of holy baptism please call the church office, 781-665-2111.



Marilyn Parsons, Jennie Way, Marilyn McComas (Essex Park Rehab, Beverly MA), Betty Crane, Kate Watson, Anne Wing, George Burrell, Bud Pendleton, Barbara Jones.

† **Please keep in your prayers** *The Fitzpatrick family: Rick, Laura, Sarah and Sean. Rick's mother, Ethel Fitzpatrick passed away on December 12th at the age of 93 in Santa Barbara, California, just a month after her husband, Bill.*

GIVING (PLEDGE) STATEMENTS

Giving Statements for 2009 will be available at the church January 15, 2010. If you would like a preliminary statement now, to see where you stand, please call the church and leave a request or email Rick Mockler at crmocker@verizon.net.



CITY MISSION HOLIDAY DRIVE

Each year, City Mission Society, a UCC MA Conference mission activity, organizes a Christmas Shop, where needy families and individuals are invited to come and select gifts for themselves and their children.

Circle 10 is proud to be organizing our Church's collection efforts again this year. Look for our drop-off table before service in the Narthex. Donate this coming Sunday, Dec. 13th (Preferred Date) or Dec. 20th (Final donations).

City Mission recommends the following **new/ unused** donations:

- ❖ **Winter coats, sweaters and sweatshirts (large sizes especially)**
- ❖ **Hats, mittens, gloves and scarves**
- ❖ **Socks and underwear**
- ❖ **Blankets and backpacks**
- ❖ **Toys, games, and books for all ages**
- ❖ **Gift cards – Grocery, Target, CVS or other Merchants.**

Contact Jen Crain at jen_crain@hotmail.com or another Circle 10 member with any questions or to arrange a pick-up of a donation.

To sort gifts at First Church in Winchester, contact Carl McDonald at CMS to arrange a date/time in advance— (617) 742-6830, ext. 210 or information@cmsboston.org.

Clients' Christmas

Thanks so much to people who have made donations of money or stocking stuffers so we can give our clients, especially the kids, a little something for Christmas. If anyone has anything else, please give it to Nancy Toney on Sunday.



Needed: A Room at the Inn

Our newest client, a 19-year-old man from Honduras, is still living in a shelter until we can find him a room to rent in the Malden/Wakefield/Melrose area or a homestay for him. Help! We really don't want to leave him in the shelter through Christmas...if anyone has ideas about housing, please call Nancy Toney, (781-665-6588). A single room with shared bathroom and kitchen is what we can afford and he can manage...a stable wouldn't really be good...

We will have a Fair '09 debrief on January 17th

after church in the Lounge to discuss what we learned and what we can improve. In the meantime, please write down your thoughts while they are fresh in your mind and send them to Nancy Gift (ngift@mit.edu).



Your observations and suggestions will be compiled and presented at the meeting to give us a jump start. You get extra credit if your items have a category heading, such as: "Cleaning: Make sure the windows are washed in advance of the fair."



Memorial Wreaths that adorn the church this year are In Loving Memory of: Given by:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Marjorie E. Thayer</i> | <i>Donald F. Thayer and family</i> |
| <i>Our parents:</i> | <i>Sallie and Hans Klemm</i> |
| <i>Karl and Maria Klemm,</i> | |
| <i>and Francis and Helen Lathrop</i> | |
| <i>Troy P. Oosterman</i> | <i>Bob, Cheryl, Kate and Lauren</i> |
| <i>Cynthia Henry</i> | <i>Family and friends</i> |
| <i>Our Parents</i> | <i>Steve and Debbie Anderson</i> |

Christmas Flowers are given:

IN MEMORY OF	GIVEN BY
My twin, Ethel Rufener	Alice I. Johnson
My sister, Dagmar Bowles	Alice I. Johnson
My brother, Howard A. Johnson	Alice I. Johnson
In memory of loved ones	John Curtis
Katherine T. Southerton	Katherine Clark
Laura Linehan	Katherine Clark
Marjorie E. Thayer	Donald E. Thayer
Harry & Eula Gilbert	Donald E. Thayer
Helen L. Thayer	Donald E. Thayer
Loved ones	Bud & Emelie Burnham
Lloyd W. Toney & James C. Glasser	The Toney Family
Helen & Wilford Crayton	Bob & Carolyn McVoy
Esther & Spencer McVoy	Bob & Carolyn McVoy
Taylor Liskin	Jennifer Gillette
Our Circle Sisters	Circle 12
Loved ones	Betty & Bill Huntress
Her husband, Harry F. Crouss	Lora Crouss
Harold, Ruth, & Stanley Locke	Beryl L. Brown
Loved ones	M. Joan Potter
Patsy Anna & David Maddox	Marcy Holbrook & Wayne Leslie
Her Parents & Brothers	Marilyn Boyson & Family
S. Richard Boyson, her husband	Marilyn Boyson & Family
Ruth E. Donnell	Phyllis Lanni
Loved Ones	Herb & Nancy Schurian
To be thankful and joyful during the upcoming year.	Barbara Quoos
Paul & Richard Barter	Shirley & Donald Washburn
Marjorie & Helen Washburn	Shirley & Donald Washburn
Robert E. Hall	Forence M. Hall
Connie Dow	Charles M. Dow
Bruce & Elsa Jay	Carol Bergeron
Family & friends	Bill & Myrle Copeland
David Wing & Mickala Taylor	Anne Wing
Loved ones	The Dannbauers
Mark and all our loved ones	Joan & Bill Chetwynd
Danny Williams	The Kerle Family
George A. Kerle	The Kerle Family
Robert C. Semonian	The Kerle Family
Parents, Annie G. & Leonard W. Stevens	Nancy A. Mader & Family
Nanna Boyington	Nancy A. Mader & Family
Richard Hussey	The Hussey Family
My brother, Bob James	Patty Blades
Cynthia Henry	Nam Tran
James McLoughlin	Judy & Joe Murphy
Becky Mockler	Rick & Sarah Mockler
Verlie A. Burton	From the family of Susan & Jessica Messina
Those who have touched our lives	The Ahlin Family
Ralph & Connie Towle	Sherri Towle
Randy & Pearl Lane	Sherri Towle
My "Papa"	Jordan Towle-Jackson
My Grandparents, Ethel & Bill Fitzpatrick	Sarah Fitzpatrick
Troy Oosterman	Jim & Lisa Oosterman
Our Grandparents	Jim & Lisa Oosterman





**The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund
Offering Sunday, December 20**

The Christmas Fund Offering, which is administered by the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance of the Pension Boards on behalf of the UCC, is an expression of joy and gratitude to, and for, those who

serve the church.

Gifts to the Christmas Fund help provide pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retirees, emergency assistance to the families of clergy and lay employees and Christmas Gift Checks to hundreds of annuitants.

We will be taking this collection in church on Sunday, December 20. Envelopes will be available in the bulletins that Sunday. If you would like to mail a donation to the church, mark it for "The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross."



Looking for the perfect gift? Something unique? Something that will make a real impression? How about a draft animal! The second grade class invites you to come to the Alternative Holiday Fair in the Narthex after church on December 20th. You will find gifts that will be memorable to receive and life changing to those who will benefit from your generosity. Consider this:

- for the price of an iPod you could provide a struggling family in Asia with a draft animal to help make them self-reliant.
- for the cost of a video game your support could provide blankets to a family of five displaced by a disaster.
- for the price of a pound of gourmet coffee you could provide seeds and tools to an impoverished farm family trying to feed themselves.

And these are just some of the options available through Church World Service! This holiday season give a gift that matters. See you at the fair!

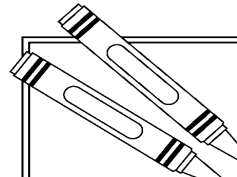


NEWS

1. Youth Group Yankee Swap - Dec. 20th, immediately after worship. Bring a \$5 swap, wrapped, and a food item for a local food pantry. Also, please bring a snack or drink to share. We're looking for 2 adults to chaperone!

2. January 3rd, 2010 - Mandatory Mission Trip Meeting for youth and parent/guardian. Immediately after worship. Agenda items - update on fundraising and trip logistics!

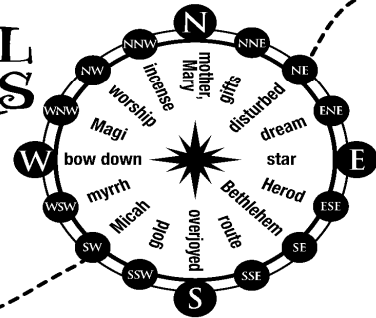
Any questions, please contact Martha Jancaitis - 781-979-9292 or mjancaitis@hotmail.com



Just for KIDS

SPECIAL VISITORS

Matthew 2 tells of visitors who traveled to worship Jesus. Read that story, or see if you can answer the questions below from memory. Use the compass guide to fill in the correct answers.



1. Who was king during the time of Jesus' birth? _____ (ESE)
2. Who came from the East to worship the one born King of the Jews? _____ (WNW)
3. How was King Herod feeling about Jesus' birth? _____ (NE)
4. Which prophet did the chief priests and teachers of the law quote when King Herod asked where the Christ would be born? _____ (SW)
5. In what city would Christ be born? _____ (SE)
6. King Herod lied to the wise men and told them to search and report back so he, too, could do what to Christ? _____ (NW)
7. What did the Magi see in the east and follow to find Jesus? _____ (E)
8. When the star stopped, how did the Magi feel? _____ (S)
9. Who else did the Magi see with Jesus? His _____ (N)
10. What did the Magi do first before they worshiped the child? _____ (W)
11. Name the three treasures the Magi brought for Jesus. _____ (SSW)
_____ (NNW) _____ (WSW)
12. These three treasures were all brought for Jesus as ... _____ (NNE)
13. What warned the Magi not to return to Herod? A _____ (ENE)
14. The Magi had to return to their country by another _____ (SSE)

Answers: 1. Herod, 2. Magi, 3. disturbed, 4. Micah, 5. Bethlehem, 6. worship, 7. star, 8. overjoyed, 9. mother Mary, 10. bow down, 11. gold, incense, myrrh, 12. gifts, 13. dream, 14. route



The Winter Wonderland Fair was a success because of all of you. We had the best clean up ever, thanks to the Boy Scouts and a crew of great volunteers.

Thank you one and all for your generous donations and for sharing your time, talents, and creativity. Heartfelt thanks to those of you who stepped up to fill the gaps created by those who were unavailable to help this year.

Thank-you to all who

- Scrubbed & cleaned
- Created or decorated raffle baskets
- Assembled gingerbread houses
- Baked & conected
- Prepared & served the supper & luncheon
- Painted; Created signs
- Handled publicity including posters, fliers, kiosk sign, church signage & maps, and wrote news releases
- Decorated
- Sewed & crafted
- Solicited silent auction items
- Coordinated volunteers and children's activities
- Manned booths
- Cashiered
- Shopped
- Took photos
- Sold tickets
- Greeted visitors
- Set up
- Wore a Santa suit
- Fielded Messenger entries and shared office supplies
- De-cluttered rooms 7 & 8
- Moved tables
- priced, and cleaned up.

Every contribution was helpful and meaningful, and we apologize if we neglected to mention anything! Thank you also for your gracious hospitality to our guests of all ages. Your tireless efforts created a wonderful fair.

Merry Christmas,
Lois Gauvreau and Nancy Gift, Co-Chairs,
2009 Winter Wonderland Fair

STAINED-GLASS STAR COOKIES

These star cookies will remind you of the star that led the Magi, or wise men, to our Lord Jesus. Enjoy these treats for yourself or give them as gifts.

What you need:

- An adult to help
- 3 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup (2 sticks) margarine or butter, softened
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- Plastic wrap
- Hard candy such as Life Savers in assorted colors
- Zippered baggies
- Rolling pin
- 2 star cookie cutters, one much smaller than the other
- Aluminum foil



What you do:

1. Mix the flour, baking powder and salt together.
2. Cream the sugar and butter. Add the eggs and vanilla.
3. Add the flour mixture and beat until well blended.
4. Divide the dough into four equal pieces. Wrap each piece in plastic wrap and refrigerate for about 30 minutes.
5. Separate candies by color and place each color in a sealed, zippered baggie. With a rolling pin, crush candy into small pieces (not a fine powder).
6. One at a time, roll out each chilled dough piece on a well-floured surface.
7. Use the large cookie cutter to make stars, and then place them on a foil-lined cookie sheet. Then press the small star cookie cutter into each large star and remove the small piece of star-shaped dough.
8. Place some crushed candy in each star-shaped hole.
9. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes or until golden brown. (The candy will melt and be translucent when cooled, like a stained-glass window.)



*Come, let us
adore him!*