



**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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**More than the Display**

I recently read about a man in California who decorated his front lawn quite elaborately. All of the landscaping was festooned with multicolored lights, displays hung in the tree branches and Santa and other figures were in spotlights on his roof. His neighbor, meanwhile, contented himself with a simple wreath on his front door and a sign on his gate that read: "See display next door" with an arrow pointing to the huge display.

Some people do go all out with their Christmas displays. Brendan and George have reached an age where they are not content with the indoor decorations but want to attack the parsonage front lawn with lights. I've told them we will take a run at that next year but not to expect a display like the guy down on the Lynn Fells Parkway near Target who requires a police detail.

Don't get me wrong—it is fun to decorate (before subzero temperatures set in) but, like so many things at Christmas, it is easy to be led away from the true meaning of the season. Personally, I'm more of a "See display next door" kind of person. Decorations of all kinds are wonderful and the way they transform our homes, churches and communities are undeniably beautiful. These decorations, however, are supposed to be symbols of the transformation and beauty that we are to display in our daily living because of Christ's birth. Too often, we stop with the decorations and forget to get to the heart of the matter.

Christmas and the New Year are great opportunities not only to celebrate but to contemplate. The outcome of these holidays should be to "re-purpose" our lives. As we sit in the glow of the tinsel and reds and greens, we should ask the deep question: "Why am I here?" And the deeper question: "How does Christ's coming into the world change my life?"

As the decorations come down in the next few weeks, may meaningful change remain. Through this holy season may we gain a centeredness, a purpose, a light, an inspiration, a spirit that will carry us through the coming year. Then, regardless of events, this time next year we will be able to bring 2010 to a close as a year truly blessed.

See you in church,

**Sunday, December 27, 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 FLOWERS ARE given by the Packham Family –  
To health & happiness in the New Year*

*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**

**Friday, January 1**  
**Happy New Year!**



**Sunday, January 3**

**9:00 AM – Confirmation Orientation Breakfast**

**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 – Mandatory Youth Mission Trip meeting  
for Youth and Parents/Guardians**

**11:15 AM – Finance Committee meeting**

*THE FLOWERS are given in appreciation of the  
congregation's support of the City Mission Toy Drive, by  
Circle 10.*

**Wednesday, January 6**

7:15 PM – Bells Rehearsal, sanctuary

**Thursday, January 7**

7:30 PM – Deacons and Trustees at the Packhams

**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



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



**Additional Poinsettias were given in loving memory of:**

\*Kenneth & Katherine Ring, and Paul Caruncho by Gerry Caruncho & Family.  
\*Her parents, Mr. & Mrs. Robert A. Leon; Her brother, Robert A. Leon; and Her husband, Charles by Edith Alice Trainor.

**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](mailto:crmocker@verizon.net).

**First Sunday for New Music Director**

Be sure to join us on Sunday, January 3<sup>rd</sup> to welcome our new Music Director, Kathy Troiano. Be sure to introduce yourself as we bring her onto the staff of First Congregational Church and wish her all the best as she begins her ministry among us!

**New Member Class**

If you are interested in becoming a member First Congregational Church, please join us for our next New Member Class! Rev. Dominic will be leading classes after worship on January 10th, 17th, and 24th. Our next New Member Sunday will be January 31st. This is a great opportunity to learn more about our church and our wider denomination--the United Church of Christ. If First Congregational feels like home, then this is the class for you!



**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](mailto: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."

**Confirmation Class 2010**



Our Confirmation Class for 2010 will begin with a Confirmation Breakfast for confirmands and their parents before worship on Sunday, January 3rd. Confirmation is open to all youth who are in the eighth grade or older. During the winter and spring, we will be exploring our faith in an intentional way as we seek to make it our own. Please let Rev. Dominic know if you would like to participate!



**NEWS**

**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](mailto:mjancaitis@hotmail.com)**



### An Opportunity to Help

Refugee Immigration Ministry, the organization our church has participated in for several years, reaching out to refugees and asylum seekers, has fallen upon hard financial times along with many of us. At the moment bills for clients' rent and food can be paid through January 1 but not through January 15. It is at the very moment that we have the opportunity to settle our newest client in a furnished, supervised room in the Caritas rooming house in Melrose at \$500/month. Will is living in a shelter on an island in Boston Harbor at the moment, a place that has been described by his lawyer as "Not a good place for a young man," not to mention cold! Will is nineteen years old and described as afraid and vulnerable; he needs us to be a family for him. We have decided that we cannot leave him there over Christmas and have decided to take the room for him as a leap of faith, not knowing where the money will come from. So we are once again asking for donations or better yet, monthly pledges to pay Will's rent and food. If 50 people pledged \$10/month, that would pay the rent! If you can help, please speak to Nancy Toney, Joan or Bill Chetwynd, Cynthia Dench-Irish or Amy Spollett, our RIM representatives.

*Thanks so much!*

I, Nancy Toney, have been playing Santa this week, delivering the wonderful stocking stuffers that you have donated to our RIM clients. I wish you could have been with me to see how touched and pleased they were that we would remember them. Mary from Uganda thanks you from the bottom of your heart and hopes to come to church soon. The Ngassa family says they cannot express (in English) how much the love and support of their church family means to them. The Bilimo family is very excited, although I told them they had to wait until Christmas to open the stockings. I will meet our new client, Will, soon and deliver his gifts. Thanks to a few of you for great generosity and to many of you for consistently dropping a dollar or your loose change in the RIM basket.

### A winning pattern for the New Year

Some anonymous wise person penned the following directions for living without bringing pain to others or oneself:

“You will never be sorry — for thinking before acting, for hearing before judging, for forgiving your enemies, for being candid and frank, for helping a fallen brother, for being honest in business, for thinking before speaking, for being loyal to God and the church, for standing by your principles, for refusing to participate in gossip, for holding your words when tempted to demean another, for not entertaining impure or hateful thoughts, for sympathizing with the afflicted, for being courteous and kind to all.”

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**FOOD PANTRY  
SUNDAY, JANUARY 3**

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