



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

*An Open and Affirming Congregation*

*Rev. Dominic Taranowski, Pastor  
Kathy Troiano, Music Director*

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## Divine Imperfection

I had an interesting and thought provoking response to my article last week. In the piece I encouraged us to find the holy in the ordinary—that God’s presence and God’s voice are around us every day but we often miss it all because we are looking for something much more dramatic.

The response I received was in the form of a question—and a good question at that: If everything around us is in reality a manifestation of the divine, then why isn’t everything perfect? This is, as I said, a great question and, like all things theological, could provoke many answers. Here’s mine:

Why do we assume that the divine is perfect? “Perfect” is, to be sure, a pretty loaded word. When we use it we commonly mean that something is without fault or blemish. I agree that God falls into this category but I also think we attach other things to the word “perfect” such as “carefree” and “painless” and “without challenge”. We see this in phrases like “In a perfect world we wouldn’t have disease” or “Wouldn’t life be perfect if every marriage was a happy one?” For us, “perfect” often means the absence of pain, suffering and challenge.

In that sense, perfect does sound pretty good! For a while that is. Can you imagine, though, a life without any challenges at all? Wouldn’t pleasure and joy become dull without their opposites in our lives to infuse them with meaning and value? Can you imagine God creating a world where we never had mistakes to learn from, where we never had to overcome anything? Such a world might be nice for a while, but I’m betting it would feel pretty lifeless after a while. In that sense, “imperfection” has its divine, life-giving place.

Now you might say that this sounds well and good when it comes to things like having a fender bender in traffic or forgetting your lunch on your way to work, but what about the big stuff? What about when that fender bender is a collision that takes the life of a loved one? What about when you have no job to bring your lunch to in the first place? What about the terminal diagnosis? Surely we could do without these. Surely God could have ordered things differently.

I would agree that this “big stuff” is different if it wasn’t for one thing. I could see being miffed at God for the world’s suffering, for setting the world spinning and then walking away if not for one truth: the incarnation. In Christ we know that God suffers the “big stuff” right along

## Sunday, January 24, 2010 *Renewing the Covenant*

**8:30 AM – Chancel Choir Rehearsal – Music Room**  
**8:30 AM – Bell Choir Rehearsal - Sanctuary**  
**10:00 AM – WORSHIP**  
**and Church School Pre-K – 12**  
**11:15 AM – Coffee Hour, Narthex**  
**11:15 AM – New Member Class**  
**7:00 PM – Confirmation Class**

*THE FLOWERS are given in memory of Clifford O. and Mildred W. Dolber, and Richard W. Dolber from their family.*

### DURING THE WEEK

#### Monday, January 25

7:30 PM – Common Threads at Sallie Klemm’s

#### Wednesday, January 27

7:15 PM – Bells Rehearsal, sanctuary

#### **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

with us—right up to a slow, tortured death. To me that says that the world is ordered just the way it is supposed to be. To me that says that the point isn’t to avoid pain and suffering but to realize God’s loving companionship in the midst of those very things. To me it says that hard times and tragedy are unavoidable and, yes, sometimes invaluable imperfections that are woven right into the fabric of the universe. Let us not forget that the resurrection would have been impossible without the crucifixion.

The point of our faith, then, is not to long for perfection in our lives or in our world but rather to praise God that, big or small, the imperfections of life are never born alone and they never have the last word.

See you in church,

*Dominic Taranowski*





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

## Relief for Victims of the Earthquake in Haiti



*Congratulations to Beth and Dan Hampson on the birth of their daughter Suzanne Juliamarie Hampson. She was born Monday, January 18, weighing in at 6 lbs 5 oz and measuring 19 3/4 inches*



*Our prayers and sympathy to Jeannette Stanley and family. Her husband, Clarence "Murray" Stanley passed away Saturday, January 16<sup>th</sup>. Graveside services were held at Wyoming Cemetery.*

## Youth Mission Trip Update!

### Upcoming Dates:

Feb 7<sup>th</sup> - immediately after worship - MANDATORY Mission Trip Meeting - parents and youth

**Feb 11<sup>th</sup> - 6-9 p.m.**

**DOCKSIDE RESTAURANT WAKEFIELD**

**FUNDRAISER!** The Mission Trip will receive 25% of the sales that evening!



**Bottle Drive:** Youth are collecting clean bottles and cans to return for deposit. Visit the Mission Trip Table in the Narthex to pick up your bag.



**Spare Change Drive:** Be sure to drop your spare change into the Mission Trip Bucket at the Youth Table!

*Congratulations to Drew Rynak and his parents, Allison and John Rynak. Drew was baptized Sunday, January 17<sup>th</sup>.*

*As an expression of the church's love, support, and care, Common Threads was pleased to present a handmade gift to Drew Rynak.*

## Haitian Earthquake

Our hearts, filled with prayers of hope and courage, go out to all those in Haiti who have experienced the devastation of the recent earthquake.

The ramifications of this tragedy are felt by loved ones around the world.

In addition, the aftermath of this event--and the suffering it caused--will linger long after any actual after-shocks. Being such a poverty stricken country, medical supplies are scarce and sanitation will quickly become an enormous challenge.

Beyond our prayers, you are encouraged to help with a financial contribution for Haitian relief. Many organizations are seeking donations. If you would like to make a contribution through our church you are welcome to do so. All donations will be forwarded to the national United Church of Christ's One Great Hour of Sharing effort for Haitian relief. **Checks can be made out to First Congregational Church with "Haitian Relief" indicated on the memo line.** These contributions can be sent to our church office or given in the offering plate on Sunday morning. Your contribution may seem small in comparison to what has happened, but every donation helps.

Confident that God's presence is not to be found in causing the earthquake but rather in the compassion that follows, we can join a growing, global spirit of healing that reflects God's resurrection power in the face of such adversity.

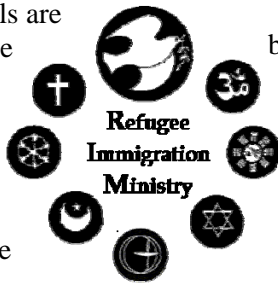
--Rev. Dominic



## Refugee Immigration Ministry News

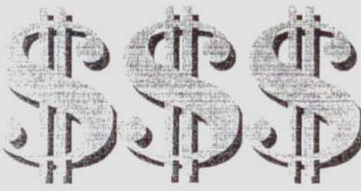
Sandra, our 20-year-old Congolese head of the household that includes her 12-year-old brother Nathan and 10-year-old sister Ruth, has just received her CNA (certified nursing assistant) diploma from a school in Malden and is looking for jobs...if you have ideas, let us know. She says many jobs require a driver's license so she is eager to get hers. Anyone good at giving lessons?

We have yet to get our newest client from Honduras into a room at Caritas in Wakefield...they have said they will take him but require an interview and the wheels are turning slowly...in the meantime he is still at the shelter on the island. Thanks to your donations, we have \$160 in pledges each month toward his \$546 rent...we are grateful for that steady income and would love to get even more! Will now has his work permit and social security card and is looking for jobs as he waits for his asylum hearing.



In the next few months, we are expecting the arrival of four families of new clients from Eritrea and Iraq. These people are refugees, which means they can work immediately and receive financial assistance from the government rather than RIM. However, we will be responsible on short notice for finding them apartments, gathering furniture and household goods, and orienting them to the American culture and community. We will need lots of help when the time comes. There will be many children, ages 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 15 and 17 so we will need clothing donations, particularly winter clothes and toys...please think of what you might contribute but hold onto it since we have no storage space and are not sure when the families will arrive.

DINING FOR DOLLARS AT THE DOCKSIDE  
IN WAKEFIELD



**DOCKSIDE**  
RESTAURANT & BAR

1099 Main Street ~ Wakefield MA 01880 ~ 781.245.0200  
[www.docksiderestaurants.com](http://www.docksiderestaurants.com)

Fundraising Night Event Ticket

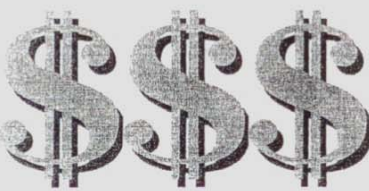
First Congregational Church Youth  
Organization to Benefit Mission Trip

Thurs. Feb 11<sup>th</sup> 6-9 p.m.  
Date & Time of Event

PLEASE PRESENT THIS CERTIFICATE TO HAVE 25% OF YOUR CHECK'S VALUE DONATED TO THE ORGANIZATION ABOVE.  
Valid for dine-in, take-out or delivery. Tickets are not to be distributed in the restaurant or within the perimeter of the parking areas. Valid only for date listed above.

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