



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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VOLUME 92

January 29, 2010

Number 21

Fragile

The earthquake in Haiti is nothing short of devastating. The reality that we are all part of one human web of coexistence could never be truer in the wake of this disaster. The ripples of suffering that began that fateful day will continue for some time as families receive news of losses not only from the earthquake itself but from the weak medical infrastructure that was available to help.

I have been on the soap box too often in this column pointing out that God does not cause suffering but rather accompanies us in our suffering through Jesus Christ to repeat that truth. It is worth repeating, mind you, but this tragedy brings home another dimension to our faith. As we reach out with donations and prayers of support, we are reminded of how fragile our lives are.

There is a common cultural struggle today. Check out the calendar in the kitchen of any modern, North American family (mine included) and you will see how packed our lives have become. We, if we count ourselves among the thoughtful at all, struggle to keep the frenetic pace of our lives from degenerating into chaos while holding out the hope that we can find meaning and faith in the midst of it all. Into this state of living, if and when tragedy befalls us, there is no room. Too many people live at the breaking point to begin with. A serious illness comes along, a natural disaster strikes, a job is eliminated, and the resources we would muster to deal with such hardship have already been diverted or depleted. We can then sink quickly indeed.

When we are not sure what Jesus means when he says "come away and rest awhile"—and many people I meet are there—then we are in trouble. Life becomes ever more fragile. The slightest tremor can send us reeling. The hard truth is, however, that it is impossible to go through life without hardship. The devastation of Haiti is real and it is also a teaching metaphor. Are you ready for tragedy in your life? Granted, no one is ever prepared for something as horrific as this earthquake, but what resources do you have within you that would allow you to sway and not crumble when devastating events happen in your life?

California, where I went to seminary and where Noreen grew up, is earthquake country. Building codes

Sunday, January 31, 2010

NEW MEMBER SUNDAY

Renewing the Covenant

8:30 AM – Chancel Choir Rehearsal

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

DURING THE WEEK

Wednesday, February 3

7:15 PM – Bells Rehearsal, sanctuary

Thursday, February 4

7:30 PM – Deacons and Trustees

Sunday, February 7 – Souper Bowl of Caring

11:15 AM - MANDATORY MISSION TRIP MEETING for youth AND parents

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

require seismic reinforcement of any structure. No such building codes existed in Haiti. While our faith calls us to reach out to those who are hurting and beleaguered after this earthquake, it should also be for us the seismic reinforcement in our own living that will allow us to withstand the times when the world collapses around us. Ours is a suffering yet resurrected Christ. Good Friday is never the end of the story. Just as those who died in this earthquake are now in God's light, Haiti itself will rebuild. The Good News is that a new day comes to all who suffer. The light of that truth will never be overcome by any tragedy—no matter how severe.

See you in church,

Rev. Dominic



Suzanne Hampson (infant daughter of Dan and Beth Hampson), Jennie Way, Marilyn McComas (Essex Park Rehab, Beverly MA), Betty Crane, Kate Watson, Anne Wing, George Burrell, Bud Pendleton, Barbara Jones.



Allison Adams Harris & Kingsley Harris of Brooklyn, NY announce the birth of their daughter, Naomi Faye Harris. Born in New York City on December 1, 2009 weighing 8 lbs and was 20.5 inches long. Joanne and Dean Adams are the proud grandparents.

2009 Giving Statements

Giving statements were emailed this past week. Printed copies are available at the church. If you would like yours mailed to you, please call the church and leave a message for Rick Mockler.



Needed Items for Will

Will, our Honduran client, will hopefully move into his Caritas room on Vine Street in Melrose this week and although the room is furnished, we still need a few items. They are:

- A comfortable chair
- Storage containers for food (there is a small refrigerator)
- A twin-sized blanket
- A couple of plates, mugs, and some silverware in case he wants to eat in his room
- Laundry detergent (the laundry is otherwise free)
- Personal items like toilet paper, toothpaste, deodorant, Kleenex, soap, shampoo, aluminum foil, plastic wrap.

(I will set up a box in the narthex to collect such items on an on-going basis)

Donations for rent, food, T-pass, phone

For our Ugandan client, we are still looking for a large, long lady's winter coat and some kind of pulled cart to carry vegetables home from Haymarket on the bus and T.

Refugee Immigration Ministry thanks so many of you for your concern and donations for Will; maybe by next Sunday he will be your neighbor!



GOSPEL ORIGINS—A LENTEN JOURNEY

Rev. Dominic will be leading adult education classes following worship during four Sundays in Lent. These will be bible study sessions but instead of focusing on particular passages, we will consider the authorship, historical context, and modern implications of each of the four canonical gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. When were they written? What was happening at the time and how did this influence the content of the writings? Who actually took pen to paper and wrote these important scriptures? It will be a macro view of the four gospels.

Classes will be held after worship on February 28th, March 7th, March 14th, and March 21st. This will be a great way to deepen your Lenten experience. All are welcome!

Volunteer Opportunity

How would you like to get involved in our church services? How about being a lay reader? As a lay reader you have the unique opportunity to be directly involved with the church service. If interested, please contact Jennifer Gillette at jennifergillette@gmail.com or call at 617 484 0688.



By Lighting our Church Steeple in memory or in honor of loved ones, you can help our church financially. Contact the church office (781-665-2111 or info@fccmelrose.org) to sign up for a week beginning on a Sunday. Your gift will be announced in the Sunday Bulletin and "The Messenger". A \$25.00 per week contribution is suggested.

Relief for Victims of the

Earthquake in Haiti

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

Youth Mission Trip Update!

Upcoming Dates:

Feb 7th - immediately after worship - MANDATORY Mission Trip Meeting - parents and youth

Feb 11th - 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!

DINING FOR DOLLARS AT THE DOCKSIDE
IN WAKEFIELD



DOCKSIDE
RESTAURANT & BAR

1099 Main Street ~ Wakefield MA 01880 ~ 781.245.0200
www.docksiderestaurants.com

Fundraising Night Event Ticket

First Congregational Church Youth

Organization to Benefit Mission Trip

Thurs. Feb 11th 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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