



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*

OFFICE 781-665-2111 - FAX 781-665-8824

E-MAIL info@fccmelrose.org Website www.fccmelrose.org

Cell phone: 781-526-3428

VOLUME 92 February 19, 2010 Number 24

Blessing and Suffering

We are blessed. There is no way around it. We enjoy the prosperity of the richest nation in the world. We live in relative safety—avoiding the ravages of war. We have loving families and abundant friends. Our church is healthy and growing. We are indeed blessed.

We tend, however, to make a clear demarcation between blessings and suffering. If you are blessed than you have escaped suffering. The truth is that the waters are a little murkier than that. There is a lot of gray. Though we are blessed, we also face significant challenges in lives.

We know this, of course, but when we get a tinge of our own hurts we have, for generations, looked at others who are down and pumped ourselves up with the slogan: “There but for the grace of God go I”. As if those who suffer more than us are somehow being denied God’s grace. As if the web of life is not real and we can take comfort in the idea that while things like earthquakes are horrible, at least it didn’t happen where I live. It is tragic that people are ill, but at least I’m not. Or I’m sure glad the children of our church didn’t have to suffer abuse at the hands of clergy like some other churches have.

The bottom line is that we are all blessed and we all suffer and it is important to be accountable for our sufferings. Pain and tragedy don’t just happen somewhere else. Not all of us are healthy. Not all of us are enjoying the prosperity of the richest nation on earth. Safety is elusive for too many of our brothers and sisters who live in the trenches of violent crime. There are many who do not have family and are absent friends. If we look deeply enough at our own lives we will find our own interweaving of blessing and pain.

I was recently awakened to this reality with regard to our church. I know, of course, that no church is perfect and ours is no exception. There are always things we can do better and areas in which we can improve. I was, however, among those who were grateful that at least our church has escaped the likes of the child abuse scandal that has rocked the Catholic Church. That is, until I got a call recently from our conference staff to let me know that a former Associate Pastor of our church,

Sunday, February 21, 2010
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 – Winter Congregational Meeting
7:00 PM – Confirmation Class

THE FLOWERS on the Communion table are given in loving memory of Charles Trainor by his wife, Alice.

*THE STEEPLE is lit this week
“in honor of my mother, Mildred Vranas’ 89th birthday”
through a gift given by Ted & Sue Cinella and family*

DURING THE WEEK

Monday, February 22

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

Tuesday, February 23

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

Wednesday, February 24

7:15 PM – Bell Choir 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

who served here in the early 1970s, is accused of sexually abusing at least one former youth group member. The fact that this was so long ago did not lessen my shock and sadness. The fallacy that our church is somehow immune from this kind of darkness came home in full force.

We are blessed, all of us. But we are also those who suffer. While it is important to elevate our blessings, it is equally important to acknowledge our shortcomings and pain. In doing so we reach out to those who hurt from the past abuse they suffered. We reach out to those who long for safety, for healing, for a sign of God’s resurrection power and abundance.

Life is not only light. The darkness is real and not just something “out there”. Sometimes it hits very close to home. The light, however, longs to call out the darkness, name and dissipate it so that honesty and wholeness are the hallmarks of our living.

See you in church,

Dominic Taranowski



Jennie Way, Marilyn McComas (at home, 143 Green St.), Betty Crane, Kate Watson, Anne Wing, George Burrell, Bud Pendleton, Barbara Jones.

BREAD OF LIFE

We wanted to give an update and a **big thanks** to all those who donated new and slightly used clothes to Bread of Life for distribution to the 100+ families living in motels in the Malden area. In Church, many of you have heard us make the appeals for winter clothes and our thanks for the great response we received from various members of the congregation. We made several deliveries in December and early January. When we re-appealed in January, a person may have expected appeal fatigue to set in. Well that person would have been wrong. We were inundated with donations. They literally filled our entryway. We dropped off an SUV full of clothes to Bread of Life two weeks ago. Bread of Life staff wanted to be sure we related how important these gifts are and how much they are appreciated by the families - multiple stories of children sleeping in their new clothes. We are currently checking with Bread of Life staff on future needs and I report out.

Barbara and Paul



GOSPEL ORIGINS—A LENTEN JOURNEY

Rev. Dominic will be leading adult education classes based on Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, following worship during four Sundays in Lent: February 28th, March 7th, March 14th, and March 21st. All are welcome!

WARRANT FOR THE WINTER CONGREGATIONAL MEETING OF FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH in MELROSE, UCC

February 21, 2010

To the Members of the First Congregational Church in Melrose, United Church of Christ:

In accordance with the by-laws, there will be a congregational meeting on Sunday, February 21, 2010 immediately following the worship service to receive and act upon the following Articles:

Article 1: To receive and act upon the Clerk's Report for the calendar year 2009;

Article 2: To receive and act upon the Treasurer's Report for the calendar year 2009;

Article 3: To adopt a budget for calendar year 2010;

Article 4: To transact such other business as may come before the meeting.

James Oosterman,
Co-Trustee of Human Resources and Congregational Records/Clerk

The Giving Tree

Do you have a passion you would like to share in support of our growing Church?



Please stop by and pick your passion off of our Giving Tree in the Narthex.

Each shape on the tree clearly identifies an area where your help is needed and a contact person to follow-up with for further details.

Timothy 6:18: "Be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share."

To add additional requests to our tree please contact Maura or Brian Packham 781-665-2305.