



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

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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A Safe Place

There are several wonderful passages in the New Testament about Jesus and stormy weather. In particular, John 6:18-20 in which Jesus walks on the wind swept waters and Matthew 8:26 where we find Jesus rebuking the wind and waves to create stillness. The message of Christ through these and other stories is clear: Jesus brings peace where there is chaos in our lives.

Our lives can become quite stormy at times. We can get battered about by the wind and waves of living. If we are not careful, we can sink! Stress can dominate our lives and exhaustion can define who we are. We can turn to coping mechanisms that are far from healthy. We need to remember again and again that we have a source available to us who can bring calm, who can center us and ground us. That source is Christ himself. In Christ we can find perspective and meaning for our living. Through him our priorities can be re-ordered so that we find ourselves aligned with the highest and best that God created us to be.

That process begins with recognizing that we are safe. The disciples in each of the above mentioned bible stories were terrified by the storms around them. In Christ they found safety and calm. Once they relaxed into the safety of Christ, they were able to learn from Jesus and grow in their faith. This is exactly the pattern we follow as well: We open ourselves to Christ in the midst of our stormy lives, discover the safety and peace he brings, and then grow into a deeper relationship with our loving God.

Because the church is the living body of Christ today, this same pattern is available to us on a collective level as well. Our church is a safe place in Christ. Here we can bring our battered spirits, our hurts and uncertainties, to God in the safety of Jesus Christ. Whether those challenges are related to our relationships, our jobs, or our health, our church stands as a well-spring of Christ's peace and restoration. This is also important to remember in light of the difficult news I shared in my column last week that part of our legacy as a church includes an accusation against a former clergy person of child sexual abuse nearly four decades ago. Much has changed in our church since then and the many parents and children in our church today need to know that we

Sunday, February 28, 2010
Renewing the Covenant

8:30 AM – Chancel Choir Rehearsal

8:30 AM – Bell Choir Rehearsal

10:00 AM – WORSHIP

and Church School Pre-K – 12

11:15 AM – Coffee Hour, Narthex

11:15 AM – Lenten Bible Study – Gospel Origins

7:00 PM – Confirmation Class

DURING THE WEEK

Tuesday, March 2

7:30 PM – RIM Meeting, Seminar Room

Wednesday, March 3

7:15 PM – Bell Choir Rehearsal, sanctuary

Thursday, March 4

7:30 PM – Deacons and Trustees

Sunday, March 7

Food Pantry Sunday

11:15 AM – Youth Mission Trip Meeting

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

have important safeguards in place to prevent such a thing from happening today. These are included in our Safe Church Policy, a copy of which is available in the church office. That policy is one component of our commitment to insure not only the safety of our children and youth, but also to reflect more intentionally the safety, compassion, and healing of Jesus as the Body of Christ in Melrose.

During the season of Lent, we are called to acknowledge our wounds, transgressions, and imperfections. First Congregational Church is an expression of the love of Christ and is a safe place to bring the fullness of who we are. Here we can appreciate the peace Christ offers, learn from him, and grow in our faith in God.

See you in church,



Jennie Way, Marilyn McComas, Betty Crane, Kate Watson, Anne Wing, George Burrell, Bud Pendleton, Barbara Jones.

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!

NEUTRAL PULPIT SUNDAY!
As part of our program theme for this year, “Renewing the Covenant”, we will be hosting a Neutral Pulpit this coming Sunday, February 28th.
What is a Neutral Pulpit you ask? When a church is in a search process for a new pastor, the search committee asks a neutral or uninvolved church, in this case us, to allow a candidate for the position of pastor at their church to preach a sermon during a worship service. This allows the search committee to see the candidate in action! It will also allow all of us, as the host church, to hear a different voice during this Lenten season while at the same time aiding a sister church in our Metropolitan Boston Association of the United Church of Christ. Be sure to join us!



Youth Mission Trip - THANK YOU!

Thank you to all who helped support our fundraising by going to the Dockside Fundraiser. We raised just

over \$550 towards our trip. Thank you!

Next Mission Trip meeting - March 7th, immediately after worship.



REFUGEE IMMIGRATION MINISTRY is in its finest hour, UCC people and Lutherans and Unitarians working together frantically to outfit three apartments for three separate families who will arrive Feb. 24, 25, and March 3. If you have anything at all you could donate, please call Nancy Toney at 781-665-6588. We particularly need strollers, high chairs, cribs and toddler beds, and clothes for 1-year-olds (boy and girl), and girls 5, 6 and 7 years old, especially jackets and boots but really anything. Anything else: lamps, bookcases, waste baskets, blankets, umbrellas, curtains, toys...anything at all!

ALSO...We are looking for a few good people to help us pick out and load furniture for these families this Saturday. We will be meeting at Home Goods Recycling in Acton at 12:30 to get the stuff, then delivering and unloading it at two apartments. It will be an all-afternoon commitment but should be fun and very helpful. We also need people to meet at the apartments around 4:30 or so to unload.

ALSO...We are still desperately looking for apartments for two families: one de-lead two-bedroom and one one-bedroom, preferably in Melrose or Malden. If you have any ideas, please let Nancy know right away! Thanks so much to those of you who have responded with donations already.



Annual Trivia Bee - March 27th

Teams from local organizations will once again be displaying their knowledge of trivia on the stage of Memorial Hall on Saturday, March 27th. The Trivia Bee supports The Bridge, the non-profit group that connects the Melrose Public Schools with willing volunteers. The First Congregational team, the "Bee-lievers" has participated every year, with various church members filling the three spots on the team. Our team members from the past few years have decided to retire this year, so we are looking for three people who are willing to take a turn answering the questions! If you have questions about participating, please see Sallie Klemm, or ask one of our recent team members - Barbara Krol-Sinclair, Ed Arnold, or Frank Stewart. And mark your calendars for a fun (and cheap!) night out at Memorial Hall on March 27th!

