



The Courier

Semi-monthly Newsletter

December 10, 2008

Melrose
Highlands
Congregational
Church

www.mhcc-ucc.org

WORSHIP PLANS FOR JANUARY



January 4
Epiphany
Communion

Food Pantry Collection
"Star Search"
Matthew 2:1-12-23

January 11
Just Peace Players

January 18
Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend
"Defining Moments"

January 25
All Church Birthday Party
"More Flags, More Fun"
Matthew 1:1-12-20

AN ADVENT POEM



This poem comes from a Christmas card that one of you received a few years ago and shared with me last Christmas. I

saved it because I liked it so much and now share it with you all in hopes that you like it as well.

On a gray, misty afternoon salty fog reaches a cross Hood Canal where a single rowboat is anchored off shore.

Tied to its prow is a Christmas tree complete with star and lights made in China. an illogical sight, rocking gently.

How like the world is this paradox of Advent when each year we relive the days history records from a desert land.

When a Savior is born anew for all people to brighten our days and our Faith and to rock gently in our hearts.

DeAnna Kauzlaric 2005

WHY DO WE LIGHT CANDLES AT ADVENT?



The fourth Sunday before Christmas marks the beginning of the season of Advent. This is the time in our church year that we prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ into the world as a new born baby on Christmas Day. The four candles of the Advent Wreath guide us through the weeks of Advent and they share important messages that

will help us to get ready for that special night, Christmas Eve.

Jesus the Light of the World



The first Sunday of Advent we light one candle in the Advent of Wreath. The second

week we light two, the third week three and the fourth week four candles are lit. Each week the light of the candles increases reminding us to: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you" (Isaiah 60:1). Jesus, our Light, is coming and will break open the darkness of the world.

Get Ready!

During Advent our primary task is to GET READY! It is the



time of year when we "prepare the way for the Lord" (Mark 1:3). The candles serve as reminders to us of the progression of the season. They tell us to get ready for Jesus' entry in to the world and into our midst.

Wait and See!

The Advent candles help us to count the weeks of the season and they remind us that waiting is a part of the process of preparing. God's plan is unfolding in God's good time and our job is to patiently wait.



Gather Round!

The shape of the Advent Wreath is round and each family that lights its candles, where in our sanctuary or at home, gathers around it to remember the true meaning of Christmas.



As you contemplate this seasons Advent Candles here are a few scripture passages to contemplate.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. For a child has been born for us, a son given us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:2, 6

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. John 1:1-4

CHRISTMAS WEEK



Our next time to feed the less fortunate will be TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23 at St. Paul's Church in Malden. Needed are donations to pay for the meal and workers to help prepare, serve, and/or clean up afterwards. It all happens between about 4:45 and 7:00 PM. If you would like to share in spreading some Christmas cheer that evening, please contact this month's coordinator, Carol Rosseland, 781-665-6350.

RETHINKING CHRISTMAS GIFT GIVING



It is the middle of Advent already! How did that happen? The sanctuary has been decorated for the season; in another two weeks, on the 21st, we will have *Music Sunday*; and just three days later it will be Christmas Eve!

Does this bring joy to your heart or a sense of foreboding? Does the thought of Christmas Eve bring a smile to your lips or lines of worry to your brow as you think of all the presents yet to be bought?

Every year I bemoan "the commercialization" of Christmas as I schlep from store to store, looking for gifts I hope will be wanted, all the while wanting to find a more meaningful way to give.

If this strikes a cord with you perhaps the following ideas will be of help.

Just the other day I received a letter from the Dalio Family Foundation, urging us to change the way we give at Christmas and to make gift giving more charitable and less commercial.

They noted that the amount of money spent on candy...just candy...in the last quarter of the year is greater than the annual budgets of the *American Cancer Society*, the *American Heart Association*, and *Habitat for Humanity* COMBINED! The not too subtle suggestion is that this is crazy.

Their solution is to give those gifts that are needed and wanted at Christmas but not the ones with little or no meaning. In the place of those gifts, the suggestion is to give gifts that help others.

The foundation has a website, www.REDEFINECHRISTMAS.org through which you can find organizations to give to. They also have on-line Christmas cards that you can send to people to let them know about the gift you have given in their name. If this appeals to you, then go to their website and see what you think.

The point of all of this is not to promote this group but to get us all thinking about what and how we give and to suggest that there are alternatives.

Christian Education Director Search



The Board of Christian Education has recently re-opened the search for the Christian Education Director. The Board

has put advertisements in the *Melrose Free Press* and has listed the position on *Craig's List*.

The response has been very encouraging. We would welcome any recommendations or ideas from the Congregation to help us to fill this position.

The position is part time- 15-20 hours a week, with a flexible schedule, and, of course, Sunday mornings. The Christian Education Director has broad responsibility for the curriculum and coordination of our Rotation Workshop Sunday School Program.

If you have any questions or ideas please contact Joanne Hartung at 781-662-9530 or any member of the Board of Christian Education.

Christmas Presents



In this "season of giving" Christmas presents to family and friends please consider giving a monetary gift to your church. Your Christmas Offering will help MHCC with its many programs and expenses.



Dear Friends,

The leftovers from Thanksgiving are long gone now and Christmas is really right around the corner. This is a busy time of year for everyone, especially ministers. In addition to all the regular holiday tasks of shopping, cleaning, decorating, and Christmas card preparation, ministers are designing meaningful Advent and

Christmas Eve services and trying to help the people in their church's to find the blessings of Christmas in the midst of all the hustle and bustle of the season.

As I sat down to write this piece I wanted to do the latter...say something that would bring the blessings of Christmas to the fore. But everything that I wrote was lacking in one way or another. Then I remembered the following piece, which I offer to you in the hope that this Christmas my be one of abundant blessings of peace, faith, and wonder for you, your family, our church, and the world.

Blessings, Rev. Peggy O'Connor

A Christmas Blessing

By Joyce Rupp

- † May there be harmony in all your relationships. May sharp words, envious thoughts, and hostile feelings be dissolved.
- † May you give and receive love generously. May this love echo in your heart like the joy of church bells on a clear December day.
- † May the hope of this sacred season, settle in your soul. May it be a foundation of courage for you when times of distress occupy your inner land.
- † May the wonder and awe that fills the eyes of children be awakened within you. May it lead you to renewed awareness and appreciation of whatever you too easily take for granted.
- † May the bonds of love for one another be strengthened as you gather with your family and friends around the table of festivity and nourishment.
- † May you daily open the gift of your life and be grateful for the hidden treasures it contains.

- † May the coming year be one of good health for you. May you have energy and vitality. May you care well for your body, mind, and spirit.
- † May you keep your eye on the Star within you and trust this luminescent Presence to guide and direct you every day.
- † May you go often to the Bethlehem of your heart and visit the One who offers you peace. May you bring this peace into our world. Amen.

FLOWER MEMORIAL DECEMBER



The flowers that grace the altar are given in loving memory
December 7 – Agnes, Albert & Wilbur James and in loving memory of Mrs. Lucy B. Snow
December 14 - Charlotte King
December 21 - Poinsettia Sunday
December 28 - Bonnie Bowden
 Memorial Wreath on the Highlands Nursery School door in loving memory of **Bonnie Bowden**.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC SUNDAY



Our annual pre-Christmas musical service will be offered on Sunday, December 21 at 10:00 a.m. To experience the joy of the season through music, we hope you will plan to attend—and invite friends who might not have a similar opportunity.

Carols and anthems from America, England, Spain and Germany will be featured, sung by our senior choir, *Choir Light* and the *Children of Note*, along with beloved carols for Congregational singing. Vanessa Holroyd, a superb young area flutist, will also be participating in the service.

Please join us for this festive program!
- Harold Prenatt, Director of Music

PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE



After many weeks of careful laboring over wording and meaning, we are pleased to report that our Local Church Profile is completed and has been sent to Dale Hempen, the MACUCC Area Minister who is helping us in this process. He will put our listing into circulation, and he will also set up a mock interview for us, to help us prepare for our talks with potential candidates. Once our position description is posted, individuals can have their ministerial profiles sent to us, and then we will start the review process. There is a copy of the Profile in the church office, if anyone wishes to read it.

One other note: we apologize for any confusion about the Retreat plans we had announced earlier in the fall. We ultimately decided that the timing of the retreat did not fit with our needs, and our plans have changed. At present we are undecided as to when -- and if -- we will hold a retreat in the spring.

Recycling and Trash at MHCC



Did you know that MHCC recycles?

The Church participates in the same curb-side recycling as Melrose residents. If you have something to dispose of when you are at the Church, please look for a recycling container if your trash is recyclable. You may have to walk a little farther, but the Church and the earth will be grateful.

On a number of recent occasions, the City has refused to take our trash because we have had too much. The more we recycle, the less trash we will have. Also, if you participate in a large event at church (such as the Fair), it would be helpful if a few people could take a bag of trash home to reduce what we put at curb-side after those events. Please be sure that trash bags are full before tying them up. It saves plastic, and the City is less likely to complain, if we put out three full trash bags instead of six half-full trash bags.

What to recycle at MHCC: you can recycle the same materials at Church as you can at your home. If you are uncertain, look on the bulletin board in Fellowship for the details about what you can recycle.

Where to recycle at MHCC:
Paper: look for the **blue** trash bins located in most rooms. There is one in the Narthex, just outside the coatroom where you can recycle your bulletin on Sunday.

Plastic, Glass and Metal Containers: look for the recycling container in the kitchen. We currently have a **green**, City recycling bin, and should soon have larger bin with a recycling label. Sometimes there is a cardboard box instead of the **green** bin.

Cardboard: flatten the cardboard and leave it neatly in the stairwell outside the boiler room on the lower level.

Plastic bags and tablecloths: clean plastic bags can be put in the hanging cloth holder attached to the left side of the refrigerator for future use at the Church. If that holder is full, look for the **green** cloth recycling bag labeled "plastic bags/tablecloths" in the kitchen. Please loosely fold the used plastic before putting it in the bag, so that we can fit as much in as possible.

Our thanks to everyone for helping MHCC to **REDUCE, REUSE, and RECYCLE.**

Board of Christian Outreach

The Green Corner

*Using our resources wisely to
care for God's creation.*

Quick, which is better: paper cups or Styrofoam ones?

If you chose paper (because of its biodegradability), you'll be surprised at the answer.

Here are the reasons why Styrofoam is actually the "greener" choice of the two:

Paper Cups Don't Biodegrade

Although the general consensus has been that paper is greener because it biodegrades faster, the truth is that it doesn't really -- not in a landfill anyway because of the lack of oxygen. Well, it does eventually, but it takes much more time than one

would think for a paper cup to biodegrade as modern landfills are designed to inhibit degradation so that toxic wastes do not seep into the surrounding soil and groundwater. The paper cup will still be a paper cup 20 years from now.

So it sounds like it unless you're throwing your paper cups out into the backyard compost pile when you're done with them (which isn't practical) or recycling them somehow they really aren't such a green deal after all.

Paper Cups Use More Raw Materials and Energy (And Cost More)

A study by Canadian scientist Martin Hocking shows that making a paper cup uses as much petroleum or natural gas as a polystyrene cup. Plus, the paper cup uses wood pulp. The Canadian study said, "The paper cup consumes 12 times as much steam, 36 times as much electricity, and 2 times as much cooling water as the plastic cup." And because the paper cup uses more raw materials and energy, it also costs 2.5 times more than the plastic cup."

Taking into account the life cycle costs, reusability, and waste produced during production, the we come to a surprising conclusion:

Styrofoam cups are, in fact, more ecologically safe than paper.

The third alternative: ceramic or steel mugs:

It takes less energy to manufacture and transport Styrofoam compared to paper or ceramic. The amount of water and energy required to wash the ceramic cup using a dishwasher approximately equals the energy required to manufacture a new polystyrene cup. *Note: washing by*

hand can actually use more water and energy than a dishwasher!

Still, that doesn't get around the problem of solid waste, and this is where the ceramic cup wins. **So the greenest cup, it turns out, is the one that you already own.**

Submitted by Keren Hummer

**The Just Peace Players
and
Mugs for the Earth
Sunday, January 11th**



In support of our theme of Environmental Stewardship, the Board of Christian Outreach has invited the Just Peace Players to present their play "For the Beauty of the Earth" as the sermon for Sunday, January 11. This play invites people to think about ecology from a perspective of caring for creation as sacred work.

Following the Worship Service, the Board of Christian Outreach will host a "green" Fellowship Hour. We will be using washable dishes and are requesting members of the congregation to **bring their favorite coffee or travel mug (empty, of course) to Fellowship Hour to use for coffee or tea that day.** (See the Green Corner elsewhere in this *Courier* to read the surprising facts about which type of cup is "greenest".) Mugs will be available for those who don't have a mug with them. Bring your family and bring your mugs to church for a fun and inspirational day.

Book Drive a Success

Many thanks to all who contributed to the Book Drive for *City Mission Society*.



We delivered nine boxes of books to them. Carl McDonald, the Boston Urban Outreach Director for City Mission Society, expressed their thanks: "...there was a great assortment [of books from MHCC]. Thanks so much to your Church for being a part of our Book Drive. We collected over 22,000 books this year which really helps our programming in so many ways." The Board of Christian Outreach



Thank you to everyone who has been using GOODSEARCH.COM as your internet search engine. The church recently received a check for your usage.



We encourage everyone to use GOODSEARCH.COM and GOODSHOP.COM; the church will earn approximately 1.3 cents each time you use these search engines. Every little bit helps!

LUNCH BUNCH

**January 14th
12:30 P.M.**



PORTHOLE RESTAURANT

98 Lynnway, Lynn

For reservations or a ride please call Barbara Kenworthy at 781.665.8235. Everyone is welcome!

CHRISTMAS DINNER



Temple Beth Shalom
Welcomes you to the 21st Annual
Christmas Day Dinner
at
First Baptist Church
561 Main Street, Melrose
on
December 25

Doors open at 12:00 noon
Dinner served at 1:00 p.m.

No admission charged.
Transportation provided upon
request. RSVP: Council on
Aging at 781.665.4304.

Sponsored by Temple Beth Shalom,
in cooperation with the First Baptist
Church, Melrose Council on Aging
and the Melrose Business
Community.

ADULT EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY OPPORTUNITIES



Bible Study is every Tuesday
morning at 11:00 a.m. in the Library
with Arnold Carlson.

Labyrinth Walk is held every
second Wednesday each month at
7:30 p.m.

REVIVE!! A time to refresh body
and soul. Wednesday evenings in
our Chapel at 7:00 p.m. **Due to the
back-to-back holidays REVIVE
will be held on Tuesday, December
30th in lieu of 12/24 and 1/31.**

Faith Talk meets with Peggy every
Thursday morning at 10:30 a.m. in
the Library. Exploring the questions
you have always wanted to ask!

INCLEMENT WEATHER



In the unlikely event that we
have a snow storm and must
cancel Sunday Worship Services
please look for cancellation notices
on MMTV (Channel 3 or 16 on
local Melrose Cable) and on
WCBV-TV Channel 5.



JEAN BEERS recovering from
knee replacement surgery.

ELEANOR EDWARDS recovering
from a recent hospitalization.