



The Courier

Newsletter January/February 2024

Worship

January 14th
Second Sunday after
Epiphany

January 21st
Third Sunday after
Epiphany

January 28th
Fourth Sunday after
Epiphany
Birthday Sunday

February 4th
Fifth Sunday after
Epiphany

February 11th
Transfiguration
Sixth Sunday after
Epiphany

February 14th
Ash Wednesday

February 18th
First Sunday in Lent

February 25th Second
Sunday in Lent



Dear church,

I hope you are doing well and staying warm! The holidays were such a warming gift this year: our sanctuary was full on Christmas Eve with families from near and far celebrating the birth of Jesus, singing familiar carols, and making a joyful noise (or racket) in our children's moment!

Thank you so much to everyone who helped make the Advent and Christmas traditions of our church so lovely. First, to the staff: Andrea for all her work with the many bulletins and announcements, Diana and Eugene for their beautiful music, and Angel for keeping the sanctuary spotless! Thank you to our Sunday School team for the great paper Advent wreaths our kids made, the worship team for setting up the many props and logistics for all the special services, the Choir and Jr. Choir for Music Sunday blessings, the Hospitality team for their generous coffee hours, the Scouts for bringing poinsettias to our at-home members, and everyone else!

So many people go into making MHCC the place that it is, where you can nurture youth, nourish yourselves, serve your neighbors and build community. When considering the vibrant and joyful place you call your faith home, think of all the friends and family who make it the place it is.

And remember that while the pastor plays a big part in the life of the church, it isn't just about them. As you probably have read or heard by now, I have found my next call. I will be serving as the Interim Associate at Wellesley Hills church. My last day with MHCC will be March 17, but MHCC will continue to grow and thrive beyond that, because YOU are what makes this church the place that it is.

Continued

I can imagine that this news might be anxiety-provoking: what happens next? While no one knows the exact timeline God has in store for MHCC and the search for a settled pastor, what I do know is: as of the writing of this letter (Jan. 10), the church profile has been posted, candidates are already submitting their applications, and the search committee is preparing to interview. Having an end to the interim period and departure of the interim pastor is a natural part of this process. By the time you read this letter, I am sure even more progress has been made in your search!

I am so incredibly thankful for the time we have spent together in mutual ministry, and am so excited to see what happens next with MHCC and your called settled pastor. I am praying for you all during this transition as well as for the pastor who is already out there and searching for YOU!

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any pressing concerns, questions, or just need some extra reassurance that MHCC will be fine through this! I have every faith that the growth and joy we have shared together will continue. You have an incredible slate of lay leaders and staff, and a deep well of spiritual strength to draw from.

Blessings,
Pastor Katie

minister@mhcc-ucc.org
cell: 301-980-1038

Search Process and Search Committee Update: Jan 21 after worship

Join members of the search committee and Pastor Katie on Sunday, Jan. 21 after worship for an information and Q&A session to talk about the pastoral transition. Pastor Katie will go back over some of the material shared at the Fall Congregational meeting about the flow of the search process, committee members will help answer questions, and we will highlight the help we have from the wider UCC in this transition. Bring your questions, concerns, and hopes!

From the Desk of the Moderator

Every year, without fail, I find myself awestruck by how beautiful our Sanctuary is on Christmas Eve -- the pews full, candles everywhere, and gorgeous music filling the room. As I'm sure you know, words cannot do it justice, and this year's service was no exception. What a lovely way to wrap up the year. Thank you all for helping make that moment perfect! And I hope your Christmas and New Years were a joyful opportunity to strengthen your connections with God, your loved ones, and yourself.

And now we dive into 2024, meeting new opportunities and challenges with full hearts. Pastor Katie will be moving on to a new opportunity in March, and we will send her off with our love and blessings ... and we will miss her dearly. In the meantime, our Search Committee is making great progress in their quest to find us a new leader who can guide MHCC into the next chapter.

It's normal for us to feel excitement and trepidation at times like these, and we will no doubt lean on one another now and then. But we've weathered greater storms than this (ahem, pandemic), and I have no doubt we will do everything we can to take advantage of the opportunities that come with this time of transition.

So please continue to pitch in whenever and however you are able: through your pledges, committee work, giving rides, serving coffee, or even just taking time to connect with your fellow congregants. We have built a thriving and loving community here at MHCC, and I can't wait to see where the journey takes us next!

Warmly,
John Swanson

Service and Outreach

A Servant's Heart Food Pantry

The Food Pantry continues to see an increased need for groceries and everyday supplies. Please consider picking up a few items for the pantry. Current list of needs for the months of January and February:



January

Aluminum foil
Plastic wrap
Hand pump soap
Kitchen garbage bags, tall
Sandwich bags that have
slider Ziploc

February

Sardines
Hot chocolate
Fruit cocktail
Welches grape juice 10 ounces
Triscuits
Snack pack chips
Snack pack jell-o
Brillo pads
Shampoo

Donations can be brought to church on any Sunday or dropped off at Faith Evangelical Church (200 Franklin St. Melrose). Thank you for your continued support!

Service and Outreach Continued



Thank You!

The Service and Outreach Team would like to thank everyone who participated in the Giving Tree for their generosity and thoughtfulness. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to serve 15 children from 8 Melrose families. Each child received toys and clothing that were requested by their family, as well as the family receiving \$100 in grocery gifts cards per child in their family. In addition to these 8 families, we were also able to fulfill gift requests from 40 under-resourced teens currently attending Malden High School. All of these gifts were delivered on December 18th by our dedicated team, despite the high wind and rain that we experienced that day.

The Melrose families come to us through the Ames Fund, administered by the Red Cross, which is specifically for Melrose families in need. The teens come to us through the social workers at Malden High School. We were originally connected to this group by John Oteri, when he was serving as Supt of Malden Schools.

Thank you all!

Service and Outreach Team

Jane Beckwith, Val Bowden, Kate Fazio, Anne Gilbert, Kathy Mapstone, Darcie Martin, Katie Omberg, Christine and John Oteri, Carol Rosseland

Service and Outreach Continued

Martin Luther King, Jr (MLK) Day of Service 2024

On Monday, January 15, 2024, the Melrose Human Rights Commission is hosting an MLK, Jr Day of Service. There are a variety of service projects that community members can choose to participate in. Check out the SignUpGenius for details. [<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0948AEA92AA3FFC34-47130281-2024#/>] MHCC is one of the project sites. The event is set up to allow people to participate in one project at 10 am and one at 11 am, if they choose to.

On the MLK Day of Service we will have two related projects: 1) making a meal for Bread of Life (appropriate for Middle School and older), and 2) cutting out and decorating cookies for the dessert (appropriate for all ages). **We need some specific help in advance of next Monday:** volunteer bakers to make sugar cookie dough and gingerbread cookie dough. We need at least 6 batches of cookie dough (each batch should make 2 dozen cookies). If you can help with either of these needs, please contact Anne Gilbert at annegilbert45@comcast.net or 781-367-9508. Thank you!

Pledge Reminder

Are you up to date on your pledge?

Now is a good time to check how you are doing in completing your annual stewardship pledge. At the start of the year we would expect to see nearly 60% of pledge payments received in order to be on track to complete 100% of pledges by April 30th but a recent look at church financials suggests we have only collected 45% of pledges. You can help! How much of your annual pledge have you sent in? Your help in “catching us up” would make a big difference.



Lunch Bunch

Please join us Wednesday, January 17th at 12:30 at Floramo's, 1099 Main St., Wakefield

RSVP to Dianne Cheney at 781-662-9138

All are welcome!



Birthday Sunday

January 28th is "Birthday Sunday" where we have 13 cakes to celebrate everyone's birthday at once – one for each month and one gluten-free cake. Please let us know what you're bringing – cakes or cupcakes of any type are welcome! Sign up here:



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0C4CA4A923A5FE3-47165912-birthday>



Please join us in praying for God's comfort and guidance in their lives and this world, as well as for all those whom you know need God's love and caring.

Please call or email the church office to add a name to our prayer list.

Nancy Chappel
Dianna Cryan
Christyne Cheney Daley
Mary Edwards
Mary Steele Hartung
Laurie Lowman
Lois Mackey
Jack McLeod
Jill Steeper
Rachel Steeper
Carol Trout
Andy Wescott
Ana Wescott

Our Sunshine List: *Please send cards, visit and hold in your prayers.*

Barbara Kenworthy, The Fitch Home, 75 Lake St., Melrose, MA 02176

Charlotte Swan, Greenwood Nursing & Rehab Center, 90 Greenwood St., Wakefield, MA 01880

Janice Blanchard, 90 Greenwood St., Wakefield, MA 01880

Beverly and Michael Harrison, Steele House, One Nason Ave., Apt. 514 Melrose, MA 02176

Judy McSween, Woburn Rehab, 18 Frances St., Woburn, MA 01801

Melrose Highlands Congregational Church
355 Franklin Street
Melrose, MA 02176
www.mhcc-ucc.org

October 2, 2023

Heifer International
1 World Ave
Little Rock, AR 72202

Re: Donation from MHCC Sunday School

Dear Friends:

The Sunday School program of the Melrose Highlands Congregational Church (MHCC) is pleased to send along our donation in the amount of \$1,250.00 to benefit Heifer's mission to end hunger and poverty in a sustainable way by supporting and investing alongside local farmers and their communities.

At the end of our program year for the last two years – MHCC's children have held a "Heifer Marketplace" and chosen an animal to benefit from the funds raised by the sale of handmade arts and crafts and a small raffle basket.

2022 Marketplace
2023 Marketplace

Goats & Baskets of Hope
Pigs & Baskets of Hope

The youth of the church have really enjoyed working to support Heifer. This faith-based plan really does bring the commandment "love your neighbor" to life. We hope this is a life lesson that will stick with them throughout their journey into adulthood. (Speaking from the experience of one of the signors of this letter – who has been a proud supporter of Heifer off and on for the last forty (40) years, your work DOES matter!).

This year, MHCC's Sunday School has taken a "deep dive" into the lesson of Jonah and the Whale. This feels like a good opportunity to raise funds for the "Gift of Clean Water" at the 2024 Marketplace. The Earth Gift Basket and Garden Seeds seems like a nice addition, too. There is no harm in raising the bar high. After all - "Shoot for the moon. If you fall short, you might land on a star."

Thank you,

Valerie J. Bowden, Deacon of Youth Ministries – Proud Supporter of Heifer Since 1983
Julie Fauvel, Sunday School Director
Jolyn Kitteredge, Deacon of Christian Education
Kate Fazio – Sunday School Teacher
Rev. Katie Omberg, MHCC Interim Pastor
MHCC Sunday School Children

UPDATE: Heifer very quickly acknowledged our \$1250 contribution. To magnify the joy of our gift, a group of generous donors has doubled our donation (resulting in a \$2500 total donation). **SAVE THE DATE** for our upcoming 2024 MHCC Heifer Marketplace – June 9, 2024 (rain date – June 16th).



Heifer International gratefully recognizes

Melrose Highlands Congregational Church

for your contribution of healthy animals and training
in their care to help struggling families overcome a life of hunger and poverty.
"The Earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Psalm 24:1

Christ Moore

Heifer International

October 2023

Date



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CONCEPT

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31	1	2 12pm - Bible Study 6:15pm - Polymnia -	3	4 7pm - Choir - Sanctuary	5 5pm - Dance - FH	6 1pm - Cardini Party - F.H.
7 10am - Holy Communion 10am - Worship 2pm - Pack 615 - FH &	8 7pm - EC meeting	9 12pm - Bible Study 6:15pm - Polymnia - 7pm - Anti-Racism Team	10	11 6pm - Pack 615 - FH	12	13
14 10am - Worship	15 MLK Day of Service	16 12pm - Bible Study 6:15pm - Polymnia -	17 12:30pm - Lunch Bunch	18	19	20
21 10am - Worship 2pm - Pack 615 - FH &	22 7:30pm - Outreach Team 7:30pm - Outreach Team	23 12pm - Bible Study 6:15pm - Polymnia -	24	25 5pm - Dance - FH	26	27
28 Birthday Sunday 10am - Worship	29	30 12pm - Bible Study 6:15pm - Polymnia -	31 7pm - Choir - Sanctuary	1	2	3

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28 Birthday Sunday 10am - Worship	29 12pm - Bible Study 6:15pm - Polymnia -	30 12pm - Bible Study 6:15pm - Polymnia -	31	1 7pm - Choir - Sanctuary	2	3
4 10am - Holy Communion 10am - Worship	5 7pm - EC meeting	6 12pm - Bible Study 6:15pm - Polymnia -	7	8	9	10 5pm - Pack 615 Blue and
11 10am - Worship 5pm - snow date Pack	12	13 12pm - Bible Study 6:15pm - Polymnia - 7pm - Anti-Racism Team 7pm - Finance Team	14 Ash Wednesday at MHCC	15	16	17
18 10am - Worship	19	20 12pm - Bible Study 6:15pm - Polymnia -	21	22	23	24
25 10am - Worship	26 7:30pm - Outreach Team 7:30pm - Outreach Team	27 12pm - Bible Study 6:15pm - Polymnia -	28	29 5pm - Pinewood Derby 7pm - Choir - Sanctuary	1 Pinewood Derby Pack	2 8am - Pinewood Derby