



**First Parish Church, Congregational**  
**On the Village Green**  
**Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts**

Rev. Dr. Marlayna Schmidt, Interim Pastor  
Donald R. Dunn, Director of Music-Organist  
Jessica Skidmore, Christian Ministry Coordinator  
Tori Potter, Sexton  
Nancy Klebart, Office Manager

978-526-7661

[office.fpchurch@verizon.net](mailto:office.fpchurch@verizon.net)

[www.firstparishchurch.org](http://www.firstparishchurch.org)

## VESPERS

**Saturday, December 23, 2017 5:30 PM**

“...Fear not. For, behold, I bring you good tidings of a great joy which shall be to all people.” (Luke 2:10)

**TEN MINUTES OF GATHERING MUSIC:** (Starting at 5:20 pm)  
*from December Recollections, Bryan Sirchio*

*Once the music starts to play, we invite you to be in silence.*

**WELCOME**

Rev. Dr. Marlayna Schmidt

### **CALL TO WORSHIP/ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING**

Jessica Skidmore, Christian Ministry Coordinator

**Joy** (written by Rev. Martha Spong)

The poet, Mary Oliver, wrote: “If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don’t hesitate. Give in to it...life has some possibility left...Joy is not made to be a crumb.” It seemed impossible, but the Israelites returned to their home from exile in Babylon. The prophet Isaiah offered a song of celebration.

**Come and rejoice! Eat and drink! Get your priorities in order!**

**Can’t you see that God is close by? The people rejoiced, amazed to have a second chance.**

The end of the story has yet to be written. When we light the candle of Joy, we celebrate the One who has come, is coming and will come again.

**Whatever we face in life, God will make joy possible.**

(Jessica lights the Joy Candle and relights the Hope and Peace Candles)

### **ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION**

**MEDITATIVE READING:** A prayer by Steven James

Bethany Woods, Reader

*(This prayer is written from the perspective of someone about to begin a potentially stressful new day. We invite you to see it as a prayer for anyone seeking God’s guidance in the midst of stress.)*

Savior,  
As night fades,

As morning comes,  
I take some time to prepare for today.  
I know at times I'll be tempted to lose my patience.  
At times I'll be tired,  
At times people will push me to the edge,  
At times I'll forget about you.

Frame my day around obedience,  
Cover my moments with a little more peace,  
Guide my words toward a little more graciousness,  
And keep my thoughts revolving  
A little more around you.

This day is a gift, and it may be my last.  
So, with that thought in mind,  
I step into this moment  
Holding your hand  
And entering my day.

## **ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION**

**SCRIPTURE READING:** Luke 2:8-14

And there were in the same country shepherds, abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not. For, behold, I bring you good tidings of a great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born, this day, in the city of David, a savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, Goodwill toward all."

## **ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION**

**REFLECTION:** *Musings from Musician Bryan Sirchio*

(from his website: [Sirchio.com](http://Sirchio.com)) Rev. Schmidt, Reader

## **LIGHTING OF VESPER CANDLES** (10 minutes)

*You are invited to come forward and light a candle(s) for people or situations you want to hold in the Light of God's Love.*

*When you light the candle feel free to whisper the name of the person(s)/situation(s) for whom you are praying.*

## **MUSIC DURING CANDLE-LIGHTING**

*from December Recollections, Bryan Sirchio*

## **BENEDICTION**

Rev. Schmidt

## **SUNG BENEDICTION RESPONSE:**

Joy to the World! The Lord is come; Let earth receive her king  
Let every heart prepare him room, And heaven and nature sing  
And heaven and nature sing, And heaven, and heaven and nature sing

*If you wish, you are invited to remain in the sanctuary after the benediction and listen to the music, which will play for another ten minutes.*

*We invite you to leave the worship service in silence when you are ready.. However, Rev. Schmidt will stay in the church for a time in case you would like her to say a word of prayer with you following the service. Just let her know if you would like to pray.*