



# **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, February 24, 2018 - 5:30 p.m.

*Connecting to God in “the desert wilderness” of our lives*

**TEN MINUTES OF GATHERING MUSIC** (starting at 5:20pm)

from *O Lord, hear my prayer* Taizé

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

**WELCOME**

Rev. Dr. Marlayna Schmidt

**CALL TO WORSHIP** (adapted from *Touch Holiness*)

Leader: O God, there are many things that stand between us and the life you intend us to lead.

**People: Like frozen ground stifling back a bulb’s expression of life, these things subdue spirits struggling to bloom.**

Leader: A lack of courage chills the ground of our being and prevents our challenging the cold grip of injustice.

**People: A snow-covering of indifference keeps problems out of sight and makes us believe there is no life below the surface.**

Leader: A sense of self-importance allows the dormancy of faith and permits us to be content without growing into the world.

**People: As we worship, O God, thaw us out.**

**All: Through all the chill of self-importance, indifference, lack of courage, we feel the life-giving warmth of your love, O God. Help us bloom as persons nourished by that love. In the name of Jesus. Amen.**

**ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION**

**MEDITATIVE READING:** “For Courage” by John O’Donohue  
(from *To Bless the Space Between Us*)

When the light around you lessens

And your thoughts darken until

Your body feels fear turn

Cold as a stone inside,

When you find yourself bereft  
Of any belief in yourself  
And all you unknowingly  
Leaned on has fallen

When one voice commands  
Your whole heart,  
And it is raven dark,  
Steady yourself and see  
That it is your own thinking  
That darkens your world  
Search and you will find  
A diamond-thought of light,  
Know that you are not alone  
And that this darkness has purpose  
Gradually it will school your eyes  
To find the one gift your life requires  
Hidden within this night-corner.

Invoke the learning  
Of every suffering  
You have suffered.

Close your eyes  
Gather all the kindling  
About your heart  
To create one spark.  
That is all you need  
To nourish the flame  
That will cleanse the dark  
Of its weight of festered fear.

A new confidence will come alive  
To urge you towards higher ground  
Where your imagination  
Will learn to engage difficulty  
As its most rewarding threshold!

## **ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION**

### **SCRIPTURE READING:** Philippians 2:12-13

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup>for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

## **ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION**

### **REFLECTION**

Rev. Schmidt

### **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 O Lord, hear my prayer Taizé*

### **BENEDICTION**

Rev. Schmidt

*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. 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.*

Today's reader is Jen Powers.