



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

www.firstparishchurch.org

VESPERS

Saturday, March 17, 2018 - 5:30 PM

Connecting to God in "The Desert Wilderness" of our Lives

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

From: *In God Alone: Songs of Taizé*

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

WELCOME

Rev. Dr. Marlayna Schmidt

CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from *Bread for the Journey*)

Leader: God calls us away from the tumult of the world, that we may find rest and focus our thoughts on things that are lasting.

People: In God's presence we see our lives more clearly; the broken pieces are put back together.

Leader: God calls us out of loneliness into a life of community.

People: Worshiping together, caring about one another, we find out what it means to be truly human.

Leader: But God will send us back into the world's confusion and busyness, its brokenness and isolation.

All: We will go with serenity and joy, rested and strengthened to be God's servants, the bearers of peace.

ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION

MEDITATIVE READING:

"For One Who Is Exhausted" by John O'Donohue

(from *To Bless the Space Between Us*)

When the rhythm of the heart becomes hectic,
Time takes on the strain until it breaks;
Then all the unattended stress falls in
On the mind like an endless, increasing weight.

The light in the mind becomes dim.
Things you could take in your stride before
Now become laborsome events of will.

Weariness invades your spirit.
Gravity begins falling inside you,
Dragging down every bone.

The tide you never valued has gone out.
And you are marooned on unsure ground.
Something within you has closed down;
And you cannot push yourself back to life.

You have been forced to enter empty time.
The desire that drove you has relinquished.
There is nothing else to do now but rest
And patiently learn to receive the self
You have forsaken in the race of days.

At first your thinking will darken
And sadness take over like listless weather.
The flow of unwept tears will frighten you.

You have traveled too fast over false ground;
Now your soul has come to take you back.

Take refuge in your senses, open up
To all the small miracles you rushed through.

Become inclined to watch the way of rain
When it falls slow and free.

Imitate the habit of twilight,
Taking time to open the well of color
That fostered the brightness of day.

Draw alongside the silence of stone
Until its calmness can claim you.
Be excessively gentle with yourself.

Stay clear of those vexed in spirit.
Learn to linger around someone of ease
Who feels they have all the time in the world.

Gradually, you will return to yourself,
Having learned a new respect for your heart
And the joy that dwells far within slow time.

ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 23:1-3

¹ The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures;

he leads me beside still waters;

³ he restores my soul...

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 is from:

In God Alone: Songs of 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.

Tonight's Greeters are Ann and Mark Heslop, Deacons.

Tonight's Reader is Mark Heslop.