

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

Saturday, December 15, 2018, 5:30 PM

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

From: *Songs of Taizé*

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

WELCOME

Rev. Dr. Marlayna Schmidt

CALL TO WORSHIP/ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

The Shepherds' Candle (adapted from *Touch Holiness*)

Jessica Skidmore, Christian Ministry Coordinator, Reader

READER: Tonight we re-light the first two candles on our Advent Wreath, remembering that we wait for Christ and that we must also prepare our hearts for Christ's coming.

[Reader re-lights 2 candles.]

PEOPLE: Tonight we also light the third candle of Advent, the Shepherds' candle.

READER: We remember that the shepherds were the first to bear witness to our Savior's birth.

PEOPLE: We follow their example when we share this good news with others, and turn to God with repentance and prayer.

READER: Sometimes we find it hard to share the good news of God's Love, yet the world is yearning to hear this message of hope and new life. Let us pray.

ALL: O God, help us to truly believe that your Love can heal what is broken in our world. And help us to bear witness to Your Love through what we say and do. In honor of all good shepherds, especially Jesus, we light this candle. Amen.

[Reader lights the pink candle.]

MEDITATIVE READING: A prayer/poem by Christine Rodgers

Christiane Alsop, Reader

COVENANT

The world

is still

wounded—
one long
jagged scar
throbbing.
And yet
this blessing.
This amazing
luminous
blessing in
the shape of
a baby comes
to us each
year. Comes
quietly, in the
midst of winter
when all seems
barren and dead—
bringing the
promise of
our deepest life.

ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION

REPEAT READING (*In the tradition of “Lectio Divina,” another reader will repeat the above poem, so it can be heard in “a different voice.” As it is read, listen for the words/phrases that the Spirit is calling your attention to.*)

Jason Smith, Reader

ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 1:46-55 Christiane Alsop, Reader

Mary’s Song of Praise

⁴⁶ And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
 Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
 and holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him
 from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

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Jason Smith, Reader

ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION

MEDITATIVE READING: A prayer/poem by Christine Rodgers

Christiane Alsop, Reader

SONG FOR THE POOR AT CHRISTMAS

We have romanticized
this birth—very nearly
sanitized the reality
away. The truth is
this baby was born
into poverty. There
was no room for him.
No hospital—no clean
sheets—no doctors or
nurses in attendance.
There were animals
and outcasts around
him. His own parents
exhausted and far
from home. This is
how our God chose
to come into the

world. He chose
poverty—and I
imagine he would
choose it still.
He would choose to
be close to those
with nothing—those
who had room
for wonder. It makes
me wonder where
we are—where
Jesus would be born
today.

ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION

REPEAT READING *(In the tradition of “Lectio Divina,” another reader will repeat the above poem, so it can be heard in “a different voice.” As it is read, listen for the words/phrases that the Spirit is calling your attention to.)*

Jason Smith, 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 *is from 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.

This year our Advent Vespers will be featuring the poems of Christine Rodgers, from her book, “Upon a Luminous Night”. The Christian Education Committee of FPCC has bought 20 copies of her book to give away to people who come to Vespers.

If you would like a copy, see Rev. Marlayna.