



**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

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# VESPERS

Saturday, December 8, 2018, 5:30 PM

*“Prepare the way of the Lord” (Isaiah 40:3; Luke 3:4)*

**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**

Erica Williams, Christian Education Intern, Reader

The Bethlehem Candle

READER: Today we light the second Advent candle, the Bethlehem candle.

**PEOPLE: It is offered in honor of the birthplace of Jesus, as well as the many places that Christ is born in the hearts of believers.**

READER: It is a time to prepare for the coming of the Christ, with prayer and resolutions to be better people than we are now.

**PEOPLE: Not only must we wait, but prepare.**

READER: We light the first candle remembering that we wait for Christ.

*[READER lights first candle.]*

READER: We light the second candle remembering that we must also prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.

*[READER lights second candle, extinguishes taper.]*

READER: Let us pray. Dear God, help us to prepare not only our homes, but also our hearts and lives for the coming of Emmanuel.

**ALL: Help us let go of the things that take up too much room in our hearts—our pain, our fear, our lack of forgiveness-- that Christ might come to us in the fullness of time, as we wait and prepare a place in our lives. In honor of Bethlehem, we light this candle. Amen.**

**ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION**

**MEDITATIVE READING:** A prayer/poem by Christine Rodgers

Erica Williams, Reader

**What Keeps Us From the Feast**

What keeps us from You, Lord.

Our lives are filled with things.

Is there still no room

At the inn – our inmost being

The place You made in us

For your gracious self alone.  
What keeps us from You, Lord.  
And what do we make of Paul's  
Command to pray without ceasing.  
Doesn't he know I'm busy.  
I have a job – a family – a deadline.  
I have a paper to write – the laundry  
To do. I have banking and baking.  
Running and wrapping. I have  
Christmas shopping to do. There  
Is always something to be done.  
What keeps us from You, Lord.  
What keeps us from the feast.

### **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.)*

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

**SCRIPTURE READING:** Isaiah 40:3-5

Erica Williams, Reader

A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

### **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.)*

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

**MEDITATIVE READING:** A prayer/poem by Christine Rodgers  
Erica Williams, Reader

### **A Clearing**

Help me  
Make  
A space for you  
Emptying myself  
To create  
A place for you  
Spreading the straw  
On the floor  
Of my soul  
In joyful expectation  
Of your coming.

### **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.*)

### **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.*