



November
2021

Minister's Message
Rev. Dr. Mark Boyea



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

In a time long ago, a wise woman was making her way on a pilgrimage to the holy land. But it was a long, hot and tiring walk. So once her destination was in sight, the wise woman decided to lie down on the side of the road and rest up for the final leg of her journey.

A short time later, she felt someone kicking at her feet.

"Get up!", the person shouted. "You are in sight of the holy land! How dare you lie down on sacred ground – on the place where God resides!"

At that, the wise woman replied, "Thank you, my friend, for pointing out my lack of reverence. Now, if you would be so kind to point me in the direction where God *does not* reside, I will be happy to go and lie down there."...

Once again, we have entered the month in which we celebrate Thanksgiving. More specifically, for us in the Christian spiritual tradition, it is a time when we are called to place special emphasis on the spiritual practice of *gratitude*. But the question for us is not just, "Are we grateful?", for I have never known anyone who has not been grateful for something at some point. The greater question for us is, "What is the *scope* of our gratitude?" That, in turn, is dependent upon our answer to the question, "Where do we see God?"

If we believe, as we say we do in our tradition, that God is the source of all our blessings, and we also see, as the wise woman did, that there is no place – or person – in which God *does not* reside, then our gratitude will know no bounds. And gratitude, as countless spiritual leaders and guides have expressed throughout the centuries, is a foundation for other vital spiritual blessings, such as *joy, compassion, and generosity*.

As the 13th Century German theologian, philosopher and mystic Meister Eckhart wrote, "The eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me."

Continued...

This Thanksgiving, and at all times, let us approach God with an eye that sees God residing in every direction – with an eye of gratitude.

Blessings,
Mark

WORSHIP NOTES

Our October Worship was highlighted by our first “Ask the Minister Sunday” of the year on October 3. The questions submitted were insightful, thoughtful and meaningful, leading to a vital spiritual experience for our community. Then, on Sunday, October 17, we were blessed to welcome Jim Alexander, Harold Jones and John Todd into full Membership. And finally, if you haven’t seen the Stewardship Reflection offered by Betsy Nickless on Sunday, October 31, please do so. It was a moving and powerful testimony to the life-changing impact a spiritual community – *this* spiritual community – can have on a person at every stage of their life, and especially in the most difficult circumstances.

In November, we will be blessed with a special presentation developed and led by Rev. Dr. Lelly Smith and the First Parish Choir:

“The Mayflower in 1620” – a combination of spoken word and music - was originally planned to be presented in our church in commemoration of Manchester-by-the-Sea’s 375th anniversary celebration last year. But like most of the town’s celebrations of that historic event, it needed to be postponed. On Sunday, November 7th, it will be the centerpiece of our Worship time.

We will also be blessed that day by a Stewardship Reflection from Christiane Alsop.

Then, on Sunday, November 14th, the Board of Outreach and Service will sponsor a special ***“Outreach and Service Sunday”***.

On that day, representatives of four of the service efforts First Parish supports will be on hand to give brief presentations on what they do and how our support has helped make their efforts possible. These presentations, interspersed throughout our Worship time, will take the place of that morning’s Message.

The following Sunday, November 21, we will celebrate ***“Thanksgiving Sunday”***. In recognition of all God has blessed us with in the past twelve months, we will celebrate the Sacrament of Communion together as a spiritual community, as well as join together in ***“A Gathering of Thanks”***. Instead of our usual time of offering prayer intentions followed by silent and then spoken prayer, we will instead have the opportunity to share with each other one or two of the specific things we are most grateful for since last Thanksgiving.

Also on Sunday, November 21 – **and please note this change from its original date of November 14** – we will celebrate ***“Pledge Sunday”***, when we offer our financial promises to God and each other for the coming year in support of all we do here at First Parish. Following a recent discussion between Rev. Mark and the Stewardship Committee, it was felt that there was no more appropriate Sunday to offer our pledges than on the Sunday we celebrate Thanksgiving, as the offering of those financial promises to God and each other is rooted in, more than anything, our gratitude to God for all we have been blessed with.

Then finally, the last Sunday in November, the 28th, is also the First Sunday of the Holy season of Advent when we prepare to welcome the birth of Jesus – the embodiment of God and God’s ways for us in the Christian spiritual tradition. Our Message theme for this year is ***“It’s Better to Light a Candle...”***

Borrowing from the quote attributed to people as varied as Confucius and Eleanor Roosevelt, *“It’s better to light a candle than to curse the darkness”*, during each of the four Sundays of Advent, we will explore one of the theological and spiritual concepts identified with the four candles of the Advent Wreath – Hope, Peace, Love and Joy – as it relates to our call from God to light candles in the dark spaces and places of our own and others’ lives.

Please keep in mind that the Indoor Mask Mandate for Manchester-by-the-Sea remains in place. Therefore, we will continue with the protocols we have been using throughout the Fall.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH and EXPLORATION

Thursday Bible Study will be held on the following dates in November at 4pm:

Thursday, November 11

Thursday, November 18

Prayer and Meditation will be offered twice in November at 7pm:

Wednesday, November 3

Wednesday, November 17

You will continue to receive details on times and how to participate in all our offerings from the Church Office either on the day of or day before each gathering.

Our Current Spiritual Exploration Unit Concludes!

“Shepherd, Soldier, Sinner, Sovereign: The Life of David”

Tuesdays: November 2 and 9 (additional week as needed)

7:00-8:15pm

Few figures from the Bible have been larger than David. His epic rise from shepherd boy, to mighty warrior, to beloved and beleaguered king, as well as his tragic flaws, make him one of the Bible’s most compelling characters.

Throughout this unit, we have been looking at some of the major episodes from David’s story arc, reflecting on the questions and timeless spiritual insights they raise for us in areas such as our relationships with God and others, the use of power, and personal ambition.

Coming in Late November!

Our next Spiritual Exploration unit will be Advent-themed and begin on **Tuesday, December 7.**

“Oh, Baby!”: Characters in the Advent and Christmas Stories

Tuesdays: December 7, 14 and 21

7:00-8:15pm

Angels, shepherds and kings are just some of the characters we find in the Gospel stories surrounding Jesus’ birth. Over the course of these weeks, we will explore a number of these characters, examining their words and actions, exploring their role and importance from a literary, theological and spiritual perspective, and discussing how they might speak to us in our time and place.

Our Bell Wheel is back! It was reinstalled in our Steeple in September.

Once again, people can ring the Church Bell by pulling on the rope in the Narthex to commemorate memorable occasions such as weddings, special holidays, etc.

The Bell Wheel was removed about a year ago. It was in disrepair, not functioning, and has been completely rebuilt by American Steeple Company. Half the cost was paid for by MBTS Community Preservation Act funds which were awarded to First Parish Church in 2020.



Council on Aging Thanksgiving Gift Bags

Continuing with this tradition of providing seniors in the community with bags and food gift cards we will be collecting items from October 24-November 8 in the Church Narthex or on Mary Ellen's front steps at 23 Harold St., Manchester. Marked tubs will be provided.

Items will be posted in the Church Narthex or by calling Mary Ellen 978-500-0018 or Nancy in the Church Office 978-526-7661. The Women's Fellowship group is leading this, with support from the Missions Committee and the Congregation.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Diaconate

The Deacons reconvened for our regular monthly meeting on Thursday, September 30th after our traditional Summer break. It was great to welcome our new Deacons, Liz Loomis and Nancy Petersen as we bid farewell to long-standing Deacon, Christiane Alsop, who has moved on to new adventures.

We've been busy preparing the Church for Fall worship and despite the new restrictions are excited to see so many familiar “eyes” in Church each week. We look forward to returning to normal soon so we can see familiar “faces”! When that time comes we look forward to christening our new coffee maker thanks to a kind donation from Bruce Warren. With the Deacons doing double duty as baristas we are confident that we will be upping our refreshment game soon.

Preparations were underway by the Search Committee for Mark's Installation but that has been postponed to a time when we can gather without restrictions. More news to come on this. Deacons Sue Parker and Jan Marshall are volunteering to help prepare for this special day.

We still actively discuss our desire to hold a Public Safety recognition day at the Church for our devoted police, fire, EMS, and educators. We will revisit this as the current restrictions are lifted.

Ann Heslop and Jan Marshall have taken over the responsibility of Corresponding Secretary from the departing Christiane and have a wonderful selection of inspirational cards. Please reach out to them if there is anyone in need of a thoughtful boost.

First Parish uses candid photos of church activities in its publicity from time to time. Any photos of children used will not contain personally identifiable information. Members of the community not wanting their or their children's photos depicted should inform the Church Office.

Director of Youth and Children's Ministry Jeanne Westcott

The October School Supplies drive is complete, and many items have been collected.

Great thanks to our Congregation members who so generously donated. The school supplies will be delivered to Beeman Memorial School in Gloucester in the coming days. The following items are included in the donation:

10 Composition books	Sanitizing Wipes
4 packages of pens	Backpacks
4 packages of pencils	Scissors
2 Colored Pencils	Crayons
6 Washable Markers	Pencil Case
Pencil Sharpeners	Stickers
Erasers	Tissues
Colored Paper	
Legal Pads	
Folders	
Binders	

Thank you all for your participation. After the hustle and bustle of a new start to the academic year, teachers come to know where classroom supplies are lacking and take measures to supplement, most often from their own pockets. Supporting our teachers by picking up a few needed items goes a long way to minimizing their worries and allows them to focus on what they do best: teach! So, thank you again!

Approaching this time of Thanksgiving, I recall a young lady I knew who confided in me that she was having a tough time with gratitude.

Let me introduce you to Jill. Jill, at the time of our first conversation, was small in stature, thin and tired. She had on the same jeans she had worn for over a week straight and a tee shirt she had pulled from a clothing donations bin. She was wearing flip flops but in the first week in September that year, it was pretty chilly. She was camping with about three thousand other folks, 2098 of them she did not know. She was hungry, scared, lost and most of all, in the physical withdrawal stage from methamphetamine Jill was fifteen at the time.

Jill had just attended a teen group for recovering addicts where the conversation had been about the gifts of a grateful heart. I was sitting outside a small outbuilding that served as a make-shift kitchen. I had just eaten lunch. I was enjoying my coffee and a cookie when I looked up and caught Jill's eyes. She looked angry and annoyed. I asked if she needed some help.

"How could you possibly help me?" she asked. "Do you have a magic wand or a million dollars?"

"No," I said, "but I have an ear and can buy you a burger."

She took me up on the offer.

We sat for nearly three hours together as she struggled to eat and talked about her young life. Thrown out of her parent's house after sharing with them her sexual orientation, she found herself couch hopping and then with a young woman who she believed would be her salvation. Instead, Jill found drug addiction and prostitution.

She had just been arrested for the second time and was determined to set herself on the right path somehow, but this gratitude thing was just too much.

"Grateful," she scoffed. "What do I have to be grateful for? That my parents hate me? That my girlfriend used me? That I spent every dime I got my hands on doing something that just won't seem to kill me, no matter how hard I try!?"

"Why don't we start with something small," I suggested. "How about grateful for this lousy burger, or this bottle of water, or the fact that those jeans don't have bigger holes in them.?"

Jill laughed. I laughed. We exchanged phone numbers. We talked a lot.

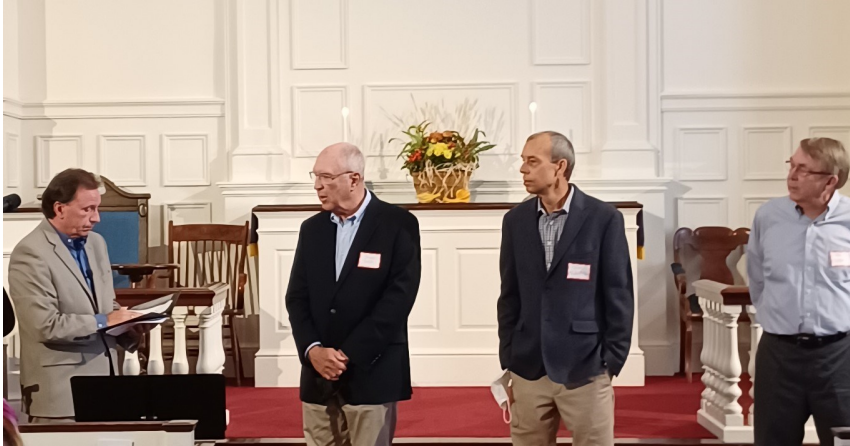
Jill is better now but she didn't get there alone. Many people came to Jill's aid when she was ready to accept it. Sometimes it was just a meal or a clean sweatshirt, but little by little, Jill found a few other things to be grateful for.

Comfort is a gift. It helps people feel their dignity, even when that dignity has been stolen. A small thing really.

Jill and I are forever grateful for the small things. How about you?

Jeanne Westcott, Dir. of Youth and Children's Ministries

Welcome New Members



On October 17th, we welcomed three new members into our spiritual community.

From left : John Todd, Jim Alexander and Harold Jones.

Please be sure to say a big hello and welcome next time you see them at First Parish or out and about.



The Christian Education and Vitality Committees recently participated in the MBTS Wobblin' Gobbilin' festivities by handing out candy and running a photo booth.

Book group is open to everyone! Consider joining us. We are now meeting again in person on the last Monday of the month.

We will next meet on November 29 at Meredith Tuft's home to discuss "The Orphan Collector" by Ellen Marie Wiseman.

Looking ahead to December the book discussed will be "Mr. Dickens and His Carol" by Samantha Silva along with a potluck dinner and a Yankee Swap of a used book. We will meet on December 13 at 6:30 PM, location TBA.

This is a time for church members as well as non-church friends to come together and engage with one another, build relationships, and share in a discussion of books that are of interest to people of various backgrounds. We have fun visiting, conversing about the book and sharing stories and would love to have you join us!

Questions? Please call Mary Ellen Cook 978-500-0018

Our Annual Fund Drive is underway. Look for mailings in the next week and join us with your pledge card on *Pledge and Thanksgiving Sunday*, November 21, for a special blessing by Rev. Mark.

First Parish Church Annual Fund Drive 2022

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Total Pledge for 2022 _____

Thank you for your pledge

"We are about to do a new thing; now it springs forth. Do you perceive it?" (adapted)

Isaiah 43:19



Please use the enclosed pre-stamped envelope to return your pledge for Pledge Sunday, November 14

November 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 07:00 PM-Tuesday Spiritual Studies	3 11:00 AM-Minister's Office Hours 05:00 PM-Manchester Summerstage 07:00 PM-Prayer & Meditation 07:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal	4 10:00 AM-VNA Health Clinic 03:00 PM-Seaside Parish Knitters	5 12:00 PM-Al-Anon	6
7 10:00 AM-Worship 10:00 AM-Mayflower Sunday	8 07:00 PM-Board of Trustees	9 12:00 PM-Al-Anon 07:00 PM-Tuesday Spiritual Studies	10 11:00 AM-Minister's Office Hours 07:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal	11 09:00 AM-Office Closed Vet. Day 04:00 PM-Bible Study	12 12:00 PM-Al-Anon	13 11:00 AM-Baptism 11:30 AM-Reception
14 10:00 AM-Worship 10:00 AM-Outreach & Service Sunday	15	16 12:00 PM-Al-Anon 06:30 PM-Church Council	17 11:00 AM-Minister's Office Hours 07:00 PM-Prayer & Meditation 07:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal	18 10:00 AM-VNA Health Clinic 03:00 PM-Seaside Parish Knitters 04:00 PM-Bible Study	19 12:00 PM-Al-Anon	20
21 10:00 AM-Worship 10:00 AM- Communion 10:00 AM- Thanksgiving & Pledge Sun	22	23 11:00 AM-COA Luncheon 12:00 PM-Al-Anon 02:30 PM-Friends of COA	24 11:00 AM-Minister's Office Hours 07:30 PM-Choir Rehearsal	25 09:00 AM- Thanksgiving	26 09:00 AM-Office Closed 12:00 PM-Al-Anon	27
28 10:00 AM-Worship	29	30 12:00 PM-Al-Anon				

*First Parish Church, Congregational
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The Outreach and Service collection continues for **The Open Door and The Grace Center**

Baking Mixes - Cake, Brownie, Cookie, Muffin, Pancake

Peanut Butter

Canned Tuna, Chicken, and Turkey

Healthy Snack Items

100% Juice/Juice Boxes

Breakfast Cereal

Hearty Soups

Canned Vegetables and Fruits

Spaghetti Sauce

Macaroni and Cheese

Rice, Noodles, Pasta



Gift Cards from local grocery markets (Shaw's, Stop & Shop, Market Basket, etc.)
so they can purchase butter, cream and other perishables