



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

*Awaken to the Light and Love of God;
Be a Joyful Beacon to the World*

**First Parish Church, Congregational
United Church of Christ
December 17, 2023, 10 AM
Third Sunday of Advent
Worship with Cantata**

Prelude Christmas Medley – arr. Linda Hartman
Still, Still, Still, O Little Town of Bethlehem, I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

Welcome by Deacon

Call to Worship

One: Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

All: Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim an end to the suffering of my people.

One: A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord."

All: 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.

One: Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together,

All: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

One: A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?"

Surely the people are grass.

All: The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

One: Get you up to a high mountain and lift your voice, O herald of good tidings;

All: lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities, "Behold, your God!"

One: O beloved people of God, the promise of the prophet lives with us!

All: Come, let us walk in the Light of the Lord!

[adapted from Isaiah 40:1-9]

Opening Prayer

Emmanuel – God-with-us

we gather in this beloved place, this time set apart,
to ponder the meanings of your coming near.

We remember the trust and the wonder
of the ones who discovered your birth –
laborers whose work was cold and long and tedious,
but whose attentiveness was priceless.

Teach us this morning
to abide with them, keep watch
for signs of the in-breaking of love and justice.
May the prayers we pray and the songs we sing change us,
so that we may help You change hearts, and change the world.
We pray in the strength of the nearness of Jesus.
Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Candle Eleanor Harris and son, Alex Demeter

Hymn Once in Royal David's City #145 NCH

Prayer Intentions

Time of Spoken Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Emmanuel, God-with-us –

You have heard our earnest prayer, “O come, O come,”
and sent Jesus to be with us.

We have heard his call to follow him into the true work of Advent:
the healing of wounds, the righting of wrongs, the restoring of relationships.

May the giving of these offerings help us to be with him,
and open our hearts to be with You – today, tomorrow, and in time to
come. Amen.

Scripture Reading Isaiah 35:1-10 Peter Bubriski

¹The desert and the parched land will be glad;
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.

Like the crocus, ² it will burst into bloom;
it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.

The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,
the splendor of Carmel and Sharon;
they will see the glory of the LORD,
the splendor of our God.

³ Strengthen the feeble hands,
steady the knees that give way;

⁴ say to those with fearful hearts,

“Be strong, do not fear;
your God will come,
 he will come with vengeance;
with divine retribution
 he will come to save you.”

⁵ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
 and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

⁶ Then will the lame leap like a deer,
 and the mute tongue shout for joy.
Water will gush forth in the wilderness
 and streams in the desert.

⁷ The burning sand will become a pool,
 the thirsty ground bubbling springs.
In the haunts where jackals once lay,
 grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

⁸ And a highway will be there;
 it will be called the Way of Holiness;
 it will be for those who walk on that Way.
The unclean will not journey on it;
 wicked fools will not go about on it.

⁹ No lion will be there,
 nor any ravenous beast;
 they will not be found there.
But only the redeemed will walk there,

¹⁰ and those the LORD has rescued will return.
They will enter Zion with singing;
 everlasting joy will crown their heads.
Gladness and joy will overtake them,
 and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Choir Cantata Once Upon a Night – words and music by Pepper Choplin
(1957-) see bulletin insert

Blessing

Closing Song God Be with You – Ralph Vaughn Williams (1872-1958)
God be with you ‘till we meet again; by His counsels guide, uphold you,
with His sheep securely fold you; God be with you ‘till we meet again.

Our Deacons this morning are John Feuerbach and Paul Gudonis.

Our Preacher today is Rick Spalding. Rick retired in 2018 after nearly 20 years of service as Chaplain at Williams College in western Massachusetts – where his work included encouraging spiritual life and inter-faith collaboration among students representing most of the world’s great religious traditions. He had previously served congregations in Boston, New York City, and Albany, and taught at Harvard Divinity School, Andover-Newton Theological School, and Trinity School in NYC.

Since retiring, Rick has served as Interim Senior Pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor, Michigan and at Old South Church in Boston. He and his partner Peter Bubrski now live in Ipswich and feel very much at home on the North Shore - perhaps partly because Rick's grandfather grew up on Bridge Street here in Manchester.

Listening devices are available for those in need; they are at the back of the Sanctuary. Feel free to address a Deacon should you need help.

Join us following worship for hospitality!

Our Advent theme from Rev. Rick Spalding - *Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you...* So affirms the beloved carol in whose shelter we gather ourselves together, each Advent - to wait and to wonder. The prophet Isaiah proclaims that God's name means "God with us". What are the implications of the with-ness of God - for each of us alone, for all of us together? How does the with-ness of God change our ways of being with each other? with ourselves? with the world? These are some of the questions we'll be pondering as we worship together during this momentous Advent at First Parish - on the cusp of an exciting new chapter in the life of our church, and a season of urgent need in the world. In light of everything that's going on around us, let's be sure to be **with** one another, and **with** God, as we prepare ourselves again through the month of December to receive *tidings of great joy which shall be to all people!*

Save the date! Join us in welcoming our new pastor, Rev. Katherine Schofield, as she begins her ministry at First Parish Church on January 1, 2024 and leads worship on Sunday, January 7, 2024.

You can **contribute to the work of First Parish Church** or pay your pledge **[@PayPal.Me/FPChurchManchester](https://www.paypal.com/paytoemail?email=FPChurchManchester@gmail.com)**.

Happy 2024! Welcome the New Year!

First Parish invites you to ring in the New Year with some festive fun! Sunday, December 31, 4 - 6 PM, (at our Community Hall behind Santander Bank).

Come have fun, make friends, play Bingo, win silly prizes, sing Auld Lang Syne, and be home nice and early. All ages welcome. FREE!

Hands on Community Service, all items can be dropped at the Chapel or Church –

- **Operation Troop Support** Socks, any size any color. Small board and card games.
- **Food Drive for The Open Door** Cereal, coffee & tea, granola bars, oatmeal, pancake & waffle mix, maple syrup, 100% fruit juice.
- **The Grace Center** Gift Cards from local grocery markets.

December and Advent Activities

- **Poinsettias**, the Deacons will once again offer the opportunity to purchase a poinsettia to decorate the church for Christmas. Order [online here](#) or use the enclosed order form.
- **Join us for Christmas Eve**, Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you... In-person Worship celebrations at 10 Central St. and also on Facebook Live

5 PM Come one and all to our 5 PM Christmas Eve Intergenerational Service for people of all ages. Infused into the service will be a recreation of an older pageant script, slightly modernized, entitled Looking Back is Looking Forward. Music, joy, and the humanness of this ancient tale is sure to set your Christmas Eve with just the right tone to meet Christmas Day with arms and eyes wide!

7:30 PM Traditional Candlelight service open to all! Rev. Rick Spalding "A Feather in a Gale", and the First Parish Choir led by Dr. Herman Weiss.

Thursday Bible Study with Elsa Marshall 4 PM Join in a lively discussion, Thursdays, 4 PM, on Zoom.

Welcome to all who are new to our Worship time. **To join our mailing list** please fill out a "Welcome Card" to place in the collection plate or contact office.fpchurch@gmail.com, 978-526-7661 ext. 1.

Our FPCC **Compassion child**, Chepkirwok always needs supporters, [sign up now](#). Questions can be directed to Sue Parker, sueparker33@aol.com.

Click to read the most recent edition of [The Church Bell Newsletter](#).

Our Online Prayer Wall Request prayers and pray for others
<https://www.firstparishchurch.org/prayer-wall/>

The Stephen Ministry Learn more call Linda Crosby at 978-314-1526 or Steve Carhart at 978-407-8454.

The Seaside Parish Knitters meets each 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at the Chapel, from 1-3 pm. Dec. 7 & 21. We welcome all to stop by anytime during that time and join in. Over the years we have enjoyed our time knitting and crocheting items for baptismal events at the church, shawls and blankets for friends at home, scarves, neck gators, and helmet liners for our veterans in combat, and mittens and hats for Cape Ann children. We are always looking for knitting needles and yarn that you might be considering "casting" aside, especially wool. Contact Penny Lapham at 978-526-7128.

Use the links below to **learn more about First Parish Church** online
Facebook www.facebook.com/FirstParishChurchManchesterMa/
Instagram www.instagram.com/fpcmanchesterbythesea/
Website www.firstparishchurch.org/
YouTube Worship Services
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUvfURhmsH8lfE13FLaRtWcw-pOTC9T2h>

First Parish Staff

Rev. Katherine Schofield, Pastor, revkatherine.fpchurch@gmail.com

Dr. Herman Weiss, Director of Music, hweiss05@comcast.net

Jeanne Westcott, Director of Youth and Children's Ministry

jeanne.fpchurch@gmail.com

Nancy Klebart, Office Manager, office.fpchurch@gmail.com, 978-526-7661

Visiting Nurses Health Clinic, free. Held on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month, 10 - 11:45 AM at First Parish Chapel Hall. Services offered include health assessments, blood pressure screenings, B12 administration, pulse, heart and lung monitoring, blood sugar screenings for diabetics, medication and diet consults. Drop in. Free and open to all.

Manchester Seniors - Drop in for Coffee and Conversation Every Monday 10 AM-12:30 PM (except holidays) at the First Parish Community Hall located behind Santander Bank. Hospitality provided by The Friends of The Manchester Council on Aging. Come sit down and talk!

Readers and Greeters are always needed. To volunteer speak to the Deacons, or you can also sign up online.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e0c4caba822a1f49-diaconate>

First Parish is looking for help with streaming our worship services.

Can you volunteer? Full training is provided! Sign up here or contact Richard Smith at richard.w.smith@gmail.com.

Book Group

Tomorrow night, December 11, 6:30 PM a potluck dinner, and book swap at Joanne Hadaegh's home, 29 Hickory Hill Rd. Manchester. Bring a dish to share and a wrapped used book to swap. RSVP for planning purposes to Joanne at noushi65@yahoo.com or 413-221-4518.

January 29 at Mary Ellen's home, 23 Harold St. The book is Hello Beautiful by Ann Napolitano.

February 26 at Meredith Tufts' home. The book is Beyond That, the Sea by Laura Spence-Ash.

March 25 at Carol Spence's home. The book is Genesis in the Bible.

Your Stewardship Committee would like to remind you to fulfill your pledge commitment for 2023 to help us close out the year. We also invite you to pledge for 2024 so the Trustees can continue planning for First Parish's activities in 2024.

Questions? Contact Mary Ellen Cook or David Lumsden.

First Parish Church Annual Fund Drive 2024

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Total Pledge for 2024 _____

Thank you for your pledge

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as indeed you are doing."
1 Thessalonians 5:11



Please use the enclosed pre-stamped envelope to return your pledge or bring to Church on Pledge Sunday, November 19