



Lisa Greenleaf 2009

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**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
Christmas Eve Celebration
Sunday, December 24, 2023
5:00 PM**

Prelude Hark, the Herald Angels Sing – Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Welcome

Call to Worship

Leader: Come, one and all, and revisit the glory in the face of a babe.

All: We look into the eyes of Love.

Leader: Come, hear anew the message, of Divine intercession in an unexpected place

All: We listen to the message of Love.

Leader: Come, feel the swell of hope, alive now as in the time of our faith-filled ancestors

All: We lean into the promises of our God, who never changes. Love reawakened in this time and this place. In joyful anticipation of His one and Only Son. Emmanuel.

Opening Prayer together

In this sacred evening may our spirits be renewed. May our souls be illuminated with truth and grace and our paths be righteous and purposeful. May we seek a deeper connection with you, Oh, God, as we welcome the coming of your living redemption, Jesus. As it was and will always be, we sing the praise of God who makes the sick, healthy; the crooked, straight; and the wrong, right. Scarred and journey-hardened we come, ready to be in the presence of the Alpha and Omega, the God who never fails. Amen

Lighting of the Advent and Christ Candles Tom and Lynnée Lance with their daughter, Andrea, her husband Daniel, and their children, Patrick and Cassandra Weaver.

Hymn It Came Upon the Midnight Clear #129 PH

Scripture John 1:14 (New Living Translation) Paul Clark

“So the Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father’s One and Only Son.”

Scene One: Looking Back is Looking Forward

Solo Joseph (I Was Not His Father, He Was Mine) – Michael McLean (1952)
Paul Knox, solo

He was working late one evening with the wood he knew so well when she thought she recognized him though at first she couldn't tell. As she humbly begged his pardon a strange sadness swelled inside when she asked "aren't you the father of the man they crucified?" Then the carpenter repeated what he'd said so many times, he said: "I was not his father, he was mine." Then he humbly went on working with his worn and calloused hands. Though she did not ask more questions he knew she didn't understand, So she asked if she would help him, he saw her answer in a glance and she did the chores he asked her and she was grateful for the chance. Then they talked for hours of Jesus and how he knew he was divine. He said "I was not his father, he was mine."

Solo Mary's Lullaby (Tonight You Art Mine) – Wanda West Palmer (1930-2016)

Rebecca Shrimpton, solo

All mine in your loveliness, Baby, all mine; all mine in your holiness, Baby Divine. Sing on herald angels in chorus sublime; sing on and adore, for tonight you are mine. The wise men are coming to worship their king. The shepherds came kneeling, their homage to bring. Out yonder the star over Judah will keep. No harm can befall thee, then sleep, Baby, sleep. Oh, let me enfold thee, my baby, tonight, while legions are singing in joyous delight. A new star has risen to hail thee divine, for you are a King, but tonight you are mine. All mine in your loveliness, Baby, all mine, all mine in your holiness, Baby, divine. Sing on herald angels in chorus sublime; sing on and adore; for tonight you are mine.

Joys and Concerns:

The Lord's Prayer:

Invitation to The Offering:

Scene Two: Looking Back is Looking Forward

Hymn Joy to the World #130 PH

Lighting of the Candles Silent Night, Holy Night

Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant so tender and mild,

Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar, Heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Scene Three: Looking Back is Looking Forward

Blessing

Tonight, we welcome Love Incarnate, not with dusty ritual but renewed vigor for we know as our ancestors knew, that our God never has and never will fail in his kindness and care of His beloved ones. Ask the waves if they are stilled at the mention of His name, they will say, our God is still the same. Into this night, we fear nothing, because His Mercy and Power has never changed. Rejoice and Blessed Christmas!

Jeanne Westcott, worship leader would like to thank the Lance and Weaver Families, Bruce Westcott, Rebecca Shrimpton, Paul Knox, and Herman Weiss, as well as our Deacon, Nancy Peterson for their offerings to this service.

The nativity scene on the altar is in celebration of Christmas Eve.

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.

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