



**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 24, 2023, 10 AM
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Christmas Eve Worship**

Prelude In Dulci Jubilo – J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

Welcome by Deacon

Call to Worship

Leader: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news,

People: who proclaim peace,

Leader: who bring good tidings,

People: who proclaim salvation.

Leader: who say to Zion

People: Your God reigns!

Leader: Let the heavens be glad.

People: Let the earth rejoice;

Leader: Let the sea roar and all that fills it.

All: Shout for joy, all the earth!

Hymn Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light #140 NCH

Opening Prayer (unison)

Creating and sustaining God, in your presence there is life. Seeking the life that comes from you, we have gathered before you. Our hearts are ready, O God, our hearts are ready. Delight us with your presence, and prepare us for your service in the world. We pray in the name of Christ who rules with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Diane Houghton, son-in-law Jeffrey, daughter Rebecca and their sons, Samuel and Benjamin Shrimpton

Anthem Once in Royal David's City – arr. Philip Ledger (1937-2012)

Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,

Where a mother laid her baby in manger for his bed.

Mary was that mother mild, Jesus her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven Who is God and Lord of all,

And His shelter was a stable, and His cradle was a stall;

With the poor and mean and lowly lived on earth our Savior holy.

Prayer Intentions

Time of Spoken Prayer

O Light Invisible, we worship Thee! We thank Thee for the lights that we have kindled, the light of altar and of sanctuary, small lights of those who meditate at midnight and lights directed through the colored panes of windows. And light reflected from the polished stone, the gilded carven wood, the colored fresco. Our gaze is submarine, our eyes look upward and see the light that fractures through unquiet water. We see the light but see not whence it comes. O Light Invisible, we glorify Thee!

In our rhythm of earthly life, we tire of light. We are glad when the day ends, when the play ends, and ecstasy is too much pain. We are children quickly tired: children who are up in the night and fall asleep as the rockets are fired; and the day is long for work or play. We tire of distraction or concentration, we sleep and are glad to sleep, controlled by the rhythm of blood and the day and the night and the seasons. And we must extinguish the candle, put out the light and relight it; forever must quench, forever relight the flame.

Therefore, we thank Thee for our little light, that is dappled with shadow. We thank Thee who hast moved us to building, to finding, to creating at the ends of our fingers and beams of our eyes. And when we have built an altar to the Invisible Light, we may set thereon the little lights for which our bodily vision is made. And we thank Thee that darkness reminds us of light. O Light Invisible, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory!

[T.S. Eliot, alt]

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

Musical Meditation Mary, Did You Know? – Lowry & Greene, arr. Jack Schrader

Rebecca Shrimpton, solo

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would someday walk on water?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?

This child that you've delivered will soon deliver you.

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with His hand?
Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
When you kissed your little baby, then you kissed the face of God.
The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again;
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb.
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy was heaven's perfect lamb?
This sleeping child you're holding, is the great, the great "I AM!"

Prayer of Dedication

Scripture Reading Luke 1:26-33 Bethany Woods

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Sermon "A New Story" Rev Rick Chrisman

Hymn The First Nowell #139 NCH

Anthem Angels' Carol – words and music by John Rutter

Verse: Have you heard the sound of the angel voices ringing out so sweetly, ringing out so clear? Have you heard the star shining out so brightly as a sign from God that Christ the Lord is here? Have you heard the news that they bring from heaven to the humble shepherds who have waited long?

Chorus: Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo! Hear the angels sing their joyful song.

Verse: He is come in peace in the winter's stillness, like a gentle snowfall in the gentle night; He is come joy like the sun at morning, filling all the world with radiance and with light. He is come in love as the child of Mary; in a simple stable we have seen His birth:

Chorus: Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo! Hear the angels singing 'Peace on earth'.

Verse: He will bring new light in a world of darkness, like a bright star shining in the skies above; He will bring new hope to the waiting nations when He comes in purity and love. Let the earth rejoice at the Saviour's coming; let the heavens answer with the joyful morn:

Chorus: Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo! Hear the angels singing 'Christ is born'.

Parting Exhortation.

What life have you if you have not life together? There is no life that is not in community, and no community not lived in praise of God. Even the anchorite who meditates alone, for whom the days and nights repeat the praise of God, prays for the Church, the Body of Christ incarnate. And now you live dispersed on ribbon roads, and no one knows or cares who our neighbors are, unless they make too much disturbance. But we dash to and fro in motor cars, familiar with the roads and settled nowhere. Nor does the family even move anywhere together, but every son would have his motor cycle, and daughters ride away on their own, too. Much to cast down, much to build, much to restore: let the work not delay, time and the arm not waste—let your fire not be quenched in God's forge! [T.S. Eliot, alt]

Blessing

Hymn Joy to the World! #130, Pilgrim Hymnal

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 Janet Groth.

This morning we welcome Rev. Rick Chrisman. Rick has had a dual career in campus and urban parish ministry. He served chaplaincies at Princeton, Tufts, and Skidmore. Also he ministered at Old South Church Boston, Central UCC in Jamaica Plain, and Eliot UCC in Newton. He always asks, what might the arts contribute to ministry? He lives with his wife Cindy in Brighton.

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 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. Jan. 4 & 18. 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

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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

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