



First Parish Church
Congregational, Manchester-by-the-Sea • MA

January 2024

The Church Bell Newsletter

Dear First Parish Church,

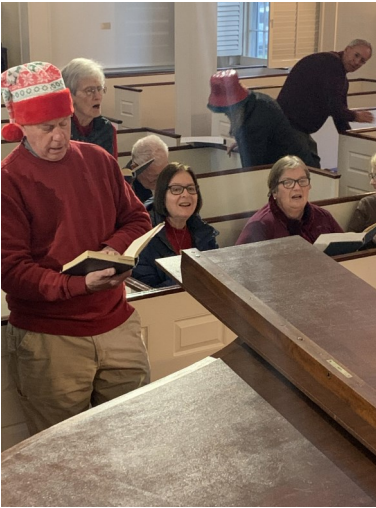
As that favorite hymn says - "This is a Day of New Beginnings". The turning of the year is often a time for reflection, for new starts, for fresh hope. And this year, January brings with it some extra excitement. I am so thrilled to be joining you as your Pastor, as we set out on this journey of faith together. One of my favorite scripture verses is from Isaiah 43:19, where God says, "I am about to do a new thing! Can you perceive it?" Truly it feels like God is doing a new thing in Manchester-by-the-Sea and I'm already getting swept up by it. How about you?

My main goal for this first month at First Parish is to get to know you all. I'll be doing this in a variety of ways (reading reports, meeting community members, attending meetings and events), but what I'm really looking forward to is meeting you all in person. I will be reaching out over the next 100 days in an attempt to have an in-person conversation with every church member (and some bonus church friends too). I have also put together a quick survey to help me get more acquainted with you all. You can complete the survey online [here](#). There will also be a paper version available in the bulletin in the later part of January.

Please also note my schedule. In addition to Sunday worship and evening meetings I plan to work from home on Mondays and Fridays, and in the Chapel Office or about town on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. I will have drop-in office hours in the Chapel Office, Tuesdays 10a-3p and at Laughing Gull, Thursdays 10a-12p. Please feel free to come and say hi. And, you can always reach me at revkatherine.fpchurch@gmail.com (preferred) or on my cell phone at 774-994-0892.

Cheers to a joyous new year of building relationships and growing together as a community of Christ!

Rev. Katherine



Caroling Around the Piano

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. Thank you for your donations in December we donated 5 bags of socks and games! We have decided to keep these 2 items as our focus since they are easy for folks to pick up and donate.

The Open Door the need is great so please donate what you can. The holiday drive targeted - coffee & tea, granola bars, oatmeal, pancake & waffle mix, maple syrup, 100% fruit juice. They are also grateful for bake mixes including muffin mixes

The Grace Center welcomes gift cards from local grocery markets to help the center provide cream, butter and other perishables.

Thank you to all who donated for the gift bags for the Council on Aging and Freshman care packages and the Toys for Tots collection with Ballet de Mar!



The Pepper Choplin Cantata, *Once Upon a Night*

Click [here](#) to view videos of this event



Messiah Sing 2023

Book Group

Book Group 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! Book Group meets on the last Monday of the month and hosting is shared among members.

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.

Diaconate

The common worship theme of the month at First Parish was Stewardship, leading up to Stewardship Sunday November 19th. We heard from Bethany Woods on the 9th and Mary Ellen Cook on the 12th. On the 19th we also celebrated Veterans Day and celebrated the Veterans in our midst.

Our ministers for the month were Rev Teri Motley and Rev Ellie Richardson. They both announced from the pulpit how much they appreciated being at our church because we were so strong even after being without a full time minister for so long.

Average attendance was in the 40 range. The choir was amazing as always and our guest ministers praised them often from the pulpit.

We very much look forward to welcoming Rev Katherine on January 1st.

November Head Deacon, Nancy Peterson

It's not too late to pledge for 2024!

The 2024 Stewardship Annual Fund Drive launched with testimonials in October & November and Pledge Sunday on November 19.

Our theme for the year is

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

Reflection question: “What are your dreams for the future we are building together at First Parish?”

A pledge card is below, drop it in the offering plate or mail it to P.O. Box 187 Manchester, MA 01944

Updating our information - We will be sending forms in the mail for you to update your contact information. Please update and mail back to First Parish Church P.O. Box 187 Manchester, MA 01944. This is our chance to get current addresses, phone numbers, emails, etc. which will be so helpful to our committee.

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



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

Katherine grew up in a UCC church on Cape Cod and went on to earn a BA in Religious Studies from Hamilton College in 2005 followed by a Master of Divinity from the Chicago Theological Seminary in 2010. She became an ordained minister in the UCC in 2011. Rev. Katherine has served as Interim Minister at Memorial Church at Harvard University, Minister for Campus Engagement at the United University Church in Los Angeles, Pastor at First Congregational Church in Wareham and will be completing a five-year period of

service as Interim Associate Minister at Old South Church in Boston.

Referring to her early commitment to the pastoral life Katherine said, “I recognized that it was actually possible to have a career that combined walking with others on their life journeys, helping people feel God’s love, sharing the Good News of the gospel, and singing praises to my Creator. How amazing!”

She and her family — her wife, Dr. Adilia James, a professor of sociology at Endicott College, and their two young children, Rosie (2) and Eliot (9) — are eager to meet all of you.

Advent Activities of the Music Committee

Advent! Three Sundays in a row we have hosted musical events!

On December 3rd we co-hosted with the Women's Club of Manchester a lively community Carol Sing, MC'd energetically by Allison Moir Smith. A sizable crowd of carolers surrounded the sanctuary piano, played by Bonnie Anderson, for the hour before the Friendship Tree lighting. The pouring rain outside made the beautifully decorated sanctuary all the more welcoming, and it frankly outshone the tree lighting.

The Ballet de Mar children's dance troupe – and their families – joined in for the Twelve Days of Christmas prior to their charming holiday dance recital, which was moved into the church at the last-minute to avoid being rained out, as indeed the high school's scheduled musical performance was.

The rain returned for the next Sunday evening, December 10th, and while it may have dampened some would-be singers' enthusiasm for venturing out, 130 people were in the church by 7:30 for the "Second Annual Messiah Sing." This "Sing" was again dedicated to the memory of Laura Ells, who was for many years a member of the First Parish Choir and whose bequest helped make the evening possible. As Music Director Dr. Herman Weiss described it, "The whole idea is that people who may or may not know each other will spontaneously get together with professionals to create something beautiful." And we did! This was the 9th Messiah Sing that Herman has directed. Herman had been planning this event for months and the choir had been rehearsing for months as well, giving the congregation a bit of a preview on the past few Sunday mornings (much to Fran Bachman's delight - he even came to hear the choir rehearse). The event was widely advertised and was open to anyone who wanted to sing or listen. This year the kettle drums made it (last year's snowstorm interfered) and were prominently stationed in front of the altar along with the trumpets, with the rest of the orchestra squeezed in front of the pews. The singing audience, including the First Parish Choir, was seated in four sections by voice with non-singers primarily in the balcony. Visitors were provided with scores, though many Messiah fans brought their own. We sang the choruses for Part I of the Messiah plus the beloved Hallelujah Chorus, and the arias and recitatives were song by four profoundly professional soloists: Marsha Johnson, soprano; Rebecca Shrimpton, mezzo-soprano; Robert Cinnante, tenor; and Andrew Stack, baritone. We were accompanied by a professional orchestra of thirteen members of the Cape Ann Symphony and a harpsichordist, Robert Littlefield of Beverly. The event was live streamed and recorded. Following the singing, a reception was held in the Chapel Hall where there were delicious refreshments and the opportunity to mingle with new friends and celebrate an inspiring evening. Having worked up an appetite, nearly half the attendees joined us for sandwiches, donated Prosecco, cookies and other sweets. Many hands (and voices) went into making this event such a success.

The First Parish Choir performed the Pepper Choplin cantata, *Once Upon a Night*, on December 17th. (The weekly Sunday rain kindly held off until later.) In addition to the usual Wednesday rehearsals, there was a dress rehearsal in the sanctuary on the evening of Thursday, Dec. 14th. The cantata is about 100 pages of music – a lot to learn. Rev. Rick Spalding sonorously read the part of Luke for the Cantata, drawn from the Gospel of Luke but transformed creatively into a first-person account of Luke's memories as he was writing the story. In addition, Simone Argento, Paul Knox, Rebecca Shrimpton and Lauren Gudonis performed the poignant solos and the choir chimed in with the supporting choruses. The congregation was both enthusiastic and deeply moved by this lovely Cantata. Herman knows the composer who personally sent him the scores and was delighted that we were performing it.

Next Sunday is Christmas Eve and there will be three services with solos and/or choir participation at 10:00 am, 5:00 pm and 7:30 pm. Herman is giving us all a well-deserved day off on Sunday, New Year's Eve, but he will provide the music and is looking for enthusiastic singers from the congregation to participate.

Merry Christmas to all, and to all a Happy New Year!

Marty Farmer
Maggie Michael



The Stephen Ministry at First Parish Goes Live in the New Year

We are pleased to report that the First Parish Stephen Ministry completed the training of its first cohort of eight Stephen Ministers the Sunday before Thanksgiving. This group stands ready to support Rev. Katherine and other care functions at First Parish by providing confidential one on one spiritual support to parishioners dealing with life challenges such as bereavement, divorce, or terminal illness. The Stephen Ministry will of course work with all elements of the lay leadership to identify any among us could use additional emotional and spiritual support from the Church.

We salute the following members of the congregation who beginning in the summer have participated in the thirty hours of the rigorous training prescribed for Stephen Ministers:

Martha Farmer
Diane Houghton
Paul Lengieza
Sue Parker
Marianne Round
Rebecca Shrimpton
Richard Smith
Jeanne Westcott

The team is currently working with Rev. Katherine to ensure that the service will be fully functioning in the New Year. The Stephen Ministers will be formally commissioned at the regular Sunday service on February 4. A Soup and Conversation describing this initiative in detail will be presented at a later date.

A Stephen Minister's objective is not to "solve" the challenge but rather to ensure that none feel alone in their struggles. To date, the movement includes about 13,000 congregations and has trained 75,000 Stephen Leaders who have in turn trained 600,000 Stephen Ministers. Fuller details on the movement are here: [Stephen Ministries](#)

If you are interested in participating or are aware of any individual in the congregation who might benefit from our care, please feel free to contact Stephen Leaders Linda Crosby at 978-314-1526 or Steve Carhart at 978-407-8454.

Misc.

Contribute to the work of First Parish Church by going to <http://www.PayPal.Me/FPCChurchManchester> and clicking the “send” button.

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

First Parish is looking for **help with streaming**. Full training is provided! Not sure? Sign up to be an assistant to the volunteer who is streaming. We need your help to continue to provide online access to Worship services. Sign up [here](#) or contact Richard Smith at richard.w.smith@gmail.com.

Our Online Prayer Wall Give it a try! Request prayers and pray for others through the Prayer Wall on our website. Feel more connected to the Joys and Concerns of our congregation, and hear what's on each other's hearts. You will be touched to receive notifications every time someone prays for you.
<https://www.firstparishchurch.org/prayer-wall/>

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

Visiting Nurses Health Clinic - Held the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month, 10 - Noon 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. Open to all.

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 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.

First Parish Church
P.O. Box 187
Manchester, MA 01944

