



**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  
Worship Sunday Advent 2 - Peace  
December 8, 2024  
10:00 am**

**Ringling of the Bell and Lighting of the Candles**

**Prelude** Pastoral Symphony (from 'The Messiah') – G. F. Handel (1685–1759)

*Please maintain a prayerful quiet during the prelude as we prepare our hearts for worship.*

**\* Call to Worship and Advent Wreath Lighting** Bruce Billingham and Sarah Mellish

One: Last week we began our Advent journey by lighting the candle of Hope.

**Many:** May we kindle God's light together as we journey on.

One: This morning we light the candle of peace, [The candle is lit.]

**Many:** Awaiting the arrival of Jesus Christ, light of the world.

One: Strengthen us as we cry out for an end to violence

And work to build a world where everyone's needs are met.

**All:** Be not afraid, the light of God's peace is at hand...

**Welcome**

*First Parish Church is rooted in the Congregational tradition of democratic governance and the full inclusion and participation of all who call this their spiritual home. We take seriously the responsibility to make the Christian faith our own in this time and place and seek to live lives of generous service.*

**\*Prayer of Invocation** *Unison*

**All:** Holy God,

We long for your peace, and trust in your promise;  
we hear your call to turn toward you,  
to change our lives and welcome you in.

Meet us here and fill our minds with your wisdom  
and our hearts with your peace,

that our worship together may open us to the challenge  
of your dream of wholeness for all.

In the Name of the One who is coming, we pray. Amen!

### Presentation of New Members

Joan Berg

Bruce Billingham

Sarah Mellish

Brian and Rosy Parker

### Litany of Intent

One: Friends in Christ, these people have found nurture and support in the midst of the family of Christ. They have been led by the Spirit to claim in our presence their covenantal relationship with Christ and the members of the Christian church.

Many: They are here, as we are here, to endeavor to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and our neighbors as ourselves. God help us.

One: Friends who are joining, we rejoice in your pilgrimage of faith which has brought you to this time and place. We give thanks for every community of faith which has been your spiritual home, and we celebrate your presence in this household of faith. Do you promise, by the grace of God, to continue in your pilgrimage of faith, to be Christ's disciple, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able?

*Those joining: We do.*

One: Do you promise to walk with us in faithfulness and in Christian love? And do you promise, that so far as able, you will participate in the life of this church, by worshiping God with us, and offering your time, talent and means for the ministry of this church and for the larger church of which this is a part?

*Those joining: We do.*

One: Friends, we then welcome you as partners in the common life of this church and join our voices to share our covenant of mission with you.

**\*All:** We pledge to give ourselves to the one whom Jesus called "Abba, Father," as the God in whose love we are grounded, and to Jesus Christ, God incarnate, our salvation and strength. We give ourselves to God the Holy Spirit, our comforter and guide, and trust in the Good News of the Holy Scriptures as the rule of our faith and practice. We promise to walk in covenant with one another, with the wider church, and with the First Parish Church, Congregational. We promise to walk secure in God's grace, prepared in gratitude to live by our promises and to serve by the word of the Gospel.

### **Congregational Greeting**

**\*Hymn** My Soul Gives Glory to My God - #119, NCH

### **Passing of the Peace**

**Choir Anthem** In the Bleak Midwinter Gustav Holst (1874-1934), text: Christina Rossetti, arr. Robert Lau

Sydney Scherer, flute

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan, hark, earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone; snow had fallen, snow on snow, in the bleak midwinter, long ago. Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain; heav'n and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign: In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed, and there the Lord God incarnate, Jesus Christ. Angels and archangels gathered there, cherubim and seraphim thronged the air; but His mother only, in her maiden bliss, worshipped the beloved with a kiss. What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; if I were a wiseman, I would do my part; yet what can I give Him, give my heart, give Him my heart.

### **Prayer Intentions**

#### **Pastoral 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.

**Meditation** For Behold, Darkness Shall Cover the Earth; The People That Walked in Darkness - G. F. Handel

Paul Knox, solo

For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall rise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

**Scripture Reading** Luke 1:57-79 Adrian Argento

<sup>57</sup> Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. <sup>58</sup> Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

<sup>59</sup> On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. <sup>60</sup> But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." <sup>61</sup> They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." <sup>62</sup> Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. <sup>63</sup> He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. <sup>64</sup> Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. <sup>65</sup> Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. <sup>66</sup> All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For indeed the hand of the Lord was with him.

<sup>67</sup> Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

<sup>68</sup> "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

<sup>69</sup> He has raised up a mighty savior<sup>l</sup> for us  
in the house of his child David,

<sup>70</sup> as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

<sup>71</sup> that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

<sup>72</sup> Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors  
and has remembered his holy covenant,

<sup>73</sup> the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,  
to grant us <sup>74</sup> that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,  
might serve him without fear, <sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness  
in his presence all our days.

<sup>76</sup> And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High,  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

<sup>77</sup> to give his people knowledge of salvation  
by the forgiveness of their sins.

<sup>78</sup> Because of the tender mercy of our God,  
the dawn from on high will break upon us,

<sup>79</sup> to shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

## **Sermon “ Zechariah’s Song of Peace ” Rev. Katherine Schofield**

### **Invitation to the Offering**

**Anthem** Canticle of the Turning (Magnificat) – Hal H. Hopson (1933), text:  
Rory Cooney

Sydney Scherer, flute

Verse: My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the God of my heart is great, and my spirit sings of the won’drous things that you bring to the ones who wait. You fixed your sight on your servant’s plight, and my weakness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my name be blest – could the world be about to turn?

Refrain: My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn. Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn.

Verse: Though I am small, my God, my all, you work great things in me, and your mercy will last from the depths of the past to the end of the age to be. Your very name puts the proud to shame, and to those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the strong to flight, for the world is about to turn.

Refrain:

Verse: From the halls of pow'r to the fortress tow'r, not a stone will be left on stone. Let the king beware for your justice tears ev'ry tyrant from his throne. The hungry poor shall weep no more, for the food they can never earn; there are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed, for the world is about to turn.

Refrain:

Verse: Though the nations rage from age to age, we remember who holds us fast: God's mercy must deliver us from the conqueror's crushing grasp This saving word that our forebears heard is the promise which holds us bound, 'til the spear and rod can be crushed by God, who is turning the world around.

Refrain:

**\* Doxology #780 NCH**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
Praise Him all creatures here below,  
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! Amen.**

**\* Hymn We Hail You God's Anointed - #104, NCH**

**\* Blessing**

**Closing Song - God Bless You and Keep You – Jay Althouse (1951)**  
God bless you and keep you wherever you may go; His love be a constant companion. God lead you and guide you and be at your side. God bless you and keep you forever.

\* Indicates the congregation is invited to rise in body or in spirit.

**Our Deacons are Nancy Peterson & Sue Parker**

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 x 1.

Contribute to the work of First Parish by going to <http://www.PayPal.Me/FPChurchManchester> and clicking "send"

## Welcome our new members –

Joan Berg grew up in Wilmington, Delaware. She has an identical twin sister who lives in Philadelphia. Joan graduated from the University of Delaware with a major in nursing (at that time Joe Biden also attended U of D and was a year ahead of her!) After graduation, she worked as a pediatric nurse at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia for 5 yrs, then Joan moved to Boston and worked at Mass General and Boston Lying In. Joan moved to Wenham where she lived for many years, and now she lives in Manchester. Her daughter, Gretchen Berg, is her pride and joy. Gretchen moved back to this area after working at The Today Show in NYC for about 10 yrs. When she came, she and Joan became a Real Estate team at J. Barrett. Joan no longer works in real estate, but Gretchen continues to be a truly amazing realtor. Joan also has a sweet little dog, Lulu who is 14 yrs old and brings her so much joy.

Bruce Billingham grew up in Walpole, MA and lived there through high school and attended the local UCC church with his family. After graduating from UMass twice – once as an undergraduate and then with his masters – he and his family moved to the North Shore. He and his wife Valerie live in Beverly and together they have 4 children and 6 grandchildren that keep them very busy. Bruce enjoys golf and biking in the warmer weather and skiing in winter. He very much has enjoyed visiting FPC and looks forward to being more involved as a member.

Sarah Mellish grew up in Lincoln, MA, attending the First Parish Church weekly. She moved to Keene, NH when she was in High School and joined the Unitarian Church there. She went to Kalamazoo College in Michigan. After college Sarah lived in Boston, Winthrop & North Reading, moving to Manchester in 2000. She was an ERISA & SEC attorney working for insurance company Broker-Dealers, retiring in July, 2020. Sarah began volunteering for the Town in 2011 when she joined the Finance Committee. She is currently chair of the Finance Committee and ZBA and on the Affordable Housing Trust. In 2021 & 2022 the SLV 40B comprehensive permit



on upper School St consumed all of Sarah's time. She just finished with the MBTA Zoning Task Force and will start on the Preliminary Review Committee for a new Town Administrator. Sarah has a Brother in California and a Sister in Dallas, TX with a second home near Allentown, PA. Her 99 year old Mother lives alone in a carriage house at Sarah's sister's home in PA. Sarah looks forward to joining this church community.

Brian and Rosy Parker and their three children moved to Manchester this summer from the Bangor, Maine area. William is age 7, Alex is 6, and Caroline is 3. Brian lived in Maine his entire life and Rosy is from Mexico City originally. The couple met in 2013 and married the following year. After living in Maine for a decade together, they now reside on Pine St. Brian attended Congregational churches since birth and Rosy grew up Catholic. The family participates in a variety of sports (especially golf and tennis) and is active in Scouting. Listening devices are available for those in need; they are at the back of the Sanctuary. Feel free to ask a Deacon should you need help.

**Readers and Greeters** are always needed. To volunteer speak to the Deacons, or you can also sign up [online](#).

### **Faith Formation Opportunities for All Ages**

Through study and prayer and service, we aspire to love God "with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength." From the youngest toddlers, to the wisest Elders, we each are called to grow in our faith and understanding.

**Weekly Bible Study** – Meets on Tuesdays, 3:30-4:45p via Zoom. We study scripture together, utilizing resources from a variety of traditions, and seeking meaning for our daily lives.

**First Parish Stephen Ministers** are highly trained lay volunteers who stand ready to provide confidential, one on one presence and counsel for anyone facing a life challenge such as divorce, job loss, major illness, or bereavement, under the direction of our Minister. This service also provides referrals to local agencies which can provide tangible assistance for needs such as housing, energy, or medical care. This program is part of the national interdenominational Christian movement described here: [stephenministries.org](http://stephenministries.org). If you or anyone you know might benefit from this

service, please contact Rev. Katherine or Stephen Leaders Linda Crosby (978-314-1526) and Steve Carhart (978-407-8454).

**The Seaside Parish Knitters** meet each 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at the Chapel, from 1-3 pm, December 5 and 19. We welcome all to stop by anytime during that time. 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.

**A Church Directory, Fall** is available at the Church and in the Church Office.

### **Hands on Opportunities at First Parish**

**First Parish has continuing collections for –**

- **The Open Door** Most needed items – canned chicken & tuna, peanut butter, healthy snacks, 100% juice boxes, cereal, hearty soups, canned fruits & veggies.
- **Operation Troop Support** Socks, and small board and card games.
- **The Grace Center** Gift Cards from local grocery markets for perishables like cream, butter, milk.

***Drop items at the Chapel (inside and outside bins) and at the Church***

Our FPCC Compassion child , Chepkirwok needs supporters for 2025, [sign up now](#), questions can be directed to Sue Parker, [sueparker33@gmail.com](mailto:sueparker33@gmail.com).

**Winter Queen's Emporium** Saturday, December 14 & 15, 12 PM - 4 PM  
Children grades 1-6 may bring a list and approximately \$2 per gift in cash. They can shop for their family, meet the Winter Queen and take home their wrapped and tagged gifts while their adult waits in our comfortable waiting area with a treat and a drink. Speak to Jeanne to sign up for a shopping time.

**Through our Online Prayer Wall** you can request prayers and pray for others on our website. Feel more connected to the Joys and Concerns of our congregation and hear what's on each other's hearts. <https://www.firstparishchurch.org/prayer-wall/>

**Book Group is open to everyone!** Book Group 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! Book Group meets on the last Monday of the month, at 6:30 PM, and hosting is shared among members. **December 16**, 6:30 PM  
Christmas potluck dinner at Nancy Peterson's home 111 Chebacco Rd. South Hamilton. Participating in a Yankee Swap, with a wrapped used book, is optional. RSVP to Nancy at 508-284-0883 or [nancypete1@gmail.com](mailto:nancypete1@gmail.com).

**Burgers and Bingo New Year's Eve party** Join us for a fun, festive and light-hearted Burgers and Bingo New Year's Eve party in the Chapel on Tuesday, December 31 from 4 to 6 PM. The entire community is welcome to this FREE event (sponsored by the Vitality Committee). First Parish will provide rides for seniors (who can RSVP thru the Council on Aging -- drivers needed) Come enjoy burgers, treats and Bingo ending with, of course, Auld Lang Syne. Volunteers needed for serving and enjoying. Come with a joyful spirit! You'll be home nice and early, to boot!

**A Ceremony of Carols, 4 PM, December 15.** The First Parish Choir & members of the Somerville Chorus, harpist Mary Jane Rupert, soloists Rebecca Shrimpton, and Erin Merceruio Nelson, under the direction of Dr. Herman Weiss. The combined choral performance, a familiar Ukrainian composition, Carol of the Bells, and other selections, will climax with audience participation in a 'carol sing'. All welcome, freewill offering.



# ADVENT

## *at First Parish Church* *★ Manchester-by-the-Sea*

Wednesday Evening Vespers, 6pm

❄️ **SUNDAY DEC 8TH**

2pm Christmas Carol Sing

3:30pm Friendship Tree Lighting

• **SATURDAY DEC 14TH & SUNDAY DEC 15TH**

12p-4p Winter Queen's Emporium

Characters, decorations and a thrifty shopping experience for kids.

❄️ **SUNDAY DEC 15TH**

4pm Benjamin Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols"

With Mary Jane Ruppert (Harp), and the FPCC Choir



**CHRISTMAS EVE - TUESDAY, DEC 24TH**

5p Impromptu Pageant and Candlelight Service

7:30p Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols