



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

December 2024

The Church Bell Newsletter

Dear First Parish Church,

As we enter the season of Advent, we are invited to pause and reflect on the profound mystery of God's love made manifest in the birth of Jesus Christ. This sacred time of waiting is a reminder that even in our busyness and the hustle of the holidays, we are called to prepare our hearts to receive the light that comes into the world, the light that no darkness can overcome.

Advent is a season of hope. It is a time when we remember that, no matter how challenging the world may seem, God's promises remain true. The hope we anticipate is not just the birth of a child in a manger, but the promise that God is always with us, guiding us through every season of life.

As we prepare for Christmas, let us open ourselves to God's peace, joy, and love. Together, we journey through these final weeks of the year, giving thanks for the many blessings we've received, and looking forward to the new beginnings that come with the new year.

Upcoming in Worship

As we light the candles of hope, peace, joy and love, our sermon series will highlight the songs of Advent.

12/1 - Hope: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

12/8 - Peace: The Song of Zechariah

12/15 - Joy: A Voice in the Wilderness

12/22 - Love: The Magnificat

There will also be weekly **Vespers services on Wednesdays at 6pm** in the Church Sanctuary. The theme for 12/4 and 12/11 will be the "O Antiphons". On 12/18 at 6pm we will have a simple **Blue Christmas Service** of prayer and candlelight, a beautiful way to make room for sorrow and grief during the Advent and Christmas season.

And don't forget **Christmas Eve!** We hope to see you at either 5pm or 7:30pm. Our 5pm service will include an Impromptu, No-rehearsal-required Pageant as well as beloved Christmas Carols and Candlelight. Our 7:30pm service will include the traditional Lesson and Carols and Candlelight, and will

continued

Pastor continued

feature the FPCC Choir.

There will be lots of great opportunities to make merry together this season. Read on to find out more. I can't wait to spend this first Advent and Christmastide with you all.

May this December bring you closer to the presence of Christ, and may you find moments of quiet wonder amidst the hustle and bustle.

In Christ's love and peace,
Rev. Katherine



Advent Worship

SUNDAYS AT IOAM
THE SONGS OF ADVENT
DEC. 1 - O COME, O COME EMMANUEL
DEC. 8 - THE SONG OF ZECHARIAH
DEC. 15 - A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS
DEC. 22 - THE MAGNIFICAT

WEDNESDAYS AT 6PM
ADVENT VESPERS
DEC. 4 - O ANTIPHONS
DEC. 11 - O ANTIPHONS
DEC. 18 - BLUE CHRISTMAS

Christmas Eve
5P IMPROMPTU PAGEANT AND
CANDLELIGHT SERVICE
7:30P CANDLELIGHT SERVICE OF
LESSONS AND CAROLS



HOLIDAY EVENTS
First Parish Church, MBTS

SUNDAY, DEC 8TH
2pm Christmas Carol Sing
3:30pm Friendship Tree
Lighting

**SATURDAY & SUNDAY
DEC 14-15TH, 12-4PM**
Winter Queen's Emporium
Characters, decorations and a
thrifty shopping experience
for kids.

SUNDAY, DEC 15TH
4pm Choir Concert
Benjamin Britten's
"Ceremony of Carols"
Mary Jane Ruppert, Harp

CHRISTMAS EVE
5pm Impromptu Pageant
and Candlelight Service
7:30pm Candlelight Service
of Lessons and Carols

NEW YEAR'S EVE
4-6pm Burgers and Bingo!



You are invited to purchase a traditional Poinsettia, (6 & 1/2" plant with 3-6 flowers, \$20) to decorate our sanctuary for the Christmas services. The Diaconate also offers the option of donating to The Diaconate Fund to assist people in our community who are in need.

Following the Christmas Eve services the plant may be taken home or left to be given to our members and friends who are

ill or unable to leave their home. A complete list of all honored will be included in the Christmas Eve bulletins.

I (we) wish to donate a plant(s) please circle one:

In Memory of

In Celebration of

In Honor of

Name of Honored

Name of Donor(s)

Please check:

☐ I will take plant(s) home

☐ Please give my plant(s)

☐ A donation to the Diaconate Fund

of Poinsettia(s) desired: _____ Enclosed: \$ _____

Please return order form and payment to the church office,
drop in the offering plate or order online [here](#)

by Monday, December 16



☆ *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



Deacons

What is the Deacon Fund? The Deacon Fund is used to help church members, and sometimes, Cape Ann community residents who need short-term financial assistance. Requests are considered on a case-by-case basis and kept confidential. Fund recipients are also encouraged to connect with local service agencies. The Deacon Fund is supported by your donations, collected online and in "Deacon Fund" envelopes on Communion Sundays.

November was a month of beauty, reflection and anticipation. We heard incredibly heart-felt and spiritually filled testaments to our church through the Stewardship reflections. We remembered our loved ones who have become part of that Great Cloud of Witnesses. We honored our FPC Veterans, who spoke of the heartache and the pride of their service to our country. We had a new member informational session that was well attended. And throughout the month our FPC little ones scampered in and out, bringing great joy to our sacred space. We prepare now for a very special Advent Season.

Seaside Parish Knitters

The Seaside Parish Knitters are meeting again each 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at the Chapel, from 1-3 pm, in December **on the 5th and 19th**. 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.



Verity
New Year's Eve for All!

BURGERS & BINGO

*Celebrate New Year's Eve with food,
fun, excitement, and fantastic prizes!*

FPC Community Hall

DECEMBER 31ST

→ 📅 **4 - 6 PM**

**All are welcome.
A free and fun
family event!**

WWW.FIRSTPARISHCHURCH.ORG





Outreach-the Council On Aging gift bags were assembled on Wednesday, November 13 thanks to Jane Pearson, Bethany Woods, Cheryl Lengieza, Reverend Katherine, Nancy Klebart, Jill Auld and Mary Ellen Cook. The Council on Aging distributed these bags to seniors in Manchester before Thanksgiving. We also donated 20 gift cards to Market Basket to be used for those for Thanksgiving. Thank you to everyone for their donations. Mary Ellen.

The Choir and Music Committee Are Eagerly Preparing for the Christmas Season

December 8th is the date of the Friendship Tree lighting and, as in previous years, there will be a boisterous carol sing in the sanctuary at 2:00 pm that Sunday, in advance of the 3:30 pm tree lighting. This event will be led by Vitality but the choir will lend their voices.

On December 15th, the third Sunday of Advent, the First Parish Church Choir will offer special music during the Sunday service: *A Ceremony of Carols* by Benjamin Britten.

In the winter of 1942, composer Benjamin Britten was returning home to England from the US aboard a Swedish freighter. To ‘alleviate the boredom’ he said, and to take his mind off the intolerable heat, noise and smells inside the freighter, and the German U-boats outside it, he composed the first version of *A Ceremony of Carols*. He was inspired to set to music several 16th century poems from *The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems* which he had purchased when the freighter stopped briefly in Halifax, Nova Scotia, before making the arduous Atlantic crossing. He composed the piece for harp and treble voices originally, and the initial version, titled *Seven Christmas Carols*, was performed that December at Norwich Castle by the women’s voices of the Fleet Street Choir. Britten subsequently added two additional movements, including a Latin processional, “Hodie Christus Natus” (Today Christ is Born) and the piece was renamed *A Ceremony of Carols*. The now immensely popular piece was first performed by the Morristown Boys Choir in London in 1943, conducted by the composer. In 1955 it was arranged for SATB voices by Julius Harrison, and it is that arrangement that the First Parish Church Choir will sing.

The English language of the 16th century poems is reminiscent of Shakespeare’s verses. The words can look foreign yet in context sound familiar and the story they tell, the Christmas story, is of course deeply familiar.

The Choir, directed by Dr. Herman Weiss, will be accompanied by harpist Mary Jane Rupert with soloist Rebecca Shrimpton, as well as guest soprano Erin Merceruio Nelson. To pay for the guest harpist we are grateful to Maggie Michael for a memorial gift of \$1,000 in honor of her sister, Nancy L. Fardelmann, who passed away in July.

At 4:00 on December 15th the First Parish Church Choir will be joined by several members of the Somerville Chorus who have been preparing *A Ceremony of Carols* simultaneously this fall, also under the direction of Dr. Weiss. The combined choral performance, which will also include a familiar Ukrainian composition, *Carol of the Bells*, and other selections, will climax with audience participation in a carol sing. It will be held in the sanctuary of First Parish Church, Congregational, 10 Central St. in Manchester. The public is invited to join us for the concert and carol sing and light reception to follow. A free-will offering will be appreciated.

Christmas Eve services will be at 5:00 pm and 7:30 pm. Dr. Weiss and our soloists will provide the music at the 5:00 family service and the choir will sing at 7:30.

First Parish Church, Congregational, MBTS presents
A CHORAL CONCERT

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15TH - 4PM

10 Central Street, Manchester-by-the-Sea

The FPC Choir will be joined by members of the Somerville Chorus

In a concert featuring...

BENJAMIN BRITTEN'S
A CEREMONY OF CAROLS

the Ukranian composition

CAROL OF THE BELLS

and several other seasonal compositions



Featuring Guest Harpist, Mary Jane Rupert

Featured soloists Rebecca Shrimpton and Erin Merceruio Nelson

Directed by Dr. Herman Weiss

Join us for the concert, a Carol Sing to follow, and a light reception.

The event is free and open to the public.

December Birthdays

12/05	FLYNN, WILDER	7 LOADING PLACE RD MANCHESTER	
12/09	DRINKWATER, JUDY	252 EAST MAIN ST GLOUCESTER MA 01930	judithdrinkwater@gmail.com
12/19	POTTER, MARK	15 NORWOOD AVE MANCHESTER	markpotter555@gmail.com
12/20	CROSBY, LINDA	22 BRIDGE ST MANCHESTER	lhrosby@gmail.com
12/20	NICKLESS, GEORGE	124 BRIDGE ST MANCHESTER	georgejune@comcast.net
12/23	SCHOFIELD, KATHERINE	10 BRIMBAL HILLS DR BEVERLY MA 01915	revkatherine.fpchurch@gmail.com
12/28	STEFANOVICH, LILY	61 FOREST ST MANCHESTER	anapeter2005@yahoo.com
12/30	DEMOURA, DAVID	47 LEXINGTON AVE GLOUCESTER MA 01930	ddemoura@comcast.net



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

Contribute to the work of First Parish Church by going to <http://www.PayPal.Me/FPChurchManchester> 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>

Manchester Seniors - Drop in for Coffee and Conversation! Every Monday (except holidays) 10 AM-12:00 PM at the First Parish Community Hall. Hospitality provided by The Friends of The Manchester Council on Aging. Come sit down, talk and play some games!

Use the links below to learn more about First Parish Church online:

[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/FirstParishChurchManchesterMa/) www.facebook.com/FirstParishChurchManchesterMa/

[Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/fpcmanchesterbythesea/) www.instagram.com/fpcmanchesterbythesea/



Winter Queen's Emporium

DECEMBER | 14 & 15 | 12-4 PM

First Parish Church, 3 Chapel Lane, MBTS

CHARACTERS | DECORATIONS
A THRIFTY SHOPPING EXPERIENCE FOR KIDS

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.

SIGN UP FOR A
SHOPPING TIME HERE:



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



Our Annual Fund Drive 2025 is underway. The pledge letters have been mailed. Thank you Maggie Michael for doing that! Testimonials were given each week at church. Thank you everyone in advance for your generosity! Mary Ellen, Stewardship Chair

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

Name _____

Email _____

Address _____

Pledge _____

