



**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, 10 AM. Sunday, December 14, 2025  
Advent 3 - Joy**

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

**Prelude** The Day is Surely Drawing Near – Michael Praetorius  
(1571-1621)

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

**\* Call to Worship and Advent Wreath Lighting Nancy Peterson and  
Paul Driscoll.**

One: It's getting closer. Can you feel it?

The days are shorter, but the lights burn brighter.

**Many: We're listening. We're eager to hear good news.**

One: We've gathered together in the House of Joy.

**Many: We're here to praise God with our voices.**

One: We're here to praise God with beautiful music.

**Many: We're here to praise God with all we have.**

One: Today we light the candle of Joy.

(Light the third candle.)

**All: We worship God with exceeding joy!**

**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.*

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

**Prayer of Invocation (Unison) Robert Lewis Stevenson (adapt.)**

**All: Grant to us, O Lord,**

**a posture of inward happiness,**

**and the serenity which comes from living close to you.**

**Daily renew in us the sense of joy,**

**and let the eternal spirit of God dwell in our souls,**

**filling every corner of our hearts with light and grace;**

**so that we may bring life and joy to all people. Amen.**

**Children's Message**

## \* Passing of the Peace

**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, him, 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 carnate, 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** In Dulci Jubilo – J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

Dr. Herman Weiss, piano

#### Scripture Reading Luke 1:46-55 John Todd

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup> for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.

Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,

<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name;

<sup>50</sup> indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

<sup>52</sup> He has brought down the powerful from their thrones

and lifted up the lowly;  
<sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty.  
<sup>54</sup> He has come to the aid of his child Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
<sup>55</sup> according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

## **Sermon “The Gifts We Bring” Rev. Katherine Schofield**

### **Invitation to the Offering**

**Offertory Anthem** – Cantic 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.**

## **Prayer of Dedication**

Hymn O How Shall I Receive You - #102, NCH

### **\* Blessing**

**Closing Song** The Peace of the Earth – Guatemalan, traditional  
The peace of the earth be with you, the peace of the heavens too; the peace of the rivers be with you, the peace of the oceans too. Deep peace falling over you; God’s peace growing in you

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

**Our Deacons are Marianne Round and Liz Loomis.**

**Our Greeter is Eleanor Harris.**

**Join us following worship for coffee and conversation.**

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

You can contribute to the good work of First Parish Church or pay your pledge @PayPal.Me/FPChurchManchester or Venmo to @FirstParish-Church

**Stephen's Ministry** 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).

**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.

**Family Worship** (second Sunday of the month) children of all ages stay in worship for these special intergenerational services.

**Church School** (all other Sundays) children depart from worship around 10:15a for their own time of learning, crafting, sharing and playing.

**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.

**The Seaside Parish Knitters** meet each 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month, **Jan. 8 & 22, 1-3 PM**. We welcome all to stop by. 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.

**Hands on Community Service, all items can be dropped at the Chapel or Church –**

- **First Parish Church serves dinner at The Open Door**, Gloucester, Emerson Ave. Gloucester, monthly. Sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0C4CABA822A1F49-54306850-open> or speak with Coordinator Jim Brennan 978-580-9623.
- **Operation Troop Support** Socks, any size any color. Small board and card games.
- **The Open Door** Pantry items welcome. 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.
- **Toys for Tots** - Ballet de Mar is collecting, new unwrapped toys, there is a box outside the Church Office.

**Book Group** We will meet tomorrow, **December 15**, at 6:30 PM for a potluck and a Yankee Swap with a wrapped used book. We will discuss "When the World Fell Silent" by Donna Jones Alward. At Nancy Peterson's home, 111 Chebacco Rd, South Hamilton. RSVP to Nancy at (508) 284-0883 or nancypete1@gmail.com for planning purposes.

**January 26**, Mary Ellen Cook's home, The Grimkes: The Legacy of Slavery in an American Family by Kerri K. Greenidge. 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. Book Group usually meets on the last Monday of the month, at 6:30 PM, and hosting is shared among members.

## Last call for Poinsettias!



You are invited to purchase a traditional Poinsettia, \$30, 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 or drop in the offering plate. Payment by credit card can be made in the church office, Mon-Fri 9-noon. Order online [here](#)

**Orders accepted by Wednesday, December 17**

**Thank you for making our Sanctuary beautiful!**



FIRST PARISH CHURCH

Community  
Messiah Sing

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup> – 7:30PM

First Parish Church, 10 Central Street, Manchester-by-the-Sea

Come Sing With Us!

Music by G.F. Handel, Part One & “Hallelujah” Chorus with  
Marsha Johnson, Soprano Rebecca Shrimpton, Mezzo-Soprano  
Nathan Snyder, Tenor Dylan Evans, Baritone  
And members of the Cape Ann Symphony  
Conducted by Dr. Herman Weiss

Admission \$20 at the door to help pay for the musicians.  
Reception to follow at First Parish Community Hall (2 Chapel Lane)

For more information: (978) 526-7661 or [www.firstparishchurch.org](http://www.firstparishchurch.org)

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