

**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 28, 2025**

Christina Bray, piano; Ashley Offret, violin

Ringing of the Bell and Lighting of the Candles

Prelude Away in a Manger – arr. Dave Brubeck (1920-2012)

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

*** Call to Worship**

One: A new day is dawning, a new year beginning

Many: O Lord, call us so we may hear Your voice

One: The world turns to hopes and dreams of the future

Many: O Lord, keep us in Your ways and on Your path

One: We enter this new year with hope and excitement

Many: O Lord, remind us that You lead us,

guide us as we look to You, and offer you our worship and praise.

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** It Came Upon a Midnight Clear - #131, NCH

Prayer of Invocation (Unison)

**All: Lord of the opening way, we bring to you our past,
with all that has happened in our lives,
our hopes and our dreams, our successes and our failures,
our gains and our losses.**

**We bring to you our present,
lives filled with exhaustion, wonder, fear, concern.**

**We come to you with hearts open to receive
your word for us, for the future.**

**We want to be part of your new heaven and earth,
to serve you by serving others.**

**Speak to us, heal us, teach us, lead us,
for we ask these things in Jesus' Name. AMEN.**

*** Passing of the Peace**

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 'Largo', from Sonata in C, BWV 1005 – J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
Ashley Offret, violin

Scripture Readings

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

¹ For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:

² a time to be born and a time to die;

a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;

³ a time to kill and a time to heal;

a time to break down and a time to build up;

⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn and a time to dance;

⁵ a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶ a time to seek and a time to lose;

a time to keep and a time to throw away;

⁷ a time to tear and a time to sew;

a time to keep silent and a time to speak;

⁸ a time to love and a time to hate;

a time for war and a time for peace.

John 1:1-18

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He

himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ") ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Sermon "The Clock in the Sanctuary" Rev. Katherine Schofield

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory Solo - In the Bleak Midwinter – Gustav Holst (1874-1934)
Christina Bray, piano

*** 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 Little Town of Bethlehem – #133, NCH

*** Blessing**

Postlude - Ding Dong Merrily On High!– French Carol, arr. Brent Edstrom

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

Our Deacons are John Feuerbach and Sue Parker.

Join us following worship for coffee and conversation.

Christina Maria Bray, née Guibas, received her Masters in piano performance along with the Mary Ellis Smith prize in 2013 from the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Throughout undergraduate and graduate school, her primary studies were with the late Ludmilla Lifson (former faculty of the Leningrad State Conservatory in Saint Petersburg, Russia). Post-graduate school, Bray continued her studies briefly with Tufts Music Faculty and Mozarteum graduate Thomas Stumpf. Bray taught privately for a decade, and as a member of the piano faculty at the Franklin School for the Performing Arts from 2014 through 2017. She has served on numerous boards including the New England Piano Teachers Association as their 20th and 21st century recital chair, the Bridge at 211 in Salem, a large 19th century architectural landmark slotted to serve as a future performance hub for the greater North Shore, and her current seat as Vice President of the Paul Madore Chorale, where she is also the pianist for the group. She regularly collaborates with musicians throughout greater Boston, and substitutes for church musicians in various local churches. Bray married her husband Preston in 2024 and they now live in Manchester-by-the-sea with their cat Sebo.

A native New Englander, violinist **Ashley Offret** is a full-time freelance musician in the greater Boston area. She completed undergraduate studies at the University of Maine in violin performance followed by a masters degree in music history from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and has performed throughout much of the US and Italy. Ashley is a founding member of the Essex Piano Trio, which performs throughout New England. Some of Ashley's other recent career highlights include engagements with the Rhode Island Philharmonic, Symphony NH and Boston's Bach, Beethoven and Brahms Society, as well as guest concertmaster appearances with Opera51 and Portsmouth Symphony Orchestra. More recently, with the Lowell Chamber Orchestra, she was involved in a recording project of the complete Milhaud chamber symphonies and newly commissioned companion works. The collection of works will be released next year by PARMA Recordings. Ashley was also proud to be part of the March 2022 premiere of Essex Piano Trio's commissioned work *When Blessings Brighten* by Ian Weise at Salem's Peabody Essex Museum. In addition to her performance obligations, she maintains a violin, viola, and piano studio in Salem, Massachusetts for students of all ages, nurturing appreciation for live performances of music.

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 (978-907-3781).

Prayer Wall - Give it a try! Request prayers and pray for others through the Prayer Wall on our website. <https://www.firstparishchurch.org/prayer-wall/> 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.

We also have traveling prayers walls throughout the year. Look for us at the 4th of July Parade, Festival by the Sea, Burgers & Bingo and other community events!

The Church Office is closed for the holidays. It will reopen Monday, January 5, 9 AM.

Looking for a space for your upcoming event? Our community hall is a lovely spot. There is a sound system and projector available. Members pay a discounted rate. Check availability by call 978-526-7661 x1 or email office.fpchurch@gmail.com.

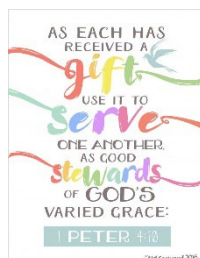
Events going on in our hall during the week –

Manchester Seniors - Drop in for Coffee & Conversation - Every Monday (except holidays) 9:45 - 11:45 AM 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!

Strong Women Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 AM Sponsored by the Council on Aging

Mindfulness Meditation Tuesdays 11- noon and 5 - 6 PM Sponsored by the MBTS Library



It is not too late to make a pledge for the 2025

Stewardship Annual Fund Drive! If you did not receive an appeal letter or have questions please reach out to Mary Ellen Cook at 978-500-0018. Thank you to all who have already pledged their support for 2026.

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. 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.

Considering Book Group?

Try us out in the new year! We will meet January 26, 6:30 PM at Mary Ellen Cook's home, 23 Harold St, MBTS. We will discuss *The Grimkes: The Legacy of Slavery in an American Family* by Kerri K. Greenidge. RSVP to Mary Ellen at 978-500-0018 or cook.maryellen7@gmail.com for planning purposes only.

Upcoming books -

February 23rd, Conference Room, Bible TBA

March 30th, Heather Reid's home, *The Glassmaker* by Tracy Chevalier

April 27th, Carol Spence's home, *The Chaperone* by Laura Moriarty

May 25th, Lauren Gudonis' home, *Finding Margaret Fuller* by Allison Pataki

June 29th, Mary Lumsden's home, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson

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.

The Care Team Ministry

We support FPC families with meals, rides, & visits through times of illness and loss. If you would like to become involved with this wonderful team contact; Mary Ellen Cook at 978-500-0018, or cook.maryellen7@gmail.com or fill out the info below and drop in the offering plate.

Name:

Phone:

Email:

I prefer to provide: Circle all that apply

Meals

Rides

Visits