



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
Sunday Worship, 10:00 am
March 30, 2025**

Ringling of the Bell and Lighting of the Candles

Prelude Air - J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

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

*** Call to Worship**

One: Loving God, You run towards us, eager to be close to us

Many: Help us to draw near to You with confidence.

One: Loving Father, You desire to forgive us and lavish us with love and mercy

Many: Help us to accept and find joy in Your forgiveness.

One: Mothering God, You hold us in our frailty, and love us unconditionally

Many: Help us to open our hearts to Your empowering love.

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.

*** Hymn** I Love to Tell the Story - #522, NCH

***Prayer of Invocation**

Passing of the Peace

Anthem The Road Home – Stephen Paulus (1949-2014), lyrics by Michael Dennis Browne

Rebecca Shrimpton, solo

[Intro]Ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo

Tell me, where is the road I can call my own that I left, that I lost so long ago?

All these years I have wandered - oh, when will I know?

There's a way, there's a road that will lead me home

Ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo

After wind, after rain when the dark is done, as I wake from a dream in the gold of day - through the air there's a calling from far away. There's a voice I can

hear that will lead me home

Ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo

Rise up, follow me come away, is the call, with the love in your heart as the only song. There is no such beauty as where you belong - rise up, follow me -

I will lead you home.

Ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo

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 Take Me to the King – Kirk Franklin* (1970)

Rebecca Shrimpton, solo

Take me to the King. I don't have much to bring. My heart is torn in pieces; it's my offering. Take me to the King. Truth is, I'm tired, options are few. I'm trying to pray, but where are You? I'm all church'd out, hurt and abused. I can't fake what's left to do. Truth is, I'm weak, no strength to fight. No tears to cry even if I tried. But still, my soul refuses to die. One touch will change my life. Take me to the King. I don't have much to bring. My heart's torn in pieces; it's my offering. Lay me at the throne. Leave me there alone to gaze upon Your glory and sing to you this song. Please take me to the King. Truth is, it's time to stop playing these games. We need a word for the people's pain. So Lord, speak right now. Let it fall like rain. We're desperate. We're chasing after You. No rules, no religion. I've made my decision to run to You, the Healer that I need. Take me to the King. I don't have much to bring. My heart's torn to pieces; it's my offering. Lay me at the throne. Leave me there alone to gaze upon Your glory and sing to You this song. Take me to the Lord, we're in the way. We keep making mistakes. The glory's not for us; It's all for You. Take me to the King. I don't have much to bring. My heart's torn to pieces; it's my offering. Lay me at the throne. Leave me there

alone to gaze upon Your glory, sing to You this song. Take me to the King. Take me to the King. Take me to the King.

Scripture Readings Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 Andrea Kunst

¹⁵ Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³ So he told them this parable:

¹¹ Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.’ So he divided his assets between them. ¹³ A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. ¹⁴ When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ But when he came to his senses he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸ I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ ²⁰ So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹ Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, ²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷ He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all

these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' ³¹ Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' ”

Sermon “Prodigal Grace” Rev. Katherine Schofield

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory Anthem Lord of the Dance – Shaker Hymn – words by Sydney Carter, arr. John Ferguson

Verse: I danced in the morning when the world was begun, and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun, and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth; at Bethlehem I had my birth.

Chorus: Dance then wherever you may be; I am the Lord of the dance, said he, and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be, and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

Verse: I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee, but they wouldn't dance, and they wouldn't follow me; I danced for the fishermen, for James and John; they came with me and the dance went on.

Chorus:

Verse: I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame; the holy people said it was a shame. They whipped and stripped and they hung me high, and left me there on a cross to die.

Chorus:

Verse: I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black; it's hard to dance with the devil on your back; they buried my body and they thought I'd gone – But! I am the dance and I still go on. They cut me down and I leaped up high: I am the life that'll never, never die; I'll live in you if you'll live in me. I am the Lord of the dance, said he.

Chorus:

*** 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** Amazing Grace - #547, NCH

* **Blessing**

Closing Song God Be with You – Ralph Vaughn Williams (1872-1958)
God be with you ‘till we meet again; by His counsels guide, uphold you,
with His sheep securely fold you; God be with you ‘till we meet again.

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

Our Deacons are Jason Smith and Jeff Bodmer-Turner.

Our Greeters are Andrea Kunst and Eric Grant.

***Musical Note: Kirk Dewayne Franklin** is an American gospel musician. He is best known for leading urban contemporary gospel ensembles such as The Family, God's Property, and One Nation Crew (1NC). One of the best-selling gospel music artists, his accolades include 20 Grammy Awards. *Variety* dubbed Franklin as a "Reigning King of Urban Gospel" and he is one of the inaugural inductees into the Black Music & Entertainment Walk of Fame (excerpted from 'Wikipedia').

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 Church
[@PayPal.Me/FPChurchManchester](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.paypal.com%2Fme%2Ffpchurchmanchester)

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

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 (first 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.

Although it doesn't feel like it, Spring will arrive and our feathered friends will need affordable housing. If you would like a birdhouse for your home or apartment outdoor area, please contact Jeanne at Jeanne.fpchurch@gmail.com

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).

The Seaside Parish Knitters meet each 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at the Chapel, from 1-3 pm, Apr 3 & 17. 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.

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! March 31, 6:30 PM we meet to discuss "Exodus" at Carol Spence's home, 4 Overledge Rd, Manchester. RSVP to Carol (for planning purposes only) at (240) 305-5520 or cdspence@gmail.com. Book Group meets on

the last Monday of the month, at 6:30 PM, and hosting is shared among members.

Hands on Opportunities at First Parish

First Parish has resumed serving at The Open Door each 2nd Wednesday of each month (Mar 12, Apr 9...) 2 volunteers are needed from 3:30-6:30 on each of those dates. You can sign up on our Sign Up Genius online (link below) or by speaking to Jim Brennan after worship or at 978-580-9623. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0C4CABA822A1F49-54306850-open>

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

Lenten Study Series If the Bible isn't a science book or an instruction manual, what is it? What do people mean when they say the Bible is inspired? When New York Times bestselling author Rachel Held Evans found herself asking these questions, she embarked on a journey to better understand what the Bible is and how it's meant to be read. What she discovered changed her--and it can change you, too. Over the Season of Lent you are invited to join in reading this book. We will have weekly discussions on Mondays, from 6-7pm in the Chapel Hall, beginning March 10th. Paperback copies of the book are available in the office, and it is also available on Kindle, iBooks and Audible.

We will take up two chapters per week:

3/31 - "The Water" and Gospel Stories + "The Sea" and Fish Stories

4/7 - "The Letter" and Church Stories + And Then...

If you have any questions, please reach out to Rev. Katherine (email).