



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 16, 2025**

Ringing of the Bell and Lighting of the Candles

Prelude Jesus, I Will Ponder Now – J. G. Walther (1684-1748)

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

*** Call to Worship**

One: God of grace, You have made our minds,

Many: So help us to know you.

One: You have made our hearts

Many: So help us to love you.

One: You have made our voices,

Many: So help us to sing your praise.

One: Fill us with your Holy Spirit,

Many: So together we may celebrate and worship you! Amen!

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** In the Cross of Christ I Glory - #193, NCH

***Prayer of Invocation**

Passing of the Peace

Anthem My Song Is Love Unknown – Edwin T. Childs (1945)

Words: Samuel Crossman (1624-1683)

My song is love unknown, my Savior's love to me; love to the loveless shown, that they may lovely be. Who am I, that for my sake my Lord should take, frail flesh and die? Sometimes they strew His way, and His sweet praises sing; resounding all the day Hosannas to their King: then "Crucify!" is all their breath, and for His death they thirst and cry. Why, what hath my

Lord done to cause this rage and spite? He made the lame to run, He gave the blind their sight, sweet injuries! Yet they at these are why the Lord most high so cruelly dies. Here might I stay and sing, of Him my soul adores; never was love, dear King! Never was grief like yours. This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise I all my days could gladly spend.

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.

Meditations

Rev. Katherine Schofield, Simone Argento, and Paul Knox – vocals and guitars

Forever Young – Bob Dylan (1941), arr. Rhiannon Giddens (1977)

(Verse) May God bless and keep you always. May your wishes all come true. May you always do for others, and let others do for you. May you build a ladder to the stars and climb on every rung. May you stay Forever Young.

(Chorus) Forever Young, Forever Young, May you stay Forever Young.

May you grow up to be righteous. May you grow up to be true. May you always know the truth and see the lights surrounding you. May you always be courageous, stand up right and be strong, May you stay Forever Young.

(Chorus)

May your hands always be busy. May your feet always be swift. May you have a strong foundation when the winds of change do shift. May your heart always be joyful. Your song always be sung. May you stay Forever Young.

(Chorus)

Fear Not – words and music by Paul Knox

(Verse) Fear not, don't worry. Fear not, don't worry. Fear not, don't worry.

(Chorus) God will take care of you. Love will see us through.

(Verse) Fear not if things seem eerie. Fear not if things look leery. Fear not if you feel weary.

(Chorus)

(Verse) Fear not if things look hazy. They are not if you feel lazy. Fear not if things get crazy.

(Chorus)

(Verse) Some people think God dwells in heaven above. God also dwells in each of us. God is love. It says so in the Bible: Chapter 4, Verse 8, In John's first epistle. So, fear not, don't worry. Fear not if you feel weary. Fear not if things get crazy.

(Chorus)

Scripture Readings Mark 4: 26-34 Jeff Bodmer-Turner

²⁶ He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground ²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸ The earth produces of itself first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle because the harvest has come."

³⁰ He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it; ³⁴ he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Sermon "Lessons from the Master Gardener" Rev. Katherine Schofield

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory Anthem Steal Away – spiritual, arr. Nicholas White

Chorus: Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus, Steal away, steal away home, I ain't got long to stay here.

Verse: My Lord, He calls me, He calls me by the thunder; the trumpet sounds within my soul, I ain't got long to stay here.

Chorus:

Verse: Green trees are bendin', poor sinners stand a-tremblin'; the trumpet sounds within my soul, I ain't got long to stay here.

Chorus:

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, Feb 6 and 20. 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:

3/17 - "The Well" and Deliverance Stories + "The Walls" and War Stories

3/24 - "The Debate" and Wisdom Stories + "The Beast" and Resistance Stories

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).

Lenten Vespers Service



Wednesdays at 6pm

In prayer and candlelight may
we find our center in the midst of
a chaotic world.