



Dear First Parish Church,

Grace and peace to you in this holy holiday season. As December arrives, we enter into **Advent**—a season set aside for preparation, reflection, and hope. In the rhythm of the Church year, Advent invites us to pause and listen for God’s presence in our lives, even as the world around us becomes increasingly busy, noisy, and demanding.

Advent is often described as a time of “waiting,” but it is not a passive or idle sort of waiting. It is an **active preparation**—a readying of our hearts and homes for the coming of Christ. We prepare by looking honestly at our lives, naming what aches for healing, opening ourselves to God’s love, and making room for the light that is on its way.

And yet, December has a way of overwhelming us. The holiday season swirls with activities, gatherings, travel, expectations, and the pressure to create “perfect” moments. In all the shimmer and rush, it can be easy to lose the deeper invitation of Advent.

That is why this season calls us—gently but persistently—to seek out **moments of peace**. Not perfect stillness, not a full retreat from life, but small, sacred pauses in the midst of the ordinary:

- A quiet breath before the day begins
- A candle lit at the dinner table
- A walk in the cold air, listening for God
- A whispered prayer while waiting in line
- A moment of gratitude before falling asleep

*continued*

*Pastor continued*

These small acts of attentiveness become doorways to the holy. They slow our pace just enough for hope to catch up with us. They remind us that Christ comes not only at Christmas, but again and again—into our anxieties, our celebrations, our longings, and our everyday routines.

As a church community, may we help one another find these moments. May we choose compassion over hurry, presence over perfection, love over stress. And may the peaceful promise of Advent guide us as we prepare our hearts for Emmanuel—God with us.

In addition to our Sunday worship services, during this season we will hold Advent Vespers services on Wednesday evenings at 6pm (12/3, 12/10 and 12/17). We also have an at-home resource for you (available in the church narthex and [online](#)), “[The Dawn Chorus: An Advent Devotional on the Wonder of Birds](#)”. Inspired by the birds there will also be a LOT of opportunities for us to sing together - carols and hymns and hallelujahs all season long.

And don't forget **Christmas Eve!** We hope to see you at either 5pm or 7:00pm. Our 5pm service will include an Impromptu, No-rehearsal-required Pageant as well as beloved Christmas Carols and Candlelight. Our 7:00pm service will include the traditional Lesson and Carols and Candlelight, and will feature the FPCC Choir.

There will be lots of great opportunities to make merry together this season. Read on to find out more.

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

**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!



# Advent & Christmas

FIRST PARISH CHURCH  
MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

Advent Vespers, Wednesdays 6pm

Caroling at the Holiday Stroll  
Friday 12/5 at 6pm

Community Christmas Carol Sing  
Sunday 12/7 at 2pm  
(Before the Friendship Tree Lighting at 3:30p)

Community Messiah Sing  
Sunday, 12/14 at 7:30pm

Christmas Eve, Wednesday, 12/24  
5pm Impromptu Pageant Candlelight Service  
7:30pm Candlelight Lessons & Carols Service

[FIRSTPARISHCHURCH.ORG](http://FIRSTPARISHCHURCH.ORG)

 THE DAWN  
CHORUS




AN ADVENT DEVOTIONAL ON   
THE WONDERS OF BIRDS

## Council on Aging Bags & Freshman Boxes

We donated 20 bags to the Council on Aging to distribute to seniors for Thanksgiving. Thank you to everyone for their donations! The worker bees who put the bags together were Bethany Woods, Jan Marshall, Jane Pearson, Cheryl Lengieza, and Mary Ellen Cook with help from Nancy Klebart. Our outreach committee paid for 20 gift cards to go along with the bags. Thank you to everybody for always making this such a successful event.

Our freshman boxes were a huge hit this year. We had eight freshman in college. Donations were collected and boxes were sent after Thanksgiving to Sydney Bartlett, Carson Croft, Jarrett Croft, Ella Arnsten, Lily Stefanovich, Nick Brown, Sammy Bothwell and Atticus Smith. Cards were put in all the fresh boxes wishing them the best with their semester finals and hoping to see them during this Christmas season.

We've been doing this event for many years thanks to Muriel Parker.

Thank you, Muriel 



*Led by The Vitality Committee and Women's Fellowship*

## Outreach & Service

**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.

## December Birthdays

12/01	LARSEN, JOLENE	221 TURNPIKE RD MONTAGUE MA 01351	jolene.larsen@gmail.com
12/05	FLYNN, WILDER	7 LOADING PLACE ROAD 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



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](mailto:office.fpchurch@gmail.com).



**In November  
local artist,  
Alison Daley used our  
hall to host an  
Art Exhibition and  
Sale!**

**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

## 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.

## CHURCH SCHOOL

Families start Sunday in worship until 10:15a when children depart to Church School (Except 2nd Sundays - when children stay in church for All-Ages Family Worship) Our kids engage in hands-on, age-appropriate learning opportunities that integrate storytelling, the arts and spiritual development in a safe and family-friendly environment.





**“We  
Hold  
These  
Truths”  
Concert  
November**



If you couldn't join us for the “We Hold These Truths” concert  
[Click here](#) to watch  
Program for the concert [here](#)

FIRST PARISH CHURCH, MBTS

# Advent Vespers Service



**Wednesdays at 6pm**

In prayer and candlelight may we  
find our center in the midst of a  
chaotic world. Beginning 12/3.

## Stewardship Annual Appeal Drive

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.



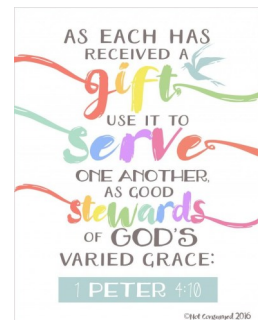
### Annual Fund Drive 2026

Name:

Email:

Address:

Pledge amount for 2026:



## Book Group

We will meet on 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.

- January 26, Mary Ellen Cook's home, *The Grimkes: The Legacy of Slavery in an American Family* by Kerri K. Greenidge
- February 23<sup>rd</sup>, Conference Room, Bible TBA
- March 30<sup>th</sup>, Heather Reid's home, *The Glassmaker* by Tracy Chevalier
- April 27<sup>th</sup>, Carol Spence's home, *The Chaperone* by Laura Moriarty
- May 25<sup>th</sup>, Lauren Gudonis' home, *Finding Margaret Fuller* by Allison Pataki
- June 29<sup>th</sup>, Mary Lumsden's home, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson

### Supplemental Reading List - these books didn't make the cut but are good reading

*Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen

*Shy Creatures*, Claire Chambers

*The House is on Fire*, Rachel Beanland

*Beneath Scarlet Sky*, Mark Sullivan

*The Orchard*, Adelle Kitty Roberts

*A Piece of the World*, Christina Baker Kline

*The Nickel Boys*, Colson Whitehead

*The Rowans*, Beverly Cooper Pierce

*The Mirror Cracked*, Agatha Christie

**The Seaside Parish Knitters** meet each 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at the Chapel, **Dec. 4 & 18, 1-3 PM**. 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.



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)

Made possible by a grant from the Manchester Cultural Council.

**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). Also, if you are interested in becoming a Stephen Minister, contact any member of the leadership team for more information.

### **Stephen Ministry Plans Expansion**

The First Parish Stephen Ministry is pleased to announce its plans to train additional Stephen Ministers to support its expansion in Cape Ann. Stephen Ministers are trained to offer a ministry of presence with individuals suffering life crises such as divorce, job loss, bereavement, or serious illness, all under the general direction of the Pastor. In addition, the program provides referrals to community resources which can provide tangible assistance such as food, energy, and medical assistance. The interdenominational Christian movement, celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year, has about 13,000 congregations who have joined and has trained over 600,000 Stephen Ministers. The training takes 35-40 hours and is planned to begin shortly after the New Year. If you are interesting in possibly becoming a Stephen Ministry or simply want to know more about the program, come to the information session after church on December 7, or talk to Rev. Katherine or Stephen Leaders Linda Crosby (978-314-1526) and Steve Carhart (978-407-8454)

### **Yearend Support for the Least Among Us**

At a time of unusual political and economic uncertainty, those of us who are able may wish to make financial contributions to those who are less fortunate. The Outreach and Service Committee has been working to create deeper partnerships with Cape Ann social service agencies which include financial contributions from the church, volunteer assistance to their programs, and Stephen Ministers when requested. Three of these agencies have made recent presentations to the Congregation.

In particular, the Committee wishes to highlight the following as key social service partners: [Action Inc. in Gloucester](#) [Beverly Bootstraps](#) in Beverly, [Gloucester Office for Veterans Affairs](#), [Lifebridge North Shore](#) in Salem and The [Open Door](#) in Gloucester. They provide a wide range of services including emergency shelter; prepared meals and groceries for those who need them; energy and rent assistance; fellowship meetings; job training; and much more. These agencies have been the focal point of the Church's outreach financial donations this year, and the Committee commends them to you if you would like to make a personal contribution.

**Vitality  
New Year's Eve for All!  
Come join us!**

# **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](http://WWW.FIRSTPARISHCHURCH.ORG)



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



**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](mailto: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**