

**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 21, 2025  
Advent 4 - Love**

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

**Prelude** Christmas Medley III (Still, Still, Still; O Little Town of Bethlehem; I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day) - arr. Linda Hartman

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

**\* Call to Worship and Advent Wreath Lighting, The Lance-Weaver Family**

One: God speaks in many ways:  
Through dreams, visions, new ideas,  
And the kicking of a child not yet born.  
We light our fourth candle,  
Asking that we may hear God's call  
In our body, mind and spirit.

**Many: Living Christ, give us love to live for you,  
joy to adore you,  
peace that comes from knowing you,  
and hope to follow where you lead.**

**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** Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light - #140, NCH

**Prayer of Invocation (Unison)**

**All: Gracious God, we give thanks for the light that is dawning, even as the days grow so short.**

**Open us to your nearness, to Gabriel's good news.**

**Help us to trust, like Mary,  
that you are actually and truly with us.**

**Breathe upon the spark of your love that is in each of us, until the light and warmth of it can be felt by all those we meet. We pray in the shining name of Jesus. Amen.**

### **\* Passing of the Peace**

**Anthem** – Carol of the Star – T. Tertius Noble (1867-1953), arr.  
June Nixon

Verse: There came three kings who rode apace to Bethl'em town by God's good grace. Hail Earendel God love be with us. In sooth it was a duteous thing, wise men to worship childe King: God love be with us, Hail, Earendel. They gave Him gifts of farbrought thing, of Recells, Myrhh and Gold of Kings; Hail Earendel, brightest of angels, and setten there in strawy tent their mystic signs of Orient: God love be with us, Hail, Earendel. The Gold and Frankinsense and Myrhh for King for Priest for digne martyr, Hail Earendel, brightest of angels. On the great Good Friday morn is't crown of gold or crown of thorn? God love be with us, Hail, Earendel. O hymn then those Orient Kings, who brought for Him their offerings. Hail Earendel, brightest of angels, and grfant in holy mystery ourselves His sacrificed may be, God love be with us, Hail, Earendel.

Note: Earendel is an old English name, which translates to 'morning star'. Also, it is the name given to the character of Tolkien's 'Lord of the Rings' who carries with him the 'Silmaril', or morning star.

### **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** Snowfall – Claude Thornhill (1908-1965)  
Dr. Herman Weiss, piano

#### **Scripture Reading Matthew 1:18-25 Jason Smith**

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace,

planned to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.” <sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife <sup>25</sup> but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

## **Sermon “Joseph’s Dream” Rev. Katherine Schofield**

### **Invitation to the Offering**

**Offertory Solos** - Mary, Did You Know? – Lowry & Greene, arr.

Jack Schrader

Rebecca Shrimpton, solo

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would someday walk on water?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?

This child that you’ve delivered will soon deliver you.

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with His hand?

Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?

When you kissed your little baby, then you kissed the face of God.

The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again;

The lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb.

Wasn’t That a Mighty Day? – spiritual, arr. Herman Weiss

Rebecca Shrimpton, solo

Wasn’t that a mighty day? Oh, Halleluh, Halleluh!

Wasn’t that a mighty day, when the baby Jesus Christ was born!

When Jesus was a tiny baby, slumberin’ on Mary’s arm;

Lyin’ in the stable of Bethlehem with the angels there to keep him from harm.

Shepherds came to kneel before Him, sleepin’ on His bed of hay;

Bowin’ low before the tiny child in the stable where the Christ child lay.

**\* 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 Hark, the Herald Angels Sing - #120, Pilgrim Hymnal

**\* Blessing**

**Closing Song** Siyahamba (We Are Marching in the Light of God) –  
Zulu Song, arr. Doreen Rao

**Musical Note:** Pianist/arranger Claude Thornhill (1909-1965) led some of the most exquisite bands of the swing era. His musical ideas were unconventional when compared with what almost all other swing era bands did. His composition/theme song "Snowfall" was actually written as a part of a suite Claude wrote in the 1930s that was called Fountain in Havana.

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

**Our Deacons are John Feuerbach and Janet Groth.**

**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](mailto: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).

**Don't forget Christmas Eve!** We hope to see you at either 5pm or 7:30pm. Our 5pm service will include an Impromptu, No-rehearsal-required Pageant as well as beloved Christmas Carols and Candlelight. Our 7:30pm service will include the traditional Lesson and Carols and Candlelight, and will feature the FPCC Choir.

**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!

**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.

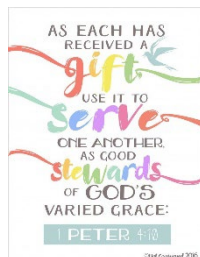
### **Events going on in our hall during the week –**

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](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.

**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](mailto: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](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