

**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, Epiphany Sunday  
January 4, 2026**

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

**Prelude** How Lovely Shines the Morning Star – Michael Praetorius (1571-1621)

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

**\* Call to Worship**

One: Arise! Shine! Your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you!

**Many: We have seen the star in the east, and we are following.**

One: We remember the Magi,  
who set out with singular focus on the promise of the heavens.

**Many: We remember God's steadfast love born into this world.**

One: Lift up your eyes and look around;  
God's people now gather, to open our hearts and sing our praise.

**Many: The mystery of God's grace is here: Come, let us adore!**

**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** As With Gladness Men of Old - #119, Pilgrim Hymnal

**Prayer of Invocation (Unison)**

**All: God of Light and Love,  
In this very moment the star still beckons.  
Gather us and let the star call us to new ways  
Of healing and hope,  
Restoration and renewal,  
As we discover again Christ's call to discipleship. Amen.**

**\* Passing of the Peace**

**Solo** – Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart – Frederck C. Atkinson  
(1841-1896), arr. Lloyd Larson  
Dr. Herman Weiss, piano

## **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** Les Cloches (The Bells) – Claude Debussy (1862-1918)  
Rebecca Shrimpton, solo (sung in French)

English translation:

The leaves opened upon the edge of the branches, delicately. The bells rang, light and free, in the clear sky. Rhythmically and fervently, like an antiphon, this distant call reminded me of the Christian whiteness of altar flowers.

These bells told of happy years, and, in the great forest, seemed to revive the withered leaves of days gone by.

### **Scripture Reading Matthew 2:1-12**

<sup>1</sup> In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage.” <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, <sup>4</sup> and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup> ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’ ”

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found

him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”<sup>9</sup> When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was.<sup>10</sup> When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.<sup>11</sup> On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.<sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

## **Sermon “Gifts of the Magi” Rev. Katherine Schofield**

### **Invitation to the Offering**

**Offertory Anthem – The Shepherd’s Farewell (Thou Must Leave Thy Lowly Dwelling) – Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)**

Thou must leave thy lowly dwelling, the humble crib, the stable bare,  
Babe, all mortal babes excelling, content our earthly lot to share,  
Loving father, loving mother, shelter thee with tender care! Loving father,  
loving mother, shelter thee with tender care! Blessed Jesus, we implore  
thee with humble love and holy fear, in the land that lies before thee, forget  
not us who linger here! May the shepherd’s lowly calling, ever to thy heart  
be dear! May the shepherd’s lowly calling, ever to thy heart be dear! Blest  
are thee beyond all measure, thou happy father, mother mild! Guard ye  
well your heavenly treasure, the Prince of Peace, the Holy Child! God go  
with you, God protect you safely through the wild, guide you safely through  
the wild

### **\* 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.**

## **The Sacrament of Communion**

### **Invitation to the Table**

### **The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

One: The Lord be with you.

**All: And also with you.**

One: Lift up your hearts!

**All: We lift them up to God!**

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All: It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

## **The Breaking, Pouring, and Sharing of the Bread and Cup**

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Holy Lord, God of endless love,

Heaven and earth are surely full of your glory.

**The angels sang of it—we have been lavished with it.**

**Thank you for this meal, in which your love is made real.**

**Blessed is he who was born that we might have life.**

**Glory to God and on earth peace to all people. Amen.**

**Hymn We Three Kings of Orient Are - #143, Pilgrim Hymnal**

### **\* Blessing**

**Closing Song** The Peace of the Earth – Guatemalan, traditional

The peace of the earth be with you, the peace of the heavens too; the peace of the rivers be with you, the peace of the oceans too. Deep peace falling over you; God's peace growing in you

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

**Our Deacons are Jason Smith and Liz Loomis.**

**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).

**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?

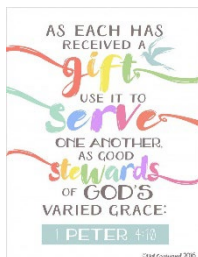
Our community hall is a lovely spot, with a sound system and projector available. Members pay a discounted rate. Check availability by call 978-526-7661 x1 or email [office.fpchurch@gmail.com](mailto:office.fpchurch@gmail.com).

### 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** Wednesdays 11- noon 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.

**An updated Church Directory edition is now available in the Narthex and at the Church Office -**

Do we have your contact information?

Your birthday?

Updated photos of you or your family are welcome!

Send them along to [office.fpchurch@gmail.com](mailto:office.fpchurch@gmail.com).

**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