



**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
March 15, 2026**

Ringling of the Bell and Lighting of the Candles

Prelude Interlude, from 'Orfeo ed Euridice' – C. W. Gluck (1714-1787)

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

*** Call to Worship**

One: Day by day, God leads us:

**Many: to the deep, deep pools of peace,
to the green, lush lawns of grace.**

One: Day by day, Jesus calls us:

**Many: To pour out ourselves in service,
To anoint the stranger with hope.**

One: Day by day, the Holy Spirit shows us:

**Many: The community we could be,
The family we are called to become.**

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** Beneath the Cross of Jesus - #190, NCH

Prayer of Confession (in unison)

**Holy Jesus, we confess that we fail to question our own
sightlessness.**

Being so sure that we "see," we miss the truths you would teach us.

**Open our eyes to our own misunderstandings,
our own failures and our own faults.**

**For it is only when we see ourselves clearly that we can worship you
truly. Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Passing of the Peace

Anthem Canticle of Fellowship – Craig Courtney (1948), text from Col. 3:12-14, and John Fawcett

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Forgive each other as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love. Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above. Before the throne we pour our prayers; our hopes are one, our comforts and our cares. Blest be the tie that binds our hearts, that binds our hearts in love. We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear; and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear. When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain; we shall still be joined in, joined in heart, and hope to meet again. Blest be the ties that binds our hearts, that binds our hearts in love. From sorrow, toil, and pain and sin we shall be free; and perfect love and joy shall reign throughout eternity. Blest be the tie that binds our hearts, that binds our hearts in love.

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 Poeme – Zdenek Fibich (1850-1900)

Dr. Herman Weiss, piano

Scripture Reading John 9: 1-41

¹ As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, ⁷ saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him."

He kept saying, "I am he."¹⁰ But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"¹¹ He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight."¹² They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.¹⁵ Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see."¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided.¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight¹⁹ and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"²⁰ His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind,²¹ but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself."²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.²³ Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner."²⁵ He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."²⁶ They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"²⁷ He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?"²⁸ Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."³⁰ The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will.³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."³⁴ They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶ He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." ³⁸ He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind." ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

Sermon "To See and Believe" Rev. Katherine Schofield

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory 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

*** 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 Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us - #252, 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 Paul Gudonis and Marianne Round.

Our Greeters are Mary and David Lumsden.

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, 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).

Lenten Study Most of us tend to think of the second half of life in chronological terms, but this book proposes a different paradigm. Spiritual maturity is found "when we begin to pay attention and seek integrity" through a shift from our "outer task" to the "inner task." What looks like falling down can be experienced falling upward—and is not necessarily connected with aging. This new edition focuses on practical guidance that you can use to live a life of love and meaning in a world of suffering and challenge. Falling Upward is an invitation to living the gospel and a call to ongoing transformation. We will gather on 3/22 after worship for Soup and Conversation to discuss the book together. Please sign up to bring a soup, salad or dessert.

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.

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 11AM, 5 PM sponsored by the MBTS Library

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. 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, **March 5 & 19, 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.

Book Group Upcoming March 30, 6:30 PM we gather to discuss “The Glassmaker” by Tracy Chevalier at Mary Ellen Cook’s home, 23 Harold St MBTS. RSVP to Mary Ellen at 978-500-0018 or cook.maryellen7@gmail.com for planning purposes. 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.

Hands on Community Service

- **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.

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.