

The Church Bell Newsletter

FIRST PARISH
CHURCH

March 2026

From the Pastor

Dear First Parish,

March arrives carrying both the hush of lingering winter and the quiet invitation of Lent. The snow may still cover everything, the mornings remain slow to brighten, and yet beneath the frozen earth something is stirring.



Lent is like that.

In the church year, Lent is our forty-day journey toward Easter — a season rooted in Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. It is a time of reflection, prayer, repentance, and renewal. But more than giving something up, Lent is about making space — space to encounter Jesus more deeply.

Throughout the Gospels, so many encounters with Jesus happened in quiet, in wilderness places, or in the midst of personal struggle:

- Nicodemus coming by night, full of questions.
- Mary and Martha gather with Jesus at their brother Lazarus' tomb.
- The disciples, weary and uncertain, called gently to follow.

These were not loud, triumphant moments. They were intimate. Personal. Transforming.

Late winter gives us a similar gift. The world is quieter. Trees stand bare. The pace feels slower. We are invited inward — into prayer, into stillness, into honesty with God. This month, I invite you to make some extra time to read, pray, or sit quietly with God.

Even beneath frozen ground, life is preparing to rise. Even in the quiet of Lent, resurrection is drawing near. May this holy season deepen your faith and steady your heart.

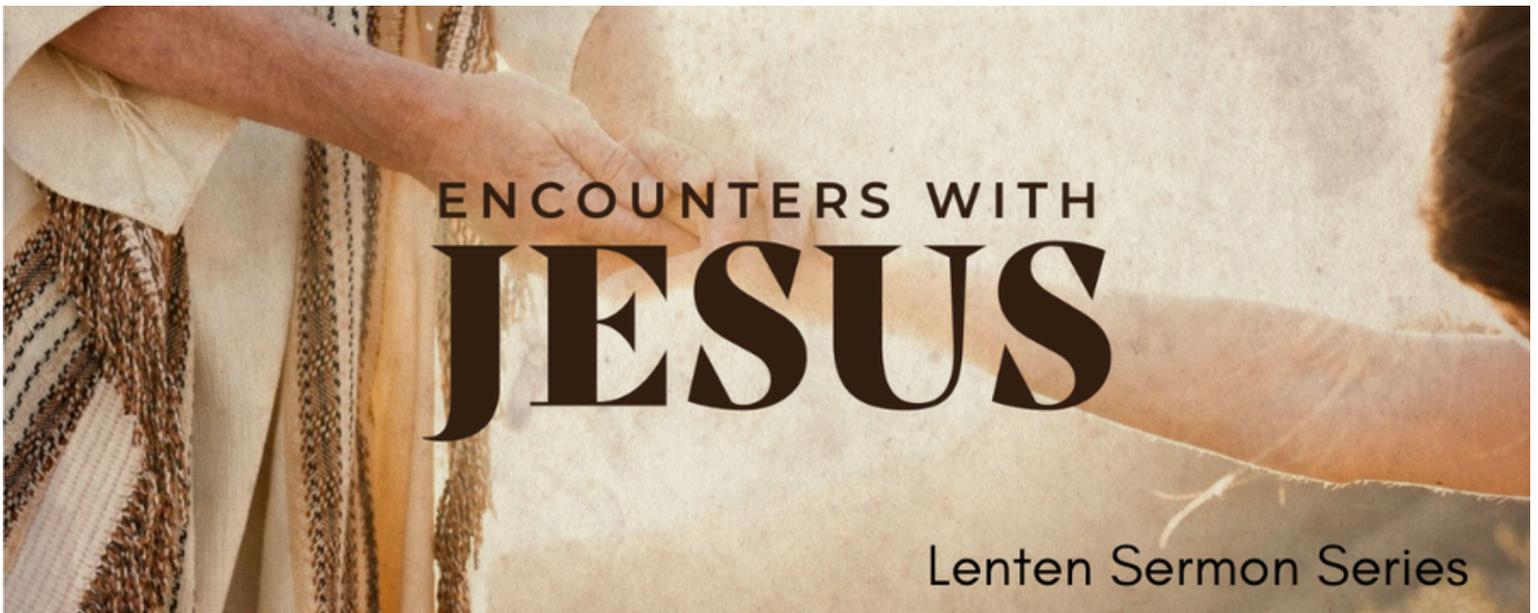
Blessings,
Rev. Katherine



Soup & Conversation: "No matter who you are..."

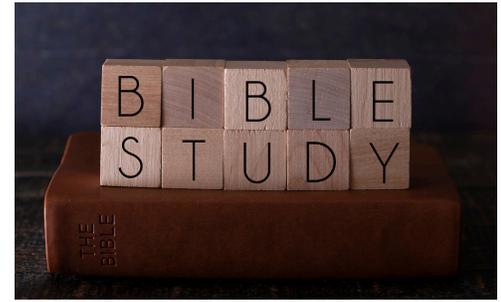
March 8, 2026 - After Worship

A brave conversation about how to 'walk the walk' of being church together. Rev. Rick Spalding will lead us in discussion about what we really mean when we say, "No matter who you are, you are welcome here." Please sign up to bring a soup, salad or dessert.



Faith Formation

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.



An Intergenerational workshop was held to create Valentine's and joyful expressions of love for the Friends of the COA.

Nine participants created all these and had fun, food and conversation.

Don't miss out on the next offering through Faith Formation.



Weekly Bible Study
Tuesdays, 3:30-4:45p
via zoom

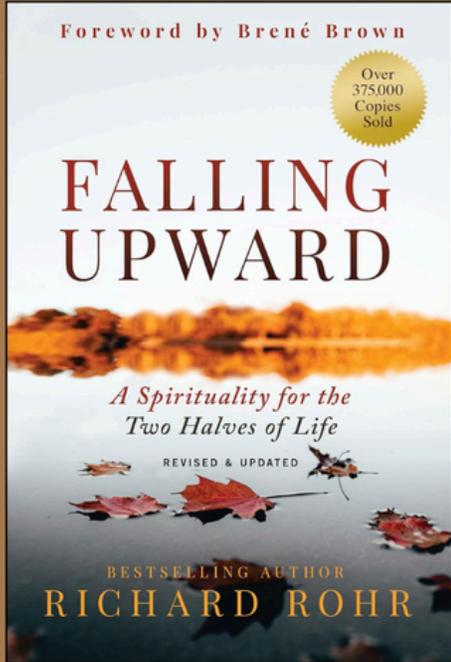
We study scripture together, utilizing resources from a variety of traditions, and seeking meaning for our daily lives.

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.

At First Parish Church, we value kids of all ages and encourage families of all configurations to join in our Christian worship, activities and spiritual experiences. The staff and volunteers at First Parish Church are committed to respect, safety and the strengthening of relationships encompassed in God's Love and illuminating Christ's life and work. For more info contact jeanne.fpchurch@gmail.com.

FIRST PARISH CHURCH LENTEN STUDY



Read along with us each week.

Weekly reflection questions are available.

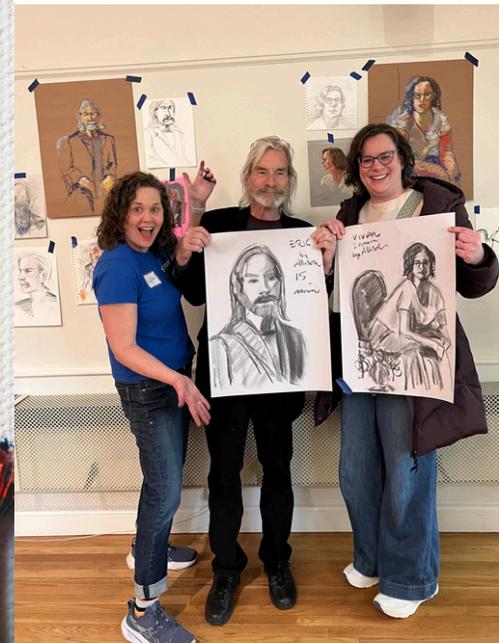
We will gather on 3/22 after worship for Soup and Conversation to discuss the book together.

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 as 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.



Celebrate the Artists Saturday, March 7th 4-6pm

Beat the winter doldrums and meet members of the Friday Figure Group, which meets weekly in the FPCC Community Hall. Enjoy a wine and cheese reception, art show and sale, and watch the artists in action as they create 20-minute portraits of FPC members.



March Birthdays

3/1/2026	KNOX, PAUL	12B PICKETT STREET BEVERLY MA 01915	paulknox1@comcast.net
3/4/2026	BELL, WILLIAM	4 RAYMOND STREET #8 MAGNOLIA MA 01930	
3/7/2026	SMITH, RICHARD	13 WASHINGTON STREET MANCHESTER	richard.w.smith@gmail.com
3/12/2026	GRAYDEN, LOIS	1340 S. OCEAN BLVD. #2001 POMPANO BCH FL 33062	lois.grayden@gmail.com
3/15/2026	HARRIS, ELEANOR	P.O. BOX 383 MANCHESTER 01944	ekeharris@gmail.com
3/15/2026	PARKER, BRIAN	40 PINE ST MANCHESTER	brianparker30@gmail.com
3/19/2026	MICHAEL, MARGARET	12 FULLER ST MAGNOLIA MA 01930	mills_margaret@yahoo.com
3/21/2026	DUNN, DONALD	6 TREETOP LANE MAGNOLIA MA 01930	dondunn@verizon.net
3/22/2026	GRANT, ERIC	44 MILL ST DORCHESTER MA 02122	ahab55@icloud.com
3/30/2026	DIGIOVANNI, CHRISTINA	9 JEFFREY COURT MANCHESTER	christinadigio@gmail.com

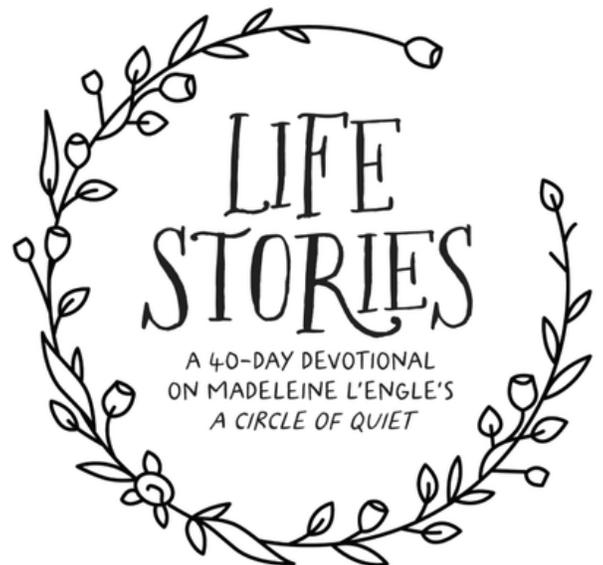
Lenten Vespers Service



Wednesdays at 6pm

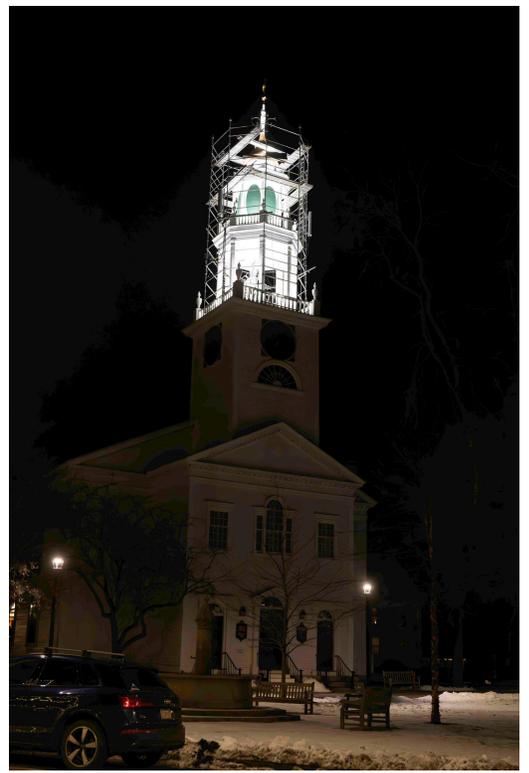
In prayer and candlelight may we
find our center in the midst of a
chaotic world.

Feb 25 - March 25, all welcome, in
the church at 10 Central St, MBTS



[online devotional here](#)

Thank
you
to
all!



Our steeple is a beacon once again! After seven months of darkness and silence (the Carillons were not ringing out their twice daily musical interludes during construction), it has been reborn with LED lighting, a shiny dome, a regilded rooster, and song once again.

Thanks to so many of you who helped to make this project a success! A community-wide fund-raising campaign (led by Reverend Katherine and Office Manager Nancy Klebart) had a goal of \$20,000 but raised more than \$30,000! About two-thirds of it was given by you, our generous fellow church congregation members. This, in part, supported the \$200,000+ project, along with monies from the Community Preservation Act and our church's various capital Funds.

A special thank you goes to Trustee Dave DeMoura who served as the project manager. It is the largest project undertaken by our church in several decades. Dave worked closely with our contractor American Steeple of Salem to ensure that the work proceeded efficiently. And we are not done just yet. We are looking into ways to light the four steeple clocks and plan to paint the clock level of the steeple in the spring.

Our restored steeple is a symbol of both our faith in our church and its mission, its history, and the collective goodwill that continues to shape our future.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this project possible.

Sincerely,
First Parish Church Trustees

Seaside Parish Knitters

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.

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).

First Parish uses candid photos of Church activities in its publicity from time to time. Any photos of children used will not contain personally identifiable information. Members of the community not wanting their or their children’s photos depicted should inform the Church Office.



FIRST PARISH CHURCH	978-526-7661 EXT 1
Website firstparishchurch.org	PO Box 187 Manchester by the Sea, MA 01944
Facebook firstparishchurchmanchesterma	Instagram fpcmanchesterbythesea

Have you seen what's happening in
our Chapel building?

Ode to the Community Hall Bathroom

Open the door.
Switch on the light.
What a surprise!
What a delight!

New paint job, new flooring,
and a very nice sink—
This top-to-tail upgrade's
Even better than you'd think.

Wainscoting painted
in deep forest green—
A color so beautiful
it needs to be seen.

Then there's the wallpaper
with flowers and birds—
On that one wall,
what joy occurs!

Do take a moment
to Oooh and to Ahhh.
That dingy old bathroom's
now an elegant spa.

Big thanks to the Parkers --
to Jeff and to Sue.
How blessed First Parish is
by both of you.

— Anonymous Admirer



February Deacon Notes

Thank you, Amaral Bailey Post 113, who reverently donated the patriotic altar flowers on February 1st, in honor of the Four Chaplains of the SS Dorchester. When torpedoed by the German submarine U-223, the chaplains aboard the Dorchester helped other soldiers onto lifeboats and then gave up their own life jackets and went down to the sea with the ship. Sadly, the actual afternoon service was canceled due to inclement weather, however, the flowers were inspiring at the morning service to pay reverence to the brave and sacrificing chaplains.

Deacons hosted a delicious luncheon that preceded the February 15 annual meeting of the church. Thank you to everyone who provided the wonderful food.

We are grateful to the youth who often acolyte. Eliot, William and Alex bring Christ's light into and out of the service.

Please remember that hearing amplifiers are available for individual use at each service. They are located on the table as you enter the sanctuary from the narthex.

If you would like to greet and/or read scripture, please speak to any deacon.

Thank you to all the people who have committed to sponsoring Chepkirwok, our Compassion boy from Kenya, in 2026. Opportunities remain for September, November and December. Please speak with Sue Parker if you can help.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Parker

Outreach & Service

Hands on Opportunities Every Month

We are always collecting items for local service agencies. Items can be dropped at the Chapel or Church:

Operation Troop Support - Socks, any size any color. Small board and card games.

The Open Door Pantry - Pancake & waffle mix, maple syrup, 100% fruit juice. They are also grateful for bake mixes including muffin mixes.

The Grace Center - gift cards from local grocery markets to help the center provide cream, butter and other perishables

Join us as we serve

THE
Open
Door

Community Meal

Slots filled March: Wednesday, March 1 

Slots filled April: Wednesday, April 8

May: Wednesday, May 13

June: Wednesday, June 10

July: Wednesday, July 8

August: Wednesday, August 12

September: Wednesday, September 9

October: Wednesday, October 14

November: Wednesday, November 11

December: Wednesday, December 9

Sign up [here](#) or scan the QR code below
or contact Jim Brennan at 978-580-9623 or in person after worship



Considering Book Group?

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.

Upcoming March 2nd (due to the blizzard!), 6:30 PM we will meet in the Chapel Conference Room at 1 Chapel Lane to discuss *The Grimkes: The Legacy of Slavery in an American Family* by Kerri K. Greenidge and selections from "Praise, Lament, and Prayer: A Psalter for Singing" by Carl P. Daw, Jr." (Contact Rev. K for a copy).

Coming Up...

- March 30th, Mary Ellen Cook'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

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
- Don't Let Him In*, Lisa Jewel

Prayer Wall, - Give it a try!

Request prayers and pray for others through the Prayer Wall at 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!

Our Community Hall



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.



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).