

# Church Bell Newsletter

FIRST PARISH  
CHURCH

February 2026

## From the Pastor

Dear First Parish Church,

As February arrives, winter certainly has its grip on Manchester-by-the-Sea — but the light is slowly returning, and with it, new energy for connection, reflection, and care for one another. Even in the coldest season, our church remains a place of warmth, welcome, and shared purpose.



## Worship in February

We invite you to join us for Sunday worship each week as we gather in community — whether in the pews or from home. February’s services highlight Jesus’ teachings from the Sermon on the Mount. We will be blessed to receive new members on February 1st. Ash Wednesday will be February 18th (evening service at 6pm) and then we will be into the season of Lent. The theme for Lent will be “Encounters with Jesus” as we will look at the stories of some of Jesus’ most important and transforming encounters (Nicodemus, the Syrophenician Woman, Lazarus) in the Gospel of John.

## Lenten Opportunities

In addition to our Lenten Sermon Series we will engage in a book study this Lent, taking up Richard Rohr’s “Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life” (please note this is the Revised and Updated edition). Everyone is invited to read along. Here is [a link to weekly reflection questions](#) to accompany your reading. We will have Soup and Conversation on March 22nd right after worship when we will discuss the book all together. I will also make available a take-home devotional for the season, Life Stories: A 40-Day Devotional on Madeleine L’Engle’s A Circle of Quiet ([available online here](#) or pick up a printed copy in the narthex after 2/18). And we will continue our tradition of Lenten Vespers services, on Wednesday evenings at 6pm beginning on 2/25.

## Annual Meeting on February 15th

Be sure to join us for Annual Meeting, right after worship on February 15th in the sanctuary. Together we will review the wonderful year past, celebrate the incredible success of our Stewardship drive, vote together on an annual budget and appoint new members to church

leadership. This ship of faith has really got some wind in her sails - and that's thanks to the prayers, engagement, and contributions of all of you. As we look to the future it's time to set our sights even higher, and to dream together about God's calling for us as a congregation

### **Valentine's Season: Love in Action**

February often centers on love, and at First Parish, we understand love as something we live out together. Thank you to all who continue to support our ministries of care, outreach, and fellowship. Your presence, generosity, and compassion truly make a difference. We could still use some

[volunteers to serve dinner at the Open Door](#) on 2nd Wednesdays, or [help sponsor Chepkirwok](#) through Compassion International. The Outreach and Service Committee is also working on an "Inventory of Individual Efforts" as a way to build our network of service out in the community. Keep an eye out for more info about that.

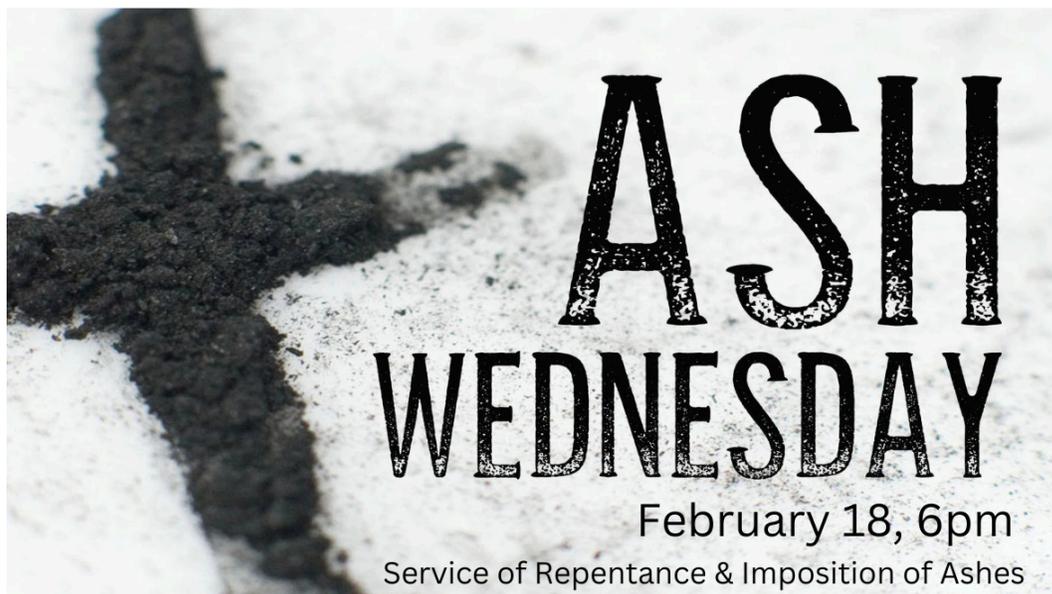


### **Weather & Winter Safety**

Please keep an eye on email and our website for weather-related updates or service changes. Your safety is important to us. As always, know that you are valued and missed whenever you cannot be with us.

With gratitude and blessings,  
Rev. Katherine

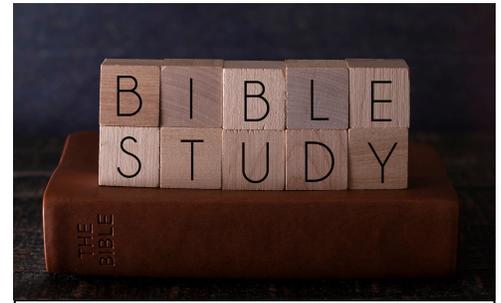
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## Faith Formation

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.

Through the end of the year our Church School explored the stories from the Old Testament that tie into the life of Jesus, and then we focused on why the birth of Jesus was a blessing for many and a threat for others. The SS collected canned goods to donate during the Season of Advent and also created beautiful Fall Cards for the COA baskets distributed in November.



### 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.

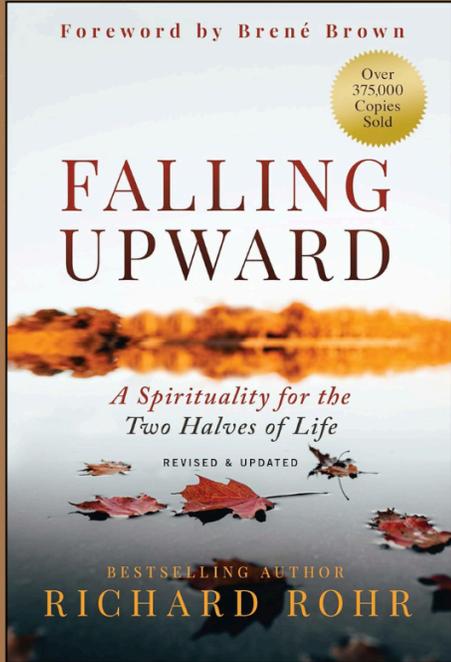


## CHURCH SCHOOL

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

# FIRST PARISH CHURCH LENTEN STUDY



Read along with us each week.

Weekly reflection questions are available.

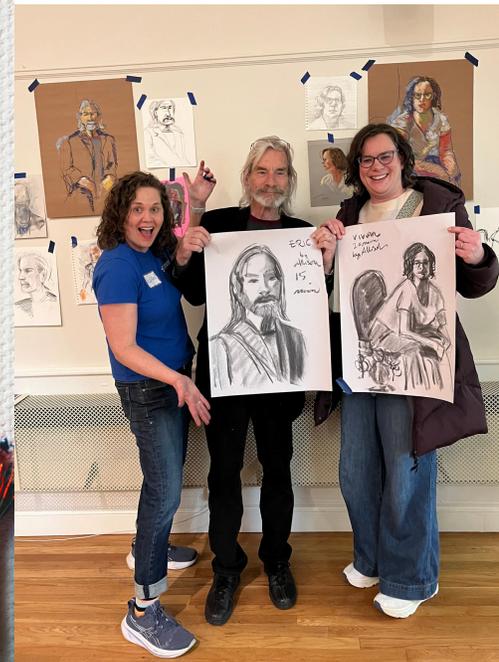
We will gather on 3/22 after worship for Soup and Conversation to discuss the book together.

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.



# February Birthdays

|            |                           |   |                            |
|------------|---------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 2/1/2026   | WEAVER, PATRICK           | 12 ALLEN AVE MANCHESTER                   | alance@nextchapterma.com   |
| 2/2/2026   | POWERS, JENNIFER          | 8 STORY ROAD MAGNOLIA MA 01930            | danajenpowers@gmail.com    |
| 2/4/2026   | LORING BYRNE,<br>ROSEMARY | 33 WAY TO THE RIVER W NEWBURY MA<br>01985 | rkloring@gmail.com         |
| 2/6/20...  | CLARK, PAUL               | 18A KENNEDY RD GLOUCESTER MA 01930        | peecee@me.com              |
| 2/14/2...  | MCCAFFERTY, BEVERLY       | 26 FULLER STREET MAGNOLIA MA 01930        | jean.mccaff@gmail.com      |
| 2/17/20... | LONDON, LINDY             | P.O. BOX. 23 MANCHESTER                   | lindylondon12@aol.com      |
| 2/23/2...  | BENINCASA, BONNIE         | 25 HICKORY HILL ROAD MANCHESTER           | bonnie.benincasa@gmail.com |
| 2/24/2...  | HESLOP, ANN               | 34 NORWOOD AVE MANCHESTER                 | ann@heslopfamily.com       |
| 2/28/2...  | WILKINSON, BENJAMIN       | 47 FOREST ST MANCHESTER                   |                            |

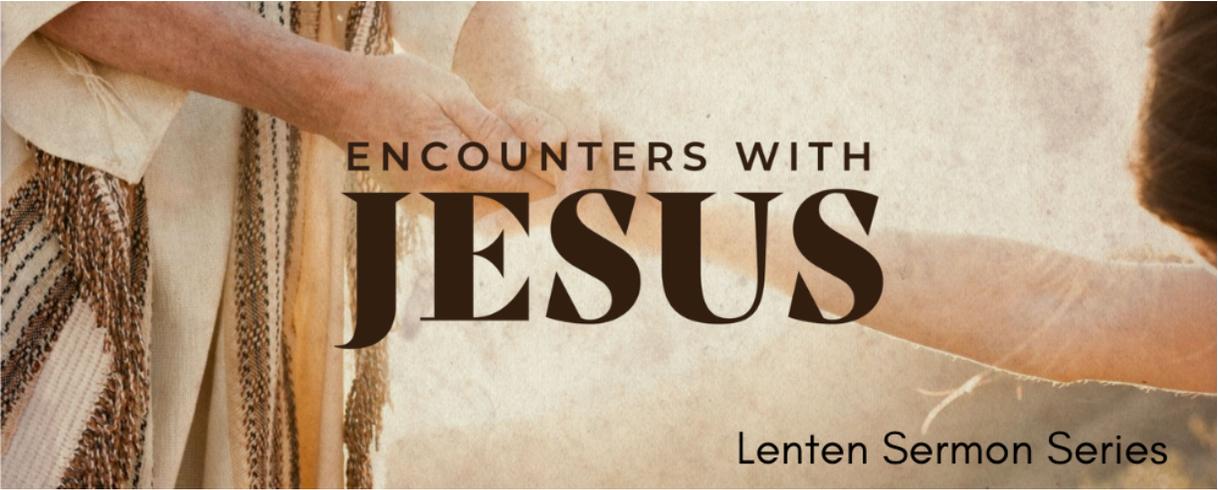
First Parish Church

## VALENTINE'S PARTY

**Thursday, February 12th 6-8 pm  
in the Greenleaf Room (3 Chapel Ln)**

All ages are invited to drop in to make Valentines for a loved one and for the Council on Aging. We'll provide the materials and refreshments.





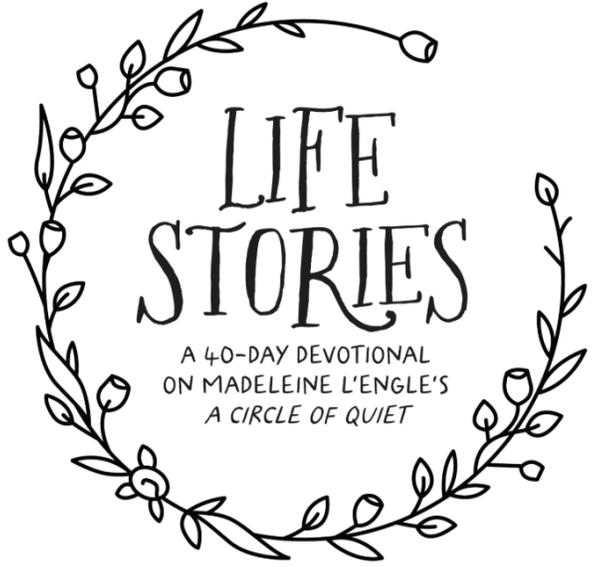
# Lenten Vespers Service



## 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](#)

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

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## Seaside Parish Knitters

The Seaside Parish Knitters meet each 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month, Feb. 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](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).

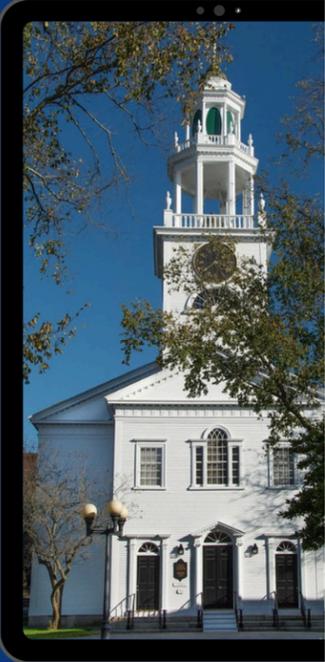


**SAVE THE DATE**

**ANNUAL MEETING**

**FIRST PARISH CHURCH  
CONGREGATIONAL**

**FEBRUARY 15, 2026  
FOLLOWING WORSHIP**



# Have you seen what's happening in our community hall?





# Friday Figure Drawing

## Outreach & Service

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



### Prayer Wall, -Give it a try!

Request prayers and pray for others through the Prayer Wall at [firstparishchurch.org/prayer-wall/](http://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!

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).

### Hands on Opportunities Every Month

First Parish Church serves dinner at The Open Door, Gloucester, Emerson Ave.

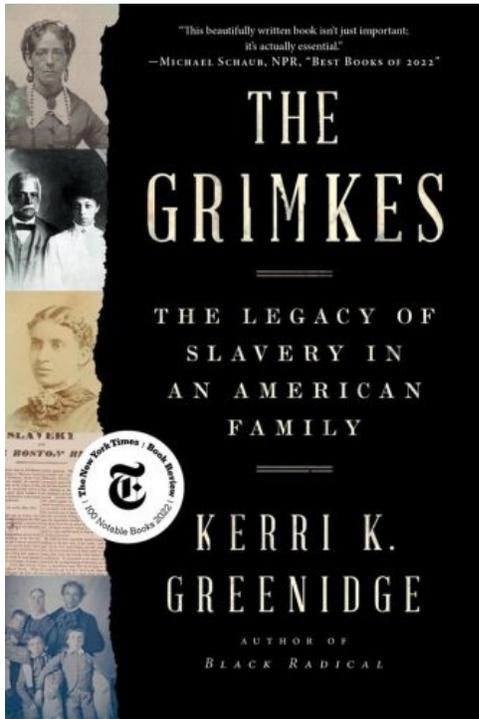
Gloucester, monthly. Sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0C4CABA822A1F49-54306850-open> or speak with Coordinator Jim Brennan 978-580-9623.



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

## 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.

We will meet on January 26, at 6:30 PM to discuss *The Grimkes: The Legacy of Slavery in an American Family* by Kerri K. Greenidge. We gather at Mary Ellen Cook's home, 23 Harold St MBTS. RSVP to Mary Ellen at 978-500-0018 or [cook.maryellen7@gmail.com](mailto:cook.maryellen7@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

### Coming Up...

- February 23rd, Conference Room, Selections from "Praise, Lament, and Prayer: A Psalter for Singing" by Carl P. Daw, Jr.
- 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

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

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*Thank you for reading!*