



**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
April 12, 2026**

Ringling of the Bell and Lighting of the Candles

Prelude Prelude in C (WTC, book 2) – J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

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

*** Call to Worship**

One: Chuckling, chortling God,

Many: Who lifts our hearts when we feel most down,

One: Who strikes the light of joy in the midst of despair's gloom,

Many: Who surprises us with wonder and awe,

One: Enter into our hearts this morning, we pray.

Open our minds to the endless possibilities you create
for growing closer to you with a giggle.

**Many: Open our eyes to your presence in all things,
allowing us to respond in joy.**

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.

***Hymn** Come You Faithful, Raise the Strain - #230, NCH

Prayer of Invocation

Message for All Ages

Passing of the Peace

Anthem With a Voice of Singing – Martin Shaw (1875 – 1958)

With a voice of singing declare ye this, and let it be heard, Alleluia. Declare ye this, and let it be heard, Alleluia. Utter it even unto the ends of the earth. The Lord hath delivered his people, Alleluia. O be joyful in God, all ye lands, O sing praises to the honour of his name, make his praise to be glorious. With a voice of singing declare ye this, and let it be heard, Alleluia. Alleluia. Declare ye this, and let it be heard, Alleluia.

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 Great is Thy Faithfulness – Thomas Chisholm (1866-1960), arr. by Jenifer Cook.

Dr. Herman Weiss, piano

Scripture Reading Cynthia Westland

Psalm 126

¹ When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

² Then our mouth was filled with laughter
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”

³ The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

⁴ Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

⁵ May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

⁶ Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Genesis 18: 1-15

¹ The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. ² He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them and bowed down to the ground. ³ He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” ⁶ And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah and said, “Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make

cakes.”⁷ Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it.⁸ Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

⁹ They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.”¹⁰ Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him.¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I be fruitful?”¹³ The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’¹⁴ Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.”¹⁵ But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. He said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

Sermon “Under the Big Top” Rev. Katherine Schofield

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory Anthem Easter Song – Alan Pote (1945), Luke 24:10

The angel rolled the stone away. ‘Twas on a bright and shiny morn when the trumpet began to sound, the angel rolled the stone away. Alleluia, Christ is risen! Alleluia, Christ is risen! Go tell Mary and Martha; go tell Peter and John. Go tell all the disciples, that Christ is risen! Jesus, He was killed on a Friday; Jesus, He lay buried and dead; Jesus, He arose on the third day. He rose upon into heaven, just like He said. Alleluia, Christ is risen! Brother, won’t you ever believe me, sister, do you think it’s a lie, listen while I tell you a story – if you believe in Jesus, then you’ll never die. Alleluia, Christ is risen!

*** 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 The Day of Resurrection – #245, NCH

*** Blessing**

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, ***note the change in April - April 9 & 23, 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 will meet on **Tuesday, April 28, 6:30 PM** because of town meeting on the 27th. We will gather to discuss “The Chaperone” by Laura Moriarty at Carol Spence’s home, 4 Overledge Road MBTS. RSVP to Carol at (240) 305-5520 or cdspace@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, (Except in April!) 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](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0C4CABA822A1F49-54306850-open) or speak with Coordinator Jim Brennan 978-580- 9623.