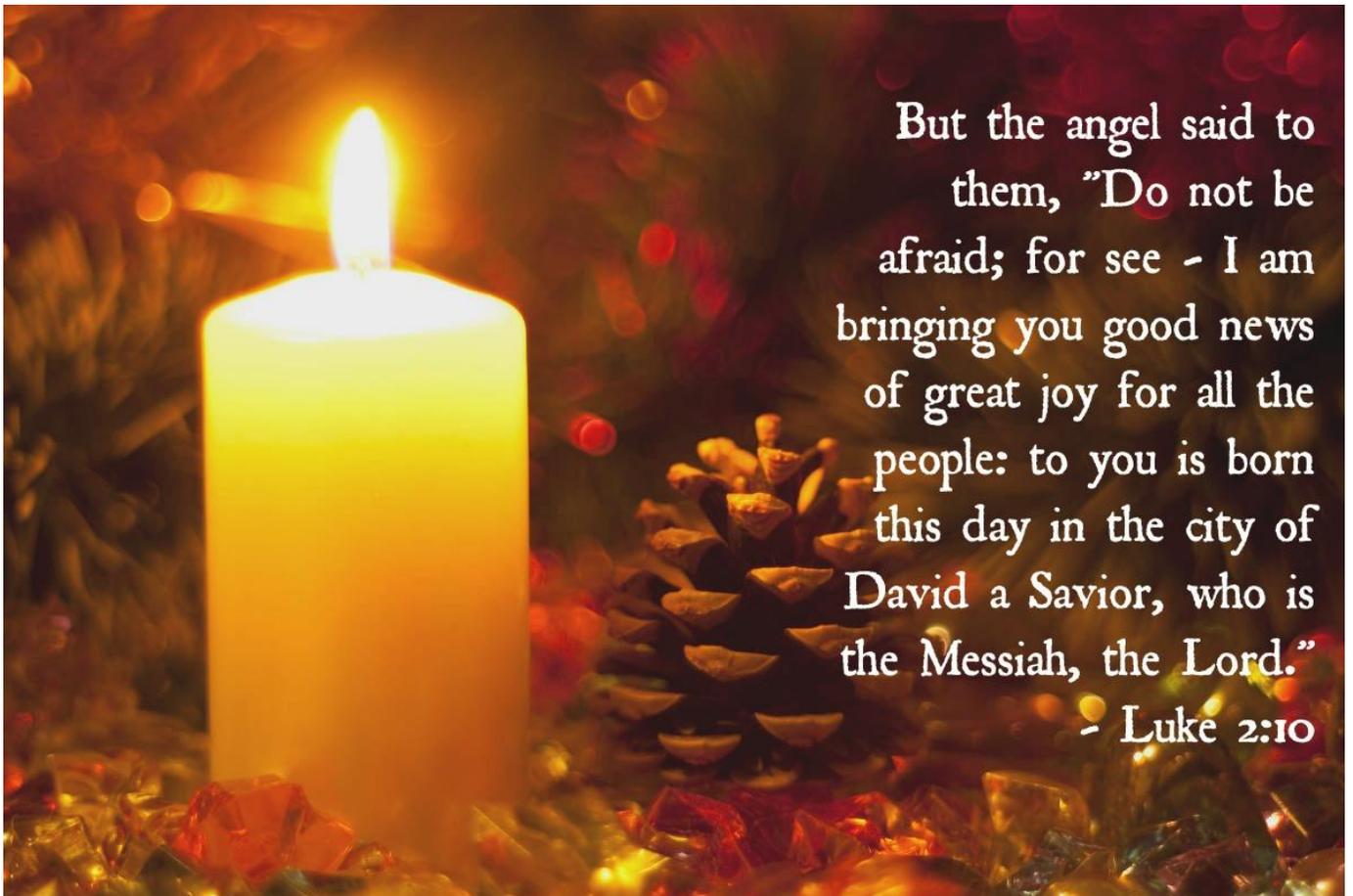


First Parish Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
P.O. Box 114, 47 East Derry Road
East Derry, New Hampshire 03041
Tel. (603) 434 – 0628

December 24, 2015 7:00 PM Christmas Eve Year C



But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."
- Luke 2:10

ALL ARE WELCOME

*"Friend, you enter this church not as a stranger, but as a guest of God.
Come, then, with joy in your heart and thanks upon your lips,
and offer God today your love and your service."*

(Adapted from a 12th Century Church in Hampshire, England)

LET US ENTER INTO GOD'S PRESENCE

INTROIT Choir: "Run to the Manger" by Victor Johnson

PROCESSIONAL HYMN "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;

Come and behold Him, born the King of angels;

O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!

Glory to God, all glory in the highest;

O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born for our salvation,

Jesus, to Thee be all glory given;

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.

O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

WELCOME AND CENTERING BREATH

"In the beginning..."

John 1:1-5

"darkness turns to light..."

Isaiah 9:2,6,7

HYMN "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

O come, O come, Emmanuel And ransom captive Israel

That mourns in lonely exile here Until the Son of God appear

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Advent Wreath Lighting Ceremony

One: We light the candle of hope to remind us of the promises made by all the prophets that God would raise up a savior for his people Israel.

Many: Christ is our hope and our salvation. He calls us to share our hope in Him with each other.

One: We light the candle of peace to remind us that it is only with God and by following in His path that true peace can be found.

Many: Christ brings the Peace of God to us. He calls us to share the peace He gives with others.

One: We light the candle of love to remind us that Jesus is God's gift of love to us – and that in Him, the light of love triumphs over darkness.

Many: Love never fails – it transforms all those who give it and receive it. God calls us to share his love with each other.

One: We light the candle of joy to remind us that God gives joy to every heart that abides in Him.

Many: As Mary rejoiced in the birth of Jesus – so His birth in us brings us joy. God calls us to share the joy He gives with each other.

One: We light the Christ candle to remind us that the light of the world was born this night.

Many: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness – on them a light has shined.

Unison Prayer of Approach - Let us pray:

Almighty God - you have made this night holy by the gift of your son, born of the Holy Spirit and of Mary. Upon Him rested all your grace, through him has come all your mercy. Let His light shine within our hearts tonight even more brightly than it shines from the candles in this place. Help us to hear your word and to celebrate your everlasting love through Him. Amen

LET US REMEMBER OUR BELOVED STORY

“Greetings, favored one...”

Luke 1:26-33; 38

“a decree went out ... all the world should be registered”

Luke 2:1-7

HYMN “*Away in a Manger*”

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head. The stars in the sky looked down where He lay, the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay close by me forever, and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care, and fit us for heaven to live with Thee there.

“the glory of the LORD shone around them”

Luke 2:8-14

HYMN

“*Angels We Have Heard on High*”

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o’er the plains, and the mountains in reply, echo back their joyous strains.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo, Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see Christ whose birth the angels sing; Come adore on bended knee, God, our world now entering.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo, Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

“Let us go now to Bethlehem”

Luke 2:15

HYMN *“O Little Town of Bethlehem”*

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth.
Your voices raise to God in praise; and peace to all on earth!

“they found the child lying in the manger”

Luke 2:16-18

HYMN *“What Child is This?”*

What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary’s lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this, the angels sing, is Christ, God’s holy offering;
Hail, hail, the Word made flesh, the babe, the child of Mary!

“glorifying and praising God”

Luke 2:19-20

CHOIR and SACRED DANCERS:
Shepherd, Play Your Pipes Tonight

Mark Shepperd

PASTORAL REFLECTION

WE RESPOND TO GOD’S LOVE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

O God, we come back to hear the story once again for ourselves, for our faith,
for our lives. We pray now for others and ask that you hear our prayers, O God.

May those who are lonely hear an angel song of hope drawing near,
and the footsteps of kindly people on the way.

May those who are homeless find at least a sheltering stable on this night
and the company of a God who stays fast beside them.

May those who are rejected, be embraced by unexpected neighbors
and the lost, see a guiding star overhead.

May those who are hungry be filled with the gifts of those who have much
and justice rise up in all the earth around them.

May those who are powerless and without voice, who suffer in the silences
be given the wise and the prophets to speak for them.

Praise be to you, O God. Gather us all into your loving presence now and help
us to cherish the life of the vulnerable Child in all the world.

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR (debts)

WE CARRY THE LIGHT INTO THE WORLD

CANDLELIGHTING

As you come forward to receive your lit candle, ushers will be available to receive your financial offering. Please take a candle-light back to your seats as we sing together.

HYMN *“Joy to the World”*

Joy to the World, the LORD is come Let earth its praises bring;
Let every heart prepare Him room, And heaven and nature Sing,
And heaven and nature Sing, and heaven and nature Sing.

Joy to the world! the Savior reigns Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods Rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy;
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness And wonders of His love;
And wonders of His love; And wonders and wonders of His love.

HYMN *“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”*

Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King; peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!” Joyful all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies; with the angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!” **Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the new-born King!”**

Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord! Late in time behold Him come, off-spring of the virgin’s womb. Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail the incarnate Deity, pleased in flesh with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel. **Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the new-born King!”**

HYMN *“The First Noel”*

The first Noel, the angel did say, was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay; in fields where they lay keeping their sheep, on a cold winter’s night that was so deep.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star shining in the east, beyond them far, and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.

This star drew nigh to the northwest, o’er Bethlehem it took its rest, and there it did both stop and stay, right over the place where Jesus lay.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born in the King of Israel.

HYMN *“Silent Night, Holy Night”*

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child, holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight,
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Savior is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love’s pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

BENEDICTION

(After the Benediction please extinguish your candle before you stand up. For safety sake kindly give your candle to an usher before you go down the stairs.)

POSTLUDE

*All that are able may stand.

PEACE LIGHT: The candles at this service were lit from a flame given to First Parish Congregational, UCC from Boy Scout Troop 405. This same flame originated in the grotto of Jerusalem several weeks ago and connects to flames across the world. Go to Peacelight.org for more information.

MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH
DEACONS OF THE MONTH
PASTOR
ASSOCIATE PASTOR
AFFILIATE PASTOR
MUSIC DIRECTOR
ACCOMPANIST/ORGANIST
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Members of the Congregation
Fred Merrill and Julie Turner
The Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof
The Rev. Heidi Carrington Heath
The Rev. Chester R. Ham
Susan Handy
Jeff DeLangie
Lindsey Roman

Welcome Visitors! Merry Christmas! We are so very glad that you are here!

**First Parish Congregational MISSION STATEMENT:
First Parish Congregational Church, United Church of Christ,
is a community of faith built upon a firm foundation of
worship, prayer and education.**

**In affirming diversity, we are dedicated to welcoming all people
who seek the Word of God, Christian fellowship and service to others.**

**In partnership with Christ and led by the Holy Spirit,
we reach out to the ever-widening community
through active and loving ministry.**

As members of the United Church of Christ we say:

“No matter who **you** are
or where **you** are on life’s journey,
you are welcome here!”
We mean it!”

If you would like information about our church or would like to be added to our mailing list, please fill out a bright yellow “How May We Serve You”/ “Communication Options” card located in the pews and at the back of the Sanctuary.

Heartfelt thanks to all of the Deacons and to Diane Breeden whose assistance and support this Advent Season has been so welcomed and so appreciated. Your help with all of the services has been invaluable. Christmas Blessings!

Pastor Deborah & Pastor Heidi

Liz and I want to thank everyone who sent us cards and gifts during this Christmas Season. We approach our 3 year anniversary with First Parish Congregational UCC. God has again blessed us in amazing ways this year. We appreciate your faithfulness and your friendship. May God’s blessings continue to warm us and to challenge us to do great things in God’s name!

Thank you, Pastor Deborah and Liz

I want to extend my deep thanks to all of you for your outpouring of love and support around my recent ordination to ministry. I have been genuinely overwhelmed in the best possible sense. Thank you for the beautiful stoles, cards, letters, and gifts you’ve showered me with. Thank you also for the Christmas gifts and cards. Special thanks to the forty or so of you who made the trip to be with us in person at Old South! I’ve been deeply blessed to serve you all for the last year. Here is to 2016! Merry Christmas! God loves you and so do I, **Pastor Heidi**

A MESSAGE FROM OUR STEWARDSHIP BOARD

We have received **107** pledge cards. We were hoping for many more with a goal of \$225,000. We have received \$195,150.56 for the general fund, and \$18,100.56 to mission. It’s not too late for you to help us reach our goal. Ask an Usher for a pledge envelope.

Margie Ives, John Bartel, Carl Hepworth, Sue Weaver, Joyce and Glenn Pope

A MESSAGE FROM THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

If you want contributions to be included in your tax returns for 2015, they must be at the church on or before **January 8, 2016** and should be dated **December 31, 2015**. The books will be **closed Monday, January 11, 2016**.

Thank you, Pat Crowell

P.S. We deeply appreciate end-of-the-year charitable gifts.

First Parish Congregational Church, UCC would like to give a very warm thank you to all the local businesses and organizations who supported our fundraising efforts in 2015, particularly with our placemat advertising drive, including:

Amphora Greek Restaurant, Crystal Ashman, Realtor at Coldwell Banker, Beauty in the Beads, C.R.E.A.T.E. Center for Expressive Art Therapy & Education, Derry Auto Parts, East Derry Auto, Rebecca Fleury Financial Advisor, Rose Foroughi Hairstylist, The Happy Hippy, La Carreta Mexican Restaurant, LeFebvre's Auto Repair, Jake's Auto Body, Fred Merrill Accounting & Bookkeeping, Nutfield Cooperative School, Peabody Funeral Home, Rings On Your Toes (Nancy Murdock), Rockingham Boat Repair & Sales, Stepping Stones (Karen Wilson), Ultimate Attraction Hair Salon.

Thank you for your support of FPC!

We would like to also recognize La Carreta Mexican Restaurant again, for their very generous donation of \$700 during our dining out event at their Derry location in October 2015!

Merry Christmas!
God Bless Us – Every One!

