

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 17, 2017      Third Sunday of Advent**



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)

GATHERING MUSIC: Christmas Carol Hymn Sing at 9:45

**WE GATHER INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

LIGHTING THE CHRIST LIGHT

Acolyte: Charlotte Dugan

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS; SHARING JOYS & CONCERNS

(Please introduce yourself; give a brief description at this time; ask people to seek you out after worship.)

**LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH**

*Lighting of the Advent Candle: **Third Sunday of Advent: Joy***

One: Hope is a light given by God to every Child of God.

**All: We light the candle of Hope as we remember Christ's gift.**

*(Light the candle of Hope)*

One: The flame of Peace, just as the Peace of Christ, is the true order of life.

**All: We light the candle of Peace as we remember to live in Christ's Peace.**

*(Light the candle of Peace)*

One: Joy is the celebration given by God through the light of the world.

**All: Joy is the celebration given by God at the birth of the Christ Child.**

One: Joy is the celebration when the angels sang "Glory to God in the highest!"

**All: Let us dance and sing and shout for joy. Christ is coming again!**

*(Light the candle of Joy)*

\*CALL TO WORSHIP (Please stand in body or Spirit.)

One: God is in our midst; do not fear.

**Many: God rejoices to renew our lives in steadfast love.**

One: God gathers us for this time of worship,

**Many: And claims us and promises us a home.**

One: Trust in God who is our strength and life.

**Many: Give thanks to God, the source of our salvation.**

One: Let us sing praises and exalt God's name.

**Many: With joyous shouts, we will tell of God's glorious deeds.**

\*HYMN: #108 – Isaiah the Prophet Has Written of Old

**\*INVOCATION**

**Loving God, we rejoice in this season of anticipation as we remember your promises and look forward to ways that you reveal yourself to us. May your presence be real to us in this hour. Strengthen us for victories over temptation, for renewal of our love for you and one another, for leadership and service in your church. We give thanks that you have called us into community and commissioned us to make a difference in the world. Equip us here for the tasks you set before us. Amen.**

**\*SONG OF PRAISE #759** Glory to the Creator, the Christ, the Holy Spirit, Three-in-One; As it is in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

CHIME CHOIR "On This Day Earth Shall Ring" by Gustav Hoist, arr. by Carol Lynn Mizell

**WE INVITE FORWARD GOD'S YOUNGER DISCIPLES**

*At this time, all children are invited to come forward for the children's offering, and children's time. An offering is not required for participation. All are welcome, especially first time visitors.*

CHILDREN'S OFFERING Hymn #138 Jesus, Our Brother, Strong and Good  
Jesus, Our Brother, Strong and Good, was humbly born in a stable rude, and the friendly  
beasts around him stood, Jesus our brother, strong and good.

#### PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**In our hearts these gifts we bring; for you give us everything. Teach us how to follow you; in all we say and all we do. Amen.**

#### CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Sarah Keller

#### 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory forever. Amen.**

#### WE HEAR GOD'S WORD FOR US

\*HYMN: People Look East (Insert)

**OLD TESTAMENT Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11** 61The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; <sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; <sup>3</sup>to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. <sup>4</sup>They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. . . .

<sup>8</sup>For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. <sup>9</sup>Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

**GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28** <sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

<sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.

<sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>19</sup>This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup>He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."

<sup>21</sup>And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." <sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

<sup>23</sup>He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. <sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

<sup>25</sup>They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" <sup>26</sup>John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup>the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." <sup>28</sup>This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

SERMON

“Testify to the Light”

The Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof

**WE RESPOND WITH PRAYER**

CHOIR ANTHEM "O Come to Set Us Free" by Mary McDonald

PASTORAL PRAYER

CHORAL RESPONSE

**WE RESPOND WITH OUR FINANCIAL GIFTS**

OFFERTORY INVITATION

Today God's voice is heard through the ministries we help to provide, here in our church, and in outreach to all the world's people. We bear witness to the light that is coming into the world through personal caring and corporate sharing. May all our giving be generous!

OFFERTORY MUSIC

\*DOXOLOGY #780 - Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, you heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**In our unworthiness, O God, may we yet bring worthy gifts to honor the Messiah. May the brokenhearted be led to enriching new celebrations. May the lowly among us come to know their true worth as persons chosen by you to do great things. By your mercy, may the hungry be fed not only with bread but also with opportunities to feed others. Thank you, God, for expecting great things of us. Amen.**

**WE GO OUT TO LOVE AND SERVE A LOVING, SERVING GOD**

\*HYMN: #110 – Now Bless the God of Israel (Please be seated after the hymn.)

BENEDICTION

BENEDICTION CHORAL RESPONSE

POSTLUDE (Please remain seated during the Postlude and until the Christ Light departs.)

*\*Indicates all that are able may stand.*

MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH

Members of the Congregation

DEACONS OF THE MONTH

Ken Gould and Julie Turner

LAY READER

Diane Breeden

USHERS

Becky Fleury, Verna Elwell, Nancy Berry, Pat Cefaly and Michael Bryan

GREETER(s)

Diane Dunn

SENIOR PASTOR AND TEACHER

The Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Susan Handy

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Christine Lehoullier

ACCOMPANIST/ORGANIST

Chris Ferrin

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Hannah Collier