

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 23, 2018
Fourth Sunday of Advent



Share how you celebrate LOVE

Happy is she who believed that the Lord would
fulfill the promises he made to her.

Luke 1:45

The United Church of Christ: What We Believe

We believe in the triune God: A Creator, the resurrected Christ, the sole Head of the church, and the Holy Spirit, who guides and brings about the creative and redemptive work of God in the world.

We believe that each person is unique and valuable. It is the will of God that every person belong to a family of faith where they have a strong sense of being valued and loved.

We believe that each person is on a spiritual journey and that each of us is at a different stage of that journey.

We believe that the persistent search for God produces an authentic relationship with God, engendering love, strengthening faith, dissolving guilt, and giving life purpose and direction.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING

WE GATHER INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD

WELCOME THE CHRIST LIGHT

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS & JOYS AND CONCERNS

ADVENT CALL TO WORSHIP

*Lighting of the Advent Candle: **Fourth** Sunday of Advent: Love*

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

(Light the candle of Joy)

One: Love is the wick given by God that is central to the life itself.

All: Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. (Light the candle of Love)

*HYMN # 116- O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

*** INVOCATION (in unison)**

We do not like to think that God might be angry with us. Yet, we admit that we forget to pray and we spend much of our time acquiring things. Our compassion knows limits. We fall short of becoming the people God intends us to be – and yet, God loves us in spite of ourselves. Let us rejoice in the wisdom and forgiveness of our loving Creator.

***SONG OF PRAISE There's a song of Love**

There's a song of love in my heart,

Love is a gift from Jesus.

There's a song of love in my heart,

Love is a gift from God.

There's a song of joy in my heart,

Joy is a gift from Jesus.

There's a song of joy in my heart,

Joy is a gift from God.

There's a song of peace in my heart,

Peace is a gift from Jesus.

There's a song of peace in my heart,

Peace is a gift from God.

There's a song of hope in my heart,
Hope is a gift from Jesus.
There's a song of hope in my heart,
Hope is a gift from God.

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Shellie Aseltine, Libby LeBlanc, Wendy Williams

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 and 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

Debbie Gline-Allen

ANTHEM: Stille Nacht

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.

Children are excused as we sing: **"Go now in peace. Go now in peace. May the love of God surround you everywhere, everywhere you may go."** Words & Music: Natalie Sleeth, © 1976 Hinshaw Music, Inc.; All rights reserved. Reprinted under ONE LICENSE #A-708716.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD FOR US

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 43:1-3

NEW TESTAMENT: Luke 1:47-55

SERMON: The Greatest of These is Love

WE RESPOND WITH PRAYER

PASTORAL PRAYER

HYMN: #606 – Nearer, My God, To You

WE RESPOND WITH OUR FINANCIAL GIFTS

OFFERTORY INVITATION

In this season, we remember the greatest offering of all time, God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. The only appropriate response is our giving of ourselves. The morning offering will now be received.

OFFERTORY MUSIC

What Child Is This? arranged by Vince Guaraldi
Malysa Deranian, trumpet & Dani Allen, guitar

***DOXOLOGY Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God all creatures here below; Praise God above you heavenly host: Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.**

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Thank you, God, for your mercy and protection, for feeding us physically and spiritually, for caring for us like a shepherd. We present our offerings as an act of gratitude. What we can never repay we pause to appreciate. In the name of generosity we cannot match, we seek to be generous toward others. May these offerings do far more than support our church. We dedicate ourselves and these gifts to honor Christ through ministry in the world. Amen.

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

*HYMN: # 135- O Come, All Ye Faithful

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE (Please remain seated during the Postlude)

**Indicates all that are able may stand.*

MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH

Members of the Congregation

DEACONS OF THE MONTH

Sue Lindemann, Ryan Lehoullier

LAY READER

Ryan Lehoullier

USHERS

Dusty Patrick, Verna Elwell, Joan Crimlisk, Michael Bryan

GREETER

Beth Hunter

SENIOR PASTOR AND TEACHER

The Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof

INTERIM DIRECTOR OF MUSIC MINISTRY

Debbie Gline Allen

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Christine Lehoullier

ACCOMPANIST/ORGANIST

Chris Ferrin

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Michelle Guerrin

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 43:1-3

¹But now thus says the LORD,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.

²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.

³For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

NEW TESTAMENT: Luke 1:47-55

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”



Here are ways you can embody LOVE during the fourth week of the Season of Advent:



Monday: BRIGHTEN – Write a prayer for someone you love and use twine or ribbon to tie it around a candle. Even a small candle will do! Present it as a gift, knowing that every time the candle is used, your prayers will be felt as you bring light into someone’s world. [#loveofneighbor](#)

Tuesday: PROCLAIM – “On the first day of Christmas...” what does your true love give to you? Take a moment today to tell your loved ones about their gifts and how much they matter to you. [#loveofneighbor](#)

Wednesday: BLESS – Over the winter break, many children will have less to eat as they aren’t provided with school breakfasts and lunches. Does your church or community have a blessing box or other easy-access food pantry? Donate nutritious snacks. [#loveofchildren](#)

Thursday: GAZE – As we retell a story of holy stars and nighttime celestial pronouncements, let evening stargazing remind you of God’s astronomical love. Find the nearest dark sky sanctuary at [darksky.org](#) and share in efforts to reduce light pollution for the sake of human health, ecosystems, and even public safety! [#loveofcreation](#)

Friday: ADVOCATE – December 28th is the feast of the Holy Innocents, as we remember the children slaughtered by Herod in his bid to extinguish the competition. Find time today to send a postcard or email to your elected officials, telling them about the importance of making care for all children a top priority for those in power. [#loveofchildren](#)

Saturday: CONSERVE – Whether there’s snow or sunshine outside your windows at Christmas, it’s always a good time to save on home energy use! Schedule an audit for your church or home in the New Year, and let us know how you’re sharing in [#loveofcreation!](#)