

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

**December 24, 2018      Christmas Eve**



*HOPE*

*PEACE*

*JOY*

*LOVE*

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)

*December 24, 2018*

## **WE GATHER INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

### WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### **LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH**

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 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 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 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.**

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

One: Come apart to this place of rest and renewal;

**Many: Let our spirits rejoice in the presence of God.**

One: We will sing of God's steadfast love for all people.

**Many: We will proclaim God's faithfulness to all generations.**

One: God looks with favor on the humble and lowly.

**Many: God's covenant does not focus on rank or position.**

One: Blessed are those who walk in God's light.

**Many: Blessed are all who say 'yes' to God's call.**

\*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!**

\*INVOCATION

**God of unseen angels and unheard greetings, whose love for humankind continues even when we are inattentive, favor us now with a message we cannot ignore. Reign among us that we may respond to your call and serve with faithfulness in the ways you envision for us. Make us instruments of your peace. 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.

**WE RESPOND WITH OUR FINANCIAL GIFTS**

OFFERTORY INVITATION: God gives us responsibilities in the church and the world to carry good news, to build up, to feed the hungry and house the homeless, to be faithful in all things. Our offerings are one sign of love and faithfulness.

OFFERTORY MUSIC

\*DOXOLOGY #780 - Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow

\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**Our best we give to you, loving God, for you have given your best to us in the mystery of the Incarnation. May our offerings proclaim Jesus in ways that will be received with joy. Send your Word to the world in this season through our caring service. May we share it with one another in ways that help us all to grow. We are your servants. The gifts we dedicate here now are already yours. Thank you for all the ways you have provided for us. Amen.**

**WE RESPOND WITH PRAYER**

Christmas Litany: "First Coming" by Madeleine L'Engle

One: God did not wait till the world was ready, till nations were at peace.

**Many: God came when the Heavens were unsteady and prisoners cried out for release.**

One: God did not wait for the perfect time.

**Many: God came when the need was deep and great.**

One: God dined with sinners in all their grime, turned water into wine.

**Many: God did not wait till hearts were pure.**

One: In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.

**Many: To a world like ours, of anguished shame, God came and God's Light would not go out.**

One: God came to a world that did not mesh; to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.

**Many: In the mystery of the Word made Flesh, the maker of the stars was born.**

One: We cannot wait till the world is sane to raise our songs with joyful voice, or to share our grief.

**Many: God came with Love to touch our pain.**

One: In spite of our tears we can for that rejoice.

**Many: Let us rejoice in the confidence that God comes to us still today.**

PASTORAL PRAYER followed by 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.**

\*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!”**

### THE LITTLE PAGEANT

The music below is disbursed throughout the pageant.  
We invite you to remain seated as you sing along with us.

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.

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.

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.  
Glo - - - - - ria in excelsis De - o,  
Glo - - - - - ria in excelsis De - - o.

Shepherds why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
Say what may the tidings be, which insoire your heavenly song.  
Glo - - - - - ria in excelsis De - o,  
Glo - - - - - ria in excelsis De - - o.

HYMN *“We Three Kings”*

We three kings of Orient are bearing gifts we traverse afar;  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.  
**O, Star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright.**  
**Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy Perfect Light.**  
These three gifts we offer to you: gold and myrrh and frankincense, too.  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! God’s love for us born anew!  
**O, Star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright.**  
**Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy Perfect Light.**

HYMN *“The Friendly Beasts”*

Jesu our brother, kind and good,  
Was humbly born in a stable rude,  
And the friendly beasts around Him stood.  
Jesus our brother, kind and good.

**Musical solos by: Mikayla Henrick, Abigail Slowick & Madison Pinault**

Thus every beast by some good spell,  
In the stable dark was glad to tell  
Of the gift he gave Emmanuel,  
The gift he gave Emmanuel.

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

\*HYMN: # 132 Joy to the World!

Joy to the world! The Lord is come:  
Let earth its praises bring  
Let every heart prepare Christ room,  
and Heaven and nature sing, and Heaven and nature sing,  
and Heaven and Heaven and nature sing.

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

BENEDICTION The Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof



## **A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

Our Children's programs continue to flourish on Sunday morning with many thanks to our incredible staff of teachers and volunteers! The Youth program is now evolving into a tri-church gathering with the participation of the Atkinson and Hampstead UCC churches.

Our Adult Faith Formation program continues to thrive, as we wonder together, sharing our faith journeys, reading scripture and current books.

With thanks to a multitude of volunteers, the Board of Christian Education was able to offer programs like a Lenten Workshop, Vacation Church School and the Advent Workshop! Thanks be to God!

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## **A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD OF MISSION AND OUTREACH**

We give every dollar that is given to Mission. We are a "5 for 5" church in the United Church of Christ, giving to all 5 UCC missions. Locally, we support the Derry Friendship Center, Sonshine Soup Kitchen, First Baptist Food Pantry, Community Caregivers, Pastoral Counseling, Pinkerton Homeless Program, Upper Room, Family Promise of Nashua and Liberty House in Manchester.

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## **A MESSAGE FROM OUR STEWARDSHIP BOARD**

May the birth of the baby Jesus bring joy to your heart  
and renew your loving spirit.

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## **A MESSAGE FROM OUR FACILITIES BOARD**

We have accomplished many repairs and improvements to our physical plant this year. To name just a few: new plumbing fixtures in the kitchen and lower level girls room, new evacuation signs posted, transitioning to LED bulbs throughout, and recently, new ceiling fans and sound system in Currier.

Thank you to everyone who helped, and everyone for their patience throughout this process.

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## **A MESSAGE FROM OUR COUNCIL**

We cannot do the work of Christ without you. Please pray about how YOUR gifts of time or talent or treasure might help us continue this mission as Christ's hands and feet here in Southern New Hampshire.

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If you are curious about our efforts to preserve the 1769 Meetinghouse next-door please pick up a brochure in the lobby.

Or check out [www.nutfieldhistory.org](http://www.nutfieldhistory.org) or NutHist on Facebook.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS from FIRST PARISH CONGREGATIONAL!**