

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, 2019 Christmas Eve 7pm



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)

LET US ENTER INTO GOD'S PRESENCE

PRELUDE

*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!

(Please remain **seated** for hymn singing for the remainder of this service.)

WELCOME AND CENTERING BREATH

CHOIR ANTHEM: **O Holy Night** by Adolfe Adam

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 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.**

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**

WE REMEMBER OUR BELOVED STORY TOGETHER

“In the beginning...”

John 1:1-5

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.

“Greetings, favored one...”

Luke 1:26-33; 38

SPECIAL MUSIC Ave Maria

“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

HYMN “Go, Tell It On The Mountain”

Go, tell it on the mountain Over the hills and everywhere

Go, tell it on the mountain That Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching O'er their silent flocks night

Behold throughout the heavens here shone a holy light

Go, tell it on the mountain Over the hills and everywhere

Go, tell it on the mountain That Jesus Christ is born!

The shepherds feared and trembled When lo! Above the Earth

Rang out the angel chorus That hailed our Savior's birth

Go, tell it on the mountain Over the hills and everywhere

Go, tell it on the mountain That Jesus Christ is born!

“wise men came from the east”

Matthew 2:1-10

HYMN “*We Three Kings of Orient Are*”

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.

Glorious now behold Him arise, King and God and Sacrifice.

Alleluia, alleluia! Sounds through the earth and skies.

O Star of wonder, star of night Star with royal beauty bright

Westward leading, still proceeding Guide us to thy Perfect Light

“leaving by another road” and “Joseph’s dream”

Matthew 2:11-15

CHOIR ANTHEM: “**Do you hear what I hear?**” Noel Regney and Gloria Shayne

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)

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.

READING: "First Coming" by Madeleine L'Engle

God did not wait till the world was ready, till nations were at peace.
God came when the Heavens were unsteady and prisoners cried out for release.
God did not wait for the perfect time.
God came when the need was deep and great.
God dined with sinners in all their grime, turned water into wine.
God did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame, God came and God's Light
would not go out.
God came to a world that did not mesh; to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh, the maker of the stars was born.
We cannot wait till the world is sane to raise our songs with joyful voice, or to
share our grief.
God came with Love to touch our pain.
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

PASTORAL REFLECTION by Pastor Deborah

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 is the King of Israel.

HYMN "It came upon the midnight clear"

It came upon the midnight clear, That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth, To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to men, From heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay, To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come, With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains, They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its babel sounds The blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not The love-song which they bring;
O hush the noise, ye men of strife, And hear the angels sing.

WE CARRY THE LIGHT INTO THE WORLD

GIFT GIVING AND CANDLELIGHTING

We invite everyone to come forward at this sacred time. Ushers are available to receive your financial offering and then you will receive the Christmas light from Pastor Deborah. Please take a candle-light back to your seats as we sing together.

HYMN “Good Christian Friends Rejoice”

Good Christian friends, rejoice,
With heart and soul, and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ is born to-day;
Ox and ass before him bow,
And he is in the manger now.
Christ is born to-day!
Christ is born to-day!

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 “*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 “Angels From the Realms of Glory”

Angels from the realms of glory wing your flight o’er all the earth;
As you sang creation’s story now proclaim Messiah’s birth;
Come and worship, come and worship; worship Christ the new born King.
Shepherds in the fields abiding watching o’er your flocks by night;
God with us is now reciting yonder shines the infant light;
Come and worship, come and worship; worship Christ the new born King.

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

POSTLUDE

Please remain seated until the conclusion of the Postlude.

After the Postlude please extinguish your candle before you stand up. Kindly give your candle to an usher as you leave.

SPECIAL THANKS: We offer our heartfelt gratitude to our guest musicians Dani, Debbie and Ben Allen.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

Liz and I want to wish each and every one of you a joyous Christmas and a healthy New Year! We are so blessed to be among you. God has enriched our lives and the life of this church so abundantly. We don’t always receive what we want – but we always get what we need. May you be on the lookout for those mysterious God-winks and God-incidences in your lives. We wish you Christ’s hope, peace, joy and love, from our house to yours, Pastor Deborah and Liz

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHOIR DIRECTOR

“Singing is praying twice!” It is such a joy to be among you here at First Parish. The music ministry is so spirit-filled and rewarding. Thank you to every person who contributes in some way to our worship of God through music.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

As the Christmas approaches, we find ourselves reflecting on the past year with gratitude and love. We are reminded to take time to truly appreciate everyone who has helped to shape our lives, our families, and our faith in a most significant way. Christmas is a wonderful time to spread not only good cheer and tidings, but also to spread the Word of the Lord. Thank you to all of our Board members and volunteers who give with great joy in their hearts. Thank you!

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD OF MISSION AND OUTREACH

Every dollar that you give to Mission is given away - every single dollar. We are a "5 for 5" church in the United Church of Christ, giving to all 5 UCC missions. We took up a special collection this past summer so that the seminary in Zimbabwe could install solar panels! 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. Thank you!

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD OF DEACONS

All of us wish all of you a very Merry Christmas. We pray that you will be able to enjoy this Christmas surrounded by loved ones. We delight in our growing congregation and in the joy we witness on Sunday morning.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR STEWARDSHIP BOARD

Our 300th anniversary reminds us of our long tradition of working together to shine Christ's light into the world. Thank you to our church family for sharing so generously your talents and treasures. Let us continue to be the little church with a big heart. "God bless us, every one."

A MESSAGE FROM OUR FACILITIES BOARD

We have accomplished many repairs and improvements to our Church Facilities this year. We have a new sidewalk to the Nutfield doors; a new cleaning company was selected; we added Handicap parking spaces and cleared brush from along the playground fence; and we have transitioned to LED bulbs throughout. Thank you to everyone who helped!

A MESSAGE FROM OUR COUNCIL

We do the work of Christ with your help because we are all the hands and feet of Christ. Thank you for all that you have done to support First Parish this year!

If you are curious about our efforts to preserve the 1769 Meetinghouse please call our office (603) 434-0628 to arrange a tour.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU AND YOURS!
MAY YOU BRING TONIGHT'S CHRISTMAS LOVE
WITH YOU INTO THE COMING YEAR!**