

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 15, 2019
Third Sunday of Advent



Share how you celebrate JOY

Sing to the Lord, for God has done glorious things;
let this be known to all the world.
Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion,
for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.

Isaiah 12:5-6

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

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

One: Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth.

Many: Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

One: In the beginning was the Word— spoken and breathed, a promise made and kept.

Many: Persevere in hope, keep the faith—God's promise is true!

(The first candle – the candle of HOPE – is lit.)

One: The Word was in the beginning, and through him all things come into being.

Many: Eternal and near at hand, Already and not-yet, God's promise is the peace in our hearts and the foundation of all life.

(The second candle – the candle of PEACE – is lit.)

One: Keep going! Persevere in joy, giving voice to God's presence yet again.

(The third candle – the candle of JOY – is lit.)

*HYMN #116 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

(Having sung the first four verses the last two weeks, we now sing **vss 5, 6**)

*INVOCATION (in unison)

God of anticipation, renew in us today the gifts of your Holy Spirit: hope, peace and joy. We have come together, eager for good news. We are here ready to do the work you call us to do in the world. Equip us in this time of worship to draw deeply from the waters of salvation. Fill us with your love that we may pass it on. Amen.

***SONG OF PRAISE** “Gloria in excelsis Deo”

Special Music: Come, Emmanuel, Come

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, followed by THE LORD’S PRAYER

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.;

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WE HEAR GOD'S WORD FOR US

NEW TESTAMENT: Luke 1: 5-25

Narrator: ⁵ *To understand the life of Jesus, I must first give you some background history, events that occurred when Herod ruled Judea for the Roman Empire. Zacharias was serving as a priest in the temple in Jerusalem those days as his fathers had before him. He was a member of the priestly division of Abijah (a grandson of Aaron who innovated temple practices), and his wife, Elizabeth, was of the priestly lineage of Aaron, Moses' brother.* ⁶ They were good and just people in God's sight, walking with integrity in the Lord's ways and laws. ⁷ Yet they had this sadness. Due to Elizabeth's infertility, they were childless, and at this time, they were both quite old—*well past normal childbearing years.* ⁸ One day Zacharias was chosen to perform his priestly duties in God's presence, according to the temple's normal schedule and routine. ⁹ He had been selected from all the priests by the customary procedure of casting lots *for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity* to enter the sacred precincts of the temple. There he burned sweet incense, ¹⁰ while outside a large crowd of people prayed. ¹¹ *Suddenly Zacharias realized he was not alone:* a messenger of the Lord was there with him. The messenger stood just to the right of the altar of incense. ¹² Zacharias was shocked and afraid, ¹³ but the messenger reassured him.

Messenger: ...

Narrator: Zacharias is a priest working in the temple, but priests don't normally hear from God. Those who hear from God are called prophets, not priests. One becomes a priest by being born in a priestly family line. Prophets, on the other hand, arise unpredictably and have no special credentials except the message they carry. So Zacharias has no reason to believe his duties will be interrupted in this way. Often in the biblical story, when people receive a message from God—after getting over the initial shock—they start asking questions. They push back; they doubt.

Messenger: ...

Zacharias: ¹⁸ How can I be sure of what you're telling me? I am an old man, and my wife is far past the normal age for women to bear children. *This is hard to believe!*

Messenger:...

Narrator: ²¹ Meanwhile the crowd at the temple wondered why Zacharias hadn't come out of the sanctuary yet. It wasn't normal for the priest to be delayed so long. ²² When at last he came out, *he* was making signs with his hands to give the blessing, but he couldn't speak. They realized he had seen some sort of vision.

²³ When his time on duty at the temple came to an end, he went back home to his wife. ²⁴ Shortly after his return, Elizabeth became pregnant. She avoided public contact for the next five months.

Elizabeth: ²⁵ I have lived with the disgrace of being barren for all these years. Now God has looked on me with favor. When I go out in public *with my baby*, I will not be disgraced any longer.

SERMON: Drawn to Joy

WE RESPOND WITH PRAYER

SHARING our JOYS AND CONCERNS followed by
PASTORAL PRAYER

HYMN #103 Watcher, Tell Us of the Night

WE RESPOND WITH OUR FINANCIAL GIFTS

OFFERTORY INVITATION

Whether we face plenty or hunger, abundance or want, we are indebted to God for all we have and all we are. In these moments of thankfulness, we remember how God has blessed us. Let us give with joy because we trust the God of our salvation.

OFFERTORY MUSIC

***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.
Amen.**

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

We rejoice, O God of peace, in the privilege of giving without fear. You come to us daily with blessings too numerous to count. You are the Holy One whose presence relieves our anxieties, feeds our hungers, and stirs our compassion. Through our offerings, we express our gratitude. Thank you for accepting all we offer. Amen.

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

***HYMN #117 Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates**

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE (Please remain seated during the Postlude)

**Indicates all that are able may stand.*

MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH - Members of the Congregation

DEACON - Brian Williams

LAY READERS - Anne Engelhardt

**USHERS - Stanley Gorgol, Holly Gorgol, Tom Cooper,
Michael Bryan**

GREETER - Shirley Dickason

SENIOR PASTOR AND TEACHER - The Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof

CHOIR DIRECTOR/ ORGANIST - Joan Virga

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DIRECTOR - Christine Lehoullier

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT - Michelle Guerrin

General Announcements December 15, 2019

Christmas Caroling at 9:45 every Sunday in Advent. Come sing with us!

Meetinghouse Ornaments handmade by local potter Mike Gibbons will be available from the Friends after Worship service today. Generously donated by Mike, the supply of ornaments is limited, but the full \$10 cost for each one goes to the historic preservation and rehab fund.

A message from the Financial Secretary- If you want contributions to be included in your tax returns for 2019, they must be at the church on or before January 5, 2019 and should be dated December 31, 2019. The books will be closed Monday, January 6, 2019. Thank you, Pat Crowell, Financial Secretary

Christmas Pageant final rehearsal is December 22nd 12-1:30 followed by a Happy Birthday Jesus celebration. Pageant participants- please arrive by 3:30 on the 24th.

January Adult Faith Formation: We meet Tuesday evening from 6:30-8pm. We are excited to announce that we will be reading Anne Robertson's 1st volume of her new series, "Exploring Justice: The Ten Commandments." Signup for class and get more information in back of Currier. Or tell Pastor Deborah or Christine that you are interested.

Used Clothing Drop-Off Shed is ready for donations! Items accepted; Clothing, shoes, belts, purses, blankets, sheets,

pillowcases, curtains and stuffed animals. Reduce waste in landfills, the items are used worldwide and we receive funding based on the weight. These donations can also be used by us when we have a specific need as identified by R.E.A.C.H. or Missions. Please take a flyer.

Brunching for Dollars - December– Sunday, 10am-3pm! East Derry Tavern will donate 10% back to First Parish Church. Please take a flyer and head over for Brunch!

Brainstorming for Pastor's Sabbatical: Pastor Deborah has delayed her sabbatical until 2021 in order to work with members of the congregation in crafting a proposal that will benefit both the pastor and the congregation. We will be writing a Lilly Foundation grant proposal for a significant amount of money (up to \$50k; \$15k for the church and \$35k for the pastor's expenses). "What will make your heart sing?" is the lead question of the grant. What kind of programs might the church participate in during Pastor Deborah's absence that would renew and rejuvenate the church? We invite you to participate in a brainstorming session on January 12th after church. Schedule: brainstorm in January; compile and distill our ideas in February and write in March.

Our Amazon account: We experienced an unfortunate miscommunication and needed to remove the link. We will share updates to this as we receive them. In the meantime, we are still part of the Amazon Smile program, please select to support First Parish Congregational Church!

Mark your calendars!

December 17th ~ 7:00 Blue Christmas

December 18th ~ 12:30 K.I.T.

December 22nd ~ 12:00 Pageant Final Dress Rehearsal
followed by Happy Birthday Jesus celebration

December 24th ~ 4:00pm– Christmas Pageant and 7:00pm–
Candlelight, Choir, Lessons & Carols

December 26th ~ Newsletter deadline

Purchase or reload your  gift cards after church.

**You can help the church budget by when you shop at
Hannafords.**

A percentage of the dollars that you **already** spend at
Hannafords can help the church.

Checks can also be dropped off at the church during office
hours. Thank you!

First Parish Congregational Church IN OUR PRAYERS – December 15, 2019

PRAYERS OF JOY

The Derry Fire Department for their diligence in visiting our
Church numerous times to update their maps and records
and Facilities for continued efforts to keep our Church safe.

Advent Talk 'n Walk on the Labyrinth – so peaceful.

Advent Workshop – what a joy!

Sugar Plum Fair – What a joy when a community comes
together on a beloved project!

Visit from the Aghadowey Rural Kinship

Brittany (Pastor Deborah's daughter) & Jeremy welcomed
Harlan Nathaniel, at 6:54pm on Oct. 21!

Thank you, Bill Smallwood of W.J. Smallwood Landscaping!
Bricks look great!

Thank you, Paper Angels! We are good for now!

Gratitude to people who are catching up with their pledges!
Kindness Rocks – with gratitude to Christine Lehoullier, our
kindness ambassador

PRAYERS OF HEALTH and HEALING

Rev. Renee Rouse on the death of her son, Tre.

Selma Gould and Ken's children who are grieving the death
of Ken on November 23.

Pauline Gorgol, Stan Gorgol's mother, for her healing after a
car accident

Jorge Alpizar, fiancé of Liz's daughter Rebekah is
undergoing treatment for prostate and bladder cancers.

Cole Ferry, Cindy Pingree's nephew, was in a car accident
The family of Bill VenderWoude, who passed away after a
long struggle with cancer

Prayers for Paula Robinson and family

Alyssa Mulhern and her family, she is a friend of Diane
Breedon, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and surgery
is planned in a month.

Marge Palmer's sister Ruth in Wisconsin is in need of our
prayers.

Jo Worthen's sister Barb continues to struggle with cancer.

Marge Palmer's Brother in law, Steve, passed away. Prayers
for Nancy and the family.

Jo Worthen's co-worker Cindy lost her sister to cancer,
leaving her husband and a 9 year son

Family and friends of Alice Coller who passed away on
October 8th in West Lafayette, Indiana.

Martha, close friend of Pat and Dick Plouff, being treated for recurring leukemia.

Lynn Dinan, continued prayers for health and healing

Connie Cox's sister, Suzie: her husband Kent passed away after a long illness.

Randy Lariviere and his wife Dee - Medical Concerns
(Randy)

Jessie Brooks, friend of Tim Beers, for strength

Tommie Pitts – medical concerns

SPECIAL ONGOING PRAYERS

Andrea Cooper health & strength

Aghadowey Rural Kinship

Southern NH Family Promise

Avis Hanson, Marjorie Palmer's cousin's wife, battling, and in treatment for, cancer

Dangamvura – UCCZ – Zimbabwe African Church

Jay Bingel – Health & strength

Tim Beers – Health & strength

Bob Dinan, father of Karen & Bob Wilson's friend Kristen Wilson, ongoing struggle with cancer

Brian Krantz and ALL of the Wildland Firefighters this fire season

Victims of floods and fires and violence; Refugees and their families

People of color and members of the LGBTQ+ community

Friends of the Meetinghouse Board of Directors

Our Covenant Partner: Pastoral Counseling Services, Inc.