

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 22, 2019
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

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

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.)

Many: **We trust the good news—God's promise is true!**

One: Trust in God! Wait with faith, giving voice to Christ's love for all.

(The fourth candle – the candle of LOVE – is lit.)

*HYMN #116 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (Each week of Advent we have sung two verses. This morning let us sing joyfully vss 1, 7)

*** INVOCATION (in unison)**

**We bring our spiritual hungers to this place, O God,
hoping to be fed. We bring our weariness,
expecting to find rest for our souls. We bring our
dullness, asking that we might be alerted to those
things that you consider important. We come
because we want the scattered fragments of our
lives to come together in a meaningful wholeness.
You have promised to be with us. Reveal yourself to
us here, we pray in the name of One who came to
share our common lot. Amen.**

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

Special Music: Carol of the Bells, Chimes

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

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

NEW TESTAMENT: Luke 1:57-80

⁵⁷ Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

⁵⁹ On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father.

⁶⁰ But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." ⁶¹ They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." ⁶² Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. ⁶³ He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed.

⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵ Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ All who heard them pondered them and said, “What then will this child become?” For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

⁶⁷ Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

⁶⁸ “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a mighty savior in the house of his servant David,

⁷⁰ as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

⁷¹ that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

⁷² Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant,

⁷³ the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us ⁷⁴ that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.

⁷⁸ By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,

⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

⁸⁰ The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

SERMON: Sing a New Song!

WE RESPOND WITH PRAYER

JOYS AND CONCERNS followed by PASTORAL PRAYER

HYMN #115 The Baptist Shouts on Jordan's Shore

WE RESPOND WITH OUR FINANCIAL GIFTS

OFFERTORY INVITATION

God gives us responsibilities in the church and the world to carry good news, to build and not destroy, to feed the hungry and house the homeless, to be faithful in all things. Our offerings are one sign of faithfulness and obedience.

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**

**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 are already yours. Thank you for all the ways you have provided for us. Amen.

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

*HYMN #107 Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE (Please remain seated during the Postlude)

**Indicates all that are able may stand.*

MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH- Members of the Congregation

DEACON- Joanne Worthen

LAY READERS- Beth Hunter

USHERS- Shirley Dickason, Jack Martin, Michael Bryan

GREETER- Diane Dunn

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 22, 2019

Peace Light: This morning we welcome the Boy Scouts bringing the Peace Light from the Church of the Nativity, in Bethlehem, Israel. There is an oil lamp that's been burning continuously for centuries. Each year a child from Austria travels to Bethlehem in the Middle East to light a flame from the one that burns in the Church of the Nativity. This flame is then flown to Austria where it is distributed to Scout delegations from across Europe and the world. The Peace Light is taken by Scouts back to their home countries to share with others.

The Christmas Pageant final rehearsal is today after the Worship Service followed by a Happy Birthday Jesus celebration. On the 24th, Pageant participants are requested to arrive by 3:30.

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, 2020 and should be dated December 31, 2019. The books will be closed Monday, January 6, 2020. Thank you, Pat Crowell, Financial Secretary

The Annual Report deadline is Monday, January 6, 2020. Please send your reports to the office. They will be accepted early!

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." Books are on the way but it's not too late to sign up. See Christine or Pastor Deborah.

Used Clothing Drop-Off Shed is ready for donations! Items accepted; Clothing, shoes, belts, purses, blankets, sheets, pillowcases, curtains and stuffed animals. Please take a flyer in the lobby.

Food Pantry – During end of the year cleaning, please take a look in your pantry, do you have unexpired items, that you haven't enjoyed? Please drop off at the church and they will be delivered to those in need.

Christmas Cards- We have received some lovely cards from members and friends, take a look on our new bulletin board! Also, please send Michelle (or leave in the office) a flyer for local events to be posted.

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

December 25th ~ Merry Christmas! Office will be Closed.

December 26th ~ Newsletter submissions due! Please send your articles to officemgr@fpc-ucc.org.

December 27th ~ Spaghetti Supper. Volunteers are always welcome! Please contact Kevin Gordon or Bill Mann to assist with set up, service or clean up. Children are welcome to volunteer when accompanied with a care giver and it's a fantastic way for family holiday fun to continue!

Purchase or reload your  gift cards after church. A percentage of the dollars that you **already** spend at Hannafords can help the church. Checks can also be dropped off during office hours. Thank you!

First Parish Congregational Church IN OUR PRAYERS – December 22, 2019

PRAYERS OF JOY

K.I.T. enjoyed listening to Marge Palmer telling Christmas stories. It was wonderful!

Santa Breakfast was a huge success. Thank you everyone! 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 Breeden, 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.

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

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.

Christmas' True Meaning

By Deborah Ann Belka

Let Christmas' true meaning,
rise up in you today...
may you see the real splendor
of Jesus' birth on this day.

May His beauty and grandeur,
cause your heart to sing
may the gift of His excellence
become your eternal spring.

May His majesty you behold,
with all dignity and honour
may the fullness of His truth
glorify His heavenly Father.

May the wonder of His grace,
reveal its magnificence in you
may the gratefulness you feel
be in all you say and do.

Let Christmas' true meaning,
bring your Saviour near today
may you see the need for Him
today, and every day.



Budget Updates

Finance and Council have been working to manage the 2019 budget and draft the 2020 budget. Our financial challenges continue to be significant. Our latest projections show we're likely to end 2019 with a deficit. Anything you can do to fulfill your pledges or possibly give an additional gift at Christmas time could help us end the year in a better position.

The larger concern is the status of the 2020 budget. The current draft has a \$45,000 deficit. Obviously this isn't a viable budget. The solutions won't be easy. We need your help to find the solutions that are best for our congregation.

We are offering budget information sessions after worship on January 5th and 19th. We'll provide budget overviews and as much detail as anyone wants. We hope you'll join us to better understand the issues we're dealing with, hear the ideas we're contemplating, and offer your ideas.