

First Parish Congregational Church, United Church of Christ  
P.O. Box 114, East Derry, New Hampshire 03041  
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**January 10, 2020**



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.”*

**WE GATHER INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

CENTERING MUSIC AND LIGHTING THE CHRIST LIGHT

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: The magi came from many places, following a star.

**Many: We come to worship, and the star sheds light on our lives.**

One: The magi brought gifts to offer the Child.

**Many: We too bring gifts – ourselves, our hopes, our dreams.**

One: Shepherds and magi – the meek and the mighty – all were welcome  
in Bethlehem.

**Many: We too come to Bethlehem and then return to our homes rejoicing.**

## HYMN: We Three Kings

We three kings of Orient are Bearing gifts we traverse afar.  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, Following yonder star.

### **Refrain:**

**O star of wonder, star of night, Star with royal beauty bright,  
Westward leading, still proceeding, Guide us to thy perfect Light.**

Born a king on Bethlehem's plain, Gold I bring to crown Him again,  
King forever, ceasing never Over us all to reign.

Frankincense to offer have I. Incense owns a Deity nigh.  
Prayer and praising all men raising, Worship Him, God on high.

Myrrh is mine: Its bitter perfume Breaths a life of gathering gloom.  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding dying, Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

(Sing the **Refrain** again!)

## INVOCATION (Lay Reader – join in at home.)

God of gold, we seek your glory: the richness that transforms our drabness into color, and brightens our dullness with vibrant light; your wonder and joy at the heart of all life.

God of incense, we offer you our prayer: our spoken and unspeakable longings, our questioning of truth, our searching for your mystery deep within.

God of myrrh, we cry out to you in our suffering: the pain of all our rejections and bereavements, our baffled despair at undeserved suffering, our rage at continuing injustice; and we embrace you, God-with-us, in our wealth, in our yearning, in our anger and loss. Amen.

SONG OF PRAISE: Arise, your light is come! The Spirit's call obey;  
Show forth the glory of your God which shines on you today!

## **WE SPEAK TO GOD'S YOUNGER DISCIPLES**

## 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.**

## WE HEAR GOD'S WORD FOR US

### OLD TESTAMENT: Luke 3:1-22 The Message Translation

1-6 In the fifteenth year of the rule of Caesar Tiberius—it was while Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea; Herod, ruler of Galilee; his brother Philip, ruler of Iturea and Trachonitis; Lysanias, ruler of Abilene; during the Chief-Priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—John, Zachariah's son, out in the desert at the time, received a message from God. He went all through the country around the Jordan River preaching a baptism of life-change leading to forgiveness of sins, as described in the words of Isaiah the prophet:

Thunder in the desert!

*“Prepare God's arrival! Make the road smooth and straight! Every ditch will be filled in, every bump smoothed out, The detours straightened out, All the ruts paved over. Everyone will be there to see The parade of God's salvation.”*

7-9 When crowds of people came out for baptism because it was the popular thing to do, John exploded: “Brood of snakes! What do you think you're doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to deflect God's judgment? It's your *life* that must change, not your skin. And don't think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as 'father.' Being a child of Abraham is neither here nor there—children of Abraham are a dime a dozen. God can make children from stones if he wants. What counts is your life. Is it green and blossoming? Because if it's deadwood, it goes on the fire.”

10 The crowd asked him, “Then what are we supposed to do?”

11 “If you have two coats, give one away,” he said. “Do the same with your food.”

12 Tax men also came to be baptized and said, “Teacher, what should we do?”

13 He told them, “No more extortion—collect only what is required by law.”

14 Soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?”

He told them, “No shakedowns, no blackmail—and be content with your rations.”

15 The interest of the people by now was building. They were all beginning to wonder, “Could this John be the Messiah?”

16-17 But John intervened: “I'm baptizing you here in the river. The main character in this drama, to whom I'm a mere stagehand, will ignite the kingdom life, a fire, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He's going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He'll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false he'll put out with the trash to be burned.”

18-20 There was a lot more of this—words that gave strength to the people, words that put heart in them. The Message! But Herod, the ruler, stung by John's rebuke in the matter of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, capped his long string of evil deeds with this outrage: He put John in jail.

21-22 After all the people were baptized, Jesus was baptized. As he was praying, the sky opened up and the Holy Spirit, like a dove descending, came down on him. And along with the Spirit, a voice: "You are my Son, chosen and marked by my love, pride of my life."

**SERMON:** "Open Up the Sky with Praying"

HYMN # 261 Let Every Christian Pray

Let every Christian pray, this day and every day,  
Come, Holy Spirit, Come! Was not the church we love  
Commissioned from above? Come, Holy Spirit, come!

The Spirit brought to birth the church of Christ on earth,  
To seek and save the lost. God never has withdrawn,  
Since that tremendous dawn, the gifts of Pentecost.

### **WE RESPOND WITH OUR FINANCIAL GIFTS**

OFFERTORY INVITATION: (Lay Reader)

We are stewards of God's grace, entrusted with the unsearchable riches of Christ, channels through which the wisdom of God is offered to the world. Our prosperity gives us the marvelous opportunity to share. What treasures will we offer today to honor Christ? What costly offerings will be given with joy and worshipful devotion?

OFFERTORY MUSIC

\*DOXOLOGY

When morning gilds the skies, my heart awaking cries,  
May Jesus Christ be praised!  
Alike at work and prayer, one purpose I declare:  
May Jesus Christ be praised!

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (Pastor Deborah)

For the joy of giving, we offer the products of our labor for the ministry of this church, in outreach to the world. With concern for those who are poor, oppressed, and needy, we rededicate ourselves as helpers and advocates. Out of devotion to Christ, we commit our best, that the church may bear witness among the principalities and powers of this world. Help us all, O God, to be faithful stewards. Amen.

### **WE RESPOND WITH PRAYER**

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS and PASTORAL PRAYERS

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

HYMN # 154 "Go Tell It on the Mountain"

**Refrain:** Go tell it on the mountain, over the hill and everywhere.  
Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,  
Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. **Refrain**

Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,  
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. **Refrain**

### **BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE "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.*

MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH - Members of the Congregation

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

LAY READER –

GREETERS – Jack Martin, Sue Lindemann

CHOIR DIRECTOR/ ORGANIST - Joan Virga

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DIRECTOR - Christine Lehoullier

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT - Michelle Guerrin

Visit our Facebook page or our website for recent videos of services and moments of Christian Faith Formation and inspiration.

### **IN OUR PRAYERS – JANUARY 10, 2020**

#### **PRAYERS OF JOY**

Gratitude for the people who put themselves in harm's way for our country's safety.

Congratulations to the Pingree family: Welcome to Rory Jean, born January 4!

Congratulations to Kayla and Christopher, and to Grandma Cindy and Grandpa Mark!

Happy New Year! Happy Epiphany!

Dr. Kennedy Gondongwe is recuperating nicely from Covid.

Successful COVID-19 Vaccine being distributed.

Family Promise is an amazing mission and resource to our community! Pastor

Deborah's trunk was FULL! Thank you to everyone who gave.

Drive-in Christmas Eve was wonderful!

Paul Lindemann's work on the prerecorded Christmas Eve service.

Grateful for Spaghetti Supper Angels

Progress on the connector and elevator!

Mission giving does so much good!

So many people participated in the Angel Tree Project. Santa is alive and well!

Our first "drive-in" church was a lot of fun! Thank you everyone who made it possible!

Council is grateful for all of the positive things that are happening despite Covid!

Gratitude texting groups: three groups uphold one another in prayer and gratitude  
Labyrinth finger walks and growing appreciation in this ancient spiritual practice.

### **PRAYERS OF CONSOLATION**

Prayers for Trudie Bergeron, whose brother died; for the family and friends of Avis Hanson, who died recently (the wife of Marge Palmer's cousin); Rosemary, friend of Marge Palmer, died 11.28.20; Family and friends of Colleen Robbins, who died on 11.7.20 (relative of the Guerrin Family); Family of Molly Rockwell, who died in a car accident (Chris Cox was her Scout Leader and friend of the Robinson Family); Suzanne MacGibbon on the death of her 62-yr-old son Kevin who died 11.2.20; Families of the over 360,000 deaths in the US due to COVID 19.

### **PRAYERS OF STRENGTH, HEALTH, AND HEALING**

Wendy William's health concerns.

Kathleen McFadden (friend of Trudie Bergeron) recently diagnosed with cancer on her lung will have surgery after Thanksgiving.

Beth and her daughter Allison - both have Covid - friends of Nancy Murdock Teachers and all school personnel; Medical Professionals of all levels and in all locations; pastors; world and local leaders

Edie Cefaly (Pat Cefaly's) sister and her family: Edie is experiencing memory loss.

John Stewart, long-time member and friend of First Parish. Cards would be welcome:

1 Oak St.; Derry 03038

Lindsay Huber recovering at Brigham Health and Rehab, 77 High St, Newburyport, MA 01950 but is facing serious health issues. Cards of encouragement needed.

Dillingham Family (friends of Diana Sweeney) who lost their home in Oregon and at the same time a joy that they and pets are all safe

McKeil Family (friends of Diana Sweeney) for comfort and healing in the coming days due to a challenging diagnosis.

Trina & Terrance Brand's nephew Nathan and his family (wife, young daughter, parents, and sister) At 32, he has been diagnosed with glioblastoma (brain cancer) and has 6

**For those with cancer:** Verna Elwell has stage 1 lung cancer (along with some other health concerns) cards can be sent to: 3 Hood Rd, #507; Derry;

Kate, Jesse's friend is battling terminal cancer; Jay, Marjorie Palmer's friend, a 41-yr old father of 3 young children who has been recently diagnosed with multiple cancers and given possibly a year to live. Martha, close friend of Pat and Dick Plouff, recurring leukemia; Janice Paradzick; Bob Dinan (friend of the Wilson's), Danny with stage 4 cancer, brother of Mary Jane (friend of Cobban family)

### **SPECIAL ONGOING PRAYERS**

Family Promise in their new expanded facility

Tom and Andrea Cooper - health & strength

For the families of those who are hospitalized and are unable to visit them.

For teachers, staff, & students the uncertainty of going back to school.

For those who choose hate and those who choose violence  
For people who are losing their livelihood due to this pandemic  
Parkland Hospital Personnel, and All Nurses and Doctors, Hospice workers and  
employees of Nursing Homes and Extended care facilities  
First Responders; National Guard Active Military; Aghadowey Rural Kinship  
Our Covenant Partner: Pastoral Counseling Services, Inc.  
Southern NH Family Promise; Sonshine Soup Kitchen; Marion Gerrish; Upper Room  
Dangamvura – UCCZ – Zimbabwe African Church  
Union Theological College in Zimbabwe, as well as our friend Kennedy Gondongwe  
Everyone in Zimbabwe, a country riddled with revolution and pandemic.  
Tim Beers – Health & strength  
Bonnie Hillsgrove, friend of Tim Beers  
Brian Krantz and ALL of the Wildland Firefighters this fire season  
Victims of floods and fires and Covid and violence; Refugees and their families  
People of color and members of the LGBTQ+ community  
Friends of the Meetinghouse Board of Directors

