

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

**December 20, 2020 – 10:00am Virtual Service**  
**Advent 4 – LOVE**



## **CHRISTMAS CAROLING**

### **As With Gladness**

As with gladness men of old did the guiding star behold,  
As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright,  
So, most gracious Lord, may we evermore be led to thee.

### **Friendly Beasts vs. 2**

"I," said the donkey, shaggy and brown,  
"I carried your mother uphill and down,  
I carried your mother to Bethlehem town;  
I," said the donkey, shaggy and brown.

## Silent 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.

## It Came upon a 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 all. From heaven’s all gracious King.”  
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angel’s sing.

## Joy to the World

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let ev’ry heart prepare him room.  
And heav’n and nature sing,  
And heav’n and nature sing,  
And heav’n and heav’n and nature sing.

## WE GATHER INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD

### WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### CALL TO WORSHIP and LIGHTING THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE - **LOVE**

(Lay reader is “one” and Pastor Deborah will lead “many”. Please join her.)

One: We gather around wreaths to pray into our lost hopes, so we light the candle of hope; to pray through the broken peace in our world, so we light the candle of peace; and we pray through our limited joys, so we light the candle of joy.

We affirm that our candles demonstrate how we claim the power to call this season **Advent**, that time when God’s light comes into the world and nothing can overcome it.

Many: **We now light the candle of love even when many things dim our sparkling love.**

One: The light of God’s love cannot be extinguished.

(The candle of LOVE is lit.)

God’s love will ignite its embers under great loss and sorrow this year.  
God’s love will lead us on our path to a fulfilling life.

Many: **Emmanuel, God be with us in the week to come lighting hope, peace, joy and love on the wick of our lives, so that we may shine on our world your unconditional welcome to all. Amen**

## **HYMN #110 Now Bless the God of Israel (vs. 1,2,3)**

Now bless the God of Israel, who comes in love and power,  
Who raises from the royal house deliverance in this hour.  
Through holy prophets God has sworn to free us from alarm,  
To save us from the heavy hand of all who wish us harm.  
Remembering the covenant, God rescues us from fear.  
That we might serve in holiness and peace from year to year;  
And you, my child, shall go before to preach, to prophesy,  
That all may know the tender love, the grace of God most high.  
In tender mercy, God will send the dayspring from on high,  
Our rising sun, the light of life for those who sit and sigh.  
God comes to guide our way to peace, that death shall reign no more.  
Sing praises to the Holy One! O worship and adore!

INVOCATION (Read by Lay Reader. Feel free to join in at home.)

**Loving God, we rejoice in this season of anticipation, as we remember your promises. Your light breaks into our darkness so we look forward to your winks of light breaking into our lives. Strengthen us for the journey by renewing within us the gifts of your Holy Spirit: hope, peace, joy and love. We are so very grateful for your abiding Presence in our lives. Amen.**

## **\*SONG OF PRAISE #125 Angels We Have Heard on High (Refrain)**

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

## **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**

### **NEW TESTAMENT: Luke 1: 26-45**

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup> But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, "Do not

be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” <sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” <sup>35</sup> The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup> And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God.” <sup>38</sup> Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

<sup>39</sup> In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, <sup>40</sup> where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup> and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup> And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup> For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

**SERMON:** “Blessed are You Among Women”

**HYMN #122 Come, O Long-Expected Jesus (vs. 1,2)**

Come, O long expected Jesus, born to set all people free;  
From our fears and sins release us; grant us your true liberty.  
Israel’s strength and consolation, hope to all the earth impart;  
Dear desire of every nation, enter every longing heart.

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

OFFERTORY INVITATION (lay reader)

God gives us responsibilities in the church and the world to carry God’s love to all who will listen. We are called to build up, to feed the hungry and to house the homeless. Our offerings are just one sign of our faithfulness.

OFFERTORY MUSIC: “Carol of the Bells” Chimes Choir

DOXOLOGY # 780 Praise God From Whom All Blessing Flow

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God all creatures here below,  
Praise God above you heavenly hosts Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (Led by lay reader. You may join in at home.)

**May our offerings proclaim Jesus in ways that will be received with joy. May the gifts that we offer today be multiplied and spread far and near - even as we here are blessed beyond anything we might imagine. Amen.**

### **WE RESPOND WITH PRAYER**

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS and PASTORAL PRAYER

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

**HYMN #117 Lift up your Heads you Mighty Gates (vs. 4)**

So come, my Sovereign; enter in! Let new and nobler life begin;  
Your Holy Spirit guide us on, until the glorious crown be won.

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 – Rachel Cobban  
GREETERS – Anne-Marie Merrill, Sue Lindemann  
CHOIR DIRECTOR/ ORGANIST - Joan Virga  
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DIRECTOR - Christine Lehoullier  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT - Michelle Guerrin  
AV/ TECHNICAL – Paul Lindemann

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

## ***IN OUR PRAYERS – DECEMBER 20, 2020***

### **PRAYERS OF JOY**

Successful COVID-19 Vaccine being distributed.

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

Paul Lindemann’s work on the 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!

Gio is a joy to so many people! Thanks, Michelle, for sharing him!  
Our first "drive-in" church was a lot of fun! Thank you everyone who made it possible!  
Melanie and Alan Pawl came home from the hospital!  
Council is grateful for all of the positive things that are happening despite Covid!  
Pastor Deborah had an incredibly inspirational Study Leave!  
Walking prayer circles around Meetinghouse! We ended with a service of gratitude!  
New Book Group began: Unbinding the Gospel! Books are still available.  
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 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 300k deaths in the US due to COVID 19.

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

Wendy William concerns about liver damage.

Melanie and Alan Pawl are both home from the hospital, but need prayers for recovery.

Pauline Gorgol (Stan's mother)

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 6-24 months to live. We pray for comfort and peace.

**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; Steph Lesko, friend of Pastor

Deborah's daughters: 30-yr-old mother of a 1-yr old, diagnosed with advanced breast

cancer that has spread to lymph nodes – had mastectomy - prayers for Steph and her whole family; 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**

Paula Robinson

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