

# FIRST PARISH CHURCH OF STOW & ACTON

*Unitarian Universalist*



Sunday, December 8, 2024  
*Unpacking Christmas*

**The Rev. Dr. Cynthia L.  
Landrum**  
Minister

**Meg Rivers-Wright**  
Administration, Publicity,  
Membership

**Rayla D. Baldwin-Mattson**  
Director of Religious  
Education

**Chris Hossfeld**  
Music Director

**Trevor Berens**  
Accompanist

**Justin Marble**  
Nursery Care Coordinator

**Felix Freeman**  
Tech Assistant

**Mike Silkonis**  
Sexton

**Brendon Chetwynd**  
President

**Trisha Guditz**  
Vice President

**Bill Froberg**  
Treasurer

**Johanna Pyle**  
Clerk

*First Parish is a Unitarian Universalist Association Welcoming Congregation.  
We warmly welcome gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people into our community.*

Large print orders of service and hymnals are available from an usher.  
Assisted Listening Devices are available when worship is in the Sanctuary.

FPC currently has a masks-optional policy throughout the church.  
In the Sanctuary, several back rows with accessible seating are “mask-required.”

FPC is on the web at [fpc-stow-acton.org](http://fpc-stow-acton.org) and on Facebook.

**December 8, 2024: 10:00**

**Gathering**

**Prelude**                      Improvisation on “Jesus Refulsit Omnium”                      Trevor Berens,  
One of the oldest Christmas hymns (4th century)                      piano

**Welcome and Announcements**                      Hector Constantzos,  
Sabbatical Committee

**Special Announcement**                      Southeast India Project                      Russ Hart

**Introit**                      “December Round”                      FPC Choir,  
Catherine Young                      Chris Hossfeld,  
Music Director

December dark, take your flight  
above the feathers of this night.  
We hold the spark in richest soil of dark.  
We turn to light.

**Opening Words**                      by Andrew C. Kennedy  
Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Landrum

**Chalice Lighting**

**Advent Candle Lighting**                      by Jeanyne Slettom, alt.

**\* Hymn #226**                      “People Look East”

**Centering**

**\* Covenant and Affirmation**

Love is the spirit of this church, and service its law.	From all that dwell below the skies let words of love and peace arise.
This is our great covenant: To dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another.	Let joyful songs of praise be sung. through every land, by every tongue.

**Land Acknowledgement**                      Johanna Pyle

*\* Please rise in body or in spirit*

Time for All Ages

Rayla D. Baldwin-Mattson  
Director of Religious Education

### Going Forth With the Light

Congregation sings

Our love surrounds you. Here joy has found you.  
Let hope abound freely. Go in peace!

### Joys and Sorrows

Kate Hart, Lay Minister

Joys and Sorrows is a time for the things on our hearts and minds to be heard by the gathered community. If you would like a follow-up call by a lay minister or the minister, email [caring@fpc-stow-acton.org](mailto:caring@fpc-stow-acton.org).

### Prayer or Meditation

“Holiday Season Prayer”

by Wayne B. Arnason

### \* Hymn

“I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day”

1 I heard the bells on Christ - mas Day their old fa - mil - iar car - ols play,  
2 I thought how, as the day had come, the bel - fries of all Chris - ten - dom  
3 And in de - spair I bowed my head: "There is no peace on earth," I said,  
4 Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God is not dead, nor doth God sleep;  
5 Till, ring - ing, sing - ing on its way, the world re - volved from day to day,  
1 and wild and sweet the words re - peat of peace on earth, good - will to all.  
2 had rolled a - long the un - bro - ken song of peace on earth, good - will to all.  
3 "for hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth, good - will to all."  
4 the wrong shall fail, the right pre - vail, with peace on earth, good - will to all."  
5 a voice, a chime, a chant sub - lime of peace on earth, good - will to all.

Words: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Music: *Waltham*, John Calkin

## Exploring

**Stewardship Testimonial**

Jenni Edgerton

**Plate Sharing Introduction**

Hector Constantzos, FPC Guest Table

**Sharing Our Gifts**

This month we share our weekly offering with FPC Guest Table.  
You may donate by check made out to First Parish Church,  
online at [fpc-stow-acton.org/donate](http://fpc-stow-acton.org/donate), or text (978) 310-3309, and  
find more information about that organization in this bulletin.

**Anthem**      “It’s You I Like/Love Came Down at Christmas”      FPC Choir  
Fred Rogers & Christina Rosetti      Chris Hossfeld, solo  
arr. Chris Hossfeld      Trevor Berens, piano

It’s you I like, it’s not the things you wear,  
It’s not the way you do your hair,  
But it’s you I like, the way you are right now,  
The way down deep inside you,  
Not the things that hide you,  
Not your toys – they’re just beside you.

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas;  
star and angels gave the sign.

But it’s you I like, every part of you.  
Your skin, your eyes, your feelings,  
Whether old or new.  
I hope that you’ll remember  
Even when you’re feeling blue,  
That it’s you I like, it’s you yourself, it’s you.  
It’s you I like.

Love shall be our token;  
love be yours and love be mine;  
love to God and others,  
love for plea and gift and sign.

**Sermon**

“Unpacking Christmas”

Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Landrum

## Returning

\* **Hymn #224**

“Let Christmas Come”

\* **Benediction**

\* *Please rise in body or in spirit*

## \* Closing Song

Peace be with you 'til we meet again!  
As life lays its task before you,  
keep love's banner floating o'er you.  
Peace be with you 'till we meet again.

## Postlude

“Gloucestershire Wassail”  
18th Century English carol

Trevor Berens, piano

## Greet Your Neighbor



### Thank you:

Kim Kinnear, Zoom Host  
Rick Lent, Lisa Rydin, Ushers  
Kirsten Chetwynd and Johanna Pyle, Coffee Hosts ☕♥  
Our staff and leadership

## To our visitors, thank you for coming!

We hope you find what you're looking for and that you'll come back. Here's how to keep connecting with our people and programs:

♥ Watch these pages for information about fall & winter Newcomer Coffees to meet the minister and other newcomers, and UU Journey classes to learn about UU history, spirituality, mission, and traditions.

♥ Fill out a Visitor Card in your pew or scan the QR code to complete the same form online.

♥ Subscribe to our e-newsletters and email groups

♥ Check out our website, [www.fpc-stow-acton.org](http://www.fpc-stow-acton.org)

There is so much happening at FPC! Visit our homepage and the “Church Life” tab to learn about our events & programs.



Visiting & Learning  
about FPC



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## Today at FPC

9-9:45am Pre-Service Open Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

10-11am Service, Sanctuary/Zoom

11am Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall; Collecting Donations of Vitamins, Toothpaste & Photos for the Southeast India Project



11am Elder/Memory Care Peer Support Group, Parlor

6:45-8:45pm drUUm and dance circle, Fellowship Hall

### **Elder Care/Memory Care Support Group** 11am -12:30pm, Parlor

Are you or your family approaching, dealing with, or recovering from an elder/memory care crisis? It's exhausting and draining. There are all kinds of legal, financial, and caregiving or care-finding challenges. It can be overwhelming and lonely. And that's not to mention the *grief*. Join us for the FPC Peer-to-Peer Support Group for anyone dealing with elder/memory care issues for a loved one. We're here to support each other on this difficult journey and share resources.

### **DrUUm and Dance Circle** 6:45-8:45 pm, Fellowship Hall

A collaborative venture between FPC and UCMH, the **drUUm-&-dance circle** meets on **Second Sundays** at FPC. Bring your joy and your open heart and join us for an evening of hand drumming and dancing around the "fire" circle. Facilitated by experienced



drummers/dancers Jim Flavin and Nan Rogers, we'll circle up to experiment with various types of instruments and sustained rhythm sessions and see what we create together. Let's gather in sacred and healing community to lower our stress levels, plug into the energy, and raise some good vibes!

**Feel free to arrive around 6:45 to settle into the space and partake of sound smudging in the stand-in singing bowl; drumming will start at 7:15.**

*Drummers and dancers of all abilities are welcome; please bring your own drums, and we will have a few drums and other percussion instruments available to borrow. Questions? Contact Nan at [nandancing@comcast.net](mailto:nandancing@comcast.net).*

## Religious Education News

**Today, Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>** - *Time for All Ages* followed by stations in the Community Room, including preparation for the Solstice Service and Christmas Eve.

**Friday, Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>** - Friday Friends from 6:00-8:00pm. Meet in Vestry. This week we will be working on seasonal cookie decorating. This event is open to the public.

**Sunday, Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>** - Multigenerational service. Children and youth who rehearsed will participate in the service. There will be participation opportunities even for those who weren't able to participate!

## This Week at FPC

**Cookie Swap** Tue, 12/10, 6:30pm, Community Rm. All are welcome!

- ❖ Light reception - Please bring your favorite snacks, both sweet & savory, for those coming right from work. We'll provide wine, seltzer, & hot mulled cider.
- ❖ Storytelling & sharing
- ❖ Cookie swap! To participate, **please bake 3 dozen nut-free cookies.** Otherwise, please still come and enjoy the holiday decorations & conversation, while we read poems and favorite stories.
- ❖ So that we can plan, please RSVP to Lynda Layer, [ldlayer89@comcast.net](mailto:ldlayer89@comcast.net).



-Lynda Layer, Liz Moseley, Ann Sadler, & Marcia Allison

**FPC Book Group** Wed, 12/11, 7-8pm on Zoom

Christina Henriquez's *The Great Divide*, "a powerful novel about the construction of the Panama Canal, casting light on the unsung people who lived, loved, and labored there" [amazon.com]. Email Sharon Brownfield for the Zoom link at [sharonbrownfield@gmail.com](mailto:sharonbrownfield@gmail.com).

**Guest Table** Fri, 12/13, 5:30-6:30pm, Fellowship Hall

Our free community dinner on the second Friday of each month

Doors open 5 PM ~ Dinner starts 5:30 ~ All are Welcome ~ No Charge!

Menu: TBA - Watch for it on FPC Announce. Vegetarian, gluten-free, and dairy-free options available. All meals are nut-free.

## **Next Sunday** December 15, TWO SERVICES! Sanctuary/Online/Phone

### ► 10am "Where Is the Light?" A Multigenerational Solstice Service

Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Landrum, Rayla Baldwin Mattson, Director of Religious Education, and members of the Religious Education Program will tell a Solstice story in a pageant based on *Lucia and the Light* by Phyllis Root. This special service will also feature the song "Where is the Light?" by Peter Mayer (composer of the favorite hymn "Blue Boat Home") as we all learn to find the light in our lives.

### ► 5pm "Luminous Night: A Solstice Celebration"

Music Director Chris Hossfeld conducts the FPC Choir with accompanist Trevor Berens, soprano Jessica Tunick Berens, and cellist Gary Hodges. The event will be a multi-faith service with seasonal music and will include a choral piece titled "Luminous Night of the Soul" by Ola Gjeilo, whose compositional style is often described as cinematic and evocative, with a lush, harmonious sound.



## December Plate Sharing

**FPC Guest Table** has been offering a free monthly community dinner in Fellowship Hall since November 2015. It is a sit-down meal consisting of salad, entree, and dessert. Volunteers plan, shop, set up, clean up, prepare, and serve the meal. After dinner, the leftovers are put in to-go containers and given to guests to take home. It costs about \$250 a month to put on a meal and the largest portion of that expense is food. Our primary sources of funding are the Stow Community Chest and the plate-share from this congregation. In addition to being a resource for those with food insecurity, we are also a resource for those who want a night off from planning and cooking a meal, and/or for those who typically dine alone in their homes. Guest Table is a welcoming community for ALL, and we invite you to come dine with us on the second Friday of every month.



### Every Week at FPC

**Tues. 10AM**

**Coffee and Chat** at the Town Center Park Gazebo



**Wed. 6:40PM**

**Meditation** in Fellowship Hall & Online



**Thurs. 5PM**

**Peace Vigil** on the Town Common in front of FPC



**Thurs. 7:15 PM**

**Choir Rehearsal** in the Community Room - Join the choir! [music@fpc-stow-acton.org](mailto:music@fpc-stow-acton.org)

**Fri. 1PM**

**Bridge Playing** in the Community Room





**ONLINE SUPPLEMENT PAGE:**

**Information for folks joining us online**

1. Closed captioning is available for FPC's online services. If you don't see captions on your screen, you can use the button at the bottom of your screen to request that the host turn them on.
2. Today's Zoom Host: Kim Kinnear
3. Hymn lyrics will be in a slide presentation today.



**Sharing Our Gifts**

If you are mailing a pledge or donation, here is the information:

Pledges:

Attn: Pledge Secretary

PO Box 215

Stow, MA 01775

Donations:

Attn: Treasurer

353 Great Rd.

Stow, MA 01775