

**The First Congregational Church
of Rockport, UCC
12 School Street ~ Rockport, MA
December 14, 2025
Third Sunday of Advent ~ Joy
Poinsettia Sunday**



The First Congregational Church of Rockport, “The Old Sloop,” is an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ. Whoever you are and wherever you are on your journey of faith, you are welcome here for an hour or a lifetime.

About Us

Our Covenant

We, the members of this congregation welcome you with gladness into our lives. We renew our covenant of faith and offer you our support, encouragement and love to the end that all of us may grow in the boundless mercy of God. By loving and being loved, forgiving and being forgiven, serving and being served, let us go forward together with courage as Christ's disciples, glorifying God by being fully alive.

Our Open and Affirming Statement

We, the members of The First Congregational Church of Rockport are called upon to love each other as God loves us, freely and unconditionally. Therefore, we covenant to become an Open and Affirming congregation, welcoming persons of every age, ability, gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, nationality, ethnicity and immigration status into full membership and participation in our community life and ministry. We embrace and support those who experience rejection and exile from spiritual community and commit ourselves to the struggle against injustice.

Serving the Church

The Congregation, Ministers
The Rev. Derek van Gulden, Pastor
Dr. Philip Swanson, Music Director
Kristina Martin, Associate Music Director
Kaitlyn Welch, Director of Faith Formation
Annette Mackin, Office Manager
Phil Bynarowicz, Church Sexton
Daniel Chase, Tech. Person
Gillian Hurst, Artist in Residence

Contact information

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12 School St. Rockport, MA 01966
Office Hours- W, T, F 9-2
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oldsloop.org



Welcome to our Sanctuary! Hearing devices are on a rack by the main entrance, cushions are available in the last pew. Masks are optional and are available, as is hand sanitizer. * An asterisk in the program indicates to stand if able. Please be at home and comfortable here!

***We acknowledge that the land we live on and the water that surrounds us,
were inhabited by the Pawtucket peoples, members of the
Wabanaki Confederacy.***

Order of Worship

We Gather as God's People

Prelude Rorate Caeli (Drop Down Ye Heavens: Isaiah 48:8)
J. Demessieux

Introit

Welcome Rev. Derek

Hymn* #132 Joy To the World

Call to Worship

One: May the Sovereign of All,

All: the Child of Joy,

One: the Spirit of Resistance to Injustice,

All: be with us now as we gather together.

Mission Moment Outreach Jay Reed

Lighting the Advent candle of Joy

Leader: We often hear Jesus referred to as the “Son of God” and the “Son of Man.” But this carol points out his identity over and over as the “Son of Mary.” This equally powerful description points to his being reared by a woman who, upon hearing she would bear a child, said “yes” to one of the most difficult and precarious situations she could face. And then she sings with joy a song of justice for the ages. She goes on to guide and help form this child who would tend to the suffering ones.

Reader 1: We light this candle of Joy for those who need it most.

Reader 2: For all whose despair feels endless.

Reader 1: For all who find little joy in daily living.

Reader 2: For all whose disappointment runs deep.

Reader 1: Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this: “How can we proclaim a deep joy “in spite of” hardship in our time?”

Reader 2: What child IS this? This, this, is the Son of Blessed Mary who reigns with joy forever.

Prayer of Invocation

Liz Rice Smith

Here, at the nativity of your birth, give us the courage to face this moment with an uncanny joy. Open us to new understandings of the unfolding story of your presence among us. Show us how to praise you even when songs and carols feel empty. We pray in the name of the Child, the One Who Uplifts our hearts and lives. Amen.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

Great Redeemer, too often we allow the idea of absolute happiness to block the existence of joy from our daily lives. Our hopes are crushed under the weight of the world’s sorrows, and our peace is disturbed by the agonies of an interconnected existence. We race toward solutions without pausing to meditate on the greater good. We lay bare the sorrows we carry without acknowledging the small delights that make the fight against injustice worthwhile. Relieve us of the pain we wear as a badge of honor, ignoring your love, even as it surrounds us. Amen

Words of Grace

Our loving God does not spare us from pain, as empathy is born from suffering; but neither does God remove joy from our lives as a punishment for our indiscretions. We are bound together with a sacred braid of hope, peace, and joy designed to hold fast against the greatest

adversities. In faith, no anguish can take hold completely; no sorrow completely outweigh the possibility of joy. Praise be to God!

Passing the Peace

Song

We Listen for God's Word

Scripture Luke 1:26-56

Liz Rice Smith

Sermon "The Babe, the Son of Mary!"

Rev. Derek

Choral Anthem Good Christian Friends Rejoice (In Dulci Jubilo) 14th century tune

Prayers of the People

The Lord's Prayer (The New Zealand Book of Common Prayer)

Eternal Spirit Earth-Maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all. Loving God, in whom is heaven. The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the earth! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

Response #769 Hear Our Prayer

We Respond to God's Word

Invitation to Generosity

Offertory Solo : He Is Like a Refiner's Fire (from The Messiah)
Soloist Gillian Hurst G. F. Handel

Doxology

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication

We Take God's Light into the World

Hymn* 106 My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise

Benediction Rev. Derek

Postlude La Rejouissance (from Royal Fireworks Music)
G. F Handel/arr. J. Scott

All welcome to coffee hour hosted by the Membership Committee.

Today's Worship Service Helpers

Ushers Donna Schwenk and Liz Rice Smith

Liturgist Liz Rice Smith

White Sock Tree!

*Imagine what it would feel like if your feet were wet and cold. That's the reality too many of our Cape Ann neighbors face. Clean white socks are like a gift from heaven for them. Goal is 150 pairs donated. I can provide shopping service if that is convenient for you. Thanks, **Ruth Janet Taylor***

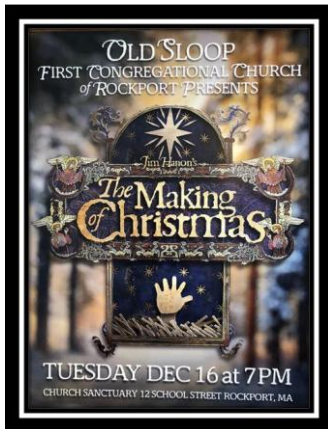


Outreach Announcements from Jay Reed

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our

lower-income retirees. The Christmas Fund is one of the UCC's special mission offerings

Also, Diapers Needed for the Open Door Please donate any size diapers including adult in our collection box in the 12 School St. Lobby.



“The Making of Christmas” Dec. 16 at 7pm In Fellowship Hall “

Movie scenes from Rockport!! A thoughtful artistic meditation on the nature of Christ's birth, Featuring Rockport's Christmas Pageant and The Old Sloop (some personal interviews) Tickets at Old Sloop Presents \$10 (youth \$5)

Dec. 20, 2:00 pm Rockport Legion Band Concert
in our Sanctuary, Town Christmas **Pageant 5:00pm**
followed by **Ham and Bean Supper** in Fellowship Hall



Dec. 21, Sunday service with special music 10 am
and **Blue Christmas Service** in the Morgan Room 7:00pm

Dec. 24, Christmas Eve 2 services: 4pm Intergenerational Service and 8pm Candlelight Service - with special music starting at 7:45

The Nominating Committee is still looking for people to serve on the Diaconate, Membership, and Flower committees beginning in January 2026. Giving your time and talent is an important form of stewardship upon which the Church relies. If interested, please send an email to nomcom@oldsloop.org or reach out to any one of the members of the Nominating Committee, who are Geof Lyon, Lucy Fales Evans, Barbara Reed, Wendy Woodbury, Katie Welch, Susan Himml, and Laurie McKenna. Thank you.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS Dec. 14-21, 2025

Sunday, Dec. 14 10:00 am Worship Service, Third Sunday of Advent
 Poinsettia Sunday
 10:15 Old Sloop Youth Sunday School
 Coffee Hour hosted by the Membership Committee
 2:00 pm AA Women's Group

Monday, Dec. 15 Office Closed

Tuesday, Dec. 16 Office Closed
 11:00 am Tai Chi (Fellowship Hall)
 7:00 pm Al-Anon (Morgan Room)
 7:00 pm Movie **The Making of Christmas** in Fellowship Hall
 Tickets \$10 at www.oldsloopresents.org

Wednesday, Dec. 17 Church Office -Open 9am-2pm
 9:15 am Yoga (Fellowship Hall)
 3:00 pm Storytelling Zoom
 5:00 pm Bible Study Zoom

Thursday, Dec. 18 Church Office Open 9am to 2pm
 9:30 am Book Group (Morgan Rm)
 4:00 – 5:30 pm Youth Group

Friday, Dec. 19 Church Office Open 9am to 2pm
 4:00 pm Prayer service on Zoom
 4:30-6 pm Kids Club

Saturday, Dec. 20
 8:30 am AA meeting (Fellowship Hall)
 2:00 pm Rockport Legion Band Concert (Sanctuary)
 5:00 pm Rockport Christmas Pageant
 Following the Pageant Ham and Bean Supper (Fellowship Hall)

Sunday, Dec. 21 10:00 am Worship Service, Fourth Sunday in Advent
 10:15 am Old Sloop Youth Sunday School
 December Birthdays Coffee Hour hosted by the Old Sloop Fleet
 2:00 pm AA Women's Group
 7:00 Blue Christmas Service (Morgan Room)
 7:00 pm Cabinet meets online