

**The First Congregational Church
of Rockport, UCC
12 School Street ~ Rockport, MA
December 28, 2025
First Sunday following Christmas**



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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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

Pre Lude

Welcome

Rev. Derek

Hymn* #141 The First Noel (red Pilgrim Hymnal)

Call to Worship

One: May the Sovereign of All,

All: the Child of Love

One: the Spirit of Resistance to Injustice,

All: be with us now as we gather together.

Mission Moment

Outreach

Jay Reed

Prayer of Invocation

Lucy Fales Evans

Here, at the nativity of your birth, give us the courage to face this moment with a steadfast love that casts out fear. Open us to new understandings of the unfolding story of your presence among us. Show us how to be with and for one another in ways that add to the flourishing of all creation. We pray in the name of the Child, the Love Enthroned in our hearts and lives. Amen.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

Righteous One, you make all things new, and yet, we often cling to those things, actions, and attitudes that do not serve your purposes.

We refuse to confront ourselves and examine our feelings and reasoning out of fear. We may be more concerned with being wrong and needing to change than being faithful to your way and confident of your grace. Meet us in our fears with the assurance that you go with us and welcome us when we turn back to the path you have laid.. Transform us, renew us, and redeem us for your glory and in your love. Amen.

Words of Grace

Precious and beloved creation of God, you have been made for God's companionship. The One who will never leave you nor forsake you is faithful to forgive, revive, and empower you. Receive the grace that God gives and the opportunity to live into the person that the Holy One has created you to be and the world needs.

Passing the Peace

Hymn # 129 It Came Upon a Midnight Clear.

Hymn #120 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

We Listen for God's Word

Scripture Luke 2:21-36

Lucy Fales Evans

Homoly

Rev. Derek

Prayers of the People

The Lord's Prayer Traditional

Response #769 Hear Our Prayer

We Respond to God's Word

Invitation to Generosity *Hymn # 128 In the Bleak Midwinter*

Doxology

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication

We Take God's Light into the World

Hymn #130 Joy to the World! the Lord is Come

Benediction

Rev. Derek

Postlude

Today's Worship Service Helpers

Ushers Amy Seabrook, Celene Lyon

Liturgist Lucy Fales Evans

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***



The Christmas Fund

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

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



