

**The First Congregational Church  
of Rockport, UCC  
12 School Street ~ Rockport, MA**



**December 7, 2025  
Advent Sunday of Peace**

***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

office@oldsloop.org  
12 School St. Rockport, MA 01966  
Office Hours- W, T, F 9-2  
978-546-6638  
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**      O Little Town of Bethlehem      arr. Jason Krug

**Welcome**      Rev. Derek

**Hymn\*** #140 What Child is This, Who, Lay to Rest - Red Hymnal

### **Call to Worship**

One: May the Sovereign of All,

**All: the Child of Peace,**

One: the Spirit of Resistance to Injustice,

**All: be with us now as we gather together.**

### **Lighting the Advent candle of Peace**

**Leader:** The poet of our theme carol, "What Child is This," penned the phrase "the silent Word is pleading." Our vision of the child in the manger may be the soothing lullaby and the silent night, but the reality of babies, and of that time in history, is that of a "crying out." It was a time when many were silenced, and the need for prophesying justice in the midst of trauma was great. Zechariah does this when his silence is lifted. The Word became Flesh for such a time.

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

**Reader 2:** For all who are being silenced.

**Reader 1:** For all who are afraid to speak out.

**Reader 2:** For all who know that peace comes with justice.

**Reader 1:** Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this: “How will we cry out for true peace for ALL people? How will we soothe the trauma of the world in our time?”

**Reader 2:** What child IS this? This, this, is the Prince of Peace who invites us to proclaim his reign forever.

### **Prayer of Invocation**

Jim Schell

In this moment of silent contemplation, we lift up our hopes for the world, for its people, for the kind of kin-dom embodied by the child who became the Prince of Peace. Seeking the one who will meet us here in the person who resists hate and greed and then persists; when my people work together, righting ancient wrongs, singing peaceful songs. Amen.

### **Prayer for Transformation and New Life**

God, it is not a year abundant with hope. We cry out for solace, for rest, for strength; we curse in anger at the horrors we see perpetrated in your name; we turn our backs on those who suffer, and we scorn those who bring suffering upon others. We are lost and demoralized, aching for the hope in your Word, and yet when you speak, we do not hear. We do not quiet the spirit within or allow your peace to fall upon us. We root ourselves in devastation when true strength is born out of your tender grace. Forgive us, God, for abandoning peace for a desire for retribution.

### **Words of Grace**

God does not turn us away when we falter. We are, instead, taken in and given sanctuary so that we may revive in God’s tender mercy. God will be our shelter while we rest, as well as when we are ready, once again, to rise up. Thanks be to God!

### **Passing the Peace**

**Communion Hymn** see insert

**Celebration of Holy Communion** see insert

**Communion Solo** How a Rose e'er Blooming...M. Praetorius/K. Meyer  
**We Listen for God's Word**

**Scripture** Luke 1:5-25

**Sermon** "The Silent Word" Rev. Derek

**Choral Anthem** Lo, How a Rose e'er Blooming M. Praetorius

**Prayers of the People**

**The Lord's Prayer** (Traditional)

**Response** #769 Hear Our Prayer

**We Respond to God's Word**

**Invitation to Generosity**

**Offertory Solo** He Shall Feed His Flock (from the Messiah)  
G. F. Handel

**Doxology**

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication**

**We Take God's Light into the World**

**Hymn\*** Let There be Peace on Earth (see insert) #677 Chalice Hymnal

**Benediction** Rev. Derek

**Postlude** Vom Himmel Hoch (From Heaven's High) M. Luther/setting  
by Wilbur Held

**Our soloists** are Gillian Hurst, alto and Alison Trott, hand chimes.

## **Today's Worship Service Helpers**

**Ushers** Donna Schwenk and Barbara Sachs

**Liturgist** Jim Schell



*The altar flowers this morning are given in appreciation for the lives of our beloved mothers, Arantza Basañez Bilbao, 11/20/41-11/24/96, and Rev. Virginia Bush Derr, 8/3/32-11/25/24.  
- the Derr/Bilbao Family*

## **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***

**Jay Reed** reminds us of the Outreach Diaper Drive for the Open Door

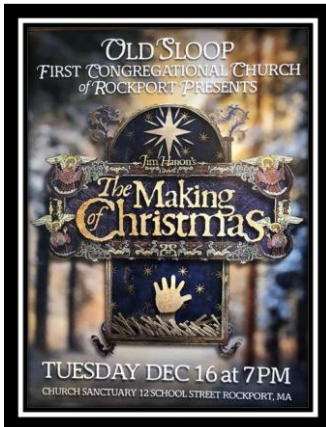
*Please donate any size diapers including adult in our collection box in the 12 School St. Lobby.*

**Kevin Love** will have copies of the revised By Laws to give out today. Changes will be voted on at the Jan. Annual Meeting.

*The Trustees are grateful to all who helped move furniture, boxes, and all and helped with cleaning this week in preparation of the new rental space. **Thank you all!***



***Donate a poinsettia in honor of or in memory of a special person. Dedication forms insert in this bulletin. The Flower Committee will be accepting donations and dedication forms in the Narthex after church. If you'd prefer to mail your donation directly to the office, keep in mind that there is a deadline of December 10. Make all checks payable to 'First Congregational Church' and put 'General Plant & Flower Fund' in the check memo.***



***“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 First Congregational Church Tickets at Old Sloop Presents  
\$10 (youth \$5)*

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



**Dec. 21, Regular Sunday service 10am 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**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS Dec. 7 to 14, 2025

---

Sunday, Dec. 7 10:00 am Worship Service, Holy Communion

10:15 Old Sloop Youth Sunday School

2:00 pm AA Women's Group

Monday, Dec. 8 Office Closed Trustees Meet online 7pm

Tuesday, Dec. 9 Office Closed

11:00 am Tai Chi (Fellowship Hall)

7:00 pm Al-Anon ( Morgan Room)

Wednesday, Dec. 10 Church Office -Open 9am-2pm

9:15 am Yoga (Fellowship Hall)

3:00 pm Storytelling Zoom

5:00 pm Bible Study Zoom

Thursday, Dec. 11 Church Office Open 9am to 2pm

9:30 am Book Group (Morgan Rm)

Friday, Dec.. 12 Church Office Open 9am to 2pm

4:00 pm Prayer service on Zoom

Saturday, Dec. 13

8:30 am AA meeting (Fellowship Hall)

12 noon Solstice Singers Lunch in Fellowship Hall

Sunday, Dec. 14 10:00 am Worship Service

10:15 Old Sloop Youth Sunday School

2:00 pm AA Women's Group

***The Nominating Committee is seeking people interested in serving as Outreach Treasurer or on the Diaconate, Membership, or 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 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.*****