

**The First Congregational Church
of Rockport, UCC
12 School Street ~ Rockport, MA
February 1, 2026**



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

Contact information

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Office Hours Wed., Thurs., Fri. 9-2

978-546-6638

www.oldsloop.org



Order of Worship

**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.**

We Gather as God's People

Prelude A Mighty Fortress is Our God M. Luther/J Pachelbel

Welcome Rev. Derek

Hymn* #386 The Church's One Foundation

Announcements

Call to Worship

Leader: Come, people of God—the dawn is breaking! A new day rises.

People: The dawn is breaking—and we rise with it.

Leader: Where burdens have bent us low, the Holy One draws near,
steading our steps.

People: The Holy One draws near—and we gather our courage.

Leader: Where yokes have weighed on shoulders and spirits, God is
loosening what has held us down.

**People: What held us down is lifting—and we move toward
freedom.**

Leader: Come, all who yearn for justice; all who hope for healing;
all who hunger for joy.

**People: We come to the dawning way, we come to the hopeful way,
we come to the way God makes glorious.**

Prayer of Invocation

Barbara Sachs

Holy One, your light dawns where our shadows are deepest. You are never far; your presence remains with us. Awaken us to the glimmers of your glory breaking into our world's weariness. Reveal in us the places where liberation is already taking root. Draw near to us today. Let us behold your radiance in overlooked places and in one another. Make us ready, alert, and courageous—a people who move with your Spirit, who join your work of release, and who make glorious the way where your justice and joy can flourish. Descend upon us, Spirit of the Living God. Remain with us. Awaken us. And guide our worship into the brightness of your new day. Amen.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

Holy Companion of our difficult days, you call us toward what is new even when we feel worn or uncertain. We confess the weight we carry—the fears we nurture, the habits that hold us tight, the moments we turn from compassion, the truths we avoid. Unbind what tightens around our hearts. Lift what has grown too heavy. Make room in us for generosity, justice, and the courage to begin again. Shape us for your healing work as this new day unfolds. Amen.

Words of Grace

Passing of the Peace

We Listen for God's Word

Scripture Exodus 3:1-10, Matthew 25:31-40

Barbara Sachs

Sermon What Can One Person Do

Rev. Derek

Choral Anthem Jubilate

W. A. Mozart/arr. Alan Bullard

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

Offering Idumea Shape note tune Solo Gillian Hurst

Doxology

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication

We Take God's Light into the World

Hymn* #391 In the Midst of New Dimensions

Benediction

Rev. Derek

Postlude

Soloist today Gillian Hurst, soprano

Annual Meeting and church luncheon follows the worship service

Today's Worship Service Helpers

Ushers Marge Schell and Louisa Casadei Johnson

Liturgist Barbara Sachs

This morning's altar floral plant is given to honor "Our Saint of the Old Sloop," Annette Mackin, in appreciation and gratitude for the many ways she contributes to our life together.



*"Why were the saints, saints?
Because they were
cheerful when it was
difficult to be cheerful,
patient when it was
difficult to be patient; and
because they pushed on
when they wanted to
stand still, and kept silent
when they wanted to talk,
and were agreeable when
they wanted to be
disagreeable"*

Author Unknown

The Annual Reports 2025 are available at www.oldsloop.org

They represent the work of all our Old Sloop members named and unnamed here. Special thanks to Pastor Derek and our church staff, Katie Welch, Phil Swanson and Kristina Martin, Phil Bynarowicz (for keeping us all in order), our Clerk Susan Lillis and man of many hats Jim Schell, Historian Liz Rice Smith, Committee Members and the Chairs, Rick Kasten, Jack Reed, Jill Carter, Ruth Janet Taylor, Joe Chambers and Laurie McKenna, who provided reports of their Committees' work for the 2025 Annual Reports. And thanks to our Treasurer, Bruce Coates, for his work all year and his meticulous reporting on the financial records of

the church. Thanks to Jay Reed for tireless support of our ambitious Outreach programs and Celene and Geof Lyon and their devoted volunteers for Old Sloop Presents. Gratitude for our members who worked hard at fun and fun raising events all year led by Amy, Barbara S, Barbara R., Louisa , Jack, Michelle and Bill. Wendy, thanks for keeping the kitchen supplied along with all those that got certified and baked all year! Thanks to the Old Sloop Fleet angels led by Wendy and Liz Rice Smith. Thanks to Moderator Kevin Love for shepherding the Annual Meeting process. Thanks to Geof Lyon and Juliette Mackin for tech help and Camilla Ayers for her expert proof-reading skills and time. A wonderful giving congregation! Thanks to all and enjoy the coming year 2026!

CALL TO ANNUAL MEETING

The 272nd Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Rockport, Massachusetts, postponed due to severe weather on Jan. 25th, will be held today commencing at 11:00 AM.

The Meeting will be followed by a congregational luncheon in Fellowship Hall. All welcome to the luncheon.



The Annual Reports 2025 for the 2026 Annual Meeting can be found at www.oldsloop.org. under the heading "Congregational Meeting."

CALENDAR OF EVENTS Feb. 1-8, 2026

Sunday, Feb. 1 10:00 am Worship Service
 10:15 Old Sloop Youth Faith Formation
 11:00 am Annual Meeting followed by our Congregational
 Luncheon ~ All welcome!
 2:00 pm AA Women's Group (Morgan Room)
Monday, Feb. 2 Office Closed
 3:45 pm CAYC rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)
 6:00 pm Orchestra rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)
Tuesday, Feb. 3 Office Closed
 11:00 am Tai Chi (Fellowship Hall)
 7:00 pm Al-Anon (Morgan Room)
Wednesday, Feb. 4 Church Office -Open 9-2
 9:15 am Yoga (Fellowship Hall)
 3:00 pm Storytelling Zoom
 5:00 pm Bible Study Zoom
 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)
Thursday, Feb. 5 Church Office Open 9-2
 9:30 am Book Group (Morgan Room)
Friday, Feb. 6 Church Office Open 9-2
 4:00 pm Prayer service on Zoom
Saturday, Feb. 7
 8:30 am AA meeting (Fellowship Hall)
Sunday, Feb. 8 10 am. Worship Service, Holy Communion
 10:15 Old Sloop Youth Faith Formation
 2:00 pm AA Women's Group (Morgan Room)
 3:00 pm Rockport Music Classical Concert