

**The First Congregational Church  
of Rockport, UCC  
12 School Street ~ Rockport, MA  
January 18, 2026**



*“Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.”*

*~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

***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](http://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** O Perfect Love

arr. David N. Johnson

**Welcome**

Rev. Derek

**Hymn** #576 For the Healing of the Nations

**Announcements**

**Mission Moment**

Christian Outreach

**Call to Worship**

One: Our Mother-Father God has made us to be One Body with  
many members.

**All: United and uniting. This is our calling.**

One: God calls us to share our diverse gifts activated by the one  
and same Spirit.

**All: United and uniting. This is our redemption.**

One: God longs for us to be united in love and to manifest the Spirit  
in our different ways.

**All: United and uniting. This is our worship.**

One: Let us gather in this hour to offer praise and worship to our  
Holy God, who challenges us and calls us to *create the  
Beloved Community*.

## **Prayer of Invocation**

Liz Rice Smith

O God, all people are your Beloved, across races, nationalities, religions, genders, sexual orientations and all the ways we are distinctive from one another. We are all manifestations of your image. *We are bound together in an inescapable network of mutuality and tied to a single garment of destiny.* You call us into your unending work of justice, peace and love. Let us know your presence among us now: Let us delight in our diversity that offers glimpses of the mosaic of your beauty. Strengthen us with your steadfast love and transform our despairing fatigue into hope-filled action. Under the shadow of your wings in this hour may we find rest and strength, renewal and hope. We ask this, inspired by the example of your disciple, Martin Luther King, Jr., and in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

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

Redeemer, granter of free will, helps us to stay encouraged to exercise our free will to cause heaven to exist on the earth. We confess that we often miss the bigger picture, while staring at the snapshot of our lives. You have equipped us to see each other's suffering and remedy it. In doing so, we transform how we live and where we live. Amen.

## **Words of Grace**

God's ability to help us stay alert, keeps us open to salvation and the possibility of experiencing Heaven on earth at any given time. Heaven can be a place on earth. Amen.

## **Passing of the Peace**

**We Listen for God's Word**

**Scripture** Ephesians 4:1-6; John 1:43-51 Liz Rice Smith

**Sermon** Creating the Beloved Community Rev. Derek

## **Prayers of the People**

**The Lord's Prayer** Traditional  
Response #769 Hear Our Prayer

## **We Respond to God's Word**

**Offering**

**Doxology**

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication**

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

**Hymn** #570 We Shall Overcome

**Benediction** Rev. Derek

**Postlude** Nkosi sikelel' Afrika by Enoch Sontonga

*Our organist this morning is David Bergeron*

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

**Ushers** Susan Lillis and Kevin McDonough

**Liturgist** Liz Rice Smith

*The flowers on the altar this morning  
are from Evelyn and Jack  
in memory of Renee Good,  
victim of ICE violence*



## **Candy Bar Bingo!**

*The Faith Formation committee is going to hold an Intergenerational Candy Bar Bingo activity immediately following worship on Sunday, February 1st. All are welcome to join, a great opportunity to invite someone new to church! All that is required is a candy bar or two for your bingo cards. (The more candy bars you bring in, the more cards you get to increase your chance of winning!)*

## **An invitation from our church Historian, Liz Rice Smith:**

The community-building [New England's Hidden Histories \(NEHH\)](#) transcription project has drawn the participation of diverse segments of the population from professors to public school teachers, and from scholars to genealogists.

Participants in the hands-on process of transcribing have shared the excitement of discovering previously unknown facts: women in the early Republic who contested church practice, congregations vehemently challenging slave-owning pastors, men and women of color who left first-hand accounts of their lives, daily details preserved in letters and diaries, and many more. In schools, transcribing primary sources has re-inspired pedagogy and revolutionized how students learn history. In this talk, Helen Gelinas, NEHH

Director of Transcription, and a few volunteer transcribers will explore the process the NEHH project uses to make history accessible to all through transcription. Mark your calendars now to join us on Zoom on Wednesday, January 28th from 1–2 pm EST.

The event is free to all, but registration is required via this link: [https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/9817658288668/WN\\_5vkhHFPFSSm95TVCRC92Tg](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/9817658288668/WN_5vkhHFPFSSm95TVCRC92Tg)

### **CALL TO ANNUAL MEETING**

#### *The First Congregational Church of Rockport*

*The 272nd Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Rockport, Massachusetts will be held on Sunday, January 25, 2026 commencing at 11:00 AM, to consider and act upon the following:*

1. *Reports of the Church Officers and Committees.*
2. *The report of the Nominating Committee and the election of Church Officers and Committee Members.*
3. *The Annual Budget proposed by the Board of Trustees.*
4. *Any other business that may be brought legally before the meeting.*

*Because of ongoing health concerns, this will be a hybrid meeting. Instructions for how to participate remotely will be distributed shortly.*

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Susan G. Lillis*

*Clerk of the Church, [clerk@oldsloop.org](mailto:clerk@oldsloop.org), 978-546-6638*

***The Trustees and Treasurer will host a review of the new budget for 2026 on Sunday, Jan. 18<sup>th</sup> 11am.***

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS Jan 18 to 25, 2026

Sunday, Jan. 18	10:00 am	Worship Service
11:00 am	Budget Review meeting in preparation for the 2026 Annual Meeting (Morgan Room)	
2:00 pm	AA Women's Group (Morgan Room)	
7:00 pm	Cabinet meets online	
Monday, Jan 19	Office Closed      Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	
Tuesday, 20	Office Closed	
11:00 am	Tai Chi (Fellowship Hall)	
5:30 pm	Orchestra rehearsal Fellowship Hall)	
7:00 pm	Al-Anon ( Morgan Room)	
Wednesday, Jan 21	Church Office -Open 9-2	
9:15 am	Yoga (Fellowship Hall)	
1:30 pm	Chime Rehearsal (Morgan Room)	
3:00 pm	Storytelling Zoom	
5:00 pm	Bible Study Zoom	
7:30 pm	Choir Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)	
Thursday, Jan 22	Church Office Open 9-2	
9:30 am	Book Group (Morgan Room)	
Friday, Jan 23	Church Office Open 9-2	
4:00 pm	Prayer service on Zoom	
Saturday, Jan 24		
8:30 am	AA meeting (Fellowship Hall)	
Sunday, Jan 25	10 am. Worship Service	
10:15	Old Sloop Youth Faith Formation	
11am	Annual Meeting followed by our Congregational Luncheon	
2:00 pm	AA Women's Group (Morgan Room)	

