

FIRST PARISH CHURCH OF GROTON

Friday, December 24, 2011 – 7:30 PM Service

A Thought as the Service Begins

Now is the moment of magic,
When an eastern star beckons shepherds and kings toward
an unknown goal,
And here is a blessing:
They find nothing in the end but an ordinary baby,
Born at midnight, born in poverty, and the baby's cry, like
bells ringing,
Makes people wonder as they wander through their lives,
What human love might really look like, sound like, feel
like.

Now is the moment of magic,
And here is a blessing:
We already possess all the gifts we need;
We've already received our presents:
Ears to hear music, eyes to behold lights,
Hands to build true peace on earth
And to hold each other tight in love.

(Victoria Safford, adapted)

*(We ask that you turn off the ringer on your cell phones
as well as the flash on your cameras.*

Please join us in a time of quiet during the prelude.)

Pre-Prelude Ave Maria (Tomas Luis de Victoria)
Adult Choir; soloists Mary Timmons, Barbara
Murray, David Gordon, Dave Hill

Prelude In Dulci Jubilo (J.S. Bach)

Welcome Ed McNierney, Worship Leader

Chalice Lighting Jake Jackson

*Hymn O Come All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come, ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, born the king of angels;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Lo, humble shepherds, Hasting to his cradle,
Leaving their flocks in the fields, draw near.
We, too, with gladness, thither bend our footsteps,
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
Glory to God in the highest,
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Anthem Gloria In Excelsis Deo from Cantata #191
(J.S. Bach) Adult Choir

Reading from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke
Rev. Clio Fisher

Responsive Prayer written by Rev. Jamie Green, adapted

Congregational Response:

Wherever the world is in darkness, let us bring light.

Offertory Of the Father's Love Begotten (arr. David Lasky)
Offering introduced by Rev. Clio Fisher

*(Tonight's offering is for the Caring Committee, which supports
needs within the congregation and supports strangers and friends
who come to our doors for help. Thank you for your generosity. If you
are in need, please speak to the minister in confidence.)*

*Hymn Angels We Have Heard on High

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the
plains
and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why these songs of happy cheer?
What great brightness did you see?
What glad tidings did you hear?
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing:
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Reading Brother Giovanni's Christmas Eve Letter, 1513

***Hymn In the Bleak Mid Winter**

In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.

Our God, Heav'n cannot hold Him
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter, a stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels
May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air,
But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the Beloved
With a kiss.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give Him,
Give my heart.

Reflections Life is So Generous

Rev. Elea Kemler

Anthem Nativity Carol (John Rutter) Adult Choir

Candle Lighting Ceremony

***Silent Night**

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight,
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing "Alleluia,"
Christ the savior is born, Christ the savior is born!

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord at thy birth.

***Hymn Joy to the World!**

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love,
And wonders of his love,
And wonders, wonders, of his love.

(service continues on back cover)

Benediction

Rev. Elea Kemler

Postlude O Holy Night

(Adolphe Adam)

Ring of the Church Bells

Rebecca Pike, First Parish Bell Ringer

***Please stand as you are able.**

Large print hymnals, large print bulletins and assisted listening devices are available from the ushers.

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Greeters: Nancy LaFosse, Rich Suval, Jared LaFosse-Baker,
Kira LaFosse-Baker

Ushers: Suzanne Nelson, Kate McNierney,
Meghan McNierney Frances McNierney

Light Bearers: Youth of First Parish Church: Anya Harter,
Conor McNierney, Hannah Tellier, Sam Tellier

Special thanks to Kurt Staven, trumpet.

Special thanks to Steve Boczenowski for fire safety.

**Christmas Day Open House, Sunday, December 25,
10:00 am – 2:00 pm at First Parish Church**

The Worship Committee invites all to join us tomorrow for a Christmas Day Open House from 10 am to 2 pm. Come enjoy a relaxing, festive time with your First Parish friends before you head off for your Christmas visits!

We will begin the festivities with a chalice lighting at 10:00 am. Then we'll have caroling led by Shawn McCann from 10:30 to 11:00 am. Finally, we'll be entertained with a dramatic reading of *A Christmas Carol* at 11:30 am.

All are invited, so come whenever you can and bring snacks (even the leftover fruitcake!), games, books, your favorite present from Christmas morning — whatever you would like — to share with friends. Coffee, tea, and cocoa will be provided (as well as any leftover cider and cookies from Christmas Eve!), and the warmth of the season will abound. See you in the morning!