



Epiphany

Communion Sunday January 4, 2026

We are a progressive community of faith seeking to follow the teachings of Jesus, pursue justice and live God's love.

**No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.**



A Note for Families / Folks of All Ages: Today we worship all together; there is no Church School. Children are invited to join in this all-ages service and communion. There are clipboards with paper and coloring pages at the back of the sanctuary, for worshippers of any age to use during the service.

PRELUDE

Retrospect

York Bowen

WELCOME TO WORSHIP

Rev. Alison Buttrick Patton

THRESHOLD MOMENT

CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: In the dark of morning,

All: the stars still shine.

One: In the depth of winter,

All: the birds still climb.

One: At the start of the year, tender and new,

All: God is here.

One: God is near.

All: Do not rest in your fear. God is here.

One: So like the stars and the birds,

All: Let us worship holy God.

***OPENING HYMN**

As With Gladness Men of Old

#168

RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

One: Ever-loving God, we long for Christmas to usher in a season of peace and joy. However, we know that is not how the world works. Even right after Christmas, we may find ourselves face to face with fear again.

All: So today we pray —

Forgive us when our fear speaks louder than love.

Forgive us when we allow fear to keep us from following your call.

Teach us how to overcome when fear stops us in our tracks.

Transform our fear into action and

Show us once more how to live like the magi,

Who searched for you in a fearful world. With hope we pray, amen.

PRAYERFUL PAUSE

*Please rise, on your feet or in your hearts.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

*SUNG RESPONSE

We Three Kings, verse 1 and chorus

#162

**We three kings of orient are bearing gifts we traverse a far,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.
O star of wonder, star of night, star of royal beauty bright.
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.**

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

Lynne Lanctot

One: God of the Stars, like the magi, we come to this place searching for you. So today, we ask that you remove any barricades that keep us from your Spirit.

All: **Clear out the distractions. Wipe away the doubt. Open up our hearts, and speak to us through these ancient words. As you do, we will keep walking toward you. With hope we pray, amen.**

RESPONSIVE SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 2:1-12 Common English Bible Trans.

One: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked,

All: **“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We’ve seen his star in the east, and we’ve come to honor him.”**

One: When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. They said,

All: **“In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote: ‘You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah, because from you will come one who governs, who will shepherd my people Israel.’”**

One: Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you’ve found him, report to me so that I, too, may go and honor him.”

All: When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy.

One: They entered the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

All: Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another road.

AN EPIPHANY PLAY †

One More Epiphany

Meetinghouse Players

SUNG RESPONSE

We Three Kings (new lyrics)

Herald, Healer, Prince of Peace, calling us God's love to increase.

Alleluia, Alleluia! Wonders never cease.

**O star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.**

OFFERING INVITATION ☰

Help us to live God's love and justice. You can make a secure gift by using the QR code, going to fccucc.org/donate, or by adding your contribution to the box at the back of the sanctuary. Thank you!



MUSICAL INTERLUDE

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

Prayers of the People

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father-Mother in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

The Story is Told

The Gifts are Blessed

The Meal is Shared

You are invited to come forward by the center aisle to receive communion. All bread is gluten free. The juice is non-alcoholic. There are pre-wrapped communion elements for those who prefer, on the communion table.

The magi will also be handing out Star Words. You are invited to take a word to accompany you on your journey through the coming year.

Communion Anthem *Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning*

William Walker

Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving

For the light of a star, for wise ones who follow, for the birth of a child, for this bread and cup, for the gifts we can offer, for the unfolding journey, for your care and this company: we thank you! Bless us now as we go out, to tell the story and share our gifts with a hungry world. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

Arise, Your Light is Come!

#167

ANNOUNCEMENTS

STAR BLESSING AND BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Go Tell it On the Mountain Spiritual /arr.Gabriel Ruiz-Bernal

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WORSHIP NOTES

Thank you to this morning's ushers: Team H, Carrie Skeffington, captain.

Livestream: Thank you to Alex Ratta for managing our worship livestream.

† **Thank you to** Craig Patton, the author of *One More Epiphany*, for his creative contribution to this worship, and to John Grew, Hannah Long-Higgins, Bob Morse and Pat Thatcher, for bringing the story alive this morning!

The poinsettias on the altar this morning were given by various FCC UCC members and friends in memory or in honor of loved ones.

How to make an altar dedication: Would you like to place flowers on the altar or light the Mission Globe in memory or in honor of a loved one? If so, please contact

Danna Wiggins at dannawig2@gmail.com. If you'd like to dedicate the lighting of the church steeple, please contact the business manager at 799-3361 or email business@fccucc.org.

☰ **Royalty for Spirituals:** Historically, the composers of African American Spirituals were neither known nor compensated for use of their songs. The FCC UCC music department has committed to paying forward a 'royalty' each time we include a Spiritual in worship. We are now donating funds to the **Indigo Arts Alliance:** <https://indigoartsalliance.me/>. You are invited to contribute, as well. Donate by check or online, with "Royalty for Spirituals" in the memo. Thank you.

****Our Advent-Christmas season Liturgies** were written by/adapted from Rev. Sarah Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.

Cover design by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman | Photography by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.

THANK YOU

A special *thank you* to FCC UCC member Bryan Wiggins for refreshing our church logo. Check out the updated design on the front cover of the bulletin.

WEEKLY @ FCC UCC

Bible Study, Tuesdays, 12:30 - 1:30 pm in Davidson Lounge: Explore the scripture from the past Sunday, led by Rev. Steve Savage. All are welcome!

Meetinghouse Choir rehearses on Wednesdays, 6:15 – 8 pm. All singers are welcome. We meet in the Choir Room on the lower level of the church. Questions? Contact choir director Deirdre McClure at dmclure@fccucc.org.

Handbells rehearse on Wednesdays, 4:45 pm in Wright Pavilion. If you are interested in ringing in the choir or would like more information, please contact bell choir director Sharon Potter: handbells@fccucc.org.

COMING UP @ FCC UCC

Fellowship Club, Tuesday, January 6, 6:15 pm: Dinner and entertainment in Guptill Hall. The guest will be Sargent Shane Stephenson from the South Portland Police Department, accompanied by a K-9 Officer. For reservations: Carolyn Clark at carolyn.clark353@gmail.com

Small Group: Parents of Adult Children, Monday, January 12, 6:30 – 8 pm, Wright Pavilion: If you are currently a parent of an adult child, you are invited to join us for an initial gathering. We'll talk about forming one or more ongoing "parents of adult children" small groups at our church. Light snacks will be provided.

Women's Spirit Circle: FCC UCC members Nancy Brajtbord and Pat Thatcher are creating a sacred, welcoming space where women (LGBTQIA+) can gather to share life, faith, laughter, and support, beginning in February. Share your interest and ideas with them at: Nancy Brajtbord (nancy.brajtbord@gmail.com)
Pat Thatcher (pat.thatcher123@gmail.com)

MISSION AND SOCIAL WITNESS

Clynk Bags are in the narthex (inside main entrance). Collect your returnable cans and bottles and return them to a Clynk collection site at Hannaford or other participating grocery stores. Scan the code on the bags and the refunds will automatically be donated to our FCC mission team. *Thank you!*

Volunteer for Preble Street Food Hub: On the last Friday of each month, we prepare meals at the Food Hub, 75 Darling Avenue, South Portland, for delivery to Preble Street satellite sites. Please join us! To learn more about how to volunteer, see the Weekly Word or contact Danna Wiggins at dannawig2@gmail.com

THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Weekly Multi-Faith Vigil outside the Cumberland County Detention Center, at the corner of Congress and County Way, every Wednesday from 2:45 – 3:15 pm
Community faith leaders host these vigils, which may include songs, silence, prayer or other spiritual practices to honor the sacred worth of all people, and to hold up everyone involved - those detained, officers, and our entire community.

WHAT'S UP?

Want to stay in the loop? Make sure you are on our email list! To UPDATE or ADD your contact info, go to: fccucc.org and select "Contact Us" then select "Contact Info Update Form."

**Your positive reviews on social media help others to find us.
Write a review on Google (Thanks!). Like and follow us:**



3RD ANNUAL
**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
CELEBRATION**



Artwork by Emma Wolfsohn

SONGS AND COURAGE FOR OUR TIMES

FEATURING THE SEA CHANGE CHORALE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 2026

2:00 - 3:30 PM

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

301 COTTAGE ROAD

SOUTH PORTLAND, ME

Free admission

Sponsored by the Greater Portland Multifaith Group