



Advent Week 4: Love

Sunday Worship December 21, 2025

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 begin worship together. After the Time For All God's Children, young people grades K-8 are invited to follow teachers upstairs to our one-room classroom.

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 *In the Bleak Midwinter* Gustav Holst
Arr. Mark Hayes

WELCOME TO WORSHIP Rev. Alison Buttrick Patton and Rev. Steve Savage

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING** The Love Candle Abbie Jellison

SUNG RESPONSE *When God is a Child*, verse 4 Four candles are lit
Congregation joins second time through:

**Love is a flame that burns in our heart.
Jesus has come and will never depart.
When God is a child there's joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
And none shall be afraid.**

CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: Here in worship—

All: We pray together,

One: We stand together,

All: We sing together,

One: We listen together.

All: Here in worship— we are not alone.

One: So, when life gives you reason to grieve, to fear, or to worry,
remember this moment.

All: We are not alone.

One: Let us worship our with-us God.

***OPENING HYMN** *O Christ, How Shall I Meet You* No. 130

PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS** _____

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

One: When you were afraid, did I stay by your side? Did I offer my hand, or did I leave you alone? When you were afraid, did I choose solidarity? Did I see your fear, or did I only see mine?

All: Friend, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. Fortunately, God offers grace, and we do too. So, take a deep breath, and let's start again.

One: Thank you. Your mercy is a gift.

All: Now we must ask— when you were afraid, did we stay by your side? Did we offer our hands, or did we leave you alone? When you were afraid, did we choose solidarity? Did we see your fear? Or did we only see ours?

One: Friends, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. Fortunately, God offers grace, and I do too. So, take a deep breath, and let's start again.

All: Thank you. Your mercy is a gift. We accept your grace and would love to start again.

One: May it be so, with God's help.

All: Alleluia, amen.

PRAYERFUL PAUSE

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

***SUNG RESPONSE** *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!

TIME FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

Children are invited to leave for Church School at the conclusion of this time.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**

Betsy W-Keiter

One: Immanuel, we turned off alarm clocks. We poured cups of coffee or tea. We slipped shoes onto our feet and pulled on coats. We traveled to this room and settled into this space, all in hopes of drawing closer to you.

All: **So as we hear your Word read aloud, help us to feel your presence in our midst. We are reaching out our hands. We are reaching out our hearts. Speak to us now. With hope we pray, amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 1:18-35

Betsy W-Keiter

SERMON

When you're afraid, give me your hand

Rev. Alison J. Buttrick Patton

MOMENT OF CONTEMPLATIVE SILENCE

ANTHEM

The Holly and the Ivy

arr. Ola Gjeilo

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father-Mother in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kin-dom 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 kin-dom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

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

PRAYER OF BLESSING

CLOSING HYMN

People Look East

No. 116

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending

Olivers/arr. Gary Norian

WORSHIP NOTES

☰ **Annual Christmas Split Plate Offering:** This morning, the loose plate offering (all gifts that are not pledges) will be divided between our Church and ILAP, the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project. ILAP is Maine's only state-wide immigration legal services organization. ILAP helps low-income immigrants improve their legal status and works for more just and humane laws and policies affecting immigrants.

Thank you to this morning's ushers: Team B, Peggy Murray, captain.

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

****Our Advent Liturgy** was 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.

WEEKLY @ FCC UCC

Advent Bible Study, Tuesday, December 23, 12:30 - 1:30 pm in Davidson Lounge: Explore the scripture from the past Sunday, along with art and reflections from our Advent Devotional, *What Do You Fear?* Led by Rev. Steve Savage.

☛ **Bible Study** will take a holiday break on December 30, and will resume on Tuesday, January 6.

The Meetinghouse and Bell Choirs will NOT rehearse on December 31 due to the holiday break. Rehearsals resume on January 7 at 4:45 pm in the Sanctuary for the Bell Choir, and 6:15 pm for the Meetinghouse Choir.

MISSION AND SOCIAL WITNESS

Holiday Mitten Tree: December 14 - Epiphany, January 4

Decorate the sanctuary tree with your donations of adult and children's hats, mittens and scarves. Covering the branches with every color and size will help to ensure the warmth of our neighbors in the community.

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!*

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

The Christmas Fund is a program of the Pensions Board of the United Church of Christ. The Christmas Fund provides emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. There will be Christmas Fund offering envelopes in the pews on Christmas Eve. Donation options:

1. Place checks or cash in envelopes and mail to the church or place in the offering box at the rear of the Sanctuary. Include your name if you wish the offering to be listed in your report.
2. Securely online at www.fccucc.org: click the “donate” button on the home page. Please use the “other” option, enter the amount, and write “Christmas Fund” in the box provided. Add your name to have your offering be included in your report.

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

*Volunteers are needed for the following winter dates:
January 30, February 27, and March 27*

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.

Celebrating Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Songs and Courage for our Times – Sunday, January 18, 2 pm: Join us for this third annual gathering to honor the legacy of Dr. King and reflect on the work yet to be done, with guest community chorus, the Sea Change Chorale, Deirdre McClure directing. Sponsored by the Greater Portland Multi-Faith Group.

Is FCC UCC on Your Gift List?

As you make your holiday to-do lists this year, please consider a few items to support FCC UCC:

☑ **Fulfill your 2025 pledge:** Now's the time to wrap up 2025 giving. If you don't know whether you have fulfilled this year's pledge, reach out to Melissa Yosua-Davis at business@fccucc.org. She is glad to lend a hand!

☑ **Consider an end-of-year gift:** Do you have a little extra this year? Are you feeling grateful for this community and the difference we make? Say, "Thank you" with a year-end gift to FCC UCC.

☑ **Make a 2026 pledge:** If you have already responded to our 2026 campaign, *thank you!* If not, it's not too late! Pick up a pledge card in the narthex (back of the sanctuary) or email your commitment to business@fccucc.org. Your pledges help us to plan!

Do you need help updating a recurring donation online? Melissa is glad to help. Business Manager Office hours:

- Mondays & Wednesdays, 9 am - 3 pm in the office
- Tuesdays 9 am - 3 pm working remotely, available via email

Thank you for all the ways that you support FCC UCC. Your generosity helps us to respond to the world around us, tending to bodies and spirits. Together, we are making love and justice take flight!

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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:



Wednesday, December 24: Christmas Eve

5 pm: All-Ages Christmas Pageant - We will gather and tell the story together.

8 pm: Candle-lit Christmas Eve Worship with lessons and carols



Sunday, December 28: Worship led by members of Spiritual Life and Worship, with sermon by the Rev. Marvin Ellison. Sing and pray together and reflect on the turning of the year.

Sunday, January 4: Epiphany: Join us for a creative, All-Ages Epiphany Worship with communion, star words and a fresh, dramatic take on the story of the magi.

Church Offices will be closed December 25, 2025 - January 1, 2026.

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



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