

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF NATICK

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ



Land Acknowledgement

We gather, acknowledging the land we are on, the rocks and waters of this land, the plants and animals of this land, the air we share.

We also acknowledge the original people of this land, including the Nipmuc, Pawtucket, and Massa-adchu-es-et People(s), as well as the legacy of the Natick Praying Indians, and all those who have walked on this land before us, as well as our own ancestors.

We remember ourselves as part of a web extending back in time, forward in time, and in every direction in time.



Welcome To Worship at FCC Natick!

It doesn't matter to us if you grew up in a church or never set foot in one before. You matter to us. We welcome you as you are, because we believe that we are all embraced by God's inclusive and extravagant love.

As a congregation, we strive to practice radical inclusivity and extravagant hospitality. When we gather for worship, we want everyone to have access, to be comfortable, and feel welcomed.

If you are new here, we invite you to introduce yourself to the pastor, and fill out the card in the *Welcome Newcomers* brochure and place it in the offering plate so that we can extend a more personal welcome!

To help you worship with comfort and meaning:

- We invite you to change any portion of today's service to language in which you feel included. We welcome all into God's presence and worship God in wholeness.
- **Large Print Bibles and worship bulletins** are available from the ushers. The bulletin is also available in digital form using the weekly QR code.
- **Noise cancelling headphones** are available from the ushers.
- *Listening Everywhere* app is supported. (Download to a smartphone, bring headphones.)

Childcare for infants through age 3 is available. There is a video link to the sanctuary for parents who wish to stay with their child. There is a changing station in the nursery.

- **Verbal cues** are used along with the bulletin text to direct the congregation. For instance, "Please rise in body or in spirit."
- Our building is **handicap accessible**. This includes handicap parking spaces, a handicap entrance near the lot, an all-floors handicap elevator, and handicap restrooms on 2 floors.
- There is a **gender-neutral bathroom** on the second floor.
- There is an **Automatic External Defibrillator (AED)** on the wall on the ground floor elevator lobby. When turned on, it provides step-by-step instructions.
- **Narcan** doses are available via the ushers or the church office.

We realize that our best intentions and efforts may sometimes fall short. Please let us know if there is anything else we can do. Speak to an usher or drop a note in a collection plate.

First Day of Advent

December 1, 2024

“A seed in the ground. A flame in the darkness.
A hand outstretched. A child in the womb.
Hope starts small and overtakes us.
-Jan Richardson

PRELUDE

Thomas Foster, organ

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry

CALL TO WORSHIP

Janice Gilkes

One: In a crowded world, is there a place for Hope?

All: May there be room for Hope in our hearts.

One: Hope seeks a place where it can flourish and grow.

All: May there be room for Hope in our hearts.

One: We can be the place where Hope can dwell.

All: May there be room for Hope in our hearts. Amen.

* OPENING HYMN 116

People Look East

Besançon

People look east. The time is near of the crowning of the year.
Make your house as you are able, trim the hearth and set the table.

People look east and sing today. Love the Guest is on the way.
Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is planted there.

Give up your strength the seed to nourish, that in course the flower may flourish.
People look east and sing today. Love the Rose is on the way.

Stars, keep watch. When night is dim, one more light the bowl shall brim,
shining beyond the frosty weather, bright as sun and moon together.

People look east and sing today. Love the Star is on the way.
Angels announce with shouts of mirth him who brings us life to earth.

Set ev'ry peak and valley humming with the word, the Lord is coming.
People look east and sing today. Love the Lord is on the way.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH: HOPE

Karen Maki, Wreath Lighter

SUNG ADVENT RESPONSE (Hymn No. 611 verse. 1, *Hope is a Star*)

Hope is a star that shines in the night,
leading us on till the morning is bright.
When God is a child there's joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none will be afraid.

SHARING GOD'S PEACE

In person we rise to greet each other with a wave, bow or a high five.
And we send God's peace to those participating from home!

One: God's peace be with you.

All: **And also with you!**

* SONG OF CELEBRATION *Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn* Rejoice, Rejoice

Awake! Awake and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning.
sing out your joy, for Jesus is born, behold! the Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together,
to open wide the heavenly door, and lives now inside us forever.

CHOIR ANTHEM

Senior Choir, Thomas Foster, director

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 1:26-38

WORD FOR ALL AGES

MUSICAL RESPONSE

After *Word for All Ages*, children (age 3 – grade 6) depart for Sunday School (*Godly Play & Connect*). Parents may accompany children and return to worship once they are settled.

READING

You Are a Blessing

by Rev. Sara A. Speed

REFLECTION

Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry

MUSICAL RESPONSE

COMMUNION

JOYS AND CONCERNS

INVITATION TO THE FEAST

TELLING THE STORY

COMMUNION PRAYER AND PRAYER OF JESUS

SHARING THE BREAD AND CUP

THANKSGIVING PRAYER

OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR SUBSTANCE

OFFERING INVITATION

OFFERTORY

As the plates are passed from person to person, we share our financial gifts.
Even if we are not adding money to the plate, we offer thoughts of gratitude.

As you hold the plate, you might breathe deeply and pray,
“May all the earth be healthy and whole.”

*** SONG OF PRAISE**

Old Hundredth

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done.
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

*** SENDING HYMN 151**

O Little Town of Bethlehem

St. Louis

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark street shineth the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God our King, and peace to us on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in' be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

BLESSING

POSTLUDE

Calendar for Dec. 1 – Dec. 8, 2024

More at fccnatick.org/events

- Sunday, Dec. 1** 9:00 AM *Adult Faith Group*
10:30 AM *Worship w/ Rev. Cindy in the sanctuary*
10:45 AM *Godly Play and Connect*
11:30 AM *Post-Worship Fellowship: Coffee Hour in Vestry*
- Wed., Dec. 4** 12:00 PM *Midweek Connection & Prayer via Zoom*
7:00PM *Pub Theology with Eliot Church at 7 South Bottle & Kitchen*
- Sat., Dec. 7** 10:00 AM *Christmas Pageant Rehearsal in the Vestry*
3:00 PM *Living Creche & Carols w/ Brass on the porch*
- Sunday, Dec. 8** 9:00 AM *Adult Faith Group*
9:30AM *Annual Bring a Friend Holiday Breakfast in the Vestry.*
10:30AM *Christmas Pageant in the sanctuary*
10:30 AM *Worship w/ Rev. Cindy in the sanctuary*
10:45 AM *Godly Play and Connect*
11:30 AM *Post-Worship Fellowship: Coffee Hour in Vestry*

Thanks to Coffee Hour hosts Wayne and Jeanette Szretter

This Week

Pub Theology

Wed. Dec. 4, 7:00 pm at 7 South Bottle & Kitchen

Join us for fun conversation with folks from the Eliot Church. Topic: Intersection of family, holidays, controversy, and boundaries. Sign up link: <https://ucc.fccnatick.org/pubtheology>

Living Creche & Carols with Brass

Sat. Dec. 7, 3:00-4:30 pm

Christmas Poinsettias

Place your order after worship on December 8 and 15

Order a poinsettia to remember a loved one or to celebrate a blessing! Following worship on Dec. 22nd, poinsettias will be delivered to those in our church family unable to be with us for worship. Look for Flower Ministry volunteers in the Vestry as you leave worship (or contact the church office). Give them the dedication you want printed in the 12/15 bulletin. Donate any amount.

Annual Bring A Friend Holiday Breakfast

Sun. Dec. 8, 9:30-10:30am

Join the FCC community for our 3rd Annual Bring-a-Friend Holiday Breakfast. There will be bagels, baked goods, fruit and yogurt, quiche and our now famous hot chocolate bar.

Christmas Pageant

Sun. Dec. 8, 10:30 am in the sanctuary

On the Horizon

11th Annual Interfaith Community Vigil

Sun. Dec. 15, 5-6pm

The evening will include music, testimony, interfaith prayer, inspirational speaking and a candlelight vigil. A meeting hosted by The Journey Bereavement Group will follow. All are welcome.

Sound & Spirit: "Voices of the Season Holiday Concert

Fri. Dec. 13, 7:30pm and Sat., Dec. 14, 3pm

Join the Sound & Spirit intergenerational choir for some holiday spirit Tickets are available at their website at www.soundandspirit.net

Lunch Bunch

Thurs. Dec. 19, 12:30pm in the Vestry

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Saturday, December 24, 7 PM in the Sanctuary

A service with candles and carols.

PRAYER LIST

Sharing Your Prayer Requests. Prayer concerns and celebrations to be shared during worship can be done so verbally (raise your hand to be recognized) or in writing (use provided notecards) or emailed to prayers@fccnatick.org.

Susan & Bob	The McLaren Family	Declan and his parents Beth and Kenny
Angela	Lois and Pam Dotter	Family & Friends of Noah Lynch
Jacqui	Katie	Family & Friends of Mary Connolly
Joel	Char Hannon	Family & Friends of Tom Tannar
Debbie Collins	Irene & Walter	Peg & Charlie Ostrander
Jeanna B.	Charles	The Levesque Family
Aunt Kathy	John Lilly	Tanya
Eric	Aunt Gwen	Steve Perry
Sarah Kazim	Robin and Laura	Frankie Notarbartolo
Joan Person	Uncle Al & Aunt Deb	Melissa and Tiffany Wallace
Brian J.	Paul S.	Ann and George Schmidt
Beverly Newell	Don & Heather C.	Charles Gobron
Anna Hayes	Mary Cerreto	Susan Eck and family
John Sullivan	Connie Sullivan	Richard Conway
Ronnie	Phil Jennings	Abigail Brewer
Jane Hall	Faye Bishop	Doug & Barbara Shirley
Jenna Hayes	Tommy Hannon	Audra, Nate & Rowan Mackey
Abby Robbins	Paul	Alice Bridinger
Natalie Friend	Anne	Pat & Jane Conaway
Jayne Hayes	Molly	Peace for the world and in everyone's day
Myriam's Mom	Evelyn and Family	All immigrant families seeking justice
Robbins Family	Mike McCormick	The people of Ukraine & Russia
Jackie Snizek	Malfrid Abrahamsen	The people of Santa Maria Tzeja
Mark Sullivan	Bob Brown	Angels of Hope in Uganda
Dorothy Young		Overdose victims

The prayer list is updated periodically. If you find a name has been rotated off the list for whom you would like continuing prayers, please contact Prayer List Coordinator Linda Champion at lchampion17@gmail.com or the office at 508-653-0971. Also, if a known issue has been resolved, please let us know. Thank you to all for your care and prayers.

Welcome To Worship at FCC Natick!

Offering. Every week we practice the spiritual discipline of generosity by sharing our financial resources. We call this the Offering. We offer multiple ways to give. In person we pass the plate through the congregation, where donations by cash and check are welcome. By mail, checks may be sent to the church office. Online (get there using the *QR code* or by visiting ucc.fccnatick.org/give), you may give using a credit card. But if this is your first time with us, please consider yourself our guest and just pass the plate along. If you'd like to learn more about money at FCCN, please see the pastor.



Communion. We usually celebrate communion on the first Sunday of the month. Folks online are invited to have a bit of food and drink handy. In person, we serve communion in several different ways, so the worship leader will instruct you. Our communion table is open to all who find meaning there, regardless of age, membership, or belief.

Photography/Videography Policy. Sunday worship is livestreamed via local cable access. In addition, we occasionally take video or photography during worship and elsewhere on the church property. By your presence, you grant FCCN unrestricted rights to use and publish, transmit, or telecast images that may be taken of you for use in communication related to the church. Please contact the church office (508-653-0971 or admin@fccnatick.org) with questions or concerns.

Name Tags. Please consider wearing a **name tag** – and a pronoun pin! Nametags are on the board in the elevator lobby (ground floor) and upper vestibule of the Sanctuary. If you don't yet have a nametag or are missing yours, make a note on the sheet and one will be on the lobby board next week. We want our church to be a place where everyone knows your name!

The LINK e-Newsletter. The LINK is emailed to subscribers every Tuesday and Friday. Please subscribe to the LINK, to stay in the loop. The Community LINK goes out Tuesdays (with happenings in Natick beyond the church). The Worship LINK goes out Fridays (and is more focused on the goings on in the congregation and that Sunday's service). It's free to subscribe: use the QR code or go to ucc.fccnatick.org/subscribe.



Hybrid Worship. Many folks worship from home, at least from time to time. Join us live online (ucc.fccnatick.org/livestream). Natick residents can join us through local access cable (Comcast Xfinity 22, Verizon Fios 29, RCN 03). You can also find worship recordings on our website: (ucc.fccnatick.org/worship-video).

Calendar, News, and Program information at FCCnatick.org.

Welcome To Worship at FCC Natick!

Open and Affirming. FCCN is an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation, affirming the dignity and worth of every person. We welcome everyone into full participation, including people of every ability, race, culture, gender, economic circumstance, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.

Denominational Affiliation: FCCN is a member of the **United Church of Christ**, a liberal Protestant denomination within the Christian tradition. It offers for reflection a traditional Statement of Faith, yet values the individual's right and ability to prayerfully and thoughtfully determine what to believe regarding the Bible, God, creation, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, etc. The UCC values outreach and justice work. It seeks to be inclusive. Authority is held by members of the local congregation, not the church's pastor or national staff.

Children and youth. Children and youth are always welcome in our worship services. The *Prayground* down front has a great view and quiet activities. Midway through worship, children ages 3 through grade six are invited to join in for Sunday School: preschoolers through kids in grade 3 explore sacred story through the *Godly Play* curriculum, and youth in grades 4 through 6 participate in our *Connect* program. If they wish, parents may accompany their child to the classroom, then return to the Sanctuary. Parents are encouraged to attend coffee hour after worship, then pick up their child from their classroom at 11:45 am. (Staffed *nursery care* is also available near the sanctuary throughout the service: ask an usher for directions or information.)

First Congregational Church of Natick (FCCN) Staff

Pastor

Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry
revcindyfccn@gmail.com
508-653-0971

Director of Spiritual Vitality and Congregational Care

Sarallyn Keller
sarallyn@fccnatick.org
508-740-3134

Church Office

Colleen King, Office Administrator
admin@fccnatick.org
508-653-0971

Minister of Music

Thomas Foster
music@fccnatick.org

Sunday Nursery Staff

Grace Seiche

Outreach Minister

Rev. Dr. John Weagraff

Financial Assistant

Cynthia Hamwey

FCCnatick.org