

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.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2024

The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved –
loved for ourselves, or rather,
loved in spite of ourselves.
-Victor Hugo

PRELUDE

Once He Came in Blessing
Thomas Foster, organ

J.S. Bach

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry

CALL TO WORSHIP

Bill Ramage

One: We are waiting

All: for hope to be real

One: We are waiting

All: for peace with justice

One: We are waiting

All: for all people to know joy

One: We are waiting

All: for love without end

One: we are waiting, God,

All: we are waiting for you.

* OPENING HYMN 114

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Veni Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, thou Day-spring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Refrain

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show and cause us in her ways to go.

refrain

O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one the heart and mind
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

refrain

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH: LOVE

Kim Nicholson

SUNG RESPONSE (Hymn No. 611 verse. 4, *Hope is a Star*)

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 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.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 1:46-55

WORD FOR ALL AGES

MUSICAL RESPONSE

READING My Soul is Alive with Thoughts of God by Rev. M. Barclay

REFLECTION Love Is Worth the Risk Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry

MUSICAL RESPONSE

GATHERING OUR COMMUNITY IN PRAYER

JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

PRAYER OF JESUS

Our God, who art 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.
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.

ALLELUIA

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 137**

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Mendelssohn

Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King;
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing “Glory to the newborn King!”

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail the incarnate Deity,
pleased on earth with us to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing “Glory to the newborn King!”

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise all souls on earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing “Glory to the newborn King!”

BLESSING

POSTLUDE

Comfort, Comfort, Ye My People

Georg Boehm

Christmas Eve Offering

Our Christmas offering this year will support the MetroWest Free Medical Program, which has served the MetroWest area for 20 years. The Program serves as an entry point to the healthcare system for those that are uninsured or insufficiently insured.

The Christmas offering will be received during Christmas Eve worship, December 24 at 7 pm. You can also participate in the Christmas offering by [giving online \(https://fccnatick.org/giving/\)](https://fccnatick.org/giving/) or sending a check directly to the church, with “*Christmas offering*” in the memo line.



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA DEDICATIONS

Merry Christmas and Peace to all.

June & Hank Szretter

*In loving memory of my husband, Lawrence,
and my son, John.*

Myrna Bartlett

*With prayers for all women and girls whose access
to healthcare is limited or denied.*

*Gail Martin & Carolyn
Williams*

Peace on Earth and Merry Christmas to all.

Sharon & Ric

*Joy and good cheer in memory of loved ones
with us in spirit.*

*Pam Weagraff
& Ulrike Mende*

In memory of cherished loved ones.

*Linda Champion &
Gerald Granfors*

*Remembering Dick, husband and Dad, at Christmas
as we do every day. Just as he thought of us every day
and lived to love and care for us all.*

*Linda MacFarlane
and Family*

*In honor of Rev. John Lilly who shone God's Light
and Love to everyone. His inspiration lives on.*

Nate & Jeannine Keedy

*In loving memory of my dad,
a frequent Santa impersonator.*

Beth Canterbury

With loving support of the Gurvich-Lifton family.

*The Canterbury/
van Geel family*





CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA DEDICATIONS

*Remembering our son, Chris Gobron, with
unending love during this Christmas Season*

For the memory of loved ones.

Rejoice Friends and Family!

Thanksgiving for all that FCC does.

*To the Glory of God, in celebration of life
and in memory of loved ones.*

In loving memory of Barbara and Olin Hayes.

Joy to the World!

In honor of loved ones. May there be peace on earth.

*In honor of friends and family, past, present, and
future.*

In loving memory of Ron.

*Laura & Charles
Gobron*

The Evers Family

Amy & Neal Foley

*Kirsten & Lane
McDonough*

*Wayne & Jeanette
Szretter*

*Laura & Charles
Gobron*

Sara & Doug Hanna

The Levesque Family

Seiche Family

Brightie & family



Calendar for Dec. 22 – Dec. 29, 2024

More at fccnatick.org/events

- Sun., Dec. 22** 9:00AM *Adult Faith Group*
10:30AM *Worship w/ Rev. Cindy in the sanctuary*
11:30AM *Post-Worship Fellowship: Coffee Hour in Vestry*
- Tues., Dec. 24** 7:00PM *Christmas Eve Candlelight Service in the sanctuary*
- Wed., Dec. 25** **Christmas Day** [church office closed: 12/25-1/1; re-opens 1/2/25]
- Thurs., Dec. 26** 7:00PM *Centering Prayer Circle via Zoom*
- Sun., Dec. 29** 9:00AM *Adult Faith Group*
10:30AM *Annual New Year Brunch and Communion Service in the Vestry*

Thanks to Coffee Hour hosts Doug and Sara Hanna

ADVENT & EPHIPHANY EVENTS

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Tues., December 24, 7 PM in the Sanctuary

A service with candles and carols.

New Year Brunch/Communion Service

Sun., December 29, 10:30 AM in the Vestry

Save the Date: Welcome in another year with our Annual FCC New Year Brunch and Communion Service. Join us for a worship and communion service embedded in a festive brunch experience. **We could also use some help - we need:** A set-up crew (the day before on Sat, Dec 28, time TBD); shopping (for the brunch extras like fruit salad and juice); at home bakers (for strata or baked french toast - recipes provided); brunch crew (Sun, Dec 29 ~ 9:30-noon); and clean-up crew (after the event). Contact Heather Seiche heathersfs@gmail.com volunteer to be on this awesome crew!

Epiphany Worship-combined with area churches

Sun., January 5, 10:30 AM in the Sanctuary

Four churches gather to celebrate Epiphany! First Congregational and Eliot Churches in Natick, Edwards and Plymouth Churches in Framingham have invited Matt Crane, Executive Director of Hospitality Common, Inc. HCI currently provides evening adult ESL classes and weekly meals to folks in the Metro West and is expanding to offer housing for new refugees in our community. Stay for refreshments and further conversation after the service. A program for children (ages 3-grade 6) runs concurrently with worship

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.

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

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