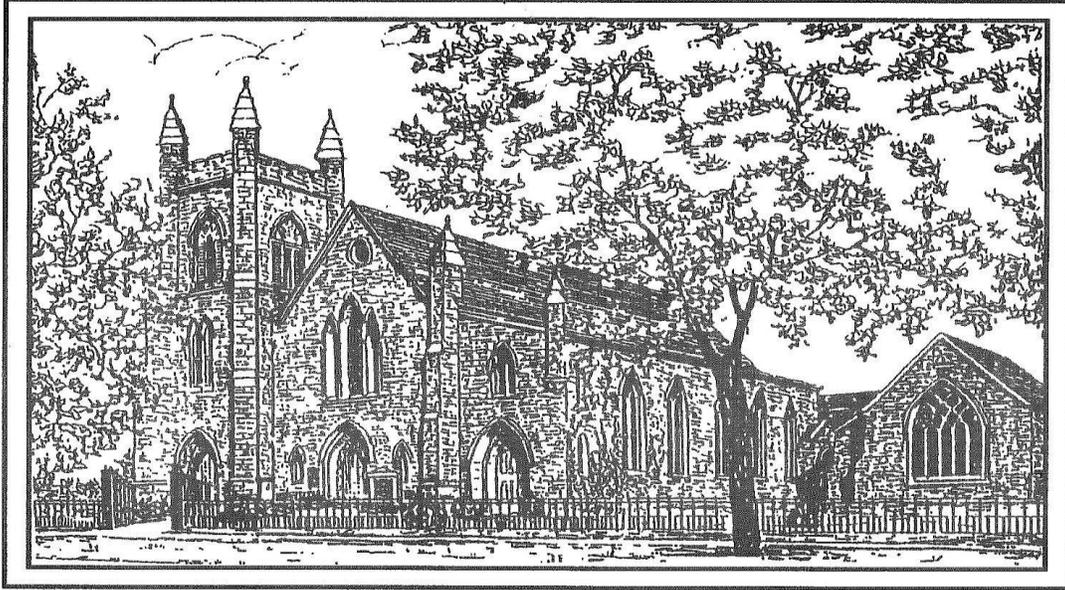


# First Congregational Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ



Founded in 1680

*Living the Love and Justice of Jesus*

An Epiphany Service with Holy Communion  
January 4, 2026 ~ 10:00 am

**Prelude**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Introit**

**Bringing Forth the Light of Christ**

Acolytes

**\*Call to Worship**

One: Rise and shine—the Light is revealed. God’s dwelling is now among us. From the sea comes abundance, from the desert comes hope. All creation moves toward joy.

**Many: I lift up my eyes. We lift up our eyes. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.**

One: Like frankincense, we offer our prayers, that our longing may breathe with God’s longing, that our voices rise with all who seek peace.

**Many: I lift up my eyes. We lift up our eyes. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.**

One: Like myrrh, we offer compassion—balm for the broken, mercy for the wounded. Where rivalries have ruled, grace now gathers; the scattered come home, nations share their treasures.

**Many: I lift up my eyes. We lift up our eyes. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.**

One: Let us desire what God desires—life for all creation, justice that sets every captive free, and joy where justice is fulfilled. The end of God’s justice is joy. The end of God’s compassion is peace.

**Many: God’s dwelling is now among us. I lift up my eyes. We lift up our eyes. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord! Amen.**

**\*Invocation**

**Radiant and Revealing God, you dwell not in temples or thrones but among us. You are the Star that stirs our seeking, the Presence that refuses to be hidden, the Word made flesh in neighbor and stranger alike. As we gather, let your justice take root in our hearts, your joy rises on our lips, your compassion steadies our hands, and your peace settles upon this world you so dearly love. Lift up our eyes, O Holy One, so that we may see as you see— creation radiant, humanity restored, and your dwelling now among us. Amen.**

**\*Prayer for Transformation**

**Holy One who dwells among us, you call us to rise, to see, and to rejoice—yet too often we turn inward, protecting our comfort instead of pursuing your justice. When your radiance invites us to lift up our eyes, we close them against the pain of the world. When your abundance flows like the sea, we grasp rather than share. When your caravans of mercy draw near, we hesitate to join the journey. Forgive us, O God. Transform the fear that keeps us small and turn it into courage that acts with compassion. Renew the weariness that dims our hope and turns it into joy. By your grace, we will be made new. Amen.**

**Words of Assurance**

**\*Hymn**

“Brightest and Best”

NCH#157

**Welcoming a New Member—Ray Battcher**

Minister: We invite Ray to come forward to join our covenanted community of faith.

Minister: Welcome, Ray, you who come in Christ’s name.

Deacons: You bring us new insights and energy. You open us to a wider world.

**Congregation: So here, in this sacred space, we welcome you, for where path cross and pilgrims gather, there is much to share and celebrate.**

Minister: Together let us recite our covenant as it has been expressed, affirmed, and practiced from the earliest days of our denomination:

**All: We covenant with the Lord and with one another and do bind ourselves in the presence of God, to walk together in all the ways which are revealed to us by God, as the Word is made known to us.**

*(Adapted from the Salem Church Covenant, 1629)*

Minister and

Deacons: Do you so promise, covenant, and agree?

**Candidate: I do, God being my helper.**

**Congregation: We welcome you with joy as partners in the common life of this church following Jesus Christ. We promise you our friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of this church. God grant that loving and being loved, serving and being served, forgiving and being forgiven, offering grace and receiving grace, we may dwell together in love, unity, and hope. Amen.**

**An Old Testament Reading**

Isaiah 60:1-6

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples, but the Lord will arise upon you, and glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light and rulers to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together; they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried in their nurses’ arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you; the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

Reader: For the Word of God in Scripture,  
for the Word of God among us,  
for the Word of God within us

**ALL: THANKS BE TO GOD!**

### **A Gospel Reading**

Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, or so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Reader: For the Word of God in Scripture,  
for the Word of God among us,  
for the Word of God within us

**ALL: THANKS BE TO GOD!**

### **\*Hymn**

"We Three Kings of Orient Are"

PH #143

*(The Deacons will collect the prayer request cards during the hymn.)*

### **Message**

"And There, Ahead of Them, Went the Star in the East"

Rev. Dr. Nancy Hamlin Soukup

### **Sharing of Joys and Concerns**

### **Pastoral Prayer**

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father 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 and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

### **Prayer Response**

**Lord, listen to your children praying,  
Lord, send your spirit in this place;  
Lord, listen to your children praying, send  
us love, send us power, send us grace.**

### **Offertory Invitation**

### **The Offertory**

**\*The Doxology PH #515**

Old Hundredth

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;  
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

**Radiant God, we thank you for the gifts that flow like rivers, for the abundance that rises from the sea, for the courage to give and to receive. Bless now these offerings and the hearts from which they come. Let them join the caravans of compassion moving through this world, bringing joy where despair has lingered, and peace where fear has taken root. God's dwelling is now among us. May our lives shine with the glory of God, our hands carry God's grace, and our gifts become good news for all creation. Amen.**

**\*Hymn**

“O Morning Star, How Clear and Bright”

NCH #158

**Holy Communion**

**Invitation to Communion**

**Words of Institution**

**Sharing the Elements**

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**

**Eternal God, you sent Mary on a journey to Egypt and led Hagar through the desert. You lit the wilderness way for Moses and produced manna for his family. Send us into this new year with fire to see by, bread to live by, and family to travel with, as we follow the star in the East. Where you go, O Lord, we will go; and where we lodge, you will lodge, for we are your people, and you are our God. Amen.**

**\*Closing Hymn**

“Arise, Your Light Is Come”

NCH #164

**\*Benediction**

**\*Benediction Response**

*Amen, amen, Amen,  
amen, amen.*

**Carrying the Light of Christ into the World**

**\*Postlude**

*~ Leading Worship today is the Rev. Dr. Nancy Hamlin Soukup ~  
~ Our Music Director and Organist is Nikita Zabinski ~  
~ Our greeters today are Janine Beausoleil, Eleanor Ingraham & Clifford Gustafson ~*

*Please join us for fellowship hour following Worship*

NCH = New Century Hymnal (black hymnal) and PH = Pilgrim Hymnal (red hymnal)

Sources and Credits: Hymn tune names - as well as composers of the music and authors of the text - are listed in the hymnals with each hymn. CCLI License #1958911 and One License.Net #A-728124.

Sources: Prayers from this service were written by or adapted from the following: Rev. Michael Anthony Howard, Lift Up: Service Prayers for Epiphany Year A, Worship Ways, Epiphany A - January 6 - United Church of Christ; Rev. Ian Elston, [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/18473/12\\_January\\_2014.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/18473/12_January_2014.pdf); re:Worship: Epiphany; Jeanyne Sletton, Communion Prayer, Process & Faith, Center for Process Studies, Process & Faith, Used by permission; and Benjamin, an M.Div student at Mercer University, <http://moonhat.blogspot.com/>, re:Worship: Epiphany.



## **Prayer List for Sunday, January 4, 2026**

### **For cares and concerns in the world:**

Members of our local community who are experiencing food insecurity as well as frustration about access to health care and or those who may be affected by a government shutdown

The Palestinian and Israeli people that they will be able to broker a lasting peace from the fragile negotiations in the ancient land of our spiritual ancestors

Peace in the Ukraine

Prayers for all victims of violence

Prayers for those who have lost their way may have wisdom, courage, and strength

### **For those in need of healing on our prayer list:**

Tony Morettini, who is in the hospital after a bad fall

Juan Morales

Patrick McLean Blackburn

Our congregation family as we recover from the fire on October 31

Mary Ann, who is recovering after surgery, and for all those who are preparing for surgery and are recovering from their procedures

Angel Rose, a local teenager who is in the hospital after neurosurgery and for her family

Bill Walsh, who is at the VA Hospital

Tommy, who is dealing with a degenerative muscular disorder

Sug Grant, who is undergoing evaluation for cancer treatment

Sally Evans, who is preparing for surgery in January

Ronald Blackburn, Rev. Nancy's brother-in-law, who is in hospice care, and her brother Alan Dana Soukup

Kathy Conoway, Sug Grant's niece, who has Stage 4 Breast Cancer, which had been in remission but has probably reoccurred

Kathy, Jen Johnson's cousin, who decided to return home against her doctor's recommendation; prayers for her safety and for Jen's Uncle Paul's safety as he tries to care for Kathy

Kristen, calling on all available angels to gather around Kristen as she undergoes extensive chemotherapy treatments with a minimum of pain and discomfort

Camille Pansa

Sarah, Celeste's niece, who is nine years old and is waiting for a liver transplant

Steve, Amanda, and Elliana Wiacek, Ed Wiacek's son and family, who have begun a three-year diplomatic tour at the U.S. Embassy in Manila, Philippines.

Nick Chaccone, for recovery

Ryan Higgins, Lilly Kilvert's son-in-law, who has Leukemia

A beloved son, who is suffering from Leukemia

Marty Costianes

Renee that she may find resolutions to issues pressing in on her

Claudia and her family, as she enters hospice

Scott, Brenda, and Cameron, who need divine guidance and strength to follow God's path for them

Max, for healing and freedom, and for his Mom  
 Robin Vestal, who has Stage 4 Duodenal Cancer, and her husband Ulysses, who are friends  
 of the Grant family  
 Rusty, who has Lung Cancer  
 Ellie's Dad, who she misses  
 Carol, Karen's cousin, who had brain surgery  
 Carrigan, who has cancer, and for Carrigan's nurse, Kristen, who is also  
 being treated for breast cancer  
 Ken Latham in Leicester, MA, who is on chemotherapy for Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma  
 Harriet  
 Ryan  
 Mark E., who has an aggressive form of prostate cancer  
 Fred Davis, who has stomach cancer  
 Meriel Smith  
 Charlotte Griffith  
 Kellie and Juan Morales's daughter  
 Bruce C., who is in rehab, and Pat P., both friends of Ed Wiacek

### **For those who have died and for their families:**

Thanksgiving for the life of Rev. Nancy's brother-in-law, Ronald Blackburn, who died on  
 Saturday, and for Nancy's sister Betty and her nephew Patrick

### **Upcoming Birthdays:**

Adria Sartrys 01/16	Steve Walsh 01/17	Lisa Andrade 01/18
Karen Griffith-Dieterich 01/21	Ryan Gamon 01/23	Mikey McGowan-Roach 01/23
Kara Pisasale 01/23	Glenn L. Donovan 01/25	Anne Archibald 01/27
Mike Oglo 01/28	Jarrold Riccio 01/28	Meredith Stone 01/29
Anthony Morettini 01/29	Sally Evans 01/31	

### **What's on the Church Calendar**

<b>January 04, 2026</b>	<b>Sunday Worship 10:00am</b>
January 06, 2026	Tuesday Prayer Shawl Circle Facilities Committee Meeting 7:00pm (Dimond Room)
January 07, 2026	Wednesday FCC Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm (Dimond Room)
January 08, 2026	Thursday Deacons' Meeting 7:00pm (Guiteras House)
January 09, 2025	Friday Trivia Night 7:00pm
January 10, 2026	Saturday Flower Committee un-deck the Church 9:30am
<b>January 11, 2026</b>	<b>Sunday Worship 10:00am</b>
January 13, 2026	Ground Hog Band Rehearsal after worship (Dimond Room) Tuesday Church Council Meeting 6:30pm (Dimond Room)
January 14, 2026	Wednesday FCC Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm (Dimond Room)
<b>January 18, 2026</b>	<b>Sunday Worship 10:00am</b>
January 21, 2026	Ground Hog Band Rehearsal after worship (Diamond Room) Wednesday FCC Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm (Dimond Room)
January 24, 2026	Saturday Bristol Stone Church Coffee House (DeWolf Room)
<b>January 25, 2026</b>	<b>Sunday Worship 10:00am</b>
January 28, 2026	Ground Hog Band Rehearsal after worship (Diamond Room) Wednesday FCC Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm (Dimond Room)

Please visit our website for more information about the Church  
And Events go to [fccbristol.org](http://fccbristol.org)



### **First Congregational Church at 300 High St. Bristol, RI**

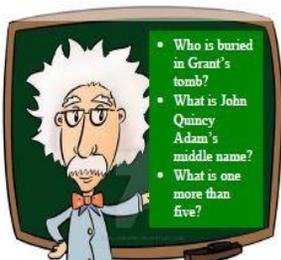
*Team Trivia Night*

*This Friday, January 9, 2025 @ 7PM*

**Ask Friends and Family and Come Join the Fun  
Up to 8 Per Team**

- *Up to 8 per Team*
- *No Charge*
- *Bring Snacks and a Beverage*
- *Light Refreshments and Snacks will be available*
- *Prizes for the Top Finishers*
- *Call (401) 253-4813 to pre-register*

*your team or send an email to [dubordrjd@cox.net](mailto:dubordrjd@cox.net)*



### **Bristol's Stone Church Coffeehouse Presents**

*An Evening of Folk Music Featuring  
Ellis Paul*



*Photo Credit: Jack Looney*

**Saturday, January 24, 2026**

Doors open at 6:45pm  
Music starts at 7:30pm

**First Congregational Church  
300 High Street  
(Corner of Bradford and High St)  
Bristol, RI 02809**

Tickets are \$25.00; Students are Half Price; Children 5 and Under are Free  
Seating is Limited and Early Reservations are Recommended.  
Please Call 401-253-4813 for reservations or ticket information.



## **KEEP THOSE RECEIPTS COMING**

### **A Community Partners Program with Clements Marketplace**



Clements Marketplace at 1150 Hope Street in Bristol is engaged in their Community Partners Program. Twenty-seven years ago, they began this effort at their other locations to support organizations and groups in the area. By saving and submitting your Clements' shopping receipts, you help support First Congregational Church.

Where do I drop off my receipts? At First Congregational Church in an envelope marked receipts that is pinned to the bulletin boards in the Wardwell Room near the church kitchen and/or in the Narthex (the entrance of the church).

**Please save those Clements' receipts** and join with us in their Community Partners Program to benefit First Congregational Church! Please.

Church Office (401) 253-7288 • [Office@FCCBristol.org](mailto:Office@FCCBristol.org) • Church location: 300 High St. • Office location: 281 High Street • Bristol, Rhode Island 02809



The Groundhog is coming. *This is an invitation to join the First Congregational Church 32<sup>ND</sup> Annual Groundhog Day February 1, 2026, Snow date February 8, 2026*

The groundhog is safely asleep in his underground chamber. It is up to us to awaken him on Sunday, February 1, 2026. Snow date is February 8, 2026.

The Groundhog Band will started rehearsals every Sunday at 11:15 in the Dimond Room until the performance. The full schedule is below.

If you do not have your instrument or music, please see me. If you need to borrow an instrument, accommodations can be made with help from Mt Hope High and KMS music departments.

All instrumentalists are invited, no matter your experience. If you know someone who plays or played an instrument, give them a shove toward the rehearsal.

When we meet, we will rehearse in the church, play for the gathering music, play the hymns during the service, and then head for the Veterans Home for an 11:45 performance. Vocalists are encouraged to attend and sing with the band for the veterans.

Remember: "Every note you give us is one more note that we have, that we would not have without you."

Bennett Burnham  
253-8530 HBur700343@aol.com

Rehearsal and Performance Schedule will be listed

January 11 <sup>th</sup>	After Worship in Dimond room
January 18 <sup>th</sup>	After Worship in Dimond room
January 25 <sup>th</sup>	After Worship in Dimond Room
January 31 <sup>st</sup>	Saturday at 9:00am in the sanctuary
February 1 <sup>th</sup>	8:00am before Church
February 2 <sup>th</sup>	10:00am Worship

Snow Date February 7 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday at 9:00am in the sanctuary
February 8 <sup>th</sup>	8:00am before Church 10:00am Worship 11:45am Veterans home.

### **"Invitation to Share Time, Talent, and Treasure"**

When you give to First Congregational Church, you make possible our ministries that serve all God's people. Your gifts share the love of Jesus all year long. The act of giving is our personal expression of worship and also keeps our church financially healthy.

Stewardship is not payment for services rendered. It is an act of faith and devotion to God.

You may go to the following link to give now: <https://fccbristol.org/support-us/>.



Would all member please update your Pledges for 2025  
And if you haven't already please pass in your 2026 pledge Cards. Would you please.  
*Thank you from your Stewardship Committee.*

**Church Office Hours** are Tuesday – Friday 9:00am – 2:00pm

Office e-mail address: [office@FCCBristol.org](mailto:office@FCCBristol.org)

### **Pastoral Office Hours**

You may also schedule an appointment by contacting Rev. Nancy. Church office line 401/253-7288 or e-mail [office@FCCbristol.org](mailto:office@FCCbristol.org)