



**First Church of Christ in Mansfield
(Congregational) United Church of Christ**

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Ministers: All the Members of the Church
The Rev. Charles Ericson, Intentional Interim Minister
Erik Haeger, Organist
Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator

**December 7, 2025 ~ The Second Sunday of Advent
Communion Sunday**

Welcome to Our Guests!

*We're delighted you have joined us for worship; the members are the ministers of this church...
if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask us!*

Playing the Chimes

Greeting and Announcements

Prelude

Erik Haeger

Centering in the Spirit

Dave Litrico

One: Family of faith, God is at work!

All: God is healing and creating,

One: redeeming and dreaming,

All: calling and sending,

One: listening and loving.

All: Yes, indeed, God is at work!

One: So may we worship our God who never gives up.

All: May we worship our God who holds onto hope. Amen.

Procession of the Children

Light a Candle for Peace

by Shelley Murley (adapted)

Light a can - dle for peace, light a can - dle for peace,
light a can - dle that shines all a - way a-round the world.
Light a can - dle for me, light a can - dle for you,
that our wish for world peace will one day come true.



Lighting of the Advent Candle:

Peace

Cheryl Chase

One: In a world full of fear, where do you see glimmers of peace?

All: We see glimmers of peace in the quiet of early morning, when people shake hands, when loved ones say they're sorry, and when the church sings together.

One: You are right. Even in a fearful world, peace is all around us. Today we light the candle of peace as a reminder of this good news. May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, peace is present. We only have to look for it.

(Lighting of the candle by the Puccini family)

A: Thanks be to God! Amen.

*Opening Hymn

Christians All, Your Lord Is Coming

CH136

Prayer for Transformation

On-the-move God, we have every reason to hold onto hope. We have every reason to believe that spring will come, that flowers will bloom, that the sun will rise. And yet, too often hope slips through our fingers. With anxious hearts we cry out to you, "Will change ever come? Will things ever get better? Will I ever make a difference?" Soothe our wandering hearts and show us the places where the sun is shining. Show us the places where you are on the move. With open hearts we pray, amen.

moment of silence

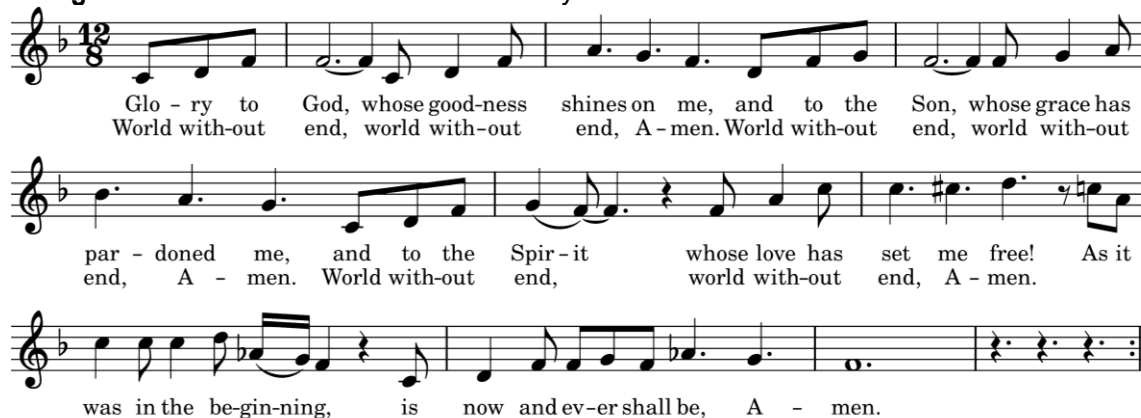
Words of Grace

Family of faith, in our honesty, we are heard. In our worries, we are held. In our failings, we are forgiven. In our fear, we are not alone. Friends, this is the good news of the gospel! When we're running out of hope, God is still at work. Thanks be to God! Amen.

*Song of Praise

Glory to God

Paul Vasile



Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 43:19-21

19 I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. 20 The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, 21 the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

Gospel

Matthew 11:1-11

11 Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities. 2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" 4 Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. 6 And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." 7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. 9 What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' 11 "Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Reflection

"Camel's Hair or Soft Robes?"

Rev. Chuck Ericson

Hymn

"Comfort, Comfort, You My People"

CH122**Reading (Poem)***"God in the Kitchen" by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed*

Julie Menard

I called home my first semester of college. I told my mom I was fine,
but I was homesick. She must have heard the truth in my voice.
The ache ate at me. It was a long, slow song, a million tiny ants
slurping the juice from a peach. I was tender and bruised,
in the doldrums of it all. But she could hear all of that. So three states away,
she preheated the oven. Three states away,
she tossed blueberries in a thin layer of flour. Three states away,
she dusted a layer of streusel over the soft peaks
of a dozen warm muffins. And three days later,
I unboxed a package from home—
a dozen blueberry muffins, a love letter with my name on it,
a reminder that I was not alone.
If you're running out of hope, count to three.
God is in the kitchen. She's just waiting for yeast to rise.

Call to Prayer

Hear Us O Lord

Don Besig and Nancy Price



Prayers of the People and the Prayer of Jesus

Please pray the Prayer of Jesus in whatever language is comfortable for you.

The following are offered as examples...

**Our Father/Mother/Creator,
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 debts/sins/trespasses,
as we forgive our debtors/those who sin/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.**

Invitation to Generosity

Peace makes us generous. God's abundance pours through us to our neighbors, just as God's love showers us with blessing. As each of us gives what we can, we know that our community is only as resilient as our most vulnerable neighbor.

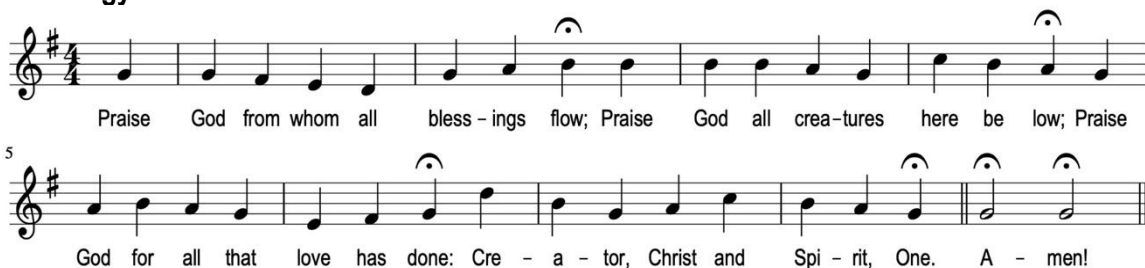
*Your financial offerings may be placed in the collection plates as they come around,
or mailed to: First Church of Christ in Mansfield UCC, PO Box 36, Mansfield Center, CT 06250.*

Musical Offering

"Walk in the Light" by Karen Marrolli

Choir

*Doxology



*Prayer of Dedication

**Emmanuel, hear our prayer! We bring these gifts before you to spread peace throughout our homes, our communities, and our world. On every street corner, beside rivers, lakes, oceans, at the top of your tallest mountains, and dwelling below the cliffs, your people are in need. Take these gifts to strengthen our church and bring relief to your beloved children.
Amen**

Invitation to Communion

Friends, did you ever have a moment growing up when you walked into the school cafeteria, panned the faces in the crowd, and wondered if you were going to have a place to sit?

Did you ever have a moment, maybe as a new student or at the start of a new school year, when fear nibbled at the back of your mind because you weren't sure where you belonged?

I imagine, at some point or another, most of us have experienced that kind of fear. But here at this Table you never have to wonder.

Here at this Table, there is enough room, enough food, enough love for everyone.

Here at this Table, Jesus is standing up on his chair, waving his hands over his head, saying to each of you, "I saved you a seat!"

Here at this Table, you are wanted and welcomed. You are safe and loved.

Here at this Table, you belong.

So my friends, there is no need for fear here, for this is a joyful feast.

And you are invited. Come. All are welcome.

The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

With-us God,

We live in a fearful world.

If we're honest, we come to this Table today with the taste of fear on our tongues.

We come to this Table carrying our anxiety.

We come to this Table asking for guidance.

We come to this Table with all of life's "what-ifs."

But you do not disregard our fear.

You do not brush it under the rug or call us foolish.

You do not ignore the realities in front of us.

You do not dish out hurtful platitudes, telling us to "toughen up" or "power through."

Instead, you meet us here.

You listen to our fears.

You remind us that we are not alone.

You surround us with people who love us.

You show us where we are strong.

You walk beside us.

And you give us a new song to sing.

So today we pray, gracious God:

replace the fear on our tongues with words of hope and songs of joy.

As we come to this Table, pour out your Spirit on this bread and cup.

Remind us that even in a fearful world, you are on the move.

Remind us that even in a fearful world, you are here,

inviting us to the Table,

nourishing our spirits,

reminding us that we belong,

calling us by name.

Instill that good news in us, for this is a joyful feast.

Fear is not the loudest voice today.

What a gift that is.

Musical Response

Santo Santo Santo

CH111

San - to, san - to, san - to. Mi co - ra - zon te a - do - ra! Mi
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly. My heart, my heart a - dores you! My

5
co - ra - zon te sa - be de - cir: San - to eres, Se - nor!
heart knows how to say to you: Ho - ly are you, Lord!

Sharing the Bread and Cup

All are welcome at Christ's table; we offer non-alcoholic juice and gluten-free bread.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Loving God,

In a world racked with fear, you gather us together. You set the table. You meet us here. You nourish our bodies as you nourish our spirits. You remind us that this is a joyful feast, and that fear cannot win every time. So with renewed courage, with renewed hope, with renewed conviction, send us out into the world. Help us to feed others as you have fed us. With gratitude we pray, Amen.

*Closing Hymn

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

God rest ye merry gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember Christ our Savior
Was born on Christmas Day
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray
Oh tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
Oh tidings of comfort and joy

In Bethlehem, in Israel
This blessed Babe was born
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessed morn
The which His Mother Mary
Did nothing take in scorn
Oh tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
Oh tidings of comfort and joy

Fear not then, said the Angel
Let nothing you affright
This day is born a Savior
Of a pure Virgin bright
To free all those who trust in Him
From Satan's pow'r and might
Oh tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
Oh tidings of comfort and joy

*Benediction

Now may God bless you and keep you;
May God's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you;
May God's countenance be lifted up upon you and give you peace. Amen.

***Passing the Peace**

The peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, is with you always.

And also with you.

Let us share with one another a sign of that peace.

Postlude

Much of this morning's liturgy is used by permission granted by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

The Invitation to Generosity and Prayer of Dedication were written by the Rev. Michelle L. Torigian, senior pastor of St. Paul United Church of Christ, Belleville, Illinois, for Worship Ways on www.ucc.org

Our greeters this morning are Janna Pedersen and Julie Menard

Our cantor is Laurel Thurman.

The choir is directed by Cathie Rowe.

Our Communion servers are Jo-Ann Wunschel, David Darnell, Julie Menard, Steve Lane

Coffee Hour hosts are David Darnell and Gary Cote.

About this year's Advent theme & series from Sanctified Art LLC

WHAT DO YOU FEAR? INSISTING ON HOPE THIS ADVENT

Luke's Gospel begins the story of Jesus with this opening line: "In the time of Herod..." This detail may seem minor to modern readers; however, it reveals layers of information about the fearful world Jesus entered, one filled with rampant oppression, economic disparity, uncertainty, and instability. A world not so unlike our own. And yet, throughout the stories of Christ's birth, we hear the whispers of angels delivering a surprising message: "Do not fear."

ADVENT WEEK TWO:



John the Baptist sends word to Jesus from his prison cell, asking, "Are you the one?" John has spent his entire life preparing the way for Jesus; but from his prison cell, now certainly facing death, the future looks grim. Like John, even the most confident of us wonders from time to time: Is all this work worth it? Does anything I do matter? Am I on the right track? We can't always see the fruits of our labor, yet God is at work anyway. How might we, like Jesus and Isaiah, point to the places where God is at work in our world? How might we keep hope alive?

The Pastoral Search Committee is recommending that our congregation call the Reverend Donald Erickson as our next settled pastor.

Candidating Weekend will take place on December 13 & 14. In the UCC, this is the culmination of a church's pastoral search process. This weekend's events will include the candidate meeting with the church staff and the Governing Board, a social event (meet & greet) for the congregation, and the candidate's participation in the Sunday worship service, which is followed by a congregational vote on the candidate.

You are invited to the following events:

- **Saturday, December 13: 1:30-3:00 p.m.** - Informal social gathering in Fellowship Hall with light refreshments, giving our entire church family the opportunity to meet and get to know Rev. Erickson and his family.
- **Sunday, December 14: 10:15 a.m.** - Worship Service in the Sanctuary. Rev. Erickson will lead worship and preach the sermon.
- **Immediately Follow Sunday Worship:** A congregational meeting will be held in the Sanctuary. All church members in attendance will have the opportunity to ask questions of the Pastoral Search Committee and then vote on the call for Rev. Don to become our next pastor.
- A **Potluck Lunch** in Fellowship Hall will follow the congregational meeting.

THE WEEK AHEAD...

TODAY

10:15 a.m. Worship & Worship Circle; Communion
11:15 a.m. Second hour intergenerational Advent craft
3:00 p.m. Take Note! holiday concert

Wednesday, December 10

1:00 p.m. Book Group
5:00 p.m. Meditation Group

Thursday, December 11

5:00 p.m. Governing Board
7:00 p.m. Choir

Friday, December 12

Fellowship Hall inaccessible all day for floor cleaning

Saturday, December 13

9 a.m.-noon WAIM Work Day
12:30-1:30 p.m. Governing Board & Staff lunch with Rev. Don Erickson
1:30-3:00 p.m. Open House for congregation to meet Rev. Don Erickson
5:30 p.m. Worship Circle's Family Movie Night