



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

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All the Members, Ministers

Rev. Joseph Blotz, Pastor + Erik Haeger, Organist

Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS + DECEMBER 31, 2023

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!*

Chimes and Prelude

Welcoming the Light

Every year we celebrate Christmas.

Every month we break bread.

Every week we gather for worship.

Every day we count our blessings.

Every minute God is near.

Yes, every minute God is near.

These are the rituals of our faith.

Let us worship Holy God. .1

Welcome and Greeting

¹ Our Words for Worship this Advent were written by the Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Prayer of Confession

God of rhythms, we confess: our faith would not be what it is without rituals. Unlike you, we depend on bread and water. We have to return to this space again and again to hear old, familiar stories. For if we stopped, we know it would not take long before we lost our way. Forgive us for our fragility, and thank you for giving us ordinary rituals and rhythms to hold onto. With grateful and humble hearts we pray, Amen.

Friends, it is not enough to hear once a month or once a year that you are forgiven. We need to hear it every single week. Every single week we need to be reminded that we are held in God's loving embrace. So hear this good news: no matter where you are on your journey of life, love, or faith, and no matter what you have done or left undone, you belong to God.

We are loved. We are claimed. We are forgiven. We are sent to serve.

Amen.

Song of Praise*Doxology for the Weary*

CRANHAM



Praise the One Cre - a - tor, praise the Liv - ing Christ. Praise the Ho - ly Spi - rit,
 7
 praise both day and night. Praise when you are wea - ry, praise in times of joy.
 13
 Praise, my soul, with all your strength and your heart and voice.

Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;
 my whole being shall exult in my God,
 for God has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
 God has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
 as a one decks themselves with a garland on their wedding day,
 as one adorns themselves with their wedding jewels.
 For as the earth brings forth its shoots
 and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
 so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise

to spring up before all the nations.
 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
 and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
 until her vindication shines out like the dawn
 and her salvation like a burning torch.
 The nations shall see your vindication
 and all the rulers your glory,
 and you shall be called by a new name
 that the mouth of the Lord will give.
 You shall be a beautiful crown in the hand of the Lord
 and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Canticle Lord God Now Let Your Servants Depart in Peace Greg Scheer

Lord God, now let your ser-vants de - part in peace for our eyes have seen your sav - ing grace

8

A light to the world and the light of life seen in our Sa - vior's face

16

Al - le - lu - i - a! Al - le - lu - i - a! Al - le - lu - i - a!

Gospel Luke 2:21-38

When the eighth day came, it was time to circumcise the child, and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word,
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”

And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.”

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Poetry Prayer

Muscle Memory

Sarah Speed

When the world falls apart around me,
when the rug is pulled,
and the house is on fire,
when all I can do
is swallow the cry in my throat,
take me to the table.
Tell me how people have fed each other.
Tell me how they’ve torn the bread
with wrinkled hands
and children’s hands.
Tell me how they’ve said, This love is for you,
as they looked you in the eye.
Then take me to the font.
Float my hands in the pool.
Let me feel weightless.
Tell me to leave my burdens there.
Then take me to the front doors.
Remind me how we throw them open.
Take me to the creaky pews,
pews that have held the straightened spines
and silent prayers of so many.

Take me to church.
 Move me through the rituals.
 Tell me why it matters,
 so that next time,
 when someone else's world falls apart,
 I will have the muscle memory to share.

Call to Prayer

Creator of the Stars of Night

CH127

Cre - a - tor of the stars of night, your peo-ple's e - ver - last - ing light,
 O Christ, re-deem-er of us all, we pray you hear us when we call.

Prayers of the People for a New Year and the Prayer of Jesus

Please pray the Prayer of Jesus in whatever language is most 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.**

Musical Offering

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

CH153

*Offerings may be placed in the collection boxes at the entrances to our worship space,
 mailed to: First Church of Christ in Mansfield UCC. Box 36. Mansfield Center, CT 06250,
 or given online at www.myfcc.info*

Doxology

Praise God from whom all bless - ings flow; Praise God all crea - tures here be low; Praise
 God for all that love has done: Cre - a - tor, Christ and Spi - rit, One. A - men!

Prayer of Dedication

Accept, O God, this money offered, these gifts given, the goodwill of our hearts, that disappointment may be turned to hope, and worry may be turned to joy, as we celebrate with wonder the birth of Christ. Amen.

Hymn

Good Christian Friends Rejoice

CH164

Benediction

Postlude

The Week Ahead...

Sunday, December 31

10:15am Worship and Worship Circle

Tuesday, January 2

10:30am First Church leads Worship at MCNR

Wednesday, January 3

1pm Book Group in Fellowship Hall

Thursday, January 4

10am First Church leads Worship at St. Joe's Center for Living and Rehab

12:15 Contemplative Communion

Sunday, January 7

10:15am Worship and Worship Circle