



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 FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME + JANUARY 28, 2024

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

Welcome and Greeting

Hymn

O Christ the Healer

CH503

Confessing our Brokenness and Opening Prayer

Hear these words from the First Letter of Paul to the Church in Corinth: Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him. Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "no idol in the world really exists," and that "there is no God but one." Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth--as in fact there are many gods and many lords-- yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. "Food will not bring us close to God." We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

When in this past week have we been puffed up and not built up love? When have we been a stumbling block to others?

Silence

Let us pray.

Holy God, the authority of Jesus is found in integrity and living truth, not the assertion of power over others. Open our imaginations to new dimensions of your love, and heal us of all that severs us from you and one another, that we may grow into the vision you unfold before us.

Amen.

Musical Response

More Light

Christopher Grundy

9 More - light, more - truth is breaking from your Word.

More - light, more - truth, Ho-ly Spirit, help us hear what needs to be heard.

Hebrew Scripture

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Today's reading is part of a longer discourse in Deuteronomy, an updating of the law for the Israelite community as the people wait to enter the promised land. Here Moses assures the people that God will continue to guide them through prophets who will proclaim the divine word.

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." Then the LORD replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak--that prophet shall die."

Psalter

Psalms 111

REGENT SQUARE

5 With my heart, I praise my Mak - er! Ev - er in God's tem - ple sing;
God, all gra - cious and all ca - ring, send your bless - ings from a - bove;
All your laws are sure es - tab - lished, wrought of love and equ - i - ty;

9 Great and glo - rious are God's mer - cies, end - less hon - or shall we bring
if in wrath your arm works ven - geance, can your heart with pi - ty move?
and the pro - mise of your mer - cy shall en - dure all time to be.

to the Lord; let all cre - a - tion with great a - dor - a - tion ring!
May our sins by grace in - her - it jus - tice temp - ered with your love.
Those whose lips sing of your glo - ry ev - er - more your face shall see!

Gospel

Mark 1:21-28

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching--with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Reflection

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 and the Prayer of Jesus

For the Church: that the teachings of Jesus will guide and challenge us as we seek to be more authentic disciples

For renewal of the air that we breathe: that God will inspire scientists in finding ways to cleanse the atmosphere and enhance the quality of the air that we all share

For all who exercise authority: that they may use their authority as Jesus did, to free people, to heal the sick, and to build up the community.

For members of government: that they will hear and comprehend the needs of the powerless and marginalized as legislation and priorities are developed

For Peace: that God will impel leaders to a deeper dialogue that will promote safety and development for all people

For all who are bound by evil: that the Spirit of Christ may release them from addictions, greed, anger, and vengeance so that they may live in the freedom of God's children

For all who are suffering: that God will protect those who are in the cold, guide the unemployed to new job opportunities, and help families find sufficient food

For healing and strength: that God will heal the sick, curb the transmission of the coronavirus, sustain all who care for the sick, and guide those who are working to administer the vaccine

For all who are grieving: that they may experience God's comforting presence and the loving support of others

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

Lord Whose Love Through Humble Service

CH461

Offerings may be placed in the collection plates, 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
5 God for all that love has done: Cre - a - tor, Christ and Spi - rit, One. A - men!

Prayer of Dedication

God of Heaven and Earth, you call us to leave behind our preoccupations and to follow you into the future. May this act of giving be a gesture of our willingness to follow where you lead. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Hymn *They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love* CH494

Benediction and Response

Take Us Home By Another Way

Christopher Grundy

Spir - it take us home take us home by an - oth - er way, take us long way 'round the
7 ty - rants and their schemes. Give us strength to walk, show us dreams of a bet - ter
13 day, and we'll pave the way with jus - tice go - ing home by an - oth - er way

The Week Ahead...

Sunday, January 28

10:15am Worship and Worship Circle
Congregational Meeting following worship
2:00pm Take Note! rehearsal and potluck in Fellowship Hall

Monday January 29

10am First Church leads Worship at St Joseph Living Center

Wednesday, January 31

1pm Book Group in Fellowship Hall

Thursday, February 1

9:30am Sewing and Serving in Fellowship Hall
12:15pm Contemplative Communion

Sunday, February 4

10:15am Worship with Holy Communion and Worship Circle