



**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 SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT + FEBRUARY 25, 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**

**Call to Worship**

**Welcome and Greeting**

**Hymn**

*Wonderful Words of Life*

CH323

**Prayer of Confession**

Often the first step to change is listening. We have to listen to those we've hurt. We have to listen to creation as she cries. We have to listen to the voice of the oppressed, If we ever hope to make things right. So today as we begin our prayer of confession, We will start with a moment of silence—a moment to listen. And then we will pray together trusting that God is always listening to us, And that God's ears listen with love. So let us confess, silently and then together...

Listening God,

**Take what is closed in us and open it. Take what is distracted in us and settle it.  
Take what is hurting in us and hold it. Take any and all parts of us that create  
distance from you. For we are like Peter, O God. We argue what we don't know. We  
fear what we cannot see. And we almost always speak sooner than we listen. So  
open us, settle us, hold us, and forgive us. We long to hear you more clearly. We  
long to know you more fully. With hope we pray, and with gratitude we confess.  
Amen.**

Siblings in Christ, we confess with gratitude because we know that God already has heard and forgiven us. No matter what we have done or left undone, we are held in God's hand.

**So rest in this good news: God invites us in. God meets us where we are. God hears our prayers. God forgives us. Thanks be to God for a love like that.**

**Song of Praise**

*Glory to the Creator*

James Buccini

Glo - ry to the Cre - a - tor, the Christ, the Spi - rit: One; as it  
 5 was in the be - gin - ing, is now and ev - er shall be.  
 9 be, world with out end. A - men.

### Prayer for Illumination

Creator God,  
 We cannot hear the trees growing—  
 seeds pushing up through the dirt into the sun.  
 And we cannot hear a single drop of rain, missing one in the many.  
 We cannot hear the weight of people’s grief, a burden that so often is silent.  
 And we cannot hear when hearts are changed, but you can.  
 You hear it all.  
 So once again, we come to you with bowed heads and hopeful hearts,  
 Asking that you would lend us your ears.  
 Help us to hear as you hear so that we can live as you lived.  
 We are listening.  
 Amen.

### Hebrew Scripture

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

*As with Noah, God makes an everlasting covenant with Abraham and Sarah. God promises this old couple that they will be the ancestors of nations, though they have no child together. God will miraculously bring forth new life from Sarah’s womb. The name changes emphasize the firmness of God’s promise.*

<sup>1</sup>When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. <sup>2</sup>And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” <sup>3</sup>Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, <sup>4</sup>“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup>No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup>I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup>I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”

<sup>15</sup>God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. <sup>16</sup>I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

### Psalms

Psalm 22

CH732

### Gospel

Mark 8:31-38

<sup>31</sup>[Jesus] began to teach them that the Human One must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup>He said all this

quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

<sup>34</sup>He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. <sup>36</sup>For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup>Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?

<sup>38</sup>Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Human One will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of God with the holy angels."

## Poetry Prayer

### *Truth that Ricochets*

Sarah Speed

I went to a lecture once—  
An interfaith conversation with  
interfaith leaders.  
Whispers bounced off the church's  
tile floors  
As people shuffled into place,  
Carrying hope alongside assumptions—  
Mixed into pockets like loose change.  
About halfway through the evening,  
A young woman in a blue hijab  
began speaking.  
She was the youngest person on the panel,  
Seated far to the left. You might almost  
miss her  
If you weren't paying attention;  
But not here, not when she spoke.  
In quiet determination she told us of fear  
and persecution.  
She told us of hatred and racial slurs,  
Thrown at her people from car windows  
like bombs.  
It was a truth I did not know,  
And that truth ricocheted like sunlight  
through the cathedral windows,  
Touching almost everyone that day.  
Then a man in the back, who could  
have been me—  
Who has been me—  
Approached the microphone and said,  
"Your people are persecuted. You live in  
fear. You are battered by hate.  
If that is true, then why am I just now  
hearing about it?  
Why is your story not on the news?  
Why have you not spoken up about it?"  
And the air was still, partly because we held  
our breath in anticipation,  
And partly because the Spirit slows her

dance when we stand at the edge  
of truth.  
The woman in the blue hijab leaned into  
the microphone  
And whispered with a quiet strength that  
can only come from years of practice:  
“We are screaming.”  
If there is one truth in my life  
That unfolds again and again,  
It is the need to listen.  
For again and again, I will try,  
with good intentions,  
To act and walk with love.  
But again and again, I will make mistakes.  
Again and again, I will say the wrong thing.  
Again and again, they will call me Peter,  
And again and again, they will be right.  
So again and again,  
I will pray for a truth that ricochets,  
For ears that will listen,  
And for space to hold truth.  
If people are screaming,  
And to be clear—people are screaming—  
I do not want to miss it.

## Reflection

### Affirmation of Faith

#### **We believe.**

Sometimes our belief is confident, Like a child on a dance floor—  
Unashamed and wildly genuine.

We believe.

#### **Sometimes our belief is distant, Flickering and calling out to us like a lighthouse on the sea.**

#### **We believe.**

Sometimes our belief shows up as passion,  
Guiding the way we vote, shop, give, live, trust, and hope.

We believe.

Sometimes our belief is like a shadow—  
Faith stitched to our heels, unmoveable, unloseable, A gift for winding journeys.

#### **We believe.**

Sometimes our belief exists like growing pains. We step forward. We fall back.  
But again and again,  
Jesus invites us to listen,  
To grow, and to take another step.

#### **So again and again,**

#### **We speak these truths out loud: We believe.**

We believe.

#### **Again and again, we believe.**

## Call to Prayer

## O Lord Hear My Prayer

Taize

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and repetitive, consisting of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the notes.

O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer. When I call, an - swer me. O  
Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer. Come and li - sten to me.

## Prayers of the People and the Prayer of Jesus

Your gift of grace is for all people. Give confident faith to all the baptized, that they may follow you wholeheartedly. Give new believers joy in your promises; give hope and courage to those who suffer for their faith.

All the ends of the earth worship you. From galaxies to microorganisms, preserve your creation. Teach humanity to wonder at your works and to join you in tending to creation's well-being.

You rule over the nations. Raise up advocates for peace and justice within and between nations. Give life where hope seems dead; call into existence new realities we cannot even imagine.

In Jesus you joined humanity in suffering and death. Reveal to all the depth of your love shown on the cross. Accompany all who suffer in body, mind, and spirit. Restore all who are sick or grieving. Bring vindication for victims of injustice, exploitation, and oppression.

You made Abraham and Sarah the ancestors of a multitude of nations. Bless grandparents, parents, and foster parents, and the children who look to them for care and guidance. Console those who deal with infertility, parents who have entrusted their children to adoption, and children longing to be adopted. Equip ministries and services to families.

We await the day of Christ's coming in glory. Lead us by the example of all the saints whom you have called to take up their cross and follow you, that together we may find our lives in you.

*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

*Duet for Violin and Viola*

Cheryl Chase and Laurel Thurman

*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](http://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 the wilderness, we give these offerings in gratitude, rejoicing in the abundance of your gifts to us. We give these offerings in faith, trusting that you will provide for our needs. We give these offerings in hope, knowing you can use them to spread your love in this world. And with these offerings, we give ourselves; may we live with generous hearts, with open hands. Amen**

Hymn

*Lift High the Cross*

CH108

## Benediction and Postlude

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### The Week Ahead...

Sunday, February 25	10:15am Worship and Worship Circle
Monday February 26	10am First Church leads Worship at St Joseph Living Center
Tuesday February 27	10:30am First Church leads Worship at MCNR
Wednesday, February 28	1pm Book Group in Fellowship Hall
Thursday, February 29	12:15pm Contemplative Communion
Sunday, March 3	10:15am Worship and Worship Circle