



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 FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT + MARCH 17, 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

Every week is a new week, another chance to say:

"Here I am. Use me."

Every day is a new day, another chance to say:

"Thank you for yesterday. Thank you for tomorrow."

Every hour is a new hour, another chance to say,

"Again and again, make me new."

We do not come to this place to stay the same.

We come to this place to be changed.

So let us worship holy God,

Who created yesterday, will create tomorrow, and even now is creating something new.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Welcome and Greeting

Hymn

In the Bulb There Is a Flower

CH638

Prayer of Confession

In the gospel of John, a group of Greek people approach the disciples and say, "We would like to see Jesus." It's a brief, beautiful moment that the text doesn't spend a lot of time on, and yet, it always catches my eye. It catches my eye, because the phrase, "I want to see Jesus," Feels like it should be my constant prayer. Help me see Jesus. I'd like to see Jesus. Bring me closer to Jesus. In the prayer of confession, we take a moment to recognize how much space exists between us and those words, trusting that even when we forget to seek out God, God is seeking us out. So join me in the prayer of confession today as we take one step closer to the Divine . . .

Gracious God, we want to see you. We want to be known as the people who looked for Jesus; but not only that, we want to be people who have your covenant written on our hearts. Why do we feel so far away from that at times? What went wrong? Where did we lose our way? Could you, would you, once again, write on our fragile hearts? We would be so grateful. Amen.

Friends, despite our wonderings, despite our distractions, despite wrong turns time and time again, We are known and loved by God. Like a lighthouse keeper by the sea, God will never stop waving us home. So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:

Our fragile bones are held by the Great Creator. Our fragile hearts are loved by the Great Creator. Our tender spirits are forgiven by the Great Creator.

Today is a new day.

Again and again, we are forgiven; Again and again, we are reformed. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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

Hebrew Scripture

Jeremiah 31:31-34

The Judeans in Babylon blamed their exile on their ancestors, who had broken the covenant established at Sinai. Here the prophet looks to a day when God will make a new covenant with the people. There will be no need to teach the law, because God will write it on their hearts.

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Psalm

Psalm 51

CH743

Gospel

John 12:20-33

²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason

that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” ³⁰Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Poetry Prayer

Keep Digging

Sarah Speed

I can feel change inside of me.
It's a slow burn.
Change usually starts out hot—
Defensive and angry,
A self-righteous blanket
Of, “I am right and here's why . . .”
I wrap it around my shoulders
Like a barricade.
I fight the temptation to lean forward,
To play the challenger,
To argue with confidence.
But in time, Almost always, The heat fades.
The air leaves the balloon.
The audacity of it all Starts to wear off.
And eventually,
What I am left with
Is myself
And a big, open sky.
It's colder here.
It's quieter.
I can hear my thoughts.
And in this big, wide openness
I am able to say out loud,
“Maybe I wasn't right
Maybe I need to learn.
Maybe it's time for change.
Maybe that's okay.”
And if I'm quiet, and if I'm paying attention,
I can usually hear God whisper inside of me,
“Good work, my child. Now keep digging.”

Reflection

Affirmation of Faith

We believe that flowers need the rain.
We believe that humans need community.
We believe that bodies need rest.
We believe that hearts need connection.
We believe that mornings need sunrise.
We believe that seasons need change.
We believe that grief needs space.
We believe that change needs time.
We believe that love needs security.
We believe that pain needs art.
We believe that joy needs company.

We believe that our spirits need God.
 Again and again, our spirits need God.
 Fortunately for us, we trust that God is here.
 God is at work in our lives.
 God is a lighthouse keeper that never gives up.
 Thanks be to God. Amen.

Call to Prayer *O Lord Hear My Prayer* Taize



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

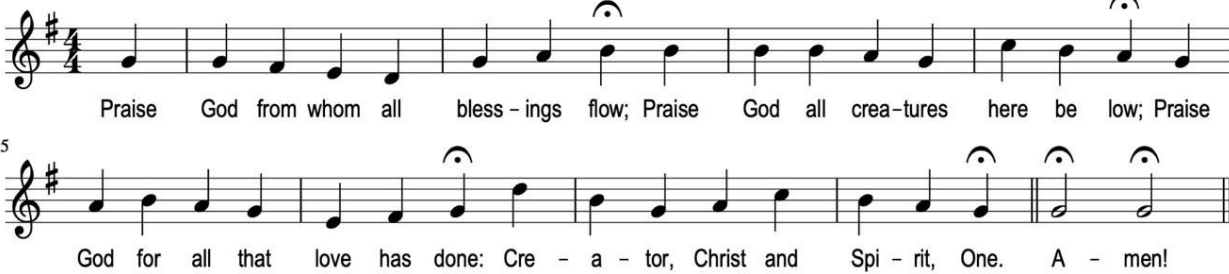
*Please pray the Prayer of Jesus in whatever language is most comfortable for you.
 The following are offered as examples...*

**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/trespases,
 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 *God of Grace* Keith Getty/arr. Lloyd Larson

*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

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