



**First Church of Christ in Mansfield
(Congregational) United Church of Christ**
549 Storrs Rd. P.O. Box 36 Mansfield Center, CT 06250
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All the Members, Ministers
Rev. Joseph Blotz, Pastor + Erik Haeger, Organist
Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator

Easter Sunday + March 31, 2024

Welcome to Our Guests! We're delighted you have joined us for worship.
Please let us know of any way we might assist you.

*Children will be worshipping with us through the entire service this morning.
We at First Church believe the noises and wiggles of children are signs of the
Spirit's movement among us
and of a church alive with God's presence. If, however, your child wishes to be
somewhere other than in the Worship Service, there are rocking chairs in the
entrance space at the back of the church where you may rock and play.*

Gospel

Mark 16:1-8

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le -
lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid.

Opening Prayer

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Let us pray.

Resurrecting God,

you conquered death and opened the gates of life everlasting.

In the power of the Holy Spirit,

raise us with Christ that we, too,

may proclaim healing and peace to the nations. Amen

Opening Hymn

Christ the Lord is Risen Today

CH216

Greeting and Welcome

Confessing our Brokenness

Beloved Community, before God and before you, my family, I confess: I have seen the sun rise and withheld my praise. I have seen my neighbor suffer and withheld my aid. I have seen love extended and chosen to walk away. I have seen divisions deepen and managed to remain unfazed.

We hear you. We see you. You are forgiven. God's love is like the sun. No matter how lost we are in the night, day after day, the light will find you. Rest easy. You are held in God's warmth.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Now we must pray. Beloved friend, before God and before each other, we confess: We have seen the sun rise and withheld our praise. We have seen our neighbors suffer and have withheld our aid. We have seen love extended and chosen to walk away. We have seen divisions deepen and managed to remain unfazed.

I hear you. I see you. You are forgiven. God's love is like the sun. No matter how lost we are in the night, Day after day, the light will find you. Rest easy. You are held in God's warmth.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia. 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

There are a million ways that you speak to us,
God of the garden and God of the empty tomb.
You speak to us in rituals, both formal and organic—
In drops of water on foreheads,
In vows said at the altar,
Through pieces of bread dipped in ordinary wine,
And through shared candlelight on Christmas Eve.
You speak to us in nature—
Your artistry showing up in starry nights,
In the smell of pine,
In rushing water and in most every sunrise.

You speak to us through our relationships—
The comfort of a loved one,
The laughter of our friends,
The security of those who support us and cheer us on.
You speak to us in so many ways, and we are grateful for them all.
However today, we just need one. That would be enough.
So lean down and breathe life into these sacred texts.
We are craving to hear your word like never before.
We are craving to understand, to see ourselves in the story.
We are craving proximity to you.
There are a million ways that you speak to us.
Today, we just need one.
With hearts full of gratitude we pray, amen.

Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 25:6-9

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And God will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; God will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of the people will be taken away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for the Holy One, so that God might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in God's salvation.

Psalter

Psalms 118

CH758

Christian Scripture

Acts 10:34-43

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to the Lord. You know the message sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Poetry Prayer

Light

Rev. Sarah Speed

In Italian, the phrase, "to give birth"
Literally means, "to bring into the light."
A mother will labor for hours and days,
Breaking herself for you,
Whispering between fractured breaths,
"This is my body, broken for you."
A mother will do this as long as it takes

So that you, her beloved,
Have a chance at life.
So that you, her beloved,
Can feel the warmth of the light.
And after all that pain,
The sun will rise.
The doctor will put a baby on her chest.
The mother will hold her child as if
Letting go is indeed physically impossible.
She will breathe easy,
And then she will whisper softly,
“All this time,
All these deep breaths...
It was love, again and again and again.”
It is childbirth,
But it is also resurrection.
A body broken.
Breath fractured.
A long night.
A sunrise.
Breath returned.
New life,
And a love that won't let go.
Friends, maybe Easter is just God whispering,
“All this time,
All these deep breaths...
It's been love, again and again and again.”
I think we've been standing in the light all this time.
Now that I think of it, isn't it warm?

Reflection

Celebrating God's Presence in the Baptism of James Russell and Giavanna Kotecki

Do you, who witness and celebrate this sacrament, promise your love, support, and care to James and Giavanna as they live and grow in Christ?

We do, by the grace of God.

God is with you.

And also with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We thank you, God,

As James is immersed in water:

James, you are baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God, Mother of us all. Amen.

As hands are extended to James in blessing:

James, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for you are a child of God, a disciple of Jesus, a member of the Church. Amen.

As Giananna is immersed in water:

Giavanna, you are baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God, Mother of us all. Amen.

As hands are extended to Giavanna in blessing:

Giavanna, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for you are a child of God, a disciple of Jesus, a member of the Church. Amen.

Into the family of faith, we welcome you with joy and thanksgiving. We are members of the Body of Christ. We are inheritors of God's promise. We are the people the Spirit sends to serve. In the name of Christ, we welcome you.

Renewing our Baptismal Promises

And so now I ask you, Beloved Ones,
Do you wish to renew your own promises to be Christ's disciple, to follow in the way of the Spirit,
to resist oppression and evil,
to show God's love and justice,
and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able?
If so, please say, "I promise, with the help of God."
I promise, with the help of God.

Hymn

We Call Ourselves Disciples

CH357

The Prayers of the People and The Prayer of Jesus

As we pray the Prayer of Jesus, you are invited to use whatever language is most meaningful to you.
The following is offered as a suggestion:

**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, for ever. Amen.**

Musical Offering

O God Beyond All Praising
Offerings may be placed in passed plates, mailed to:
First Church of Christ in Mansfield UCC.

M. A. Perry; G. Holst

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

Let us pray.

Generous God, we bring you these gifts which you have given to us. We bring, too, our very lives that, through your Holy Spirit, we may become the body of Christ, risen and serving the world you so love. Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

God is with you.

And also with you.

Open up your hearts.

We have opened them up to God and one another.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Musical Response

Santo Santo Santo

Traditional Argentine

Sharing the Bread and Cup

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

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Hymn

Christ is Risen, Shout Hosanna

CH222

Benediction

Sharing Christ's Peace

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The peace of the Risen Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

The 2024 Easter Flowers are given by:

Artemis Damble

Ava Little

Barbara Dobrocki for Roman and Edeltraut Dobrocki.

Bobbi Giardina in memory of Barbara & Lyle Perry, and Audrey & Anthony Giardina

Carol Fineout in memory of cherished family and friends especially Patricia Felletter, Ellen Shirshac, Marsha Shoemaker, and James Robertson

Joy and Dale Truman in memory of our parents.

Mark Messier and Deborah Richards in memory of George and Joyce Richards, Tom and Allison Richards, and Dick and Betty Messier

Gary Coté and David Darnell in memory of George and Evelyne Cote and Frances Darnell

The Hall Family in memory of Roswell G. Hall III.

Howard and Carol Drescher in honor of Kara and Jenny Drescher

Given by Jean and Wes Bell in memory of loving grandparents

The Blotz-Buccini-Rodriguez-Octaviani Family in memory of family members who are no longer with us.

Jo-Ann, Frank & Frankie Wunschel in honor/memory of the beloved members of the Waide and Wunschel families.

The Healey Family in honor of Lucille Healey, Robert Healey, Joana Healey

John and Katie Clauson in memory of family members no longer with us.

Kimberlie and Jim Robitaille in memory of the Schors-Robitaille family, Cindy Collins, & Carol Tetzlaff

Laurel Thurman and Cheryl Chase in memory of Ellen Shirshac and Deb Russel

Lisa Peterson-Blinn for Pat Felletter, Alisha Colon and Ellen Shirshac

Loris Masterton in memory of Bill Masterton and Eileen Stock

Mary Anne Baker in memory of her parents, Doris and Ellwood Grissom

Penny Guerin in memory of James, Dorothy, Natalie and David Guerin.

Sandy and Don Baxter in memory of our parents, Nickie and Willie Pilardi and Mary and Bob Baxter and Don's brother Russ.

Sharon and Bob Chalecki in memory of loved ones.