



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

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Ministers: All the Members of the Church
The Rev. Charles Ericson, Bridge Minister
Erik Haeger, Organist
Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator

December 15, 2024 — The Third Sunday of Advent

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!*

Playing the Chimes

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

Erik Haeger

Centering in the Spirit

“Teacher,” the crowd asked, “What should we do?”

If you have two shirts, give one away.

Hold onto hope.

Live like we belong to one another.

Speak the truth.

Look for God.

Do the good that is yours to do.

It's all that easy, and it's all that hard.

Let us worship our present and active God.

Procession of the Children

Light a Candle for Peace

by Shelley Murley (adapted)

Light a can - dle for joy, light a can - dle for joy,
 light a can - dle that shines all a - way a-round the world.
 Light a can - dle for me, light a can - dle for you,
 that our wish for world peace will one day come true.
 Sing peace a - round the world. Sing peace a - round the world.
 Sing peace a - round the world. Sing peace a-round the world.

Lighting of the Advent Candle: Joy

One: In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again? Where do we start?

All: Let us start small. Let us begin with what is right in front of us.

Let us do the good that is ours to do, and let us do it with joy!

One: Yes, let us begin with joy. Today we light the candles of hope, peace, and joy.

All: May these lights remind us of what could be.

May these lights inspire action.

May the warmth of these lights fill us with joy.

One: May it be so! Amen.

***Opening Hymn**

One Candle Is Lit

CH128

Prayer for Transformation

Liberating God, There are days when the world can feel like it's crumbling. There are days when we doubt that we can make a difference. We ask ourselves,

What could these two hands do?

What could this one voice say?

Shake us free of our own paralysis and self-doubt. Remind us that we are not called to fix everything. We are simply called to do the good that is ours to do. With hope in our hearts and a fire in our bones, we pray. Amen.

moment of silence

Words of Grace

Friends, no matter how many times we lose momentum, doubt our own ability, or tell ourselves that the problems of the world are simply too big, God sees what we cannot. God calls us by name, surrounds us in grace, and invites us to begin again. Trusting in this good news, join me in proclaiming these words of forgiveness:

***We are loved. We are forgiven. We are invited to do the good that is ours to do.
Thanks be to God for this new beginning. Amen.***

*Song of Praise

Glory to God

Paul Vasile

Glo-ry to God, whose good-ness shines on me, and to the Son, whose grace has
end, world with-out end, A - men. Worldwith-out end, world with-out
4 par - doned me, and to the Spir - it, whose love has set me free! As it was in the be-ginning, is
end, A - men. Worldwith-out e - nd, world with-out end, A - men.
8 now and ev - er shall be, A - men Worldwith-out men!

Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 58:9-12

Gospel

Luke 3:7-16

Reflection

"Here I Am"

The Rev. Charles Ericson

Hymn

Here I Am, Lord

CH452

Reading

Harvest, by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Julie Menard

Maybe none of it matters.

Maybe you can't make a difference.

Or maybe that watermelon seed you spit out over the summer will grow into a green orb, full of sticky sweet fruit. Maybe the rain will nourish it. Maybe your mother's hands will pull it from the vine, slice it into wedges, and place it on the dining room table. Maybe the neighbors will come over and chomp into that soft pink fruit, juicy water running down their chins. Maybe you will laugh at the shared experience, at this garden-grown communion, and maybe the stars will shine brighter that night.

People say the problems of the world are too big to make a difference,
but surely those people have forgotten the fruit that grows from one little seed.

Call to Prayer

Hear Us O Lord

Don Besig and Nancy Price

Hear us, O Lord, as we come now in prayer, shar - ing our joys, our trou-bles, and our cares.

Help us, O Lord, to be o - pen to your word, and teach us to put our trust in you.

Prayers of the People and the Prayer of Jesus

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

Invitation to Generosity

from Worship Ways

Embracing radical joy transforms our spirits, creating a gentle energy within us. We are renewed, and we sense God's call more clearly. In seeking God's message, we know how to joyfully share our talents, treasures, and time, bringing more peace and comfort into our world.

Musical Offering

Hark! The Glad Sound

Robert J. Powell

*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

from Worship Ways

**God of Holy Darkness and Returning Light,
We give of our full hearts, knowing that you will bless this world with love. We give of our
full minds, knowing that you will bless this world with peace. We give of our full souls,
knowing that you will bless this world with hope. May the joy of your gifts encourage us to
share the best we have, creating your Realm here on earth. Amen.**

*Closing Hymn

Come, O Long-expected Jesus

CH125

*Benediction

Now may God bless you and keep you;
May God's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you;
May God's countenance be lifted up upon you and give you peace. Amen.

*Passing the Peace

The peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, is with you always.

And also with you.

Let us share with one another a sign of that peace.

Postlude



Much of this morning's liturgy was written by the Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed for the Advent series "Words for the Beginning." Permission for use has been granted by A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

About this week's icon:



DO THE GOOD THAT IS YOURS TO DO

We are each uniquely gifted, called, and equipped for the good that is ours to do in the world. In the center is the cross, symbolizing Christ's impact, and surrounding it are individuals reaching out and shining their particular light in the world.

The *Invitation to Generosity* and the *Prayer of Dedication* were written by the Rev. Michelle L. Torigian, senior pastor of St. Paul United Church of Christ, Belleville, Illinois, for Worship Ways on www.ucc.org

Coming up...

Today	5:00 p.m. PFLAG of Mansfield Tolland
Wednesday, December 18	1:00 p.m. Book Group
Thursday, December 19	9:30 a.m. Quilt Group 12:15 p.m. Mid-week Music Meditation 7:00 p.m. Choir
Sunday, December 22	10:15 a.m. Worship & Worship Circle – Fourth Sunday in Advent (poinsettias on display)
Tuesday, December 24	7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship – Paper Bag Pageant