



**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 22, 2024 — The Fourth 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

Dave Litrico

In this weary world,
we sing of joy.

In this fragile world,
we lift each other up.

In this beautiful world,
we look for God.

In this tender world,
we hold onto hope.

This is the invitation of faith. So in this time of worship, may we sing, lift up, look for, and hold onto our with-us God.

With hope in our hearts, amen!

Procession of the Children

Light a Candle for Peace

by Shelley Murley (adapted)

Light a candle for love, light a candle for love,
 light a candle that shines all a-way a-round the world.
 Light a candle for me, light a candle 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: Love The Litrico Family

One: In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again? Where do we start?
All: Let us begin with tenderness.
 Let us begin with our hearts on our sleeve.
 Let us begin from a place of vulnerability and hope.
 Let us begin with love.
 One: Yes, let us start with love. Today we light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love.
All: May the warmth of these lights be our cornerstone.
 May the truth in these lights help us begin again.
 One: May it be so! Amen.

***Opening Hymn** People, Look East CH142

Prayer for Transformation

Gracious God,
 You paint pictures of what could be, but we declare those visions impossible. You speak of the lion lying down with the lamb, but we spout skepticism and uncertainty. You dream of a more just day, but we poke holes in the plan, unable to fathom that horizon. Forgive us for losing sight of hope. Forgive us for assuming that what we see is all there is. Open up our hearts to see the world as you see it. Open up our hearts to risk hope, to dream dreams, and to not be afraid of either. With gratitude we pray, amen.

moment of silence

Words of Grace

Friends,

No matter what you hold onto, and no matter what you let slip through your hands, God is holding onto you. That good news will never change. So hear and believe the good news of the Gospel:

Today is a new day. Today, we have reason to hope. Today, we are forgiven. And the same will be true tomorrow. Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

*Song of Praise

Glory to God

Paul Vasile

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a time signature of 12/8. It consists of three staves of music with lyrics underneath. The first staff begins with a repeat sign. The lyrics are: "Glo-ry to God, whose good-ness shines on me, and to the Son, whose grace has end, world with-out end, A - men. World with-out end, world with-out". The second staff continues the lyrics: "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. World with-out e - nd, world with-out end, A - men." The third staff includes first and second endings: "now and ev - er shall be, A - men" followed by a first ending bracket and "World with-out men!" followed by a second ending bracket.

Hebrew Scripture

Micah 2:2-5a

²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. ³Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. ⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, ⁵and he shall be the one of peace.

Gospel

Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Reflection

"Small Beginnings"

Hymn

Comfort, Comfort You My People

CH122

Reading

Despite It All

by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

What's to love?
she asked.
I understood the question.

I've seen the riot gear,
the tear gas,
the names of children
wiped from this
war-stained world.
I've seen the spray paint Swastikas
and the Proud Boys with their flags.
I've heard grandmothers at church
pray in urgent, desperate whispers.
And I've watched young mothers cry,
because teachers carry guns.
I've felt the tremor of an earthquake.
I've felt the heat of climate change.
I've seen the temple curtain tear in two.

But despite it all,
the bell that wouldn't stop tolling,
the words that won't stop clanging through my heart,
are, *so much*.
There is so much left to love.
So much left to hope for.

Call to Prayer

Hear Us O Lord

Don Besig and Nancy Price

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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/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.**

Invitation to Generosity

from Worship Ways

We reconnect in this space and time to seek God's call for our lives and our congregations. As part of our spiritual journeys, we share our treasures, time, and talents, bringing God's light into our world. We do not give to impress God or share offerings because of our shame. Instead, we bring our offerings to celebrate the Body of Christ.

Musical Offering

Look-A That Star

by Jay Althouse

*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

from Worship Ways

God of All Joy, Holy Hope, We delight in living in your ways as we create your Realm here on earth. These offerings of talents, treasures, and time are not to appease you but to collaborate with you. As co-creators, we seek your intentions and celebrate your love for us and our neighbors. Amen.

*Closing Hymn

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

CH119

*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:



HOPE IS WORTH THE RISK

This traditional quilt square design is called “birds in the air.” Sometimes when we take a risk, hope takes flight. At times it may feel like you’re falling, but you’ll find that, in God’s embrace, you are flying.

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

THE WEEK AHEAD:

Tuesday, December 24th (Christmas Eve)

7:00 p.m. - **Paper Bag Pageant** - everyone has the opportunity to participate using a paper bag that contains a costume for one of the parts in the pageant.



Sunday, December 29th (Sunday after Christmas)

10:15 a.m. - **Lessons & Laughter** - a creative liturgy for the first Sunday after Christmas using resources by the Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed and Sanctified Art.

This Year’s Christmas Poinsettias are given . . .

by Mary Anne Baker in memory of her husband, John Baker

by Sandy and Don Baxter in memory of their parents, Nicoline & Willie Pilardi and Bob & Mary Baxter

by Pam Bridgeford in memory of her parents, Ruth & Kendrick Dyer, and her friend, Adelaide Corcoran

by David Darnell and Gary Cote in memory of their parents, George & Evelyn Cote and Frances Darnell

by Chrstine and Art Dimock in loving memory of Winston and Norma Hawkins

by Barbara Dobrocki and Kristina Woodley in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Roman and Edeltraud Dobrocki

by the Drescher Family in memory of cherished friends Kristina Elias-Staron and Evelyn “Ginny” Oriola

by Gretchen Hall in memory of husband, Ros Hall

by Kathleen Healey in memory of family members Joana Healey, Lucille Healey and Robert Healey

by the Litrico Family in honor of mother, Theresa Litrico, and mentor, Trudy Lamb

by Loris Masterton in memory of husband, Bill Masterton, and friend, Eileen Stock

by Lisa Peterson-Blinn in memory of her mother and father, Mary & Richard Blinn, her niece, Alisha, friends, Pat Felleter & Ellen Shirshac, and her brother, Ricky Blinn

by Parrish Protheroe in memory of her parents, Barbara and Donald Protheroe

by Deb Richards and Mark Messier in memory of their parents, Betty & Dick Messier and Goerge & Joyce Richards, and siblings, Allison and Tom Richards

by the Thurman-Chase Family in honor of all the Saints of First Church

by Dale and Joy Truman in honor of their families, the Trumans and the Sutros

by Jo-Ann Wunschel in honor of the beloved members of the Waide and Wunschel families