



**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, Intentional Interim Minister

Erik Haeger, Organist

Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator

**January 26, 2025 — Third Sunday after the Epiphany  
Congregational Meeting Sunday**

**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**

**Greeting and Announcements**

**Prelude**

**Centering in the Spirit**

L: The Spirit of God has called us to this place and time.

**P: We gather to hear God's liberating word of love.**

L: Today, past and future meet in the holiness of now.

**P: May the Spirit of God at work in Jesus, also work in us.**

L: May the vision of flourishing for all be imprinted on our hearts.

**P: And may it be enacted in our lives!**

**\*Opening Hymn**

*Gather Us In*

**CH284**

**Prayer for Transformation**

**O Love that will not let us go, interrupt our familiar inertias leading down paths of distraction and discouragement. Let today's Sabbath pause gift a freeing grace impossible to imagine on our own. By Your abundant outpouring of Spirit lighten every burden carried from yesterdays past. Cleanse the lens of our hearts, that we may see more clearly your vision of a world made new. Yes, forgive us and free us for this delight you yearn to offer, in and through Jesus Christ. Amen.**

*moment of silence*

**Words of Grace**

Beloved of God, hear the good news: In Christ, God has declared that you are no longer captives to the past. All that you have carried, the Holy One has lifted. The eternal love of God, made known in Jesus Christ, has anointed you anew. You are forgiven and invited to join in the joy of God's great vision for your life. Thanks be to God who has fulfilled this in your hearing. Amen and 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. World with-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. World with-out e - nd, world with-out end, A - men.  
8 now and ev - er shall be, A - men World with-out men!

**Hebrew Scripture**

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

8:1...All the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. <sup>2</sup>Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. <sup>3</sup>He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. <sup>5</sup>And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. <sup>6</sup>Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. <sup>8</sup>So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. <sup>9</sup>And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. <sup>10</sup>Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

**"Gospel**

Luke 4:14-21

<sup>14</sup>Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup>He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. <sup>16</sup>When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: <sup>18</sup>"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." <sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

**Reflection**

"Our Eyes Fixed on Jesus"

**Hymn***Your Words to Me Are Life and Health***CH324**

## Call to Prayer

Hear Us O Lord

Don Besig and Nancy Price

9 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

At work in life is a holy generosity that begins and ends in God. This “yes” of God is the source of everlasting joy. Now, we are invited to this enduring delight. May our hearts and minds be opened anew as we bring our gifts to God with thanksgiving and praise.

*Your financial offerings may be placed in the collection plates as they come around,  
or mailed to: First Church of Christ in Mansfield UCC, PO Box 36, Mansfield Center, CT 06250,*

## Musical Offering

offered by Howard Drescher

### \*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

**We thank you, God, for loving us into the freedom of a generous life. Bless these gifts we bring in response to the blessing you have already given us with the gift of life. Form our lives anew into living offerings, sharing Your love with a grace that frees others. Amen.**

\*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

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The source of our liturgy this morning is ***Proclaim: Service Prayers for the Third Sunday after Epiphany Year C***, written by the Rev. Dr. David Long-Higgins, Conference Minister of the Heartland Conference of the United Church of Christ, for *Worship Ways*.

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THE WEEK AHEAD...

**Sunday, January 26**

**10:15 a.m.** Worship and Worship Circle

Congregational Meeting immediately after worship

**3:00 p.m.** Take Note! Rehearsal & Pot Luck

**Wednesday, January 29**

**1:00 p.m.** Book Group

**6:00 p.m.** Governing Board special meeting (Zoom)

**Sunday, February 2**

**10:15 a.m.** Worship & Worship Circle; Celebration of the Sacrament of Communion