

**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

March 23, 2025 — Third Sunday in Lent

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

Erik Haeger

Centering in the Spirit

Jo-Ann Wunschel

One: Worship is a place to rest.

All: We breathe deeply here.

One: We still our aching bones.

All: We sit in the quiet.

One: We surround ourselves with music.

All: Worship is a place to rest.

One: Worship is a place to grow.

All: We listen for God's word.

One: We invite it to challenge us.

All: We lean in with curiosity.

One: We ask questions.

All: Worship is a place to grow.

One: So come into this space. Come rest and grow here.

All: For where two or more are gathered, God is always there.

One: Let us worship our gracious God.

***Opening Hymn**

Out of Need and Out of Custom

CH293

Prayer for Transformation

Holy God, There are days when we fail to rest. We stretch ourselves too thin. We say "yes" to every invitation. We run a million miles a minute. We ignore your command to rest. There are also days when we fail to act. We wait for someone else. We take the easy road. We find excuses and justify our inaction. God, forgive our imbalance. Remind us that birds rest, and they also fly. Show us how to do the same. Amen.

moment of silence

Words of Grace

Family of faith, I have good news! Our God does not keep score. Our God does not hold grudges. Our God does not assume the worst about us. No, our God offers grace, and endless second chances, and boundless love. So join me in proclaiming the good news of the gospel: God's grace is deeper than the ocean. God's love is wider than the sky. We are seen. We are claimed. We are forgiven. May this realization change and inspire us. Thanks be to God! 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 1. now and ev - er shall be, A - men 2. World with-out men!

Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 55:1-9

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. ³Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. ⁴See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. ⁵See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. ⁶Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; ⁷let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Gospel

Luke 13:1-9

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did." ⁶Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' ⁸He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

Reflection	“Don’t Look Here, Look Over There!”	Rev. Chuck Ericson
Hymn	<i>Standing in the Need of Prayer</i>	CH579
Reading	<i>Slow Growth, by Rev. Sarah Speed</i>	Julie Menard

There’s a vine in the South that covers everything.
 It chokes out the light. Grows up to twelve inches per day.
 In a matter of years, it will blanket a forest.
 If you saw it from space, you’d marvel at its reach.
 If you saw it from the passenger seat, you’d weep at what it covers.
 Those looking for fast shade plant this invasive vine.
 Who can blame them? We’re all impatient.
 But if it’s fruit you want—
 the tart cherry,
 the sticky sweet kumquat,
 the soft side of a peach,
 the crisp bite of an apple—
 then bless the rain.
 Thank the sun.
 Put your hands in the dirt,
 and wait.

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

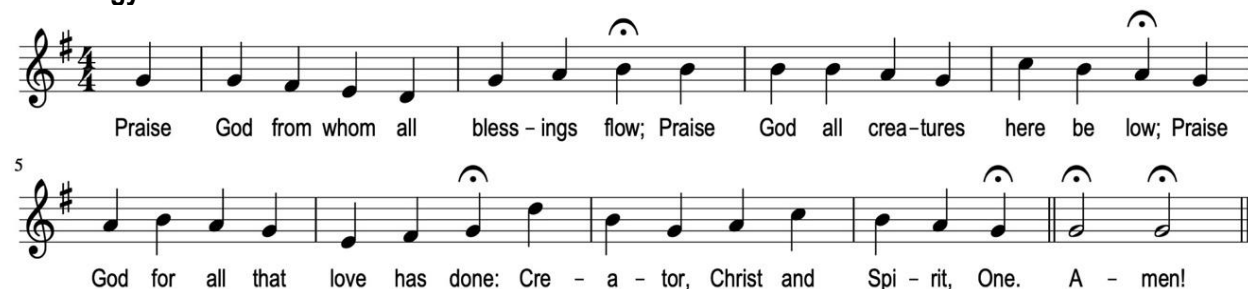
As we each prepare to dedicate our offerings to God, let us not consider what others may be giving — whether more or less than what we give. Rather let us each give out of deep personal gratitude to God, according to our own ability, for the upbuilding of our beloved church and the well-being of those we are called to serve. In that spirit, may our offerings now be given and received.

Musical Offering

Lo Yisa Goy!

Israeli Folk Song, arr. Debbie Cavalier

*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

God of all Creation, we bring our gifts and offerings to you now, each of us according to our own ability. Taken together, we know that our giving can deliver love where it is needed most, bring hope to neighbors who have been longing for some good news, and sometimes even make miracles happen. Please accept them all, bless them, and use them through our church's missions and ministries in service to our neighbors and our world. Amen.

*Closing Hymn

Let There Be Peace on Earth

CH677

*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

This morning's opening liturgy and the poetry reading were written by the Rev. Sarah A. Speed for the Lent series "everything [in] between." Permission for use has been granted by A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

THEME FOR THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT
everything [in] between rest & growth



Our 2025 Lent theme branding shows two hands reaching toward each other, representing our longing for connection despite the politics, assumptions, beliefs, and narratives that divide us. The hands look as if they are reaching for a handshake, but they are paused just before they connect. The negative space in between the hands creates the shape of a doorway, symbolizing hospitality or a pathway forward. The doorway invites us to look for God in the spaces in between.

THE WEEK AHEAD...

TODAY	2:00 p.m. "Indivisible" meeting
Monday, March 24	6:30 p.m. Take Note! rehearsal
Tuesday, March 25	6:00 p.m. Special Olympics Cornhole Practice
Wednesday, March 26	1:00 p.m. Book Group 5:30 p.m. Pastoral Search Committee
Thursday, March 27	12 noon Music & Meditation 7:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
Sunday, March 30 (Fourth Sunday in Lent)	10:15 a.m. Worship and Worship Circle



Music and Meditation

Thursdays during Lent
12:00 to 12:45 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Our First Church Pantry needs:

- small boxes/bags of breakfast cereal (not oatmeal - we have plenty)
 - one-can meals/soups
 - canned vegetables
 - tuna
-

Request from the Interfaith Sewing Group:

The Interfaith Sewing Group that meets weekly at Willimantic Congregational Church is looking for old, clean mattress pads to use for making hot pads. See Donna Clauson for more details.

Updated information about Church World Service kits:

These items will be needed for our future projects. Our church collects and donates 50 kits of each type per year. Please do not bring these items in yet. We've already completed the Hygiene Kits for this year. We will let you know when we are ready to collect the items for the Kids Kits.

Kids Kits (formerly called School Kits):

- 12 colored pencils
- 1 Two-pocket folder
- Glue stick
- Blunt-tip scissors
- 70-page spiral-bound notebook
- 12" ruler with centimeter markings
- Hand-held pencil sharpener
- Large eraser
- 6 new, unsharpened pencils
- Box of 24 crayons

We are also looking for 'kid friendly' cotton fabric. Sewing and Service uses this to make the Kid Kit bags. We need a minimum of 1/2 yard per bag. The fabric request is ongoing so we have time to make the bags before we collect the kit contents.

Hygiene Kits:

- Washcloth
- Fingernail or toenail clipper
- Toothbrush (in original packaging)
- Bath-size bar of soap (in original packaging)
- Travel-size deodorant (3.4 oz. or less, non-aerosol)
- Travel-size lotion (3.4 oz. or less, fragrance-free, New only)
- Travel-size shampoo (3.4 oz. or less, New only)
- Travel-size toothpaste (3.4 oz. or less, expiration date of 1 year)
- Sturdy wide-tooth comb (6" minimum teeth)