



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

December 14, 2025 — The Third Sunday of Advent
Candidating Sunday for the Rev. Donald Erickson

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

Deb Richards

Prelude

Tàladh Crìosda (Christ Child Lullaby)

ensemble

Centering in the Spirit

Donna Clauson

One: Jeremiah said, "I am only a boy."

All: Moses said, "Who am I to do this work?"

Mary said, "How can this be?"

We often say, "But God, I am afraid."

Even when we are afraid, God invites us closer.

So may we trust the Inviter.

May we heed God's invitation.

May we summon our courage and sing God's praise.

Let us worship our courageous, inviting, calling God. Amen!

Procession of the Children *Light a Candle for Peace* Shelley Murley (adapted)





Lighting of the Advent Candle:

Joy

Cheryl Chase

In a world full of fear, where do you see glimmers of joy?

We see glimmers of joy in birthday candles and homemade cards. We see joy in the laughter of children and the delight of grandparents. We see joy in meals around the table and in the singing of Christmas songs.

You are right. Even in a fearful world, joy is all around us. Today we light the candle of joy as a

reminder of this good news. May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, joy is here. Joy is real. We only have to look for it.

(Lighting of the candle by the Russell family.)

Thanks be to God for that good news! Amen.

*Opening Hymn

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

CH #160

Silent Prayer for Transformation (a moment to pause, reflect, and renew)

moment of silence

Words of Grace

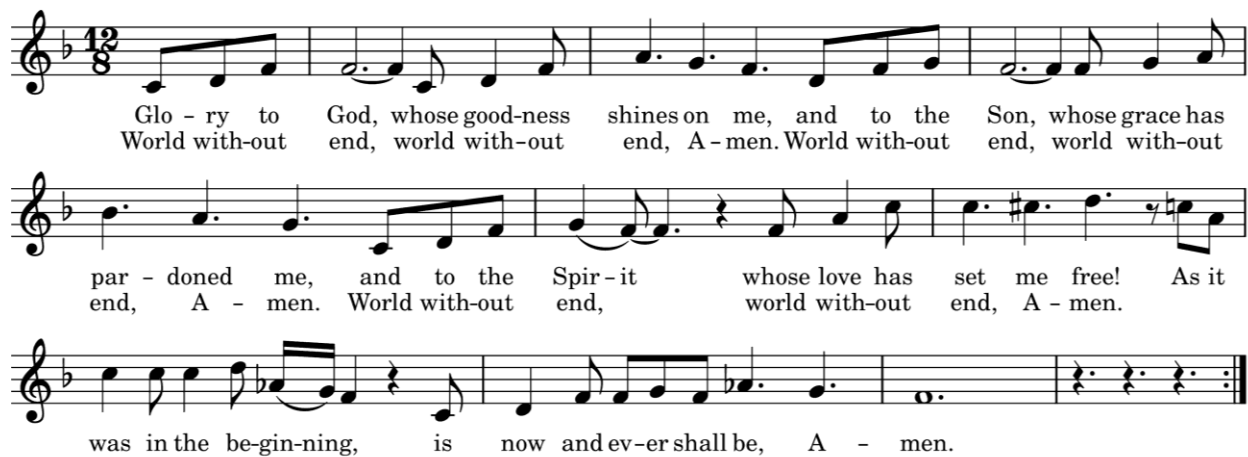
Family of faith, no matter where your path has led you in the past, today is a new day. So join me in declaring this good news:

We are known. We are forgiven! We are sent to serve. May we step forward in faith, always moving closer to God's call. Amen.

*Song of Praise

Glory to God

Paul Vasile



Hebrew Scripture

Psalm 146:5-10 (NRSVUE)

⁵ Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
Whose hope is in the Lord his God,
⁶ Who made heaven and earth,
The sea and everything that is in them;
Who keeps faith forever;
⁷ Who executes justice for the oppressed;
Who gives food to the hungry.
The Lord frees the prisoners.
⁸ The Lord opens *the eyes of* those who are blind;
The Lord raises up those who are bowed down;
The Lord loves the righteous.
⁹ The Lord watches over strangers;
He supports the fatherless and the widow,
But He thwarts the way of the wicked.
¹⁰ The Lord will reign forever,
Your God, Zion, to all generations.
Praise the Lord!

Gospel

Luke 1:26-39 (NASB)

²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was very perplexed at this statement, and was pondering what kind of greeting this was. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." ³⁴ But Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; for that reason also the holy Child will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, even your relative Elizabeth herself has conceived a son in her old age, and she who was called infertile is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible

with God.”³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, the Lord’s bond-servant; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.
³⁹ Now at this time Mary set out and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah,

Reflection

The Journey of ‘Yes’

Rev. Don Erickson

Poetry Reading

“The First Step” by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Barbara Dobrocki

Watch any parent. It starts with the first step.
 They kneel down. They smile with anticipation.
 They reach for their baby, calling and cooing them forward.
 And then before they know it, they’re running behind a bike. They’re yelling,
“Keep pedaling! You got it! I’m right here!” And they’re jumping up and down,
 because that little red helmet passed the mailbox.
 And then, just like that, they’re driving circles in the church parking lot.
 They’re giving instructions about easing on and off the pedal.
 They’re having conversations about curfew and heartbreak.
 And then, before they know it, they’re standing in a hospital room.
 Their heart is bursting. And they say, *“Put her head right here.*
Rock her gently. Do you remember the nursery rhymes?
You were born for this.”
 The first step is always the hardest,
 but you, beloved, were born for this.

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.
 9
 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

**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

Offertory

"Advent Carol of Hope" by Don Besig & Nancy Price

Choir

*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

Beautiful God, just as Mary responded “Yes” to Your call, we bring these gifts as a sign of our own “Yes” to Your call to participate in the new life and hope that You bring to our world. Bless our offerings to spread Your love and bring hope to those in need, that Your will may be done through us.

*Closing Hymn

Joy to the World

CH #143

*Benediction

*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

Our greeters this morning are Artemis Damble, David Darnell, and Robert Johnson.

The choir is directed by Cathie Rowe.

Our cantor is Laurel Thurman.

Some of this morning's liturgy is used by permission granted by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

A note about today's prelude: This Scottish Gaelic Christmas song was written by Catholic priest Ranald Rankin in 1855 for his parish in the Outer Hebrides. The title, Tàladh Crìosda, is pronounced roughly as TAH-luh KREE-stuh, and translates as Christ Child Lullaby, envisioned as a lullaby sung by Mary to her newborn son. It is well-known in Scotland and the United Kingdom and still sung at midnight masses in the far islands. The original contained 29 verses, many of which have been lost, and is set to a traditional Scottish melody. Soon after writing the song, Father Rankin and many of his parishioners

emigrated to Australia seeking a better life, but this enchanting carol remains as a gift to all who celebrate the peace and beauty of Christmas.

A congregational meeting will be called to order in the Sanctuary following the Postlude today so that the church may consider extending a Call to the Rev. Don Erickson.

A potluck lunch in Fellowship Hall will follow the congregational meeting. There will also be an intergenerational Advent craft activity (mirror ornaments.)

THE WEEK AHEAD...

Wednesday, December 17	1:00 p.m. Book Group 5:00 p.m. Meditation Group
Thursday, December 18	9:30 a.m. Quilters' Open Sew 7:00 p.m. Choir
Saturday, December 20	12:30 p.m. Girl Scouts

SAVE THESE DATES!

Wednesday, December 24th (Christmas Eve)

7:00 p.m. - A family-friendly version of the traditional Anglican Lessons & Carols service, blending short Bible readings telling the Christmas story with popular hymns.

Sunday, December 28th (Sunday after Christmas)

10:15 a.m. Breakfast Church - Our weekly church service will take place in Fellowship Hall over a **Potluck Breakfast**, with a creative Breakfast Church liturgy woven into the meal using resources by the Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed and Sanctified Art. (This service will not be livestreamed on YouTube.)

About this year's Advent theme & series from Sanctified Art LLC

WHAT DO YOU FEAR? INSISTING ON HOPE THIS ADVENT

Luke's Gospel begins the story of Jesus with this opening line: "In the time of Herod..." This detail may seem minor to modern readers; however, it reveals layers of information about the fearful world Jesus entered, one filled with rampant oppression, economic disparity, uncertainty, and instability. A world not so unlike our own. And yet, throughout the stories of Christ's birth, we hear the whispers of angels delivering a surprising message: "Do not fear."

ADVENT WEEK THREE:



Sometimes saying "yes" to God's call fills us with fear. Like Mary and Jeremiah, we fear that we aren't enough. That we'll be alone. That no one will listen. And yet, God calls us forward, inviting us to live fully into who we are created to be and promising to be with us every step of the way as we move forward through our fear. Too often we talk about bravery and courage in terms of hero narratives or big actions, but each day presents many moments to practice small, quiet acts of courage. May we say "yes" to God, even when our knees shake and our voices tremble.