



## 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

Mandy Boukus, Office Assistant

**December 24, 2025 ~ Christmas Eve**

### 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!*

**Greeting**

Cheryl Chase

**Prelude**

Justin Chase

### Call to Worship

On this holy night, we come,  
**dazzled and awe-struck,**  
**ready to sing alongside the angels.**

On this holy night, we come,  
**eager and hopeful,**  
**ready to journey alongside the shepherds.**

On this holy night, we come,  
**quietly and tenderly,**  
**ready to worship alongside Mary.**

On this holy night, we come,  
**singing, trusting, believing, proclaiming:**  
**good news is louder than fear.**

Let us worship our good news, with-us God.

**\*Carol**

**O Little Town of Bethlehem**

**CH 144**

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;  
yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary; and gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.

O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth!  
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts the joys of highest heaven.  
No ear may hear Christ coming, but in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.

### **Lighting the Advent Candle**

In a fearful world, where do you see the presence of God?

**We see God's fingerprints all around us.  
We see God in the beauty of the stars.  
We see God in the love of this community.  
We see God in the dreams we hold for a better world.**

You are right. Even in a fearful world, God is here. God is all around us. On this holy night, we light the Christ Candle as a reminder of this good news. May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, God's love is all around us.

**Thanks be to God for a love like that! Amen.**

### **Unison Prayer**

God of yesterday, today and tomorrow,  
we long to catch a glimpse of your Spirit.  
We cup our ears to hear the sound of the angel chorus.  
We turn our eyes toward the sky to see if we can find your star.  
We lean forward in our seat to see if we can feel your presence in our midst.  
We long to catch a glimpse of your Spirit, O God.  
So on this quiet night, on this holy night, on this joyful night,  
reveal yourself to us once more.  
Speak to us through the music and the children.  
Speak to us through starlight and candlelight.  
Speak to us through these ancient words once again.  
We long to catch a glimpse of you.  
Amen.

**Reading**

**The prophet Isaiah foretold the coming**

**Gary Coté**

#### **Isaiah 7:14**

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

#### **Isaiah 9:6-7**

For to us a child is born; to us a son is given. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

#### **Isaiah 11:1**

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

<b>Carol</b>	<b>O Come, O Come, Emmanuel</b>	<b>CH 119</b>
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O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

<b>Reading</b>	<b>The Birth of Jesus</b>	Janna Pedersen
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Luke 2:1-7

2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

<b>Carol</b>	<b>Away in a Manger</b>	<b>CH 147</b>
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Away in a manger no crib for his bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,  
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

<b>Reading</b>	<b>The Shepherds and the Angels</b>	David Darnell
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Luke 2:8-14

<sup>8</sup> Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

<b>Carol</b>	<b>Hark the Herald Angels Sing</b>	<b>CH 150</b>
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Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.  
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies.  
With angelic host proclaim, Christ is born in Bethlehem.  
Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn King!

<b>Reading</b>	<b>The Manger in Bethlehem</b>	Laurel Thurman
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Luke 2:15-20

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the

shepherds told them,<sup>19</sup> and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.<sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

**Carol****O Come All Ye Faithful****CH 148**

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold him, born the King of angels.  
O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him,  
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

**Reading***"Honeysuckle"**a poem by the Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed*

Barbara Dobrocki

There is an abandoned house on my block.  
Maybe someone owns it and is just waiting to fix it up,  
or maybe it belongs to a family that simply cannot let it go.  
Either way, the yard is an overgrown tangle of weeds—  
crabgrass and yellow nutsedge, horsetail and clover—  
unforgiving and entrenched.  
Over the summer, a honeysuckle bush crept  
from that forgotten house over the fence and through the yard.  
It spilled out in broad patches on the sidewalk. As a result,  
you could not pass that mess of a house without the taste of honey  
in your mouth.  
You could not pass that mess of a house without being engulfed in  
the sweet scent of something good.  
It was almost as if the earth was saying, sure,  
things are chaotic here,  
but pause for a moment. Pull a flower bud off in your fingers.  
Break the stem.  
Slurp the tiny bead of honey at the base. Remember that even  
when bad news is unforgiving and entrenched, good news grows  
out of its cage, across the sidewalk, just to get to you.

**Call to Prayer****Creator of the Stars of Night****CH 127**

Creator of the stars of night,  
your people's everlasting light.  
O Christ, redeemer of us all,  
we pray you, hear us when we call.

**Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer**

*Please pray the Lord's Prayer in whatever language is comfortable for you.  
Examples are offered below...*

Holy One, tonight is a night for good news.

Tonight is a night for candles in the window and joyful music in the air.  
Tonight is a night for family around the table, and children too excited to sleep.  
Tonight is a night for Christmas caroling and storytelling.  
Tonight is a night for *good* news.  
And we are so grateful for that.  
We are so grateful for the good-news moments you sprinkle throughout our days.  
However, we also pray for those, both inside and outside this room, who struggle to hear the good news over the sound of their fear.  
For despite the joy of this evening, we are well aware that we live in a world with plenty of reasons to be afraid.  
We are afraid of the divisions that rack our country.  
We are afraid of messing up our relationships, or losing the ones we love.  
We are afraid of climate change and of saying the wrong thing.  
Everywhere we look, we have reasons to be afraid.  
And if we're honest, that fear can cling to us.  
So tonight, with-us God, we ask for your presence among us.  
So just like the shepherds on that first Christmas, may we hear the voice of angels.  
May you fill our hearts with a holy hope.  
And may we know, deep in our bones, that your good news *is* louder than fear.  
And until the day when every reason to be afraid has been washed away, we ask that you would continue to inspire courage, conviction, and hope in us.  
Point our hearts toward sources of joy.  
Remind us of the good news of this night, and may we always hold onto some portion of the wonder, the mystery, and the joy found here.  
With hope, we lift our voices together to pray the words your son taught us to pray. Saying...

**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.**

### **Call to Offering**

The Love of God is born new in the world as often as we embody that love in the works of compassion, peace and justice. Let us offer our gifts in a spirit of generosity and hope.

### **Musical Offering**

#### **Prayer of Dedication**

**With these gifts, dear God, accept the praise and thanksgiving of our hearts, which rejoice in**

your goodness and love. Let our gifts point to your presence in the world, and further your dream for the world through Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Amen.

**Sharing the Light of Christ**

**John 1:1-5**

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

*(Distribution of the flame while the congregation sings)*

**Carol**

**Silent Night**

**CH 145**

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright  
round yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight,  
Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing alleluia;  
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light  
Radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light;  
with the angels let us sing Alleluia to our King;  
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.

**Benediction**

In a fearful world,  
may you look for God's spirit.  
May you reach for each other's hands.  
May you choose courage whenever you can.  
And in all things, may you remember  
that good news is louder than fear.  
In the name of the one who calls,  
the one who sends,  
and the one who journeys with—  
go in peace and  
be *not afraid*.  
Amen.

**\*Benediction Response**

**Joy to the World**

**CH 143**

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;  
let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing,

and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

    Joy to the world, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ;  
    while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains repeat the sounding joy,  
    repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

    He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove  
        the glories of his righteousness, and wonders of his love,  
        and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

#### **\*Passing the Peace**

May hope, peace, joy, and love be with you this Christmas Eve.

**And also with you.**

Let's share a greeting of "Merry Christmas" with one another.

#### **Postlude**

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The *Call to Worship, Advent Candle Liturgy, Poem, Prayers, and Benediction* were written by the Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed for the Advent series "What do you fear? | Insisting on Hope this Advent." Permission for use has been granted by A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org)

#### **About tonight's theme:**



The Christmas season can be filled with saccharine images of Mary, meek and mild, with a quiet, sleepy Jesus in her arms. But the host of angels shouts to the skies, "Glory to God in the highest!" What would it look like for us to proclaim the good news loudly, with overflowing joy? In a world that weaponizes fear, where algorithms decide what gets weight, what gets circulated, and what takes up space, let us be disruptive with our joy. Let us be loud and unruly, amplifying the good news like the shepherds running into the streets of Bethlehem. In a world where good news never feels loud enough to drown out fear, let us shout with the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!"

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## THE WEEK AHEAD...

*The Church office will be closed December 25th through January 1st.*

### **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.)*

### **Sunday, January 4th (Epiphany Sunday)**

**10:15 a.m.** Worship & Worship Circle; Communion Sunday; Rev. Don Erickson's first Sunday

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### **Four Marks of Our Thriving Church:**

In his inaugural sermon series, Rev. Don will point to four wonderful characteristics that define First Church and discuss ways to reinforce these characteristics as we together build the Kin-dom of Christ in our beautiful college community.

- January 4 Clarity
- January 11 Compassion
- January 18 Creativity
- January 25 Contemplation