



**First Church of Christ in Mansfield
(Congregational) United Church of Christ**

549 Storrs Rd. P.O. Box 36 Mansfield Center, CT 06250
860.423.9008 + www.myfcc.info

Ministers: All the Members of the Church
The Rev. Don Erickson, Pastor
Erik Haeger, Organist
Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator
Mandy Boukus, Office Assistant

March 8, 2026 – Third Sunday of 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

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

Erik Haeger

Call to Worship

Gary Cote

If you need good news,
settle into this space.
We have good news to share.
If you need a word of hope,
then trust us when we say,
there is hope enough to go around.
If you need a glimmer of joy,
then you're in luck!
We have resilient joy abounding.
If you need to feel God's presence in your midst,
then know that this is God's house.
This is the good news of the gospel.
God is here. Love is real. Joy is on the move.
Let us worship our with-us God!

Silent Confession

Words of Grace

Family of faith,
no matter how many mistakes the disciples made,

Jesus still washed their feet. Jesus still fed them. Jesus still called them beloved.
The same is true for you and me, so hear and believe this good news:

**today is a new day, and once again, we belong to God.
We are forgiven. We are called. We are not alone.
What good, good news. Amen!**

***Opening Hymn**

Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart

CH 265

Prayer for Illumination

New Testament Reading

Ephesians 3:13-21

¹² In Christ and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. ¹³ I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of God's glorious riches you [may be strengthened] with power through God's Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to [the one] who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to [divine] power that is at work within us, ²¹ to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! 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
World with-out end, world with-out end, A - men. World with-out end, world with-out
par - doned me, and to the Spir - it whose love has set me free! As it
end, A - men. World with-out end, world with-out end, A - men.
was in the be-gin-ning, is now and ev-er shall be, A - men.

Gospel Reading

Mark 6:32-44

³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³ But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

35 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. 36 Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

37 But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages^[a]! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

38 "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see."

When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish."

39 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. 44 The number of [people and families] who had eaten was five thousand.

Reflection

"Hungry Heart"

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 & 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 *help us yield not to/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

"Love Reaches Out"

by Pat Humphries & Sandy Opatow
offered by Bobbi Giardina

*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 (in unison)

Howard Drescher

Steadfast God of Hope, you have called us to rejoice—not in ease or achievement—but in the grace that sustains us through suffering, the love that meets us in struggle, and the hope that does not disappoint. You pour your Spirit into our hearts, shaping us into a people who give not out of obligation, but out of gratitude. As we bring these gifts, may they testify to your presence among us and to the promise of reconciliation you offer the world through Christ. Make us bold in our sharing, joyful in our worship, and confident in your grace.

*Closing Hymn

God of Grace and God of Glory

CH 464

*Poetry Prayer

Surely, This Must Be It

Rev. Sarah Speed
read by Julie Menard

Everyone has a job. I wash the potatoes, filling the sink with slivers of potato peel. You brine the turkey, hovering by the oven all afternoon. Someone sets the table, taking care to fill a vase with asters and marigolds, sprigs of holly and shoots of evergreen. We play music while we prepare. "What The World Needs Now is Love" comes on. We can't get it out of our heads. We whistle along to Dionne all afternoon. And eventually, the doorbell rings.

You've invited the neighbors, the grad student who sits on the second row at church, the widower in the choir. We add seats to the table. We go around the room and share one thing we're grateful for. Eyes well as we create a laundry list of beauty. The kids get squirmy, but we're grateful for that too.

And then we eat! We scoop whipped potatoes and crisp green beans with fresh garlic. We pass the bread basket, leaving crumbs all over the table. They are tiny reminders of communion in our midst. And at the end of the night, when we walk our guests to the car and carry sleeping children to their car seats, our neighbors say, What a holy moment it all was. Surely this must be what heaven feels like. Surely we can create it together.

*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 and poetry reading were written by the Rev. Sarah A. Speed for the Lent series "Tell me something good... Grounding ourselves in the good news this Lent." Permission for use has been granted by A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

THIS WEEK'S THEME:



Our greeters this morning are Frank Ball and Eleanor Joyce
Our cantor is Howard Drescher
Coffee Hour is hosted by David Darnell and Gary Cote

Easter Flower Fundraiser

The Easter Flower Order Forms are now available in the Sanctuary and on our website. Our flowers this year will be from Hart's Greenhouses. Please submit your order and payment no later than March 16.

THE WEEK AHEAD...

Monday, March 9

6:30 p.m. Take Note! rehearsal

Wednesday, March 11

1:00 p.m. Book Group

5:00 p.m. Meditation Group

Thursday, March 12

5:00 p.m. Governing Board & Ministry Teams

7:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal

Saturday, March 14

12:30 p.m. Girl Scouts

Sunday, March 15

9:15 a.m. First Hour Lenten Series

10:15 a.m. Worship and Worship Circle

5:00 p.m. PFLAG Mansfield Tolland



This Lent and Easter season we will once again use the creative ministry resources from A Sanctified Art LLC. The overarching theme for Lent 2026 is **“Tell me something good... Grounding ourselves in the good news this Lent.”**

We often describe Jesus’ ministry as “radical” which comes from the Latin word “radicalis,” meaning “root” or “ground.” Therefore, the good news should bring us back to our roots, back to what grounds us: loving our neighbor, caring for the vulnerable, pursuing justice and mercy, and resting in God’s unending grace. This Lent, may the teachings of Jesus lead us forward. Let the good news ground us. And let that good news inspire us to take action in a world desperate to hear, see, and taste what is good.

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First Hour Programs During Lent **Sundays, 9:15 to 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall**

A Lenten spiritual journey of reflection and renewal.
Discovering and discussing the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Weekly Offerings

- 2/22 Karen Christianson – The Spirituality of Teaching.
- 3/1 Steve Lane – The Spirituality of Refugee Resettlement.
- 3/8 Don Baxter – The Spirituality of Cycling.
- 3/15 Penny Guerin/Barbara Dobrocki – The Spirituality of Painting.
- 3/22 Paul Tanner – The Spirituality of Beekeeping & Honey Harvesting.
- 3/29 Rev. Don Erickson – The Spirituality of Writing Poetry



HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Palm Sunday - March 29, 10:15 a.m.

We Commemorate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem

Maundy Thursday - April 2, 6:30 p.m.

Contemplative Service with Communion

Good Friday - April 3, 6:30 p.m.

Were You There? - A Service of Poetry and Song

Easter Sunday - April 5, 10:15 a.m.

We Celebrate the Resurrection

Pop/Rock God-Talk

a Song... a Spiritual Theme... a Short Symposium

An alternative form of church gathering that is focused on theology and religious contemplation, using popular music to spark and stimulate discussion.

The next Pop/Rock God-Talk will take place on Friday, March 27 at 7 p.m.

The pop song will be "I Want to Know What Love Is"
and the focus will be on the spiritual power of divine love.