



**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

**April 12, 2026
Second Sunday of Easter**

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!*

Our worship service is made available digitally for those who cannot attend in person. Footage from this service may also be used in marketing materials for our community. If you do not wish to have your likeness recorded, streamed, or photographed please inform a Greeter who can seat you appropriately.

Playing the Chimes

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

Erik Haeger

Call to Worship

Ray LaPointe

One: Let us say to the Holy One: You are our God, we have no good apart from you!

Many: Holy One, you are our God, we have no good apart from you!

One: The Holy One is our chosen portion and our cup; God holds our lot.

Many: Holy One, you are our God, we have no good apart from you!

One: The Holy One provides us protection and refuge, keeps us in pleasant places, and gives a good heritage.

Many: Holy One, you are our God, we have no good apart from you!

***Opening Hymn**

Be Thou My Vision

CH 595

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

Gracious and Eternal God, you never abandon us the way that we sometimes abandon you. We doubt your power and your compassion. We call upon your name, but too often without expectation that you will answer. We blame you for the things we have collectively caused or that life demands. Yet, we give ourselves credit for the good that comes our way. We offer empty apology devoid of real repentance. We


want to be absolved without engaging in repair. Help us to cherish grace as a gift and mercy as a miracle.

(Silence for Contemplation)

Words of Grace

Beloved, the Redeemer of our souls meets us in our doubts, uncertainty, and questions. When we call, God responds. When we do not call, God remains present with us. Let us receive the grace of God to trust the Holy One with our struggles, pain, and brokenness. Let us have life in the name of the One who came to us, comes to us, and will come to us again, and again.

***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.

Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 55:6-13

- ⁶ *Seek the Lord while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;*
- ⁷ *let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*
- ⁸ *For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord.*
- ⁹ *For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*
- ¹⁰ *"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and return not thither but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,*
- ¹¹ *so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

¹² "For you shall go out in joy,
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off."

New Testament Reading

Colossians 3:1-4, 12-17

³ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, ¹³ forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Reflection

Easter is Over, Now What?

Cheryl Chase

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 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

Simple Gifts - arr. John Purifoy

Laurel Thurman / Erik Haeger

*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)

Generous One, may these gifts be a blessing to those in need, a source of hope for those in despair, comfort for those who grieve, encouragement for those who doubt, a balm for those in pain. May our generosity reflect our gratitude and our giving be another source of praise. Amen.

*Closing Hymn

Spirit

CH 249

*Poetry Prayer

“Forgive Me” by Mary Oliver

Julie Menard

Angels are wonderful but they are so, well, aloof.
It's what I sense in the mud and the roots of the trees, or the well, or the barn, or the rock with its
citron map of lichen that halts my feet and makes my eyes flare, feeling the presence of some
spirit, some small god, who abides there.
If I were a perfect person, I would be bowing continuously.
I'm not, though I pause wherever I feel this holiness, which is why I'm often so late coming back
from wherever I went.
Forgive me.

*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

The Call to Worship, Prayer for Transformation, Invitation to Generosity and Prayer of Dedication were written by the Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology for the United Church of Christ. for "So I Send You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter Year A" from Worship Ways on www.ucc.org.

*Our Greeters today are Tatyana Dominique and Parrish Protheroe.
Our Cantor is Laurel Thurman.
Coffee Hour is hosted by Artemis Damble*

Rev. Don on Vacation This Week

Rev. Don will be away from April 12 through April 18 for some well-deserved rest and renewal.

During this time, if you have an urgent pastoral care need, please contact Donna Clauson (860-933-4289) and she will assist with coordination of support.

We are grateful to the Rev. Paul Doyle from First Congregational Church in Willimantic, who will be available to assist with any emergency pastoral care.

THE WEEK AHEAD...

- Monday, April 13** 6:30 p.m. Take Note! rehearsal
- Wednesday, April 15** 1:00 p.m. Book Group
5:00 p.m. Meditation Group
- Friday, April 17** 6:00 p.m. Northeast CT Community Orchestra rehearsal
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Church World Service Hygiene Kits

During the month of April we will be collecting items for the Church World Service hygiene kits. There will be a collection basket under the table near our name tags in the sanctuary. If you would rather not shop you can give Sharon Foster-Chalecki a donation and she will shop for you. The items we need this year are:

- 12 Facecloths/washcloths
- 24 Nail clippers
- 50 Travel-size lotion (3.4 oz. or less which is fragrance free)
- 32 Travel-size shampoo (3.4 oz. or less)
- 37 Toothbrushes (in individual packaging)
- 35 Travel-size toothpaste (3.4 oz. or less, expiration date of 1 year)
- 24 Sturdy wide-tooth comb (6" minimum teeth)

New Sermon Series
Mysticism: An Ancient Way Made New

Ever since the Jesus Movement began, there's been an approach to the faith that focuses less on doctrinal correctness than on a direct connection to Christ. This approach came to be known as Christian Mysticism. While the teaching of Jesus remained central, for Christian mystics, it was all about Christ living in us and through us. In this 6-part series, Rev Don will examine Christian mysticism and what it might mean for us and our spiritual lives.

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| April 19: | Unmediated Experience of God |
| April 26: | Creation Revealing God |
| May 3: | Communion With God |
| May 10: | Unknowability of God |
| May 17: | Limitless Love of God |
| May 24: | Simplicity of Life in God |

New First Hour Series Coming - starting on April 19th at 9:00 a.m.
~ Peter & Paul and the Christian Revolution ~

In this 4-week series we will view a documentary on the lives of Saints Peter and Paul as they spread the message of Jesus throughout the Roman Empire. It is part of the PBS "Empire" series that looked at people and passions that changed the world. Each week we will view a 30-minute segment of the video, followed by 30 minutes of discussion. (Video is closed-captioned.)

Welcome Spring Sale - Save the Date!
Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ 9 a.m. to noon

Your opportunity to organize your storage spaces while helping the church is coming soon!

- Start cleaning your closets! "All things flat" - Good condition books, cds, dvds, LPs, games, puzzles, and any other "flat" entertainment item will be needed. Use your imagination!
- Garden Items needed! Bare-rooted plants welcome, as well as houseplants, nice plant pots, garden decorations, tools, and other garden items are welcome.

More information will be provided after the Easter holiday is over.

If you have any questions please contact Cheryl Chase (860) 429-7265 or seachase3860@yahoo.com.

Calling OFF Plastic Bags

Please stop bringing in plastic bags for now. A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to the "Plarn" project. We have delivered so many mats to Project Hope that they have said they have enough for now, and we have started to deliver what we have left to a group in Vernon, which is now inspired to make their own mats for the Cornerstone program in Vernon. With your help, approximately 12,000 plastic bags have been kept out of the waste stream. If we start this project up again, we will let you know!!

Creation Justice Starts with You

Our church needs your help to Be Green! You are essential to the success of First Church becoming a Creation Justice Church and “leveling up” to A Level Three Green Congregation. Here are the areas where we need ideas for possible programs over the coming year, either before or after church, or on a weeknight with a meal/fellowship:

- Does anyone know of someone who can speak about how indigenous communities approach creation care and how indigenous removal and cultural genocide are examples of environmental racism?
- We need suggestions for current videos on environmental topics that could be used for viewing and discussion.
- Does anyone know of an organization in our community that is working on environmental issues that would be willing to come to speak to the congregation on what they are doing and how we can help?
- Is anyone out there an expert on hydroponic gardening and would be willing to lead a “hands-on” workshop in creating a table-top hydroponic garden for participants?

As we move through this process and have specifics, there will plenty of opportunities to participate and help. If you have ideas about the above, please let Cheryl Chase know. It takes a village!

✨ All-Church Visioning Retreat ✨

Hosted by the Capital Campaign Committee



Think of this as a community brainstorm — a chance for all of us to come together, listen to one another, and imagine what's possible. We'll explore the gifts already present in our congregation: our heart, our people, and our property — and prayerfully consider how those gifts can meet the real needs of our community.

SAVE THE DATES

- **Friday, May 1st** | 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
- **Saturday, May 2nd** | 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

SPECIAL GUEST LEADER

Jill White *Mission Interpreter*

United Church of Christ Church Building & Loan Fund (CB&LF)

WHY ATTEND?

- **Share Your Voice:** Every perspective is needed to shape our path forward.
- **Dream Big:** Moving from where we are today toward exciting new possibilities.
- **Make an Impact:** Discover how our congregation can make a lasting difference.

IMPORTANT DETAILS

- **Childcare:** Provided on both days.
- **Sign-up:** Please **add your name to the sign-up sheet** today!

Every voice matters. Every perspective is needed.