



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, Bridge Minister
Erik Haeger, Organist
Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator

December 1, 2024 ~ The First Sunday of Advent

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

Centering in the Spirit

God says, "Do not be afraid."

God says, "I have called you by name."

God says, "I will be with you."

God says, "You are precious and honored in my sight."

At the beginning of this season, at the start of this week, at the top of this hour,

May we wrap ourselves in these words. May we begin again.

Let us worship our Holy God!

Procession of the Children

Light a Candle for Peace

by Shelley Murley (adapted)

Light a can - dle for hope, light a can - dle for hope,
light a can - dle that shines all a - way a-round the world.
Light a can - dle for me, light a can - dle for you,
that our wish for world peace will one day come true.

Lighting of the Advent Candle:

Hope

Kristina Woodley

One: In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again? Where do we start?

All: Let us begin with the good news! Let us begin by trusting that we are a blessing, loved by a gracious God. Let us begin with music and singing! Let us begin with warmth and welcome. Let us begin with hope.

One: Yes, let us begin with hope. Today we light the candle of hope to shine a light in a worn and weary world.

All: May this be our foundation. May this be our fresh start. May this be our new beginning.

One: May hope flow forth from here. Amen!

***Opening Hymn**

Christians All, Your Lord Is Coming

CH136

Prayer for Transformation

Affirming God, Your first words to creation were words of love. You looked at this earth and said, "It is good." You spoke affirmations through the prophets. You spoke blessings over Mary. You spoke belonging through Christ. At every turn, you have reiterated that we are a blessing, made in your image, held in your love. Forgive us for forgetting this truth. Forgive us for measuring our worth by society's measuring stick instead of yours. We believe. Help our unbelief. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

~ moment of silence ~

Words of Grace

Family of faith, I don't know the last time someone told you that you are good, just as you are. I don't know the last time you heard that you are loved and created in the image of God. I don't know the last time you trusted those words and truly believed that you are a blessing. However, in case it has been a while, hear these words from Isaiah: God says,

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine."

We are forgiven. We are loved. Let it leave you awestruck. Thanks be to God! May we believe it. 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 World with-out men! 2.

Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 43:1-7

¹But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ³For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. ⁴Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. ⁵Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; ⁶I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth— ⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Gospel

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Reflection

"Favored One"

Rev. Charles Ericson

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.

Poetry Prayer

"Joy and Celebration"

by Sarah Speed

You are a blessing.
If you hear nothing else,
if the wind howls,
if your brain runs amok,
if rebuttals and denials line up like little toy soldiers,
then hear this—
you are a blessing.

I knew it the first moment I met you / heard your name / learned there are 7 billion of us
on this planet.

I knew it in my bones,
the way my feet know the way home.
You are a blessing.

For our creating God
breathed life into your being.
And there is simply no way that,
along with that life,
some of God's goodness
didn't slip right in.

So tell the rebuttals to rest.
Tell the toy soldiers to find another hill,
because this one is reserved for joy and celebration.
You are a blessing.
Breathe it in.

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

*Your financial offerings may be placed in the collection plates as they come around,
or mailed to: First Church of Christ in Mansfield UCC, PO Box 36, Mansfield Center, CT 06250,
or given online at: www.myfcc.info*

Musical Offering

One Star

Jay Althouse and Sally K. Albrecht

Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God all creatures 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**

Joyous God, Originator of all Gifts, this day and always, we celebrate the gifts of our hands and hearts. We share our talents and time, knowing our energy builds the world with love. We share our treasures, knowing that all gifts we entrust to your Church will build your Realm. With joy, we devote our first-fruits to loving you and your children. Amen.

Communion Hymn

We Come as Guests Invited

CH386

Invitation to Communion

Friends, Advent is a season of waiting.

We wait for Christ to be born.

We wait for the feeling that love is near. We wait for God's promised day.

Advent is a season of waiting.

So come to this Table. Come catch a glimpse of what could be.

Come end your waiting, for love is hovering close. This is what it's all about.

God is all around us.

So come. This good news is for you. All are welcome here.

The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

God of new beginnings, as we prepare to come to this Table, pour out your spirit in this room.

Allow this meal to feel like a new beginning.

Allow us to experience welcome here. Allow for all to be fed here.

Allow for all to sense your presence here.

And may these experiences jumpstart our faith, hope, and love in new ways.

With hope we gather. With hope we begin again.

So in this spirit of beginnings, we come to your Table. Once more we ask that you would meet us here. Pour out your Spirit on this ordinary meal, that in this bread and cup we may glimpse a new day. May the sight of everyone being welcomed at this Table remind us that all are loved by you.

May the evidence that there is food for all remind us that no one is meant to go hungry.

May the fact that our own sin, shame, and doubt do not keep us from this Table remind us that you welcome and love us as we are. And may all of these Communion truths serve as building blocks for a new day, for a new beginning.

With hope in our hearts, we pray.

With hope in our hearts, we gather.

With hope in our hearts, we begin again.

Meet us here.

Allow this joyful feast to be the start of something new.

Musical Response

Santo Santo Santo

CH111

Sharing the Bread and Cup

All are welcome at Christ's table; we offer non-alcoholic juice and gluten-free bread.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Nourishing God, Sometimes we tell ourselves that too much has taken place to begin again. We think the world is too far gone. We think we have made too many mistakes. We tell ourselves that we couldn't possibly begin again. But then we come to this Table and we get a glimpse of your kingdom. We come to this Table and all are welcomed, all are seen, all are fed. And just like that, we have hope. Just like that, we begin again. Thank you for the gift of this fresh start. Thank you for

planting hope deep in our bones. Thank you for meeting us in ordinary bread and juice to remind us that it's never too late to build your kingdom here. We are grateful. We are so grateful. Amen.

***Closing Hymn**

Go, My Children, with My Blessing

CH431

***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



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

The Invitation to Generosity and Prayer of Dedication were written by the Rev. Michelle L. Torigian, senior pastor of St. Paul United Church of Christ, Belleville, Illinois, for Worship Ways on www.ucc.org

Sunday, Dec 1 10:15am Worship & Worship Circle - 1st Sunday of Advent
 11:30am Audit Committee
 6:00pm Christmas Tree Lighting

Monday, Dec 2 10am Interim Planning Team (via Zoom)

Tuesday, Dec 3 10:30am MCNR Monthly Service

Wednesday, Dec 4 1:00pm Book Group (in FH)

Thursday, Dec 5 9:30am Sewing & Service (in FH)
 12:00pm Caring Ministry (in FH)
 12:15pm Music (in Sanctuary)
 7:00pm Choir (in FH)

Friday, Dec 6 9:00am Interim Planning Team (in FH)

Sunday, Dec 8 10:15am Worship & Worship Circle - 2nd Sunday of Advent