



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

549 Storrs Rd. P.O. Box 36 Mansfield Center, CT 06250

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All the Members, Ministers

Rev. Joseph Blotz, Pastor + Erik Haeger, Organist

Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator

THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME + FEBRUARY 13, 2022

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 and Prelude

Greeting and Welcome

Phillis Wheatley was the first African American and second woman (after Anne Bradstreet) to publish a book of poems.

Born around 1753 in Gambia, Africa, Wheatley was captured by slave traders and brought to America in 1761. Upon arrival, she was sold to the Wheatley family in Boston, Massachusetts. Her first name Phillis was derived from the ship that brought her to America, "the Phillis." Both she and her enslavers were members of the Old South Church in Boston.

The Wheatley family educated her and within sixteen months of her arrival in America she could read the Bible, Greek and Latin classics, and British literature. She also studied astronomy and geography. At age fourteen, Wheatley began to write poetry, publishing her first poem in 1767. She was emancipated her shortly thereafter.

Wheatley's poems reflected several influences on her life, among them the well-known poets she studied, such as Alexander Pope and Thomas Gray. Pride in her African heritage was also evident. Her writing style embraced the elegy, likely from her African roots, where it was the role of girls to sing and perform funeral dirges. Religion was also a key influence, and it led Protestants in America and England to enjoy her work. Enslavers and abolitionists both read her work; the former to convince the enslaved population to convert, the latter as proof of the intellectual abilities of people of color.

Although she supported the patriots during the American Revolution, Wheatley's opposition to slavery heightened. She wrote several letters to ministers and others on liberty and freedom. During the peak of her writing career, she wrote a well-received poem praising the appointment of George Washington as the commander of the Continental Army. However, she believed that slavery was the issue that prevented the colonists from achieving true heroism.

In 1778, Wheatley married John Peters, a free black man from Boston with whom she had three children, though none survived. Efforts to publish a second book of poems failed. To support her family, she worked as a scrubwoman in a boardinghouse while continuing to write poetry. Wheatley died in December 1784, due to complications from childbirth. In addition to making an important contribution to American literature, Wheatley's literary and artistic talents helped show that African Americans were equally capable, creative, intelligent human beings who benefited from an education. In part, this helped the cause of the abolition movement.

Marilyn Nelson was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1946, into a military family: she is the daughter of one of the last of the Tuskegee Airmen. Her mother was a teacher. Nelson spent much of her youth living on different military bases and began writing poetry in elementary school. She earned her BA from the University of California at Davis, her MA from the University of Pennsylvania, and her PhD from the University of Minnesota. She is a professor emeritus of English at the University of Connecticut and the founder and director of Soul Mountain Retreat. She was poet laureate of the State of Connecticut from 2001 to 2006 and in 2013, was elected a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets.

Dr. Nelson was a member of this congregation and regularly offered her poems for centering, as well as offering a custom poem for the church's auction.

For our centering this morning, I offer Dr. Nelson's words written for the commitment ceremony of our own Deb Hubbell and Linda Wenner.

Epithalamium and Shivaree

for Linda and Debbie

All Cana was abuzz next day with stories:
Some said it had a sad aftertaste; some said
its sweetness made them ache with thirst.
Years later those who had been there
spoke of it with closed eyes, and swayed
like the last slow-dance of the prom.
The village children poked each other's ribs
when they reeled past, still drunk at eighty.
Lovers know what that drunkenness is:
It makes a festive sacrament of praise
for the One who loans us each other

and this too-brief time.
One sip of the wine of Cana
and lovers become fools. And fools lovers.
The willows are drunk tralala; they shimmy
in the silly wind of Spring,
lovers sing noisily. With a little pink parasol
a lover pedals out to the halfway point on the wire.
Below, a silver thread of river. She waves, blows kisses,
wavers and oops,
her unicycle disappears into mystery.
Her face mimes our gasp.
We hear an unseen, slide-whistle chorus.
She sings: Tralala, the willows are drunk;
they shimmy in the silly April wind.
And I'm just a kitten in catnip, a pup
rollin' in some ambrosial doggie cologne.
Why settle for less than rapture?
Your pulse against my lips, your solitude
snoring next to mine. The wine we drink from each other.
She leaps. And now there are two of them out there,
jitterbugging on shimmering air.

Opening Hymn

Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

CH354

Confessing our Brokenness and Opening Prayer

Today we hear the prophet Jeremiah proclaim, "Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is in the Lord." For the times we have not trusted in God and instead placed our hope in things not of God, we ask for forgiveness and healing

Lord Jesus, you satisfy the hungry: Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you bring hope to those who grieve and weep: Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you share an abundance of good things with the poor: Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

silence

God of blessing and woe, disturbing the deadly order of the world: give us faith tested in poverty, hunger for what really satisfies, eyes softened

by tears and hearts ready to laugh at all that is false and pompous;
through Jesus Christ, who turns the world upside down. Amen.

Song of Praise

Paul Vasile

Glo-ry to God, whose good-ness shines one me, and to the Christ, whose grace has
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 e - nd, world with-out end, A - men.
was in the be-gin-ning, is now and ev-er shall be, A - men World with-out men!

Hebrew Scripture

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Thus says the LORD: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the LORD. They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse-- who can understand it? I the LORD test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.

Psalter

Psalm 1

Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,
nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful!

**Their delight is in the law of the Holy One,
and they meditate on that law day and night.**

They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season,
with leaves that do not wither; everything they do shall prosper.

**It is not so with the wicked; they are like chaff which the wind blows
away.**

Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes,
nor the sinner in the council of the righteous;

**For the Holy One knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked is doomed.**

Gospel

Luke 6:17-26

Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them. Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. "Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. "Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. "Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. "Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets."

Reflection

Prayers of the People and the Prayer of Jesus

For the protection and renewal of the earth: that God will inspire and guide us as we strive to be good stewards of the air, land, and water which God has given to us

For national leaders: that God will give them wisdom in addressing the issues that challenge society, free them from self-reliance, and inspire them to work for the common good

For an end to violence and the exploitation of the poor: that God will raise up those who are exploited in slave-like working conditions or caught in human trafficking and heal their wounds, and lead them to a new life

For refugees: that God will lead them to places of safety and help them to build new lives in communities that will welcome their gifts and talents

For all who are sick: that God will restore the sick to health, help all to get good sleep, and strengthen all who are for the sick

For all who are suffering: that God will guide the homeless to shelter, the hungry to food, and the abused to places of safety

For all who are grieving: that those who have lost loved ones, their health, employment, or freedom may know the presence of God who wipes away all tears and who brings light into every darkness

*Please pray the Prayer of Jesus in whatever language is most 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.**

Musical Offering

Lead Me Lord

John D. Becker

*Offerings may be placed in passed plates, mailed to:
First Church of Christ in Mansfield UCC.*

Box 36. Mansfield Center, CT 06250, or given online at www.myfcc.info

Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God all creatures here below; Praise
5 God for all that love has done: Cre - a - tor, Christ and Spi - rit, One. A - men!

Prayer of Dedication

Holy God, we give you thanks for the diverse gifts you have bestowed upon us. Bless us with your Spirit that they may be used to proclaim your good news in word and deed. Amen.

Hymn

Blessed Assurance

CH543

Benediction

The Week Ahead...

Sunday, February 13 10:15am Worship and Worship Circle

Monday, February 14 10am First Church leads Worship at St Joseph Living Center

Tuesday, February 15 7pm Prayers at the End of the Day on Facebook

Wednesday, February 16 10am Ministry of Caring, Outreach Subgroup

11am-1pm Open Office Hours

1pm Book Group in Fellowship Hall

Thursday, February 17 9:30am Quilting Group

Sunday, February 20 10:15am Worship and Worship Circle