



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

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All the Members, Ministers

Rev. Joseph Blotz, Pastor + Erik Haeger, Organist

Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME + FEBRUARY 20, 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

Centering

Valerie Russell was born on April 4, 1941 in Winchester Massachusetts to a family that did not expect her to go to college, but she was a person who did the unexpected – she graduated from Winchester High School in 1959, earned a Bachelor of Arts cum laude from Suffolk University and did graduate work in sociology at Columbia University in New York City. Russell held an honorary Doctor of Theology degree from Lafayette College in Easton, Pa.

Valerie Russell came of age during the heat of the civil rights movement. In the 1960s, she was part of the group that started the Massachusetts chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and participated in the Selma March and the March on Washington. She said, "I think that faith is only real when it's shaped out of every generation's struggle. Every time has to redefine the moral imperative and what the gospel has to say to meet the challenges of that age."

In 1973 she became the assistant to the president of the United Church of Christ and coordinator of new efforts within the denomination to respond to the changing roles of women in church and society.

After her service in the UCC president's office, she worked with urban issues in New York and as executive of the City Mission Society of Boston, the first woman and the first layperson to head the 181-year-old organization. From 1991 until her untimely death in 1997, she returned to leadership in the UCC as executive director of the Office for Church and Society. There, Russell provide leadership for social action concerns in the United Church of Christ by doing advocacy work on social and political issues.

A stroke in 1993 brought physical changes that meant Valerie needed a wheelchair and which caused her to focus more on accessibility issues. She wrote, "There are so many places that don't invite people in wheelchairs, and too often, the church is one of those places. The church's theology is about the broken body of Christ. I am outraged that our practice is so inconsistent with our theology. It is sad we violate the center of our faith and exclude so many of God's people."

Russell also served on boards of the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, taught a course on urban ministry at Harvard Divinity School, and co-founded Christians for Justice Action, a UCC social justice group.

"I believe that ministry is a work of the whole people of God," she once said. "I think my role in that is to enable persons to find their own voices; to acknowledge their own courage in meeting and dialoguing with the stranger; in making an affirmation that we are all God's children; and that whether we're talking about war or AIDS, God doesn't have any 'good guys' or 'bad guys.' God only knows that His – or Her -- children are suffering."

Today, we give thanks for the witness and work of Valerie Russell.

Opening Hymn

The Gift of Love

CH526

Confessing our Brokenness and Opening Prayer

Hear these words from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians: The first person was from the earth, a person of dust; the second person is from heaven. As was the person of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the person of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the person of dust, we will also bear the image of the person of heaven.

When in this past week have we failed to see the image of Christ in others?
When have we failed to be an image of heaven for the world?

silence

O perfect Love, whose compassionate power transforms brokenness into health and dust into eternal glory: grant us a gracious faith, so that we may face our trials with confidence, and become a blessing to friend and enemy alike in Jesus' name. 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

Genesis 43:3-11,15

Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. I will provide for you there--since there are five more years of famine to come--so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.' And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

Psalter

Psalms 37:1-11, 39-40

Do not fret yourself because of evildoers; do not be jealous of those who do wrong.

For they shall soon wither like the grass, and like the green grass fade away.

Put your trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and feed on its riches.

Take delight in the Lord, who shall give you your heart's desire.

Commit your way to the Lord and put your trust in the Holy One who will bring it to pass.

God will make your righteousness as clear as the light

and your just dealing as the noonday.

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for God.

**Do not fret yourself over the one who prospers,
the one who succeeds in evil schemes.**

Refrain from anger, leave rage alone; do not fret yourself; it leads only to evil.

**For evildoers shall be cut off,
but those who wait upon the Lord shall possess the land.**

In a little while the wicked shall be no more;
you shall search out their place, but they will not be there.

**But the lowly shall possess the land;
they will delight in abundance of peace.**

But the deliverance of the righteous comes from the Lord,
who is their stronghold in time of trouble.

**The Lord will help them and rescue them;
rescuing them from the wicked and delivering them,
because they seek refuge in God.**

Gospel

Luke 6:27-38

Jesus continued, "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

Reflection

Prayers of the People and the Prayer of Jesus

For the Church: that we may be instruments of God's mercy and compassion by sharing what the forgiveness that we have received with others

For Peace: that God will guide world leaders to end nuclear weapon proliferation and use their resources to end famine, disease, and oppression

For all who have been our enemies, whether politically, economically, or personally: that we may let go of hurts and grudges, and seek a new understanding of them

For healing of racial and ethnic hatreds: that all people may see the value and dignity of each person as a child of God

For new minds and hearts: that the Spirit will help us to recognize those in need as our sisters and brothers and give us the courage to respond to them as friends

For the grace to forgive: that God will help us to forgive those who have injured us and to pray for them and their needs

For all who have never experienced forgiveness: that they may encounter the free and healing gift of forgiveness through someone who loves as Jesus taught

For all who are suffering: that God will free those unjustly held, bring justice to the oppressed, hope to those who are grieving, and healing to the sick

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/trespases,
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

By the Grace of God

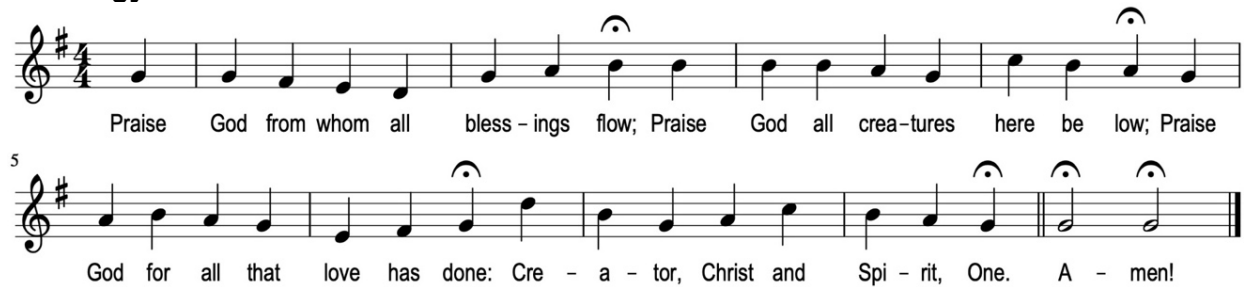
arr. Anthony Giamonco

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



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

They'll Know We are Christians By Our Love

CH494

Benediction

The Week Ahead...

Sunday, February 20	10:15am Worship and Worship Circle
Tuesday, February 22	7pm Prayers at the End of the Day on Facebook
Wednesday, February 23	11am Covid Team Meeting 11am-1pm Open Office Hours 1pm Book Group in Fellowship Hall
Sunday, February 27	10:15am Worship and Worship Circle