



**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

SEPTEMBER 4, 2022 + THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

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

A Blessing Upon Returning from Sabbatical

Joe – we welcome you back from your time of respite and reflection, hoping that your time away has been nourishing in body, mind, and Spirit. We are glad to have you back in our midst. As you replace your stole – the symbol of your ministry and leadership among us, together we will share in our ongoing commitment to the life and energy of our faith community.

**Together may we continue to be a blessing. Pray often. Give thanks.
Do good. Have courage. Lead with love. Practice peace. Be the light.
And, work for justice. Amen.**

Greeting and Welcome

Opening Hymn

Joyful Joyful

CH2

Confessing our Brokenness and Opening Prayer

Hear these words from the Book of Deuteronomy: See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in God's ways, and observing God's commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess... I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying and holding fast to God; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

When in this past week have we not walked in God's ways?

When have we chosen death over life and curse over blessing?

silence

Source of life and blessing; God of garden, orchard, and field; root us in obedience to you and nourish us by your ever-flowing Spirit, that, perceiving the good we might do, our lives may be fruitful and our service useful, in communion with Jesus, our brother. Amen.

Song of Praise

Glory Glory! Hallelujah!

African American Spiritual

9

Glo-ry, glo-ry! Ha-le - lu-jah! Since I laid my bur-dens down.

Glo-ry, glo-ry! Ha-le - lu - jah! Since I laid my bur-dens down!

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are: 'Glo-ry, glo-ry! Ha-le - lu-jah! Since I laid my bur-dens down.' The second staff continues the melody with a similar pattern of notes and rests. The lyrics are: 'Glo-ry, glo-ry! Ha-le - lu - jah! Since I laid my bur-dens down!' A small number '9' is written to the left of the second staff.

Christian Scripture

Paul's Letter to Philemon

In our Christian Scripture this morning we hear of a slave named Onesimus being sent back to the man who had previously owned him, Philemon. Paul asks the Philemon to give up any idea of receiving back a slave; he has to receive Onesimus as a brother, a blood brother, and as a member of the family of Jesus.

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus.

I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother. For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love--and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother--especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

Psalter**Psalm 1****WINCHESTER OLD**

The one is blest who, fear - ing God, walks not where sin - ners meet,
How blest the one who in God's law finds good - ness and de - light,
That one is nour - ished like a tree set by the ri - ver's side;

5
who does not stand with wick - ed ones, and shuns the scorn - ers' seat.
and med - i - tates up - on that law with glad - ness and de - light.
its leaf is green, its fruit is sure: the works of such a - bid.

Gospel

Luke 14:25-33

Now large crowds were traveling with Jesus; and he turned and said to them, "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

Reflection**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 and the Prayer of Jesus

For the Church: that the Spirit of God will enlighten our minds and guide us in making loving and life-giving decisions each day

For a renewal of creativity: that the Spirit of God will inspire us to use the many gifts that God has given us to bring forth new blessings and undreamed-of possibilities for our faith community and all the human family

For freedom of spirit: that God will unbind us from past hurts and failures so that we may be free to love, serve and be in relationship

For all who are suffering for their discipleship or who are imprisoned or persecuted for their faith: that God will heal their pain, strengthen their spirit, and make strong and effective their witness to Christ

For a true appreciation of all of our possessions: that we may accept them as gifts from God, use them to serve God and others, and never be possessed by them

For all who have no food: that God will touch the hearts of those with abundance to share their bounty so that all may experience the reign of God

For all who are recovering from wildfires, hurricanes or other disasters: that God will ease their suffering, give them hope, and strengthen all who working to assist them

For all who are held in slavery or human trafficking: that God will break their bonds, heal them, and reconnect them with their loved ones

For refugees and those who have fled violence, particularly children: that God will open the hearts of many to recognize them as sisters and brothers, help them find places of safety, and be welcomed into communities of faith

For preservation of our common home: that God will inspire leaders to develop policies and practices that will preserve the natural systems that God designed for the earth so that all may benefit from earth's resources

For all living in the midst of violence and civil discord: that God will open opportunities for peaceful resolution to these conflicts, protect each person from harm, and bring forth justice in these communities

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

Halle, Halle, Halle

arr. Hal Hopson

*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 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

**May these gifts of our labor to used to bring your healing and hope
to the world, O God. Amen.**

The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

God is with you.

And also with you.

Open up your hearts.

We open them up to God and one another.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Musical Response

Santo Santo Santo

Traditional Argentine

San - to, san - to, san - to. Mi co - ra - zon te a - do - ra! Mi
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly. My heart, my heart a - dores you! My
5 co - ra - zon te sa - be de - cir: San - to eres, Se - nor!
heart knows how to say to you: Ho - ly are you, Lord!

Sharing the Bread and Cup

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

Hymn

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus

CH344

Benediction

The Week Ahead...

Sunday, September 4	10:15am Worship with Holy Communion and Worship Circle
Wednesday, September 7	1pm Book Group in Fellowship Hall
Thursday, September 8	5:30pm Governing Board on Zoom
Saturday, September 10	9am-12noon WAIM Work Day (866 Main Street, Willimantic, Connecticut 06226)
Sunday, September 11	10:15am Worship and Worship Circle

Contemplative Communion is Back.

We gather each Thursday at 12:15 for a brief contemplative communion service. We will engage in the ancient practice of Lectio Divina (a method of reading, studying, and praying Scripture), share prayers, and be fed at Jesus' Welcome Table... all in about 30 minutes. Take a break midweek, come, and be.