



**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 ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME + JUNE 18 2023**

**Chimes and Prelude**

**Welcome and Greeting**

**A Poem for Centering**

*Your Laughter*

Pablo Neruda

Take bread away from me, if you wish,  
take air away, but  
do not take from me your laughter.

Do not take away the rose,  
the lance flower that you pluck,  
the water that suddenly  
bursts forth in joy,  
the sudden wave  
of silver born in you.

My struggle is harsh and I come back  
with eyes tired  
at times from having seen  
the unchanging earth,  
but when your laughter enters  
it rises to the sky seeking me  
and it opens for me all  
the doors of life.

My love, in the darkest  
hour your laughter  
opens, and if suddenly  
you see my blood staining  
the stones of the street,  
laugh, because your laughter

will be for my hands  
like a fresh sword.

Next to the sea in the autumn,  
your laughter must raise  
its foamy cascade,  
and in the spring, love,  
I want your laughter like  
the flower I was waiting for,  
the blue flower, the rose  
of my echoing country.

Laugh at the night,  
at the day, at the moon,  
laugh at the twisted  
streets of the island,  
laugh at this clumsy  
boy who loves you,  
but when I open  
my eyes and close them,  
when my steps go,  
when my steps return,  
deny me bread, air,  
light, spring,  
but never your laughter  
for I would die.

**Hymn**

*Faith of our Fathers*

CH635

### **Confessing our Brokenness and Opening Prayer**

Hear these words from the Gospel according to Matthew: Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip

and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food.

When in this past week have we found it difficult to find Good News?  
When has it been difficult to believe that the Kingdom has drawn near?

*Silence*

**God of the prophets and apostles, you greeted old Abraham and Sarah with news of wonder and life. Send us into the world to preach good news, as Jesus did, heal the sick, resist evil, and bring the outcast home. Amen.**

**Song of Praise**

*Gloria*

Christopher Grundy

Glo - ry to the Cre-a - tor, and the Christ, and the Spir-it so near, as it  
 9  
 was from the start so it shall be for - ev-er one God, al-ways here.

**Christian Scripture**

Romans 5:1-8 (The Message)

By entering through faith into what God has always wanted to do for us—set us right with him, make us fit for him—we have it all together with God because of our Master Jesus. And that's not all: We throw open our doors to God and discover at the same moment that he has already thrown open his door to us. We find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand—out in the wide open spaces of God's grace and glory, standing tall and shouting our praise.

There's more to come: We continue to shout our praise even when we're hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we're never left feeling shortchanged. Quite

the contrary—we can't round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!

Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, and doesn't, wait for us to get ready. He presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready. And even if we hadn't been so weak, we wouldn't have known what to do anyway. We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him.

**Psalter**

Psalm 100: All People Who On Earth Do Dwell

CH18

**Hebrew Scripture**

Genesis 18:1-5; 21:1-7

Now Yhwh was seen by Avraham by the oaks of Mamre as he was sitting at the entrance to his tent at the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and saw: here, three men standing over against him. When he saw them, he ran to meet them from the entrance to his tent and bowed to the earth and said: My lords, pray if I have found favor in your eyes, pray do not pass by your servant! Pray let a little water be fetched, then wash your feet and recline under the tree; let me fetch (you) a bit of bread, that you may refresh your hearts, then afterward you may pass on— for you have, after all, passed your servant's way! They said: Do thus, as you have spoken. Avraham hastened into his tent to Sara and said: Make haste! Three measures of choice flour! Knead it, make bread-cakes! Avraham ran to the oxen, he fetched a young ox, tender and fine, and gave it to a serving-lad, that he might hasten to make it ready; then he fetched cream and milk and the young ox that he had made ready, and placed it before them. Now he stood over against them under the tree while they ate. They said to him: Where is Sara your wife? He said: Here in the tent. Now he said: I will return, yes, return to you when time revives, and Sara your wife will have a son! Now Sara was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. And Avraham and Sara were old, advanced in days, the way of women had ceased for Sara. Sara laughed within herself, saying: After I have become worn, is there to be sexual pleasure for me? And my lord is old! But Yhwh said to Avraham: Now why does Sara laugh and say: Shall I really give birth, now that I am old? Is anything beyond Yhwh? At that set-time I will return to you, when time revives, and Sara will have a son. Sara pretended (otherwise), saying: No, I did not laugh. For she was afraid. But he said: No, indeed you laughed. Now Yhwh took account of Sara as he had said, Yhwh dealt with Sara as he had spoken. Sara became pregnant and bore Avraham a son in his old age, at the set-time of which God had spoken to him. And Avraham called the name of his son, who was born to him, whom Sara bore to him: Yitzhak/He Laughs. And Avraham circumcised Yitzhak his

son at eight days old, as God had commanded him. Avraham was a hundred years old when Yitzhak his son was born to him. Now Sara said: God has made laughter for me, all who hear of it will laugh for me. And she said: Who would have declared to Avraham: Sara will nurse sons? Well, I have borne him a son in his old age!

## Reflection

### Call to Prayer

### *Lord Listen to Your Children Praying*

CH305

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are: "Lord, li-sten to your chi - ldren pray - ing. Lord, send your Spi-rit in this place." The second staff continues the melody with similar note values. The lyrics are: "Lord, lis-ten to your chi - ldren pray - ing. Sendus love, sendus power, sendus grace." The piece ends with a double bar line.

### Prayers of the People and the Prayer of Jesus

Holy One, you bring us together and call us your own. Bless theologians, teachers, and preachers who help us grow in faith. Guide your church, that we might be a holy people.

Holy One, the whole earth is yours. Where there is fire, bring cool air and new growth. Where there is flooding, bring abatement. Where there is drought, bring rain. Inspire us to care for what you have provided. This week we thank you for Lake Powell, our nation's second-largest reservoir. As its water recedes, there is an emergence of a deep red-rock canyons that home lush ecosystems and other-worldly arches and for Strumpshaw Fen, a wildlife reserve in Norfolk, UK, where butterfly enthusiasts have recently congregated to catch a glimpse of the Swallowtail, one of the UK's rarest and largest butterflies and we prayer for the people in the Philippines where 13,000 residents in the have been evacuated from their homes, impacted by the Mount Mayon volcano.

Holy One, we have created divisions you will not own. In places of conflict, raise up leaders who work to develop lasting peace and reconciliation. Encourage organizations and individuals who care for all forced to leave their homes. In particular, we pray for the people of Ukraine and Russia.

Holy One, you care for those who are harassed and helpless. Protect and defend those who are abused. Heal those who are sick. Feed all who hunger. Empower all whose voices go unheard, and help us respond to the pressing needs of our neighbors.

Holy One, you provide a plentiful harvest of gifts and resources. Prepare us to labor and gather the fruits of this congregation, that we might discover new ways of living. Minister to

us in our work, that we do not lose heart. We pray for our ministry partners: the Community Meal Program, the Covenant Soup Kitchen, the Domestic Violence Program, those who use our First Church Blessing Box, Habitat for Humanity, Holy Family Shelter, No Freeze Shelter, WAIM, and Church World Service.

Holy One, you bring all people to yourself. We give thanks for the holy people who have gone before us. Sustain us in your mission until the day you bear us up to join the saints in light.

*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

*Source and Sovereign, Rock and Cloud*

CH12

*Financial offerings may be placed in the collection plates,  
mailed to: First Church of Christ in Mansfield UCC. Box 36. Mansfield Center, CT 06250,  
or given online at [www.myfcc.info](http://www.myfcc.info)*

### 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

**We worship you, O God, with gladness for your faithful love endures forever. In witness to this faith which we claim, we boldly give for ministry which changes people's lives in your holy name. Amen.**

## Hymn

*God of Grace and God of Glory*

CH464

## Benediction

## Postlude

The Week Ahead...

Sunday, June 18

10:15am Worship and Worship Circle

Monday, June 19

10am First Church leads Worship at St Joseph Living Center

Wednesday, June 21

1pm Book Group in Fellowship Hall

Thursday, June 22

12:15pm Contemplative Communion in Yellow Office

Sunday, June 25

10:15am Worship and Worship Circle

Following Worship, Congregational Meeting

2pm Dr. AJ Levine "How and Why Jews and Christians Read the Same Texts Differently"