



**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 EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME + AUGUST 6, 2023**

**Chimes and Prelude**

**Welcome and Greeting**

**Centering in the Spirit**

*Logos*

Mary Oliver

Why worry about the loaves and fishes?  
If you say the right words, the wine expands.  
If you say them with love  
and the felt ferocity of that love  
and the felt necessity of that love,  
the fish explode into many.  
Imagine him, speaking,  
and don't worry about what is reality,  
or what is plain, or what is mysterious.  
If you were there, it was all those things.  
If you can imagine it, it is all those things.  
Eat, drink, be happy.  
Accept the miracle.  
Accept, too, each spoken word  
spoken with love.

**Hymn**

*Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ*

CH422

**Confessing our Brokenness and Opening Prayer**

Hear these words from the Gospel according to Matthew: Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

When in this past week have we considered our resources too meager to help?  
When have we excluded or discounted others?

*Silence*

**Glorious God, your generosity floods the world with goodness and you shower creation with abundance. Awaken in us a hunger for food to satisfy both body and heart, that in the miracle of being fed we may be empowered to feed the hungry in Jesus' name. 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  
was from the start so it shall be for - ev - er one God, al - ways here.

**Christian Scripture**

Romans 9:1-5

In this morning's reading from his Letter to the Romans, Paul expresses his anguish and sorrow that so many of the children of Israel, the people especially favored by God, have not found what he understands to be Lord's promise of salvation in Jesus. To them belong the covenants, the law, and so much else. From their nation Christ himself came. Paul would go to great lengths, even see himself an outcast, if such would help Israel to know the love of God in Jesus. Later in this letter Paul tries to explain how this all may be part of God's plan of redemption, which in the end will include Israel with the Gentiles.

At the same time, you need to know that I carry with me at all times a huge sorrow. It's an enormous pain deep within me, and I'm never free of it. I'm not exaggerating—Christ and the Holy Spirit are my witnesses. It's the Israelites . . . If there were any way I could be cursed by the Messiah so they could be blessed by him, I'd do it in a minute. They're my family. I grew up with them. They had everything going for them—family, glory, covenants, revelation, worship, promises, to say nothing of being the race that produced the Messiah, the Christ, who is God over everything, always.

**Psalter**

Psalm 17

THE SERVANT SONG

Hear, O Lord, my plea for jus - tice, lis - ten to my heart - felt prayer;  
Test my heart for its a - fflic - tion, pur - i - fy my soul with fire;  
Keep me, Lord, in sure pro - tec - tion, as the a - pple of your eye;  
In its wake send vin - dic - a - tion; to its sha - dows, show your face;

in your just de lib - er - a - tion may I find re - demp - tion there  
 let my mor - tal tongue speak wis - dom, right - ous - ness be my de - sire.  
 shel - ter me be - neath your sha - dow when my hour of death draws nigh.  
 bring me to my re - surr - ec - tion clothed in gar - ments of your grace.

**Hebrew Scripture**

Genesis 32:22-31

The same night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Penuel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.

**Reflection**

**Prayers of the People and the Prayer of Jesus**

You take resources that appear to be meager, bless them, and there is enough. May your church trust that what you bless and ask us to share with the world is abundantly sufficient.

Your bountiful creation offers sustenance and life for all creatures. Protect this abundance for the well-being of all. Reverse the damage we have caused your creation. Replenish ground water supplies, provide needed rains in places of drought, and protect forests from wildfires.

You offer yourself to all the nations and peoples of the earth, inviting everyone to abundant life. Bring the prophetic vision to fullness, that all nations will run to you and that nations who do not know you will find their joy in you.

You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Hear the anguish of tender hearts who cry to you in suffering and satisfy their deepest needs. Bring wholeness and healing to those who suffer in body, heart, soul, and mind.

You offer freely the fullness of salvation. Give our congregation such a welcoming heart, that our words and actions may extend your free and abundant hospitality to all whom we encounter.

You gather your saints as one, united in the body of Jesus. Bring us with all your saints to the heavenly banquet. We remember with love and thanksgiving the saints we have known.

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

*The Quiet Faith of Man*

Bill Staines

Offered by Howard Drescher

*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 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

**Holy Spirit keep us attuned to the voices around us, to those who need us to be bearers of your love and compassion; may these gifts we have given help us, through your church, meet those needs. Amen.**

### Hymn

*Love Divine All Loves Excelling*

CH517

### Benediction

The peace of Christ is with you all

**And also with you!**

Let us share some sign of that fellowship with one another.

### Postlude

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The Week Ahead...

Sunday, August 6	10:15am Worship and Worship Circle
Monday, August 7	10am First Church leads Worship at St Joseph Living Center
Thursday, August 10	12:15pm Contemplative Communion in Yellow Office 5:30pm Governing Board in Fellowship Hall
Sunday, August 13	10:15am Worship and Worship Circle