



**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 SEASON OF CREATION + SEPTEMBER 17, 2023**

**Chimes and Prelude**

**Welcome and Greeting**

Friends, may the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Good morning. Welcome to worship among this people who are the First Church of Christ in Mansfield (Congregational) United Church of Christ where we boldly proclaim that no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are indeed welcomed here.

Let us now center ourselves in the Spirit of creation.

**Centering in the Spirit of Creation**

Blessed are you, Creator God, for in Christ, the living water,  
you have blessed us and transformed us.

**Grant that as we are sprinkled with this water  
we will be refreshed by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

May we draw water from the springs of salvation.

**and continue to walk together in the new life we received in baptism.**

**Musical Response**

*We Gather Together*

CH276

**Confessing our Brokenness and Opening Prayer**

Hear these words from the Gospel according to Matthew: Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

When in this past week have found it difficult to forgive?

When have we found it difficult to accept forgiveness?

*Silence*

**God of freedom, you brought your people out of slavery with a mighty hand. Deliver us from our captivity to pride and indifference to the needs and gifts of others, that we may be ready to love as you have loved us, and to give even as we have received. 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 14:1-12

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God. We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

**Psalter**

Psalm 103: The Lord is Kind and Merciful

Marty Haugen

The Lord is kind and mer-ci-ful, the Lord is kind and mer-ci-ful.

**Hebrew Scripture**

Exodus 14:19-31

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt." Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the

Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

## Reflection

Jim Buccini

**Call to Prayer** *Stepping In* Christopher Grundy

There is a prayer like a wide ri-ver it ne-ver-ends,  
7 does not be-gin... a-round the world  
11 its al-ways flow-ing and we are step-ping in we are step-ping in.

## Prayers of the People and the Prayer of Jesus

Uphold your church throughout the world; make it a place of welcome. Strengthen faith through adult education and Sunday schools, confirmation classes and youth ministries. Nurture new ministries of education and growth.

The heights of the heavens show us the vastness of your steadfast love. Have compassion on your creation. Where human selfishness has brought ruin and destruction, we look to you to heal, renew, and redeem your world.

Make your ways known to the nations. Speak kindness to our bitter grudges. Settle our hearts when we want to settle accounts with violence. Bless our leaders with patience and wisdom.

Bring healing and justice wherever harm is dealt. Provide vindication for all who are oppressed. Free victims of human trafficking and forced labor; deliver all who are bound by debt. Feed all who hunger, and guard refugees fleeing famine, poverty, and war.

Teach us to forgive. Remind us that you do not always accuse us. Still our tongues when we are tempted to pass judgment and argue over opinions. Make this congregation a community of mercy for one another and for all our neighbors.

Whether we live or whether we die, we are yours. We thank you for those who have showed us faithfulness, for the knees that taught us how to bow to you and the tongues that taught us to praise you

At this time I invite you to add your prayers to those I have spoken. You are welcome to come forward and light a candle as a symbol of that pray, speaking it aloud into the microphone at the front if you wish.

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

*Ubi Caritas*

CH523

*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 God, may the gifts here given help meet the needs of the world. Amen.**

### Hymn

*We Are Called*

CHXXX

1. Come! Live in the light! Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord! We are called...  
2. Come! O - pen your heart! Show your \_ mer - cy to all those in fear! We care called  
3. Sing! Sing a new song! Sing of that great day when all will be one! God will reign, \_  
10 \_ to be light for the king - dom, to live in the free - dom of the ci - ty of God!  
\_ to be hope for the hope - less, so all hat - red and blind - ness will be no more.  
\_ and we'll walk with each - o - ther as sis - ters and bro - thers u - ni - ted in love!  
**Refrain**  
17 We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tender - ly, we are called to  
27 serve one - an - oth - er; to walk hum - bly with God!

## **Benediction and Postlude**

As you have been forgiven,  
now go into a world that needs your forgiving, healing touch.  
Bring peace and hope to others,  
sharing God's love with them. AMEN.  
The peace of Christ be with you!

**And also with you!**

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

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## **The Week Ahead...**

### **Sunday, September 17**

10:15am Worship and Worship Circle  
5pm PFLAG of Tolland Mansfield in Fellowship Hall

### **Monday, September 18**

7-9pm Take Note

### **Tuesday, September 19**

3:15pm First Church leads Worship at MCNR  
5:30pm Governing Board on Zoom

### **Wednesday, September 20**

First Church hosts the Community Meal at First Baptist Willimantic  
1pm Book Group in Fellowship Hall

### **Thursday, September 21**

9:30 Quilt Group in Fellowship Hall  
10am First Church leads Worship at St Joseph Living Center  
12:15pm Contemplative Communion in Yellow Office

### **Friday, September 22**

9-4 Memorial Service Prep

### **Saturday, September 23**

11am Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Alisha Colon

### **Sunday, September 24**

10:15am Worship and Worship Circle  
5pm PFLAG of Tolland Mansfield in Fellowship Hall