



**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 24, 2023

Chimes and Prelude Welcome and

Greeting

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

Water River Spirit Grace

CH366

Confessing our Brokenness and Opening Prayer

Hear these words from the Gospel according to Matthew: For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

When in this past week have we been envious?
When have we found it difficult to be generous?

Silence

O God, from your providing hand even the dissatisfied and grumbling receive what they

need for their lives. Teach us your ways of justice and lead us to practice your generosity, so that we may live a life worthy of the gospel made known through your Son Jesus Christ, our Savior.
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

Philippians 1:21-30

In our Christian Scripture this morning, Paul writes to the Philippians from prison. Though he is uncertain about the outcome of his imprisonment, he is committed to the ministry of the gospel and calls on the Philippians to live lives that reflect and enhance the gospel mission.

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Psalter

Psalm 105: For the Beauty of the Earth

CH56

Hebrew Scripture

Exodus 16:2-15

²The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not.

⁵On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." ⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, ⁷and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your complaining against the LORD. For what are we, that you complain against us?" ⁸And Moses said, "When the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the LORD has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the LORD."

Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, ‘Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.’”¹⁰ And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. ¹¹The LORD spoke to Moses and said, ¹²“I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’”

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.”

Reflection

Call to Prayer

Stepping In

Christopher Grundy

There is a prayer like a wide ri-ver it ne-verends,
 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

Generous God, you make the last first, and the first last. Where this gospel challenges the church, equip it for its works of service.

Sun and wind, bushes and worms, cattle and great cities—nothing in creation is outside your concern, mighty God. In your mercy, tend to it all. Give us a spirit of generosity toward all you have made

Where we find envy and create enemies, you provide enough for all. Bring peace to places of conflict and violence. Inspire leaders with creativity and wisdom. Bless the work of negotiators, peacekeepers, and development workers.

Reveal yourself to all in need as you are gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, ready to relent from punishing. Accompany judges and lawyers, victims of crime and those serving sentences. Give fruitful labor and a livelihood to those seeking work.

Even beyond our expectations, you choose to give generously. Grant life, health, and courage to all who are in need.

We praise you for the generations that have declared your power to us. Give us faithfulness to follow them, living for Christ, until you call us to join them in the joyful song of all ages.

*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

All Who Hunger

CH419

*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*

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

Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah

CH622

Benediction and Postlude

May we be blessed to open our hearts to receive the living waters of God's justice and peace within us:

May we be blessed to share the living waters of justice and peace with our suffering brothers and sisters and all creatures around us:

May we be blessed to walk together with all people of good will so that the many streams of the living waters may become a mighty river all over the Earth:

And may God: Creator, Christ, and Spirit bless us on this journey. Amen.

The Week Ahead...

Sunday, September 24

10:15am Worship and Worship Circle Greeter Training
after Worship

Monday, September 25

10am First Church leads Worship at St Joseph Living Center 7-9pm Take
Note

Wednesday, September 27

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

Thursday, September 28

12:15pm Contemplative Communion in Yellow Office

Sunday, October 1

10:15am Worship and Worship Circle