



**First Church of Christ in Mansfield
(Congregational) United Church of Christ**

549 Storrs Rd. P.O. Box 36 Mansfield Center, CT 06250

860.423.9008 + www.myfcc.info

All the Members, Ministers

Rev. Joseph Blotz, Pastor + Erik Haeger, Organist

Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator

THE FEAST OF EPIPHANY + JANUARY 7, 2024

Chimes and Prelude

Poetry Prayer

There Is Room

Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

The world may feel like one long stretch of night,
like an endless winter, or a hovering rain cloud.

And life may feel like walking into the wind,
an uphill climb in every direction,
but we can still open the door.

We can't calm every storm,
but we can turn on the porch lights.

We can add chairs to the table.

We can keep clean sheets on the guest bed,
just in case.

We can hold the elevator,
and learn pronouns.

We can tell stories of belonging,
and take turns listening.

We can learn each other's names,
and plant trees for our children.

We can study privilege
and advocate for mental health.

We can insist,
every single day,
in a million different ways:

there is room,

there is room,

there is room for you here.

We can't calm every storm,
but we can turn on the porch lights.

Welcoming the Light

God of the weary traveler,
our feet are dusty from the roads we've traveled
**this past week,
this past year,
every day of our lives.**

We've followed your star here, looking for a glimmer of hope.
And now, after a long journey, we set our baggage down.

We have arrived.

We're here, and we're on holy ground.

You may not show up where we expect you,
but we trust that you are here nevertheless.
Be known to us
in the hope of the star,
the peace of a baby snuggled in the manger,
the joy of arrival,
and Love that could not stay away.

We are here. You are here.

And we are so very grateful. Amen.¹

Welcome and Greeting

Hymn

We Three Kings

CH172

Gospel

Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi[a] from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.' "

¹ Our Words for Worship this Advent were written by the Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Reflection

Call to Prayer *Creator of the Stars of Night* CH127

Cre - a - tor of the stars of night, your peo-ple's e - ver - last - ing light,

O Christ, re-deem-er of us all, we pray you hear us when we call.

Prayers of the People and the Prayer of Jesus

God of heaven and earth,
 God who twinkles among the stars
 yet was born in a manger,
 you are here among us.
 You are God with us, Emmanuel.

You know the intricacies of human life,
 the weariness and the joy,
 the laughter and the heartbreak,
 tired bodies and little wins and anxiety for what is to come.
 You knew the grief of losing a loved one.
 You knew the feeling of not having a bed to call your own.
 You knew the pain of betrayal and sore feet and being misunderstood.
 And so with confidence that nothing is too big, too small, too complicated for you to hold,
 we ask for your hand on those in our community who are hurting.

Yet within the weariness of human life, you also knew joy.

You knew the companionship of close friends
and the joy of dancing at a wedding while the wine was flowing.
You knew laughter and deep love and how a field of flowers can take your breath away.
We know that you are present in all the joys of our lives,
and you are celebrating with us this morning.

You hold it all, God, so we lay it at your feet.
We lay it before you so we can return home lighter,
rejoicing at the wonders we have encountered in this place.
With gratitude and joy we pray, in the name of your child and as he taught us saying...

*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

What Child is This

CH162

*Offerings may be placed in the collection boxes at the entrances to our worship space,
mailed to: First Church of Christ in Mansfield UCC. Box 36. Mansfield Center, CT 06250,
or given online at www.myfcc.info*

Prayer of Dedication

**Holy God, we bring our gifts before you this morning. We have no gold,
no frankincense, no myrrh— but what we have we give to you. Bless our
gifts of worship. Multiply our gifts of care for one another as we anoint
the sick, sit with the lonely, and listen to voices that are silenced.
Incarnate God, you broke into our weary world and there is still so much
joy to bring. May it be so, amen.**

Benediction

Epiphany Benediction Response *Take Us Home By Another Way* Christopher Grundy

Spir - it take us home take us home by an - oth - er
5 way, take us long way 'round the ty - rants and their schemes.
9 Give us strengths to walk, show us dreams of a bet - ter
13 day, and we'll pave the way with jus - tice go - ing home by an - oth - er way

*The mountains and the hills made low the rough places made plain
the despots thrown down from their thrones 'til only love remains.*

*Spirit, take us home take us home by another way
take us long way 'round the tyrants and their schemes,
Give us strength to walk Show us dreams of a better day
and we'll pave the way with justice going home by another way.*

*No offerings for billionaires to make them richer still
bring all your frankincense and myrrh that the hungry may be filled*

*Spirit, take us home take us home by another way
take us long way 'round the tyrants and their schemes,
Give us strength to walk Show us dreams of a better day
and we'll pave the way with justice going home by another way.*

*So when the Proud Boys and the Klan ask where the Christ child lies
just tell 'em that you'll let them know next time you're passing by*

*Spirit, take us home take us home by another way
take us long way 'round the tyrants and their schemes,
Give us strength to walk Show us dreams of a better day
and we'll pave the way with justice going home by another way.*

*So, when things get tough and feet are tired we'll know it'll be okay.
cause we'll pave the way with justice going home by another way.*

The Week Ahead...

Monday, January 8

10am First Church leads Worship at St. Joe's Center for Living and Rehab

Tuesday, January 9

5:30pm Governing Board on Zoom

Wednesday, January 10

1pm Book Group in Fellowship Hall

Thursday, January 11

12:15 Contemplative Communion

Sunday, January 14

10:15am Worship and Worship Circle