



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

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Ministers: All the Members of the Church

The Rev. Charles Ericson, Intentional Interim Minister

Erik Haeger, Organist

Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator

**December 29, 2024 ~ The First Sunday after Christmas**

**Welcome to Our Guests!**

We're delighted you have joined us for worship; the members are the ministers of this church...  
if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask us!

**Playing the Chimes**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude**

Erik Haeger

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***WHAT BRINGS YOU JOY?***

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**Call to Worship**

We have named our joy, and it is clear—

**God is in our joy.**

God is in this room.

**We have reason to celebrate.**

We have a reason to sing.

**Thanks be to God for the bright hope of this day.**

**\*Opening Hymn**

Joy to the World

CH 143

**Prayer for Transformation**

Joyful God, You told us that in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must be like children.

**Did you mean that like children, we must practice unhindered joy?**

**Did you mean that like children, we should lean into laughter, release our cynicism, and open ourselves to delight?**

In a world as broken and battered as ours, we admit,

**this often seems easier said than done.**

Forgive us, patient God, for the moments when we are so focused on the bad that we miss the good.

**Forgive us for hearing the nativity story and staying in our seats instead of jumping for joy.**

We know that even now you are sowing delight in our lives.

**Open our hearts up to it.**

**With gratitude we pray, amen.**

~ moment of silence ~

## Words of Grace

Friends, hear and believe the good news of the Gospel:

**We are seen. We are loved. We are forgiven.**

## \*Song of Praise

Glory to God

Paul Vasile

*Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me,  
and to the Son, whose grace has pardoned me,  
and to the Spirit, whose love has set me free!  
As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, Amen.*

*World without end, world without end, Amen.  
World without end, world without end, Amen.  
World without end, world without end, Amen.  
As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, Amen.*

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## JOY FOUND IN THE WORD

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## Prayer for Illumination

God of angel choruses and contagious laughter,  
we know that you speak to us in the quiet.  
We know that when we bow our heads and fall to our knees,  
you are there, hovering close, calling our names.

However, we also trust that when we throw our heads back in laughter,  
when we dance and clap with joy,  
when we skip and sing with gratitude,  
that even there, you are speaking.

So on this Sunday morning we pray:  
open our ears and hearts to hear what it is that you are saying.  
Meet us in this joy.  
Meet us in this delight.  
Meet us in the hope of this Christmas season  
and reveal the wisdom we need to hear today.  
With hearts full of gratitude -  
We laugh. We listen. We pray.  
Amen.

## Reading

Luke 2:10 and Isaiah 9:2-3

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people..."

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined.  
You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest;  
as people exult when dividing plunder.

## Hymn

Angels We Have Heard On High

CH 155

**Reading**

Matthew 2:10 and Psalm 148

When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

Praise the Lord!  
 Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!  
 Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!  
 Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.  
 He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,  
 fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!  
 Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!  
 Young men and women alike, old and young together!

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven.  
 He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him.  
 Praise the Lord!

**Hymn**

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

CH 164

**Reading**

Psalm 126:1-3 and Isaiah 55:12-13

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.  
 Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
 then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."  
 The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

For you shall go out in joy and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.  
 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle, and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

**\*Hymn**

Go Tell It On the Mountain

CH 167

**Reflection**

(adapted from a reflection by Kayla Craig | Sanctified Art | Words for the Beginning)

**JOY FOUND IN PRAYER****Call to Prayer**

Hear Us O Lord  
 Hear us, O Lord, as we come now in prayer;  
 Sharing our joys, our troubles, and our cares.  
 Help us, O Lord, to be open to Your Word

Don Besig &amp; Nancy Price

And teach us to put our trust in you.

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

Holy God, when our joy becomes scarce, remind us of these prayers we have offered here today. When hope becomes dim, grant us laughter. When love seems absent, help us remember that we have much to be grateful for. Here, we can see it all so clearly. You are near and that is good news of great joy for all people.

In your many names we pray the prayer the Jesus taught us: *(use the words you find most meaningful)*

**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.**

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### **JOY FOUND IN GIVING**

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#### **Invitation to Gratitude**

One thing that we know to be true is that we are surrounded by sources of joy and reminders of God's goodness. However, those countless gifts can be easy to miss in the hustle and bustle of our lives. So today, we have named the things that inspire gratitude. For as the Psalmist said, "The Lord has done great things for us." Let us continue to show our gratitude.

#### **Musical Offering**

"What Did Mary Say" by Rev. Chuck Ericson

(lyrics on last page)

#### **\*Doxology**

(sung to the tune of "The First Noel" CH 151)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God all creatures here below;  
Praise God for all that love has done:  
Creator, Christ and Spirit, One.  
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,  
Born is the King of Israel.

#### **\*Prayer of Dedication**

**Cheerful God, we have dedicate these offerings to your use so that the blessings and joy you have given to us may be shared among our neighbors. Amen.**

#### **\*Closing Hymn**

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

CH 150

#### **\*Benediction**

Family of faith,  
in a hurting and lonely world,  
in a battered and bruised society,  
there is good news:  
Jesus Christ is born!

So as you leave this place,  
may you be quick to laugh and quick to hope.  
May you look for reasons to be grateful.  
May you not hesitate to join in the dance,  
or join in the song.  
May you extend a hand to your neighbor,  
and find God in every moment of joy.  
For unto you a child is born.  
That is good news!  
So go in peace trusting in that promise.  
Go in peace, and go with joy.  
Amen.

### **\*Passing the Peace**

When the Magi are traveling to Jesus in the days following his birth, the Bible describes them as being “overjoyed.” When they see the star above Bethlehem, their response is a deep, contagious, abiding joy.

I imagine that joy was amplified because they did not travel alone. It’s one thing to experience joy by yourself. However, when we share our joy with each other, that joy has a contagious, expanding ripple effect.

So, as we practice our tradition of closing the service with the passing of the peace and time of fellowship, I invite you to share your joy with this community. Greet those around you, introduce yourself to someone new, hug someone you haven’t seen in a while, and relish in the joy of community.

Friends, the peace and joy of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pass joy and peace to one another.

### **Postlude**

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Most of this morning’s liturgy was written by the Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed for the Advent series “Words for the Beginning.” Permission for use has been granted by A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org)

### **About this week’s theme and icon:**



### **DON'T FORGET TO LAUGH**

From a center point, tulip-like flowers stretch and bloom, referencing the Ralph Waldo Emerson quote, “The Earth laughs in flowers.”

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### **THE WEEK AHEAD...**

**Wednesday, January 1<sup>st</sup> - HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

**Thursday, January 2<sup>nd</sup> - 9:30 a.m. Sewing & Service**

**Sunday, January 5<sup>th</sup> - 10:15 a.m. Worship & Worship Circle.**

We celebrate the sacrament of Communion and a Covenant litany that welcomes New Members.

## What Did Mary Say?

What do you think they talked about, This young couple barely betrothed  
As they came near to Bethlehem, So worn out and long on the road.

Maybe it wasn't a silent night. Maybe they talked all the way.  
If you could hear them when they arrived... What would you hear them say?

Maybe Joseph said: "At last the journey's over!"  
Maybe Mary said: "It's just begun!!"

What of the kings who travelled far? Riding west toward the light  
Bearing their gifts with cautious hope; Fearing great Herod's might

Maybe they bent down to their knees; Maybe at last they felt safe  
If you could hear them when they arrived... What would you hear them say?

Maybe the kings said: "At last the journey's over!"  
Maybe Mary said: "It's just begun!!"

What of the day we now call Good... Friday when the sun's light withdrew  
Earth was shaking and boulders split... And all of the disciples flew...

Maybe they gathered back again, After they sorrowed three days  
If you had heard them at Easter's dawn... What would you hear them say?

Maybe the disciples said: "At last the journey's over!"  
Maybe Jesus said: "It's just begun!!"

What is it like for us these days; Has anything really much changed  
When we arrive at Christmas Eve, do we still sing the same refrain?

Maybe we think we're different now; Maybe we think we have learned  
Or like Joseph and all the rest... do we think that this is the end?

If we say: "At last the journey's over!"  
Mary tells us: "No, It's just begun!!"