

**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

March 16, 2025 — Second Sunday in Lent

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

Greeting and Announcements

Prelude

Erik Haeger

Centering in the Spirit

Gary Coté

One: Come as you are.

All: If you have deep faith or your faith has run dry,

One: If you know every scripture or none at all,

All: If you have calloused hands and live your faith through good works,

One: Or if you kneel at God's feet, with a million hungry questions,

All: Come as you are.

One: This is God's house.

All: None are turned away.

One: All are welcome here.

***Opening Hymn**

O God of Vision

CH288

Prayer for Transformation

God of Grace, We long to do the "right" thing. We long to make the "right" choice. We long to stand on the "right" side of the dividing line. In our earnestness, we sometimes miss the sacred right in front of us. In our earnestness, we sometimes miss opportunities to show love. Show us how to hold our heart's desire for perfection loosely. Show us how to lead with grace and love, over anything else. For even more than our desire to be right, we desire to be close to you. Show us the way. Amen.

moment of silence

Words of Grace

Faithful friends, God knows your heart. When you mean well and lose your way, God knows. When you try to do the right thing and miss the point, God knows. When you long to be close to God, and doubt your worth, God knows. You are seen. You are loved. You are forgiven. You have been sent to serve. This is the good news of the gospel! Nothing can separate you from God's love. Thanks be to God! Amen.

***Song of Praise**

Glory to God

Paul Vasile

Glo-ry to God, whose good-ness shines on me, and to the Son, whose grace has
end, world with-out end, A - men. World with-out end, world with-out
4 par - doned me, and to the Spir - it, whose love has set me free! As it was in the be-ginning, is
end, A - men. World with-out e - nd, world with-out end, A - men.
8 now and ev - er shall be, A - men World with-out men!

Epistle

Philippians 3:17-4:1

¹⁷Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. ¹⁹Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

4:1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

Gospel

Luke 13:31-35

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³²He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' ³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Reflection

"Citizens of Heaven"

Hymn

All Who Love and Serve Your City

CH670

Reading

"Wildfire" by Rev. Sarah Speed

Barbara Dobrocki

I can picture it—salty sweat, accumulating in her bangs. The scent of toasted sesame seeds, crushed oregano, sumac, and cumin. Flour on her hands, painting streaks of white in her hair when she ties it back. The sweet date she samples—the way it stretches and clings to the back of her teeth, leaving the taste of honey in her mouth.

I can picture Martha in that kitchen, plating meals, eager to see their eyes close. Their heads nod. To hear the swell of approval that rises from their lips. And I can picture her sister. Brows scrunched. Fingers fidgeting,

wishing for a pen, for paper, for a way to write it down. I can see her mouth part like a fish in the air, questions forming and reforming on her curious lips. I can see her lean in, knees tucked, eyes bright. I can see her imagining the world he dreamed of.

And I can picture how,
for generations, this story of two brazen women in scripture, a story of two women so close to Jesus, may have felt like an untamed wildfire. I can picture the way we put these women in boxes. I can imagine how people saw their full hearts, their untamed energy, and decided to label that as good and bad, better and worse. I can imagine how Martha's questions were interpreted as nagging, or the interruption interpreted as needy.

I can picture how it happened,
but what if it was all more beautiful than that? What if these sisters discovered a ministry of cooking? What if they discovered the faithfulness of learning, the kind of friendship that allows you to ask questions, or something in between?
I can imagine it. Can you?

Call to Prayer **Hear Us O Lord** **Don Besig and Nancy Price**

Hear us, O Lord, as we come now in prayer, shar - ing our joys, our trou - bles, and our cares.

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Help us, O Lord, to be o - pen to your word, and teach us to put our trust in you.

Prayers of the People and the Prayer of Jesus

Please pray the Prayer of Jesus in whatever language is 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/trespas 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.**

Invitation to Generosity

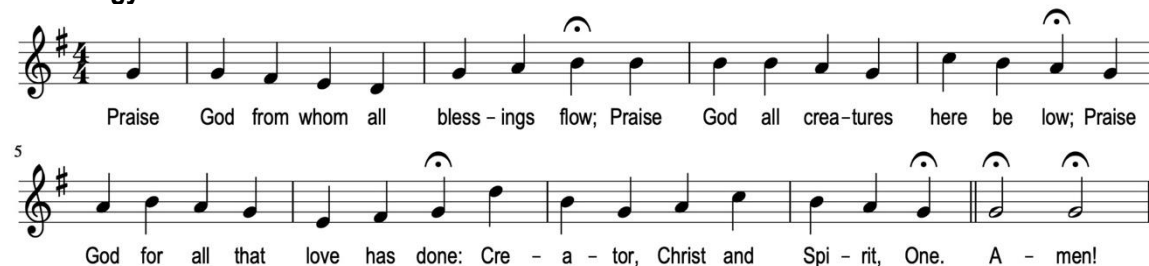
Today and tomorrow we engage in the work of ministry together — feeding hungry souls, healing broken hearts, making peace where there is discord. This is how we follow the example of Jesus and imitate the early disciples. Our morning offerings, given out of love and devotion, help to keep this ministry going: changing lives and making a better world. Come, let us bring our gifts to God, hope-fully and joy-fully.

Your financial offerings may be placed in the collection plates as they come around,
or mailed to: First Church of Christ in Mansfield UCC, PO Box 36, Mansfield Center, CT 06250,
or given online at: www.myfcc.info

Musical Offering

Stabat Mater by Pergolesi Laurel Thurman & Cheryl Chase

*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

Heavenly Spirit, you have sent us into this world to imitate our ancestors in faith, and follow the example of Jesus. Our prayers, our daily expressions of loving-kindness, and the gifts we bring to you now, are among the many ways that we reveal the living spirit of Christ to our others. Please bless all of our giving, so that your love and good news may reach far and wide. Amen.

*Closing Hymn

This Is My Song

CH722

*Benediction

Now may God bless you and keep you;
May God's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you;
May God's countenance be lifted up upon you and give you peace. Amen.

*Passing the Peace

The peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, is with you always.

And also with you.

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

Postlude

This morning's opening liturgy and the poetry reading were written by the Rev. Sarah A. Speed for the Lent series "everything [in] between." Permission for use has been granted by A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

THEME FOR THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT
everything [in] between faith & works



Our 2025 Lent theme branding shows two hands reaching toward each other, representing our longing for connection despite the politics, assumptions, beliefs, and narratives that divide us. The hands look as if they are reaching for a handshake, but they are paused just before they connect. The negative space in between the hands creates the shape of a doorway, symbolizing hospitality or a pathway forward. The doorway invites us to look for God in the spaces in between.