



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

May 18, 2025
Fifth Sunday of Easter

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 (*inspired by Revelation 21*)

Karen Christianson

Leader: In the Revelation to John, the writer envisioned a new heaven and a new earth.

All: As we gather this morning, we can imagine a new heaven emerging right here on earth.

Leader: We can imagine an earthly heaven where all are fed and no one goes hungry.

All: We can imagine an earthly heaven where no one is excluded and all are affirmed.

Leader: We can imagine an earthly heaven where natural resources are preserved and peace abounds.

All: We can imagine an earthly heaven where love is given and received unconditionally.

Leader: We can imagine heaven right here on earth, and work together to make this vision come to life.

All: Come, let's praise God together in prayer and song and word as we begin to build heaven right here on earth.

***Opening Hymn**

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

CH25

Prayer for Transformation (*inspired by Psalm 148*)

The writers of the ancient Psalms called upon all of Creation to join in praising you, O God: "Praise God, all you shining stars..." wrote the Psalmist, "...you sea monsters and all deeps...fire and hail, snow and frost...mountains...fruit trees...wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds...young men and women alike, old and young together." As Creation resounds in praising you, dear God of Awe and Wonder, we humans can often remain silent and detached, shying away from joining the symphony of praise to you. As we pause now for a few moments of silence and reflection, please draw us back into the great chorus of praise that helps us to feel closer to you, to re-center our spirits and to rediscover the deep satisfaction of living as faithful disciples of Jesus. Amen.

moment of silence

Words of Grace

Beloved friends, our God delights in all of our expressions of praise — those that form in silence and holiness within our hearts...those that pour forth from our lips when we experience grace and elation...and those that resound in this sanctuary when we gather for worship. In response, God showers us with new life...new potential...and new possibilities to join together as disciples creating heaven right here on earth.

*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

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.

now and ev - er shall be, A - men 1. World with-out 2. men!

Christian Scripture

Acts 11:1-18

Now the apostles and the brothers and sisters who were in Judea heard that the gentiles had also accepted the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, ³ saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" ⁴ Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, ⁵ "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners, and it came close to me. ⁶ As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. ⁷ I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' ⁸ But I replied, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹ But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' ¹⁰ This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. ¹¹ At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. ¹² The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³ He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' ¹⁵ And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

Gospel

John 13:31-35

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Reflection

"No Distinctions"

Hymn

O for a World

CH683

Call to Prayer

Hear Us O Lord

Don Besig and Nancy Price



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

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/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.**

Invitation to Generosity

The dream of creating heaven right here on earth, where we all learn to love one another without distinction, does not happen without a cost. It requires our faithful commitment to living and serving as Christ's disciples every day, finding ways of sharing our time, talent and treasure so that this dream may come true. May our hearts continue to discern how we can bring this dream to life together, as our morning offering is now received.

*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,*

Musical Offering

Erik Haeger

*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

We ask your blessing, Loving God, upon the gifts and offerings we dedicate now to you. Through our church's ministries and missions, may they help to fulfill the dream of a heaven right here on earth, where love and peace abound and all may share the abundance of Creation without distinction. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

*Closing Hymn

In Christ There Is No East or West

CH687

*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

The Week Ahead...

TODAY	5:00 p.m. PFLAG of Mansfield Tolland
Monday, May 19	6:30 p.m. Take Note rehearsal
Tuesday, May 20	5:30 p.m. Worth Fighting For
Wednesday, May 21	1:00 p.m. Book Group 5:30 p.m. Pastoral Search Committee
Thursday, May 22	9:30 a.m. Quilt Group
Saturday, May 24	12:30 p.m. Girl Scouts

Please join the Pastoral Search Committee for a
Potluck Lunch on Sunday, June 1
where they will share an overview of the survey results.

The June 5th Visioning Retreat has been cancelled.

There will be a Congregational Meeting after worship
on Sunday, June 22