



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

Ministers: All the Members of the Church

Rev. Don Erickson, Pastor

Erik Haeger, Organist

Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator

Mandy Boukus, Office Assistant

January 4, 2026 — Epiphany Sunday

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

Centering in the Spirit *from D.T. Niles (1908-70)*

Gary Côté

One: The great love of God is embodied in the One.

All: Love comes to this earth to redeem everyone.

One: That love, like a stream flowing clear to the sea,

All: makes clean every heart and sets every spirit free.

One: Love binds the whole world, every barrier it breaks,

All: the hills it lays low, and the mountains it shakes.

One: Love is yours, love is ours, O how lavishly given!

All: The pearl of great price, and the treasure of heaven.

*Opening Hymn

The Gift of Love

CH 526

Silent Prayer for Transformation (a moment to pause, reflect, and renew)

moment of silence

Words of Grace

*Friends in faith, our Kind and Merciful God has been listening, and has heard us. God's grace has
already begun to embrace us... lift us... fill us. Feel the power of God's reassuring love. Give thanks!*

*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
World with-out 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
end, A - men. World with-out end, world with-out end, A - men.

was in the be-gin-ning, is now and ev-er shall be, A - men.

Christian Scripture

1 John 4:7-12 (NRSVUE)

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Gospel

John 13 (NRSVUE)

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

The Marks of Our Thriving Church: Clarity

Rev. Don Erickson

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.

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 with 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 help us not yield to/Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

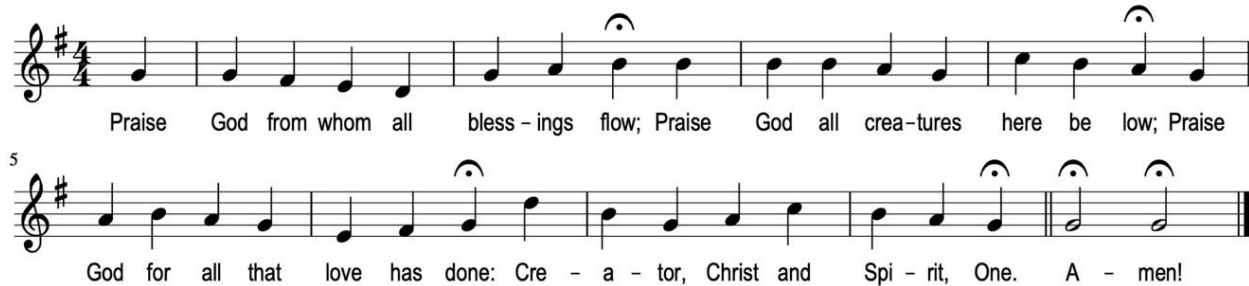
Invitation to Generosity

Offertory

I Wonder as I Wander

Howard Drescher

*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

Radiant God, the light of your wisdom and love shines for all who seek you, guiding us not with force, but with grace. Like the magi, we come bearing gifts, not to earn your favor, but in response to the gift of love you've given us. Use these offerings to reflect your compassion, so that others might be drawn to your love, your justice, and your joy. Keep us faithful in our seeking, generous in our sharing, and willing to be led wherever your star shines next. In Jesus' name, Amen.

~ The Service of Holy Communion ~

Pastoral Introduction

Silent Remembrance *(a time to in our own way remember all that Christ is to us)*

With reverence and faith and love, stay near, O God. Amen.

Communion Litany

"The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body broken for you"

(distribute bread)

One: O God, just as this broken loaf was scattered over the hill as grain, and, having been gathered together, became one; in like fashion, may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

All: *Because yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.*

The Body of Christ, the Bread of Life...

In remembrance of our Lord Jesus, Our Way, Truth, and Life

(partake)

"In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant effected by my lifeblood poured out for you."

(distribute juice)

One: O God, just as this juice comes from a gathering of grapes grown on a vine rooted deep, in like fashion, may we be rooted in the Vine that is Christ, and bear good fruit together as we look to your kingdom.

All: *Because yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.*

The Lifeblood of the New Covenant, the Cup of Wholeness...
In remembrance of our Lord Jesus, Our Way, Truth, and Life

(partake)

***Closing Hymn**

They'll Know We Are Christians

CH 494

***Litany for the Release of the Pastoral Search Committee**

Moderator: Friends, we gather today to mark the end of a significant chapter and the beginning of a new one, as we release our dedicated Pastoral Search Committee, trusting God to guide us forward.

People: Thanks be to God for your faithfulness.

Moderator: For the friendships made, the burdens shared, and the wisdom sought during this time of transition, we give thanks. For the hard work, the patience, and the prayers offered for our church's future, we give thanks.

People: Thanks be to God.

Moderator: We thank God for the Holy Spirit's guidance, even when the path was unclear, for the closed doors that led to deeper yearning, and for the open doors that now await us.

People: Thanks be to God.

Moderator: We commit to you, Search Committee, our heartfelt gratitude. We release you from this sacred charge, trusting that your service has strengthened our bonds and prepared us for what's next.

People: We release you, and we celebrate your ministry.

Moderator: We now turn our hearts to the future, asking for courage, clarity, and continued faith as we discern the next chapter of leadership. May we trust God's loving plan, Alpha and Omega, beginning and end.

People: Our hope rests in you, O Lord.

Moderator: Guide us, O God, to recognize your voice in the coming days, to build on the past, embrace the present, and dream boldly for the future you set before us.

***Closing Words**

***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

Our Greeters this morning are Karen Christianson and Janna Pedersen.

Our Cantor is Laurel Thurman.

Communion Servers are Gary Coté, David Darnell, Barbara Dobrocki, and Janna Pedersen.

Coffee Hour is hosted by Deb Richards.

About Communion at First Church

At the Last Supper, Jesus turned no one away and imposed no restrictions on receiving the bread and the cup. Neither do we here at First Church of Christ in Mansfield. Christ's table is open at all, and we extend an extravagant welcome to you to join us. The communion elements will be brought to the pews by servers. Plates containing pieces of bread will be distributed first, followed by trays containing individual cups of grape juice. Each time, worshipers are asked to hold the elements until all have been served and an invitation to partake is spoken from the communion table. For those who wish to know, the cup contains non-alcoholic grape juice, and the bread is gluten-free.

Welcome to the Rev. Don Erickson!

On December 14, 2025, the congregation voted unanimously to call the Reverend Don Erickson to serve as our next settled pastor. Today is his first Sunday in that role. Rev Don was ordained in the United Church of Christ in 2009 and currently holds ministerial standing in the Farmington Valley Association of the Southern New England Conference, UCC. Don lives in Bristol, CT with his wife, Holly, and their son, Corey. We look forward to living into our new ministry together!

Four Marks of Our Thriving Church:

In his inaugural sermon series, Rev Don will point to four wonderful characteristics that define First Church and discuss ways to reinforce these characteristics as we together build the Kin-dom of Christ in our beautiful college community.

January 4 Clarity
January 11 Compassion
January 18 Creativity
January 25 Contemplation

THE WEEK AHEAD...

Tuesday, January 6

10:30 a.m. Monthly Worship Service at Mansfield Center for Nursing & Rehab

Wednesday, January 7

1:00 p.m. Book Group

5:00 p.m. Meditation Group

Thursday, January 8

6:00 p.m. Governing Board

Sunday, January 11

10:15 a.m. Worship and Worship Circle

SAVE THESE DATES:

Our January **Congregational Meeting** will take place after worship on Sunday, January 25, 2026.

The Capital Campaign Committee will host a **Visioning Retreat**, led by Mission Interpreter Jill White of the UCC Church Building & Loan Fund on Friday/Saturday, May 1st and 2nd



The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
 To find the lost,
 To heal the broken,
 To feed the hungry,
 To release the prisoner,
 To rebuild the nations,
 To bring peace among others,
 To make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman

