

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

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Ministers: All the Members of the Church
The Rev. Don Erickson, Pastor
Erik Haeger, Organist
Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator
Mandy Boukus, Office Assistant

February 22, 2026 – First Sunday of 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

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

Erik Haeger

Call to Worship

Dave Litrico

The good news of the gospel is:
**manna in the desert,
water turned into wine,
love after loss,
forgiveness after pain.**

The good news of the gospel is:
**release for the captive,
hope for the hopeless,
mourning turned to dancing,
and strangers turned to friends.**

So come on in.
**There's no time to waste!
This surprising good news is here for you.
Let us worship this good-news God.**

Silent Confession

Words of Grace

God's grace is wild and unruly.
God's mercy is abundant and surprising.
God's love is expansive and unending.
So if you ask, "Holy One, am I forgiven?"

the answer is and always will be:
of course, of course, of course.
This is the good news of the gospel.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

*Opening Hymn

You Are My Hiding Place

CH 554

Hebrew Scripture

Psalm 32:6-11

Dave Litrico

*Therefore let all who are faithful
offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters
shall not reach them.
You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. Selah
I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,
else it will not stay near you.
Many are the torments of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD.
Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.*

"Poemily"

Divinely Found, Lost, & Losing

Rev. Don Erickson

*Hymn

Sun of My Soul

bulletin page 5

Gospel

Matthew 13:31-35 (NRSVUE)

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

*"I will open my mouth to speak in parables;
I will proclaim what has been hidden since the foundation."*

Contemplative Reflection

Poem

On the Parables of the Mustard Seed (Denise Levertov)

Julie Menard

Who ever saw the mustard-plant,
 wayside weed or tended crop,
 grow tall as a shrub, let alone a tree, a treeful
 of shade and nests and songs?
 Acres of yellow,
 not a bird of the air in sight.
 No, He who knew
 the west wind brings
 the rain, the south wind
 thunder, who walked the field-paths
 running His hand along wheatstems to glean
 those intimate milky kernels, good
 to break on the tongue,
 was talking of miracle, the seed
 within us, so small
 we take it for worthless, a mustard-seed, dust,
 nothing.
 Glib generations mistake
 the metaphor, not looking at fields and trees,
 not noticing paradox. Mountains
 remain unmoved.
 Faith is rare, He must have been saying,
 prodigious, unique —
 one infinitesimal grain divided
 like loaves and fishes,
 as if from a mustard-seed
 a great shade-tree grew. That rare,
 that strange: the kingdom
 a tree. The soul
 a bird. A great concourse of birds
 at home there, wings among yellow flowers.
 The waiting
 kingdom of faith, the seed
 waiting to be sown.

Call to Prayer

Hear Us O Lord

Don Besig and Nancy Price



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 *help us yield not 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

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 (in unison)

Howard Drescher

Surprising God of Mercy, you meet us in wilderness places and walk beside us through trial and temptation. Even when we feel alone, your grace is never far, your presence never absent. In this moment of giving, we offer not just our resources, but our trust that you are already at work, shaping us through challenge, strengthening us through sacrifice, and surrounding us with unseen angels. Use these gifts to bring hope where there is hunger, healing where there is pain, and light where there is despair. May what we give reflect our desire to walk more closely with you, even in the hard places. Amen.

*Closing Hymn

'Tis a Gift to Be Simple

CH 568

*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 Greeter today is Bill Briggs
 Our Cantor is Howard Drescher
 Coffee Hour is hosted by Lisa Peterson-Blinn*

Portions of this morning's liturgy were written by the Rev. Sarah A. Speed for the Lent series "Tell me something good... Grounding ourselves in the good news this Lent." Permission for use has been granted by A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

THIS WEEK'S THEME:

 the good news is...

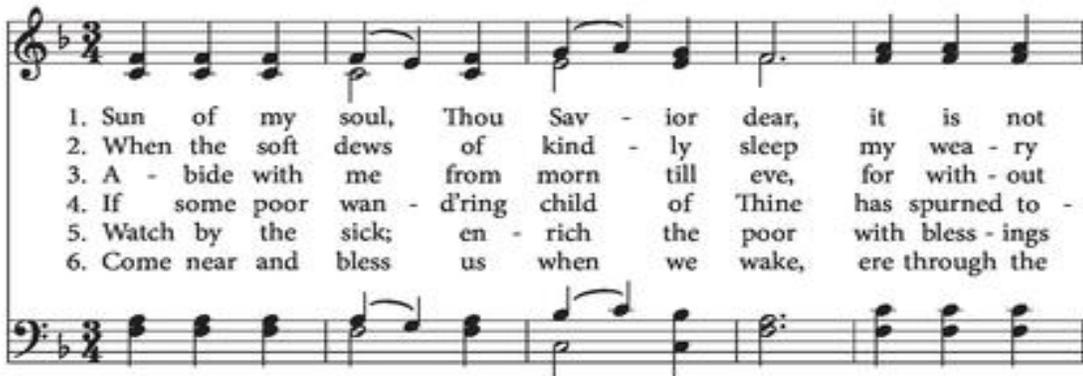
so good, it catches us by surprise

413 Sun of My Soul, Thou Savior Dear

John Keble, 1820

HURSLEY
LM

Katholisches Gesangbuch,
Vienna, ca. 1774



1. Sun of my soul, Thou Sav - ior dear, it is not
 2. When the soft dews of kind - ly sleep my wea - ry
 3. A - bide with me from morn till eve, for with - out
 4. If some poor wan - d'ring child of Thine has spurned to -
 5. Watch by the sick; en - rich the poor with bless - ings
 6. Come near and bless us when we wake, ere through the



night if Thou be near; O may no earth - born
 eye - lids gent - ly steep, be my last thought how
 Thee I can - not live; a - bide with me when
 day the voice di - vine, now, Lord, the gra - cious
 from Thy bound - less store; be ev - ery mourn - er's
 world our way we take, till in the o - cean



cloud a - rise to hide Thee from Thy ser - vant's eyes.
 sweet to rest for ev - er on my Sav - ior's breast.
 night is nigh, for with - out Thee I dare not die.
 work be - gin; let him no more lie down in sin.
 sleep to - night like in - fant's slum - bers, pure and light.
 of Thy love we lose our - selves in heav'n a - bove.

THE WEEK AHEAD

Monday, February 23

6:30 pm Take Note! Rehearsal

Wednesday, February 25

10:00 am Coffetime with Rev Don (Price Chopper Food Court)

1:00 pm Book Group

5:00 pm Meditation Group

Thursday, February 26

9:30 am Quilt Group

Friday, February 27

6:00 pm Pre-program Pizza

7:00 pm Pop/Rock God-Talk

Saturday, February 28

12:30 pm Girl Scouts

Pop/Rock God-Talk

a Song... a Spiritual Theme... a Short Symposium



Friday, February 27, 7-8 pm

Lose Yourself

(Eminem & Selected of God Gospel Choir)

What is Pop/Rock God-Talk? An alternative form of church gathering that is focused on theology and religious contemplation, using popular music to spark and stimulate discuss.

Come early at 6 p.m. for Pizza before the program!
A sign-up sheet is in the sanctuary.





This Lent and Easter season we will once again use the creative ministry resources from A Sanctified Art LLC. The overarching theme for Lent 2026 is **“Tell me something good... Grounding ourselves in the good news this Lent.”**

We often describe Jesus’ ministry as “radical” which comes from the Latin word “radicalis,” meaning “root” or “ground.” Therefore, the good news should bring us back to our roots, back to what grounds us: loving our neighbor, caring for the vulnerable, pursuing justice and mercy, and resting in God’s unending grace. This Lent, may the teachings of Jesus lead us forward. Let the good news ground us. And let that good news inspire us to take action in a world desperate to hear, see, and taste what is good.

@sanctifiedart

The **"Tell me something good." Devotional Booklet** may be picked up in the sanctuary. It contains scripture, commentary, poetry, visual art, hymns, and reflection prompts that parallel each week's worship theme.

First Hour Programs During Lent
Sundays, 9:15 to 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall

A Lenten spiritual journey of reflection and renewal.
Discovering and discussing the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Weekly Offerings

- 2/22 Karen Christianson – The Spirituality of Teaching.
- 3/1 Steve Lane – The Spirituality of Refugee Resettlement.
- 3/8 Don Baxter – The Spirituality of Cycling.
- 3/15 Penny Guerin/Barbara Dobrocki – The Spirituality of Painting.
- 3/22 Paul Tanner – The Spirituality of Beekeeping & Honey Harvesting.
- 3/29 Rev. Don Erickson – The Spirituality of Writing Poetry

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Palm Sunday - March 29, 10:15 a.m.

Maundy Thursday - April 2, 6:30 p.m.
Contemplative Service with Communion

Good Friday - April 3, 6:30 p.m.
Were You There?: A Service of Poetry and Song

Easter Sunday - April 5, 10:15 a.m.



Easter Candy Fundraiser

Our annual Easter Candy Fundraiser campaign starts today and runs through Thursday, March 5th. It's a short, two-week time frame so be sure to submit your order right away!

Please check the most recent all-church email for more information and a clickable link.

NOTE: Orders are placed online but you do not submit any payment information. You will pay with cash or check at the time of delivery.

www.munsonschocolates.com/online-fundraising/first-church-of-christ-mansfield-ctct/