

**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
The Rev. Don Erickson, Pastor
Erik Haeger, Organist
Olivia Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator
Mandy Boukus, Office Assistant

March 15, 2026 – Fourth 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

Jo-Ann Wunschel

God loves the field mouse.

God loves the crows that take flight when church bells ring.

God loves the baby, cooing in the back pew.

God loves the child who rocks and claps.

God loves the one with wrinkled hands and soft eyes.

God loves the bumblebees and the tabby cats.

God loves those who walk, crawl, and roll.

**God loves the giant oaks and the evergreens,
standing strong over all of us.**

God loves the young, the impressionable, and the earnest.

There is no bit of creation that God does not love.

So let us worship this good-news God!

Amen.

Prayer of Confession & Words of Grace

The Prophets say, "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them."

Holy God, we confess, we have mistreated the immigrants in our land.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

We confess, we have clung to guns and war more than we have pursued peace.

Torah says, "When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow."

We confess, we have hoarded our resources and failed to care for our neighbors.
Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them."

We confess, we have gatekept the good news in unfair ways.

Fortunately for all of us, Scriptures tell us,
"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name; you are mine."

**By God's grace, despite our sin and shortcomings,
we are redeemed, claimed, forgiven, and loved.**

May this good news change our lives!

Amen.

***Opening Hymn**

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

CH 16

Prayer for Illumination

Hebrew Bible Reading

Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: Thus you shall bless the [people]: You shall say to them:

²⁴ The Lord bless you and keep you;

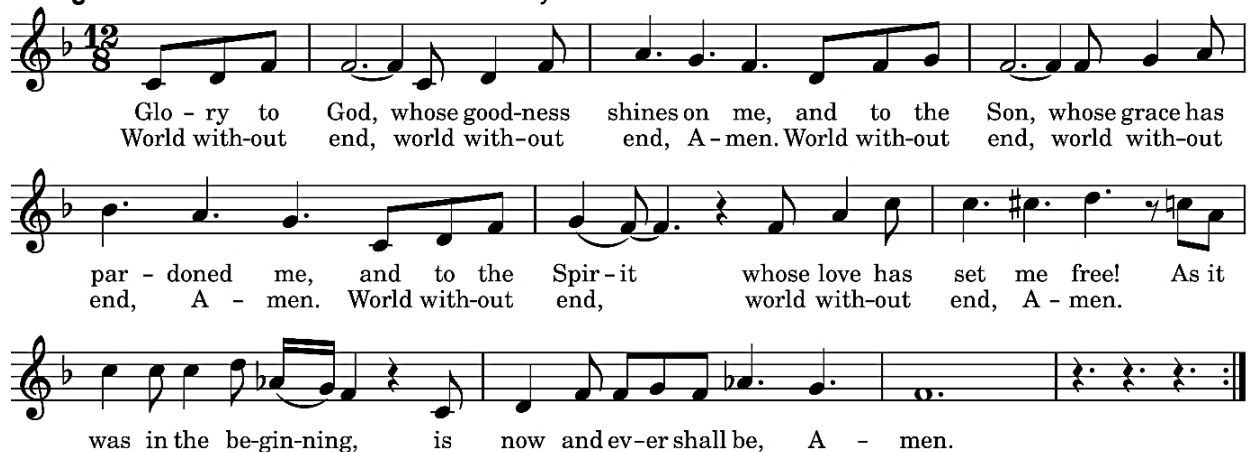
²⁵ the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

²⁶ the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

***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.

Gospel Reading

Mark 4:35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." ³⁶ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. ³⁷ A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion, and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ And waking up, he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead

calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Pastoral Meditation

"Peace, Be Still"

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.

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

Prayers of the People & the Prayer of Jesus

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/tresspass 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

"Bridge Over Troubled Water"

by Paul Simon
 offered by 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 (in unison)**

Laurel Thurman

Radiant Shepherd, you walk beside us through valleys and over mountaintops, guiding us with grace and guarding us with love. In your presence, we lack nothing that truly matters. Even in a world clouded by shadows, your light shines through—inviting us to live as children of the day. Receive these gifts, O God, as signs of our desire to walk in your ways,

to live as your people, and to shine with the goodness, justice, and truth that reflect your image. Let our giving be more than ritual; let it be an act of trust, a response to your faithfulness, and a testimony of your light at work in us. Amen.

***Closing Hymn**

Let There Be Peace on Earth

CH 677

***Poetry Prayer**

Unwritten Agreement

*by Rev. Sarah Speed
read by Julie Menard*

We have this unwritten agreement,
us members of humanity.
When the toddler at the coffee shop runs round the corner,
when her mom, at the register, looks up in panic,
we, the adults in the room, will pledge,
with quick smiles and silent head nods, to keep watch.
We will lean out of our seats.
We will put down our phones.
We will stand at the ready
to scoop up,
to offer words of comfort,
to make silly faces,
to keep an eye on the door.
And we will do this,
because we cannot ignore the instinct to care.
We will do this,
because we cannot ignore the child right in front of us.
We will do this,
because love always includes the least of these.

***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 Frank Ball and Eleanor Joyce
Our cantor is Howard Drescher
Coffee Hour is hosted by David Darnell and Gary Cote

Much of this morning's liturgy and poetry reading 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 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.

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THIS WEEK'S THEME:



Easter Flower Fundraiser

The Easter Flower Order Forms are now available in the Sanctuary and on our website. Our flowers this year will be from Hart's Greenhouses. Please submit your order and payment no later than tomorrow (Monday, March 16.)

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
-

CHURCH WORK DAY
SATURDAY, MARCH 21st
9 a.m. – 12 noon

Don't miss this opportunity to work together on spring clean-up! There are indoor and outdoor projects for all ages. Coffee and Donuts provided.

THE WEEK AHEAD...

TODAY

~ there is no Justice & Love Song Circle today ~
5:00 p.m. PFLAG of Mansfield Tolland

Wednesday, March 18

1:00 p.m. Book Group
5:00 p.m. Meditation Group

Thursday, March 19

9:30 a.m. Quilt Group
6:00 p.m. Special Olympics
7:00 p.m. Choir

Saturday, March 21

9:00 a.m. All Church Work Day

Sunday, March 22

9:15 a.m. First Hour Lenten Series
10:15 a.m. Worship and Worship Circle
11:15 a.m. Justice & Love Song Circle



HOLY WEEK SERVICES

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

We Commemorate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem

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.

We Celebrate the Resurrection

Pop/Rock God-Talk

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

An alternative form of church gathering that is focused on theology and religious contemplation, using popular music to spark and stimulate discussion.

The next Pop/Rock God-Talk will take place on Friday, March 27 at 7 p.m.

The pop song will be "I Want to Know What Love Is"
and the focus will be on the spiritual power of divine love.

SAVE THESE DATES – MAY 1st & 2nd

The Capital Campaign Committee will host an all-church **VISIONING RETREAT**, led by Mission Interpreter Jill White of the United Church of Christ Church Building & Loan Fund (CB&LF) on Friday evening, May 1st and daytime Saturday, May 2nd. (A specific time schedule will be forthcoming.) We are counting on your participation, so please hold these dates!