

January 26, 2025

MCCC Heritage Sunday

Message: Good morning, and welcome to our online worship service! We're so glad you've joined us today whether tuning in from near or far.

Today is a significant milestone for our church—we are celebrating 198 years of ministry! For nearly two centuries, this church has been a place for people to worship, grow, and serve together. Think about that for a moment—198 years of faith, love, and community!

No matter if you've been a part of this church family for years or if this is your very first time here, you're part of something bigger today, and we're so happy you've chosen to be here. Let's lift our voices, our hearts, and our spirits together as we worship the God who has brought us this far and will lead us forward in faith. We hope you feel the joy and peace of God's presence with us today! Welcome to worship!

Prelude “All Creatures of Our God and King” Sarah Park

Welcome

Welcome to the Mantua Center Christian Church

We are a community seeking to have open minds, open hearts, and open arms.

- Thank you for joining us here in the house and online. Welcome to everyone!
- **ANNOUNCEMENTS**
 - Potluck after worship
 - Camp Stories during the potluck
 - 4C's Collection & Collection of Diapers & Wipes (Free Clothing Giveaway)
 -

Scripture Reading **Matthew 7:24-25** **Ryan Lind**

²⁴Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.

***Response - Weave** **#495**

*Weave, weave, weave us together, Weave us together, in unity and love.
Weave, weave, weave us together, weave us together, together in love.*

Call to Worship**Ryan Lind**

ONE: Come, let's gather in the presence of God, who calls us to be one.

ALL: We come as seekers, as builders, as those longing for a firm foundation.

ONE: The ground beneath us is holy, shaped by hands we cannot see.

ALL: We are drawn together, stones joined in purpose and love.

ONE: With each prayer, each song, each act of faith, we are made strong.

ALL: In God's grace, we are built into something greater than ourselves.

ONE: Come, let's worship the One who makes all things new.

ALL: With open hearts, we offer ourselves to the work of God's kingdom.

Opening Hymn*The Church's One Foundation****#272, vs. 1-3**

1 The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, our Lord;
we are a new creation by water and the Word.

From heav'n he came and taught us what perfect love can be;
through life and death he sought us, and rose to set us free.

2 The church in ev'ry nation is one through all the earth;
our charter of salvation, one God, one faith, one birth;
one name together blessing, one holy food we share,
to one hope ever pressing, at one in work and prayer.

3 Yet we on earth have union with God, the Three in One,
and mystic, sweet communion with those whose rest is won.
Oh, happy ones and holy! God, give us grace that we,
like them, the meek and lowly, may live eternally.

Invitation to Generosity

Invitation

Ryan Lind

Offertory

Music:**"Great is Thy Faithfulness"****MCCC Choir**

*Response

"Let All Things Now Living"**#717**

Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving
to God our Creator triumphantly raise;

who fashioned and made us,
protected and stayed us,
by guiding us on to the end of our days.

Offering Prayer

Ryan Lind

Children's Moment

Rev. Chad Delaney

- Building a Cake
- 4th for the 4C's & Collecting Diapers & Wipes

Gracious God, we lift up the children of our church, our community, and the world. As we celebrate this church's birthday, we pray that these young lives will grow strong, built on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ. Bless them with joy, curiosity, and hope, and help us to be faithful builders in their lives, showing them your love and truth. May they always find shelter, purpose, and belonging within your church, a place grounded in Christ's love and grace. Amen.

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Special Music

"Jesus, What a Friend for Sinners"
[by Earlene Rentz, Henry J. Gauntlett]

MCCC Choir

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer

Rev. Chad Delaney

Gracious and Loving God,

On this special day, we come before You with hearts full and grateful. Today we are recognizing our 198th year this church has stood as a testament to your faithfulness and the gift of Jesus Christ. We thank you for the generations who came before us, who labored in faith and love to build not only these walls but also the spirit of community that binds us together. Their prayers, their sacrifices, their vision remind us that we are part of something much larger than ourselves.

Today our hearts are also aching. Aching at the loss of our friend and sister in Christ Sue and for the grief within her family...be with them Lord. Our hearts ache for the many within our congregation who are struggling in ways we know and in ways we don't know. Our hearts ache for those in our world who need shelter, warmth, and care. For those shivering in the cold, Lord, bring comfort. For the hungry and weary, bring sustenance and rest. And for those who feel

forgotten, may they find in us a reflection of your boundless love. We pray for those who live in fear as the transition of power takes place in our country and changes are spreading.

Stir our hearts, O God, as a church to be a people who build bridges, connections, and hope in the lives of those around us. Who call for unity, not division. Who cry out for hope and not hatred.

We thank you for the ministries of this church, for every mission carried out in your name. From feeding the hungry to teaching the young, from comforting the grieving to welcoming the stranger, your Spirit has guided our work. Bless these efforts, Lord, and help us to continue building your kingdom with wisdom and compassion.

As we look to the future, we ask for your guidance. Shape us into a people who align our lives with Christ, our cornerstone. Deepen our faith and enlarge our vision so that this church may continue to be a place where lives are transformed, faith is nurtured, and your love shines brightly.

God, each of us come with joys and concerns on our hearts. We give them to you now in silent prayer...

Hear us now as we pray the prayer you taught us to pray saying...

Holy Communion

Meditation

Communion Hymn

My Hope is Built

Carol Buzbee

#537, vs. 1-2

1 My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

[Refrain]

***On Christ the solid Rock I stand;
all other ground is sinking sand;
all other ground is sinking sand.***

2 When darkness veils his lovely face,
 I rest on his unchanging grace.
 In every high and stormy gale
 my anchor holds within the veil. *[Refrain]*

Communion Prayer

Ruth Anne Ruehr

Words of Institution

Ruth Anne Ruehr

Music

“I Know Not Why God’s Wondrous Grace” Sarah Park

[by J. McGranahan]

Scripture

Ephesians 2:17-22

17 So Christ came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, 18 for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, 20 built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone; 21 in him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Sermon

Building with Vision

Rev. Chad Delaney

Once, a traveler came across three stonecutters at work. The traveler asked the first, “What are you doing?” Without pausing, the worker replied, “I’m cutting stones.”

The traveler moved on to the second, asking the same question. This one said, “I’m building a wall.”

Finally, the traveler came to the third stonecutter, who stopped, looked up, and said, “I’m building a cathedral.”

Three workers, one task. Yet their answers reveal their vision, their purpose, their hearts.

When this church was constructed in 1840, what was on the minds of its builders? Were they simply carving stone and placing mortar, or were they dreaming of something greater? A place where generations yet to be might gather to worship, to learn, to find solace, and to offer praise. Their work was not just construction—it was consecration. They labored not for themselves but for something enduring, something eternal.

When we are doing the work of our church, what are we thinking? Are we laying bricks—fulfilling obligations--or are we making sacred space for lives to change?

When builders constructed this church nearly two centuries ago, they worked with extraordinary care. Today, as we maintain and restore it, we find evidence of their skills. Digging up the foundation to do the waterproofing, the workers were amazed at how plumb the rock was laid and that it stayed. They likely used plumb lines, set the walls true, aligned the corners so carefully that even today we are impressed.

Obviously, building something of that magnitude is not easy. So many different things to consider...the environment, the time of year, the soil, the materials available all that. This got me thinking about all the many difficult and even hazardous places where people build today. A few years ago, we went to the Smoky Mountain National Park and stayed between Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge. On the way to our little cabin, we were stunned by the houses that somehow got built on the steep sides of the mountain we were driving up.

Last summer, we visited Acadia National Park and saw several lighthouses...and this was even more impressive to me. A lighthouse stands where nothing else dares to stand—on jagged coastlines or the very sea itself, battered by relentless waves and unforgiving winds. Builders have to drill deep into the rock, chiseling for days or weeks to ensure the base will not falter. The mortar must withstand years of salt and storm.

While the geological terrain around here might now be as challenging as mountains or oceans, we still have our challenges. What challenges do you see? I see a world skeptical of the work and motivations of the Church. I see there are so many more options and choices and pulls in different directions for people and families. I see people working long hours and desperately needing rest and weekends to recover. For many, their experience of the church has been disappointing, filled with controversy and petty conflicts, and even seeing some churches promoting hate and injustice. Disillusionment to what is good and right and truthful is rampant in our world today. This is rocky terrain.

How do we build a church, how do we connect in such a time as this?

Homes and lighthouses and churches are all built with wood, bricks, and mortar. Yet we know the alignment of stones is not enough. Carefully measured

beams are not enough. Beautiful architecture and pleasing aesthetics...are really not enough. They are nice, but something else has to cut through all the noise. A vision of something more.

A home offers rest and restoration—not just shelter, but a place of belonging, where love dwells and memories are made.

A lighthouse serves as a beacon—not just standing tall, but offering hope, guidance, and safety to the storm-tossed.

A church gives vision and purpose—not just a gathering place, but a place of transformation and healing where hearts are aligned with God and Jesus' teachings.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, a booming metropolis in the ancient world housing many different religions and cultures. It was a patron city of the god Artemis, along with the Roman Imperial cult, the Egyptian gods, Jewish folks, and now Christians. Christians then were navigating difficult and hazardous terrain, cultural shifts, a world very different from the values they believed helped them live a Spirit-filled life. A world--they believed--where Gentile and Jew, servant and free, woman and man were no more. Where one God reigns above all others and calls people to servanthood and sacrifice--not wealth and domination. Where do they even begin?

Paul reminds them—and us—to build with faith on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, on Christ Jesus as the cornerstone. Christ is the plumb line by which everything else is measured, the unshakable foundation on which we stand. Without Christ, even the most carefully laid stones will falter.

To align our hearts with Christ means to measure our lives against his teachings: to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. It means forgiving as we have been forgiven, welcoming the stranger, caring for the hungry, and seeking justice for the oppressed. It is turning the other cheek, walking the extra mile, and praying for those who may be against us. These are not just abstract ideals; they are the bricks and beams of the Kingdom of God. And honestly, in the public conversation, these values are scorned, pressed down, and ridiculed.

BUT...when we live out these teachings—whether in the building or not--we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and serve the least of these—we are

building something greater than ourselves. A vision of the Kingdom of God—a world made whole, a cathedral of hope.

For those who built this church long ago, their work was an act of faith. They could not know the faces or names of those who would one day worship here, yet they built for them anyway.

What, then, are we building? What legacy are we shaping with our prayers, our service, our lives? Are we merely cutting stones, or building a cathedral? Are we constructing walls, or are we aligning ourselves with the cornerstone? What will our work say about our vision, our purpose, our hearts?

Today, we navigate a difficult and hazardous world, where division and uncertainty seem to grow with each passing day. The scourge of “busy-ness” distracts us and takes our attention. We live in a time where political power and the cult of personality call us to division and hatred and fear. We are surrounded by struggles, fears, and challenges that threaten to shake the very foundations of our faith and our communities. Yet, even in these turbulent times, as Christians have always been...we are called to look to Christ as our cornerstone, our plumb line, our unshakable guide so we can be the change we want to see.

Let us then continue building a home of rest and restoration. Let us shine like a lighthouse, steadfast and radiant. Let us be the church—to live and love and embody the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And for Heaven and Earth’s sake, let’s invite others to come along for another 198 years...May it be so, Amen.

***Closing Hymn**

We Call Ourselves Disciples

#357, vs. 1, 4-5

1 We call ourselves disciples, as pilgrims on the way
We seek the truth in wisdom, and beauty in each day
As women, men, and children, we serve Christ’s path to clear
In joyful expectation we see God’s reign draw near.

4 We join with all disciples to live the Word in deed
To share the cup of wine and the bread with all in need;
To work ‘til God’s compassion and righteousness prevail
‘Til all this planet’s people know justice without fail.

5 So now the vision brightens, the light of Christ burns still
In hearts of all disciples to be the church God wills.
From quiet meditation, and joyous hymns of praise

We go to do God's mission! Christ, lead us all our days!

***Benediction**

Rev. Chad Delaney

In Christ, we find our rock and foundation. In Christ, God's love empowers us to live with purpose, to serve with joy, and to share God's light in the world.

- Gratitude for the MCCC Choir!
- Please stay for the potluck and join in the fellowship!

Build with care, build with faith, and build with hope, knowing we are part of the sacred work of building on the foundation of Christ.

May the Lord bless you and keep you, steady your hands and strengthen your hearts, that your light may shine in the world. Amen.

Postlude

“Christ for the Whole Wide World”

Sarah Park

[by B. B. McKinney]