

MCCC Sanctuary Worship Order 2025

March 9, 2025

This is My Story, This is My Song

First Sunday in Lent

Message: Good morning, and welcome to worship! Whether you are joining us from home, on the road, or gathered with loved ones, we are grateful for your presence in this sacred time. As we journey through Lent, we reflect on the stories that shape us—our own, our community's, and the great story of God's love. This season invites us to slow down, listen, and discover how God is at work in our lives. Wherever you are, may you feel the warmth of God's presence and the embrace of this church family. Let's worship together!

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**
 - Lent Schedule
 - Story Books -- write stories, maybe share later!
 - Gratitude for Worship Team
 - Rick, Katie, Nancy, Carol, Sandi, and Cheryl
 - Invitation to Wednesday Night Study
“A childhood memory that sticks out to me is when....”
 - Thank you Jon (Welcome Song) and special music by handbells. Jay Schabel

God of Creation and Story,
From the very beginning, you have been writing a story of love,
shaping the heavens and the earth, breathing life into all that exists,
calling us into being in your image.

As we gather today, open our hearts to remember—
to remember where we have come from,
to remember the ways you have shaped us,

to remember that our stories are woven into yours.
to remember your Story, is our Story.

Give us a deep gratitude for our beginnings, and a fresh
awareness that you are still writing our story.

This is our story. This is our song. Open us to your presence
today. Amen.

Scripture Reading **John 1:1-5, 14**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and
without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life,
and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the
darkness did not overcome it... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and
we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

***Welcome Song** *Tune of "Blessed Assurance"* **#543**

This is God's story, retold so long,
written in scripture, in sermon, in song.
Did it all happen? Is it all true?
Know that God's story's your story, too.

[Refrain]

**This is my story, this is my song,
Sharing my weakness, I become strong!
These are my stories, gently revealed,
Speaking and list'ning, I become healed.**

(Words by Jon Secaur)

Call to Worship

Kathy Meier

ONE: In the beginning God created all things, and God saw that they were good.

ALL: This is our story, This is our song!

ONE: God created us unique and irreplaceable, loved and treasured by God,

ALL: This is our story, This is our song!

ONE: We will seek God in the freshness of this morning, in the laughter of friends, in
the colors of creation, and in this beautiful place.

ALL: This is our story, This is our song!

ONE: May we open our minds, our hearts, our arms to live God's story.

ALL: This is our story, This is our song! Let us worship the Lord!

***Opening Hymn**

Bring Many Names

#10

- 1** Bring many names, beautiful and good,
celebrate, in parable and story,
holiness in glory, living, loving God.
Hail and Hosanna! Bring many names!
- 2** Strong mother God, working night and day,
planning all the wonders of creation,
setting each equation, genius at play:
Hail and Hosanna, strong mother God!
- 3** Warm father God, hugging every child,
feeling all the strains of human living,
caring and forgiving till we're reconciled:
Hail and Hosanna, warm father God!
- 4** Old, aching God, grey with endless care,
calmly piercing evil's new disguises,
glad of good surprises, wiser than despair:
Hail and Hosanna, old, aching God!
- 5** Young, growing God, eager, on the move,
saying no to falsehood and unkindness,
crying out for justice, giving all you have:
Hail and Hosanna, young, growing God!
- 6** Great, living God, never fully known,
joyful darkness far beyond our seeing,
closer yet than breathing, everlasting home:
Hail and Hosanna, great, living God!

Invitation to Generosity

Invitation

Kathy Meier

Offertory

Music:

“Under His Wings I Am Safely Abiding”

Sarah Park

*Response

“For the Beauty of the Earth”

#56, v. 1

1 For the beauty of the earth,
 for the beauty of the skies,
 for the love which from our birth
 over and around us lies,
 Lord of all, to thee we raise
 this our hymn of grateful praise.

Offering Prayer

Kathy Meier**Children’s Moment****Rev. Chad Delaney**- *Mem Fox - Whoever You Are*

(After Children’s Moment, the children are invited to go to Sunday School for a lesson, snack, and time to play. Thank you to our volunteers!)

Special Music**“Fantasy on Hyfrydol”****MCCC Handbells***[by Hal Hobson]***Pastoral Prayer & Lord’s Prayer****Rev. Chad Delaney**

Almighty God, the Author of all stories, the Composer of our song. You were wisdom before the dawn of creation and wrapped in holy mystery, we pause to remember: Before we had a name, you knew us. Before we took a breath, you called us. Before our story began, you were writing the great and gracious story of love, redemption, and grace.

In the beginning, you moved over the waters, bringing light from darkness, order from chaos, shaping earth and sky, planting seeds of life, and breathing your image into us.

Yet, Lord, we confess that we forget our story. We have lived as though we have made ourselves. We have taken your mystery for granted, believing we have unraveled all its wonders. We have tried to write our own conclusions, forgetting that you are still at work within us. Forgive us, O God. Renew in us a holy awe for the story you are telling. Let us not hold onto anything that separates us from you or one another. Write your grace upon our hearts. Shape us, change us, move us as you will. Let our lives be a song of praise to you. We lift before you those in our church family who are struggling—those who are grieving, those who are ill, those who feel lost. May they find comfort in

knowing that their lives are held in your hands. For those facing new beginnings, give courage. For those who feel stuck, give renewal. For all of us, O Lord, remind us that no chapter is wasted, no moment beyond your redemption. This is our story, and you are still writing it.

We lift to you this day the joys and concerns in our hearts and we lift them to you...

Unite us as one body as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us saying...

Holy Communion

Meditation

Brian Hurd

Communion Hymn “You Satisfy a Hungry Heart” #429, vs. 1-2

[Refrain]

**You satisfy a hungry heart with gift of finest wheat;
Come give to us, O saving Lord, the bread of life to eat.**

1. With joyful lips we sing to you our praise and gratitude, that you should count us worthy, Lord, to share this heavenly food. *[Refrain]*

2. Is not the cup we bless and share the blood of Christ outpoured?

Do not one cup, one loaf, declare our oneness in the Lord? *[Refrain]*

Communion Prayer

Ally Bozeka

Words of Institution

Ally Bozeka

Music

“Saviour! Thy Dying Love”

Sarah Park

[by R. Lowry]

Story

The Wonder of God’s World

Jay Schabel

Scripture

Genesis 1:1-2:3

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

SUMMARY

And God said, “Let there be an expanse to separate the waters,” and it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And God saw that it was good.

And God said, “Let the waters be gathered, and let dry land appear,” and it was so. God called the dry land Earth and the waters Seas. And God saw that it was good.

And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation,” and it was so. The earth brought forth plants and trees bearing fruit. And God saw that it was good.

And God said, “Let there be lights in the heavens to separate day from night,” and it was so. God made the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night; He also made the stars. And God saw that it was good.

And God said, “Let the waters swarm with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth,” and it was so. And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply.” And God saw that it was good.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures,” and it was so—livestock, creeping things, and beasts of the earth. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’

²⁷So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’ ²⁹God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so. ³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. ¹Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ²And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Sermon

God’s Story, Our Story

Rev. Chad Delaney

Where did we come from? How did we get here? Questions humans have been asking for a long time. Our Origin Stories matter to us in a universal sense, but

also as individuals. What do your origin story? What beginnings have shaped your life and faith? Some of these stories may be filled with struggle and pain, moments of loss or difficulty.. Others may be filled with joy—sweet memories of love, laughter, and the presence of something greater than yourself. Each of these moments, the good and the difficult, contributes to the story of who you are today.

So....let's start at the very beginning. A very good place to start. When you read the bible you begin with Genesis. Here we have a sweeping, poetic, powerful vision of how everything began. It is not a logistical recipe, but a story of identity. We do not minimize the importance of Genesis Chapter 1 with the mechanics of world building. God as Minecraft Master. The story isn't about Where or What we come from or How we came to be? The story is about WHO we come from, WHO God is and WHO we are becoming.

The opening words of Genesis are so familiar: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." God takes Chaos and brings forth order. From darkness, God called forth light. The sky, the sea, the land, the plants, the stars, and the creatures—all of it was called into being by God's voice. And then, in this grand and beautiful story, we come to this moment: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness." God speaks and good things happen.

The idea of being created in the image of God—Imago Dei—is central to understanding our origin story. It asserts that we are not biological happenstances. That at our core, we are a reflection of the Divine. This truth speaks to our worth, our purpose, and our place in the world. It speaks to our connection with one another and how we might value one another. If we are all made in God's image, then every person carries within them the imprint of the Creator. Mother God. Father God. Rock and Refuge. Shepherd and Friend.

And as people who bear God's image, it means we are part of something bigger. Our joys, our struggles, our experiences—all interconnected with one another and to the story God is writing in our lives.

Jay's story earlier was about a journey—both a literal one up Mount Kilimanjaro and a deeper journey of discovering more about the Creation and WHO he is. He recalled moments that shaped him—a childhood on a farm, the sights and smells of the seasons, the feel of the earth beneath him. Those experiences planted seeds that grew into a passion for caring for creation. Powerfully encapsulated looking down at the clouds from 15,000 feet, a picture of God's artistry and presence in the world.

Our stories shape us. We all have them. Some are full of adventure, some quiet and steady, some marked by struggle. But every story—every single one—holds moments of goodness, glimpses of God's presence breaking through. A mentor's wisdom. A table filled with laughter. A steady hand in a storm. A moment when love was so real, so tangible, you couldn't deny it.

These moments stay with us—not just as memories, but as foundations of who we are and who we are becoming. And just as God looked at creation and called it good, we are invited to do the same. To name the goodness we've been given, to cherish it, and to carry it forward—not just for ourselves, but with those around us. We are powerfully proficient at naming the BADNESS in the world especially in these days. Can we SPEAK goodness to the world in such a time as this? To see the good in others and remind ourselves that when we see within someone else the marks of pain and turmoil or joy and celebration...they are on a journey to. They, too, are discovering who they are in God's eyes.

As we step into this season of Lent, may we remember—our story is not just about cosmic origins or explanations, but about becoming. About knowing we are shaped by the One who spoke light into darkness, who breathed life into dust, who looked upon creation and called it good.

Anthony De Mello shared a story about The Sculptor and the Stone

A sculptor was working on a block of stone, carefully chiseling away piece by piece. A little boy, watching in fascination, finally asked, "What are you doing?"

The sculptor smiled and said, "I'm revealing the elephant inside."

The boy, confused, said, "But there was no elephant in there before!"

The sculptor replied, "Ah, but there was. I just had to remove everything that was not the elephant."

Like a sculptor with a vision unseen, shaping stone with patient hands, so too are we being formed—chiseled, refined, revealed.

Lent invites us into this process, to let go of what is not truly us, to recognize the divine imprint already within. We are not inconsequential. We are not forgotten. We are beloved creations, spoken into being by a God who calls us good.

So as we walk forward, may we see ourselves and one another with the eyes of the Creator. May we name the goodness we find. May we experience and participate in the beauty of Creation. May we trust that even in the unfinished, the unformed, the uncertain within us and around us—God is still shaping, still calling, still creating.

And that, in the hands of the Divine, our story is not just about where we come from, but about the beauty waiting to be revealed and God's light breaking through...May it be so. Amen.

***Closing Hymn**

Creator God, Creating Still

#62, v.1-3

1 Creator God creating still
By will and word and deed
Create a new humanity
To meet the present need

2 Redeemer God redeeming still
With overflowing grace
Pour out your love on us through us
Make this a holy place

3 Sustainer God sustaining still
With strength for every day
Empower us now to do your will
Correct us when we stray

***Benediction**

Rev. Chad Delaney

- We are grateful to each one here and hope you have felt a sense of call in this service.
- Gratitude for Handbells
- Please stay for coffee and our adult conversation groups

As we prepare to go from this place, hear these words from Rachel Held Evans: "Jesus invites us into a story that is bigger than ourselves, bigger than our culture, bigger even than our imaginations, and yet we get to tell that story with the scandalous particularity of our particular moment and place in time. We are storytelling creatures because we are fashioned in the image of a storytelling God. May we never neglect the gift of that. May we never lose our love for telling the tale."

And so, beloved, go forth knowing that your story is held in the heart of God—woven into the great and beautiful story of creation, redemption, and grace.

May you leave this place with eyes open to wonder, hearts open to love, and voices ready to tell the story of what God has done and is still doing.

Go in peace, to love and to live the story of God. Amen

Postlude

“We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations”

Sarah Park

[by H. E. Nichol]