**ST. JOHN’S and ST. PAUL’S UCC**

**Fourth Sunday in Lent**

**March 30, 2025**

RINGING OF THE BELL

 THE PRELUDE

\*CALL TO WORSHIP (UCC Worship Ways)

ONE: Have you come far to be here today?

**ALL: You enlarge our gathering: welcome!**

ONE: Have you come from around the corner?

**ALL: You anchor our gathering: welcome!**

ONE: Do you seek sanctuary? Do you seek inspiration?

**ALL: May this worship meet you.**

ONE: Do you come with purpose? Do you come with questions?

**ALL: We welcome you as you are! Let us worship God together!**

\*UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION(UCC Worship Ways)

**Holy One, we come into your presence and the presence of this fellowship. We are seeking a little light, some hope, and healing. Open us to know you, to receive you and find here your transforming love. Amen.**

SONG #43 – Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

 THE READING OF SCRIPTURE: St. John’s: Jeremiah Rehrauer St. Paul’s: Sue Schultz

2 Corinthians New Perspective 5:16-21 (NRSVUE)

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we no longer know him in that way. So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Luke 15:11-32 The Story of the Lost Son (The Message Version)

Then he said, “There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, ‘Father, I want right now what’s coming to me.’ “So, the father divided the property between them. It wasn’t long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to feel it. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corn-cobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.

“That brought him to his senses. He said, ‘All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I’m going back to my father. I’ll say to him, Father, I’ve sinned against God, I’ve sinned before you; I don’t deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.’ He got right up and went home to his father. “When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: ‘Father, I’ve sinned against God, I’ve sinned before you; I don’t deserve to be called your son ever again.’ “But the father wasn’t listening. He was calling to the servants. ‘Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a prize-winning heifer and roast it. We’re going to feast! We’re going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!’ And they began to have a wonderful time.

“All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day’s work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, ‘Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound.’ “The older brother stomped off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn’t listen. The son said, ‘Look how many years I’ve stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!’ “His father said, ‘Son, you don’t understand. You’re with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he’s alive! He was lost, and he’s found!’”

FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US

THE MESSAGE – The Gospel Within the Gospel: Unpacking the Parable of the Prodigal Son

SONG (on monitors) [Look to Jesus](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdxIpseL-fM) – A Youth Theme Song

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (*Joys and Concerns*)

THE LORD’S PRAYER (St. John’s: *debts/debtors;* St. Paul’s: sins/sin against us)

**Our Father 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), as we forgive (*our debtors*/those who sin against us). And 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 (UCC Worship Ways)

 **Remembering the gifts we have received, let us make our offerings to God’s work through this church.**

BRINGING OUR GIFTS TO GOD #785 (*While the offering is brought forward*)

 **We give you but your own, what-e’er the gift may be;**

 **All that we have is yours alone, we give it gratefully.**

UNISON OFFERTORY PRAYER (UCC Worship Ways)

 **Gracious God, bless these gifts and our lives to your service.**

SONG #202 – O God, How We Have Wandered

ANNOUNCEMENTS

\*THE BENEDICTION (UCC Worship Ways)

 ONE: May you trust that God’s unfailing love and blessings go with you this day and always.

 **ALL: Amen.**

\*THE POSTLUDE