**ST. JOHN’S and ST. PAUL’S UCC**

**Fifth Sunday of Easter**

**May 18, 2025**

RINGING OF THE BELL

 THE PRELUDE

\*CALL TO WORSHIP (UCC Worship Ways, Inspired by Psalm 148)

ONE: Celebrate our God, from the plains to the mountains!

**ALL: Celebrate our God, from the waters and hills.**

ONE: Sing to our God who designed creation.

**ALL: Fill the air with song to the One who painted the world with love.**

ONE: Let us praise our God, the author of grace.

**ALL: Let us worship our God, the composer of joy.**

\*UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION(UCC Worship Ways)

**Basking in your presence, we dance in the knowledge that your presence dwells with us. We celebrate your name, your grace, your love in this space with our siblings. We proclaim our excitement that we, together, can glorify your name through sharing your love. May this minute be the start of a new chapter of our love for you and our love for our neighbors. Amen.**

SONG #28 – For the Beauty of the Earth

 THE READING OF SCRIPTURE: St. John’s: Leah & Lucas Bender

Acts 11:1-18 God Has Broken Through (The Message Version)

The news traveled fast and in no time the leaders and friends back in Jerusalem heard about it—heard that the non-Jewish “outsiders” were now “in.” When Peter got back to Jerusalem, some of his old associates, concerned about circumcision, called him on the carpet: “What do you think you’re doing rubbing shoulders with that crowd, eating what is prohibited and ruining our good name?”

So, Peter, starting from the beginning, laid it out for them step-by-step: “Recently I was in the town of Joppa praying. I fell into a trance and saw a vision: Something like a huge blanket, lowered by ropes at its four corners, came down out of heaven and settled on the ground in front of me. Milling around on the blanket were farm animals, wild animals, reptiles, birds—you name it, it was there. Fascinated, I took it all in.

“Then I heard a voice: ‘Go to it, Peter—kill and eat.’ I said, ‘Oh, no, Master.” I’ve never so much as tasted food that wasn’t kosher.’ The voice spoke again: ‘If God says it’s okay, it’s okay.’ This happened three times, and then the blanket was pulled back up into the sky.

“Just then three men showed up at the house where I was staying, sent from Caesarea to get me. The Spirit told me to go with them, no questions asked. So, I went with them, I and six friends, to the man who had sent for me. He told us how he had seen an angel right in his own house, real as his next-door neighbor, saying, ‘Send to Joppa and get Simon, the one they call Peter. He’ll tell you something that will save your life—in fact, you and everyone you care for.’

“So, I started in, talking. Before I’d spoken half a dozen sentences, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as he did on us the first time. I remembered Jesus’ words: ‘John baptized with water; you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ So, I ask you: If God gave the same exact gift to them as to us when we believed in the Master Jesus Christ, how could I object to God?”

Hearing it all laid out like that, they quieted down. And then, as it sank in, they started praising God. “It’s really happened! God has broken through to the other nations, opened them up to Life!”

John 13:31-35 The New Commandment (NRSVUE)

When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews so now, I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come. I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

CHIMES CHOIR - Jesus Loves Me

SUNDAY SCHOOL - medley of their favorite songs

FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US

THE MESSAGE – Loving as Jesus Loved

SONG (on monitors) [This Kingdom](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FInBsbSCnWk) – Hillsong featuring Darlene Zschech

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (*Joys and Concerns*)

THE LORD’S PRAYER

**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)

 **We have the tools we need to love one another. Through our talents, treasures, and time, we can create God’s Realm here on earth. Our contributions – no matter the size – will craft a world which reflects God’s love. Amen.**

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 (Adapted from UCC Worship Ways)

 **Loving God, we glorify you by sharing our gifts of love with this community. We celebrate your presence by caring for your creation. May these offerings today nourish a world craving more love, peace, justice, and hope.**

SONG #613 – O Holy City, Seen of John

ANNOUNCEMENTS

\*THE BENEDICTION (UCC Worship Ways)

 ONE: As the week begins again,

 **ALL: May we dance as we celebrate God’s presence.**

ONE: May we sing as we proclaim Christ’s love.

 **ALL: May we create as we embrace the Spirit’s vision.**

ONE: May we love boldly care radically, and share courageously

 **ALL: to glorify the Spirit of God in our midst. Amen!**

\*THE POSTLUDE