A handshake with a city in the background

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**ST. PAUL’S COMMUNITY CHURCH**

***United Church of Christ***

**April 28, 2024 10:30am**

**Fifth Sunday of Easter**

*We Welcome All, Love all, and Seek Justice for All*

*Hymnals are available underneath the pew in front of you.*

*Where there is an \*, you are invited to stand as you are able.*

*If words are in* ***bold****, we are invited to join our voices together.*

**\*MUSIC**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: God calls into our midst those who are beloved in all their diversity:

**All:  We call them.**

One:   God calls into our midst all those who are vulnerable, in need of teaching, healing, and shelter

**All:  We welcome them**

One:   God calls into our midst all those who are lost, afraid, or without a community,

**All:  We celebrate them.**

One:   God calls all of us by name, preparing a way in the wilderness,

**All: Thanks be to God who calls us!**

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

**All: Spirit of Extravagant Welcome,**

**help us to invite all parts of ourselves into worship today.**

**Guide us to see no stranger within us or around us**

**as we care for our world as the Body of Christ.**

**Help us to break down all barriers to belonging**

**and the systems sustained by suffering and greed.**

**For, in discipleship there is abundance through togetherness**

**and your acceptance of all we feel, carry, and desire.**

**So, today, and every Sunday,**

**use all that we come here with**

**to build a sanctuary for you. Amen.**

**PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION**

**All: Lord Jesus,**

**When I would shut my eyes –**

**because I am afraid to see,**

**when I would hold on tightly –**

**because I am afraid to share,**

**when I would close my doors –**

**because I am afraid to get involved,**

**may I find courage**

**in the company of your people,**

**learning with them to open my eyes,**

**my hands,**

**my home**

**and my heart.**

**Amen.**

**WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

One: God’s grace and mercy abounds. God’s everlasting arms embrace us. Each of us is beloved, affirmed, and forgiven.

**FIRST SCRIPTURE READING John 10:1-10 NIV**

**10**“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. **2**The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. **3**The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4**When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. **5**But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” **6**Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

**7**Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. **8**All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. **9**I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2010%3A1-18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26491a)] They will come in and go out, and find pasture. **10**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

**11**“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. **12**The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. **13**The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

**14**“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— **15**just as the Lord knows me and I know the Lord—and I lay down my life for the sheep. **16**I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. **17**The reason the Lord loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. **18**No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from the Lord.”

**SECOND SCRIPTURE READING** **I John 4:7-16**

**7**Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. **8**Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. **9**God’s love was revealed among us in this way: by sending Christ into the world so that we might live through him. **10**Love, then, consists of this: not that we have loved God, but that God has loved us and has Christ to be an offering for our sins. **11**Beloved, since God loved us so much, we must also have the same love for one another. **12**No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and God’s love is perfected in us.

**13**The way we know we abide in God and God in us is that we have been given the Spirit. **14**And we have seen and do testify that God has sent Christ as the Savior of the world. **15**God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. **16**So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

One: Here ends the readings.

**All: Thanks be to God who is Still Speaking!**

**CHILDREN’S MOMENT Kathleen McDonnell**

**QUIET MOMENT**

**SERMON DIALOGUE**

1. What does “abide” mean in I John?
2. In a country that is becoming increasingly divided by fundamentalism, how do we define Christian Community?

**PRAYER CIRCLE**

As we gather around the circle,

we bring with us the people we know and love, the neighborhoods we nurture,

and the world which cries out for justice and the hope of peace.

Please name out loud those people and situations which are on your heart today.

**LORD’S PRAYER** *Use whatever language for the Lord’s prayer that is most comfortable for you.*

**PASSING OF THE PEACE** *Please greet others as you feel comfortable.*

**\*MUSIC This is My Song, O God of All the Nations Hymn 591**

*During the singing of this hymn, the offering plates will be passed to collect our offering.**Your financial gifts support the ministry of St. Paul’s. You can place your offering in the basket provided or donate online at* [*www.stpaulscommunityucc.org/donate*](http://www.stpaulscommunityucc.org/donate)

**DOXOLOGY** *during the singing of the Doxology, our offering will be brought forward*

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow**

**Praise God all creatures here below**

**We thank you, God; our lives are yours.**

**In all the world, May your peace endure. Amen.**

**OFFERING AND DEDICATION**

One: We trust in God who is our Provider.

We give freely, as we have received freely,

we love fully as we have been fully loved.

**All: Accept the gifts of our hands**

**and the thankfulness of our hearts**

**hearts and hands and voices, all lifted in praise to you,**

**God of our life!  Amen.**

**INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

**All: Bread of the world in mercy broken, *Hymn 346***

**Wine of the soul in mercy shed.**

**This is your feast, for us the token**

**That by your grace our lives are fed.**

One:        God is in this place.

**All:      And in our hearts.**

One:        Open yourself to the nudging God.

**All:      We feel the breath of the Spirit.**

One:        Remember God made flesh.

**All:       Jesus, who taught us a new way.**

One: Beloveds.  We come to this Table because we are claimed in covenant.

We come to this Table because our life in faith is a relationship we define together.

We come because we are all still learning what a life in faith means:

We long for liberation, for justice, for grace and forgiveness. We long for freedom and nourishment.

The same God who called the Disciples to the table now calls us.

Friends and foes found each other, connecting in a love shared so abundantly.

We come to the table as we are, bringing our whole selves

Knowing we are welcome here.

We come to remember the life, death, and resurrection of

The One who takes appearance among us.

**BLESSING OF THE ELEMENTS**

We remember:

         On the night Jesus was arrested, he shared a meal with his companions.

         He took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to his disciples and said:

         “Take and eat: this is my body.  The bread of new life.

         Share this and remember.”

         Then Jesus took the cup, blessed it, gave thanks, and said:

         “Take and drink: this is the blood of the new covenant,

         poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

         Share this and remember.”

 And so we pray:

**All: Come, holy Spirit, come.**

**Bless this bread and**

**bless this fruit of the vine.**

**Bless all of us in our eating and drinking that our eyes might be open,**

**that we might recognize the risen Christ in our midst,**

**indeed in one another.**

**Come, holy Spirit, come.**

**CALL TO THE FEAST**  
 A new reality is unfolding at this table:

       The kin-dom of God is born from the unexpected.

       Beloveds, let us share in God’s meal together.

*Communion in the United Church of Christ is open and available to all. Communion is received in full in either the bread or cup. If you prefer to remain in your seat, please raise your hand and communion will be brought to you.*

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

**All: Living Christ, thank you for this meal that nourishes our bodies and spirits. By feasting on this bread of life, your presence reminds us of our belovedness, even when we feel broken. For you, Holy Mystery, journey with us through all things. Thanks be for your**

**sustaining love. Amen.**

**MUSIC**

**CHURCH FAMILY TIME – Birthdays, Anniversaries, Announcements**

April 28 – Loaves and Fishes Community Meal

May 4 – Thrift Store Bag Sale

May 7, 6:30pm – Combined Council and Outreach meeting

**BENEDICTION**

Go forth into the world in peace. Serve the Lord God, love your neighbor, love the Lord God, and serve your neighbor. May Jesus Christ’s grace, God’s love, Holy Spirit’s guidance be with you now and eternally. Amen.

**\*MUSIC**

**St. Paul’s Community Church**

www.stpaulscommunityucc.org

216-651-6250

**Pastor**………..Rev. Emily Culp Ashby

**Church Administrator**……. Colleen Munley

**Pianist**…………..Ying-ho Joanna Huang

**Community Engagement Coordinator**……… Paula Miller

**Director of Formation**……….Kathleen McDonnell

**Custodian**………………Samantha Yearout

**Church Council**………… Christine Lee, David Kachadourian, Kelly Armstrong, Kathie Sawyer, Maryellen Fiala, Judy Tretnik