

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 17, 2026

John 17:1-11

Spirit of Witness

Eastertide is coming to an end. But before we usher in the power of the Holy Spirit at the celebration of Pentecost next week, I pause to pray. For you. Yes, you.

I have even stepped away from writing this to light a candle, thanking God for the hearts that would be touched by words that often seem a feeble attempt in capturing how amazing, awesome, and perplexingly mysterious our God is.

I thanked God for you, dear readers. I thanked God for each soul awakening to the Easter promise of new life. I thanked God that while we never have or never will see one another in person, we can still call each other siblings in Christ, connected by our thirst for not only knowing God, but for understanding God if only a little bit better.

Eastertide's 50 days are wrapping up and that means Jesus is about to leave his friends for good this time to ascend into Heaven. But before he goes, he talks to them, and he prays.

John 17 is known by scholars as the "high priestly prayer," where Jesus first prays for himself, thanking God for all that God has done through him, and then prays for others. I love that Jesus begins with himself in mind. It is a reminder that it is not selfish to pray for ourselves.

As a pastor, I have heard many people brush aside their worries, uttering something like "enough about me, my problems a nothing compared to others." That is so not true. Your worries, your fears and your problems matter to God. As the old hymn attests, many times "it's me, it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer."

After praying for himself, Jesus then prays for his friends, thanking God for them and asking for continued strength and protection for their days ahead.

I wonder how many times after Jesus finally left his earthly life that his friends remembered how, through the power of prayer, Jesus continues to be right there by their sides? How many times do we remember that when feeling lonely and needing our Friend and Savior in our life, that all we have to do is pray?

And what is prayer? It is simply talking to the one you love. Prayer is also sitting silently with the one you love the most as God doesn't need our words. All God wants is our hearts.

And so, I find myself on this Sunday as Eastertide comes to an end, sitting here saying a prayer of thanks for each one of you reading these words right now. And I pray you feel those prayers.

Heavenly God, we know that You are not far off, but very close to us. You are always surrounding us with love and protection. We thank Jesus for his example of prayer, too. May this day we find ourselves praying more frequently and praying more boldly, remembering that prayer does change all things. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

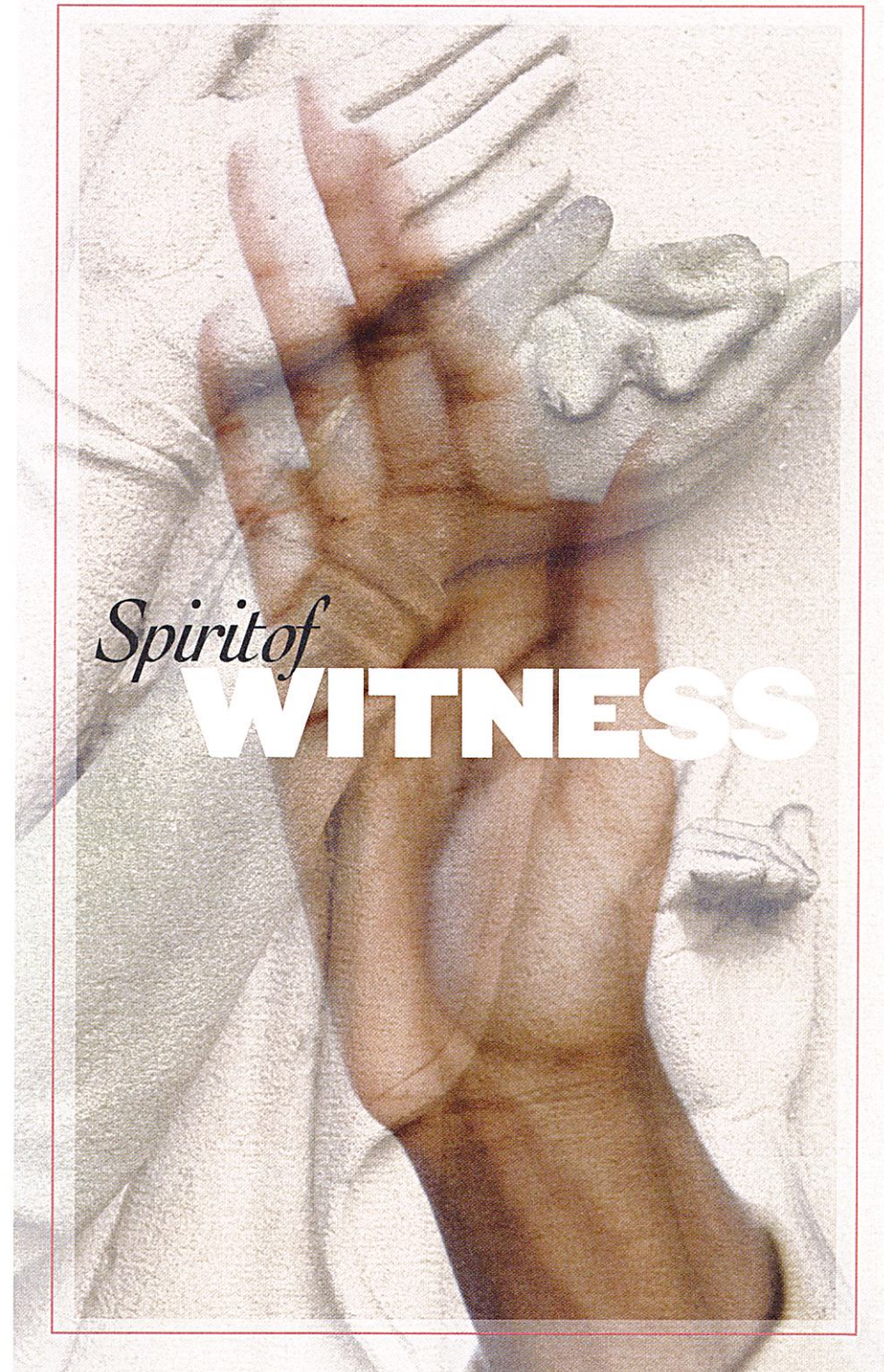
(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)



8 1/2" x 11" UCC SUNDAY BULLETIN SERVICE

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BUC0312



St. John's Grace United Church of Christ

1000 S Rolling Road, Catonsville, Maryland 21228

Trinity Sunday

May 31, 2026 11:00 AM

Vision Statement:

Our vision is to be a community of faith and a voice of hope following Jesus' way of love and service.

Mission Statement:

We serve God as Christ called us, to love our neighbor and minister to everyone. We welcome you to join us no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey.

www.stjohnsuccmd.com

Nursery care is available during service for young children.

Church School is offered during service after the Passing of the Peace

ORDER OF WORSHIP

+ Please rise in body or in spirit Congregation reads text in *bold italic*.

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Welcome and Announcements

Centering Prayer and Silence

Abundantly loving God, you fill us with the gifts of life and love, you prepare before us a table that holds all of the things we need.

Silent Meditation

Lighting of the Presence Candle

In lighting this candle, we acknowledge that:
God is here, now, everywhere, always.

+Invocation and Call to Worship

God, for each pain or hurt, you provide a healing touch or blessing that reaches every part of our being.

You bring me the experience necessary for our spiritual growth.

You call to me from the depth of my own being, and you flash before my eyes in the beauty of the world.

You, God, look at us through the eyes of those who love us, and you release your compassion and truth to us during our time of need.

You meet us in ways that we cannot know, yet we do know that your invisible presence never leaves us.

For the gifts we can acknowledge, we give thanks. For the gifts we are unable to know, we give thanks.

For the gifts of life, of love, of truth, of your presence, we give thanks, humble thanks, for all of the ways your grace strengthens us.

And we give thanks, God, for the revelation of your love in Jesus Christ.

+Opening Hymn: Alleluia! Gracious Jesus NCH #257

Prayer for Transformation

We come before you Holy One, knowing that we must humbly ask for your help and grace. We have given in to illusions, we have trouble with taking responsibility, we make mistakes, and we are often ignorant of the meaning and value of the life that surrounds us. At times we forget our purpose. Our actions can produce suffering, and we deny this inconvenient truth. We ask for forgiveness and for the ability to forgive ourselves, so that we can move forward in life and grow into our purpose in this world. Amen.

The Prayer for New Life

Through Jesus Christ we see revealed the union between your divine essence and the world in which we live and move. Help us to be mindful and thankful, aware that our knowing and seeing depend on the life that you give. May we wake to the light of each day with our heart and our mind clear, open, and ready to be a channel of your love and understanding, to each other, and in the work we perform. Amen.

Assurance of Grace

Jesus Christ has revealed to us God's Grace and Love. He has called us into relationship, to heal us, to strengthen us, to make us whole. May we rest in the comfort of God's presence. Amen.

+Passing of the Peace

Departure to Church School

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

New Testament Reading: 1 Peter 4:12-14,5:6-11

Ministry of Music: People Need the Lord Chancel Choir

+The Gospel Reading: John 17:1-11

Reflection: Rev. Johnny Ramsey

Hymn of Reflection: Hail The Day That Sees NCH #260 v.1,2
Christ Rise (tune #240)

Prayers for the Church and for the People

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass 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.

WE SHARE OUR GIFTS

Invitation to Generosity:

God calls us to be a light to the world. We make our offering as witness to God's love at work among us. In gratitude for the gifts we have received, and in hope for the light God is still bringing into the world. Amen.

Your generous offerings are appreciated and used for continuing the missions of this church.

For electronic giving, a QR code is available in the pews or in your bulletin at the end of the printed worship service.

+Doxology

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God, for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen*

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We give thanks for the gifts we have received during this communion of remembrance. We are sustained by the spiritual power of your presence. Your presence strengthens us, gives us hope, inspires us to share your love. May we grow in love, may we grow in our ability to see and understand your truth. Help us to hold sacred the covenant promised by Jesus that you are in us, and we are in you, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Connections...

Connecting our community through prayers, thoughts, and actions
– no matter where we are today!

WE HOLD in LOVE and PRAYER:

Please keep these friends and loved ones in your prayers! If there is someone you would like added to our list, let Pastor Jeff or Barbara know. The church email is welcome@stjohnsgraceucc.org.

Those added to the prayer list will remain for three months before being removed. If prayers need to be continued for another three months, please let Barbara know your request.

Continuing Prayers

Ken Mowery
Danny Waltemyer
Lois & Jim Benson
Linda Ballard
Family of Herb Dement
Family of Kathy Collins
Mary Weaver
Luanne Schaeffer

Serving Our Country

Michael Barbarino Joe Clark
Andrew Robey Jon Fuller
Ty Smith Jay Robey
Tom Myers Josh Tullius
John Howard Jason Shoemaker

Hospice

Assisted Living
Doris Bush
Virginia Hoffman

Prayers for the people of Cuba during power blackout

Cards and Visits Welcome

Mrs. Lois Benson
Keswick Rehabilitation
700 West 40th Street
Baltimore, MD 21211

Keswick Phone 410-235-8860

Upcoming Meetings & Events

Ministries Council Mtg	<i>Tues, May 19th</i>	<i>6:30 pm</i>	<i>Zoom</i>
Board of Trustees Mtg	<i>Tues, May 19th</i>	<i>7:00 pm</i>	<i>Zoom</i>

Governing Body Minutes

Our governing body consists of the Board of Trustees and the Ministries Council. Meetings are held monthly via Zoom. Interested parties are welcome. Contact the office if you would like a paper copy or email copy.

View Past Services on our Website

If you missed a worship service here at St. John's Grace, you can now view the service on our website!

Go to www.stjohnsuccmd.com Worship/ Online Worship tab and scroll down to the service you would like to view.

They are on our YouTube channel so you can subscribe if you like.

Deadline for Submitting Announcements

Announcements or changes to announcements need to be submitted by noon on Tuesday prior to the Sunday service to be included in the bulletin. Email to barbara@stjohnsgraceucc.org.



CEA: May continues with Mac 'n Cheese!



All kinds of Mac n' Cheese are needed!

As usual, CEA welcomes ANY food, at any time!

CEA can use any donations so please pick up whatever you can for our neighbors!

When Faith Goes to Market – It Always Takes a Basket!

Always available ways to help CEA:

Include a donation marked 'CEA' in the offering plate.

Go to the 'Donations' page on our website and use the CEA button to donate via credit/debit card.

Gift cards are accepted to enable CEA to purchase needed foods.

Please stop by our new website: www.catonvillehelp.org for lots of information about CEA and your community!

Come and Celebrate with Us!



Evening Worship Service on Sunday, June 28th 5:30 pm

Good Music, Good Food, Good Community

Share a Meal

Worship Service

Ice Cream Social

Followed by a concert by



THE MARYLAND MILITARY BAND

Featuring Favorite Marches and Patriotic Songs



Reminder Note: No Worship on Sunday Morning

Westside Men's Shelter Donation Needs



There is an ongoing need for shower shoes (flip flops) and these can be given and collected at any time into the bin in the Mission Hallway.

Mission & Outreach Transitional Hold-Alls



The National Capital Treatment and Recovery Center (a nonprofit organization based in Arlington & Alexandria, VA) provides substance abuse and mental health treatment to those who need these services. One of their programs is an 84-bed residential treatment center for men who are in need. When admitted, these men usually have their belongings in paper bags.

You can help them feel prouder when they leave with the donation of gently used or new backpack, duffle bag, or piece of luggage.

Please forward donations for Ken or Charlene Mowery.



TIME for SPRING

CLEAN OUT

Used Clothing Drop-Off Shed

Sponsored By:

St John's Grace United Church of Christ

With the help of Turnkey Enterprises, LLC

Location:

**1000 S. Rolling Road, Catonsville, MD 21228
(Parking Lot)**

Items Accepted:

All clothing, shoes, sneakers, belts, purses, blankets, sheets, pillowcases, drapes, and stuffed toys.

(Your donation **will not** be cut up or shredded)

(Please – **no** rags, fabric scrapes, toys, or household goods, **please understand that the above-mentioned items are a hardship and expense to dispose of.**)

Turnkey Enterprises, LLC:

Turnkey Enterprises LLC is a for-profit company that partners with non-profit organizations in communities to help support their fundraising needs by recycling unwanted clothing. The clothing collected is used as clothing, not cut into rags. Turnkey services each location and pays the sponsoring organization by the pound for the unused items.

www.turnkey-enterprises.com

Help us keep your donation clean and dry

Please put your donation in plastic bags. Thank you.

There are receipt forms in a slot in the mailbox in the hallway outside the office