

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

May 18, 2025

Revelation 21:1-6

Imagine

There's a magical place in New Jersey where children have been letting their imaginations run wild since 1954. It's called the Land of Make Believe and, just as its name says, it invites children to literally step into the nursery rhymes read to them at bedtime. There are the homes of the three little pigs to run through and the old lady's shoe — the one with so many children she didn't know what to do — to slide down from.

For years it was thought that as we grew older, we no longer visited these lands of make believe. It was thought our ability to imagine faded with each passing year. Researchers from Kent University in England proved otherwise as a recent study among 470 people between 4 and 81, showed that adult imagination was not only as vivid as a child's but became more vivid with age.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could right now play in our own lands of make believe? Wouldn't it be even better to enter God's land of belief that John is inviting us to do this day?

The beloved friend of Jesus writes to us from his seclusion on the Greek island of Patmos. It is there in a dank cave where he penned the visions he received that would later become The Book of Revelation. And one such revelation calls for us to revisit the promise that God will indeed make all things new — a promise echoed all throughout scripture.

Today, we are being called to imagine a new heaven and a new earth for the former ones have passed away. This new heaven and earth don't necessarily mean that the current ones have been destroyed and something different has emerged. Rather the ancient Greek word for "new" — *kaine* — means "new in character" or "fresh." John is talking not about the next heaven and earth, but rather a better heaven and earth.

Let's now imagine together what this "better" might look like, especially for our earth today? Close your eyes. What do you see? How would you characterize this better earth? And more importantly, how is God asking you to be a pivotal player in making this better earth a reality rather than make believe?

Imagination is a wonderful thing for all ages — and it can be a powerful spiritual practice to engage in daily. For who wouldn't want to step into a place where God is making all things new, where death and crying and pain are no more? Let our imagining become the prayer portal for making this possible.

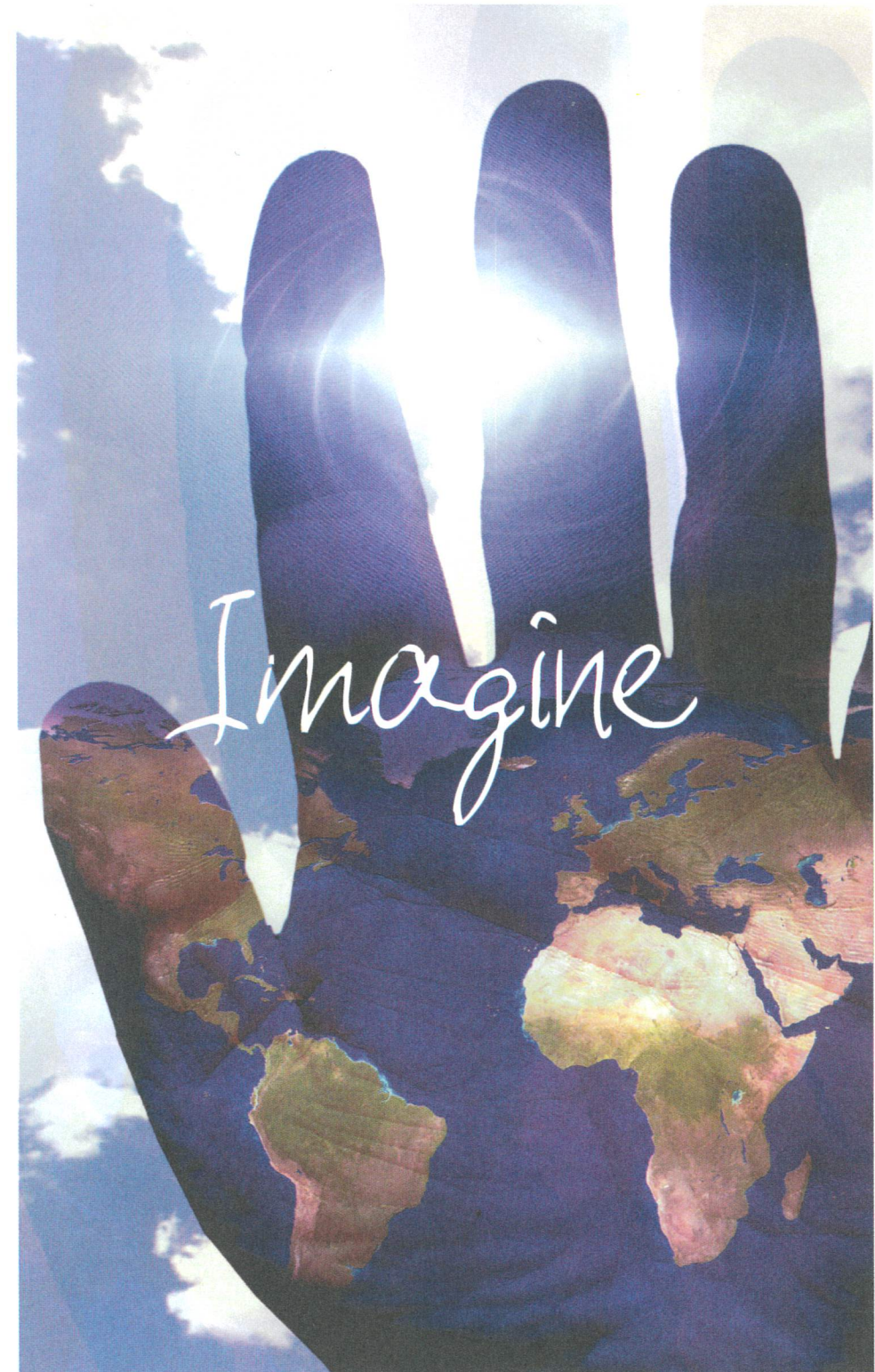
God of new beginnings, help us to look beyond the realities of this world and toward a better heaven and a better earth, where all Your children are fed, loved and safe. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



8 1/2" x 14" UCC SUNDAY BULLETIN SERVICE

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BUL0312



St. John’s United Church of Christ

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 18, 2025

Graduation Sunday/Music Recognition

* Please stand if it is comfortable to do so. **Bold print** is everyone.

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, GREET ONE ANOTHER (be seated)

CHURCH BELL (the bell invites us to worship)

PRELUDE

GOD CALLS US TO WORSHIP

We are here because we have collected the hurts and hatreds of living through another week.

We gather as the wounded people.

We are here because we have also seen joy and hope, creativity and new life in the week we have just lived through.

We gather as the wondering people.

We are here because we believe that Christ is the power that brings life together and makes it whole.

We gather as the worshipping people. We begin a new week as we celebrate resurrection - Christ’s victory over death, our victory over despair and hopelessness. We gather not to relive the past, but to be renewed that we might build the future.

***OPENING HYMN** *When in Our Music God is Glorified* (vs. 1-3) #7

***WE INVITE GOD TO WORSHIP**

We gather today, in the name of the One who is the Alpha and Omega, the First and Last. We gather today, in the name of the One who gives all the opportunity for repentance that leads to life. We gather today, in the name of the One whose command created all things. We gather today, in the name of the One whose glory is far above earth and heaven. We gather today, in the name of the One who will one day make His dwelling with humanity. We gather today, in the name of the One who will make all things new. Make us new, Lord. Make us new. Amen.

***RESPONSE** *Christ Arose* (chorus) #224

GRADUATE RECOGNITION

CHOIR ANTHEM *I Will Rise* (arr. McDonald)

CHOIR RECOGNITION

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE (children please come forward) *Jesus Loves Me*

OFFERING INVITATION**

God is so good and we are richly blessed. Let us give back to God with gratitude and thanksgiving.

***RESPONSE** *In the Garden* (v.1) #227

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

In response to the overwhelming love of God, we give with a generosity that tugs at our hearts, provides grace to those who have forgotten what grace feels like, and delivers joy to those who have forgotten what it is to walk with a lightness of heart. We give our gifts in celebration and thanksgiving for the God who knows us and loves us still. Amen.

WE GATHER IN PRAYER

Silent Prayers - Pastoral Prayer - The Lord’s Prayer (debts/debtors)

Congregational Response: *He Lives* (chorus) #226

CHOIR ANTHEM *We Will Dance* (Kingsmore)

SCRIPTURE

Old Testament: Psalm 148

New Testament: Revelation 21:1-6

The Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God.**

MESSAGE *Transformed Creation*

***CLOSING HYMN** *When in Our Music God is Glorified* (vs. 4-5) #7

***BLESSING**

God has set before us a vision for life and equipped us to be faithful to that vision.

God has affirmed us and empowers our service. In awe and wonder, we dare to respond. Amen.

* **CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE** *Go In Peace* #445

* **POSTLUDE**

****You may place your offering in the plate at the back of the sanctuary or online at myucc.org and click on the *contribute* button. Please prayerfully consider setting up regular online donations to continue our outreach into the community.**

Announcements

Best opportunity for **Church Directory** photos is **today**.

If you have not scheduled an appointment to have your member photo taken, visit the Sunshine Room immediately following the service for open opportunities to have them taken today. Walk-ins accepted. It takes approximately 10 minutes. A professional photographer is on site from: 11:30-12:30 p.m. and 2:00-4:00 p.m.

We are recognizing three **High School Graduates** today: Delaynee Coomes—South Knox High School; Joel Sanders—Lincoln High School; and Luke Lindsey—Lincoln High School. Join us in Memorial Hall for a celebration reception after Worship today.

Today is the **last Worship Service** with our **wonderful choir** for the summer. Thank you to everyone who sang and to Becky and DeEtta for their wonderful dedication. We have loved the anthems each and every week.

Please join us for an Open House **Graduation Party for Delaynee Coomes** on Sunday, May 25th from 1-3 pm in Memorial Hall. We will have light refreshments.

St. John's Adult Choir deeply appreciated the time and effort our director, Becky Brockman, and our organist, DeEtta Welte, dedicate to finding the best music for our worship services. Thank you, Becky and DeEtta! We invite interested members to consider joining our choir as we look forward to practices beginning late August. New faces and voices are welcome.

Our Wednesday **Messy Church Events** will be on hiatus until September.

Preschool Director Needed - If you know someone who would be a good fit for St. John's, or you would like more information, please contact one of the Preschool Committee members: Pastor Debbie Jo, Steve Cooper, Jill Lopez, Carolynn Stevenson, or Allison Cummins.

If you have anything to put in the **June Church Newsletter**, please send it to: sheri.stodghill@crawfordmh.org by this Friday, May 23rd. Thanks!

Joys and Concerns

We ask for continuing prayer requests for: Bruce Deckard, Gary Meyer, Don Osborne, Jr. Pat Hutchinson and Family, Gayle Huffer, Shirley Black, Brian Fillingim, Carol Graham, Vern Houchins, Jake Alexander, the family of Norma Meyer, Caden Utley, and Katrina Memering.

Please keep Caden Utley and family in your prayers. Caden broke his pelvis in six places and is recovering at home.

Shut-in Addresses:

Susie Milligan - Colonial Assisted Living, Room 118, 1622 S Hart Street Road, Vincennes, IN 47591

Leona Conway - Aperion Care, C Wing Room C-35, 3801 Old Bruceville Road, Vincennes, IN 47591

Marge Beamon - The Villages at Oak Ridge, Room 303, 1694 Troy Road, Washington, IN 47501

At Home:

Shirley Black

Bruce Deckard

Gayle Huffer

Gary Meyer

Mike Lankford

Caden Utley

**Until further notice, all prayer requests or updates should be relayed to Janet Goodman instead of the church office. Email: terrybaseball@gmail.com
Text or phone call: 812-887-2797.**

This Week in the Life of St. John’s

Sunday, May 18th

Adult Sunday School 9:15 am
Worship/Graduate Recognition 10:30 am
Children’s Church
Church Directory Photographs Taken Today
Choir Recognition
Graduation Reception Following Worship

Thursday, May 22nd

Dinner @ McAlister’s 6:00 pm
Choir Rehearsal 7:00 pm

Monday, May 19th

BABE Store Open 12 noon-5:00 pm
Friends Group Mtg. 5-6:15 pm
Worship Committee Mtg. 6:00 pm
Church Board Mtg. 7:00 pm

Friday, May 23rd

Newsletter Items Due
please send to:
sheri.stodghill@crawfordmh.org

Looking Ahead In The Month

Sunday, May 25th

Adult Sunday School 9:15 am
Worship 10:30 am
Children’s Church

Wednesday, May 28th

Laundry Love Mission 6-8:00 pm

Monday, May 26th

Memorial Day, Office Closed

Thursday, May 29th

Dinner & Conversation Group @
Mi Pueblo’s in Washington, 6:00 pm



Staff and Volunteers

Pastor:	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Liturgist:	John Riggs
Head Usher:	Michelle Grube
Organist:	DeEtta Welte
Music Director, Pianist:	Becky Brockman
Children & Family Ministry Coordinator:	Will Meyer
Nursery Attendant:	Darcie Bahr
Projection:	Sandra Lange
Sound:	Lonny Vieck
Church Board President:	Ed Cummings

Did You Know?

St. John’s Sunday Morning Worship Services are streamed **LIVE** on our church’s Facebook page, “**St. John’s United Church of Christ Vincennes.**”

Or, you can watch the Worship Service at your convenience by going on the church website, “**myucc.org**” and clicking on “Worship Service” for a particular date.

You can also download a copy of each monthly **church newsletter** from our church website to keep up with all the activities.