

Spirit of Witness

May 17, 2026

Seventh Sunday of Easter

White

John 17:1-11

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*.)