

**Sunday, May 15, 2022 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church  
Fifth Sunday of Easter**

**Bible Study –Acts 11:1-18  
“What God Called Clean”**

Open with a word of prayer

**Gathering Time** (5-10 minutes)

In groups of two or three, respond to the following, “How do you accept change? With joy or with trepidation?”

**Acts 11:1-18 Context.** Last week we read how Peter had come to Joppa and raised Tabitha, one of the women of the Christian community, back to life. While he was there, he had a mysterious vision that he did not quite understand, until he was summoned to the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion. Cornelius was a “god-fearer,” a Gentile (non-Jew) who admired and practiced the piety of Jewish tradition, but had not converted to Judaism. As Peter shared the Gospel of repentance and the forgiveness of sins with Cornelius and his household, they received the Holy Spirit. Peter then had them baptized. This is the first report of the conversion of Gentiles to the Christian tradition. Up to that moment, all the believers had been Jews. This is a turning point in the history of the Christian community: it sets the stage for Paul’s mission to the Gentiles that we read about in the second half of Acts. And within just a few generations, the majority of Christians will be Gentile converts.

**Read Acts 11:1-18**

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

**Read Acts 11:1-18 again**

**Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.**

- What led the “circumcised believers” in Jerusalem to criticize Peter?
- Is there a difference between criticism and judgement?
- Read Acts 10:28 and 10:34. Why do you think Peter concluded that this vision of killing and eating animals had to do with people?

- What is Peter's argument in verse 17? Why might it have been convincing (for at least some)? [The common experience of the Holy Spirit was evidence to Peter that God welcomed them. Common experiences help us relate even to those with whom we are most unfamiliar.]
- Why do you think those who first criticized Peter, came to agree with him, then were moved to praise God?
- **(R)** How can being welcoming be a part of being a witness for Christ?
- **(R)** Who might God be calling us to welcome who would invite criticism from some people?

### **Closing Reflection Question**

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

**Prayer** (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

**Sending Forth** (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

God of all, you are bigger than a god of tribe or nation. You are Lord of lords and King of kings. You invite people from all nations and tongues into your kingdom. You invite all people to experience the abundance that comes in an eternal relationship with you. Give us the eyes to see your extravagance and be the extravagant people who glorify you.

**Amen.**

And now we pray 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.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power

and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.