

TIDINGS

November 2025

A Regular Sharing of our Mission and Ministry

NOVEMBER: A MONTH FULL WITH SPIRIT AND COMMUNITY



Dreaming God's Dream

NO GIFT TOO SMALL, NO DREAM TOO BIG.

COMMITMENT SUNDAY, 11/23

Our Annual Campaign will celebrate our dreaming with God and our faith promises for 2026 on *Commitment Sunday*, 11/23, during morning worship.

See p. 6 for more information



HOLIDAY PIES

Order NOW & Pick up Wednesday, 11/26

Celebrate the holidays with our traditional pies! The cost is \$12 per pie. Apple, cherry, and pumpkin pie orders will be taken from 11/2 until 11/16, with pick up on Wednesday, 11/26, at 12:00 pm. Place your order on the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board or by calling the church office.



ADVENT BEGINS 11/30

Advent's light begins shining soon, showing us the way to hope, peace love, and joy. *Look for more information mid-month in a special Advent TIDINGS!*



YOUTH-LED WORSHIP, 11/2

Youth of all ages, let your light shine! On All Saints' Sunday, 11/2, youth of all ages will be leading Sunday morning worship.

From handing out name tags, to greeting at the door, to being acolytes, ushers, taking offerings, reading scripture, and welcoming the community into worship, the youth will be sharing their gifts and talents with the community.

Please join us in worship to celebrate All Saints' Sunday, and to celebrate our vibrant youth community!



TOTENFEST **11/2, During Worship**

Totenfest, the "Festival of the Departed," will take place on Sunday, 11/2, during morning worship. We will remember our members and friends who have died during this past year. We will read their names, and recall their lives with candles, prayer, scripture, and song.



**Find Our
Extravagant
Welcome**

Come together in the Sanctuary or share in our streaming Online Worship every Sunday, 10:00 am:
facebook.com/stjohnuccfreeport/live

Wherever you are on life's journey, worship as one community every Sunday

OUR MINISTRY TOGETHER



LEADERSHIP TEAMS:

Are you interested in becoming more involved at St. John UCC beyond worship on Sundays? There are many opportunities to participate where your unique talents and perspectives are needed, welcomed, and appreciated! Please consider attending a Leadership Team meeting, and see where you are called to engage in the St. John UCC community and beyond.

Leadership Team Next Meeting

Care & Community	11/5, 6:00 pm
Wellness Ministry	11/5, 10:00 am
Church Council	11/11, 6:00 pm
Imagination Team	11/16, 11:30 am
Mission & Outreach	11/24, 6:30 pm
Worship & Education	11/23, 11:30 am

COMMUNITY COLLECTIONS FOR THE HOLIDAYS



WELLNESS MINISTRY: Christmas Stockings

The Wellness Ministry Team will be assembling Christmas Stockings for our aging in place, senior living, and rehabilitation care community members.

If you would like to donate a few items, please place them into the basket in the narthex. Some suggestions might be candies, mints, crackers, pens, lotions, chapstick, or other small Christmas gifts.

Please drop off your donation no later than Sunday, 12/7. Thank you for spreading some Christmas spirit and brightening someone's day!

 SEPTEMBER & YTD FINANCIAL SUMMARY			
Income	Actual	Budget	Difference
Pledges/Gifts	\$19,292	\$27,083	\$-7,791
Monthly Income	\$26,141	\$38,267	\$ -12,126
Monthly Expenses	\$30,499	\$39,495	\$ -8,996
YTD Pledges/Gifts	\$162,736	\$243,750	\$ -81,014
YTD Income	\$267,637	\$344,400	\$ -76,763
YTD Expenses	\$344,381	\$354,904	\$ -10,523
YTD Total	\$ -76,743	\$ -10,504	\$ -66,239

Stewardship Note: Pledged gifts remain behind, while special offerings & collections surpassed expectations. Expenses remain below budget. As we look to 2026, the Finance & Resource Development Team will be reviewing our trend analysis and fiscal forecasts based on this data. How we budget our benevolences, and where we focus our stewardship in mission, will guide us in crafting the 2026 budget.



Mitten Tree for Amity

From November to December, our congregation works with Amity's Daycare, collecting mittens, hats, and gloves. Additionally, sweatshirts, sweatpants, sweaters, heavy socks, and boots are appreciated.

Please place your donations on the Christmas tree in the entry way or in the baskets surrounding it.

OUR MISSION FOR JUSTICE



National Native American Heritage Month is celebrated each year in November. It is a time to honor the traditions, languages, and stories of Native American and Alaska Native communities and ensure their rich histories and contributions continue to thrive with each passing generation.

This November and every month, we celebrate the culture and heritage of these remarkable Americans who deeply enrich the quality and character of our Nation. We celebrate the remarkable diversity of American Indian and Alaska Native cultures and peoples while remembering and honoring our veterans who have sacrificed so much to defend our Nation.

The community of St. John UCC honors that our church campus sits on the ancestral lands of the Sauk, Meswaki, Sioux, Myaamia and Ho Chunk. As a Racial Justice Congregation, we honor the rich traditions, heritage and culture that thrived here long before traders and homesteaders laid claim to shared land.

Understand the present story of Native cultures with the National Museum of the American Indian's *Native Knowledge 306* initiative:

americanindian.si.edu/nk360

Challenge yourself this month to learn the stories of our Native neighbors in the Pecatonica/Rock/ Mississippi region with the help of the Rockford Park District:

rockfordparkdistrict.org/native-american-history



Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) is an annual observance on November 20. It was founded after the 1998 murder of Rita Hester in Allston, MA, by still-unknown assailants.

Transgender Day of Remembrance honors the memories of those who have lost their lives due to anti-transgender violence and hate. The loss of transgender and gender non-conforming community members' lives, including as a result of violence and hate, often goes unreported (or misreported) in the media.

As an Open and Affirming (ONA) and Racial Justice congregation, the community of St. John UCC honors their lives and legacies. We must remember that anti-transgender hate is inherently connected to other forces of oppression, including anti-Blackness and systemic racism, misogyny, classism, ableism, xenophobia, and others

You can read more about the Transgender Day of Remembrance below, and find out how you can show support for the community on this day with the help of our mission partner, GLAAD:

glaad.org/tdor/

Read about the United Church of Christ's transgender-Nonbinary resources for solidarity and action here:

<https://ucc.org/trans>

HUNGER & HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS WEEK



November 16-22, 2025

National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week is celebrated each year, one week before Thanksgiving. It takes place from 11/16 to 11/22 this year. It creates awareness about the heartbreaking problems the less fortunate face in our society. Throughout the year, and especially during this week, donations are solicited and volunteers needed to help feed and rehabilitate those in need.

The annual Hunger Luncheon will take place on Friday, 11/14, hosted at St. Thomas Aquinas Church. For tickets, or to sponsor a table, head to:

facebook.com/freeportareachurchcooperative



EMPTY BOWLS PROJECT: AN UPDATE AND A THANK YOU!

Thank you all for supporting our *Empty Bowls Project*! The bowls created to support the 2025 FACC Hunger Luncheon are ready to be picked up!. The remaining bowls will be heading to the Hunger Luncheon to be sold in support of the Kreeger Food Pantry!

Bowls will be ready for pickup on Sunday 11/2!



FACC FOOD PANTRY

Our congregation’s generous support of the FACC Food Pantry and its clients offers us a way to spread care and compassion throughout the year.

In November we are asked to collect:



Pancake Mix, Syrup, and Oatmeal

Donations can be placed in the collection cart in the Atrium entryway.

CHICAGO AVENUE MISSION DINNER PROGRAM

Our Mission Ministry continues to prepare weekly dinners for the guests at the Chicago Avenue Mission every Wednesday evening.

We need your help as a congregation to step up and help to keep this mission going. Please sign up on the bulletin board if you can help with a meal. More info? Contact Marla Kreeger or Pam Wessel!

GREEN ENERGY REPORT



Month	Generated	Used	Difference
July	4,561 kWh	2,784 kWh	-1,777 kWh
August	5,035 kWh	2,317 kWh	-2,718 kWh
September	4,878 kWh	2,656 kWh	-2,222 kWh

Green Team Note: Our current Net Metering Credit “Bank” sits at 11,554 MWh—that’s “Mega Watt Hours” of stored energy. That is equivalent to THREE average mid-winter month’s electricity usage.

4 We’ve still got at least a month of peak generation to add in 2025!

GENEROUSLY PREPARING FOR THE HOLIDAYS



HANGING OF THE GREENS 11/30, Following Worship

Advent's light begins shining on 11/30 with the *Hanging of the Greens*. One of the great traditions of sharing our faith across the generations is our preparing for Advent and Christmas.

We will gather for a Soup and Salad luncheon and decorate the church for the season. All ages are warmly invited, with focused activities for our youngest friends.



ANNUAL FAMILY CHRISTMAS TREES

The Care and Community Team celebrates the return of our family Christmas trees, sharing our hope, peace, love, and joy. This year, the trees will spread their light from the Narthex, Entryways, and Chapel Hearth Room.

Your family can sponsor a tree by bringing decorations from your home and share your family's style with the congregation! If you are unable to decorate the tree yourself, volunteers will purchase and decorate for you for an additional \$15.

***Every family who wants to decorate
will have a tree waiting!***

Please contact the church office by 11/23 to claim your family tree!

*Trees can be decorated at the Hanging of the Greens on 11/30,
or can be scheduled at your family's convenience before 12/7.*



HOLIDAY BAKE SALE 12/7, Following Worship

Come and share in this year's ***Holiday Bake Sale!*** Holiday sweets and treats will be available on Sunday, 12/7, following worship. Proceeds will support our congregation's mission and ministry.

You can help make our Bake Sale a success! Bring cookies, muffins, breads, bars, pies, cupcakes, snack mix, or a sharing portion of your favorite holiday treats! Items can be delivered to church on 12/5 before 2:00 pm or 12/6 before 12:00 pm.

Contact the Care & Community Leadership team to volunteer or with any questions.

***Come share some holiday joy,
and your family's traditional treats!***



PEANUT BRITTLE MAKE-AND-TAKE PARTY 12/6, 8:30-12:00ish

If you've always loved eating or gifting our "almost" world-famous peanut brittle and are curious how it's made, we have just the deal for you! Help make a bunch of batches on Saturday, 12/6, 8:30-12:00ish, ahead of the bake sale on 12/7. Absolutely no prior experience is required—it's easy! Measure ingredients, Stir a pot! You will do great!

*We will make as many batches as time allows.
Please let Lisa Ebbers know you'll be there!*

DREAMING TOGETHER: 2026 ANNUAL GIVING CAMPAIGN

How we talk about our Generosity In Celebration, Mission, Outreach, and Partnership

We are a people of stories—and Biblically speaking, one story; the extravagant welcome and radical hospitality of Christ’s Way. We tell the story of our budget and ministry goals this year with a *Narrative Budget*. Our goal is to more fully communicate the reasons behind the budget—the ministries we seek to serve together.

But what is a “Narrative Budget?” A *Narrative Budget* is a way of talking about the future needs of the church to carry out its mission and ministry. Rather than simply presenting a spreadsheet style budget the Narrative Budget (as the name implies) tells a story. This year, our story “adds up” to a whole lot more than dollars and cents. Our story is one that changes lives and heals God’s creation.

Our estimate for the 2026 budget is around \$468,000. Take a look how our narrative lives out our mission :

Sharing with Sense Beyond our Dollars: Our Local Mission Giving

For the last six years, the Mission & Outreach Leadership Team sought applicants for a grant-based support program. This method served us and our mission partners well before the COVID pandemic. Since 2023, our ability to raise the necessary funds, and our mission partners’ needs, have changed. The M&O Team decided this year to suspend the grants, lowering their budget request by \$10,000.

What was their logic? *We already give our local mission partners more than that amount in like-kind support!* In measuring the real-life value of these collections, we share *more than \$2,000 per month every month!* Our collection carts are full with weekly supplies for FACC’s Kreeger Memorial Food Pantry. Every month or so, a special collection is taken to augment the seasonal needs of our partners. This year, M&O will be tallying and valuing our gathered giving, and reporting it in the weekly bulletin and monthly *Tidings*.

St. John UCC Projected Budget FY 2026

\$455,120

Worship & Formation \$152,78833.57% - Weekly faith formation for children and youth through <i>Godly Play</i> and <i>Whirly</i>; Partnering with our Illinois Conference UCC Summer Camps - Hosting regular age- and life-stage specific events and multi-generational experiences, and offering spiritual retreats, Advent and Lenten Reflections, focused programs, and discussion series - Sharing our extravagant welcome to every person who shares in worship, and streaming worship experiences, and lifting our musical gifts in voice and instrument	A Living Community Presence \$98,00521.53% - Sustaining an active presence in the lives of community youth, providing staffing and resources for Helix Youth Outreach - Ensuring the extravagant welcome for the LGBTQ+ and supporting communities in PRISM - Continuing partnerships with Scout Troop 4 and Cub Scout Pack 839, Freeport Choral Society and Camera Club, and Northwest Illinois Audubon Society - Sharing the church campus with CareerTEC, YMCA School Aged Child Care (SACC), Hippy Yoga, and others
Welcome & Justice \$91,32820.07% - Celebrating Pride in Freeport, living our <i>Open and Affirming (ONA)</i> commitments loud and proud. - Standing in solidarity with racial and social justice by living out our <i>Racial Justice Congregation Covenant</i>, partnering with NAACP-Freeport Branch - Caring for Creation locally, regionally, and globally, and “Green Justice” in the witness of the <i>Solar Energy Project</i> - Working to end hunger through the <i>CROP Walk</i>, supporting the FACC Kreeger Memorial Food Pantry, and serving meals at the Chicago Avenue Mission	Hands-on Mission \$111,84824.58% - Monthly and Special Missions collections and offerings to enhance our partnerships with Rebuilding Together-Stephenson County, <i>FACC</i>, <i>VOICES</i>, and <i>local and global mission partners</i> <i>Change for Change</i> and special collections <i>Our Church’s Wider Mission</i> in the Prairie Association, the Illinois Conference, and the United Church of Christ - Sharing in local initiatives like <i>Paint the Port</i>, uniting our community more fully in its diversity



YOUTH FAITH FORMATION



GODLY PLAY—PRE-K-3RD GRADES

Godly Play is a Montessori-style learning environment focused on the needs of children at this place on life's journey. This year, we're launching a new series of stories that focus on sharing our Bible from different and diverse places within the stories:

11/2 Everyone in Church Sunday

- 11/9 6.9 The Story of David
- 11/16 6.16 The Story of Esther
- 11/23 6.17 The Book of Psalms
- 11/29 The Faces of Advent 1

This set of stories shares more inclusive and expansive witness of the Bible's many people. Ask a youth what the most important part of this week's story was in their hearing and understanding!



Whirl is a multi-age approach older elementary and middle school youth begin to connect the dots between Biblical stories and their own experiences of God, using the Whirl characters and curriculum.

11/2 Everyone in Church Sunday

- 11/9 *Questions:* The Sadducees' Question
- 11/16 *Work:* Working Together
- 11/23 *Save:* King on the Cross
- 11/29 *Advent-Peace:* Swords into Plowshares

Whirl encourages children to ask questions, interpret Scripture in community, and connect with God and one another.



HELIX—5TH-8TH GRADES

HELIX is an after school program sponsored and hosted by St. John UCC that focuses on community-building and social-emotional learning. HELIX meets each Wednesday from 3:00 to 5:00 pm.

November Schedule

- 11/5 Caring for Ourselves: Recognizing Stress
- 11/12 Caring for Ourselves: Coping with Stress
- 11/19 Caring for Ourselves: Rest
- 11/26 School Holiday—No Meeting

helix@stjohnuccfreeport.org

www.stjohnuccfreeport.org/helix

www.facebook.com/helixyouthoutreach

www.instagram.com/helixyouthoutreach



EVERYONE IN CHURCH SUNDAYS

Worshipping together to Grow in Faith

We learned a lot last year about the importance of worshipping together - all ages in a common celebration of God's love and presence. With Sunday School for youth taking place during worship, we are introducing ***Everyone in Church Sundays!***

All ages and generations will worship together for the whole hour of celebration on the first Sunday of each month. On these Sundays, our worship words, songs, and sacraments will be crafted to meet the diverse needs of our whole community.

COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP



ADULT FAITH FORMATION

Sundays, 9:00-9:45

“Dreaming with a Generous Spirit ”

a Three-Week Series, on Faith and Giving

Sunday Mornings 11/2-11/23

Growing a culture of generosity in our congregation requires more than one person, or a small group. Being faithful in our generosity takes each of us!

Several Years ago, our Finance and Resource Development Team shared in a Midwest Cohort of *Cultivating Generous Congregations*, a seminar program offered by the United Church of Christ and Lake Institute on Faith and Giving. They prayerfully learned how we map the new landscape of religious giving in today’s realities, and became “tooled up” to help our congregation build a culture of generosity unique to our needs and challenges.

Please join us in this spiritual adventure as we consider how we will respond to our call to be the church God needs us to be in Freeport and beyond.



First Saturdays, 8:00 am

Come join the next gathering of the Men’s Ministry. Join the lively group in the Chapel Hearth Room.



CHAIR YOGA AT ST. JOHN UCC

MONDAYS AT 6:30 PM

Bless your spiritual and physical self with yoga at St. John UCC. Join yoga instructor Katherine Ray of *Hippy Yoga* for a one hour session.

Chairs are provided.

Bring cushions or a blanket for your comfort.

Wear loose, comfortable clothing.

Price is \$5 a person, per class.

Cash, PayPal, Venmo, and Cash App accepted



SUBVERSIVE BOOK GROUP

11/18, 6:30 pm

Our next meeting is Tuesday, 11/18, beginning at 6:30 pm. Information about the chosen book can be found in the Book Group mail slot outside the church office or by contacting sbgfpt@gmail.com.

Happy Reading!

NOVEMBER'S SAVE THE DATES:

Getting into the Holiday Spirit

11/2 Holiday Pie Sale - Order through 11/16

11/26 Holiday Pie Pickup Day

11/30 Hanging of the Greens

OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

11/2	Greyson Graham	11/19	Vicki Spyrison
11/4	Stanley Bomgarden Denairic Hardersen Carlos Reyes	11/20	Ryan Piefer
		11/23	Carl Roderick
11/7	Marvin DeBoer Christina Fairman	11/25	Carol Smith
		11/26	Tom Mathews Ellen Roderick
11/12	Soren Musser		
11/14	Stan Smith	11/28	Melinda Fruth
11/17	Emily Kubatzke		

NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

11/13	Jim & Gwen Drew	11/27	Kenny & Andrea Schrock
11/24	Bill & Ruth Kuntz		
11/25	Ken & Jill Collin		Ted & Kate Michaelson



The Memorial Fund

supporting the future of the mission
and growing ministry and outreach
of St. John United Church of Christ

The Memorial Fund at St. John UCC exists to support the mission, ministry, and outreach of the congregation. The Fund was created from the generosity of gifts celebrating the lives and impact of loved ones and family members of the congregation.

In 2018, Church Council received a recommendation from the Memorial and Tangible Gift Team to consolidate the memorial gifts into three designated and one undesignated funds:

Congregational Support Fund

Supports church members and their families in times of financial need. Requests are made to Care & Community Leadership Team.

Worship & Arts Fund

Provides for creative worship and artistic display throughout the church campus. Curated by Worship & Education Leadership Team.

Library Fund

The Laura S. Uthlaut Library Fund supports the collection of resources in the church library. Managed by the Library Volunteers.

Undesignated Gifts Fund

Allows special projects and non-budgeted needs to enhance church life. Coordinated by Church Council Executive Team.

To make a donation to the Memorial Fund or to ask questions related to the fund, contact Pam Wessel.

ST. JOHN UCC MINISTRY TEAM

Senior Pastor

Rev. Henry E. "Hank" Fairman 703-473-3534
hank@stjohnuccfreeport.org

Visitation Pastor

Rev. Ted Michalsen 440-536-1044
ted@stjohnuccfreeport.org

Director of Congregational Life

Pam Wessel 815-275-7202
pam@stjohnuccfreeport.org

Creative & Administrative Assistant

Karla Hardersen
karla@stjohnuccfreeport.org

Digital Media Assistant Max Gibson

Music Director

Britney Kieselhorst
britney@stjohnuccfreeport.org

Church Musician Randy Cook

Pastor Emeritus Rev. Dr. Donnley Dutcher

Contact the church office at:

815-235-2824 office@stjohnuccfreeport.org



Place
Stamp
Here

1010 South Park Boulevard

Freeport, IL 61032

www.stjohnuccfreeport.org

Change Service Requested



**Be Out
Be Proud**
We Are Open and Affirming

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: 12 SONGS OF CHRISTMAS IS BACK!



twelve songs of Christmas

*Does holiday music strike a chord with you?
Come share in a community music celebration of
instruments, choirs, and much more!*

Sunday, 12/7/2025
2:00 pm



**AND
MORE!**



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815.235.2824 • www.stjohnuccfreeport.org