

WELCOME TO WORSHIP TODAY!

We are delighted that you are here in celebration and worship at St. John UCC. The members and friends of our faith community hope that you will encounter God in a meaningful and profound way, and that God’s Spirit will inspire you today to live your faith out loud.

We hope that you want to discover more about the congregation and its ministry in the community of Freeport, across our state and nation, and around the world. Please ask one of our ushers or visit us:

- on the Web: www.stjohnuccfreeport.org
- on Facebook: www.facebook.com/stjohnuccfreeport

For our younger guests, Worship Enrichment “Busy Bags” are available in the Narthex. These are located at the counter outside of the Chapel Hearth Room. Check in with an usher to organize a bag!

Parents and guardians are also welcome to use Room S3, the Infant Room, to care for their families as needed. There is a television in the room to view the worship service in real time.

Assisted Listening Devices are located at the Sound Board in the back of the Sanctuary. Earpiece and “Induction Loops” for hearing aids are both available. Please ask an usher for assistance in their use.

Please remember to return your name tag on your way home. We will have them waiting for your return next week!

If you cannot join us in person, you will always have a front row seat on our live stream at facebook.com/stjohnuccfreeport/live.

Scan this code to access our Online Giving Portal:



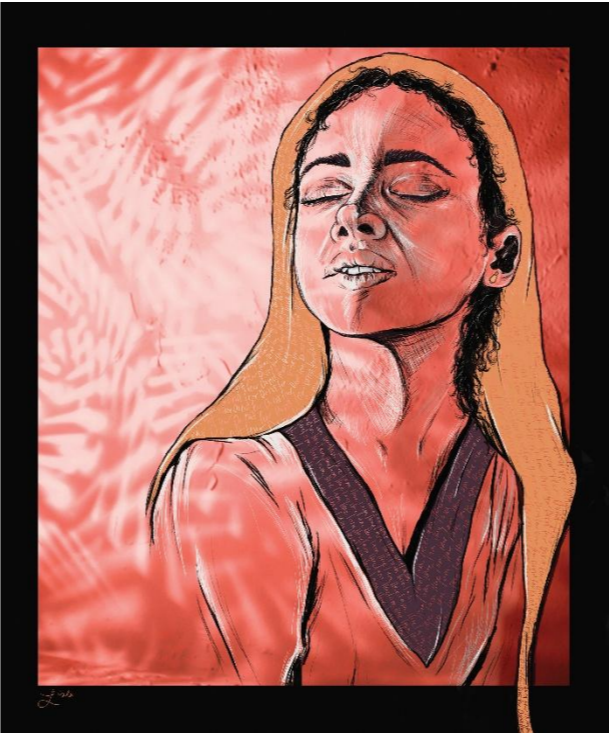
We thank you for your continued generous support of St. John UCC.

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Mary’s Yes | Lisle Gwynn Garrity
Photography with digital drawing

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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: JOY
“Even in our fear, we are called forward”
December 14, 2025 • 10:00 am

WELCOMING MUSIC AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE *Gabriel’s Message* arr. J. Wayne Kerr

*CALL TO WORSHIP Tim Ebbers

- One: Jeremiah said, “I am only a boy.”
- All: Moses said, “Who am I to do this work?”
- One: Mary said, “How can this be?”
- All: We often say, “But God, I am afraid.”
- One: Even when we are afraid, God invites us closer.
- All: So may we trust the Inviter.
- One: May we welcome God’s invitation.
May we summon our courage and sing God’s praise.
- All: Let us worship our courageous, inviting, calling God, and watch joy enter through the candle’s light.

*HYMN *Song of Mary* MORNING SONG
VU #887

*SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

* An asterisk is an invitation to rise as one is able (in body or spirit).
Please silence your mobile devices before the beginning of worship.

GATHERING PRAYER

Lighting of Advent Candles Kamholz and Ebbers Families

One: In a world full of fear,
where do you see glimmers of joy?

**All: We see glimmers of joy in birthday candles and
homemade cards.
We see joy in the laughter of children and the
delight of grandparents.
We see joy in meals around the table and in the
singing of Christmas songs.**

One: You are right.
Even in a fearful world, joy is all around us.
Mary of Nazareth came to know joy.
Though her visit with God's messenger perplexed her,
and she feared what the Angel's words might mean,
she chose to rise up, and claim her time. She said:

*"Here am I, the servant of the Lord;
let it be with me according to your word."*

The Candle of Peace is lit.

One: Today we light the candle of joy as a reminder of this
good news.
May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a
fearful world, joy is here. Joy is real.
We only have to look for it.

All: Let Joy light our way. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Response *We Are a People of Hope, v.3* TABLE OF GRACE

Words: B. Hamm, © 2009 Hope Publishing

CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM Delilah Ruth and Benson Kyle,
Children of Kristi & Kyle Kamholz

One: Do you, who witness and celebrate this sacrament, promise your love, support, and care to the ones about to be baptized, as they live and grow in Christ?

All: We promise our love, support, and care.

Child of blessing, child of promise,
baptized with the Spirit's sign,
with this water God has sealed you
unto love and grace divine.

Child of joy, our dearest treasure,
God's you are; from God you came.
Back to God we humbly give you:
live as one who bears Christ's name.

Luke 1:26-39 NRSV, Updated Edition

Liz Reyes

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.

ANTHEM *Let There Be Peace on Earth* arr. Cynthia Dobrinski
The Bell Choir

Luke 1:46b-55 NRSV, Updated Edition

MESSAGE *"Bursting with God-news"* Rev. Hank Fairman
from The Message, Luke 1:46b

*HYMN *O Come, Take Heart* VENI IMMANUEL
Words: Anna Strickland, © 2025, A Sanctified Art

an Open and Affirming, Racial Justice Congregation,
where God is Still Speaking

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!
Praise Christ, all creatures here below!
Praise Holy Spirit, evermore!
One God, triune, whom we adore. Amen.

Prayers of the People & Pastoral Prayer

*HYMN *Now Bless the God of Israel* FOREST GREEN
NCH #110

*BENEDICTION

*RESPONSE *Comfort, Comfort Now My People* GENEVAN 42
WAR #155, v. I

***POSTLUDE** *Hark, the Glad Sound!* arr. Malcolm Archer

CHILDREN ON CHRISTMAS EVE

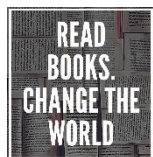
“All Are Welcome” Nativity

Children attending our 5:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship Service will have a few ways to participate. First, as is our tradition, children will be invited to put on costumes at church and represent the Nativity story during the service. If your child plans to participate, our teachers request that they come to church as often as possible during Advent, at least once or twice. This will allow teachers time to fit children for costumes and plan for this portion of Christmas Eve.



**NEW! MAT YOGA AT ST. JOHN UCC
MONDAYS, STARTING 12/15 AT 5:00 PM**

Bless your spiritual and physical self with yoga at St. John UCC. Join yoga instructor Katherine Ray of Hippy Yoga starting on 12/15 at 5:00 pm, for a new mat yoga class. Chair yoga will continue at 6:30 pm. Come for one class, or stay for both! Classes are one hour in length, and held in Fellowship Hall, an accessible space. Please bring your own yoga mat.



**SUBVERSIVE BOOK GROUP
12/16, 6:30 PM**

Our next meeting is Tuesday, 12/16, 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!



**FACC FOOD PANTRY
PANTRY BAG COLLECTION**

We will keep collecting and bagging through the end of December, and work with the FACC Food Pantry on the best way to continue our support in the January and beyond. Thank you for your support!



“What do you fear?” Adult Faith Formation Series

Come join the Sunday morning Adult Faith Formation group as we walk through Advent together. Christina Ables Fairman and Lisa Schubert will facilitate the journey with A Sanctified Art’s *What do you fear? Insisting on Hope this Advent* companion study as our guide.

12/14 – “*Even in our fear, we are called forward*”

12/21 – “*When you’re afraid, give me your hand*”

Please join us for one, two, three, or all four weeks of this conversation. And when you can’t be there, or if you’d like to engage in additional Advent devotional time on your own, you can also explore *What Do You Fear?* personal devotional, available to pick up in the Narthex.

We can’t wait to see you on Sunday mornings at 9:00 AM in the Chapel Hearth Room!



CHRISTMAS SWEATER SUNDAY, 12/21

Come share in the warmth of worship in your favorite Christmas Sweater as we celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Advent. The more unique, the more we celebrate with you!



THE LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE, 12/21, 4:00 PM

The Wellness Ministry is hosting a time for worship on 12/21 at 4:00 pm. During a season whose signs demand us to be merry and bright, this worship intentionally creates a space for people to acknowledge the shadows that grief and loss cast in our lives.

Together during The Longest Night Service, we will reserve time to acknowledge the loss we are feeling and look toward the comfort, hope, and healing that comes with the birth of Jesus and the steadily growing sun which will begin to shine a little longer with each coming day.



CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS EVE: A SERVICE IN LESSONS AND CAROLS 12/24, 5:00 PM

Come and worship! Christ, the Light of our world is born anew in our hearts! Worship for all ages begins at 5:00 pm. Share in the songs and scriptures of the Lessons and Carols service. Close the Christmas night with candlelight. Come and praise as we light the candle of Christ.



CHRISTMAS HYMN SING 12/28, During Worship

O Come, all Ye Faithful and celebrate the Christmas weekend, singing the carols together and awaiting the New Year!



HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

The church office will be open by appointment only from *Wednesday, 12/24/25 to Friday, 1/2/25*. Please contact the ministry team and church staff by email or cell phone during the holiday weeks.



2025 END OF YEAR GENEROSITY

Your end-of-year generosity helps us be ready for the mission and ministry needs that come as the next year begins. The last day to receive donations toward this giving year is **12/29/25**. Gifts received after that date will be credited in the new year. 2026 Offering envelope sets are available for those wanting and using those. Please contact the church office.