
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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Faith Formation for All Ages

Adult Faith Formation will take a summer break in July and August. We hope that our new meeting time this year has fed you, body, mind, and spirit! Look for a wrap-up/planning survey in your email inbox soon!

Whirl welcomes youth Kindergarten to 5th Grade to learn Bible stories, ask questions, and explore their faith together in **Room S8**. This multi-age Summer Sunday School takes place during the 10:00 worship hour, following the *Conversation with the Children*.

Explore a Bible story together, enjoy the *Sunday Funnies*, and partner with kids of different ages for crafts and activities.

Youth in sixth grade and up are invited to sign up to be a Youth Helper for the class, serving as mentors to their younger peers. See the schedule on the bulletin board or contact Pastor Hank to sign up.

ST. JOHN UCC STAFF

Senior Pastor:

Rev. Henry E. “Hank” Fairman

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Visitation Pastor:

Rev. Ted Michalsen

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Director of Congregational Life:

Pam Wessel

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Creative & Administrative Assistant:

Karla Hardersen

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Digital Media Assistants: Max Gibson

Church Musician: Randy Cook Bell and Choir Director: Coming Soon

Pastor Emeritus: Rev. Dr. Donnley Dutcher

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815.235.2824 • www.stjohnuccfreeport.org



TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 17, 2025 • 10:00 am

WELCOMING MUSIC and ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing* arr. Marty Parks
Sounds of the Spirit

***CALL TO WORSHIP** Tim Ebbers

One: God of life.

All: We celebrate all that you have caused to grow within and around us.

One: God of grace.

All: We rejoice in your abundant gifts that fill our tables and cause cups to spill over.

One: God of love.

All: We praise your steadfastness in caring for us our whole life long.

***HYMN** *I Sing the Almighty Power of God* ELLACOMBE
(WAR #31)

***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

Silent Centering

Congregational Prayer (speaking together)

O God, we gather in Your presence with expectation, awaiting the harvest of the spring planting.

We hunger for an encounter with you and a sampling of the fruits of our labor.

May the seeds of Your Word which have been sown among us land in fertile soil.

Permit your message to produce strong roots in our hearts.

With the words and actions of our lives may we stretch like stalks towards the light, which is your truth.

Allow us to produce an abundant harvest of good words and deeds; the food which feeds your kingdom.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, the sower. Amen.

GOD’S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 55:10-13 NRSV, Updated Edition

CONVERSATION WITH THE CHILDREN

Tim Ebbers

Change for Change Mission Collection

This month’s collection will support:
Boys and Girls Club of Freeport and Stephenson County

The Prayer of our Savior

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

Thrive Mark Hall and Matthew West
Sounds of the Spirit

GOD’S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Luke 8:4-15 NRSV, Updated Edition

MESSAGE

Can a Soil Change Its Type? Rev. Ted Michalsen

*HYMN

A Sower Came from Ancient Hills

SEACHRIST

(GTG #171, on screen)

PRESENTING OUR HEARTS AND GIFTS TO GOD

Gathering the Gifts with Praise

Offering Song Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast

arr. Stephen P. Johnson

Doxology (CH #48 lyrics, on screen)

OLD 100TH

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!

Praise Christ, all creatures here below!

Praise Holy Spirit, evermore!

One God, triune, whom we adore. Amen.

SHARING CELEBRATIONS AND CONCERNS

Prayers of the People

Pastoral Prayer

*HYMN

God of the Fertile Fields

ITALIAN HYMN

(GTG #714, on screen)

*BENEDICTION

*RESPONSE

Sing a New Church Into Being

NETTLETON

(WAR #577, v. 4)

*POSTLUDE

Thrive (reprise)

Hall/West

Sounds of the Spirit

ANNOUNCEMENTS



IMAGINATION TEAM
Today, after Worship

Please join us in Chapel Hearth following worship for the next meeting of our event planning committee, the Imagination Team. Everyone is welcome to attend.



PAINT THE PORT
8/22, 4:00 – 8:00 pm

St. John UCC is excited to continue as a sponsor of the Eighth Annual Paint the Port community event. It is being held on Friday, 8/22, from 4:00 - 8:00 pm in downtown Freeport. We have extra squares available at no cost to you. Please contact Pam Wessel and let her know you’ll be there!

Email Pam at pam@stjohnuccfreeport.org



WELLNESS MINISTRY: GRIEF GROUP SUMMER PICNIC
8/27, 11:00am - 1:00pm

Join the St. John UCC Wellness Ministry Team’s Grief Group for a Summer Picnic on Wednesday, 8/27. This gathering will be a time of sharing and nurturing for those experiencing grief as well as those who wish to show their support. You are welcome to bring and share your favorite summer comfort food.

St. John United Church of Christ – Freeport, IL

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



SAVE THE DATE:

Rally Day Celebration with Empty Bowls Project
9/7, 10:00 am

Come share in our extravagant welcome as we return from summer's days of fun! Join in worship, sharing stories of God's blessings for us all. Stay for the annual Rally Day Potluck and Empty Bowls Project, benefiting FACC's Kreeger Memorial Food Pantry!

The Empty Bowls Project is a grassroots movement by artists and crafts people in cities and towns around the world to raise money for food related charities to care for and feed the hungry in their communities.

Our goal is to glaze 96 food-safe bowls to be sold at the 2025 FACC Hunger Luncheon in November. Proceeds from the sale will go to support the Kreeger Memorial Food Pantry, and its mission of ending hunger in our community.

Join us for our potluck and bring a dish to pass and share!
Sign up in the Narthex and let us know what you'll be bringing!

171 A Sower Came from Ancient Hills

1 A Sow - er came from an - cient hills and cast good
 2 A Sow - er walked through - out the land and, ev - ery -
 3 The Seed was bur - ied deep in death be - neath a
 4 O Christ, you come a - mong us still, the Sow - er

seed a - broad: his field, ten thou - sand hu - man hearts; his
 where he trod, he sowed his life be - cause he was him -
 blood - red sky, and deep - er still was bur - ied hope for
 and the Seed. As once you sowed the truth of God in

seed, the word of God. And some who lis - tened would not
 self the Seed of God. But then, a - top a bar - ren
 those who watched him die. But then, in Jo - seph's gar - den
 glow - ing word and deed, im - plant your Word in wait - ing

hear, and some who heard for - got. But some re - ceived in
 hill, be - neath a dark - ening sky, they threw God's Seed on
 fair, as dawn broke o'er the land, the Seed, from three days'
 hearts, and let it there take hold, un - til it bears in

fer - tile soil the truth the Sow - er taught.
 ston - y ground and left it there to die.
 si - lent sleep, a - woke at God's com - mand!
 fruit - ful lives a har - vest hun - dred - fold.

Guitar chords do not correspond with keyboard harmony.

All three synoptic gospels record both the telling and the explanation of Jesus' parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23/Mark 4:3-8, 14-20/Luke 8:5-8, 11-15). Because the seed equals "the word," Jesus (as the Word made flesh) becomes the Seed in this expansion of the parable.

God of the Fertile Fields 714

1 God of the fer - tile fields, shap - er of
 2 We would be stew - ards true, hold - ing in
 3 As grows the hid - den seed to fruit that
 4 God of the coun - try - side, dear to the

earth that yields our dai - ly bread: forth from your
 trust from you all that you give; help us in
 serves our need, so your reign grows. Let all our
 Christ who died to make us one: we pledge our

boun - teous hand come gifts your love has planned,
 love to share, teach us like you to care
 toil be used, no gift of yours a - bused,
 lives a - new in faith - ful love to you.

that all in ev - ery land be clothed and fed.
 for peo - ple ev - ery - where, that all may live.
 no hum - ble task re - fused your love be - stows.
 Guide all we say and do. Your will be done.

Greater awareness has enlarged Christian stewardship to develop new dimensions of concern for people in all parts of the world. Because we believe that it is God's will that the gifts we have received should be shared, this hymn concludes with that phrase from the Lord's Prayer.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



JOIN US AT THE THEATER!
Timberlake Playhouse in Mt. Carroll, IL
9/21, 2:00 pm

We have reserved a block of 20 tickets at \$30 each (we need at least 10 going to receive the group rate). Please sign up on the Narthex board by 9/7. We plan to meet at church at 12:45pm to carpool down.

Questions and payments to Lisa Ebberts (815-275-3106) please.



WORSHIP & EDUCATION
Leaders' Round-Up Meeting
8/24, 11:30 am

Members of the Worship & Education Leadership Team are invited to the Leaders' Round-Up meeting. We will be discussing program and schedule updates for the fall quarter, and some long-term information about winter and spring quarters.