

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](http://www.stjohnuccfreeport.org)
- on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/stjohnuccfreeport](http://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](https://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

Our regular faith formation classes for youth take place during the worship hour at 10:00, following the *For the Child in All of Us*.

The Infant and Toddler Room is provided for ages birth to 3 years with age-appropriate activities and equipment in Room S3.

Godly Play welcomes youth Preschool to 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade for a play-based faith formation in Room S4.

Whirl welcomes youth 4<sup>th</sup> Grade to 8<sup>th</sup> Grade to learn Bible stories, ask questions, and explore their faith together in Room S8.

Adult Faith Formation welcomes high school youth and adults of all ages to gather in the Chapel Hearth Room from 9:00-9:45, exploring different topics and formats weekly.

This month we’ll ponder what it takes to “be the church God calls us to be in Freeport and beyond.”

- 1/11 *Discerning:* Progressive and Expansive Thought and Theology
- 1/18 *Engaged:* Community Service and Living out justice with the Social Gospel

ST. JOHN UCC STAFF

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Pastor Emeritus: Rev. Dr. Donnley Dutcher

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

“Let fear fuel a fire for Justice”

January 4, 2026 • 10:00 am

WELCOMING MUSIC and ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE *How Lovely Shines the Morning Star* arr. Paul Manz

\*CALL TO WORSHIP

- One: Friends, Hope is:
- All: “Being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.”
- One: Peace is:
- All: The wolf lying down with the lamb. A gift we can give each other.
- One: Joy is:
- All: The space between our breath and our laughter—contagious.
- One: Love is:
- All: Unquenchable, never-ending, born in a manger, here today.
- One: Christmas is:
- All: A love song to the world.  
The light that shines in the darkness.  
Let us make a joyful noise!
- One: Let us worship God.

\*HYMN *Joy to the World!* ANTIOCH  
WAR #179

\* 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.

\*SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

GATHERING PRAYER

Silent Centering

Congregational Prayer (speaking together)

Loving God, remind us again of the Hope of Christmas:

Remind us of the long walk to Bethlehem.

Remind us of the shepherds and their faithful witness.

Remind us of the magi—the way they searched for you, and the gifts they brought.

Remind us that Mary and Joseph were young, and how they treasured and pondered sacred moments in their hearts.

Remind us of the daily choice we have to open our doors to people in need.

Remind us to look up, to look for your guiding light.

Loving God, we are a forgetful people.

We confess that we want reconciliation to be quick and easy.

We are tempted to overlook the outcasts in society.

We expect that you will move in us, without seeking you on our end.

We get caught up in the business of our days.

We wake up thinking only of ourselves.

We fail to hear the voices of the young and the old.

We lose our way, forgetting to seek you.

Forgive us, we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance

GOD’S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Psalms 147:12-20

*NRSV, Updated Edition*

FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US

Tim Ebberts

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

Special Music

Britney Kieselhorst with Randy Cook

GOD’S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

John 1:1-18

*NRSV, Updated Edition*

MESSAGE

*Light and Word and Us*

Rev. Hank Fairman

\*HYMN

*The Hands that First Held Mary’s Child*

KINGSFOLD

WAR #237, vv. 1-3

PRESENTING OUR HEARTS AND GIFTS TO GOD

Gathering the Gifts with Praise

Offering Song *Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising* arr. Kickstat

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.

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

Sharing Celebrations and Concerns

Invitation to the Table

One: But here at this table, you never have to wonder.

Here at this table, there is enough room,

enough food, enough love for everyone.

All: Here at this table, Jesus is standing up on his chair,  
waving his hands over his head,  
saying to each of you, “I saved you a seat!”

One: Here at this table, you are wanted and welcomed.

You are safe and loved.

All: Here at this table, you belong. We belong.

There is no need for fear here,

for this is a joyful feast, and every one is invited.

Communion Prayer

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Sharing the Elements

*Christ’s table is open to all who wish to participate.*

*Red Wine and White Grape juice and **all bread is gluten free***

*meeting the personal and dietary needs of every person.*

*Please take a serving cup and wait to join everyone gathered in the Sanctuary  
and at home in communion as one body in Christ’s extravagant welcome and love.*

Prayer of Thanksgiving (speaking together)

Loving God,

In a world racked with fear, you gather us together.

You set the table. You meet us here.

You nourish our bodies as you nourish our spirits.

You remind us that this is a joyful feast,

and that fear cannot win every time.

So with renewed courage, with renewed hope,

with renewed conviction,

send us out into the world.

Help us to feed others as you have fed us.

With gratitude we pray, awaiting the light of Christ to light our Advent. Amen.

\*HYMN

*Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*

W ZLOBIE LEZY

WAR #221

\*BENEDICTION

\*RESPONSE

*Joy to the World!*

ANTIOCH

WAR #179, vv. 1, 4

\*POSTLUDE

*O Splendor of God’s Glory Bright*

arr. C. Tambling

St. John United Church of Christ – Freeport, IL

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

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### **EPIPHANY BRUNCH** **1/11/26, Following Worship**

With the star guiding us in thankful praise, we will gather in Fellowship Hall following worship for our annual Epiphany brunch. There will be egg bakes, coffee cakes, and muffins to share. To ensure we have enough food, please add your family's name to the signup sheet on the bulletin board. Invite a friend to join in the fellowship!

### **NEW MEMBERS WELCOMING SESSION**

Are you interested in learning more about St. John UCC and what it means to be an active part of our church community? Grab a plate of hospitality at the Epiphany Brunch and meet in the Chapel Hearth Room for an hour on our church's history and ministry. Childcare will be arranged as requests are made.



### **SAVE THE DATE: MARDI GRAS POTLUCK AND BINGO** **2/7, 4-7 PM**

Come enjoy an evening of food and fellowship at Mardi Gras Potluck and Bingo night, on Saturday, 2/7, from 4-7 pm, or until the bingo prizes run out! There will be jambalaya, gumbo, dirty rice, king cakes, and more! Pick your favorite Cajun dish (or any other dish!) and bring enough to share at the potluck.

After the meal, we will have an evening of bingo, complete with prizes! If you have any unused gifts from Christmas, or any white elephant prizes that you'd like to donate to our prize box, we will put them to good use! Please bring them to the office by February 1st. We would also encourage you to decorate a shoebox float with a Mardi Gras-theme. If you'd like to build a float, or need an idea, please let the committee know.

If you have any other questions or would like to be part of the planning team, please contact Judi Buus or the office.

***“Laissez les bons temps rouler” -***  
***Let the good times roll!***

2026  
ANNUAL  
CONGREGATIONAL  
MEETING

**2026 ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**  
**2/1, 11:30 AM**

All members of St. John United Church of Christ are called to the Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, February 1, at 11:30 am in accordance with Article V of the Constitution and Article I of the Bylaws of St. John UCC.

The business conducted shall be:

- The receipt of the 2025 ministry, financial, and endowment reports
  - The report of the Property Management Team on Sanctuary Renovations and Organ Renewal
  - The report of the Worship & Education Team, and action on, revisions to the Safe Church /Safe Conduct policy
  - The approval of the 2026 ministry & operations budget
- and any business deemed appropriate by Church Council.

Signed,

/s/ Jill Gastel, Clerk of Council

*Copies of the annual ministry and financial reports and budget will be available one week prior to the meeting. Watch for information on in-person and hybrid meeting closer to the day of the meeting.*



**YOGA AT ST. JOHN UCC**  
**MONDAYS, STARTING AT 5:15 PM**

Bless your spiritual and physical self with yoga at St. John UCC. Join yoga instructor Katherine Ray of Hippy Yoga on Mondays at 5:15 pm for a 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.