

TIDINGS

October 2026

A Regular Sharing of Our Mission and Ministry



LOVING TOGETHER: Annual Giving Campaign 2026

Stories are the heartbeat of our faith. The sacred stories of scripture expand our understanding of who God is and how God shows up in the world.

The stories of our own lives are powerful reminders of how we have been shaped by the God of all creation and Christ's church.

The stories we hear in worship celebrate that when we align ourselves and our gifts with God's heart, *There Our Hearts Will Be* too. That's the theme of this year's campaign, taken from Matthew 6:21 (NRSVUE):

*Where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also...*

This is truth in how we live our lives. And because of you, it is true for the future of ministry in and through our church. Thank you for all the ways you give...of your time, your talents, and of your financial resources. Our congregation couldn't share in all God has in store for us without you!

Read more about this year's Annual Campaign on page 5



CONFIRMATION SUNDAY, 10/18

Join in worship with the Confirmation Class of 2026, celebrating their affirmation of their Baptismal promises and the unity that they share as equal members in our faith community.

This year, a group of our Prairie Association UCC churches across northwest Illinois joined together for a "united church" Confirmation experience.

It was a wonderful way to understand that while we have our different gifts and spirits, God's uniting love binds us as one!

Meet the class on page 7



Saturday, 10/3, 4:00-7:00 pm

Join in *gemütlichkeit* with the whole Freeport community at St. John UCC's annual Oktoberfest celebration! *Find alles Zeug und der ganze Kram about this year's pretzel party on page 2.*



Sunday, 10/4

Since 1933, Christian faith communities across the world, across the lines of denomination and theological interpretations of bread and cup, have come together on this day to be:

"One in Christ, and One in Mission."



Sunday, 11/1

On the first Sunday of November, we celebrate All Saints' Day and *Totenfest*, the "Festival of the Departed." The community at St. John UCC honors those individuals from the who have died in the previous year. *More on page 9.*



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

A MONTH AT A GLANCE

What’s going on at church in October?

It’s a pretty common question heard in the church office: *What meetings are going on this month?* The St. John UCC campus is busy six days and nights a week (and often there’s something on the seventh day, too!) See what’s happening this month, and discover a new way to share your time, talents and treasures. Help us be the church God is calling us to be in Freeport and beyond!



**Illinois Conference UCC
Annual Celebration and
Prairie Association Fall Meeting**

Our community will gather under the inspiring theme, Hope, Spring Eternal, from November 5-7, 2026, at Covenant United Church of Christ - South Holland, for a meaningful time together rooted in fellowship and connection. This weekend is a beautiful opportunity to reconnect, share collaborative meals, including a Friday evening social at the Serbian Social Center, and share in powerful worship featuring keynote speaker, General Minister and President/CEO Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson.

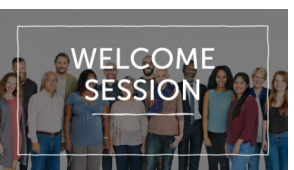
In preparation for this meeting, the Prairie Association will gather on Friday, 10/23 via conference call on Zoom.

Contact the church office for registration information.

AUGUST & YTD FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Income	Actual	Budget	Difference
Pledges/Gifts	\$19,900	\$27,083	\$-7,183
Monthly Income	\$30,410	\$38,267	\$-7,857
Monthly Expenses	\$33,803	\$38,560	\$-4,754
YTD Pledges/Gifts	\$152,495	\$216,667	\$-64,172
YTD Income	\$250,542	\$306,133	\$-55,591
YTD Expenses	\$304,003	\$310,620	\$-6,617
YTD Total	\$-53,461	\$-4,487	\$-48,973

Stewardship Note: Pledges and Identified Gifts are receiving behind budget. Expenses remain under budget. The Third Quarter ended on 9/30. Please check with Pam Wessel to see that your pledge is up to date. Thank you for your generous support of St. John UCC!



New Members Welcoming Session Sunday, 11/1 after worship

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 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.

Questions? Contact Rev. Hank



SATURDAY, 10/3, 4:00 PM-7:00 PM

Join with the community at St. John UCC in our Second Annual Oktoberfest! Dress in your finest German attire (lederhosen and dirndls welcomed!) and celebrate our community’s German roots with great music and food activities! For your enjoyment, the German folk band will be back again this year! There will be stein-holding and yodeling contests, silent auction and so much more!

Adults \$15.00
Children (under 10) \$10.00
Unlimited Refill Mugs \$10
(Last year’s mugs also receive free refills)

Can’t wait to see you there! Prost!

die Speisekarte
Bratwurst
(hot dogs for kids)
German potato salad
buttered green beans
sauerkraut
pickled red cabbage
soft pretzel.
Nachtsich
Black Forest cupcakes
and gluten-free peach kuchen

LOCAL AND GLOBAL MISSION IMPACT



FACC FOOD PANTRY

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

In October we are asked to collect:



Canned Fruit

Donations can be placed in the collection carts 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. Please sign up on the bulletin board if you can help with a meal. More info? Contact Marla Kreeger or Pam Wessel!



Impact Of Data Centers 10/22, 6:00 pm, Freeport Public Library

The Environmental Study Group (ESG) invites area residents to a community conversation on the growing impact of data centers on the region's water supplies, energy demand and utility costs, and environmental health.

Presenters from Prairie Rivers Network, Sierra Club, and Citizens Utility Board will discuss the proliferation of massive scale data centers, and also the importance of upcoming legislation known as *The Power Act*, which would regulate data centers.

GLOBAL MINISTRIES

MONTHLY PRAYER PARTNER: China

In China, over 25 ethnic groups reside in western Yunnan Province—the largest population of ethnic minorities in the country. Global Ministries partners with the Baoshan Christian Council in Yunnan Province, serving ethnic minorities with health, education and agricultural training. They also work on Bible translations so ethnic minority believers can read scripture in their own language.



Most minority villages are in the mountains where the greatest needs are health education and various social services. To build health and independences in the villages, the Baoshan Christian council organizes community health training classes and provides medical training scholarships and First Aid kits for lay people of the church committed to serving their villages. The Baoshan Christian Council provides support and encouragement, serving ethnic minority communities in their own cultural settings.

The *Global Ministries* is a partnership ministry between the UCC and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

For more information, please visit:

www.globalministries.org

GREEN ENERGY REPORT



Month	Generated	Used	Difference
July	5065 kWh	2658 kWh	-2407 kWh
August	3692 kWh	3379 kWh	-313 kWh
September	3255 kWh	3773 kWh	518 kWh

Green Team Note: The warm early fall weather kept the sun shining, but also raised our electric usage for cooling. Over energy bank balance was able to offset the 518 kWh needed!

ADULT FORMATION & FELLOWSHIP



Banned Book Week 2026 is October 4–10 and we’re celebrating here at St. John UCC!

Did you know that the Laura S. Uthlaut Memorial Library here at church contains a wide selection of banned and challenged books? Banned books at church, oh my—and...why?

The service project at the United Church of Christ’s General Synod 35 was a collection and distribution of banned and challenged books, including a display of these books on the Synod stage and worship space. Dr. Sharon Fennema, Join the Movement curator at the UCC National Setting, said,

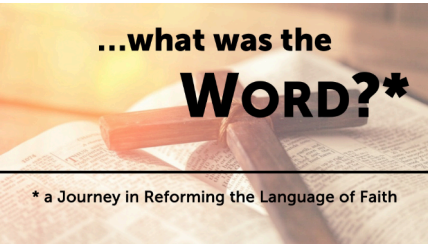
“The more we encounter each other’s stories, the more we read across divides and differences, the more we are equipped to be the true Body of Christ, leaning into our interconnectedness, rather than fascist efforts to keep us segregated and fearful of one another. There is no better time to be reading banned books to fuel our gospel-rooted resistance to dehumanization and the logics of supremacy.”

R Ward, former minister for Gender and Sexuality Justice, noted,

“We care about telling the truth [at the UCC], and books allow us to have conversations across divides and differences in ways that are not violent. We can be the library for telling the truth.”

While St. John UCC’s library and its collection predate GS35, which took place in 2025, we’re definitely thinking along the same lines.

Stop by the library, visit our Banned Book display, and check out a banned book.



Continuing through 10/11, 9:00 am

Our faith forms and re-forms many times in our lives (and often with every morning’s blessings!). Every time we encounter God’s Pentecost Spirit working in us, we are challenged to find the language needed to tell that story. And often that means finding *different and more accurate words* to share our stories with others.

This fall, our first Adult Faith Formation series will take the conversation into the history, tradition, and present of the words we use in worship, formation, and mission. Pastor Hank will guide each week’s gathering on the topics of :

- 10/4 DOXA LOGIA:
Worship Words and their Way with Us
- 10/11 The Final Chapter?: *Finding our comfort and naming our questions on the WORD*
- 10/18 Celebrate Confirmation Sunday:
Explore and discuss the questions youth studied and responded to during their six-month Confirmation Class.

Please join us for one, two, three, or all weeks of this conversation. We can’t wait to see you on Sunday mornings at 9:00 am in the Chapel Hearth Room!

LOVING TOGETHER: 2026 ANNUAL GIVING CAMPAIGN

A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

For people of faith, what we give to God through the church is a reflection of our values. Likewise, how our church stewards its money is a reflection of who we believe God is calling us to be. Over the next couple of weeks, we will ask everyone in our congregation to prayerfully and carefully discern their passions and priorities and decide how to align their money with those.

There’s a little more to that passage from Matthew we might consider. It’s part of Jesus’ *Sermon on the Mount.*” He starts it all with the words,

“You are blessed...” and ends it with the parable of building a house on a firm foundation. Taken together, and aligned by our hearts, we have a story to tell of how God has blessed us, and how our commitment to give and serve firms up an already strong foundation .

This simple request bears our weighty prayers and an equally thoughtful response, as we each determine our investment in the ministry and mission of St. John UCC. The work of our church happens every year because of the generous financial and volunteer support of people like you and me. And this year, we trust that also will happen because of neighbors we have yet to meet. We’re *“That Church!”* And our community knows and trusts that we will rise to each moment to which God calls our attention.

Thank you, friends, for being God’s generous people in a time when other choices are out there!

I’ll see you in Church,
Pastor Hank

Aligning our Hearts and our Treasures

Every year, our Financial and Resource Development Team prayerfully reviews the prior three years of generosity. They work to discern a realistic budget for the coming year, balanced with an optimistic spirit of generosity.

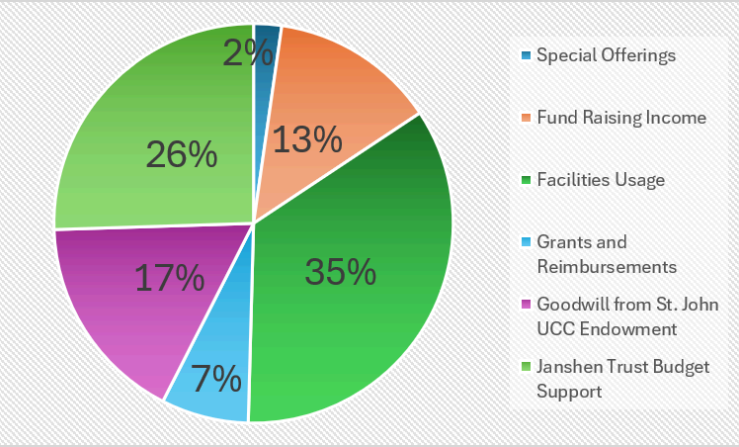
For those who need to see it in numbers, the estimated budget for 2027 is approximately \$500,000. This is similar in value to the 2025 and 2026 budgets. Here is how we described the percentages last year:

2026 Narrative Ministry Budget			
Worship & Formation		A Living Community Presence	
33.57%	\$152,788	21.53%	\$98,005
Welcome & Justice		Hands-on Mission	
20.07%	\$91,328	24.58%	\$111,848

However, each year finds our mission changing to meet the ministry needs in Freeport and beyond.

The financial and other resources that support the budget also vary from year to year. The sources of that support comes from groups and organizations using our building and campus to meet, fund raising, targeted special giving, and our annual and special giving campaigns (like this one!).

Last year, 71% of our support came from *Faith Promise* pledges and other identified gifts. The remaining 29% came from sources like:



LOVING TOGETHER: 2026 ANNUAL GIVING CAMPAIGN

Tuning our Hearts to Generosity

Our faithful financial stewardship is one way we are invited to respond to Christ’s invitation. Our generosity funds the mission and ministry that we are deploying as a sign that God’s realm is among us. Our annual campaign generates more than three-quarters of all of the funds we need to operate the church. We could not be the church we are without the support we receive through this campaign!

On Reformation Sunday, 10/25, we will gather after worship for our annual Budget and Goals Meeting. A Moment of Witness will be shared each Sunday after, telling stories about our gifts and our dreams. Members of our community will talk about why the world need a church like ours; what they believe God cares that our congregation exists; and why we engage in our particular mission.

"Where your treasure is...
10/26 Reforming our Mission
11/1 All of our Saints' Sunday
11/8 Valuing our Veterans
11/15 Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week
11/22 Commitment & Thanksgiving Sunday
there your heart will be also..."

Each family will also receive a set of letters, helping describe our vision for our unique call to community and service at St. John UCC. These are testimonies to the real impact of the spiritual practice of giving.

Our Annual Campaign will conclude on Commitment Sunday, 11/22 in prayerful worship. The members of our Stewardship and Development Team hope you will be intentional about responding to this important invitation, not simply to offer your estimate of giving card, but to join in a celebration of fellowship and thanksgiving.

COMMITMENT CARD // FOR CHURCH RECORDS

Envelope # _____

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

I plan to give beginning _____ (date) each ☐ week ☐ month

Annual Total _____

For our congregation's ministries \$ _____ \$ _____

For our congregation's wider mission \$ _____ \$ _____

I understand that this commitment can be changed at any time by contacting the church office.

☐ I would like to talk with someone about including the church or a church-related institution in my will.

SIGNED _____ DATE _____

What is a Faith Promise?

There are many ways to support the work of a congregation like St. John UCC. In the 1800s, many churches supported themselves by renting out pews (people paid for a seat as they might in a stadium, renting it out for the year). While that doesn’t happen a lot today, congregations like ours engage our gifts and skills to raise financial support for our mission and ministry.

A *Faith Promise* is one means for supporting St. John UCC. Yes, it is the way we offer our giving pledges for the coming year. But it is also a tool to help think about the reasons why we make a financial commitment to our church. Our goal is 100% participation, with every member household and friend of St. John UCC returning a *Faith Promise* on Consecration Sunday.

Our *Faith Promise* cards will arrive in the middle of November. Before then, take time as a leadership team to reflect on these questions:

- Why do you make a *Faith Promise* financial commitment to St. John UCC?
- What motivates you to make or renew this commitment every year?
- How does making this commitment change your relationship with our faith community?

Your prayers and your participation are keys to helping us advance further on the pathway of discipleship. God has done, and continues to do, remarkable things through us and with us. Who knows what God has yet for us to share with our community

FORMING OUR FAITH



GODLY PLAY—PRE-K-3RD GRADES

The Godly Play class teaches Bible stories to younger children through Montessori-style play and materials. This year, we’re enjoying the revised series of lessons with a focus on sharing our Bible’s stories:

- 10/4 The Story of Joseph
- 10/11 Moses, the Beginning
- 10/18 The Exodus
- 10/25 The Good Shepherd



KIDS’ WORSHIP—4TH-8TH GRADES

The Kids’ Worship class helps 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.

- 10/4 Rejection: Rejection in the Vineyard
- 10/11 Encouragement: Rejoice in the Lord Always
- 10/18 Giving: A Question about Taxes
- 10/25 Love: The Greatest Commandment



TRICK OR TREAT TRAIL DONATIONS

A Costumed Contingent of Church-folks from St. John UCC will be handing out candy at the annual *Trick or Treat Trail* at Krape Park on Saturday, 10/24, 3:00-5:00 pm. Please donate a bag of candy to add to our extravagant “sweet” welcome!

Donations needed by Wednesday, 10/21



CONFIRMATION SUNDAY during worship, 10/18

Bethany UCC and St. John UCC will hold a joint service on Sunday 10/18 at 10:00 am. This will be hosted in the Sanctuary at St. John UCC.

Students who choose to do so will make or affirm their Baptismal promises and join their respective congregation as members of the church. They will also share parts of their spiritual journeys through written or verbal reflections, sharing their gifts of music, lending their wisdom to the rest of the congregation.

We offer great thanks to the parents, families, mentors, and adult volunteers who assisted with our process for the past six months. Thanks be to God!

The Confirmation Class of 2026

- Bethany UCC – Freeport:
Lizzie Lamm, Carolyn Johnson, Mentor
Elowen Lamm, Jeff Jones, Mentor
- St. John’s UCC – Belvedere:
Tristan Burke, Jeanne Anderson, Mentor
Gwen (August) Brooks, Jeanne Anderson, Mentor

- St. John UCC – Freeport:
Elliot Fairman, Shawn Killingbeck, Mentor

- Warren United Methodist Church:
Lily Smith, Heather Redmore, Mentor

Congratulations to the students on completing this leg of their spiritual journey! May God’s blessings follow you, wherever you go from here.

COMMUNITY & FELLOWSHIP



MAT & CHAIR YOGA AT ST. JOHN UCC

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 of mat yoga starting at 5:15 pm. Chair yoga will follow at 6:30 pm. New in October, adult and kid’s yoga 4:30-5:00 pm.

- Bring your own mat. 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

9/15, 6:30 pm

Our next meeting is Tuesday, 9/15, 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!



9/5, 8:00 am

The monthly gathering of the Men’s Ministry happens on the first Saturday of the month. Join the lively group in the Chapel Hearth Room for the latest news, some serious discussion, and a few good jokes. *Coffee and donuts are provided!*



HELIX is an after school program sponsored and hosted by St. John UCC that focuses on community-building and social-emotional learning.

HELIX Middle High starts the Wednesday fun from 2:30-5:00 pm. And this year, HELIX Senior High returns from 5:30-7:30 pm! And one week every month, HELIX will be preparing the Chicago A venue Mission dinner, expanding their culinary expertise.

Contact us to find out more about HELIX, our Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) goals, and our focus on youth needs first at: helix@stjohnuccfreeport.org

October Schedule

- 10/1 Being a Team
- 10/8 Control
- 10/15 Planning an Event
- 10/22 Working Together
- 10/29 Halloween Party!

helix@stjohnuccfreeport.org
www.facebook.com/helixyouthoutreach

OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

10/2 Sarah Priewe	10/16 Connie Orde
Wayne Weier	Donna Ruthe
10/3 Myles Halberstadt	10/18 Tim Campbell-
10/4 Donnley Dutcher	Outcault
Jacob Priewe	10/19 Dennis Jochum
10/7 Michele	10/22 Barb Copus
Queckboerner	10/24 Marla Kreeger
10/8 Dylan Piefer	10/26 Jennifer Young
10/11 Michele Piefer	10/27 Letty Bertram
10/12 Mary Beach	Vanessa Gustofson
10/15 Andrea Hathaway	
Blake Musser	

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

10/04 Randy & Sue	10/19 Tanner & Rachel
Cook	Wilkenson
10/07 Michael Stingley	10/20 Colin & Kathryn
& Kevin Souders	Ebbers
10/08 Dale & Kelly	10/29 Dylan & Abby
Priewe	Holbert
10/10 Gwen and Tara	10/30 Alex & Olivia
Boddie	Bertram

ST. JOHN UCC MINISTRY TEAM

Senior Pastor	
Rev. Henry E. “Hank” Fairman	703-473-3534
hank@stjohnuccfreeport.org	
Visitation Pastor	440-536-1044
Rev. Ted Michalsen	
ted@stjohnuccfreeport.org	
Director of Congregational Life	815-275-7202
Pam Wessel	
pam@stjohnuccfreeport.org	
Creative & Administrative Assistant	
Myles Halberstadt	
myles@stjohnuccfreeport.org	
Digital Media Assistant	Max Gibson, Elliot Fairman
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

OUR HOMEBOUND FRIENDS

Our friends who reside in senior living facilities or are homebound would love a visit or a card from those thinking of them.

- Parkview:** Jean Koch
- Rock River Health Care:** June Nagel
- Liberty Village:** Stan Bomgarden
- Pearl Point:** Delores Siemens
- Winn Prairie:** Ray Nieman

In their homes:
Marilyn DeVries, Lee Otte,
Rae Ann McMurray, Stan & Carol Smith

Please contact the Church Office for addresses.



TOTENFEST 11/1 DURING WORSHIP

Totenfest, the “Festival of the Departed,” will take place on Sunday, November 1 during morning worship. We will remember our members and friends who have died during this past year.

If you would like to have your loved one’s name read as part of the celebration, please email the church office with their name, photograph, birthday, and date of death by Sunday, October 25.



1010 South Park Boulevard
Freeport, IL 61032
www.stjohnuccfreeport.org

Place
Stamp
Here

Change Service Requested



One More Thought: Ecumenical Mission and Fellowship Opportunities



SPECIAL MISSION OFFERING, 10/4

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion in the United States, with one-third of the offering given to the Council for American Indian Ministries and the remaining two-thirds supporting UCC justice ministries.

The funds collected support the work of the UCC's Washington D.C. Office for Public Policy and Advocacy, in partnership with congregations and church members across the nation. The work is shared through collective advocacy, with and for one another.



SUNDAY, 10/4,

Register: 1:00 pm | Walk: 1:30 pm

The CROP Hunger Walk is a national effort sponsored by Church World Service. Local churches and individuals walk to raise money to help end hunger. Twenty-five percent of the funds raised stay local, supporting community services in Freeport and Stephenson County.

Please meet at Debate Square if you wish to walk!