TIDINGS

ST JOHN United Church of Christ Freeport, Illinois

November 2026 *A Regular Sharing of Our Mission and Ministry*



NEW MEMBERS WELCOMING SESSION
Sunday, 11/1

BUDGET GOALS MEETING
POTATO BAR LUNCH
Sunday, 11/18, 11:30 am

COMMITMENT SUNDAY
11/22

HANGING OF THE GREENS

Read more on all of these events,
and so much more
in this month's Tidings

Find Our Extravagant Welcome



Our season of giving thanks arrives every year at this time, melding with our season of generous sharing. But first, it brings us to remember those who have gone before us, with All Saints' Sunday and our honoring of *Totenfest*. There's a song I know, that you probably know as well. Our Chancel Choir has sung in worship. It was written by Steve Green, a world-serving missionary and Dove Award-winning musician. It offers a call, or maybe a challenge, to us:

May those who come behind us find us faithful.

It begged a question of my mind and heart this year:"By what measure is our faith 'found faithful'?"

Our congregation celebrates a heritage of immigrant ancestors, who built an extravagant welcome into our community life. Why? Because they didn't find such a welcome when they arrived. Our wise elders seventy years ago entrusted us with a house of worship and praise. How do we honor that? By opening its doors to our many guests, and keeping the hinges (and the rest of the church campus) in good repair. Our increasingly diverse fellowship in these past years declared our part of the Body of Christ made commitments to be Open and Affirming, to work towards Racial Justice, to be Creation Caregivers, and to tend to the needs of the youth of our community. With what tool can we see the impact of these ministries?

There may be no one, single answer to these questions. But I offer this for your reflection: They will know we are Christians by our love; by our work in healing our community and the world, in word and in deed; and by our generous stewardship of what those who came before us showed us in their faithfulness.

Join me this month in living out loud the Matthew 6 verse that our Annual Campaign has us repeating, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also…"* May all that we do be done in love, following our call be found faithful.

See you in church,

Pastor Hank

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



NEW MEMBERS WELCOMING SESSION & WELCOMING SERVICE
Sunday, 11/1 & 11/22

Are you interested in learning more about St. John UCC and being an active part of our church community? The welcoming session will be held on 11/1, after worship in Chapel Hearth. Childcare arrangements can be made upon request. New Members will be welcomed during service on 11/22.

Questions? Contact Rev. Hank

BUDGET GOALS MEETING WITH POTATO BAR LUNCH
Sunday 11/8, 11:30 am

The Church Council welcomes our community to gather and learn about "the bottom line" of our congregation's finances, mission, and vision for the coming year. We will sit down for a community meal, review last year's generosity, and dream together all that God is calling us to do and be in 2027 through our ministry in Freeport and beyond. Bring a salad or dessert, and be a part of the conversation.

Sign up on the Narthex Bulletin Board today!



WELLNESS MINSITRY: 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, 12/6. Thank you for spreading some Christmas spirit and brightening someone's day!

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.

SEPTEMBER & YTD FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Income	Actual	Budget	Difference
Pledges/Gifts	$19,437	$27,083	$-7,646
Monthly Income	$38,405	$38,267	$138
Monthly Expenses	$35,005	$38,560	$ -3,554
YTD Pledges/ Gifts	$171,931	$243,750	$ -71,818
YTD Income	$288,947	$344, 400	$ -55,453
YTD Expenses	$339,008	$349,180	$ -10,171
YTD Total	$ -50,061	$ -4,780	$ -45,281

Stewardship Note: Stewardship Note: *Pledges and Identified Gifts remain behind budget. Expenses are significantly under budget for this point in our year. However, the difference betwen the two remains deficit.Please check with Pam Wessel to see that your pledge is up to date. Thank you for your generous support of St. John UCC!*

Local and Global Mission Impact

November 15-21, 2026

National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week is celebrated each year, one week before Thanksgiving. It takes place from 11/15 to 11/21 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, 11/13, hosted at St. Thomas Aquinas Church. For tickets, or to sponsor a table, head to:

facebook.com/freeportareachurchcooperative

HELIX COMMUNITY CUPBOARD DRIVE

During November, help HELIX collect personal care supplies for youth in need! Donations will stock the Community Care Cupboard on West Eby Street (next to Jones Farrar IB World School), for youth to take throughout the year as needed.

The items needed are below (Travel sizes, please!):

Bar soap & Body wash
Deodorant (stick or gel)
Shampoo and conditioner
Tampons
Hand or body lotion
Face wash
Lip balm
Toothpaste

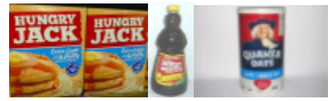
Follow this link to our Amazon wishlist:

https://bit.ly/HELIXCareCupboard

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 November we are asked to collect:



Pancake Mix, Syrup, and Oatmeal

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.

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
August	3692 kWh	3379 kWh	**-313 kWh**
September	3255 kWh	3773 kWh	518 kWh
October	3226 kWh	2833 kWh	**-393 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!*

Our Advocacy and Witness



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

Transgender Day of Rememberance 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 memebers' 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 Transgender Day of Rememberance 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



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

Loving Together: 2027 Narrative Budget

When we share in community, God's Creation heals and thrives

There is joy in practicing generosity, and it begins with a simple step of a commitment to contribute. We hope each person in the community of St. John UCC will see the opportunity to make a commitment as a way of developing a healthy habit – one that can change you, and the world!

For over 175 years, our congregation has put its treasures to work where our hearts feel called to serve. Now the invitation is before us. How will we respond and allow God to use us and our resources to change lives? We celebrate the way each of us will respond to God's invitation to give!

On Commitment Sunday, 11/22, we make a connection between our discipleship and our sharing of resources. How can we bring our best before God? What shall we bring to serve God and neighbor?

Our faithful response to these questions is *where our heart is*, guiding our generous support.

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

We have heard this verse from Matthew's Gospel every week. And we live it out in our service every day.

All of the ways our church engages our "treasured" ministries are planned and prepared by leadership and staff who are deeply committed to our becoming who it is God is calling us to be. Our community engagement, congregational care, and faith formation and worship – *the ministry of our congregation* – take place because of the spiritual and financial gifts our members and friends choose to share. These are the resources that fuel our mission; and yes, it does take money to provide these spiritual things!

As a congregation, we are entering a time of discerning what we will contribute monetarily in the coming year. The practice of exercising financial stewardship is a spiritual discipline and a way to grow our faith. It also focuses our heart on what matters most to us in our love of God and neighbor.

St. John UCC Projected Budget FY 2027	$459,502
Our Heart is in Worship and Faith Formation $128,118 27.88% • Sharing our extravagant welcome to every person who shares in worship, using modern technology for projection, recording, and streaming worship experiences, and lifting our musical gifts in shared voice and in instrumental music • Weekly faith formation for children and youth, age and life-stage specific events, multi-generational experiences, spiritual retreats, Advent and Lenten Reflections, focused programs, and devotional series	**Our Heart Cares for Our Community** $114,923 25.01% • Sustaining an active presence in the lives of community youth, providing staffing and resources for Helix Youth Outreach and our continuing partnerships with Scouting USA Troop 4 and Cub Scout Pack 839, and two recently formed Girl Scout troops • Sharing the campus with CareerTEC's classes: Health Occupation Youth Apprenticeship (HOYA), Careers in Business, Construction Trades, and Culinary Arts
Our Heart Loves through Advocacy and Activism $98,041 21.34% • Standing in solidarity with racial and social justice by living out our Racial Justice Congregation Covenant, partnering with NAACP's Freeport Branch • Caring for Creation locally, regionally, and globally, and "Green Justice" in the witness of the Solar Energy Project • Celebrating LGBTQ+ Pride in Freeport and advocating for gender justice worldwide	**Our Hearts and Hands Work for Change** $114,520 24.92% • Mission partnerships with Freeport Area Church Cooperative (FACC), VOICES of Stephenson County, AMITY Society of Freeport, and other mission partners • Bringing rejuvenation through Rebuilding Together-Stephenson County's renovation and blight remediation • Change for Change and special collections • Sharing in local initiatives that bring unity to our community and more fully represent its diversity.

Generously Preparing for the Holidays



HOLIDAY PIES

Celebrate the holidays with our traditional pies! The cost is $15 per pies. Apple, cherry, and pumpkin pie orders will be taken from 11/1 until 11/15 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.



PEANUT BRITTLE MAKE AND TAKE PARTY 12/5, 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, 12/5, 8:30-12:00ish, ahead of the bake sale on 12/6. 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!



Hanging of the Greens 11/29, Following Worship

Advent's light begins shining on 11/29 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.



Holiday Bake Sale 12/6 After Church

Do you miss the Cookie Walk? So do we! So come and share in this year's **Holiday Bake Sale!** Holiday sweets and treats will be available with proceeds supporting our congregation's mission and ministry. Sign up on the sheet in the Narthex if you would be able to donate some cookies, bars, or bread.

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:

11/1 The Ten Best Ways
11/8 The Ark and the Tent
11/15 The Story of Ruth
11/22 The Story of David
11/29 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!



KIDS' WORSHIP—*4TH-8TH GRADES*

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.

11/1 Humility: Humble and Exalted
11/8 Preprare: Ten Bridesmaids
11/15 Talents: Parable of the Talents
11/22 Service: Sheep and Goats
11/29 Anticipate: Keep Awake

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



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 two weeks every month, HELIX will be preparing the Chicago Avenue Mission dinner, expanding their culinary expertise.

November Schedule

11/4 Caring for Ourselves: Recognizing Stress
11/11 Caring for Ourselves: Coping with Stress
11/18 Caring for Ourselves: Rest
11/25 School Holiday—No Meeting

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



Congratulations 2026 Prairie Association Confirmation Class!

Our Freeport-area youth at St. John UCC and Bethany UCC celebrated joining their local congregations on Sunday, 10/19/2026.

We are all inspired by you, and look forward to the church you dare us to dream into God's realm!

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 centering time.

Adults & Kids Yoga (½ hour) 4:30-5:00 pm.
Mat Yoga 5:15-6:15 pm
Chair yoga 6:30-7:30 pm.

Bring your own mat, cushions, or blanket.
Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
Price is $5 a person, per class.
Cash, PayPal, Venmo, and Cash App accepted



SUBVERSIVE BOOK GROUP
11/17, 6:30 pm

Our next meeting is Tuesday, 11/17, 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!



11/7, 8:00 am

The monthy 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!*



A FUTURE WITH HOPE
Faith and Commitment in Days Like These

What does it mean to be a generous steward, investing in the mission of today's church?

Over the five weeks of this year's Annual Campaign, our Adult Formation Hour will take time to consider the personal and spiritual side of our commitment that leads us to support a congregation like ours.

No, this isn't going to be a "sideway" to get you to pledge or increase your giving. We will instead spread time on how sharing our resources is a spiritaul discipline, a means to see a hopeful furture for our community, and to more fully embrace our commitment as followers of Christ's Way.

Inspired by the resourcces curated at *The Salt Project,* we'll talk about things like:

11/1 *Inspired by our Ancestors*:
A Legacy of support for the Future Church
11/8 *Gratitude*:
Expressing our Gratitude (without wallets)
11/15 *Amazing Grace*: Shifting our lens from "What we need, but don't have." to
"What we do have and what is possible."
11/22 *"So What?"*: Listening to Pledge Cards and Narrative Budgets speak

Please join us for one, a couple, or all of the weeks for this conversation, listening for God's generous blessings in our lives and our turning those blessings out to our needing world!

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

Our Church Community

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

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

NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

11/13 Jim & Gwen Drew
11/24 Bill & Ruth Kuntz
11/27 Kenny & Andrea Schrock

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

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
United Church of Christ
Freeport, Illinois

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

Place
Stamp
Here

Change Service Requested

Be Out
Be Proud
We Are Open and Affirming

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: *12 Songs of Christmas* is coming!



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, 12/6/2026
2:00 pm

ST JOHN
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Freeport, Illinois

1010 South Park Boulevard Freeport, IL 61032
815.235.2824 • www.stjohnuccfreeport.org

fsd 145 SHOE fund

Contribute to the FSD 145 Shoe Fund and give the gift of warmth this season.
Donations will be taken at the concert.