

## 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](https://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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## 2026 ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING TODAY, FOLLOWING WORSHIP

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.

Signed,  
/s/ Jill Gastel, Clerk of Council



The St. John UCC Time and Talent Survey helps the Leadership Teams know what God is calling us to be and do in our mission, and what ministries you feel called to share. Please take a moment to fill out a survey and return to the office.

*Thank you for your sharing in our mission and ministry!*

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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Annual Meeting Sunday

February 1, 2026 • 10:00 am

### WELCOMING MUSIC and ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

*Celebration No. 3 in F*

Michael R. Keller

The Bell Choir

\*CALL TO WORSHIP

Anita Bicksler

One: Who may dwell in the house of God?

**All: Those who do what is right  
and speak truth from their hearts.**

One: What does God require of us?

**All: To do justice, to love mercy,  
and to walk faithfully with God.**

One: What we see as wisdom,  
God shows us to be foolishness.

**All: And what society sees as poor and lowly and weak,  
God sees as blessed members of God's Realm.**

One: Let us come to worship,  
and prepare ourselves to do God's work.

**All: We come to be God's people,  
ready for the challenge to bless the whole world.**

\*HYMN

*God of Grace and God of Glory*

CWM RHONDDA

WAR #569

\*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 (speaking together)

Loving God, you have said that the poor in spirit are blessed,  
yet we crave positions of power and envy self-sufficiency.

You have said that those who mourn are blessed,  
yet we would rather numb ourselves to the grief of this world.

You have said the meek are blessed,  
yet money becomes an idol and we wish for more than we need.

You have said that those who hunger and thirst are blessed,  
yet we would look in the other direction.

You have said that the merciful are blessed,  
yet we harbor anger and are negligent in the act of giving mercy.

You have said that the pure in heart are blessed,  
yet our motives most often are for our own benefit.

You have said that the peacemakers are blessed,  
yet we would rather incite division and choose sides.

You have said that the persecuted are blessed,  
yet we find comfort in our privilege.

O God of blessing, grant us eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts  
to truly know the ones you called blessed that we may work day  
by day to reimagine your Realm of justice and peace, here and  
now, among your diverse people, with us. Amen.

GOD’S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Micah 6:1-2, 6-8

*NRSV, Updated Edition*

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS: an Affirmation of Baptism

Invitation & Sentences

Affirmation of Faith (see insert)      UCC Statement of Faith

Welcome and Reception

One:    Let us, the members of St. John United Church of  
          Christ, express our welcome and affirm our mutual  
          ministry in Christ.

All:    **We welcome you with joy in the common life of this  
church. We promise you our friendship and prayers  
as we share the hopes and labors of the church of  
Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit may  
we continue to grow together in God’s knowledge  
and love and be witnesses of our risen Savior.**

Prayer & Greeting of Christian Love

FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US

Tim Ebbers

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

*We Shall Overcome*      Traditional Spiritual

The Bell Choir

GOD’S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:1-12

*NRSV, Updated Edition*

MESSAGE

*Beautiful Vision, Beautiful City*    Rev. Hank Fairman

\*HYMN

*Jesus Took the Bread*      NEW HOPE

NCH #343, see insert

PRESENTING OUR HEARTS AND GIFTS TO GOD

Gathering the Gifts with Praise

Offering Song      *A Place at the Table*    Lori True, arr. Paul Tate

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

St. John United Church of Christ – Freeport, IL

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

Invitation to the Table

One:    Jesus broke bread with all sorts of people:  
          with sinners and self-righteous, with hungry crowds,  
          with challengers of his words, and students of his way.

All:    **It was in the breaking of the bread that they saw:  
Christ in each other; Christ in themselves.**

One:    We come now to witness the Christ that lives.

All:    **Christ lives in our hands held together in prayer,  
and in our community working for justice.**

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)

We marvel, O God, that you love us before we love you.

By your spirit, help us to do unto others as you have for us:  
feeding others as you have first fed us;  
blessing others as you have first blessed us;  
giving to others as you have first given to us.

We go now full of blessing to be a blessing for the whole of  
creation. Thank you, God, for your love. Amen

\*HYMN

*Christ, You Call Us All to Service*      IN BABILONE

WAR #57I

\*BENEDICTION

\*RESPONSE

*Go Now in Peace*      TALLIS’ CANON

WAR #717, v. I

\*POSTLUDE

*We Are the Light of the World*    Jean Anthony Greif  
arr. Tom Tomaszek



**ADULT FAITH FORMATION:  
OUR WHOLE LIVES  
Sundays, 9:00-9:45 am**

*Adult Faith Formation* welcomes adults of all ages to gather in the Chapel Hearth Room from 9:00-9:45, exploring different topics and formats weekly. In February, we will be discussing the Our Whole Lives (OWL) program.

In July at UCC General Synod 34, a resolution was passed celebrating 25 years of the Our Whole Lives (OWL) comprehensive sexuality program—a partnership between the UCC and the Unitarian Universalist Association. Honest, accurate information about sexuality is life-changing. It dismantles stereotypes and assumptions, builds self-acceptance and self-esteem, fosters healthy relationships, improves decision making, and can even be life-saving.

Join OWL facilitators Shawn Killingbeck and Christina Ables Fairman to learn more and to celebrate this program as one way through which we can love our neighbors and ourselves.

2/1/26: What is Our Whole Lives?

2/8/26: Exploring Personal Values

2/15/26: Our Whole Lives at St. John UCC

*For these three weeks, high school youth are unable to participate in the adult faith formation offering.*

*High School youth will be able to rejoin the 9:00 am formation hour on 2/22.*

**HOLY COMMUNION**

343

**Jesus Took the Bread**

Matt. 26:26–28; Luke 9:16; 22:19; 24:30

Ruth Duck, 1982

Unison D A F#m Bm Em7 D/A A7

1 Je - sus took the bread, dai - ly gift of God,  
2 Je - sus blessed the bread, thanked the God of grace,  
3 Je - sus broke the bread; then he poured the wine.  
4 Je - sus gives the bread at our ta - ble still,

Bm Bm7 GM7 C Em7 A7

formed of wheat and sweat and toil, sun, rain, and sod.  
thanked the One who made all worlds, all time, all space.  
Bro - ken bod - y, life poured out, God gives as sign.  
gives the cup to those who seek God's lov - ing will.

D A Bm Em F#m GM7 A7

In our hands we take gifts of bread and wine,  
Bless - ing, hon - or, praise, all to God be - long.  
Weak, a - fraid, and lost: that is when we're healed.  
Let us go in peace; let us free - ly give,

D A F# Bm Em A7 D

gath - ered from the fields of earth, signs of love di - vine.  
Let us lift our hearts to God in a thank - ful song.  
In our hu - man bro - ken - ness: there God is re - vealed.  
shar - ing love with all the world dai - ly as we live.

Ruth Duck wrote this hymn emphasizing the actions of communion—taking, blessing, breaking, and giving the bread—following a summer study of liturgy at the University of Notre Dame. It was first used at New Hope United Church of Christ in Milwaukee.

Tune: NEW HOPE 10.11.10.12.  
Ruth Duck, 1982  
Arr. Randall Sensmeier, 1982

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### **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! 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.

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



### **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.



### **CLIMATE CHANGE SPEAKER SERIES 2/18, 6:30 PM**

Mark your calendars! The Green Team invites you to attend the second lecture in the “Cost of Living With Climate Change” series on Wednesday, 2/18, at 6:30 pm at the Freeport Public Library. The featured speaker is Dr. John (Jack) Herrmann, retired local veterinarian, Professor Emeritus from the Center for One Health and School of Public Health at the U of I. Dr. Herrmann has served on the IL State Board of Health for the past 12 years and will speak on the health impacts of climate change. Refreshments will be provided.



### **PREPARING FOR OUR LENTEN JOURNEY: Ash Wednesday, 2/18, 6:00 pm**

Begin your Lenten Journey with the St. John UCC community on Ash Wednesday, 2/18. A community meal, provided by our Care and Community Leadership Team, will be held at 6:00 pm. Ash Wednesday worship will begin at 7:00 pm. We will celebrate Communion and the Imposition of Ashes as we prepare our hearts for this season of reflection and community.

*Please sign up in the Narthex and let us know you'll be attending the community meal.*

# United Church of Christ Statement of Faith

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit,  
God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God,  
and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being,  
create persons in your own image,  
and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will  
declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth,  
our crucified and risen Savior,  
you have come to us and shared our common lot,  
conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit,  
creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,  
binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church  
to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,  
to be your servants in the service of others,  
to proclaim the gospel to all the world  
and resist the powers of evil,  
to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,  
to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you  
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,  
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,  
your presence in trial and rejoicing,  
and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.  
Amen.



## 2026 Time and Talent Survey

Sharing our Time, our Talents, our Passions, and our Needs

Please share the following information (even if you believe we have it already):

Name	
Address	
Email	
Cell Phone	Okay to text? Y/N
Home Phone	Okay to share? Y/N
Date of Birth	
Marriage Date	

Other Members of Your Household:

Name	Birthday	Relationship

Our church offers many opportunities to share your unique passions and skills! Please look over the items on the following pages and indicate the ministries that interest you, or those you would like to learn more about. Thank you in advance for completing the survey and sharing in the life and ministry of our congregation.

***Please return to the church office when you have completed the survey.***

# Sharing in our church's governance

I feel called to serve as a member of:

(Please mark your interests.)

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Church Council Executive Team** (2-year commitment)  
President, Vice President, Treasurer, Clerk/Secretary, Member at Large
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Worship & Education Leadership Team** (2-year term)  
Discovering and creating our celebration of worship, and our lifespan faith formation ministries.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Care & Community Leadership Team** (2-year term)  
Providing for the spiritual and pastoral care of the church, organizing times of fellowship, and community awareness and development.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Mission & Outreach Leadership Team** (2-year term)  
Discerning our church's mission partners, community partnerships, peace with justice, environmental justice and hands-on outreach opportunities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Wider Church Delegate** (1-year term)  
Representing our congregation in the Prairie Association UCC, the Illinois Conference UCC, or other national UCC organizations
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Development Team** (1-year commitment)  
Planning for our church's financial development plan, Annual Giving Campaign, and special stewardship opportunities
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Property Management Team** (1-year commitment)  
Planning for the maintenance, repair, and future development of the church's physical plant and outdoor spaces.

# Sharing in our church's ministry

I feel called to help build up our congregation's ministries through:

(Please mark your interests.)

## Worship

- ☐ Usher
- ☐ Liturgist
- ☐ Children's Moment
- ☐ Communion Set-up
- ☐ Communion Server
- ☐ Operate sanctuary audio/video
- ☐ Provide Flowers for the Altar

## Music Ministry

- ☐ Chancel Choir
- ☐ Bell Choir
- ☐ Sounds of the Spirit  
Contemporary Group
- ☐ Help with Children's Music
- ☐ Share another gift of musics

## Faith Formation

- ☐ Share in Godly Play leadership  
(Pre-K-3rd Grade)
- ☐ Share in WHIRL leadership  
(4th-7th Grades)
- ☐ Adult Formation Leader
- ☐ Adult Formation Participant
- ☐ Participate in Men's Ministry

## Fellowship

- ☐ Book Club
- ☐ Men's Ministry
- ☐ PRISM
- ☐ Yoga

## Open and Affirming (ONA)

- ☐ LGBTQ Outreach
- ☐ Pride Month
- ☐ Pride Picnic

## Community

- ☐ Church Fundraisers  
(Pie Baking, Ice Cream Social)
- ☐ Funeral and Memorial Service  
Receptions,
- ☐ Make Food
- ☐ Serve Food
- ☐ Community Gatherings-  
(Lenten Suppers, Potlucks,  
Summer Picnic,  
Hanging of the Greens)
- ☐ Sunday Morning Coffee Hour  
Help – Set-up/Clean

## Mission Partnerships and Outreach

- ☐ Rebuilding Together
- ☐ FACC Delegate
- ☐ Meals for Homeless Shelter
- ☐ Seasonal Collections  
(Mitten Tree, Underwear Drive,  
Food Drive)

## Wellness Ministry

- ☐ Wellness visitation, including  
residents in aging in place,  
senior living communities, and  
rehabilitation care



# Sharing time around the church

I feel called to share in our congregation's daily life through:

(Please mark your interests.)

## In the Office

- ☐ Assemble mailings, newsletters, bulletins
- ☐ Organize publicity / photograph church events
- ☐ Historian/Archives Room
- ☐ Art/Posters/Banners

## Across the Grounds

- ☐ Help with spring and fall yard cleanup days
- ☐ Look after the flower beds
- ☐ Plant and care for Carbon Sequestration Vegetable Gardens (April-October)

## Help Us Understand You More!

What are your spiritual gifts? Please share them below.

What helps you to feel part of the St. John UCC community?

What is something that you'd like to see happen at St. John UCC? Or something that you miss that you'd like to come back?

What is something you'd like to see more of at St. John UCC?