

## 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://www.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.

### Service Credits, Copyright, and Streaming Notice

All music and hymns in this service are reprinted, recorded/podcasted, and/or streamed with permission obtained from:

CCLI Copyright License # 2752305, Streaming License # 20105443,  
CCS PERFORMmusic and WORSHIPcast License # 13435.  
or OneLicense Copyright and Podcasting License # A-726513.

Original compositions and arrangements remain the property of the artist, and are used with their express permission for performing, reprinting, recording, and streaming.



We Are Small, We Are Numerous, We Are Deep  
Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell  
11"x14" Acrylic, mustard seed on paper

## ST. JOHN UCC STAFF

Senior Pastor:

Rev. Henry E. "Hank" Fairman

[hank@stjohnuccfreeport.org](mailto:hank@stjohnuccfreeport.org)

mobile: 703-473-3534

Visitation Pastor:

Rev. Ted Michalsen

[ted@stjohnuccfreeport.org](mailto:ted@stjohnuccfreeport.org)

mobile: 440-536-1044

Director of Congregational Life:

Pam Wessel

[pam@stjohnuccfreeport.org](mailto:pam@stjohnuccfreeport.org)

Creative & Administrative Assistant:

Karla Hardersen

[karla@stjohnuccfreeport.org](mailto:karla@stjohnuccfreeport.org)

Digital Media Assistant: Max Gibson

Music Director: Britney Kieselhorst

[britney@stjohnuccfreeport.org](mailto:britney@stjohnuccfreeport.org)

Church Musician: Randy Cook

Pastor Emeritus: Rev. Dr. Donnley Dutcher

1010 South Park Boulevard Freeport, IL 61032  
815.235.2824 • [www.stjohnuccfreeport.org](http://www.stjohnuccfreeport.org)



FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

the good news is...so good it catches us by surprise

February 22, 2026 • 10:00 am

## WELCOMING MUSIC and ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

*Take My Hand, Precious Lord*

Dr. Thomas A. Dorsey

Carl & Dianna Cole

arr. C. Cole

\*CALL TO WORSHIP

Jack Fox

One: The good news of the gospel is:

**All: manna in the desert,  
water turned into wine,  
love after loss,  
forgiveness after pain.**

One: The good news of the gospel is:

**All: release for the captive,  
hope for the hopeless,  
mourning turned to dancing,  
and strangers turned to friends.**

One: So come on in.

There's no time to waste!

This surprising good news is here for you.

**All: Let us worship this good-news God.**

\*HYMN

*Sunday's Palms are Wednesday's Ashes* ABBOTT'S LEIGH

TFWS #2138

\*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.

## CELEBRATION OF BIRTHDAYS AND GIFTS

### GATHERING PRAYER

#### Congregational Prayer (speaking together)

Loving God,  
somewhere along the way we picked up the message that in  
order to be faithful,  
we have to be serious;  
we have to pray on our knees without ceasing;  
we have to be somber in worship and quiet in our studies.  
we have to check our wiggles and our questions at the door.

But then you say the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed—  
unruly and untamed.

You turn water into wine—surprising and extravagant.

And all of a sudden, we wonder:

Can we be like that mustard seed?  
Can we be faithful and unruly?  
Can we be playful and curious?  
Can we be messy and still be yours?

We know the answer already.

The Spirit whispers: *of course, of course, of course.*

Forgive our doubt.

Pull us closer into your embrace.

With faith like a mustard seed, we pray. Amen.

#### Words of Affirmation

One: God's grace is wild and unruly.  
God's mercy is abundant and surprising.  
God's love is expansive and unending.  
So if you ask, "Holy One, am I forgiven?"

**All: the answer is and always will be:  
*of course, of course, of course.***

One: This is the good news of the gospel.

**All: Thanks be to God! Amen.**

### GOD'S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

John 2:1-11

*NRSV, Updated Edition*

## FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US

Jan Kunkle

### 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

*It Took a Miracle*

John W. Peterson  
arr. C. Cole

### GOD'S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Matthew 13:31-32

*NRSV, Updated Edition*

### MESSAGE

*Spirit and Flavor*

Rev. Hank Fairman

### \*HYMN

*In a Neat and Tidy Garden*

RUSTINGTON

Words: Anna Strickland, © 2025, A Sanctified Art

## PRESENTING OUR HEARTS AND GIFTS TO GOD

### Gathering the Gifts with Praise

One: This is some good news:  
Jesus said, "I was hungry, and you gave me food.

**All: "I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink.**

One: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

**All: "I was naked and you gave me clothing,**

One: "I was sick and you took care of me,

**All: "I was in prison and you visited me."**

One: When did I do this?

**All: "Inasmuch as you did to the least of these,  
my family and neighbors, you did it to me?"**

One: Let all you do be done in love.

---

**St. John United Church of Christ – Freeport, IL**

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

## Offering Song

*Miracles*

Dianna Cole; arr. C. Cole

## 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

*Again We Keep this Solemn Fast*

TALLIS' CANON

NCH #187

### \*BENEDICTION

### \*RESPONSE

*From Gray Until Golden*

ST. DENIO

### \*POSTLUDE

*Miracles (reprise)*

Dianna Cole; arr. C. Cole

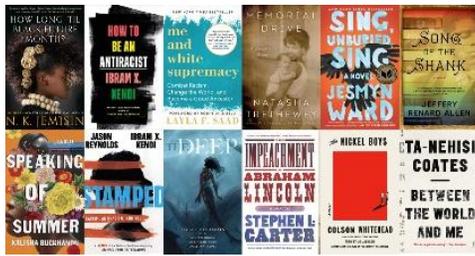
---

## THE SEASON OF LENT AT ST. JOHN UCC



### Sundays in Lent

- 2/22 First Week of Lent  
*The good news is... so good it catches us by surprise*
- 3/1 Second Week of Lent  
*The good news is... great love for God and neighbor*
- 3/8 Third Week of Lent  
*The good news is... together, the impossible is possible*
- 3/15 Fourth Week of Lent  
*The good news is... protection and care for the vulnerable*
- 3/22 Fifth Week of Lent  
*The good news is... rooted in justice, mercy, and faithfulness*



## BLACK HISTORY MONTH: RACIAL JUSTICE COLLECTION

There is so much to learn about the impact of African Americans on the history of our city, state, nation and world. Let's commit today to do our work to confront racism and learn a new story in our history.

We've curated a list of books to add to our church's library collection to expand our knowledge and witness of the African American experience. They were chosen for a variety of expressions, a mix of literature types, and a wide accessibility for the many ages in our congregation.

Help grow the Racial Justice Collection in the Uthlaut Memorial Library at St. John UCC in celebration and honor of Black History Month 2026 by donating a book from our wish list.

*Scan this code to access our Amazon wish list for books to add to our library, or visit the link below the picture:*



<https://bit.ly/2026BlackHistoryMonthLibrary>

## THE SEASON OF LENT AT ST. JOHN UCC



### ADULT FAITH FORMATION SERIES Sundays in Lent, 9:00 am

On Sundays during Education Hour, gather with Christina Fairman and Liz Reyes in weekly sessions, sharing Kate Bowler's *Bless the Lent We Actually Have*. Each week, we will reflect together on sacred scripture and personal reflections. Because when we do the hard part, something else happens: we get to the good part:

2/22 *Blessed Are the Imperfect*

2/29 *Blessed Are the Curious*



### LENTEN SUPPER AND DISCUSSION SERIES Wednesdays in Lent, 2/25-3/25 6:00 pm meal / 6:30-8:00 pm program

On Wednesdays, gather for supper at 6:00 pm, and continue or join up at 6:30 with Pastor Hank for a wider view of our Lenten focus, A Sanctified Art's *Tell me something good: Grounded in the good news this Lent*.

Each week, we'll talk through the parallels, following along with the stories in Sunday's worship of the *Narrative Lectionary*:

2/25 *The good news is...so good it catches us by surprise*  
John 2:1-11: *The wedding at Cana*

3/4 *The good news is...great love for God and neighbor*  
Matthew 25:35-40: "...whatever you did for the least of these..."

*The accompanying study guides for both the Sunday and Wednesday series are available in the Narthex. These can also be used for your personal Lenten devotions!*



Rebuilding Together Stephenson County welcomes everyone to their “Annual-ish Meeting” and Volunteer Night, 2/26 at 5:00 pm in St. John UCC’s Chapel Hearth Room. Yes, snacks will be had, and BIG EXITING NEWS for this April’s National Rebuilding Month will be shared! See you there, Rebuilders!



## **SAFE CHURCH/SAFE CONDUCT TRAINING**

**Sunday, 3/1, 11:30-2:00 PM**

Church members who work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults and church leadership should attend a Safe Church/Safe Conduct Training every three years to review our policies for protecting people in our care. Lunch is provided.

Please RSVP for the training by Sunday, 2/22, and include special dietary restrictions or food allergies, and accessibility needs to:

***[safechurch@stjohnuccfreeport.org](mailto:safechurch@stjohnuccfreeport.org)***



**a contest of musical proportions!**

Through the end of February, we will be doing a survey, gathering our favorite hymns and songs to sing in worship.

What hymns do you love singing? What songs do you wish we would add? What hymns connect you to God’s presence? What songs do you find yourself humming during the week in prayer?

Fill out a March Hymn Madness Survey (available in the Narthex) and place it in the nearby box.

All of the hymns and songs submitted will be tallied up and placed into a NCAA single-elimination tournament *March Madness* - style bracket.



## **WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2026**

**2/27, 9:30 am and 3/6, 1:30 pm**

The Church Women United of Stephenson County invite everyone to our World Day Of Prayer Bible Study and Program. The Bible Study is on Friday, 2/27, at 9:30 am with the Program on the following Friday, 3/6, at 1:30pm. The program for 2026 was created by our Nigerian sisters. Our host Church is Faith UMC, on Walnut Street. Both events will include time for fellowship.