

March 2026

A Regular Sharing of our Mission and Ministry



GROUNDING OURSELVES IN THE GOOD NEWS: HOLY WEEK

Lent's season of soulful searching is well underway. Our Sunday Adult Formation and Wednesday Supper & Discussions are keeping our eyes open for all the good news that is bubbling up around us. With our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits all focused on our theme, *Tell Me Something Good*, we are grounding ourselves for the palms, passion, shadows, and new life that comes during Holy Week. Are we ahead of the calendar? Isn't Easter coming in April? Yes, and Yes: 4/5 to be precise. And that's exactly why we're marking our calendars in March. So we our good news-searching selves will be prepared for it all when the calendar turns

"The Good News is alive in the world" - which is very good news for us all.

Check out the week-at-a-glance below, and the updates on our Lenten journey on pp.4-5.

Holy Week

3/29 Palm / Passion Sunday, 10:00 am

The good news is...
inspiring us to at

Mark 11:1-11: Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem

4/2 Maundy Thursday,

Tenebrae Worship, 7:00 pm

The good news is...

Even Judas gets his feet washed

John 2:1-11: The wedding at Cana

4/3 Good Friday,

a time for personal reflection

The good news is...

revealed through nonviolence

Luke 22-23: The journey to the Cross

4/5 Easter /Resurrection Sunday

Easter Sunrise, 6:00 am

Celebration Service, 10:00 am

The good news is... alive in the world:

Matthew 28:1-10: "Do not be afraid..."

*The Sunrise Service will take place
on the church lawn (weather permitting).*

Communion will be served at both services.



FELLOWSHIP POTLUCK LUNCH

3/15 After Worship

Come and share a bit o' the Blarney at our St. Patrick's Day potluck meal. Share your best shamrock-inspired hot or cold dish with friends and family after worship. Table service and beverage will be provided.



Amazon
Wishlist



During March, 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 & Pads
- Hand or body lotion
- Face wash
- Lip balm
- Toothbrushes &
- Toothpaste



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 March?

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!

Weekly Church & Community Activities

Sunday: Worship, Fellowship, & Faith Formation

9:00 am Adult Formation
 10:00 am Worship & Youth Faith Formation
 11:00 am Fellowship Hour

Monday: Girl Scouts Troop #832, 5:30 pm

Hippy Yoga
 5:15 pm Mat Yoga
 6:30 pm Chair Yoga
 Freeport Choral Society, 7:00 pm

Tuesday: Music Ministry

6:30 pm Bell Choir
 7:30 pm Chancel Choir

Wednesday: HELIX Youth Outreach, 3:00 pm

Thursday:

Boy Scouts Troop #4, 7:00 pm

Week of 3/1-3/7

3/1	11:30 am	Safe Church / Safe Conduct Training
3/4	6:00 pm	Lenten Supper
	6:30 pm	Lenten Discussion Series
3/4	6:00 pm	Care & Community Team
3/7	8:00 am	Men's Ministry Group

Week of 3/8-3/14

3/8	11:30 am	Worship & Education Team
3/10	6:00 pm	Church Council
3/11	10:00 am	Wellness Ministry Team
	6:00 pm	Lenten Supper
	6:30 pm	Lenten Discussion Series

Week of 3/15-3/21

3/15	11:30 am	Fellowship Potluck
3/16	6:30 pm	Mission & Outreach Team
3/17	6:30 pm	Subversive Book Group
3/18	6:00 pm	Lenten Supper
	6:30 pm	Lenten Discussion Series

Week of 3/22-3/28

3/22	3:00 pm	Freeport Choral Society Concert
3/25	6:00 pm	Lenten Supper
	6:30 pm	Lenten Discussion Series
3/26	6:00 pm	Girl Scouts

SAVE THE DATE!!

SAFE CONDUCT TRAINING
Sunday, 3/1
11:30-2:00 pm



TBD - Property Management Team

OUR LENTEN JOURNEY: A MID-LENT CHECK-IN

It's been a couple of weeks since Ash Wednesday's call to the table. "There's still room!" it welcomed us. Room for you to feel and own every emotion that Lent brings. Room for you to bring every stressor, and every joy.

From that moment at Luke's *Great Dinner*, we've been welcomed to *The Wedding at Cana*, and soon to be gathered with the sheep; and fed in community with loaves and fish; and blessed to welcome all.

Each week, you are invited to "Tell us something good," sharing a quick video response to a question based on the upcoming Sunday's focus. Questions like:

- What good news have you heard or received this week?
- Tell me a time when you were surprised by overflowing goodness?
- What does extravagant love look like?
- When has God interrupted your life with abundance?
- What's one way your church community can extend radical welcome?
- Name a time when you felt/received mercy?
- Tell me a story about following Jesus through acts of service?
- What does it look like to fight injustice?

Karla Hardersen will meet you in the back of the sanctuary with our podcast camera and mic to capture your response. Welcome yourself to the call to share!



Lent has always been a time to stretch our comfort, and ground ourselves in our faith. Following Jesus leads to a richer, more expansive life, but it's not necessarily comfortable. Jesus' ministry can be described as "radical" which comes from the Latin word "radicalis," meaning "root" or "ground."

The good news should bring us back to our roots. Emulating Jesus and embodying his teachings should ground us in who God created us to be.

This Lent, may we not only be generous hosts but also humble guests, for the good news of great joy for all people means that God's invitation is cast wider than we think, and we may be surprised to see who shows up.

A Week-to-Week good news Calendar

3/1 Second Week of Lent

The good news is... great love for God and neighbor

Matthew 25:35-40: "...whatever you did for the least of these..."

3/8 Third Week of Lent

The good news is... together, the impossible is possible:

Mark 6:32-44: The feeding of the five thousand

3/15 Fourth Week of Lent

The good news is... protection and care for the vulnerable

Matthew 19:13-15: Jesus blesses the children

3/22 Fifth Week of Lent

The good news is... rooted in justice, mercy, and faithfulness

John 8:2-11; Jesus refuses to condemn



Learn more about their work at: sanctifiedart.org

A Sanctified Art is our partner in this year's Lent liturgy, devotionals and reflection. This is a collective of artists who create resources for worshipping communities. The *A Sanctified Art* team works collaboratively to bring scripture and theological themes to life through film, visual art, curriculum, coloring pages, liturgy, graphic designs, and more. Their mission is to empower churches with resources to inspire creativity in worship and beyond. Driven by the connective and prophetic power of art, they believe that art helps us connect our hearts with our hands, our faith with our lives, and our mess with our God.

OUR LENTEN JOURNEY



Lenten Supper and Discussion Series Wednesdays in Lent

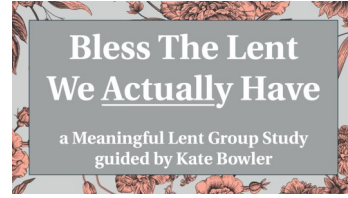
Share a meal that feeds the body, and a discussion that nourishes the soul. Over the five middle weeks of Lent, we will reflect on A Sanctified Art's Lenten resources, *Tell me something good: Grounded in the good news this Lent*.

Rev. Hank will blend the spiritual resources with examples of our lived-out faith witnessed in the real-world living of our days (*Yes, there is good news to be heard and shared!*).

Each week, we'll talk through the parallels, following along with the Bible stories told in on the Sunday before.

The stories, like all good stories, will build on each other. But please feel our extravagant welcome to come as you can. Each week is its own journey, too, and you'll be fed just the same!

*We'll gather for our meal and study
in the Chapel Hearth Room. Come hungry and leave fed!*



Adult Faith Formation Series Sundays in Lent

Come join the Sunday morning Adult Faith Formation group as we walk through Lent's long road together. Each week we will journey alongside one another with Kate Bowler's *Bless The Lent We Actually Have* as our guide.

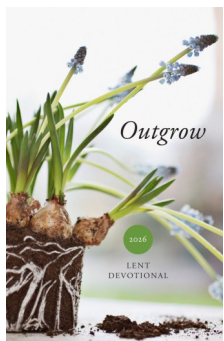
Each week, we will reflect together on sacred scripture and personal reflections. Because when we do the hard part, something else happens: we get to the good part.

- 3/1 Blessed Are the Curious
John 3:1-17
- 3/8 Blessed Are Those Who Suffer
Romans 5:1-11
- 3/15 Blessed Are Those Feel Alone
Psalms 23
- 3/22 Blessed Are Those Who Mourn
John 11:1-45
- 3/29 Blessed Are Those Who Are Rejected
Luke 23:1-56

Please join us for one, two, three, or all four weeks of this conversation. And when you can't be there, or if you'd like to engage in additional Lenten devotional time on your own, you can also explore *Bless this Lent* personal devotional, available to pick up in the Narthex, or to download for free at:

https://katebowler.com/seasonal_devotional/blessthislent/

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



UCC WRITERS GROUP 2026 LENT DEVOTIONAL

From the writers of the popular online *UCC Daily Devotional*, this year's devotional, *Outgrow*, includes a biblical text, reflection, and prayer for each day of Lent.

Copies available in the Narthex.

OUR COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE



FACC FOOD PANTRY

Come Away and Go North: A Racial Justice Immersion Experience

The Mission & Outreach Team invites you to enjoy a day trip to Milton, WI (outside of Janesville) to visit Wisconsin's only certified Underground Railroad site at the Milton House Museum and grounds. Tours last about an hour or so and this is a family friendly event. The grounds are handicapped accessible, except for the tunnel passageway.

You can relive the experience of what it was like for African American slaves making their way out of slavery to freedom using the Underground Railroad and learn about some historical figures.

The trip will take place in June. We need your help selecting the best day for us to go.

Follow this link to our online survey form.



<https://bit.ly/SJUCCMiltonHouseTrip>

Then, we can set the actual tour date and gather payment for the tour tickets as we need to pre-register our group tour with the museum.

Depending upon which day works for most people, we can either have dinner in Janesville after a tour on a Saturday, or bring a sandwich to eat after worship on a Sunday before departure to WI for the tour. Travel time is about an hour and a half. Departure would be from the church parking lot.

Please join in this immersive learning experience with us!

Stay tuned for further updates.

Our congregation's generous support of the Food Pantry at FACC and its clients offers us a way to spread care and compassion throughout the year. In March we are asked to collect:




Canned Tuna

Donations can be placed in the collection carts in the Atrium entryway.

CHICAGO AVENUE MISSION DINNER PROGRAM

Help provide some joy by preparing a Wednesday meal for the Chicago Avenue Mission. Prepare the way yourself, or gather a group of friends! Please sign up on the bulletin board if you can help with a meal, or contact Marla Kreeger or Pam Wessel.

GREEN ENERGY REPORT			
Month	Generated	Used	Difference
November	866 kWh	6,707 kWh	5,841 kWh
December	649 kWh	6,505 kWh	6,006 kWh
January	1,861 kWh	5250 kWh	3,389 kWh

Green Team Note: Due to the less than wintery weather, our January solar generation was three times higher than December, and twice that of November! While we do not have any "solar bank" credits remaining from 2025, we're starting 2026 on the sunny side!

OUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

March is Women's History Month, an opportunity to celebrate women of the past and present and re-commit to the work of ending sexism.

Since 1995, through the efforts of historians, activists, and women's organizations across the country, March has been designated as a time to honor, acknowledge, and study women's accomplishments throughout American history.



God is with us while we observe the importance of women and girls.

Let us take God's celebration of all of humanity into the world and share a love that knows no bounds!

Love loudly, love boldly, love all!

Written by Dr. Sherry Warren, Minister for Women's and Gender Justice and Rev. Amy Johnson, Minister for Sexuality Education & Justice



Discover more at the
Smithsonian American Women's History Museum:
womenshistory.si.edu



A CUP OF FELLOWSHIP

Thank you to those who have volunteered to bring weekly treats and host a Sunday. We really do appreciate you. Hosts are needed to prepare treats and share in our extravagant welcome.

Please sign up on the bulletin board in the narthex.


WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY AT ST. JOHN UCC!



Will Engel is a professional bridge player. He has joined the choir and enjoys singing with Freeport Choral Society.

Myles Halberstadt comes with their daughter Andie. They are a substitute teacher, currently working on their master's degree in special education.

Bill Delano has a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering. He loves working with people on their projects. He's our handyman.

 JANUARY & YTD FINANCIAL SUMMARY			
Income	Actual	Budget	Difference
Pledges/Gifts	\$16,859	\$27,083	\$-10,224
Monthly Income	\$25,542	\$38,267	\$-12,725
Monthly Expenses	\$37,542	\$40,704	\$-3,161
YTD Pledges/Gifts	\$16,859	\$27,083	\$-10,224
YTD Income	\$25,542	\$38,267	\$-12,725
YTD Expenses	\$37,542	\$40,704	\$-3,161
YTD Total	\$ -12,000	\$ -2,437	\$ -9,563

Stewardship Note: We begin the year with a good reserve of funds from 2025. Pledges and Identified Gifts were behind budget. If our generous giving was at the budgeted amount, we would have given beyond expenses for the period. Note also that we have not requested the annual Endowment support of \$2,000/month. Allowing those dollars to remain invested until needed adds to the fund's value.

Thank you for your continued generous support of St. John UCC!

FAITH FORMATION FOR ALL AGES



GODLY PLAY—PRE-K-3RD GRADES

Godly Play is a Montessori-style learning environment focused on the needs of children at this place on life's journey. This year, we're launching a new series of stories that focus on sharing our Bible from different and diverse places within the stories:

- 3/1** *Everyone in Church Sunday*
- 3/8 Faces of Easter 1 & 2
- 3/15 Faces of Easter 3 & 4
- 3/22 Faces of Easter 5
- 3/29 Faces of Easter 6

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!



WHIRL—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.

- 3/1** *Everyone in Church Sunday*
- 3/8 *Water:* The Woman at the Well
- 3/15 *Heart:* Samuel anoints David
- 3/22 *Grief:* Jesus raises Lazarus
- 3/29 *Hosanna:* Matthew's Holy Week

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



HELIX—5TH-8TH GRADES

HELIX is an after school program sponsored and hosted by St. John UCC that focuses on community-building and social-emotional learning. HELIX meets each Wednesday from 3:00 to 5:00 pm.

March Schedule

- 3/4 Practicing Rest
- 3/11 Dealing with Uncertainty
- 3/18 Learning Small Talk
- 3/25 *No Meeting: Spring Break Holiday*
helix@stjohnuccfreeport.org
www.stjohnuccfreeport.org/helix



PRAIRE ASSOCIATION "UNITED" CONFIRMATION CLASS

Confirmation is the historic process by which youth affirm the promises made at their baptism, and take on the role of full participation in the church. This year, a group of our Prairie Association UCC churches across northwest Illinois will be gathering for a "united church" Confirmation experience, beginning later this month. *How good it is when we join together in Christ!*

- 3/1 – Rally-Up Afternoon + Opening Dinner
(Parents and Youth) Topic: *Community Life*
- 3/15 – Zoom Meet-up
- 3/29 – In-Person Class
Topic: Our UCC History and Heritage

COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP



MAT & CHAIR 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* for a one hour session of mat yoga starting at 5:15 pm. Chair yoga will follow at 6:30 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 3/17, 6:30 pm

Our next meeting is Tuesday, 3/17, 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!



First Saturdays, 8:00 am

Come join the next gathering of the Men's Ministry. Join the lively group in the Chapel Hearth Room.



a contest of musical proportions!

Thank you all for submitting your favorite hymns! The "Hymn Playoff Brackets" are up on the Narthex Bulletin Board. Each week, you will get a chance to vote for your favorite hymn of a set of paired hymns. For an example of how the bracket works:

- Week 1 will start with 32 pairs to choose one song over its pair.
- Week 2, 16 pairs
- Week 3, 8 pairs
- Week 4, the "Final Four"
- Week 5, the "Fave!"

We can't wait to see what *Amazing Grace* our favorite songs will sing out! Maybe a new song will make your heart dance to an *Ode to Joy*! Who will prevail? *HYFRYDOL* vs *NETTLETON*? *PUER NOBIS* or *CRADLE SONG*? Will there be a Cinderella story, or will the "old faith-fulls" carry the day?

It's up to your votes! Remember to cast a ballot each week!



STAR WORDS:

A quick check-in on your Empowering Word

How's your 2026 Star Word engaging you? Is it helping guide you in your faith practices? Or is it creating a spiritual pause, as you look for its meaning? Has your word been a blessing, or will it be a blessing when it's a memory? Has it given you pause? That's okay. Maybe its meaning isn't quite ready to be known. Sometimes, that's how God's still creating Spirit works

Take a moment today to center yourself on your Star Word.

Listen where God is calling your spirit to go!



EASTER LILIES

In celebration of Easter we will again enhance and beautify our sanctuary with lilies on Easter morning. The cost for a lily is \$20. If you wish to order a lily through the church, please turn in the completed form below with your payment by **3/22**.

We also encourage you to bring in your own flowers or have them delivered before noon on **Good Friday, 4/3** (*Please mark them with your name*). You will also need to fill out the form below and turn it in by **3/22** if you would like your plant recognized in the bulletin with a dedication.

You can pick up your flower after the service on Easter Sunday.

Easter Lily (\$ 20.00) x Quantity _____ Enclosed is \$ _____

_____ I/We will bring flowers or have our own delivered before noon on Good Friday.

IN MEMORY OF _____

IN HONOR OF _____

IN CELEBRATION OF _____

PRESENTED BY _____

Please take my lilies to a homebound member or friend. _____

I will pick up the flower after Easter services. _____

OUR GOOD NEWS JOURNEY CONTINUES



For the Sake of Tiny Resurrections

Poem by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

We took the kids to the beach,
a herd of children lathered
in sunscreen.
We spent most of the day building
sandcastles,
swimming in the shallows,
wiping sand off their eyelashes
and noses.

Things changed
when a small fish washed up
on shore.

The children saw it first—
a little body gasping to survive.
They cried out—
Quick! We have to save it!
We grabbed our buckets.
We sprinted to the waterline.
We scooped up the dying fish
and returned it to the waves.
The kids sagged with relief
as the fish jolted to life,
a tiny resurrection in front of
our very eyes.

Full of pride, I said to them—
You did something good.
Today, you saved a life.
A seven-year-old with
sun-kissed cheeks
took the bucket from my hands
and said,
I'd like to save some more.

He spent the afternoon patrolling
the waves,
hoping to dole out mercy to any
shore-washed fish.
He carried his bucket around
all day, because
love inspires love.

Love will make you want to
patrol the shoreline,
sing *Hosanna*,
witness a resurrection,
save some more—
one bucket of water at a time.

OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

3/01 Robert Mayfield	3/16 Liz Reyes
3/03 Jill Kuntz	3/17 Connor Marcum
3/04 Graham Atz, Hallie Atz, Kathleen Monte	3/18 Bonnie Gennusa 3/20 Dee Agnew DeLeana Atz
3/09 Michael Smith	3/22 Diane Jochum
3/11 Lisa Ebbers Kim Evans	Ben Michelsen 3/25 Bill Kuntz
3/13 Hugh Knapp	3/26 Marilyn DeVries
3/14 Kevin Souder Oliver Busker	Peter Flynn Zeke Graybill
3/15 Kelly Priewe	

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

3/26 Ben & Autumn Kubatzke

SHARING OUR GIFTS:

Online Giving and Automatic Donations

To honor our Faith Commitment to St. John UCC, you can donate electronically:



www.bit.ly/GiveToStJohnUCC

Check the box in the lower left-hand corner to cover the fees for this transaction. The fee will be credited to your giving. And as always, you can send your check to the church office.

You can also sign up for ACH transactions, automatic deductions from your checking or savings accounts. See Pam in the church office with any questions.

Thank you for your continued generous support of St. John UCC!

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

Ascension St. Joseph Center: Marilyn Ruthe

Rock River Health Care: June Nagel

Liberty Village:

Stan Bomgarden, Arnold Eder, Anna Carroll

Pearl Pavilion: Delores Siemens

Winn Prairie: Ray Nieman

Evansville Manor: Wayne Bahn

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

Please contact Pam for addresses.

ST. JOHN UCC MINISTRY TEAM

Senior Pastor

Rev. Henry E. "Hank" Fairman 703-473-3534
hank@stjohnuccfreeport.org

Visitation Pastor

Rev. Ted Michalsen 440-536-1044
ted@stjohnuccfreeport.org

Director of Congregational Life

Pam Wessel 815-275-7202
pam@stjohnuccfreeport.org

Creative & Administrative Assistant

Karla Hardersen
karla@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



Place
Stamp
Here

1010 South Park Boulevard

Freeport, IL 61032

www.stjohnuccfreeport.org

Change Service Requested



ONE MORE THING: ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING SPECIAL MISSION OFFERING

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a Special Mission Offering of the United Church of Christ. For over 75 years, the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering (OGHS) has been helping Christians bring God's hope and healing to hurting people both in the US and around the world.

OGHS's mission is to support domestic and international development, fight poverty and its consequences, bring aid and relief to communities torn by war or ravaged by national disaster, provide advocacy and resettlement assistance for refugees and displaced persons, and combat injustice in its many forms. OGHS provides funding and hands-on assistance in collaboration with local and international partners.

You can learn more about the impact of OGHS at www.ucc.org/global-hope.



We will collect this offering on 3/15 during morning worship. Feel free to drop off your generous gift of support in the church office any time before that Sunday.

*Thank you for supporting One Great Hour of Sharing!
You continue to embody a love offering to the world.*