

## 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://facebook.com/stjohnuccfreeport/live).

Scan this code to access our Online Giving Portal:



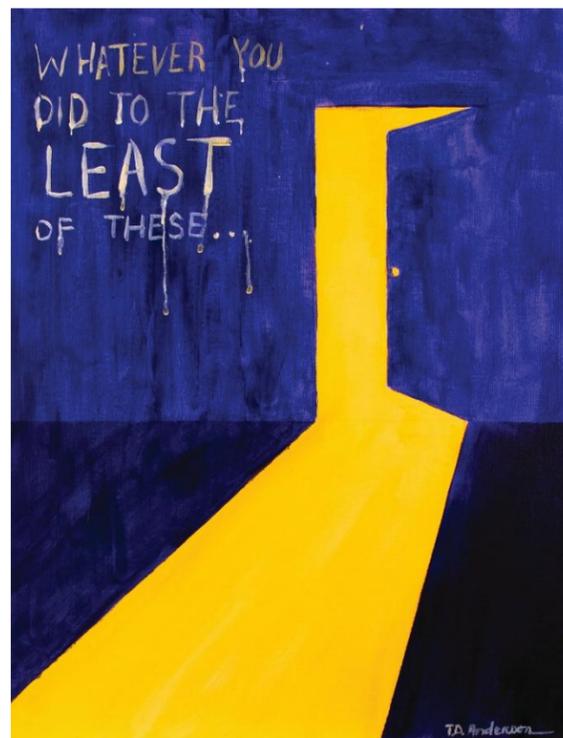
**We thank you for your continued generous support of St. John UCC.**

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**See You**  
T. Denise Anderson  
14"x18" Acrylic on canvas

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SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

the good news is... great love for God & neighbor

March 1, 2026 • 10:00 am

## WELCOMING MUSIC and ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

*Celebration No. 2 in B*

Michael R. Keller

The Bell Choir

\*CALL TO WORSHIP

Thompson Brandt

One: Tell me something good!

**All: God loves you  
more than you could imagine.**

One: Tell me something good!

**All: God loves all of creation  
more than you could imagine.**

One: Tell me something good!

**All: God's love meets us in this time of worship.  
We are not alone.**

One: This is good news indeed!

**All: Let us worship our compassionate God.**

\*HYMN

*I Come With My Devotion*

ANGEL'S STORY

Words: Anna Strickland, © 2025, *A Sanctified Art*

\*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

### Congregational Prayer (speaking together)

Merciful God,  
did we see you hungry and give you something to eat?  
Did we see you thirsty and give you something to drink?  
Did we see you alone and offer you compassion?

Or did we cross the street? Did we avert our eyes?  
Did we come up with every excuse in the book?

God, we long to be people who love our neighbors  
with the same overwhelming love that you have for them.

But we must admit, we have a long way to go.  
Forgive us for the times when we let bias, scarcity,  
or fear get in the way of love.

Challenge us to grow, and give us the courage to try again.

With hope for a better tomorrow we pray. Amen.

### Words of Affirmation

One: You know what? Even when we act with judgment,  
even when we are guided by fear,  
even when we turn our back on a neighbor in need,  
God does not turn God's back on us.

So join me in this good-news declaration:

**All: We are seen. We are forgiven.  
We are invited to try again.  
Thanks be to God for this unending love.**

## GOD'S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Luke 7:36-50 *NRSV, Updated Edition*

## 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

*The Gift of Love* arr. Hal H. Hopson  
The Bell Choir

## GOD'S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Matthew 25:35-40 *NRSV, Updated Edition*

## MESSAGE

*The Least We Can Do* Rev. Hank Fairman

## \*HYMN

*Come Now, You Blessed, Eat at My Table*

**GTG #186** COME, NOW, YOU BLESSED

## 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.

**Offering Song** *What You Have Done for Me* Tony Alonso  
arr. Paul Tate

**Doxology (CH #48 lyrics, on screen)** OLD 100<sup>TH</sup>

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!  
Praise Christ, all creatures here below!  
Praise Holy Spirit, evermore!  
One God, triune, whom we adore. Amen.

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**St. John United Church of Christ – Freeport, IL**  
an Open and Affirming, Racial Justice Congregation,  
where God is Still Speaking

## CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

### Sharing Celebrations and Concerns

#### Invitation to the Table

One: When we get anxious that there is good news happening  
and cannot see what God is doing,

**All: we comfort others, we find ways to help them heal--  
to everyone and every part of creation.**

One: When the world and its people tell us that others say that  
there is good news to be heard,

**All: We say, "I'll tell you something good:  
God loves you just as you are!"**

### Communion Prayer

#### Breaking Bread, Pouring Wine, and Sharing the Feast

*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)

Loving Christ, thank you for the bread that nourishes our  
bodies, and the cup that quenches our thirst.  
Thank you for this community, which reminds us who we are.  
Thank you for the promise that at this Table,  
and at every table, you will be there bringing us together.  
May this holy meal nourish us to go out into the world speaking  
of your good, good news. With joy and hope we pray. Amen.

**\*HYMN** *The Glory of These Forty Days* ST. DROSTANE  
**GTG #165**

### \*BENEDICTION

**\*RESPONSE** *From Gray Until Golden* ST. DENIO

**\*POSTLUDE** *They'll Know We Are Christians* Peter Scholtes  
arr. Wilbur Held



**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.*

**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:

3/1 ***Blessed Are the Curious***  
John 3:1-17

3/8 ***Blessed Are Those Who Suffer***  
Romans 5:1-11



**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*:

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

3/11 ***The good news is...together, the impossible is possible***  
Mark 6:32-44: *The feeding of the five thousand*

*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!*

# **MARCH HYMN MADNESS SURVEY**

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.

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



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

**Today, 3/1, Following Worship**

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. Please join us in Chapel Hearth following worship.



## **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.

*Please sign up in the Narthex and let us know you'll be coming!*



## **CLIMATE CHANGE SPEAKER SERIES**

**3/18, 6:30 PM**

Mark your calendars! The Green Team invites you to attend the third lecture in the "Cost of Living with Climate Change" series on Wednesday, 3/18, 6:30 at Freeport Public Library. Featured speaker is Illinois State Climatologist Dr. Trent Ford, whose topic will be "Climate Change Impacts in Illinois: From Farms to Forests". Dr. Ford has been with the Prairie Research Institute at U of I since 2019 and is an expert in climate change and its interactions and impacts, especially as they relate to water. Refreshments will be provided.