

## 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:



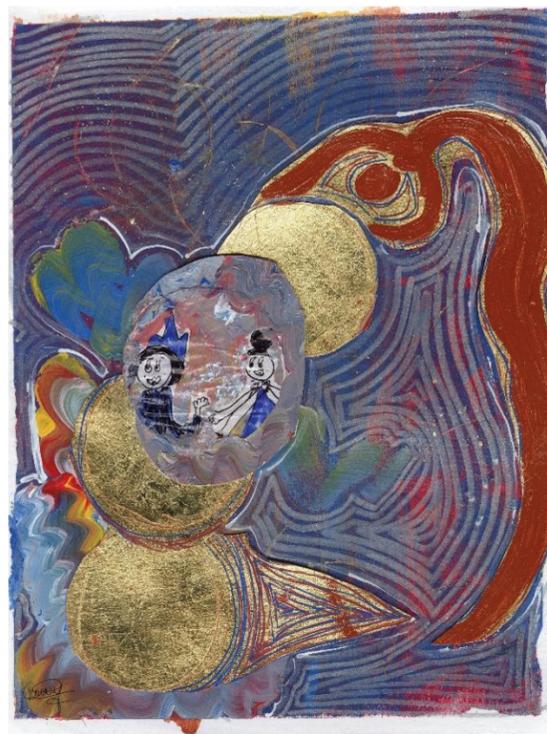
We thank you for your continued generous support of St. John UCC.

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Let the Little Children Come  
Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell  
11"x14" Acrylic, gold leaf, pen, on paper

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## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

the good news is...protection & care for the vulnerable

March 15, 2026 • 10:00 am

## WELCOMING MUSIC and ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

*Children of God*

arr. V. Earle Copess

\*CALL TO WORSHIP

Allen Buus

One: God loves the field mouse.

**All: God loves the crows  
that take flight when church bells ring.**

One: God loves the baby, cooing in the back pew.

**All: God loves the child  
who rocks and claps.**

One: God loves the one with wrinkled hands and soft eyes.

**All: God loves the bumblebees  
and the tabby cats.**

One: God loves those who walk, crawl, and roll.

**All: God loves the giant oaks and the evergreens,  
standing strong over all of us.**

One: God loves the young, the impressionable, and the earnest.

**All: There is no bit of creation that God does not love.  
So let us worship this good-news God!**

\*HYMN

*For the Fruit of All Creation*

AR HYD Y NOS

WAR #723

\*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 AND WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

### Congregational Prayer

*Please join in this responsive Prayer and Affirmation.*

One: God said,  
“When a foreigner resides among you in your land,  
do not mistreat them.” *Leviticus 19:33*

**All: Holy God, we say honestly: we have mistreated the immigrants in our land.**

One: Jesus said,  
“Blessed are the peacemakers  
for they will be called children of God.” *Matthew 5:9*

**All: We own up to it: we have clung to guns and war more than we have pursued peace.**

One: God said,  
“When you gather the grapes of your vineyard,  
do not glean what is left;  
it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.”  
*Deuteronomy 24:21*

**All: We must be truthful: we have hoarded our resources and failed to care for our neighbors.**

One: Jesus said,  
“Let the children come to me,  
and do not stop them.” *Matthew 19:14*

**All: We confess, we have gatekept the good news in unfair ways.**

One: Fortunately for all of us, God also said,  
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name; you are mine.” *Isaiah 43:1*

**All: By God’s grace, despite our sin and shortcomings, we are redeemed, claimed, forgiven, and loved.**

One: May this good news change our lives!

**All: Amen, and Amen**

## GOD’S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Matthew 19:13-15

*NRSV, Updated Edition*

## FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US

Anita Bicksler

### 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

*See the Precious Children*

Strickland/White

The Chancel Choir

## GOD’S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 24:17-22

*NRSV, Updated Edition*

## MESSAGE

*At the Boundary Line*

Rev. Ted Michalsen

## \*HYMN

*See the Precious Children*

BEACH SPRING

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.

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St. John United Church of Christ – Freeport, IL

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

Offering Song *As Christ Has Welcomed Us*

arr. E. L. Diemer

## Doxology (CH #48 lyrics)

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.

## SHARING CELEBRATIONS AND CONCERNS

### Prayers of the People & Pastoral Prayer

## \*HYMN

*See Israel’s Gentle Shepherd Stand*

SERENITY

POSAH #155

## \*BENEDICTION

## \*RESPONSE

*From Gray Until Golden*

ST. DENIO

## \*POSTLUDE

*Let Streams of Living Justice*

arr. David Blackwell

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## THE SEASON OF LENT AT ST. JOHN UCC



### Sundays in Lent

- 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*
- 3/29 Palm / Passion Sunday  
*The good news is...inspiring us to act*
- 4/2 Maundy Thursday / Tenebrae  
*The good news is....Even Judas gets his feet washed*
- 4/3 Good Friday  
*The good news is...revealed through nonviolence*



**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:

3/15 ***Blessed Are the Lonely***  
Psalm 23

3/22 ***Blessed Are Those Who Mourn***  
John 11:1-45



**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*:

3/18 ***The good news is...protection and care for the vulnerable***  
Matthew 19:13-15: Jesus blesses the children

3/25 ***The good news is...rooted in justice, mercy and faithfulness***  
John 8:2-11: Jesus refuses to condemn

# STJ 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!*



## FELLOWSHIP POTLUCK LUNCH

**Today 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.



## EASTER LILIES

**Order by 3/22**

In celebration of Easter we will again enhance and beautify our sanctuary with lilies on Easter morning. The cost for a lily is \$20.

*Order forms are available in the Narthex.*



## 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, at 6:30 pm at the Freeport Public Library. The 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.



## FREEPORT BUNNY TRAIL: 4/4, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

The Care & Community Team needs your help! The Freeport Park District is putting on their annual Bunny Trail on 4/4 from 11:00 am-1:00 pm at Krape Park. We need volunteers to help distribute candy and St. John UCC flyers to all participants. We also need candy donations to serve to the more than 600 youth that attend annually.

All donations can be brought to the church office. Let Pam Wessel know if you're able to assist and Hippy Hop over to Krape Park for some family fun! Everybunny is welcome!