

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

on Facebook: 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.

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There is Good
Hannah Garrity

18"x18" Hand-dyed and collaged newspaper with paper lace overlay

ST. JOHN UCC STAFF

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FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

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

March 22, 2026 • 10:00 am

WELCOMING MUSIC and ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE *Your Grace and Mercy* Frank Williams
Carl & Dianna Cole arr. C. Cole

*CALL TO WORSHIP Diane Jochum

One: Welcome to the weary and the worn.

All: Welcome to the wiggly and the eager.

One: Welcome to the skeptical and the seeking.

All: Welcome to the early risers and those still trying to wake up.

One: Welcome to the rule followers and the rule breakers.

All: Welcome to those hungry for justice and those desperate for mercy.

One: Welcome to the sinners and the saints.

**All: This is God's house.
You can make yourself at home here.**

One: Let us worship our just, merciful, and faithful God!

*HYMN *O Grant Us God, a Little Space* WINCHESTER OLD
NCH #516

*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)

Creation-setting God,
we love to live our lives by the rules.

We love clear answers.

We love right and wrong.

We love swift justice.

We love to pick up stones,
but you show us another way.

You welcome shades of gray and nuanced conversation.

You prioritize mercy over legality.

You prioritize people over tradition.

You prioritize love over everything.

Help us see in body and spirit what truly matters.

Challenge us for clinging tighter to laws than to each other or to
you.

Forgive us. Soften our hearts.

Root us in mercy, justice, and love.

With hope for a better tomorrow, we pray. Amen.

Words of Affirmation

One: Jesus saw a crowd ready to throw stones
and invited them to choose another way.

**All: Jesus offered them grace, mercy, and compassion,
and the same can be said for us.**

One: So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:

**All: Our God is a God of mercy.
Our God is a God of compassion.
Our God is a God of grace.**

One: We are loved and invited to choose another way.

**All: Thanks be to God for yet another second chance.
Amen.**

GOD'S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

John 8:2-11

NRSV, Updated Edition

FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US

Shawn Killingbeck

Change for Change Mission Collection

This month's collection will support:
*Summer Camp Scholarships for children and youth attending Outdoor
Ministries Programs in the Illinois Conference UCC*

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

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Thomas O. Chisholm

Carl & Dianna Cole

arr. C. Cole

GOD'S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Matthew 23:23

The Message

MESSAGE

Justice, Mercy, and Faithfulness

Rev. Hank Fairman

*HYMN

Let Us Remember

BUNNESSAN

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."

St. John United Church of Christ – Freeport, IL

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

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 *I've Got a Feeling (Everything's Gonna Be Alright)*

Spiritual, arr. C. Cole

Doxology (CH #48 lyrics)

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

I Want to Be Ready

I WANT TO BE READY

NCH #616

*BENEDICTION

*RESPONSE

From Gray Until Golden

ST. DENIO

*POSTLUDE

It's Gonna Be Alright" (reprise) Spiritual, arr. C. Cole



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 and candy donations to serve to the more than 600 youth that attend annually. All donations can be brought to the church office. Please let Pam know if you are able to help. Everybunny is welcome!

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.

3/22 *Blessed Are Those Who Mourn*

John 11:1-45

3/29 *Blessed Are Those Who Are Rejected*

Luke 23:1-56



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*.

3/25 *The good news is...rooted in justice, mercy and faithfulness*

John 8:2-11: Jesus refuses to condemn



2026 FREEPORT PRIDE PLANNING MEETING

Today, Following Worship

There will be a meeting after worship today to start the planning process for the 2026 Freeport Pride Picnic. Anyone who would like to join the planning team is welcome to attend. If you're interested in getting involved but can't make it to the meeting, please email Liz at lizzybeth123@gmail.com.



HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SUNDAY

March 29 Palm Sunday

the good news is...inspiring us to act

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

Our Holy Week journey to Christ's Resurrection begins with a day of worship and palm waving. Sing "Hosanna!" in morning worship (including the annual *Palm Parade!*).

April 2 Maundy Thursday Tenebrae, 7:00 pm

the good news is...Even Judas gets his feet washed

John 2:1-11: The wedding at Cana

Celebrate Communion as we remember the Last Supper, pray with Christ in the Garden, and mourn with his followers at the cross. Worship will include the Tenebrae, a service of shadows marking the story of Holy Week.

April 5 Easter / Resurrection Sunday

the good news is...alive in the world

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

6:00 am – Sunrise Service, with Communion

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

10:00 am – Celebration Service, with Communion

Christ is Risen! Shout Hosanna! Celebrate this day of days with the congregation. Come share in the transformation of Good Friday to Easter, grief to new life!



EASTER LILIES
Orders Due Today!

Order forms are available in the Narthex.



**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.*



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

Please note: This collection will stock the Cupboard for about two months. *There is a HIGH level of need right now.*

Follow this link to our Amazon wishlist:



<https://bit.ly/HELIXCareCupboard>