

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.

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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Faith Formation for All Ages!

Bring *Flat Jesus* with you wherever you go this summer!

Be sure to take him along on all your adventures, snap some photos, and send the photos to: flatjesus@stjohnuccfreeport.org

*We'll post them in the Sunday School hallway
so you can see what Flat Jesus has been up to!*

ST. JOHN UCC STAFF

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EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 19, 2026 • 10:00 am

WELCOMING MUSIC and ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

Gather Us In

Haugen, arr. Behnke

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Thompson Brandt

One: We’ve come to worship God,

All: who knew us before our birth.

One: Who knows us inside and out.

**All: Who knows from the crown of our head to the souls
of our feet and loves us warts and all.**

One: God’s presence never leaves us and their love for us
is without end.

All: This is who our God is. Let us worship together.

*HYMN

You Are Before Me, Lord

SURSUM CORDA

GTG #28

*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

Silent Centering

Congregational Prayer (speaking together)

God of the Sower and the seed,
you have planted us together in the same field
where your sun and rain nourish us all.
Then you allow us to grow.
It was not your intention that the saplings would compete
for resources, but we hunger and thirst for more
in our own ways.
When we do or say things that impeded the growth of another
forgive us. When we take more than our fair share, forgive us.
When we try and uproot other plants from your garden,
forgive us.
When we decide who the weed is before we attempt to love,
forgive us. Every single rose has a thorn on its stem,
and we are grateful that you love us despite our prickly bits.
Encourage us to grow our blooms and not our thorns. Amen.

GOD’S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Genesis 28:10-19a *NRSV, Updated Edition*

A MOMENT FOR ALL AGES

Tim Ebbers

Change for Change Mission Collection

This month’s collection will support:
The Northern Illinois Veterans Pantry,
*providing household supplies and general assistance
to veterans living in Stephenson County.*

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

This Little Light of Mine
Kennedy Marcum with Kelli Marcum

GOD’S WORD IN SCRIPTURE

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 *NRSV, Updated Edition*

MESSAGE

A Tale of Two Rakes and the Presence of Grace
Rev. Ted Michalsen

*HYMN

Touch the Earth Lightly TENDERNESS
GTG #713

PRESENTING OUR HEARTS +AND GIFTS TO GOD

Moment for Mission Summer Giving Campaign
Gathering the Gifts with Praise
One: 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 *Seek Ye First* Lafferty, arr. Bedford
Doxology (CH #48) 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

Blessed Assurance GRATUS

WAR #426

*BENEDICTION

*RESPONSE *With Grateful Heart* GRATUS
WAR #729, v.I

*POSTLUDE *We Thank You, For You Planted* arr. Craig Phillips

ANNOUNCEMENTS



BECOMING WISE FOR MENTAL HEALTH
Next Steps: The Wise Covenant Team

St. John UCC is walking the path towards being recognized as a congregation that is WISE for mental health (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged). Our next step is to form a WISE Covenant writing team. The Wellness Ministry team is inviting people who have a passion for mental health to collaborate in this endeavor. This is a six-month commitment that will begin TODAY following worship.



AMITY UNDERWEAR DRIVE

There is a great need for new underwear for underprivileged households in our community. We are called to reach out and let them know that we care. A laundry basket is in the Atrium for your donations of children's sizes 8-18, but especially women's M-L and men's M-2XL underwear of all types. Drop off your donations weekdays from 9:00 am - 2:00 pm.



SUNDAY, 8/30, BEGINNING AT 10:00 AM

Our Rally Day celebration welcomes us back from summer's fun, labors, and vacations.

Come join in morning worship, sharing stories of God's blessings for us all.

Stay for the annual Rally Day Pot-Luck Lunch. Bring your family's favorite dish to pass, and sample others' faves.

Celebrate as the community in Christ at St. John UCC, sharing the radical hospitality of God's all-embracing love!

In the coming weeks, please sign up that you're coming on the bulletin board in the narthex.

CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

28 You Are Before Me, Lord (Psalm 139)

1 You are be - fore me, Lord, you are be - hind,
2 Then from your Spir - it where, Lord, shall I go;
3 If I should take my flight in - to the dawn,
4 If I should say, "Let dark - ness cov - er me;
5 Search me, O God; search me and know my heart;

and o - ver me you have spread out your hand;
and from your pres - ence where, Lord, shall I fly?
if I should dwell on o - cean's far - thest shore,
and I shall hide with - in the veil of night,"
try me, O God; my mind and spir - it try;

such knowl - edge is too won - der - ful for me,
if I as - cend to heav - en you are there,
your might - y hand will rest up - on me still,
sure - ly the dark - ness is not dark to you:
keep me from an - y path that gives you pain,

too high to grasp, too great to un - der - stand.
and still are with me if in hell I lie.
and your right hand will guard me ev - er - more.
the night is as the day, the dark - ness light.
and lead me in the ev - er - last - ing way.

Guitar chords do not correspond with keyboard harmony.

The effectiveness of this paraphrase of Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24 partly derives from its imitation of the characteristic repetitions that give emotional intensity to Hebrew poetry. Such patterns of repetitiveness can also be seen in the last three notes of each phrase of the tune.

TEXT: Ian Pitt-Watson, 1973, 1989

MUSIC: Alfred Morton Smith, 1941

Text © 1973 Ian Pitt-Watson

Music used by permission of Estate of Doris Wright Smith

SURSUM CORDA (Smith)

10.10.10.11

713 Touch the Earth Lightly

Capo 3: (G) B^b (Dsus) Fsus (D) F (Em) Gm (Bsus) Dsus (Bm) Dm

1 Touch the earth light - ly, use the earth gent - ly,
 2 We who en - dan - ger, who cre - ate hun - ly,
 3 Let there be green - ing, birth from the burn - ing,
 4 God of all liv - ing, God of all lov - ing,

(C) E^b (D7) F7 (G) B^b (Am7) Cm7 (Dsus) Fsus (D) F

nour - ish the life of the world in our care:
 a - gents of death for all crea - tures that live,
 wa - ter that bless - es and air that is sweet,
 God of the seed - ling, the snow, and the sun,

(G) B^b (Dsus) Fsus (D) F (Em) Gm (Bsus) Dsus (Bm) Dm

gift of great won - der, ours to sur - ren - der,
 we who would fos - ter clouds of di - sas - ter,
 health in God's gar - den, hope in God's chil - dren,
 teach us, de - flect us, Christ re - con - nect us,

(C) E^b (G) B^b (Em) Gm (Am7) Cm7 (D) F (G) B^b (G) B^b

trust for the chil - dren to - mor - row will bear.
 God of our plan - et, fore - stall and for - give!
 re - gen - er - a - tion that peace will com - plete.
 us - ing us gent - ly and mak - ing us

one.

An Australian aboriginal saying opens this gentle hymn from New Zealand on the stewardship of creation. "Clouds of disaster" in the second stanza refers to the testing of nuclear devices then occurring in the Pacific Ocean, but the concern for all created things is timeless.



BATTING CLEAN-UP DAY Sunday, 8/2 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

As a part of this year's Summer FUNd Giving Campaign, Batting Clean-Up is a Little Cubs Field All-Church outing! Join us for a ton of fun on the field and some baseball themed menu items available for purchase:

Single: Hotdog \$5

Double: Add a Drink (water or lemonade) \$6

Triple: Add Chips OR Decorated Sugar Cookie \$7

Home Run: Enjoy ALL the Above \$8.



ANNUAL ICE CREAM SOCIAL Wednesday, 8/12 4:30pm-7:00pm

Come enjoy an evening of fun, food and relaxation with friends from the St. John UCC community. Barbecue sandwiches, hot dogs, chips, pasta salad and drinks will be served, along with cake, pie and ice cream to complete your meal! Tickets are available in the church office or on Sundays.

**\$8 for BBQ or Hot Dog,
 with Chips, Pasta Salad, and Drink**

\$5 for Pie or Cake, Ice Cream, and Drink

If you are able to donate a pie or cake, or willing to volunteer your time to serve as cashier, server, kitchen crew, or cleanup crew, please sign up on the bulletin board in the Narthex. Thank you for your help!