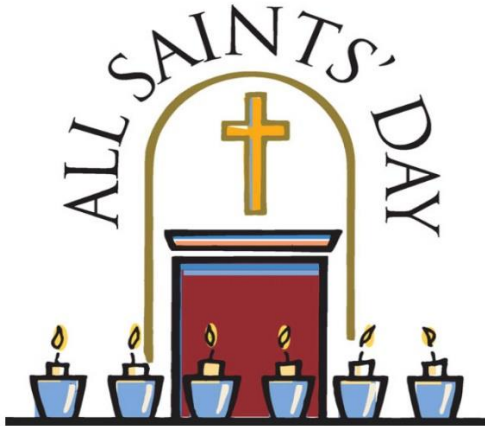


November 1, 2020 ALL SAINTS' DAY



St. John United Church of Christ

10207 Lincoln Trail

Fairview Heights, IL

Telephone 397-6323

SECRETARY – JUDY HARTMANN

Rev. Rosemary Captain 660-8894

Pianist – Nancy Eisenhauer

- CCLI LICENSE #11164431
- LITURGY WRITTEN BY REV THOM SCHUMANN
- PLEASE RESPOND WITH WORDS IN BOLD PRINT.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: As is our tradition, this being the first Sunday of the month, we will celebrate communion in the worship service that follows. Please have your piece of bread or cracker and something to drink handy as you read this service. We will be communing with our hearts and prayers, even as we keep our distance.



*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:

Respond with words in bold type.

Blessed are those who will not trade in their faith for a bushel of fear, for they know God's heart.

Blessed are those who stand alone at gravesides, for they are wrapped in God's arms.

Blessed are those who humbly care for the vulnerable, for they shall create new communities.

Blessed are those who miss dinner, and happy hour each night, in order to care for the forgotten, for they shall be filled with the manna of hope.

Blessed are those who are compassionate, even with those who rub them the wrong way, for they will be cared for by others.

Blessed are those who look out for their neighbors, for they live next door to God.

Blessed are the menders of brokenness, for they know what it is like to be reconciled to God.

Blessed are those who are mocked by the rich and the powerful, for they know they are walking the streets of the kingdom.

Blessed are you when others mock you, point at your mask, think you are foolish for keeping your distance, caring for others, for then you know you are a sibling of Jesus.

Blessed are all those who model faith for us in these uncertain days, weeks, months.

ALL SAINTS DAY PRAYER:

We continue to bless you, our God, as we try to do every day, all day long. By your grace, we discover that the boasters are not the role models we are looking for, but the whisperers of grace are. We look for saints in the shadows of fear and find a neighbor with a candle.



We long for a saint to ease the ache in our emptiness, and a stranger pours love into our souls. We wonder if a saint might quench our thirst for life, and a little boy hands us a glass of lemonade. You surround us with saints in every moment, even these uncertain, confusing ones, if we but open our eyes to see.

We continue to bless you, our Brother, as we try to do every day, all day long. By your grace, we discover that the powerful are not the role models we are looking for, but the whisperers of hope are. We look for a saint to spend time with us and a little girl asks us to play catch.

We whisper of our shattered souls, hoping to find a saintly ear, and a grandmother whispers, 'I will

listen.' We seek a saint who will overturn injustice and a tired woman sits at the front of a bus.

You surround us with saints in every moment, even these days which never seem to end, if we but open our hearts to see.

We continue to bless you, our wise Sister, as we try to do every day, all day long. By your grace, we discover that the angry voices are not the role models we are looking for, but the whisperers of peace are.

We hunger for a saint who will feed our hunger for gentleness, for kindness, for civility and a friend packs sandwiches filled with these gifts. We want saints to take away our worries, and a grandparent laughs and pulls us up into their lap to smother us with kisses.

You surround us with saints in every moment, even these times which seem overwhelming, if we but open our souls to pay attention. Holy One, it is your hope which wipes away every tear, your grace which restores our souls, your mercy which makes us one with you. Amen.

*CALL TO RECONCILIATION

God's Table is for everyone, no matter how old one is, or young; for those we think of as saints, and those we know are foolish, because we look in the mirror.

For God knows that we all try, and no matter how many times we mess up, God will forgive us, quickly and mercifully. I invite you to join in the prayer for forgiveness.

***UNISON PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS**

Long ago on a hillside, the Teacher spoke words for our faith, God of foolish people, and we still do not listen. Full of arrogance, we have no need for a home for our spirits.

Taught to be strong, we push away your arms of comfort. Seeing how the wealthy and selfish are idolized, we want to inherit their hearts. As we pass the hungry in line at the food bank, we rush to the store to hoard more.

Noticing how the kindest of people are mocked, we develop hardened hearts.

Have mercy, God who turns stragglers into saints, when we follow the wrong people, listen to words we shouldn't.

For it is those who make peace, who know your hope.

It is those whose hearts are in rhythm with yours who see the most vulnerable. It is those who care more for others than themselves, who have learned the soul behind the words of the Teacher, who would guide us to your living waters. Amen.

Silence is kept

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

**Lost, we find our way, as we seek God;
overwhelmed by loneliness, we are heard when we**

cry out; stumbling over our foolish choices, we find mercy when we tell all to our God.

We are no different from all we call saints, for they found life in the mercy and grace of our God. We are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 5:1-12 NRSV

The Beatitudes

5 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

MESSAGE: **“Blessed are those who came before us”**
How do the Beatitudes fit with our celebration of the saints? Saints are people who lived the spirit of the Beatitudes as Jesus lived. In that respect we can think of the saints as role models.

However, I think of the saints as the ones who forged a path for the rest of us; those who continued the faith in good times and bad. Perhaps they were our family and ancestors. You can't read about them in any “book of saints”, but perhaps you can remember your grandmother teaching you to pray or sang hymns to you. The people who taught Sunday School for 35 years. The people who raised money to build a new sanctuary. Even if your family and ancestors were not church people, there were others who kept the lights on at the neighborhood church.

Any of those are who I consider as saints: the unsung heroes and heroines who few people remember specifically but whose faithfulness make it possible for us to have a faith family who worships together, prays together, and learns the teachings of Jesus together. That's who we celebrate today.

Yes, I'm sure they were familiar with what we call the Beatitudes. Just as we continue to be

inspired and challenged by the words of Jesus, so did they.

We must remember that in the time of Jesus, Roman government ran the country and the people. Poor villagers were thought of as much as the dirt under everyone's feet. The Jewish community had always been taught that only the rich and powerful people were blessed by God. Since they were not rich, they assumed God had forgotten them.

It becomes quickly apparent that the Beatitudes turn the world's values upside down. What is true for those who live in the power of the kingdom of heaven is a flat reversal of what is considered to be true in the culture at large. The Beatitudes declare that the poor in spirit, the meek, the peacemakers are the ones who are truly blessed.

Jesus speaks nine beatitudes in all, and taken together, they describe the traits of the citizenry of the kingdom of heaven. The church of Jesus Christ sees its life in two frames of reference. First, it sees what everyone else sees, too – the world of human history, a world of struggle in which the church works and serves and lives out its mission. That's where those saints that I mentioned, fit in.

The church also possesses a second frame of reference. It sees what others do not see, that God is at work in this world even today and will surely bring all creation to a time of peace and rejoicing. This hoped-for time is the kingdom of heaven. For the world, the kingdom is a sure future for the

faithful, the kingdom is a present reality, giving strength and encouragement to its work.

The Beatitudes are a light in the darkness that we see around us every day. These words of Jesus give us hope when the world says everything is hopeless. They give us beauty in the world of ugly. Read them often and ask your heart what you hear. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Beginning with a time for silent personal prayer.

Today, dear Lord, we bring our thanksgiving for all those who have come before us. At the same time, we pray for strength and courage to continue so that we may be the saints for the next generations.

We bring our concerns to you, O God, as the world seems to be against us. Yet we know, with your grace, the world can be a better place. In our midst we have present saints that care for the rest of us and we are grateful; those on the front-line of caring for those suffering from Covid, the fire fighters, EMT's, techs, doctors, and nurses.

We pray for those who have lost loved ones from this pandemic and those who have lost their jobs. With your love for us and as we all work and pray together, we can all thrive during this difficult time.

We pray for all those on our prayer list, that they may find peace and comfort in their times of illness. We pray all these things in the name of the one who taught us to pray...

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

God's love is revealed in those who seek to be faithful in sharing their gifts, so the hungry might be fed, so the lonely might be comforted, so the forgotten will be remembered, so our sisters and brothers might know God's grace and love in their lives. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION:

The God of all people be with you in these moments.

May God be with you as well.

May we unite our hearts in glorifying our God.

We our hearts to the One who fills them with grace.

As God's people, we join in praising our God.

Our souls and voices come together in glad songs of joy.

There, to the edge of chaos you came, God from before time began, and you called out in a voice of imagination so that all which is wonderful and

goodness might spring into life out of the emptiness: snakes wiggling across the dirt, wolves watching the moon from mountaintops, dolphins swimming in the ocean waves.

From the dust of the earth, you breathed life into those created in your divine image, not so we might be saints without blemish, but we would be your children, who would follow you in all the days your created.

But we were easily distracted by death, and the easy promises of temptation. You sent women and men to us, not as examples of perfect humanity, for they mumbled and stumbled just like us, but to call us back into your presence.

But we could not resist idolizing all those who would pull us away from you. That is when you sent Jesus to us as we could not save ourselves from ourselves. On this day of remembering all who helped to shape our lives, we join in singing with glad songs:

Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen!

Though you alone are holy, you are still the God who leans over to wipe the tears of this pandemic from our hearts. We are blessed that Jesus has come to share your love and hope with us. Overflowing with your power and might, he embraces the poor in spirit; the Word which called forth life, he stands with us in graveyards; the One of whom choirs of angels sang, he shares his

heritage with the gentle; pouring out his glory and wisdom he clothes us with compassion;

Isaiah's true peaceful Prince, he calls us to join him in reconciling our brokenness; charged and condemned for being God's justice, he showed us the way to God's community; broken, suffering, and dying for us, he defeated that power of death over all of us, sharing resurrection with his sisters and brothers.

We have no idea what the future will hold for us, but trusting that it will hold the life and grace which was poured on Jesus, we join in singing with our sisters and brothers of that mystery we call faith:

Because Christ died, we have life; Because Christ was raised, so we might have this hope of resurrection; Because Christ is our guide, we will be led to the waters of life.

Here at this Table, on this day of remembrance, we discover how much love God has for us as we gather around the feast where those who have gone before us have been fed.

(Lift up your elements) We pray you will pour out your Spirit upon these gifts of the bread and the cup as well as for those whose hunger for justice seems to go unfilled for far too long, and for those who thirst for righteousness is not quenched.

We eat this bread, hoping to taste God's gentleness, to go into the world to care for those who are willing to wear a mask, to stay apart from

others, and care for strangers as much as for themselves.

As we share the cup of grace, may we see God's hope, heading out into the world as God's people, to offer shelter to the forgotten, to feed those whose hunger is still there, to speak out for those who endure the great ordeal of oppression.

And when we gather with those from every nation, those from all tribes and peoples and languages, especially those who have gone through this pandemic, washing their hands, wearing their masks setting aside their PPE, as we will all be with God, no longer isolated or quarantined, but worshiping day and night.

God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

PARTAKING OF THE ELEMENTS:

UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

Just as our saints did before us, we thank you for sharing this meal with us at your table, Christ Jesus. We have been fed, Holy One, by your presence. We have been led, Eternal One, by your light. May we bask in this glow now and forevermore. Amen.

SENDING:

Let us go to be God's saints this week.

Not because we are more pious or special, but because we are called to care for those whom the world has tossed aside.

Let us go now to serve with Jesus this week.

Not because we are better than those around us, but because we are called to humble ourselves in serving those whom society has forgotten.

Let us go now to journey with the Spirit this week.

Not because we have the inside track, but because we have all lost our way, but hand in hand will be led to God's heart.

CONDOLENCES: to the family and friends of Charles Chamberlin

PRAYER LIST: Rich Schmitt, Nelson Libell, Dave Seneczyn, Eric White, Lori Riess, Donna Isselhard, Mitch Nallie, Candy Pearce, Greg Talley, Carol Meyer, Leah Williams, Pat Holtgrave, Jane Riess, Shari Hamilton, Becky Ballard, Amy Annis, Robert Iverson, Sr.

(If you know of any of these people who could be removed from the list, please let the Secretary know.)

If you haven't already, please vote on Tuesday, November 3. Call Pastor Rosemary if you need a ride to the polls.

618-660-8894

Next Saturday, November 7, we will have a clean up of the church yard at 9 am. If you are able, please come and help.

**DON'T FORGET TO SET YOUR CLOCKS BACK
ONE HOUR TONIGHT!**