

**November 20, 2022**



**TOTENFEST**

**ST. JOHN**

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**Our mission is to worship and serve God in our  
church, community, and the world**

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*Liturgy – Rev. Dr. David Long-Higgins*

\*Please stand if comfortably able  
and respond with words in bold print

(NCH) New Century Hymnal

CCLI LICENSE #11164431

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**PRELUDE: “We Gather Together”** Franklin Ritter

**COLLECTION OF PENNIES FOR MISSION:**

Hoyleton Youth and Family Services

**\*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

**One:** Come, a great cloud of witnesses surrounds us as we gather.

**Many:** May the lingering echo of saints resound in our songs.

May their stories open a space for the Spirit to enter us anew.

**In remembering them, may we find ourselves re-membered.**

May the God of every generation form us anew for this generation.

**And may a new joy rise in our lives and in the life of the world.**

**\*INVOCATION:**

God of every age and time, inspire us today with memories of saints whose energy still lingers, hovering around and within as encouragement and strength. Wrap us anew with a felt sense of your persistent presence, granting a new energy to offer You everything of our hearts, minds and souls. Yes, Love of Life, root us and ground us in this. And let it be more than enough for today, as we gather in the name of Jesus. Amen.

**\*OPENING HYMN: NCH 377 “Forward Through the Ages”**

**\*UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

Loving God, Grant me grace to release everything too much or too little into your transforming fire of refinement. Sear in me the strength of your saints – generous and gentle, focused and fierce – just enough to answer every devilish temptation distracting or denying Your Holy hope for my re-formation. Yes, Love, form me anew from the inside out, centering others ahead of every selfishness that dares me to choose anything less than You. Release me from the burdens and brokenness of my own making, that I may be readied to meet You in every ordinary saint whose path crosses mine in the gift of this day. Amen.

**\*WORDS OF GRACE:**

Hear the good news! Jesus tells us that the Holy One is a God of grand reversals. Weeping turns to rejoicing, hunger is answered with fullness, honesty of heart is answered with grace upon grace. Every energy that diminishes is interrupted with a newness of life made possible by the One who is always searching us out with forgiving love. In Jesus, God revealed that grace and forgiveness has already arrived, and it includes you and me. It is the Good News! You can trust it with your life. The saints knew it and now you do, too. Thanks be to God! Amen and Amen.

**\*GLORIA:**

Glory to the Creator,  
and the Christ and the Spirit so near.  
As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God  
always here. (repeat two more times.)  
(end) One God always here. One God always here.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 149 Page 722**

**EPISTLE READING: Ephesians 1:11-23**

<sup>11</sup> We have also received an inheritance in Christ. We were destined by the plan of God, who accomplishes everything according to his design. <sup>12</sup> We are called to be an honor to God’s glory because we were the first to hope in Christ. <sup>13</sup> You too heard the word of truth in Christ, which is the good news of your salvation. You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit because you believed in Christ. <sup>14</sup> The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance, which is applied toward our redemption as God’s own people, resulting in the honor of God’s glory.

Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians

<sup>15</sup> Since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, this is the reason that <sup>16</sup> I don’t stop giving thanks to God for you when I remember you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup> I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation that makes God known to you. <sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God’s call, what is the richness of God’s glorious inheritance among believers, <sup>19</sup> and what is the

overwhelming greatness of God's power that is working among us believers. This power is conferred by the energy of God's powerful strength. <sup>20</sup> God's power was at work in Christ when God raised him from the dead and sat him at God's right side in the heavens, <sup>21</sup> far above every ruler and authority and power and angelic power, any power that might be named not only now but in the future. <sup>22</sup> God put everything under Christ's feet and made him head of everything in the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body. His body, the church, is the fullness of Christ, who fills everything in every way.

**\*GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 6:20-31**

**Happy people and doomed people**

<sup>20</sup> Jesus raised his eyes to his disciples and said:

"Happy are you who are poor,  
because God's kingdom is yours.

<sup>21</sup> Happy are you who hunger now,  
because you will be satisfied.

Happy are you who weep now,  
because you will laugh.

<sup>22</sup> Happy are you when people hate you, reject you, insult you, and condemn your name as evil because of the Human One. <sup>23</sup> Rejoice when that happens! Leap for joy because you have a great reward in heaven. Their ancestors did the same things to the prophets.

<sup>24</sup> But how terrible for you who are rich,  
because you have already received your comfort.

<sup>25</sup> How terrible for you who have plenty now,

because you will be hungry.

How terrible for you who laugh now,

because you will mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup> How terrible for you when all speak well of you.

Their ancestors did the same things to the false prophets.

Behaving as God's children

<sup>27</sup> "But I say to you who are willing to hear: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. <sup>28</sup> Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. <sup>29</sup> If someone slaps you on the cheek, offer the other one as well. If someone takes your coat, don't withhold your shirt either. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who asks and don't demand your things back from those who take them. <sup>31</sup> Treat people in the same way that you want them to treat you.

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**\*CELTIC ALLELUIA:**

**Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia**

**MESSAGE: "The End of the World's Values"**

Perhaps you have heard of the Beatitudes? They were written in the Gospel of Matthew in Chapters 5-7. Our Gospel lesson for today is Luke's version of that. There are differences between the two versions, but this one thing is clear – they are a series of bombshells. It may well be that we have read them so often that we have forgotten how revolutionary they are. They are quite unlike the laws which a philosopher or a typical wise man might lay down

Each one is a challenge. Which means that they are very important for us to learn and live in our lives.

The words in Luke and Matthew take the accepted standards and turn them upside down. The people Jesus called happy the world would call wretched; and the people Jesus called wretched the world would call happy. Just imagine anyone saying, "Happy are the poor, and, woe to the rich!" To talk like that is to put an end to the world's values altogether.

Where then is the key to this? It comes in verse 24. There Jesus says, "How terrible are the rich because they have all the comfort they are going to get." What Jesus is saying is this, "If you set your heart and bend your whole energies to obtain the things which the world values, you will get them – but that is all you will ever get." In the expressive phrase, literally, you have had it! But if on the other hand you set your heart and bend all your energies to be utterly loyal to God and true to Christ, you will run into all kinds of trouble; you may by the world's standards look unhappy, but much of your payment is still to come; and it will be joy eternal.

For example, what if you won a prize of filling your car's gas tank for free, but that's all you will ever get? That's a nice prize. However, it won't be long before you will be walking everywhere.

We are here face to face with an eternal choice which begins in childhood and never ends until life ends. Will you take the easy way which yields immediate pleasure and

profit? Or will you take the hard way which yields immediate toil and sometimes suffering?

Will you seize on the pleasure and the profit of the moment? Or are you willing to look ahead and sacrifice them for the greater good? Will you concentrate on the world's rewards? Or will you concentrate on Christ? If you take the world's way, you must abandon the values of Christ. How do you feel about that? Are you willing to give up Jesus in your life? However, if you take Christ's way, you must abandon the values of the world. How do you feel about that? Can we do that? We're pretty spoiled. Can we give up all our Christmas shopping and gifts and decorating to give that money to people who have nothing?

The challenge of the beatitudes is, will you be happy in the world's way, or in Christ's way? Maybe what we need to do is change the world so the world's way IS Christ's way. Let's pray that it could be so. Amen.

**SPECIAL MUSIC: "Precious Lord" St. John Choir - video**

**CELEBRATING THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US**

**Ardella Morris – March 15**

**James Garrett – March 21**

**Richard Schmitt – March 22**

**Esther Henry – April 21**

**Donna Logsdon – May 19**

**Judy Hartmann – July 6**

**PASTORAL PRAYER:** Beginning with a time for silent personal prayer.

We are aware that there is a little bit of saint in each of us, O God, and a little bit of sinner. And you know this already. You know our comings out and our goings-on. You know because it is in you that we live and move and have our very being.

This day, we pray that saint may edge out sinner, that we may find ourselves stretched toward you and not pushed away. We pray that we may become all that you made us to be and that we may give honor to our creation. We pray that we not become "holier than thou" so much as holy, that we become the best that we can be. Stay with us, O God. Don't go far away. Keep your Holy Spirit nearby.

God of the living, we are reminded of our community this day: those who are sitting in this holy place, those who are present in mind and soul, those who have left us recently or long ago. You call all your faithful people Saints, and even in our imperfection, we are grateful to be called to worship you with honor. Let this day be not only a time for memories, but a time for celebration of our connection throughout the ages.

This day we also remember all our family and friends, and friends we haven't met yet, that they enjoy peace, comfort, and wholeness in their battle for good health.

May we bring here our sacrifice of thanks and praise for your sake, and for the sake of all your saints throughout time. Let us pray together. . .

**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.**

**PRAYER RESPONSE: NCH 774 "Shepherd Lead"**

**Shepherd, lead, lead me in your righteousness,  
make your way plain before my face.**

**For it is you, God, you, God only,  
who makes me to lie down in safety.**

**INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:**

Luke tells us that Jesus introduced a strange kind of arithmetic. He said, when you give things away, you actually have more. Maybe it's that we get more of what we really need – freedom from the stuff that so often can hold us hostage, keeping us from a life that is truly free. The saints of old seemed to know this. So, we are invited to give not only because it helps others, but because by giving we are opened up to a fullness we could not otherwise have imagined. It is God's gift to us. May the joy of the saints be our joy today as we offer our gifts to God for the good of the world.

**OFFERTORY: "O God Our Help in Ages Past" Wm. Croft**

**\*DOXOLOGY:**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise Holy Spirit Comforter;  
One God, Triune, whom we adore. Amen.**

**\*UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

**O Giver of Life, continue to form in us a transparent spirit that by our giving and our living others may discover You. Reshape our priorities and grant us a willing vision to see and respond to those hidden saints who reveal something of you in the least likely ways and in the most surprising places. Thank you for calling us into a life such as this and bless these gifts that they may bless others. Amen.**

**\*CLOSING HYMN: NCH 299 "For All the Saints"**

**\*BENEDICTION:**

Beloved of God, trust that the Holy One still forms saints. They might be standing next to you. They might just be you. Trust that God has formed your life to be part of something larger than you could possibly imagine. So go, anticipating that God is already blessing you to bear good news into the world. Yes! Yes! Yes! Amen and Amen!

**\*BENEDICTION RESPONSE: "Let there Be Peace on Earth"**

**POSTLUDE: "We Give Thee Thanks" Janet Rand**

**PRAYER LIST:** Urban Baum, David Seneczyn, Warren Neff, Carol White, Cheri Schutzenhofer, Theo Mally, Jane Riess,

Sandy Fort, Becky Ballard, Rosemary Williams, Larry Wagner, Floyd Lorenz, Alister and Garrett Pickens, Christopher Captain, Julie Captain.

**"Hanging of the Greens"**

After worship next Sunday (November 27) please help decorate the sanctuary, narthex and fellowship hall for Advent and Christmas. We will have a bite to eat and then go to work. It shouldn't take long with many hands!

And..

Many thanks to Tom Miller and Jim Eisenhauer for installing a new system for hanging banners. No more climbing ladders! No more crooked banners!