

SUNDAY, JULY 19, 2026
EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST



St. John United Church of Christ

10207 Lincoln Trail

Fairview Heights, IL

Telephone 618-397-6323

e-mail– stjohnuccfairview@gmail.com

Website: www.stjohnfairview.org

Rev. Rosemary Captain

Email: revrosemarycaptain@gmail.com

Organist – Sharon Banjavcic

Liturgy - Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay

Ushers -

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.

Respond with words in bold print.

Bible translation – CEB Common English Bible

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS

THE BELL IS RUNG

PRELUDE: “God’s Glory Is All Around”

Ernest H. Sheppard

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Hoyleton Ministries

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP: (inspired by Genesis 28, Psalm 139 and Romans 8)**

One: The Holy One is in this place! Do we know it?

Many: The Holy One has searched and known us, our path, and all our ways.

One: The Holy One is in this place! Such knowledge is too wonderful!

Many: Wherever we go, Spirit goes with us! We cannot flee for God is there!

One: The Holy One is in this place! Spirit bears witness with our spirit, and we gather and wait in hope.

Many: The Holy One is with us. Praise God!

***INVOCATION:**

Holy Love, God of Sarah and Rebekah, we come before you knowing you go before us and you keep us in safety. We come to this place in space and time across distance and difference as your offspring to receive an inheritance of your promise and to renew our lives in your covenant. Let our spirits receive your word and our hearts ignite with your compassion, mercy, and

righteousness. Let your kingdom spread in us and through us as we worship and follow you. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 1 “Immortal, Invisible, God only Wise”**

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

Righteous God, test us and stretch us, strengthen us in your truth and justice, fortify us with resolve and power so that we might be the people you have called us to be. Holy One, even beyond forgiveness, we seek transformation. Renew our minds, open our hearts, and release our hands to repair, reconcile, and restore in your name. Keep us from being the cause of suffering. Equip us to be agents of healing. Make us attentive to your presence. Attune us to your will. Lead us on the path you have paved before us so that the grace we receive will sow seeds of redemption and healing in the world. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Offspring of the Divine, live in your power and purpose as beneficiaries of the new covenant and conspirators of God’s liberating work and impact in the world. Receive God’s forgiveness and move beyond shame and

judgment to new life and right relationships with the Holy One and neighbor.

***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 twice)
(end) One God always here. One God always here.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis 28:10-19a

From “The Message”

¹⁰⁻¹² Jacob left Beersheba and went to Haran. He came to a certain place and camped for the night since the sun had set. He took one of the stones there, set it under his head and lay down to sleep. And he dreamed: A stairway was set on the ground and it reached all the way to the sky; angels of God were going up and going down on it. ¹³⁻¹⁵ Then God was right before him, saying, “I am God, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. I’m giving the ground on which you are sleeping to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will be as the dust of the Earth; they’ll stretch from west to east and from north to south. All the families of the Earth will bless themselves in you and your descendants. Yes. I’ll stay with you, I’ll protect you wherever you go, and I’ll

bring you back to this very ground. I'll stick with you until I've done everything I promised you."

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ Jacob woke up from his sleep. He said, "God is in this place—truly. And I didn't even know it!" He was terrified. He whispered in awe, "Incredible. Wonderful. Holy. This is God's House. This is the Gate of Heaven."

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Jacob was up first thing in the morning. He took the stone he had used for his pillow and stood it up as a memorial pillar and poured oil over it. He christened the place Bethel (God's House). The name of the town had been Luz until then.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24

Page 715 - 716

EPISTLE LESSON: Romans 8:12-25 The words of Paul

¹² So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. ¹³ If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. ¹⁵ You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children. With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children. ¹⁷ But if we are

children, we are also heirs. We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with him so that we can also be glorified with him.

Our suffering and our hope

¹⁸ I believe that the present suffering is nothing compared to the coming glory that is going to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ The whole creation waits breathless with anticipation for the revelation of God's sons and daughters. ²⁰ Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice—it was the choice of the one who subjected it—but in the hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from slavery to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of God's children. ²² We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now. ²³ And it's not only the creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free. ²⁴ We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn't hope. Who hopes for what they already see? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we don't see, we wait for it with patience.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

Parable of the weeds

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like someone who planted good seed in his field. ²⁵ While people were sleeping, an enemy came and

planted weeds among the wheat and went away.²⁶ When the stalks sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ “The servants of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Master, didn’t you plant good seed in your field? Then how is it that it has weeds?’

²⁸ “‘An enemy has done this,’ he answered.

“The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us to go and gather them?’

²⁹ “But the landowner said, ‘No, because if you gather the weeds, you’ll pull up the wheat along with them.’³⁰ Let both grow side by side until the harvest. And at harvesttime I’ll say to the harvesters, “First gather the weeds and tie them together in bundles to be burned. But bring the wheat into my barn.””

MESSAGE: “Weeds and Wheat”

Today we have another agricultural parable from Matthew’s chapter 13. As parables go, this one is a little odd; it’s not one of Matthew’s best. Maybe you noticed it, too. Of course, we don’t know who wrote the Gospel of Matthew, but we’ll call him Matthew anyway. Many scholars believe that Jesus never said this parable. It is believed that Matthew wrote this one for his church.

We know that, after Jesus returned to his father, many of the disciples went out to gather in more followers of Christ. Some were Jews. Some were not. To keep these

people together, churches were formed. They met in homes or in groups along the shores of the Galilee. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each started their own little church, and each wrote their gospel to teach the new followers about the life of Jesus. When they saw difficulties in their little church, they wrote something in their gospel to help the people. It is thought that that is where this parable came from. The Gospel of Matthew is the only place we can find this particular parable.

Although the story line is based on a common fact of experience (weeds grew in wheat fields; weeds were gathered in bundles and burned for fuel while the wheat was preserved in “barns”; and some weeds resembled the wheat in early stages so that wheat was lost in the removal of weeds), (that sounds about right?) still there are elements in the story that unusual attention to themselves.

These elements do not serve to make the story natural and normal but alert the reader to anticipate special meanings. In other words, the reader is “set up” by the story to receive an interpretation, almost as though Matthew began with the interpretation and worked back to the story. For example: the seeds are sown, not by the servants as one would expect, but by the owner, and the weeds by “his enemy.” Who would assume common weeds were sown by anyone? A conflict situation is created. Or again, twice it is said the householder sowed

“good seed.” What other kind would he sow? The word “good” prepares us for its counterpart, evil. Or again, the servants are not to separate the weeds until the harvest when, in fact, farmers of that day more than once during a growing season would remove weeds from a grain field. By all these idiosyncrasies, we are being prepared to anticipate a day of reckoning.

This parable that Matthew wrote presupposes a church situation in which Jesus’ disciples are tempted to become involved in purging evil. Because “the field is the world” (verse 38) it is unclear whether the desire of Jesus’ followers is to remove evil from the world or, as is more likely, from within the church. Matthew’s church certainly contained undesirable elements, and in that church, as in any others, the desire to achieve purity and perfection was in tension with the obligation to accept, forgive, and restore. Is this beginning to sound like our churches today?

The master’s injunction against efforts to expunge evil had three reasons behind it. First, such attempts now are premature. Second, such attempts have as their usual result the disturbance and loss of the faithful in the process of seeking to eliminate the unfaithful. And third, the task of judging between good and evil belongs not to us but to Christ. We are not to judge but rather to work at reconciliation and to forgive without limitation.

(My thoughts) We are told that we are all sinners. If we want a church without sinners, our pews will be empty. Churches that say they want no sinners in them, my question is, where would you like them to be? In the pews learning how not to sin or out in the streets sinning. What do you think? Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: Video “Path To Peace”

Stacie Pickens – flute, Sharon Banjavcic - piano

PASTORAL PRAYER:

OUR FATHER’S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: Three-fold Amen

Amen, Amen, A-a-men.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

God’s gifts are generous and abundant. Give in the spirit of sufficiency and trust that God has provided for all of our needs. Our gifts enable us to share abundance so that all may feast and rejoice in God’s creation.

OFFERTORY: "To a Wild Rose" Edward MacDowell

***DOXOLOGY:**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above you heavenly host;**

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING**
Holy One, may these gifts reflect our trust in you and
your provision. Magnify them for your purpose and
grant us discernment to be caretakers of the resources
entrusted to us. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 423 "Great is Your Faithfulness"**

***BENEDICTION (INSPIRED BY MATTHEW 13)**

In God, promises are not contained. They overflow.
Therefore, as you go from this time of communal
worship

Return as participants in the communal witness

To spread the overwhelming love of God

To spread the overarching peace of God

And to spread the overcoming hope of God

Like good seeds, sowing and planting a future

That will shine like the sun in the kingdom of God

BENEDICTION RESPONSE: 571

O God of Love, O God of Peace

Make wars throughout the world to cease.

The wrath of human wrong restrain;

Give peace, O God, give peace again!

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE: "Jubilate Deo" Edward H. Wetherill

PRAYER LIST: Becky Ballard, Russ Hartmann, Marilyn
Paul, Mary Lou and Urban Baum, Pam and Syd Safriet,
Yvonne Weber, Jackie Canterbury, Sue Ganschietz, our
Beloved Country.