

SUNDAY, JULY 5, 2026
SIXTH 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

Organist – Sharon Banjavcic

Liturgy – Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay

Communion Liturgy – Rev. Thom Shuman

Ushers –

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.

Respond with words in bold print.

Turn off cell phones.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: “Hymn for Our Country” John M. Rasley

PENNIES FOR MISSION:

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP (INSPIRED BY PSALM 45)**

One: In joy and gladness, enter the presence of the Sovereign One who rules and reigns over all creation.

Worship the Holy One!

Many: The voice of the Holy One is powerful and gracious, loving and challenging, compassionate and convicting.

One: In joy and gladness, receive the fresh wind of the Spirit who ignites our hearts and connects us to one another. Worship the Holy Spirit!

Many: The voice of the Holy Spirit gives wisdom, discernment, comfort, and confirmation.

One: In joy and gladness, follow the path of the Embodied One. Worship God With Us!

Many: The voice of God With Us models for us what to say and how to live. Praise God!

***INVOCATION:**

God of all nations and all peoples, bless us as we gather in your name. Open us to vessels in building your kingdom and spreading the good news of life and liberty.

May we drink from the well of your abundance. May our cups overflow with your love. May our hearts burn in your presence. Be with us in this time and place. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 349 "I Come With Joy"**

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

Holy One, we come before you from different perspectives. Some come in a spirit of celebration. Others bring lament and despair. All of us benefit from the power of transformed lives, individually, relationally, and communally. We pray in the assurance that new life is available. We ask for the strength, courage, and persistence to seek your kingdom, peace, justice and righteousness in any and all circumstances and for all people and creation. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE**

The God of the covenant is still with us. By the power of the Spirit, we receive the fruit necessary to fuel our shared commitment and commission to building the world as God would have it over the world we inherit. God has given us everything we need to contribute, including the community of faith so that we do not labor alone.

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

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49,58-67

³⁴The man said, "I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵The Lord has richly blessed my master, has made him a great man, and has given him flocks, cattle, silver, gold, men servants, women servants, camels, and donkeys. ³⁶My master's wife Sarah gave birth to a son for my master in her old age, and he's given him everything he owns. ³⁷My master made me give him my word: 'Don't choose a wife for my son from the Canaanite women, in whose land I'm living. ³⁸No, instead, go to my father's household and to my relatives and choose a wife for my son.'

⁴²"Today I arrived at the spring, and I said, 'Lord, God of my master Abraham, if you wish to make the trip I'm taking successful, ⁴³when I'm standing by the spring and the young woman who comes out to draw water and to whom I say, "Please give me a little drink of water from your jar," ⁴⁴and she responds to me, "Drink, and I will draw water for your camels too," may she be the woman the Lord has selected for my master's son.' ⁴⁵Before I

finished saying this to myself, Rebekah came out with her water jar on her shoulder and went down to the spring to draw water. And I said to her, 'Please give me something to drink.' ⁴⁶ She immediately lowered her water jar and said, 'Drink, and I will give your camels something to drink too.' So I drank and she also gave water to the camels. ⁴⁷ Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' And she said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son whom Milcah bore him.' I put a ring in her nose and bracelets on her arms. ⁴⁸ I bowed and worshipped the Lord and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who led me in the right direction to choose the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son. ⁴⁹ Now if you're loyal and faithful to my master, tell me. If not, tell me so I will know where I stand either way."

⁵⁸ They called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will go."

⁵⁹ So they sent off their sister Rebekah, her nurse, Abraham's servant, and his men. ⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah, saying to her,

"May you, our sister, become
thousands of ten thousand;
may your children possess
their enemies' cities."

⁶¹ Rebekah and her young women got up, mounted the camels, and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left. ⁶² Now Isaac had come from the region of Beer-lahai-roi and had settled in the arid southern plain. ⁶³ One evening, Isaac went out to inspect the pasture, and while staring he saw camels approaching. ⁶⁴ Rebekah stared at Isaac. She got down from the camel ⁶⁵ and said to the servant, "Who is this man walking through the pasture to meet us?" The servant said, "He's my master." So she took her headscarf and covered herself. ⁶⁶ The servant told Isaac everything that had happened. ⁶⁷ Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent. He received Rebekah as his wife and loved her. So, Isaac found comfort after his mother's death.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 45:10-17 Page 650-651

EPISTLE LESSON: Romans 7:15-25a ¹⁵ I don't know what I'm doing, because I don't do what I want to do. Instead, I do the thing that I hate. ¹⁶ But if I'm doing the thing that I don't want to do, I'm agreeing that the Law is right. ¹⁷ But now I'm not the one doing it anymore. Instead, it's sin that lives in me. ¹⁸ I know that good doesn't live in me—that is, in my body. The desire to do good is inside of me, but I can't do it. ¹⁹ I don't do the good that I want to do, but I do the evil that I don't want

to do. ²⁰ But if I do the very thing that I don't want to do, then I'm not the one doing it anymore. Instead, it is sin that lives in me that is doing it. ²¹ So I find that, as a rule, when I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me. ²² I gladly agree with the Law on the inside, ²³ but I see a different law at work in my body. It wages a war against the law of my mind and takes me prisoner with the law of sin that is in my body. ²⁴ I'm a miserable human being. Who will deliver me from this dead corpse? ²⁵ Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then I'm a slave to God's Law in my mind, but I'm a slave to sin's law in my body.

***GOSPEL: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

This generation

¹⁶ "To what will I compare this generation? It is like a child sitting in the marketplaces calling out to others, ¹⁷ 'We played the flute for you and you didn't dance. We sang a funeral song and you didn't mourn.' ¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' ¹⁹ Yet the Human One came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved to be right by her works."

The Father and the Son

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you've hidden these things

from the wise and intelligent and have shown them to babies. ²⁶ Indeed, Father, this brings you happiness. ²⁷ "My Father has handed all things over to me. No one knows the Son except the Father. And nobody knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wants to reveal him. ²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I'm gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. ³⁰ My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light."

MESSAGE: ²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest."

For me, the Gospel reading for showed me a different way to look at Jesus and John the Baptist. I thought I knew all about Jesus; however, today the author of the Gospel of Matthew, gave us a description of Jesus I had never imagined before. It starts way back when Moses gave warnings to the children of the exodus from Egypt. Most societies have warned children about certain types of people, and the ancient Israelites were no exception. In the book of Deuteronomy, which sets out the commands and warnings given by Moses to the children of Israel immediately before they crossed the river to take possession of the promised land, there are clear

warnings about certain types of persons and what they may do.

Beware of false prophets, said Moses; they will try to lead you astray from following YAHWEH, and you must resist them. Beware of a rebellious son, he said, one who refuses to obey his parents. He will bring evil upon Israel, and his parents must bring him to the elders of the town and have them put him to death.

This harsh commandment (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) instructs the parents of such a son to accuse him in a particular way. “This son of ours”, they must say, “is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard”. Then the people must stone him to death.

But where have we heard this sort of thing before? In this passage – on the lips of Jesus himself. This, it seems, is what people are saying about him: (My first surprise about Jesus.) He’s a guzzler and a boozier, a glutton and a drunkard, he likes his parties and his food and drink. “This Jesus must be a rebellious son, leading Israel astray! Maybe he’s a false prophet as well. (This charge surfaces again later in this Gospel.)

Jesus was up against it, and clearly found it frustrating. John the Baptist had led a life of self-denial, like the holy ascetics in many traditions. (ascetics were people who practiced severe self-discipline and abstention from all forms of indulgence, typically for

religious reasons.) Ordinary people had found that hard to take. They had even suspected that a demon might have got into him. Now here was Jesus himself, celebrating the kingdom of heaven with all and sundry, throwing parties which spoke of God’s lavish, generous love and forgiveness – and people accused him of being a rebel, a son who wouldn’t behave, a false prophet! (My second surprise.) The answer, of course, then and now, is that people don’t like the challenge, either of someone who points them to a different sort of life entirely, or of someone who shows that God’s love is breaking into the world in a new way, like a fresh breeze blowing into a garden and shaking old blossoms off the trees.

And they certainly didn’t like it when this meant Jesus challenging them to turn away from the direction they’d been going and take the opposite path instead. Some of Jesus’ sternest warnings are reserved, as in verses 20-24, for those refuse this call. Why? What was going on? Was he just angry, and calling down a curse on them?

No. These warnings are among the most sober and serious words he ever said. He had lived in Capernaum and surrounding neighborhoods. They were his friends, the baker where he bought bread every day. And Jesus knew now, despite all the remarkable things he’s done for them, that they were bent on going their own way,

following their own vision of God's kingdom. And he knew where that would lead. Their vision of the kingdom was all about revolution. Swords, spears, surprise attacks; some hurt, some killed.

Jesus was offering a last chance to embrace a different kingdom vision. He had outlined it in his great sermon and the teaching he was giving in towns and villages all over Galilee. He was living it out on the street and in houses filled with laughter and friendship. He was showing how power it was with his healings. And they didn't want it – and were ready to use any excuse to avoid the issue.

What are the excuses people use today to avoid the issue of the kingdom? What is likely to happen as a result? How can we continue to live and teach God's kingdom in a world that basically doesn't want to know? Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: "America the Beautiful" Video by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir

PASTORAL PRAYER:

OUR LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: 769

Hear our prayer, O God, hear our prayer, O God;

Incline your ear to us, and grant us your peace.

***INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:**

The Holy One gives gifts beyond measure or compare. The Holy One gives with abundance and generosity. The Holy has provided for every need and invites us to ensure equitable, faithful, and mutual sharing so that no one needs to experience a lack of resources. Let us give from the well of abundance to honor God's faithfulness and to demonstrate trust in God's provision.

OFFERTORY: "God Bless America" Irving Berlin

***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. Amen.

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING:**

Giving God, make us a people who not only receive your gifts, but empower us to give in mutual measure so that all needs are met. Bless these gifts and amplify their impact as a witness to your goodness and so all may flourish in your name. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

May our promise keeping God be with you.

And with you as well.

Though weary, broken, fearful,
let us offer our hearts to God.

**For God will heal our hearts,
strengthen them, fill them with hope.**

Come now and join all creation
in singing glad songs to God.

**Our voices join with morning songbirds
and crickets chirping in the night.**

You lifted your voices, God of incredible harmony,
singing into the silence of chaos and bringing forth
wonder and beauty. Herons standing on one leg,
bullfrogs echoing across ponds, bat flying through
evening shadows, all were the gifts you shared
with those who were crafted in your image.
We could have lived in your garden,
but we just kept making the wrong choices,
listening more to the whispers of temptation
than to your songs of compassion. more times than you
can count, you sent women and men to sing your songs,
tell of your hopes, shout your invitation to return,
but we constantly choose the wrong paths,
rather than following your heart.

And so, you sent your Child,
the One who would experience our lives,
know our struggles, and stay with us in every moment.

With all who seem to have their act together,
with those who keep making the same foolish choices,
we sing our praises to God:

**You are holy, God who does not play favorites.
We join all creation in forever singing your praises.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One whose life
is ever interwoven with ours.
Hosanna in the highest!**

While you alone are holy, God of all space and time,
you are never afraid to get your hands dirty,
as seen in your creation. Your beloved Child chose
to become one of us, in every way. In him, the
vulnerable find an ally to defend them from the bullies
of wealth. In him, frightened little children hear lullabies
of grace so they can sleep at night. In him,
transgendered kids are told over and over again
how much they are loved. In him, seduction's grip is
broken, death's power is shattered, and his siblings are
gifted with the promise of resurrection life.

As we remember his life, love, and grace,
as we are bound together in life and death,
we proclaim that mystery we call faith:

**Gathering up his fears,
Jesus forged them into faith.
Gathering up his brokenness,
Jesus walked into new life.
Gathering us into his heart,
Jesus will journey home with us.**

Pour out your Spirit, Loving God,
upon the gifts of the Table
and upon your children gathered here.
As we eat of the broken bread,
may we be made whole, so we can
open up schools of peace,
welcome the forgotten,
seek justice for all people.
As we drink from the cup of grace,
may our thirst for reconciliation
never be quenched,
may our longing for hope be satisfied,
may our love be shared with everyone we meet.

And when all time comes to an end,
gather us with our siblings

from every moment and every space,
feeding us at the Table
which has room for everyone,
God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

THE ELEMENTS ARE SHARED.

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

We give thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 570 “We Shall Overcome”**

***BENEDICTION:**

As you go,
Celebrate liberty and pursue justice
Pray for the land on which you are planted
And open space for neighbors seeking a home
Remember the challenges and blessings of the past
Work for the promise and hope of the future
Knowing that the God of the Covenant
Lives, reigns, and abides with us
As the journey continues

Go in peace and go for peace
To love and to serve

***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: "Battle Hymn of the Republic" Roger C.
Wilson**

PRAYER LIST: Jane Bopp, Eleanor, Claire, Leah Captain,
Bennie Pointer, Ginny Ganschietz, Becky Ballard, Russ
Hartmann, Marilyn Paul, Mary Lou and Urban Baum,
Pam and Syd Safriet, Yvonne Weber, Jackie Canterbury,
Sue Ganschietz, our beloved country.