St. John United Church of Christ

"In Christ We Live, Celebrate, & Serve"

November 1, 2026, 2026 — 23rd Sunday after Pentecost (A)
Rev. Michelle Torigian — David R. Ekstrand, Dir. of Music
9:30 Zoom & In-Person Worship — 9:30 Sunday School for Children
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Large print bulletins are available from the Ushers.

Bold italic denotes congregation reads or sings.

*Denotes all who are able, please stand.

WE COME TO WORSHIP GOD

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC AND BELLS CALLING TO WORSHIP

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*GREETING ONE ANOTHER WITH A SMILE AND WAVE

*RESPONSE[1] "***Shine, Jesus, Shine"*** **#319**

Lord, the light of your love is shining, in the midst of the darkness shining; Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us, set us free by the truth you now bring us, shine on me, shine on me.

MESSAGE FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN — Psalm 34:1 (NRSV)
I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.
[And also with you.]

PRELUDE AND CENTERING OUR HEARTS ON WORSHIP
What a Friend We have in Jesus

CALL TO WORSHIP AND PRAYER[2]
We seek God at all times
And God answers us, delivering us from our fears.

Through our lives we bless God at all times.

Through our voices we praise God continuously.

Let us taste and see that God is good!

With joy we make God our refuge and strength.

We shine the light of God throughout the day and into the night.

Let us exalt God's name together.

Let us pray together:

God of All Blessings,
With joy, we celebrate this new week with you. With gladness, our hearts delight in this space as we seek to live our faith authentically. As we work to create your Realm here on earth, grant us strength. May we be focused on blessing you, Holy One. Amen.

*OPENING HYMN *Stand Up and Bless the Lord* #11

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Illuminating God,
We often block your light from reaching our neighbors. We often create shadows instead of ensuring all can experience your radiance. Like plants on this earth, our neighbors do not flourish without the strength of your light. May your entire creation experience your illumination. May we work together to tear down barriers to your light for the well-being of your children. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

God's grace flows abundantly in our world. May we continue to work together to share God's grace with our neighbors, ensuring that they know our Creator's love. Amen..

*RESPONSE ***"On Eagle's Wings"*** Refrain Only #438

And he will raise you up on eagle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine the sun and hold you in the palm of his hand.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

HEBREW SCRIPTURE LESSON Psalm 34:1-10

1 I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in
my mouth. 2 My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear
and be glad. 3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name
together. 4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me
from all my fears. 5 Look to him, and be radiant, so your faces shall
never be ashamed. 6 This poor soul cried and was heard by the LORD
and was saved from every trouble. 7 The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him and delivers them. 8 O taste and see that
the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him. 9 O fear
the LORD, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want.
10 The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the
LORD lack no good thing.

SPECIAL MUSIC *Great Is the Lord*

GOSPEL LESSON Matthew 23:1-12

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 2 "The scribes
and the Pharisees sit on Moses's seat; 3 therefore, do whatever they
teach you and follow it, but do not do as they do, for they do not
practice what they teach. 4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear,
and lay them on the shoulders of others, but they themselves are
unwilling to lift a finger to move them. 5 They do all their deeds to be
seen by others, for they make their phylacteries broad and their
fringes long. 6 They love to have the place of honor at banquets and
the best seats in the synagogues 7 and to be greeted with respect in
the marketplaces and to have people call them rabbi. 8 But you are
not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all
brothers and sisters. 9 And call no one your father on earth, for you
have one Father, the one in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called
instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. 11 The greatest
among you will be your servant. 12 All who exalt themselves will be
humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

SERMON Flipping the Narrative

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

*HYMN ***"Be Thou My Vision"*** #502

PASTORAL PRAYER

RESPONSE ***"The Lord's Prayer"*** (One Amen) #740

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

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

STEWARDSHIP INVITATION

We are given the opportunity to create God's Realm here on earth by sharing our talents, treasures, and time. May we contemplate the ways we can share our time and talents throughout each week. May we take time today to share our treasures with the church and community to continue to grow God's Realm for all to know.

OFFERTORY *Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying*

*RESPONSE[3] ***"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"*** Vs. 1 #72

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father, there is no shadow of turning with thee; thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not; as thou has been thou forever will be. Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed thy hand hath provided— great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

*UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Source of All Blessings,
With gratitude, we share these offerings with this community and all of your Creation. With thanksgiving, we continue to seek for new ways to bless you and our neighbors, God. May the sharing of our gifts fill our hearts with joy. May we work together to build your Realm here on earth. Amen.

INVITATION[4]
Siblings in Christ, join me today at this table to a feast belonging to Jesus the Christ. Siblings in Christ, join me today for a feast which will comfort our souls. Siblings in Christ, join me in this sacrament knowing that we will grow close to God, neighbor, and self at this table.

COMMUNION PRAYER

PREPARING AND SHARING THE ELEMENTS

All are invited to the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The inner circle of cups contain white grape juice. The outer circles contain wine. Please hold each element when served in the pews so all may partake together, remembering that in the upper room last supper Jesus said, "take this and divide it among yourselves." (Luke 22:17b)

*UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING[4]
We express our gratitude for this meal, Divine Host. We give thanks for the times we spent with our loved ones here at this table, and we thank you that this table is a reminder of our love for you, God. Accompany us into the world with peace in our hearts and strength in the days to come. Amen.

*CLOSING SONG ***"Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ"*** #698

*THE BLESSING
Throughout our world, may we find ways to bless our Creator God. Throughout our region, may we find ways to bless our Redeemer Christ. Throughout our community, may we find ways to bless our Sustainer Spirit. By sharing Divine Light and Love in our world, we build the Realm of Christ here on earth.

*POSTLUDE *Go My Children with My Blessing*

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