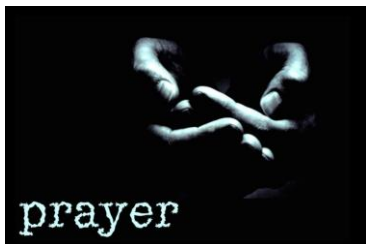


**SEPTEMBER 26, 2021
18TH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST**



**St. John United Church of Christ
10207 Lincoln Trail, Fairview
Heights, IL
397-6323**

Website: www.stjohnfairview.org

Rev. Rosemary Captain

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Come one and all to mee God here. Let all who are suffering find hope in this place.

**We have come that God might raise us up.
Our only hope is in the Maker of heaven
and earth.**

Come, all who are weary and oppressed.
God offers relief and enlists our mutual
helpfulness.

**God hears our prayers and answers us.
God equips us to be helpful to one
another.**

Come together to sing songs of praise to
God.

Give thanks for God's wondrous deeds.
**God's glory abides in this place of worship.
God's presence and help are real.**

***UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION:**

May all your people find favor with you this day, God of majesty and power. Turn our sorrow into gladness and our mourning into a holiday, a holy day, in which to praise you and find ways to help those less fortunate than ourselves. Lift us from our daily preoccupations that we may Pray with earnest intent, both to thank you and to be changed by you. Let our prayers be powerful and effective. May our worship be alive and life-changing. May the service we extend find favor in your eyes, blessed God. Amen.

***GLORIA: NCH 759**

**Glory to the Creator, the Christ,
the Holy Spirit, Three-in-One;
As it was in the beginning, is now,**

**and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen. Amen.**

***GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 9:38-50 CEB**

³⁸ John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw someone throwing demons out in your name, and we tried to stop him because he wasn’t following us.”

³⁹ Jesus replied, “Don’t stop him. No one who does powerful acts in my name can quickly turn around and curse me. ⁴⁰ Whoever isn’t against us is for us. ⁴¹ I assure you that whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will certainly be rewarded.

⁴² “As for whoever causes these little ones who believe in me to trip and fall into sin, it would be better for them to have a huge stone hung around their necks and to be thrown into the lake. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to fall into sin, chop it off. It’s better for you to enter into life crippled than to go away with two hands into the fire of hell, which can’t be put out. ⁴⁵ If your foot causes you to fall into sin, chop it off. It’s better for you to enter life lame than to be thrown into hell with two feet. ⁴⁷ If your eye causes you to fall into sin, tear it out. It’s better for you to enter God’s kingdom with one eye than to be thrown into hell with two. ⁴⁸ That’s a place *where worms don’t die and the fire never goes out*. ⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ Salt is good; but if salt

loses its saltiness, how will it become salty again? Maintain salt among yourselves and keep peace with each other.”

This is the word of God.
It is true and can be trusted.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: “They’re not one of us!”

Mark 9:38 John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw someone throwing demons out in your name, and we tried to stop him because he wasn’t following us.”

Even in the time of the disciples, people were afraid of others they didn’t know. We now call them “the other”. As humans, we have a tendency to ignore or demonize

people who look or act differently than we do.

Hollywood has made lots of money on that fact. “The Planet of the Apes” for one. In 1985 there was a movie called “Enemy Mine” with Dennis Quaid and Lou Gossett Jr.; another science fiction movie where a human from earth and an alien with horns and odd skin sort of like a dinosaur. They are marooned together on a planet and even though their cultures are enemies, they have to work together to survive. That movie actually has a very good message. If you have a chance to watch the video, I recommend it.

In 1984 – 1985 my oldest daughter loved to watch “V!!!” on tv. The earth had been invaded by lizard-like beings from another

planet called visitors. If you’re going you hate someone that looks different than us, be sure to choose a reptile. Very few people like snakes and lizards.

And that’s exactly the point. why do we love these creatures who are not like us, but others we turn away from in fear? We love panda bears. Maybe because these creatures are fuzzy, furry, and have lovely eyes. If the “other” is a dog, maybe we can train or attempt to train them to obey our orders. We have dominance over them. We feed them so they should do what we say.

And then there are humans who are down on their luck. They are homeless and hungry. “If we feed them, they should do what we say”. After all, they need to be

“worthy” of our generosity. Does God judge each of us to see if we are “worthy” of God’s grace and blessings? I think not. A few years back, there was a story in the news about a couple that raised money for a homeless man who did a good deed, but they didn’t give him the money because “he might use it on alcohol or drugs.”

Eventually a judge made them give the homeless man all the money, but I think they had already spent some of it on themselves. They were really “good Samaritans”?

Jesus says “love your neighbors and love your enemies”. There are no “buts” or “only on our conditions” connected to that commandment. Love them all, whether or not they are soft, fluffy and have sad eyes.

Jesus loved them all, even reptiles, and even us. And so should we. Amen. PS But please don’t make me touch a snake.

Pastor R.

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with Silent Prayer. Ending with the Lord’s Prayer.

HYMN NCH 32

“God of the sparrow, God of the whale, God of the swirling stars

How does the creature say awe, how does the creature say praise?

God of the hungry God of the sick, God of the prodigal,

How does the creature say care, how does the creature say life?

God of the ages, God near at hand, God of the loving heart

How do your children say joy, how do your children say home?"

Those are some of the words to hymn 32 and that is the God we pray to, the God of all: All things, all creatures, all people, everything in nature, And dear God, we are so grateful for all these blessings you have bestowed on us, humble humans.

We humans who deserve nothing, yet you have given us everything, including your Son, Jesus.

Today we lift up all those who are suffering from lack of food, water, and shelter. We pray for all those who seek a safe place to raise their families as they leave countries with violence or drought or earthquakes. Where is that safe place?

We pray for those who seek shelter in your arms in other ways; those suffering from illness, injury, sickness, pain, loneliness and those who are grieving.

We pray for all those on our prayer list. We pray for our government leadership in Washington. We pray for peace as they deal with disagreement and hurtful words. Dear god help them make wise decisions for all the people. **All the people. All the people.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed it be your 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.**

INVITATION TO SHARE: Like salt that enhances the flavor of food, Christians are called to share the joy and gladness we are discovering in our relationship with Jesus Christ. The good news is extended through our support of the church and its ministries.

***DOXOLOGY: NCH 780**

**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:**

We dedicate ourselves and our offerings to the work of your church. For those who are sick, who are suffering, who are grieving, who are lost, we have words of hope and acts of caring. We stand with all who face discrimination, oppression, and confusion, seeking to work with them for justice and a meaningful existence. As you have accepted us, we reach out to include all your children in the family of mutuality, self-revelation, and growing in love. Amen.

***BENEDICTION:** May the God of all, remind all of us to care for all of us. Take Jesus with you as you search for ways to live that care. Amen.

PRAYER LIST:

Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, Jim Garrett,
Agnes Doctolero, Julie Walker, David
Seneczyn, Cathy Ganschinietz, Warren Neff,
Jack Harris, Wayne Huff, Jackie Canterbury,
Doris Moody, Pastor Rosemary Captain.

Pray for the congregation of St. Peter's UCC,
Lenzburg and the family of Rev. Bob Coffey
as they mourn his death on Friday, Sept 17.
Rev. Coffey was the Pastor at Lenzburg St.
Peter's UCC.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3:

Riven Quartet, a men's Gospel quartet will
lead us in worship for World-Wide
Communion Sunday. You know what they

say -- when you sing, you worship twice!
You will be moved and inspired by the
music and message that day