

**TOTENFEST
ALL SAINTS' DAY
NOVEMBER 23, 2025**



**ST. JOHN
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture texts
are from the **Common English Bible (CEB)**

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” Tom Fettke

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Open and Affirming Coalition

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: Praise God, all people who are called to be saints.
Sing a new song in the assembly of the faithful.

Many: We will be glad in God our Maker.

We will rejoice with music and dancing.

One: God takes pleasure in us and receives our worship.
God lifts up the humble and invites us to share God’s
glory.

Many: We will not cease to give thanks in all things.

We look to God for revelation and wisdom.

One: Listen here for God’s Word of truth.

Share with one another the gospel of salvation.

Many: We are here to seek a better way of life.

We have come to learn and to do what God intends.

***INVOCATION:** Grant us today a vision of your reign and
an awareness of your presence, mighty God. Draw us
away from the distortions of the world to a clearer
understanding of your Word of truth. Send your Holy
Spirit among us, as you have promised. Knit us together
in love so Christ may live in all we do and say. Empower
our ministries with deep faith and abiding hope. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 381 “Faith of the Martyrs”**

***CALL TO CONFESSION:** In Christ, the selfish distortions of our times are challenged. The self-centered appetites of rampant individualism are called into question. Christ calls us away from our preoccupation with riches, public, self-congratulation, and defensiveness. The world’s values are reversed as we turn the other cheek and give more than is asked.

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

Most High God, we confess that we have not aspired to the best that we know. We have neither set our hope on Christ nor treated others with the love and respect we crave for ourselves. We seek to avoid entering into the depths of another’s pain or risking our wealth out of compassion for all your saints. We do not want to embrace those we perceive as enemies or do good to those who hate us. We are afraid to trust the working of Christ’s power among us. O God, help us to accept the demands of faith that we may experience its joy. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:** God executes judgment among us. Forgiveness is not cheap grace, for God continues to expect faithfulness in all things. Yet when we come in humble penitence and sincere desire

to change our ways, God gives us the victory. We are inheritors of salvation. We are accepted in the family of God. Our way is enlightened, and we are filled with hope. Our values are put right. Praise God!

***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.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 149 Page 722

EPISTLE LESSON: Ephesians 1:11-23

¹¹ We have also received an inheritance in Christ. We were destined by the plan of God, who accomplishes everything according to his design. ¹² We are called to be an honor to God’s glory because we were the first to hope in Christ. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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

¹⁵ Since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, this is the reason that ¹⁶ I don't stop giving thanks to God for you when I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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, ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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, ²¹ far above every ruler and authority and power and angelic power, any power that might be named not only now but in the future. ²² God put everything under Christ's feet and made him head of everything in the church, ²³ 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

²⁰ Jesus raised his eyes to his disciples and said:

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

²¹ Happy are you who hunger now,
because you will be satisfied.

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

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

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

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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

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

them.³¹ 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.

MESSAGE:

In this service of thanksgiving and remembrance, this passage, Luke 6:20-31, may be viewed as a description of the way of life of those who have entered into the “joy of the Lord.” Indirectly but clearly, such a treatment of the text would carry a strong imperative for the listeners who would be reflecting on the lives of the departed faithful with a view to imitating their faith.

This passage may sound familiar. We heard it in February, however I read it from “The Message”, the translation using common language. It certainly gave the blessings and woes a different way to look at what Luke was trying to teach us. This passage also might sound familiar because these words of Jesus were also written in the Gospel of Matthew, however again, slightly different. Today we will concentrate on how Luke wrote the passage.

Luke’s four blessings and four woes are reminiscent of the blessings and curses written in Deuteronomy 11:26-29. Of course, since Deuteronomy was written hundreds of years before the Gospel of Luke, the listeners were different from Luke’s audience and us living even more hundreds of years later. The blessings in Deuteronomy

were for the deprived, the poor, the hungry, the weeping, the rejected; the woes were on their opposites; the rich, the full, the laughing, the accepted. What we hear in Luke is a reversal of fortunes. When Jesus announced in Nazareth that his ministry was to the deprived, he said, after reading Isaiah 61:1-2, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

What we can take that to mean is that the favor of God is upon these people who no longer have to wait until the end times, but is at work now. And to say the blessing of God is “at work” is to be taken literally. Blessings and woes are not suggestions for the good life with a list of problems to be avoided. A blessing or a woe is a divine pronouncement, and it is performative; that is, it does what it says. Such a view of God’s word, which accomplishes what it says, is not a familiar one in a society that speaks of words as “only words.”

The content of verses 27-31 is tightly packed, indicating that Luke is working with a compilation of sayings of Jesus. Let me repeat those verses.

²⁷ “But I say to you who are willing to hear: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on the cheek, offer the other one as well. If someone takes your coat, don’t withhold your shirt either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks and don’t demand your things back from those who take

them. ³¹ *Treat people in the same way that you want them to treat you.*” These verses deal with the disciples’ response to those who victimize others, those who hate, curse, abuse, strike, steal, and beg.

I’m reading from Rev. Fred Craddock, and this is the message I think we all need to take from this passage.

“Followers of Jesus may be victims, but they are not to see themselves as such; they are not to have a victim mentality, being shaped and determined by the hostilities unleashed on them. Rather, they are to take the initiative, responding not in kind or simply playing dead, whining, or excusing themselves as victims. This initiative means acting not according to principles learned from the oppressor but according to the kingdom principles of love, forgiveness, and generosity. This is not a covert strategy for a soft kill, but a living out of the life one learns from God, who is kind even to the ungrateful and the wicked.” (Repeat this).

I think this is a very hard lesson for many of us at this moment in time. Pray for help from the Holy Spirit and God help us all. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: “Look at the World” – Region 9 Choir

CELEBRATING THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US

The old German tradition known as Totenfest, literally meaning "Festival of the Dead", is a

time for remembering by name and in prayer each of our sisters and brothers who have entered into God's eternal home in this past Church Year.

PRAYERS:

Doris Austin	was actually end of 2024	Member
Elaine Whitney	May 30, 2025	Member
Rosemary Williams	October 8, 2025	Member

OTHERS

Glenn Case	2025
Terry Kissel	Jan 18, 2025
Gary Hearne	July 11, 2025
Kyle Eads	July 23, 2025
Lorretta Fant	September 2025
Robert Ballard, Brother of Becky	September 2025
Carl Batha, Brother of Mary Lou	October 2025
Jan Trosper, Bookkeeper	September 28, 2025

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Abba, Father, Mother, Creator, your Son Jesus taught us to pray with such familiarity and also most profoundly to pray for the coming of the kingdom on earth.

Teach the rich the blessedness of generosity; give the poor the understanding that one day the proud will be

brought low, and the lowly lifted up; and teach us all to share unselfishly that there may be enough of your good gifts of the earth for all.

Grant to our leaders in government a concern for people that they may seek to provide for others the benefits they take for themselves. Teach us all to do to others as we would have them do to us.

Discipline our reactions to hostility so that our response to violence may be restrained and that both our private life and our street life may be more orderly and peaceful.

Bless every program that seeks to provide for the hungry both in emergency situations and when there are shortages.

Be with your church everywhere but especially we remember Christian minorities that are persecuted for their faith by people and governments around the world. Grant them consolations in their suffering and grace sufficient for their needs.

We pray for those struggling with health and mental challenges. We pray for all those on our prayer list. May they feel your loving arms of comfort in these times of discomfort.

We pray all these things in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

OUR LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: 773

Remember me, remember me, O Jesus, remember me.

OFFERTORY INVITATION: Our inheritance in Jesus Christ prompts us to share the riches of good news with the world. Our pledges and extra gifts witness to the Word of truth, to the gospel of salvation. Because we have received so much, we seek to use our resources among those who hunger for physical or spiritual food. Let us give generously.

OFFERTORY: "Give Thanks" Henry Smith

***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 OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

God of glory, in thanksgiving for your abundant goodness, we seek to reach out to others as you have reached out to us. We want to treat our brothers and sisters as we wish to be treated, with dignity, understanding, and grace. May these offerings prove

to be a blessing to those who give and those who receive. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 299 “For All the Saints”**

***COMMISSION AND BLESSING:**

One: Rejoice each day and praise God’s name;
leap with joy and dance your faith.

**Many: We have set our hope on Jesus Christ;
We live each day with the promised Holy Spirit.**

One: The eyes of your hearts will be enlightened;
God offers you a spirit of wisdom and revelation.

**Many: We sense the immeasurable greatness of God’s
power. We feel that power at work in Christ’s body, the
church.**

One: You are blessed in every time of want and need.
You are chastened whenever you put your trust in
things.

**Many: We look to God for consolation, acceptance,
and hope. We seek to know God’s reign in our midst.
Amen. Amen.**

**BENEDICTION RESPONSE: “Let There Be Peace on
Earth”**

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE: “Thanks Be to God” Ernest H. Sheppard

PRAYER LIST: Camille Abboud, Ingrid Alexiou, Becky Ballard, Mary Lou and Urban Baum, Ronald Bopp, Private Ben Boyle, Lorraine Brown, Geralyn Gammon, Neal Holiday, Marilyn Paul, Ella Perez, Pam and Syd Safriet, Gloria Steohens, Yvonne Weber, Sue and Dave in Florida.