

All Johanna ever wanted was a home in the woods with a pond where she could sit and watch the sun glisten on the water as she wrote poetry.

She got the home — and the pond. And poetry of praises for God's blessings in her life flowed from her heart onto paper. Praises for God binding her broken heart after losing her fiancé to cancer. Thanks for God giving her courage in her own cancer diagnosis. Gratitude for God making a way for her, after many starts and stops, to finally finish seminary and be ordained in the Episcopal Church — at the age of 60.

So much in awe of God's blessings in the storms of life, that Johanna lovingly named her pond "Beatitude Pond," after the "beatitudes" Jesus spoke about in what is his longest and most surprising teaching that we know as the Sermon on the Mount.

It is in this sermon that we are not only introduced to the Lord's Prayer, but we hear the teaching of the Beatitudes, which comes from the Latin word *beatus*, meaning "blessed" or "fortunate."

But Jesus' illustrations of what being blessed looked like was not what the crowd gathered that day on the mountainside expected to hear. Rather his disciples, curious onlookers — as well as many down-trodden and beleaguered families and individuals who knew intimately about hardships and struggles — were stunned to hear that those who were hungry, hated, poor and weeping, were among the blessed ones.

Blessed are you because God sees and hears and understands. Blessed are you because God is holding and redeeming you. Blessed are you who know that God is still with you amid life's trials because that very knowledge is what keeps a heart beating with hope.

To this day, the Sermon on the Mountain is considered one of the most important teachings of Jesus because of its emphasis on love, forgiveness and a hope beyond hope.

How are we defining blessedness in our lives? When counting our blessings, do we still find ourselves citing material things or achievements?

Johanna didn't. She knew blessings were not found in rainbows after a storm, but in the storm clouds themselves. And on a February day, with the strengthening sun melting the ice on her beloved Beatitude Pond, Johanna's blessedness was made complete.

Her ashes were sprinkled in the very spot where she wrote her poetry of praise to a God who always whispered to her amid the trials in her life, "Blessed are you."

Compassionate God, we praise You for always guiding, strengthening and protecting us. Help us to redefine what blessedness means in our lives. May the blessings we count be the very ones in which we finally recognize Your love and grace among us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



"Blessed are Those" by Cara B. Hochhalter inspired by: Luke 6:17-26

Art Commentary

"This is a sobering version of the Beatitudes as read in the Gospel of Luke. While the poor are blessed, Jesus goes on to chastise those who are wealthy at the expense of the poor!...This image begs for the conversation about our own "riches." Are they attained at the expense of others? How does the image make you feel? What issues does it bring up? Might Jesus cry out for a system in which all are dignified by their labors, with living wages and equitable working conditions?" Cara B.

Hochhalter

St. John’s United Church of Christ

P.O. Box 794, 401 N Main Street, Belvidere, IL 61008

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WELCOME VISITORS! Thank you for coming! Please sign a pew card to place in the offering plate.

WORSHIP: When reading this bulletin Leader Speaks Plain Font, Everyone Speak Bold Font

Nursery: Children are welcome in all aspects of worship. The nursery provides an alternative space so kids and parents can both get what they need from worship. Children are encouraged to check in with their adult before going downstairs with the nursery attendant.

You Are Not Alone

The following support groups meet regularly at St. John’s

- The Belvidere Group (AA) meets at everyday at 7pm. Women’s Group meets Mondays 5:30pm
- T.O.P.S. Mondays 11am



Delicious Fundraiser



Amazon List



T-Shirts

Announcements

- ‡ **Today after worship St. John’s Annual Meeting 11:30 AM**
Meeting ID: 819 8087 9749
Passcode: 968549
- ‡ **Spring Eggstravaganza** Saturday, March 22nd 11am-2pm. Have any potential vendors contact Pastor Muriel
- ‡ **Community Meal** This Wednesday 5p-6p! Menu: Chicken and noodle, green beans, dessert, and drink
- ‡ **Every 3rd Sunday of the month**, St. John’s leads services at **Heritage Woods** at 3 pm. Join after their service for time to socialize with the residents and meet some great people.
- ‡ **Blessing Box** No canned foods or anything that may contain water and freeze in this weather.
- ‡ **Paper Angel Closet** needs Laundry Detergent, Bleach, shampoo, and dish soap.
- ‡ **Menards Ministry:** If you have unused Menards rebates, or even receipts. We use these rebates for projects around the church.
- ‡ **Open Door Fundraiser:** We are still collecting money to upgrade our parking lot doors. Our goal is to collect enough money to automate the doors and make it a double entry to hold the temperature in the office area.

Hello everyone,
It really bothered me at this week’s Council meeting to see Lettie, St. John’s treasurer, so defeated about the finances. I started thinking about it. We are paid up through March for quarterly taxes. Will need \$700 by April. That means if 6 people pledge to give \$10 more dollars a week we will be ready for the bill. Please join me in upping your pledge and encouraging the work of St. John’s.
Thank you
Bonnie, St. John’s Financial Secretary

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Ghost,
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**



General Giving

Scripture Jeremiah 17:5-10
Luke 6:17-26

Sermon "Woe, Woe, Woe"

Invitation to Generosity

Moment for Mission Over Night Cafe

Musical Offering

Doxology

**Praise God, through whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below,
Praise God, above ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Prayer of Dedication

**Generous God, you have planted generosity in
our hearts. Receive our gifts as part of your re-
demptive work to save the world from inequities,
pain, and despair. May our resources be renewed
and magnified so that all needs are met and your
name be praised. Amen.**

Hymn #376 "God, We thank You for our People" v.1,2 &4

Benediction

Postlude

**Down with Them: Service Prayers for the Sixth Sunday after
Epiphany** was written by the Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for
Worship and Theology for the United Church of Christ.

Prelude

Announcements

Choral Introit "Like a Healing Stream"

**Like a healing stream, in a barren desert
Spirit water springing life to dusty earth.
God is trickling through our lives
as in a dream unfolding,
promising revival and rebirth
like a healing stream.**

**Like a gentle rain, on a thirsty garden,
Spirit water come to nourish tiny seed,
God is bubbling through our soil
to coax a new creation,
yearning for an end to want and need
like a gentle rain.**

**Like a river strong, with a restless current.
Spirit water rushing on to distant shore,
God is carving out a channel in a new direction,
calling for an end to hate and war
like a river strong.**

**Like a mighty sea, reaching far horizons,
Spirit water with a love both deep and wide,
God is working in our hearts
to shape a new tomorrow:
God will always challenge and provide!
Like a mighty sea.**

Responsive Welcome Statement

At St. John's United Church of Christ, we are Living
Outwardly & Valuing Everyone!

We live and work amid God's love!

In that spirit, we extend love to all who come into our
midst, regardless of sexual orientation, gender iden-
tity, race, nationality, skin color, culture, differing
abilities, age or political affiliations, to participate fully

in all aspects of church.

Our ministry is to bring the Good News of Christ's love to all.

We work in God's name to tear down walls and build community,

to walk with each other through all of life's circumstances,

to provide for those in need,

to offer comfort to the hurting and the sick,

and to uplift the brokenhearted.

Where we fail, we ask for God's forgiveness.

May the Holy Spirit and our siblings continue to challenge us to do better.

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 1)

Happy are those who delight in the law of the Holy One. Meditate on God's word day and night.

Our Sovereign God watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Happy are those who delight in the law of the Holy One. Plant yourself like a tree and yield good fruit in due season.

Our Sovereign God watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Happy are those who delight in the law of the Holy One. Prosper in all that you do according to kingdom measures.

Our Sovereign God watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Invocation

Righteous God, you create us for community, and you commune with us. May we seek your presence anew this day and in the time to come. Help us to recognize you in the sound and feel of our own breath and in the movement or noise of those around us. Embolden us to faith that surpasses understanding and ministry that reflects

radical trust in you and the path of abundance, compassion, and connection. Let our worship in song and prayer be a foreshadowing of our worship in action and witness. Transform us from despair to hope, complacency to courage, and indifference to love in your name. Amen.

Hymn #313 "Like a Tree beside the Waters"

Tune of "Come, Fount of every blessing"

A New Creed #887

Children's Time

Pastoral Prayer – The Lord's Prayer

Hymn #493 "O Jesus, I Have Promised"

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

Abiding God, you come near to us. We give thanks that you do not turn away from us when our lives reflect messiness, ungraciousness, and complacency. Take us deeper, O God, and help us to confront what needs to be known, addressed, and changed within us, our community, and our world. Forgive us and free us from guilt and shame so that we might embrace a life of accountability and transformation for the glory of God and for the hope of humanity. Amen.

Words of Grace

Good creation of God, the Holy One has begun a good work in you and will see it through to completion. You have power to transform and grace to enter the newness of life. God is near and comes down with us. Receive God's mercy, forgiveness, and grace as the gift that has been given. It is available, yours, and enough.

Gloria Patri