



Connection

November 14, 2023

Editor Pam Lottinville

History of the Community Ecumenical Service Of St. Anne, Illinois

A special thank you to the following people who helped me research the information for this story:

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Peggy Gladu
Sharyl Stevens

For additions or corrections:
contact editor

You, yes Everyone
Is Invited to the
Community Ecumenical
Service on November 19
at 6:00 pm
First Presbyterian Church
Message by
Rev. Randy Knoll of the
First Reformed
Church of Wichert

Refreshments following Service

Coming events at
First Presbyterian Church:

12/14—7:00 Prayer Encounter
12/17—6:00 Blue Christmas
12/24—6:00 Christmas Eve
Service
12/28—Prayer Encounter

For information call: 815 427 8430

It seems that the year 2023 marks the 41st Annual Ecumenical Service. In recent years, the attendance has dwindled, but a few of our local ministers have kept it alive. My purpose in writing this article is to make certain our community knows about this event in advance...**Everyone is invited, God loving and grateful people from all of our local churches and those who have no affiliation.** In addition, it is helpful to know that there is a story here summarized in the history of the St. Anne Community Ecumenical Service.

In 1982, Reverend John Stevens from the First Presbyterian Church discussed the possibility of a joint service with Father Donald Lund, pastor of St. Anne Catholic Church. Charles Chiniquy was once the pastor of each of these churches, first from the Catholic Church, subsequently from the Presbyterian. In his hands, the responsibility of the greatest schism of St. Anne lay. Families were torn apart in the name of their faith and following. Healing this division required years. After all, the result was two very successful churches for years to come. Reverends Stevens, Lund and Reverend Elmer Vander Ploeg of the First Reformed Church of Wichert jointly decided to bring the community together. The results were phenomenal.

Ministers from all local churches were invited to be part of this celebration of thanksgiving held the evening before the holiday. During the first few years, the churches that participated filled each church to capacity. The Church of Christ in Papineau, St. Mary's in Beaverville and Sacred Heart in Pembroke were added. Some churches were not large enough to hold the faithful. In time, the date was moved to the Sunday evening prior to Thanksgiving because of travel and family celebrations. Then as now, a fellowship followed each service with cookies, punch and coffee.

Music, sung in parts, was a large part of this service as the choirs practiced separately and jointly, creating an atmosphere of friendship and the love of music as praise. Two hymns made a lasting impression in my heart: *Come Ye Thankful People* and *We Gather Together*. A debt of gratitude to all who hosted, led the preaching, and shared readings. Many of us would like to continue and improve our commemoration.

It is now time to fill our churches with thanks and praise once again. Come.