



The VINEYARD

Newsletter of The Lockport
United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation

*Open to God's Spirit,
we reach out in Love to the World
and invite All to journey with us*

DECEMBER 2022 – JANUARY 2023

Advent

The Season of Advent began with our worship service on November 27. We started the celebration by decorating the sanctuary Christmas tree and lighting the first candle on our advent wreath – the candle of *Hope*.

We will continue our Advent worship services, as we prepare for Christmas and anticipate the Light that is re-born to us. Each week, we will lift up the themes of Advent. December 4, the coming of *Peace*; December 11, the *Joy* that Christ brings to the world; and December 18, the *Love* that Christ shares with us all. *Come and worship with us for this glorious season!*

The Coming of God

by Ann Weems

Our God is the One who comes to us
in a burning bush,
in an angel's song,
in a newborn child.

Our God is the One
who cannot be found
locked in a church,
not even in the sanctuary.

Our God will be where God will be
with no constraints,
no predictability.

Our God lives where our God lives,
and destruction has no power
and even death
cannot stop the living.



Our God will be born
where God will be born,
but there is no place to look
for the One who comes to us.

When God is ready,
God will come
even to a godforsaken place
like a stable in Bethlehem.

Watch . . .
for you know not when
God comes.

Watch, that you might be found
whenever
wherever
God comes.



Advent Greetings to all at Lockport United Church of Christ!

It is AMAZING how quickly the Christmas season sneaks up on me each year. Do you ever feel that way? I actually got all of my Christmas lights strung up on a nice day in October this year, but now there is so much snow on my porch that I can't even find the cord to plug them in! I definitely haven't started thinking about shopping yet, and the artificial tree and ornaments are still packed up in the basement. Time to get cracking, I guess!

The Advent season is always a special time as we gather for worship on Sundays and on Christmas Eve. Candles are lit, familiar Scriptures are read, and favorite carols are sung. I'm looking forward to being with you in church this month as we celebrate the coming of Jesus into the world and prepare for a fresh, new year ahead. Please note that our Christmas Eve service is being changed to 5:00 pm this year. We hope that the earlier time will allow folks to attend who have difficulty getting out late at night. We will not be meeting on Christmas morning the 25th, and hope that all can spend time celebrating at home or with family.

When you receive this newsletter, we will just be a few days away from the congregational meeting scheduled for December 4 after worship. We will be voting on our annual budget, and the other important agenda item is a vote to list our church building for sale with a local realtor. The result of months of evaluation of our present and anticipated financial and human resources, followed by two congregational meetings to discuss options, is that there was consensus to schedule a vote regarding the building sale. Please be prayerful and attend the meeting on December 4 as we make this important decision.

I believe it is important for us to understand that the potential sale of the building does not mean that our church will close. While that is a choice we might make, there are also several possibilities for how the life of our congregation can continue beyond our current building. Some initial thoughts were shared at a congregational meeting in November, and a summary of those is included in this newsletter. (next page) It is likely that we will have more conversation on this vital topic in the New Year.

May you and those you love experience the joy and peace of our Savior Jesus in this Holy Season and throughout the year to come!

Blessings, Pastor Rick

NOEL HALLELUJAH MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR
Noel Hallelujah Merry Christmas Happy New Year

What Could Lockport UCC's Future Look Like if Our Building is Sold?

Summary of presentation on November 5, 2022

Possible Scenarios:

- 1. Redevelopment as an entirely new UCC congregation.** In this model, assets would be turned over to the NY Conference with the hope that a new church would be started at some point in the future to serve the Lockport community.
 - Upside: New church starts are generally more successful in attracting new members than existing (and declining) churches.
 - Downside: Finding a qualified entrepreneurial leader is challenging, and the failure rate for new church starts is high.
- 2. Re-starting with a new identity.** The congregation would adopt a new name and “brand” and adjusted worship style, launching in a new location with the hope of attracting new people who are looking for a theologically progressive church that represents the message and values of the UCC.
 - Upside: The excitement of a new beginning with a fresh feel.
 - Downside: The re-branded church would “feel” different from current LUCC. No guarantee New people will be attracted to new approach more than current ministry model.
- 3. Relocation to a smaller rented or purchased facility.** In this model, the church would simply continue our current worship and program offerings in a location that is more suitable to our size (e.g. free-standing building or storefront.)
 - Upside: Priority could be placed on right-sized, handicap-accessible space for exclusive use by LUCC.
 - Downside: Availability of suitable locations might be limited, especially with adjacent parking.
- 4. “Nest” within the building of another local church.** The congregation would arrange to use a space (parlor, fellowship hall, classroom, etc.) of a neighboring church in the Lockport community for worship and programming.
 - Upside: Ability to stay together indefinitely. Low overhead costs.
 - Downside: Visibility in community and ability to attract new people might be limited, as well as the ability to utilize space as desired.
- 5. Death.** Disband as a congregation and allot remaining resources to the UCC NY Conference and/or local/national/global charitable work.
 - Upside: A dignified conclusion to many years of faithful ministry.
 - Downside: Our life together as a worshipping/serving congregation would come to an end. Members would need to find new church homes.

The above is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Your thoughts and ideas are welcome as our conversations about the future continue into the new year ahead!



*Here is a list of
Worship Themes
Pastor Rick has
planned for
Upcoming Services*

December 4 – Second Sunday of Advent – “Peace”

Text: Isaiah 11:1-10
Sermon: Stumping for Jesus

December 11 – Third Sunday of Advent – “Joy”

Text: Luke 1:46b-55
Sermon: Leaping for Joy

December 18 – Fourth Sunday of Advent – “Love”

Text: Matthew 1:18-25
Sermon: Joseph’s Dream

December 24 – Christmas Eve – Service at 5:00 p.m.

Text: Luke 2:1-20
Sermon: This Will Be a Sign for You

December 25 – Christmas Day – No Service

**January 1 – First Sunday After Christmas /
Epiphany Sunday**

Text: Matthew 2:1-12
Sermon: A New Star, a New Year, a New Hope!

**January 8 – First Sunday after Epiphany /
Baptism of the Lord**

Text: Matthew 3:13-17
Sermon: Beloved

January 15 – Second Sunday after Epiphany

Text: John 1:29-42
Sermon: Followers

January 22 – Third Sunday after Epiphany

Service theme to be announced

January 29 – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Service theme to be announced

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE

Our complete newsletter
and lots of other information
is available on our website at:

lockportucc.com

***RECEIVE YOUR NEWSLETTER
VIA E-MAIL***

If you would like to receive your
newsletter via e-mail, just send
your e-mail address to Cyndy

It’s a quick and easy way
to get your newsletter, and
it will save the church money.



Like us on
facebook

HOW TO REACH US

Church Office

98 East Ave. 433-2545

***If you are Hospitalized
or in need of Pastoral Care
please contact Pastor Rick
or the Church Office***

Help Us Keep In Touch

E-mails are a great way for us to get in touch with members when there is a need – Snow cancellations, a meeting change, etc. If we don't have yours, please take a moment to send an e-mail note to Cyndy, then we'll have yours on file when we need to be in touch quickly.



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

December 24
5:00 PM
(Note the time change)

*Lighting the
Christ Candle*

*Lessons and
Carols
of the Season*



Glory to God
in the highest.
and on earth peace,
good will toward men.

Luke 2:14, KJV

*We will NOT hold a worship
service on December 25*

THE VINEYARD

A publication of The Lockport
United Church of Christ
98 East Avenue
Lockport, New York 14094
(716) 433-2545

*The Vineyard is published
bi-monthly to keep members
and friends informed about
programs of the church
and news of its people.*

Submissions Welcome
**Deadline for Next Issue:
January 22, 2023**



*Poinsettias have been ordered, but we do have a few
extra plants available for Christmas Eve Memorials.*

Available in Red or White
4 ½" pot - \$7.50 8" pot - \$23.00

If you would like to purchase 1 or more plants,
please let Cyndy know as soon as possible.
We will do our best to fill your order.

Christmas Offering



In your Holiday Giving, we hope you will remember Your Church.

Special offering envelopes are available in the narthex, or you may just note on your check that it is for the Christmas offering.

Your gift may be placed in the collection plate throughout December, or mailed to the church. *Thank You!*

Congregational Meeting December 4

Immediately following our worship service, we will remain in the sanctuary for a congregational meeting.

The purpose of the meeting will be to vote to list the church building with a realtor with the intent to sell it.

Because our congregational meeting was cancelled on November 20, we will also vote on the proposed 2023 budget, which was mailed out in advance of the meeting.



Christmas Collections

Unfortunately, many children will not have a very merry Christmas unless someone lends a hand to make that happen. We have a couple of collections that will help to brighten a child's holiday and warm them for the winter.

Our mitten tree will be in the church narthex ready to accept your donations of mittens, gloves, hats, or scarves.

We will also be accepting your donations of toys for children through the YWCA. (Please do NOT wrap your toy.)

You may bring in your donations at any time before Christmas.



Pantry Collection

On December 18, we will be collecting donations of non-perishable foods for the local food pantry. So many of our neighbors are in need, and our donations will be a blessing to a family's Christmas dinner.

UCC Christmas Fund Offering

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

We will be accepting donations throughout December. If you wish to contribute, you may simply drop it in the collection plate or mail it to the church. Please note that it is for the UCC Christmas Fund. (Checks should be payable to Lockport UCC.)





Upcoming Community Dinners

Edna and her crew of helpers are continuing to serve our free monthly dinners to assist those in our community who struggle with food insecurity.

The dinners are served on the 4th Wednesday of each month, between 5:00 and 6:00 PM, and available as take-out only.

Our next dinner dates are planned for **December 28** and **January 25**. If you can help prepare or serve meals, or make deserts please contact Edna to volunteer.

General Fund Summary

October 1 thru November 27

In the interest of keeping the congregation informed, the Church Council has opted to publish a thumbnail sketch of our church finances in each newsletter.

Income from Pledges & Offerings	5,946.35
Other Income	525.00
Total Income	6,471.35
Withdrawals From Investments	5,000.00
Total Expenses	9,988.23

If you have questions at any time about our finances, please feel free to contact me. I am always happy to speak with you.

Cyndy Corrieri, Treasurer

Our Church Cemetery

Plots in St. Peter's Cemetery are available for \$800 each. If you would like to purchase plots, just call Dan Holler and he will be happy to help you with that.



*Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year
to Our Shut-in Members*

Linda Layer

Mt. View Assisted Living
5465 Upper Mountain Rd.
Room 408A
Lockport, NY 14094

David Payne

Lockport Rehab &
Health Care Center
909 Lincoln Avenue
Lockport, NY 14094

Lucinda Hohle

Absolut Center
4540 Lincoln Dr.
Gasport, NY 14067

Weekly Vine

In the Weekly Vine, we share the full sermon from that week, some highlights from our service, and also any prayer concerns or news that comes up. **If we don't have your e-mail, however, you will not receive it unless you contact us.** If you would like to receive the Weekly Vine, just contact Cyndy and provide your e-mail address. If you are receiving it and would rather not, let Cyndy know that, too.



- 5 Jean Boots
- 7 Debra Mullaney
- 11 Richard Dodge II
- 14 Elizabeth Dodge
- 15 Tom Reid
- 18 Rol Sy
- 18 Cheryl Turner
- 27 Linda Layer
- 27 John Wright



- 2 Savino Pelligrina
- 11 Oliver Mietlowski
- 11 James Rongo
- 12 Gary Henning
- 19 Melody Zuercher
- 21 Jeff Boots
- 22 George Cruickshank
- 25 Melissa Gritzmacher
- 30 Carl VanderWeide
- 31 Skip Dodge

Anniversaries

- Dec. 5, 1981
 - Carl & Linda VanderWeide
- Dec. 30, 1967
 - Nancy & Rol Sy
- Jan. 5, 1973
 - Sam & Cyndy Corrieri
- Jan. 16, 1987
 - Bobbi & Al Gritzmacher
- Jan. 18, 1992
 - Tom & Melody Zuercher

Losses in Our Church Family

Bev Yotter
died on October 24.

Betty Smith
died on November 24.

*We send our condolences to these families
and hold them in our prayers.*



2023 Pledge Drive

Many thanks to everyone who has made a pledge or donation for 2023. Your support is greatly appreciated!

If you have not yet made your pledge to the church for 2023, please do so as soon as possible. Cards may be dropped in the collection plate or mailed to the church.

(If you have any questions or need another pledge card please call Cyndy)



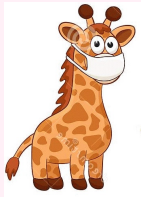
Tuesday Morning Group

Our Tuesday group meets at 10:00 am in the Mayflower Room. See Nancy Sy if you would like to join them or need more information.

Disciple Discussion Group

Disciple is taking a short break for the holidays, but will resume gatherings after the new year. (January 12)

We meet on Thursday evenings, 5:30 to 7:00 pm, in the Chapel. If you'd like to join us, please let Cyndy know so we can have study materials prepared for you.



Updated Covid Policy for Worship

The Church Council has been monitoring the Covid situation right along, and reviewing our policies at each of their meetings.

They did so again at their last meeting and agreed to make some changes to our policy for worship.

- ◆ Masks will no longer be required in worship. However, we care about your health and encourage anyone who wishes to wear a mask to feel free to do so.
- ◆ We continue to ask that you **NOT come to worship** if you, or anyone in your household, have any cold or flu type symptoms, have had any recent possible exposure to Covid, have traveled recently, or have any other reason to think that you could possibly put others at risk.
- ◆ **If you test positive for Covid** after attending worship or other meeting at church, please notify the church immediately.

Thank you for helping us keep everyone safe by observing these minimal guidelines

Little Food Pantry

Thanks to everyone who has been supporting our Little Pantry in front of the church. We encounter folks all the time who stop by to pick up food and are so appreciative that our little box is there for them.

Please keep bringing your donations of food. With your help, we are doing a lot to help needy families in our own neighborhood!



Little Library

Please remember to keep our Little Library in mind, too. It's very popular, and we have been sharing a lot of books with our community.

Please hold off on bringing any adult books for the time being.

We have a large supply of those at the moment.

We continue to need books for kids, however. Those are the most popular and at the present time we have a very small supply to share, which will soon be exhausted.

Many of you may know that we have a Girl Scout Troop that holds their meetings at our church. But you may not know that they often include the church to benefit from their community service projects.

Just recently they have baked pies for the November Community Dinner, they collected 2 big boxes of books for our Little Library, and they donated food items for our Little Pantry.



Just thought you'd like to know what a great group of girls the Scouts are!



The Wintered Spirit

by Joyce Rupp

*It takes immense trust and hope to see new life waiting
beneath the frozen barren land.*

*It takes powerful faith to believe in the gestation of a
positive future when all is unknown.*

*It takes compassionate patience to remain by the side of
an aching seed in the silent soil.*

*It takes stout-hearted resilience to endure the soul's
contractions of seemingly endless birthing.*

We wait for new life, but we do not wait alone.

*We wait with the mother bear as the little cub within her
takes shape and form.*

*We wait with the dormant juices of the maple trees
gathering up sweetness in their empty limbs.*

*We wait with the pruned rose bushes sighing
for warming sun to sing them into budding.*

*We wait with the frozen creeks and rivers yearning
to be melted into laughing waters.*

*We wait with the cosmos which is ever dying and
being reborn, giving away and receiving anew.*

*And while we wait, we struggle to accept winter as a
necessary companion, an inner season
calling us to be more than we now are.*

*It is in the winter of our lives that the enduring
Voice within coaxes us along,
nudges us into belief.*

*In our wintered time, it is this One who draws us close,
nestles us near to heart,
breathes strength into our spiritual bones,
and assures us that we are growing wings
under the frozen land of our desolate and emptied self.*

