



The VINEYARD

Newsletter of The Lockport
United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation

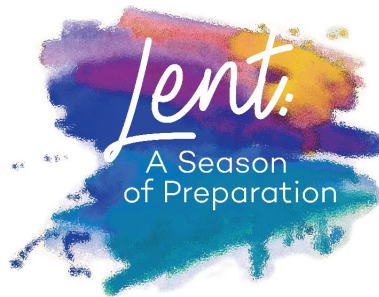
*Open to God's Spirit,
we reach out in Love to the World
and invite All to journey with us*

FEBRUARY – MARCH 2024



Lent Begins

The season of Lent begins with **Ash Wednesday**, which falls on **February 14** this year. We will observe the day with a worship service, which will include the imposition of ashes, in the sanctuary at **6:30 pm**.



Lenten services will then continue each Sunday leading up to Holy Week, the last week of March. Lent is a time for reflection. Attending services, and hearing the messages that Pastor Rick will have to share with us, can help prepare our hearts and minds to receive the gift of Easter.

Palm Sunday – March 24, 10:30 am

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday. Our morning worship will center on the theme of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, leading to the passion story of the Christ.

Maundy Thursday – March 28, 6:30 pm

Our journey through Holy Week continues with Maundy Thursday. This moving service centers on the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples. As they did on that evening, we will share Holy Communion together.

Easter Sunday – March 31, 10:30 am

The events of Holy Week culminate in the glorious celebration of Easter Sunday. Our service will include the sharing of Holy Communion.



From Pastor Rick

Hello, all members and friends
of Lockport United Church of Christ!



This month as I write to you, I am recovering from COVID. It was such a disappointment not to be able to worship with you on Jan. 21 after returning home from vacation! Thankfully, my symptoms were mild, and I anticipate being back to work very soon. It's been four years since the initial outbreak of COVID that resulted in a pandemic. Hard to believe! Despite all of the pandemic challenges and inconveniences along the way, somehow it doesn't seem like four years to me. In the same way, it is hard for me to believe that I have been with you as your pastor for two and a half years. Although our time together will conclude by Easter, I am grateful for all that we have shared together. I will continue to cheer all of you on as the church's future unfolds.

We are about to enter the season of Lent! The Christian Church has set aside six weeks to reflect on the core of Jesus' ministry of teaching and healing as preparation for the events of Holy Week and Easter. We will gather in our sanctuary on February 14 (yes, Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day this year!) to receive the ashes during a reflective service. Lent begins with the stark reminder of our mortality; it leads though Holy Week to the celebration that death can never overcome the power of life. We are Easter people, and we trust that God will renew our spirits as we move from winter to spring and from death to resurrection.

May all of God's greatest blessings be yours during this season!

Love and peace,

Pastor Rick





Worship Themes for February and March
As we move through the season of Lent to Holy Week
and Easter, here is a list of Worship Themes
Pastor Rick has planned for Upcoming Services



**February 4 – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
with Communion**

Text: Mark 1:29-39
Sermon: Looking for Jesus

February 11 – Transfiguration Sunday

Text: Mark 9:2-9
Sermon: Dazzled and Dazed

**February 14 – Ash Wednesday
Service at 6:30 p.m.**

*Please join us for this reflective service
with the imposition of ashes as we begin
the Lenten season together.*

February 18 – First Sunday in Lent

Text: Mark 1:9-15
Sermon: The Temptations of Ministry

February 25 – Second Sunday in Lent

Text: Mark 8:31-38
Sermon: Saving and Losing

**March 3 – Third Sunday in Lent
with Communion`**

Text: John 2:13-22
Sermon: My Father's House

March 10 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

Theme to be Announced

March 17 – Fifth Sunday in Lent

Text: Jeremiah 31:31-34
Sermon: The Days are Coming...

March 24 – Palm Sunday

Text: Mark 11:1-11
Sermon: Here Comes Jesus

**March 28 – Maundy Thursday
Service at 6:30 p.m.**

*Please join us for this important night as
we share in Communion and reflect on
the final days of Jesus' earthly ministry.*

March 31 – Easter Sunday

Text: Acts 9:1-7
Sermon: New Directions



Easter Sunday
Breakfast

Before the morning worship service on Easter Sunday, we will offer a Breakfast Buffet. Edna will be cooking up some special dishes, so you know it will be good! We will be serving from 9:30 to 10:15 am, so join us for a delicious Easter breakfast.

Filling Our Pulpit

To Our Members and Friends,

As you are aware, Pastor Rick will be retiring at the end of March. In preparation for that time, the Church Council has been having discussions with Rev. Gary Ferner from the UCC New York Conference. Part of his job is to assist churches in finding pastors when they have a vacancy in the pulpit.



Rev. Ferner recommended a pastor for us to consider. She is Rev. Hope Schwartz, an outstanding young UCC minister who expects to be granted approval for ordination in the next few months. She received her Master of Divinity from Northeastern Seminary in 2021. Rev. Schwartz lives in Newfane, and is currently serving as the half-time pastor for Epiphany UCC in Clarence Center, as well as a spiritual counselor for Niagara Hospice. She is seeking to pastor another church on a half-time basis to gain full-time employment.

The Church Council has met with Rev. Schwartz and was impressed with her qualifications and gifts for ministry. The Council is seriously considering hiring Rev. Schwartz as our designated pastor for one year, with the expectation of calling her to be our permanent pastor at some point during that year.

We at Lockport UCC have had experience with part-time pastors, and understand that it means being sensitive to their time restraints. However, this would be our first experience sharing a pastor with another church.

Sharing a pastor involves another level of time considerations, including the fact that she needs to do worship services at both churches. This, of course, means that both churches have to adjust their worship schedule.

The Council will continue to have discussions with Rev. Schwartz and Rev. Ferner about what will be needed to make this shared pastorate work out. We will keep the congregation informed of our progress.

*In Christ's Service,
Your Church Council*

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.



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:
March 24, 2024**

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
lockportunited@roadrunner.com

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

Free Dinner Schedule

Edna and her crew of helpers continue to prepare and serve free dinners each month 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 5:30 PM, and available as take-out only.

Upcoming dinners are planned for **February 28 and March 27**. The menu for February will be meatloaf and mashed potatoes with gravy, corn, fruit and dessert. If you can help prepare or serve meals, or make deserts please contact Edna to volunteer.



Best Wishes to Our Shut-in Members

Lucinda Hohle

Jean Boots

Absolut Care
4540 Lincoln Dr.
Gasport, NY 14067

Linda Layer

Kevin O'Connor

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



David Payne

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



Our Church Cemetery

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

February

Birthdays

- 6 Scott Mietlowski
- 9 Makenna Hoste
- 11 Anna Cruickshank
- 11 Dianna Allen

March

Birthdays

- 1 Patricia Hall
- 4 Remington Mietlowski
- 9 Ken Klino
- 11 Beth Holler
- 13 Marlene Westcott
- 30 Jill Driskel

Happy ANNIVERSARY

March 1, 1975
Beth & John Granchelli

March 20, 1976
Cheryl & Tom Reid

General Fund Financial Summary

November 20
thru January 31

Income from	
Pledges & Offerings	8,471.54
Other Income	5,570.00
Total Income	14,041.54
Total Expenses	14,082.55

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

Cyndy Corrieri, Treasurer



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, 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.



On Palm Sunday, March 24, we will be accepting donations of non-perishable food items. All food collected will be used by local food pantries to help make someone's Easter dinner a little brighter.

† BIBLE STUDY GROUPS †

Tuesday Bible Study

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

Thursday Bible Study

Our **Disciple group** also meets weekly 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.



Your Easter gift to the church supports the many important ministries of Lockport UCC. We know that you have many choices available to share your money with those in need. We appreciate you including your church in that giving.

Thank You!

There are special offering envelopes available in the church narthex, or you may just mail your gift to the church. (Checks should be payable to Lockport UCC.)

Little Food Pantry

Please continue your generous support of our little food pantry in the front yard of the church. The need is great, and thanks to you, we are doing a lot to help needy families in our own community.

Little Library

Our little library is also very popular. Please refrain from bringing any adult books at the present time because we have a large supply on hand. We continue to need children's books, however, so if you have an opportunity to donate those, they would be most appreciated.

RIP Medical Debt Relief

Please don't forget our ongoing mission to help alleviate medical debt for people who are living with the burden of crushing debt from medical bills.

**In 2023 we collected
a total of \$490.71.
That brings us to over
\$1,634 since we started.**

This organization is able to buy \$100 worth of debt for every dollar donated. So do the math – this means we have done an amazing amount of good since starting this mission project!

Change and small donations are welcome, so please keep adding to our little collection box in the narthex.



*You're here to be light,
bringing out the God-colors in the world.*
Matthew 5:14-15 (The Message)

"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine... Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine..." If Jesus had a playlist of music, surely this familiar hymn would be among the Top Five. Jesus teaches that faith calls for action. Sharing our light, as the diverse and colorful expression of God's love here on earth, leads to making blankets, staffing food pantries, cooking meals, building houses and schools, signing petitions for worthy causes, and protesting injustices. A simple song with a simple message – our light is on a light stand, for all to see – shine and share. On any given day, light is shining because we are there through your gifts to OGHS. Your contributions make a difference. Your dollars count. Give generously. Share the light.

One Great Hour of Sharing is one of the four major special offerings for the United Church of Christ, supporting a wide variety of mission projects here at home and around the world.

*We will be accepting your donations to OGHS throughout the month of March. You may place your gift in the offering plate on any Sunday, or you may mail it to the church. Please note that it is for OGHS and make checks payable to **Lockport UCC**.*



World Day of Prayer March 1

This year's World Day of Prayer service is written by women of Palestine, and their theme is taken from Ephesians 4:1-3:

*"I Beg You ... Bear with
One Another in Love."*

The origins of World Day of Prayer date back to the 19th century when Christian women of the United States and Canada initiated a variety of cooperative activities in support of women's involvement in mission at home and in other parts of the world.

Today it is initiated and carried out by women in more than 170 countries and regions.

The motto of World Day of Prayer is "Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action."

<https://wdp-usa.org>

The following is an article by Rev. Barbara Toll from an issue of the New York Conference UCC Happenings. Rev. Toll is an Associate Conference Minister in the New York Conference UCC.

My Thoughts by Rev. Barbara Toll

Anyone who knows me knows that winter just is not my season. I hate being cold, and I miss sunlight in the evening. I've tried winter sports in an effort to embrace New York winters, but my efforts are forced. I have not figured out how to enjoy these months of snow and ice. I would spend this time entirely inside under a fleece blanket if I could. The long walks I enjoy over the summer wouldn't even enter my mind this time of year, but my dog does not understand my desire to hibernate! Cosmo doesn't care if it is only 20 degrees outside. He still requires a walk of at least two miles each day.

We often walk at a fairgrounds near my home. There is enough open space to take Cosmo's leash off and throw a ball. Recently I took him off leash with fresh snow on the ground. As I trudged through the snow, trying not to get any in my boots, I couldn't help but smile. What I saw in front of me could only be described as pure delight. Cosmo didn't run; he frolicked. He moved in a way that could only be described as more rabbit than dog, bouncing through the snow. You might think I'm crazy, but I'm certain that animal was even grinning.

I'm not sure I can remember the last time I was that overjoyed about anything. What would it be like if I could be so overwhelmed with joy that I frolicked? What would this world be like if more of us experienced such delight that we bounced through our day? Maybe dogs have something to teach us.

Cosmo can delight in the snow because he isn't worried about it melting into his fur when we get home, making him cold for the rest of the day. He isn't thinking about how much nicer the fairgrounds are on a warm summer evening. He is just entirely in the moment. All he knows is right now. No worrying about the future, and no longing for the past. So he can't help but embrace all that God has for him in the present moment. I'm convinced that the more we can just be with God in the present moment the more we connect with the Divine. I'm convinced that allowing the goodness around us to overwhelm our being will allow us to better embody God's Spirit in the world. So when I put on my snow boots this afternoon, I intend to take a deep breath and embrace the day. Won't you join me?

