



THE VINEYARD

FEBRUARY 2026

LOCKPORT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

the Season of Lent

Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.
(Matthew 24:42 NRSVue)

While we may think of this scripture passage as one to be read at Advent, we might also consider it appropriate for every season of the church year. The entire liturgical calendar calls us to remember expectation. Advent ... Epiphany ... Pentecost ... all have their unique forms of anticipation.

During Lent the call to remember expectation is a call to hope, to agency, and to activation in a world in need of conduits and co-creators of good news. In this anchoring text, Jesus cautioned and encouraged their followers to “keep awake.” The command encompasses attentiveness, alertness, and readiness. The passage emphasizes the anticipated return of Christ, the Chosen One.

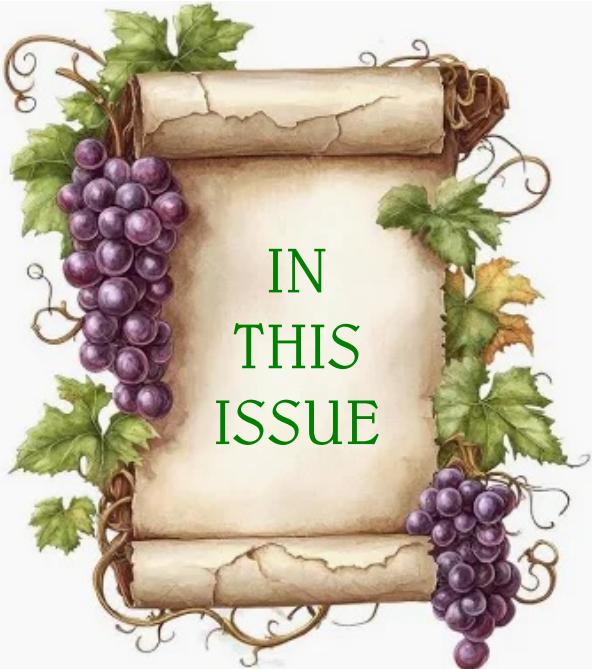
Could the Body of Christ embody God’s love and liberating power in the world? Could that be the return we expect ... to the movement to follow the way of Jesus in spirit and in truth ... not to give us an escape to heaven, but to realize the kingdom on earth through our collective, Spirit-led acts in the name of Jesus? Are we prepared and willing to be that church? That is the question we will ponder even as we heed the call to “Stay Awake.”

Lent reserves time for reflection, remembrance, and repentance. Lenten worship calls us to explore the liberating, redeeming, and sacrificial acts of Christ and to fortify ourselves to pick up our cross at the given time for the salvation, reconciliation, and restoration of the world that Jesus loves and exhorts us to do the same!

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*Lent will begin with our Ash Wednesday service on **February 18**. It will be a joint service with Epiphany UCC, held at Epiphany, at **6:30 pm**. This will be followed by Sunday services of Lent, at LUCC, 11:00 am, beginning February 22 and continuing through March.*





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Our Mission Statement

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

An Open and Affirming Congregation

HOW TO REACH US

Our Website:

lockportucc.com

Church Office:

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Mailing Address:

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THE VINEYARD

Newsletter of The Lockport
United Church of Christ

*The Vineyard is published
ten times a year to keep
members and friends
informed about
programs of the church
and news of its people.*

Submissions Welcome

**Deadline for Next Issue:
February 15, 2026**



Tuesday Study Group

Our Tuesday Bible Study group meets each week at **1:00 pm**. They are a lay-led group that discusses the lectionary scripture readings for the week. Please see Nancy Sy if you would like to join them or need more information.

Disciple Discussion Group

The Disciple Group has resumed our weekly gatherings, following a break for the holidays. We are currently working through a 6-week series – “Parables: Putting Jesus’s Stories in Their Place.”

The group meets on **Thursdays, 5:30 to 7:00 pm**. New folks are most welcome any time! If you’d like to join us, please let Cyndy Corrieri know in advance so that we can have study materials prepared for you.

Bible 101 Class

Pastor Hope leads a Bible 101 class on the **First and Fourth Sundays** of the month, following the morning worship service. This is a basics of the Bible course for anyone who is new to the Bible or wants a refresher. If you are interested in joining, please see Pastor Hope to get homework/study materials.

Who Is My Neighbor?

Everyone is our Neighbor! That’s why we offer a monthly free dinner for the community.

February’s Neighborhood Dinner will be on **February 25**. It will be served as take-out from 5:00 to 5:30 pm at Emmanuel United Methodist Church.

No word on the menu yet (it’s always good!) but we know Edna will be needing helpers to prepare and serve. It’s a rewarding experience to feed families in our own community who may be in need of a little help, so if you would like to volunteer just speak to Edna.

Lent/Easter Schedule at a Glance

Ash Wednesday - Feb. 18
- 6:30 pm service at Epiphany UCC

Lenten Sundays - Feb. 22 thru March 22
- 11:00 am services at LUCC

Palm Sunday Sunday - March 29
- 11:00 am service at LUCC

Maundy Thursday - April 2
- 6:00 pm service at LUCC

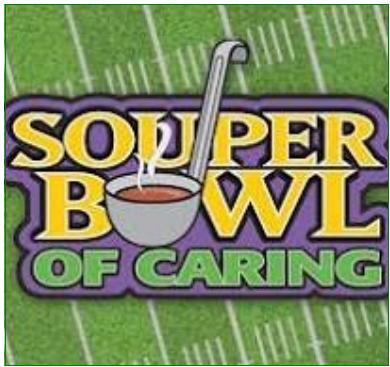
Good Friday - April 3
- service at Epiphany UCC

Easter Sunday - April 5
- 11:00 am service at LUCC

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.

Tackling Hunger February 8



On SUPER Bowl Sunday, we will be accepting your donations of money for the SOUPER Bowl.

The SOUPER Bowl is a national campaign to collect donations for food pantries

and other programs to alleviate hunger.

All money collected by our church will stay in our community and go directly to a local food pantry.

Recognizing Those Who Serve

On January 18, at our annual meeting, church officers were elected to serve for 2026.

On **February 8**, our worship service will include the installation of these officers.



*Here is a list of our
Church Officers for 2026:*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Suzanne Wilson

TREASURER: Cyndy Corrieri

HISTORIAN: Bobbi Gritzmacher

CHURCH COUNCIL

Sam Corrieri

Bobbi Gritzmacher

Suzanne Wilson

John Wright

Tom Zuercher

PARISH PASTORAL RELATIONS

COMMITTEE

Suzanne Wilson

John Wright

*Best Wishes
and Happy
Valentine's
Day to Our
Shut-In
Members*



Lucinda Hohle
Absolut Care
4540 Lincoln Dr.
Gasport, NY 14067

Linda Layer and 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



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

(If you don't see your birthday or anniversary listed, please get that information to Cyndy so we can include it in the future)



At our Annual Meeting on January 18, the congregation voted to explore becoming a Just Peace Church. This is a UCC designation in which we make a covenant that says we will consider justice, peace and the sacredness of creation in our church's decisions.

This was NOT a vote to make that commitment, it was simply a decision to explore the idea further. After much discussion and discernment, a vote would be needed in the future as to whether or not we wish to make that commitment as a congregation.

The next step is to form a committee to guide us through the process and discussion. **If you would like to serve on this committee, please let Pastor Hope know. We need at least 2 more people to fill our committee.**

Basket Raffle to Benefit LUCC Dinners

The folks at the Checkered Poppy (in Wright's Corners) hold a monthly event to benefit a local charity. In February, they have chosen to make our monthly Free Dinners the beneficiary of this event!

***It will take place on February 7
10 am to 4 pm.***

You can help support this event in two ways:

Donate a Basket – If you can contribute a theme basket that would be very helpful. (Value about \$20 to \$30) **Please bring your basket to church by February 1** (or contact Donna). Donna Dye-Sholok will collect them and deliver them to the Checkered Poppy.

Attend the Event – Go to the Checkered Poppy on February 7 and buy some tickets. This will show our appreciation to the CP owners, and add to the profit that will directly benefit our free dinner mission. And, you might win a great basket!

Happy Valentine's

Day!



General Fund Financial Summary

November 17 thru January 18

Income from Pledges & Offerings	6,835.06
Mortgage Payments	5,222.88
Other Income	14.00
From Investments	5,000.00
Total Income	17,071.94
Total Expenses	13,823.16



As we get rolling into 2026, it seems like a good time to look back on all the good works that our congregation was able to do in 2025.

Small churches are sometimes underestimated, but this is a pretty big list of all the good we do in our community and beyond!

NEIGHBORHOOD DINNERS

We prepared and served 12 free dinners, including the big summer picnic, to the folks in our community. We estimate well over 1300 meals (good, hot, hearty meals) served by an average of 10 to 17 volunteers pitching in to cook and serve from Edna's Kitchen at EUMC!

UNDUE MEDICAL DEBT

In this time of cuts to health insurance, our ongoing collection to pay off medical debt for folks is more needed than ever! In 2025 we collected \$296.50 – this equates to \$29,650 worth of medical debt paid off for folks struggling under the weight of it. (Since we started this in 2020, we have paid off \$225,068 of debt!)

FOOD PANTRY

We had 3 collections for our local food pantry. We brought them MANY bags of much needed food, plus \$70 in cash donations. Plus our **Souper Bowl** collection netted another \$86 cash for the pantry.

CROP WALK

We collected \$330 for this year's walk - 25% of which stays in our community to alleviate hunger.

LOCKPORT CARES

We were able to donate \$140 to this local emergency housing organization.

TRICK OR TREAT

We gave treat bags to over 1,000 local kids at this Main Street event.

REFUGEE FUND

We collected \$380 for the Refugee emergency fund when their government funding was abruptly cut off.

WHITE WHISKERS

We collected a bunch of paper towels, as well as \$20 cash, for this senior pet rescue group

YWCA CHRISTMAS COLLECTIONS

We collected toys, hats, mittens and scarves for the kids in the Domestic Violence Program.

POINSETTIA PLANTS

We bought \$228 of Christmas plants to support the work of our local Mental Health Association.

UCC EMERGENCY DISASTER RELIEF

California Wildfires – \$460
Ukraine - \$20

UCC SPECIAL OFFERINGS

Christmas Fund - \$100
Neighbors in Need - \$180
Strengthen the Church - \$10
One Great Hour of Sharing - \$220
Open & Affirming Coalition - \$25

OUR CHURCH'S WIDER MISSION

We fulfilled our pledge of \$3,000 to support the work of the larger UCC denomination.

WESTERN AREA COVENANT

To support the work of our local area UCC denomination, we contributed \$504.



The Church in Action

United Church of Christ Corner
ucc.org

Compassion Not Cruelty

The New York Conference of the UCC has begun a new campaign to “create compassion and constrain cruelty.” What follows is some information they have distributed about this effort.

We are a church of Jesus Christ. We are not a partisan church that favors a political party. We are a church that treats each other and our neighbors with the love and compassion of our risen Savior. We strive to birth Christ’s love into the world. This is what we do to be his faithful followers. And this is the only way to create a nation and world where every child is treated as God’s child with a future of goodness and hope.

Tragically, in the past year our federal administration has glorified cruelty and abandoned compassion. Headlines tell the tale:

- Detainees at Alligator Alcatraz Facing Harrowing Human Rights Violations
- Human Rights Groups Alarmed by Systemic Torture in Salvadoran Prisons
- Hundreds of Thousands Already Dead Since USAID Shutdown
- Federal Courts Rule L.A. Troop Deployment Illegal
- ICE arrests of Non-Criminals Skyrocket 1,500%
- Top 1% to Receive \$1 Trillion Tax Cut
- \$1 Trillion in Medicaid Cuts Threaten 1.8 Million Rural Residents
- President Weaponizes Department of Justice to Punish Foes
- President Pardons Nearly 1,600 January 6 Defendants

- Wife of Renee Good: “We had Whistles. They had Guns.”
- US Threatens Takeover of Greenland
- And on it goes...

These acts are not Christian. And they do not follow traditional American values of respect for the law, due process, and the protection of individual rights. What happens today to migrants and poor people can happen tomorrow to anyone.

In this time, we must ask ourselves, if Christians do not speak out, who will?

In Western New York, UCC clergy [our own *Pastor Hope among them*], church members, and friends, along with the same from other denominations, are joining together in a movement to call our nation to govern with Compassion Not Cruelty. We’re hoping this will spread across our state.

Our Mission – Compassion Not Cruelty is a growing movement of organized Christians committed to modeling and mobilizing the compassion of Jesus of Nazareth practiced and taught.

Our Values – We value compassion by affirming the dignity of every human being, treating everyone with decency, and honoring our nation’s democratic principles, institutions, and the rule of law. Recognizing our shared humanity, we are grounded in the nonviolent power of Christ’s love as we work for the common good. In a nation where government policy promotes cruelty, violence, hatred, and massive wealth for a few, our movement stands as a counterforce – grounded in compassion, justice, and inclusion.

Our Actions

- NO KINGS RALLY 2, Niagara Square, Buffalo, NY (October 2, 2025): Our members participated and spoke about our mission.
- Prayer Vigil at the Federal Detention Center, Batavia, NY: We gathered to pray for compassion toward refugees and the undocumented, affirming the equal dignity and worth of all people in God’s eyes.

Continued → → →

Compassion Not Cruelty continued

- Partnered with the NY Conference of the UCC: We organized a letter-writing campaign to federal representatives, held another prayer vigil in Western NY, and encouraged pastors to preach on “Compassion Not Cruelty.”

Our History – Compassion Not Cruelty began in July 2025 when United Church of Christ pastors, disturbed by the government’s celebration of cruel detention conditions at “Alligator Alcatraz,” formed a movement urging Christians to call for compassion. The movement is growing and now includes clergy and lay people from various denominations.

Our Partners – We are members of the Buffalo United Coalition, a group of labor organizations, community partners, activists, researchers, and residents dedicated to prioritizing people and the planet. We also collaborate with the NY Conference of the United Church of Christ, which aims to build a just world for all.



If you would like to find out more, or get involved and join the movement, check out their website at:

www.compassionnotcruelty.org

OR, you can speak to Pastor Hope.

- Global Ministries -

Church Partnerships

You are no longer strangers or foreigners, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of the household of God. – Eph 2:19



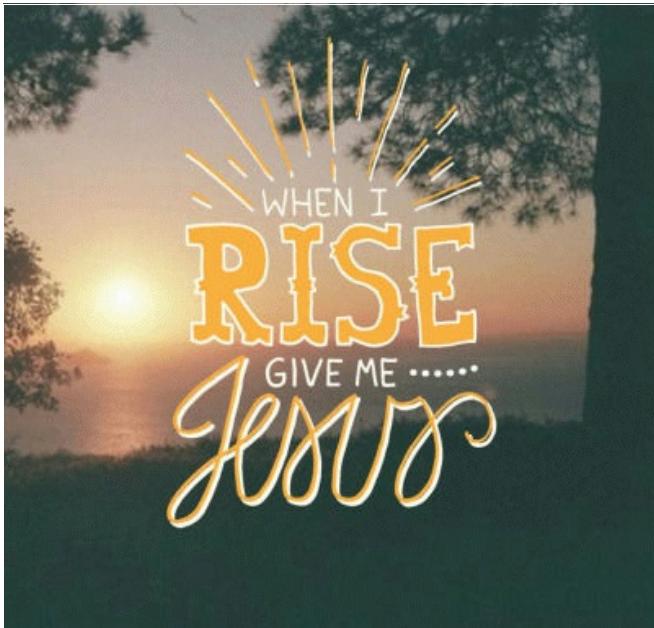
Mission happens best in relationships with international partner churches and organizations when we walk together as companions in faith. These relationships offer mutual support, shared growth in knowledge and faith, and an opportunity to experience the richness of God’s global family.

Global partnerships are a crucial and significant pathway for us as North American churches to foster an awareness of wider global contexts and thus enable us to follow Christ with appropriate understanding and adequate resolve. Engaging with Christians and people of other faiths around the world deepens our faith, life, and witness as the Church.

Who Are Our Partners?

Disciples and UCC partners, nurtured by Global Ministries, include denominations and church bodies, ecumenical councils, human rights organizations, development and disaster-response agencies, and diaconal organizations like schools and hospitals. Some partnerships are long-standing; others are more recent, formed through shared advocacy or theological vision. They are mostly – but not exclusively – Christian, as we also engage with partners of other faith communities.

Global Ministries supports your global partnership interests and facilitates connections with the worldwide church so your conference, region, association, and local congregation can fulfill the call to unity in the one body of Christ.



One of my favorite songs that I listen to over and over and over again is **Give Me Jesus**. Listening to the words of this song reminds me of the choice I am given. Each and every morning when I rise, a choice is given to me about where my hope is found. Will I find my hope in **fortune** and **fame** or in **success** and **satisfaction** or in **popularity** and **power**? Or will I put my hope in Jesus?

Church, the world around us makes promise after promise after promise about what will bring us joy and what to put our hope in and what will make us feel good and what will fulfil all our needs. But these promises go unmet and unfulfilled and unsatisfied. If what the world offers us can never satisfy us, what can? Jesus. Only Jesus.

Nothing that the world has to offer us compares to what Jesus offers us. All throughout the gospels, we are told about all that Jesus have come to offer us in our lives. Jesus has come to save us, not condemn us. Jesus has come to deliver us from evil, not give us over the powers of this world. Jesus has come to love us, not to hate us. Jesus has come to give us abundant life, not to lead us to scarcity. Jesus has come to forgive us of our sins, not to hold our sins against us. Jesus has come to heal our hearts, not to break them. Jesus has come to transform our lives, not take away our lives. Jesus has come to change the world, not conquer it. If these are the things that Jesus promises to us, what more could the world even offer to us?

Let us be like the songwriter who discovered that no matter what the world has to offer us none of it, not even a little bit of it, no nothing at all could ever compare to and could ever come close to what we have in Jesus. Let us give it all up to receive all that Jesus has for us:

Take the fame and the fortune and the followers . . . **Give me Jesus**

Take the success and the status and the standing . . . **Give me Jesus**

Take the power and the popularity and the privilege . . . **Give me Jesus**

Take my past and my present and my future . . . **Give me Jesus**

Take my problems and my conflicts and my pains . . . **Give me Jesus**

Take my fears and my anxieties and my sorrows . . . **Give me Jesus**

Take my racing heart and my restless soul and my swirling thoughts . . . **Give me Jesus**

Y'all, let them have this world so that we can have Jesus.
With God's help, we can. Thanks be to God. Amen.

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*



**Are you willing to STAND UP for
what you believe in . . . even if
it meant STANDING ALL ALONE?**

This question has ruminated in my mind over the last few months, since the Melt the Ice Protest in Lockport. This protest was sponsored by Stand Up Lockport. At this protest, the members of Stand Up Lockport gathered to raise our voices against the inhumane practices and unethical actions of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) under the cruel policies of the current federal administration.

At this protest, there were over one hundred protestors lined up along the sidewalk in front of the bank. We filled the sidewalk on the whole block. And on the other side of the street there was one single counter-protestor. As the only counter-protestor, this man stood all alone, stood all by himself, and stood as a single witness against the protest. Because there were over one hundred people with us in the protest, it would have been all too easy to simply dismiss the single counter-protestor. But I couldn't shake the feeling that there was a lesson for me to learn from this single counter-protestor.

It dawned on me that this counter-protestor was just as committed to his cause as I was to mine. This truth became quite obvious realizing that this man had shown up, even though he was all alone. This man showed up to be a witness to the other side of the conversation. He brought with him a couple signs and a megaphone, and he walked up and down the sidewalk on the side of the street that he was on. Although I did not know this man at all, it seemed likely that he and I did not agree on the topic of immigration. Yet I found myself not seeing him as my enemy or my adversary or my opponent but seeing him as a person of conviction. This man was willing to stand up and speak up for what he believed in, even when it meant standing all alone.

And then the question dawned on me . . . would I be willing to do the same thing? Would I have the conviction to stand up and speak up for what I believed in, even if it meant doing so all alone? These questions have lingered with me for months and months and months. Church, y'all know that I am not quiet about the things I am convicted about, but I wonder if I have enough courage to do so . . . if I was the only one doing it.

I do not have an answer yet. But I want to invite all of you to explore with me what would cause you to stand up or speak up. What issues of the world around us would lead you to do something about it? What is happening that disturbs you so much that you cannot remain silent and you cannot remain unmoved? Will you speak up and stand up for what you believe in, Church? Even if it meant standing all alone?

Let us be people of courageous conviction who are willing to stand up and to speak up and stand firm for what we believe in today, tomorrow, and all the days to come. With God's help, we can! Thanks be to God. Amen!

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*

Be Prepared for Winter Storms

Winter is here, and we've already seen some stormy weather . . . and there will probably be more to come!

The New York Conference of the UCC periodically puts out informational bulletins on a variety of safety issues for churches and individuals. They recently shared these reminders about how to be safe in this winter weather.

THE

HAMMER AND NAIL

NEW YORK CONFERENCE DISASTER MINISTRIES

PREPARE - RESPOND - RECOVER

BE SMART.....BE SAFE.....BE PREPARED

Food Safety After Loss of Electricity

Food safety is a major concern in the event of a power outage. Don't take a chance on questionable food during and after an outage - that can make you very sick!

BEFORE (Plan ahead if you can)

- * Put thermometers in your refrigerators and freezers
 - fridge should be keep at 40 degrees or less; freezers at 0 degrees or less
- * Group food together in freezer to keep frozen longer
- * Freeze any items you can to last longer, instead of having in the fridge
- * Dry ice or a block of ice in the fridge will help it stay colder longer

DURING (While the power is off)

- * Keep the doors of fridge and freezer closed as much as possible
- * If the door is closed, a refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours before it becomes unsafe to eat; a freezer for 48 hours.

AFTER (Once the power is back on)

- * Check the temperature inside your fridge and freezer
 - If it's still at a safe temperature, your food should be fine
- * If the temp is not safe, throw out foods that may not be safe to eat
 - particularly meat, poultry and seafood, milk, eggs and dairy
- * When in doubt, throw it out - Never taste food to determine safety!

After a Flood - Do Not eat any food that has been touched by water

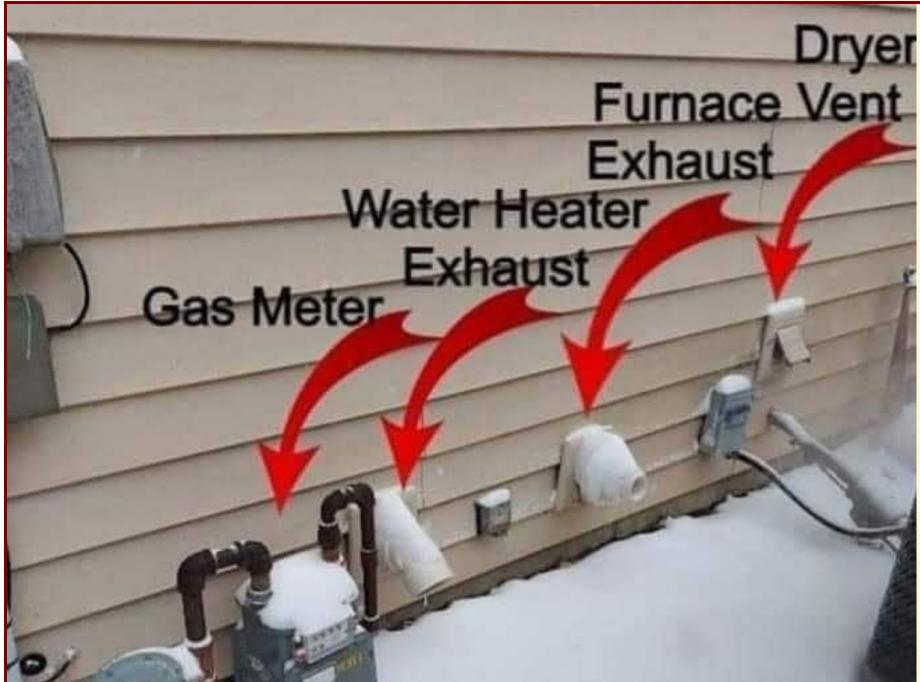
- * Discard any food not in a waterproof container - screw caps, snap lids, pull tops, and crimped tops are Not waterproof - cardboard containers are certainly not waterproof
- * Discard any cans that show signs of swelling, leakage or punctures
- * SANITIZE any dishes, pots & pans, silverware, etc that have touched water
 - Use 1 tablespoon bleach to 1 gallon of water

MORE → → →

Carbon Monoxide Safety

Through the winter, and especially during snow storms, remember to keep your outside vents, etc clear of snow to prevent the build up of carbon monoxide inside the house. Blocked vents can also cause your furnace to shut down.

ALSO be sure to have a working carbon monoxide detector on each floor of your house.



~ ~ KEEP CLEAR ~ ~

Other Winter and Storm Safety Tips

- * Have flashlights, with extra batteries ready
- * If using candles, never leave them unattended or lit while sleeping
- * Have extra blankets and warm clothes on hand
- * Have some food in the house that you can prepare without power if need be
- * If you have a generator, check to see that it's working and you have gas on hand
 - Keep a running generator away from the house - never run inside an attached garage
- * Be careful with space heaters - keep away from curtains, furniture and other flammable items, and be sure to have them vented properly
- * Keep pets inside (except trips out to potty) during storms and cold weather
 - dog houses are Not sufficient to keep them from freezing to death

Travel Safely - Be prepared

Be prepared in your car, too, during the winter, in case you should be stuck or stranded. Here are some good things to carry with you:

- * Flashlight with extra batteries
- * First Aid kit
- * Snow shovel and ice scraper/brush
- * Blanket or sleeping bag
- * Non-perishable food and bottled water
- * Hat, gloves, scarf, boots, etc
- * Sand or kitty litter for traction
- * Flares or signal light of some type
- * Jumper cables
- * Cell phone & charger