

*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

The VINEYARD

Newsletter of The Lockport
United Church of Christ

NOVEMBER 2025

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Service of Remembrance November 2

This annual service is a time to remember those members, friends, and loved ones who have passed on before us.

Names will be read in worship, as we light candles on the altar, and recall how each one brought a touch of God's light into our lives, our church, and our world.



As we light the candles and gaze upon their glow, we will remember the powerful communion we have with the saints – those who have blazed the trail before us – those whom we have loved and followed – now lost to this world, but always in our hearts.



A Day to Be Thankful

November 23

Thanksgiving Sunday

On November 23 our morning worship will focus on giving thanks to God for the abundant blessings in our lives.

Here are some ways to do that . . .

Food Pantry Collection

On that Sunday we will be collecting your donations of non-perishable food. These will be donated to a local food pantry in time to be a blessing for some other folks' Thanksgiving dinners.

Stewardship Sunday

We will also be dedicating our pledges for 2026 in worship that morning. This is another way to show your thanks to God, and share your blessings with others through the work of this church.

(Please have your pledge cards returned on or before this Sunday.)

Congregational Meeting

Immediately following our worship service on November 23, we will remain in the sanctuary for a congregational meeting. The Church Council will present the 2026 budget for congregational approval.

The proposed 2026 budget will be sent out to our members in advance of the meeting. This will allow us to keep the meeting short. Please look over the budget before coming to the meeting, and be prepared to ask any questions you may have. Then we will take the vote.



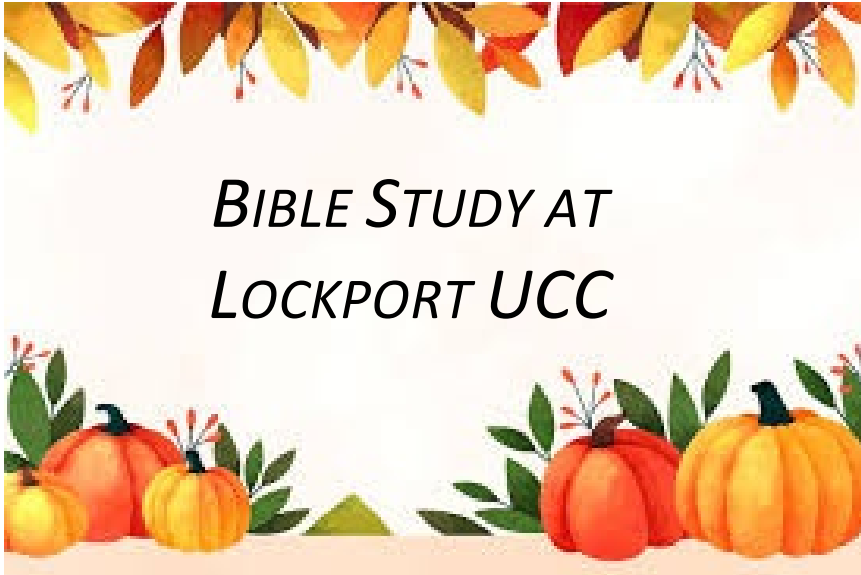
Neighborhood Dinner for November

Our next Neighborhood Dinner will be held on **November 26**, at Emmanuel UMC. It will be free as usual and available as take-out from **5 to 5:30 pm**. The menu will be a simple quart of soup that folks can heat up at home when needed, with crackers and cookies.



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.



BIBLE STUDY AT LOCKPORT UCC

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

Our Disciple group meets every **Thursday, 5:30 to 7:00 pm**. Also a lay-led group, we discuss a variety of topics, usually in the form of a multi-week series.

We are currently starting a new 4-week Advent study – “A Child is Born: Jesus’s Birth through the lens of Ancient Nativity stories” – which will go through November 20. We will then take a break for the holidays, and resume on January 8.

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.

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.



THE VINEYARD

A publication of The Lockport
United Church of Christ
80 Main St. - Suite H
Lockport, New York
(716) 433-2545

*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:
November 16, 2025**

HOW TO REACH US

Our Website - lockportucc.com

Church Office

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716-433-2545

lockportunited@roadrunner.com

Mailing Address

PO Box 427

Lockport, NY 14095

If you are Hospitalized or in need of Pastoral Care

please contact Pastor Hope
or the Church Office

LIKE US on
facebook
~ and Please ~
SHARE
our Posts



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.



Dreaming God's Dream

NO GIFT TOO SMALL, NO DREAM TOO BIG.

Annual Stewardship Drive

Letters and pledge cards for our 2026 stewardship drive have gone out in the mail. We ask our members and friends to consider lending their support the life and work of our church.

When your stewardship letter arrives, please think about what the church means for you, as well as the many ministries of our church, and how many lives are touched by our continuing presence in the community.

Once you've made your decision, please return your pledge card on or before November 23. **THANK YOU!**

* * * * *

November Birthdays

13 Larry Henn
17 Jenna Le

November Anniversaries

Nov. 22, 1997
Richard & Tammy Dodge

Happy Thanksgiving 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

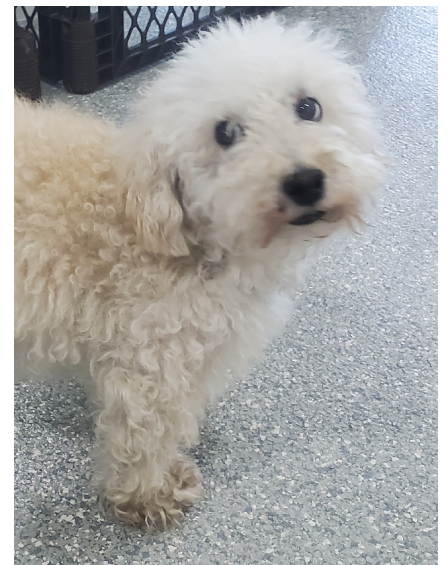
David Payne
Lockport Rehab
& Health Care Center
909 Lincoln Avenue
Lockport, NY 14094





Blessing the Dogs!

Your donations of paper towels will be put to good use at the White Whiskers Senior Dog Sanctuary in Akron. Pastor Hope delivered them for us when she went to visit and bless these perfectly adorable dogs who have found a second home here.





Hanging of the Greens

The season of Advent begins on **November 30**. During our morning service that day, we will be decorating our sanctuary Christmas Tree.

Plan to be with us for this special service, and the other services throughout Advent!

Christmas Poinsettia Orders

Advent and Christmas Eve wouldn't be the same without the beautiful Poinsettia Plants gracing our church!

Plants are available to order for memorials, which helps us cover the cost of decorating the sanctuary. If you would like to order one or more plants, please do so by **November 16**. There are order forms on the table at church, or you may simply contact Cyndy by phone, email, or text.

The color choices are
Red, White, or Pink

6.5" pot - \$13.00 each
8" pot - \$25.00 each

*Memorials will be printed in
the Christmas Eve bulletin.
After that service, you may
take your plant home.*



Supporting Mental Health

Your purchase of a poinsettia plant has an added benefit for our community. The Mental Health Association in Niagara County sells plants each year as a major fund-raiser for their organization. We order our plants from them, therefore your purchase not only helps the church, it helps to support the important work that MHA does right here in our city and county.



A Thanksgiving Prayer

Good and Gracious God, I come before you with a heart full of gratitude for your countless blessings and unwavering love.

Thank you for the gift of life, for the strength you give me each day, and for the guidance of your wisdom. Thank you for my family, friends, and community. Even in times of trial, I thank you for the lessons and the growth.

God of all creation, thank you for flowers that bloom about our feet; for the song of bird and hum of bee; for the blue of streams and sky; for the beauty of the blooming trees; for the changing seasons that bring warmth and cold, sun, rain, and snow. Thank you for all the beauty that fills our world with life and love. Amen.

* * * * *

GENERAL FUND

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

September 28 thru October 19

Income from	
Pledges & Offerings	1,875.00
Other Income	24.00
Mortgage Income	2,611.44
From Investments	5,000.00
Total Expenses	6,650.06

Fun Facts About Thanksgiving



The first Thanksgiving in 1621 lasted for three days. Turkey was not served. It's likely the menu included venison, duck, goose and seafood.

"Jingle Bells" was originally a Thanksgiving song, written by James Pierpont in 1857 to be about an American Thanksgiving celebration.

The average American consumes between 3,000 and 4,500 calories on Thanksgiving Day.

Only male turkeys make the "gobble" sound. Female turkeys make a "cackling" noise.

The first Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in 1924 did not include balloons; instead, it featured animals from the Central Park Zoo.

More than 54 million Americans are expected to travel for the Thanksgiving holiday.

The turkeys raised for our dinner tables can't fly, but wild turkeys can fly for short distances and run up to 20 miles per hour.

President Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving a national holiday in 1863, thanks to the efforts of Sarah Josepha Hale, the editor who wrote "Mary Had a Little Lamb".

The first TV dinner was created by accident when a Swanson employee ordered too much turkey in 1953 and had to find a way to sell it.

JFK was the first president to let a turkey go. Although earlier presidents simply received the birds, John F. Kennedy decided to let a turkey go in 1963, saying, "We'll just let this one grow"





The Church in Action

United Church of Christ Corner

ucc.org

The House of Many Cultures

Greetings! My name is Margaret Kofron, and I am honored to serve as a Global Mission Intern with Global Ministries. My journey began on December 1st in Scicli, Italy – a small town of nearly 27,000 residents located on the southeastern coast of Sicily.

I have been placed in Sicily to work with Mediterranean Hope, an organization dedicated to supporting migrants through its local reception center, The House of Many Cultures. This community center provides essential services to individuals in vulnerable situations, most of whom have recently arrived in Italy through Humanitarian Corridors.

The mission of Mediterranean Hope and The House of Many Cultures is clear: to create a safe and welcoming space for migrants and their families, fostering connection and understanding in an increasingly diverse region. While the people in our world may not be the same, it's inspiring to see how organizations like Mediterranean Hope work to ensure that everyone, regardless of their background, have the right to the same opportunities.

I arrived around Christmas, and experiencing the local holiday traditions was incredibly special. During the after-school program, we had the chance to walk around town, singing Christmas carols with the children, lanterns in hand. The students from the local high school band joined us, filling the streets with festive music. It was a beautiful moment of shared joy that reminded me of the power of community and celebration.

The tradition of children caroling around town, stopping at cafés, shops, and restaurants, is one that brings people together and creates a sense of belonging – something I'll never forget!

I have met many inspiring people here – staff, volunteers, and migrants. Among those who touched me most was a mother of five children, all under the age of 11, who moved to Italy alone after the loss of her husband. At 34 years old, she had already overcome so many hurdles in her life that it left me in awe. I am 24, and her struggles – raising five young children alone in a new country – are challenges far beyond anything I could fully comprehend.

Yet, despite it all, we found time to share many moments of laughter as we studied Italian together in class. This bond, rooted in shared effort and learning, was a source of great joy for both of us. Her strength and the warmth of her children continually inspire me. One day her youngest son, hurt his foot so he accompanied her to class. This was us, very focused, studying together (see photo below) ... We were almost at the same level of Italian.

Mediterranean Hope is made possible by your gifts to Our Church's Wider Mission (UCC) and other special gifts at work through Global Ministries.



Follow the Law of Love: Safeguard Sensitive Locations and Ensure ICE Accountability



As a nation, we are witnessing the convergence of xenophobia, racism, authoritarianism, and nationalism. In the face of rising cruelty, we must remind policymakers of the difference between what is legal and what is right. Romans 13:10 says “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.” We must reaffirm that our call is to follow the law of love. That is why we are calling on Congress to pass legislation that protects the dignity of our immigrant neighbors.

Since President Trump came into office, ICE has deported nearly 200,000 people – most of whom have no criminal record. Detention facilities across the US are over capacity by more than 13,500 people, and immigrants with multiple marginalized identities face disproportionate harm.

In the UCC, we proclaim that Love is louder than hate. Love is louder than racism, xenophobia, and fear-mongering emanating from policymakers who seek to divide and exclude. Instead, we reject actions that strip immigrants of due process and dignity and we affirm our responsibility to protect the sojourner as our neighbor.

Two bills before Congress that can help protect immigration communities include:

The Protecting Sensitive Locations Act (H.R. 1061/S. 455) would prohibit immigration enforcement from conducting operations on the grounds of sensitive locations, such as churches and other places of worship, schools, and hospitals – places where fear has already caused church attendance to fall and school absenteeism to rise. Protections that prevented such activity were previously in place before being reversed on inauguration day. Since then, many churches have seen attendance plummet as congregants fear being questioned or detained while worshipping. Some children, particularly younger children who are typically dropped off at school by their parents, have stopped going to school out of similar fears. In California, Central Valley schools have seen a 22% increase in chronic absenteeism. Missing school long-term hurts students’ learning, outcomes, and well-being.

The VISIBLE Act (HR 4667/S 2212) would require immigration enforcement officers to wear visible identification that announces their agency. Across the country, we’ve seen documented immigrants, undocumented immigrants, and U.S. citizens be apprehended by masked immigration enforcement officers wearing plain clothes. Unmarked vehicles are often present at the scene, further contributing to a culture of fear and confusion. This is dangerous because it enables ICE agents to feel protected by their anonymity and safe from accountability.

Urge your Senators and Representative follow the law of love and protect our immigrant neighbors during this time. Ask them to co-sponsor and pass the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act and the VISIBLE Act today!

*If you would like to keep up with all of the Action Alerts from the UCC’s
Justice & Peace Action Network (JPANet) you can go to:*

<https://www.ucc.org/action-center/>

There you can read them all, or sign up to receive the weekly Action Alerts and monthly newsletter in your email. There is also an easy to use form that you can use to contact your elected representatives.

Self-Care in Turbulent Times

We currently find ourselves living in a stressful time. There is political division, with (it seems) everyone taking “sides”, sometimes angrily or even violently. We see injustice and suffering and, as followers of the message of Christ, we want to do something about it.

While this is indeed a time to take action, we also need to practice some self-care to avoid becoming overwhelmed by it all.

We all need to care for our own spiritual, mental, and physical well-being if we are to help others. Jesus himself took time to rest and heal himself at times. We need time “away” from the noise sometimes – a time to heal and recover.

Here are a few suggestions that might work for you if you feel stressed or overwhelmed:

Limit your screen time – Take time away from the news and social media. Engage in short blocks of time to catch up on the news, rather than all day absorption.

Connect with family and friends – Spend time with those you love, doing things that bring you joy!

Take care of yourself physically – Get enough sleep, eat well, and exercise. (A quiet walk perhaps?)

Focus on things within your control – Channel your energy into issues and causes that are important to you in your own community.

Listen to your emotions – If you are feeling that you need to unplug or just rest – Do It!

Here is how one person is choosing to cope with these stressful times:

MY THOUGHTS

by Rev. Barbara VanOlpen

UCCNY Associate Conference Minister for Clergy and Congregations

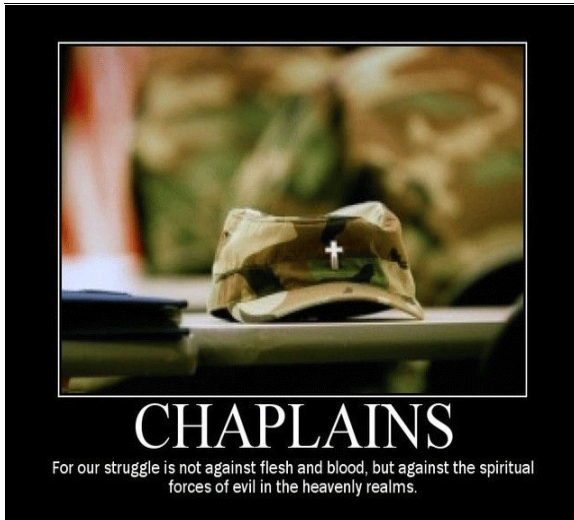
I arrived home late last night. As I walked toward my front door, I saw my dog, Cosmo. He was standing on his back legs so that he could look out the window of the storm door, and he had one paw pressed up against the glass. (I wish I had taken a photo that I could share with you!) Any stress I had been feeling about the outside world was gone in an instant. It was impossible not to smile. When I opened the door, he ran off to get his stuffed giraffe. We were playing an ill-advised game of catch in the living room within a couple minutes.

My spouse and I have been intentional lately about what we want our home to feel like when we walk in the door. I want it to feel like a place of joy, laughter, and welcome. A refuge from the outside world of endless political arguments, fear, and hatred. When I walk in the door, I want that weight to be lifted. Allowing Cosmo to stand up against the door in his excitement is one way to make home feel joyful as we enter.

There is so much about which we can (and should) be anxious and angry these days. There are serious injustices taking place, and we cannot turn a blind eye to them. AND I am convinced that Jesus does not want us to dwell in anger. Anger cannot be the abundant life about which Jesus spoke. So these days I am understanding joy as an act of resistance. I am also beginning to understand that joy can re-energize us, but anger and anxiety do the opposite.

So I am trying to let joy be my anchor, holding me securely even as the currents of rage increase their intensity. It takes faith to be anchored into joy. It takes understanding that God is still with us, and the Spirit is still moving among us. Sometimes, it even takes a dog to help that anchor hold.

Ministry in the Military



Did you know that there are chaplains that serve in the military? Indeed, there are! Chaplains from all different religious backgrounds and faith traditions serve in the military. Chaplains in the military serve as the presence of God on the bases and battlegrounds.

While at General Synod, I had the privilege and pleasure to catch up with Rev. Dr. Jeremy Lopez who was the former pastor at Salem UCC in North Tonawanda. He is now serving as a chaplain in the Air Force. I learned so much from him during our conversation together about the role of chaplains in the military. Things that I did not know . . . and that I want to share with all of you!

Quite surprisingly, the military places a high priority on and heavily protects the religious freedoms of the troops on base and on the battlefield. It does not matter what faith tradition or religion is practiced, the military goes above and beyond to make sure that all people can worship God in the ways that matter to them. If someone's religious practice requires praying at specific times of the day or fasting for a time or attending weekly worship, accommodations are made to do so.

What was most meaningful to me in our conversation was the opportunity to ask him honest questions. One question was plaguing my heart and mind and soul, a question to which I needed an answer. As a self-professed pacifist pastor (that's me), I needed to know whether or not chaplains were required by the military to use weapons and fight in combat. And what I learned from Chaplain Jeremy gave me greater appreciation for the military. He told me that chaplains are not trained for combat, not trained in weaponry, and are not even permitted to touch a weapon.

Chaplains are nonviolent agents on the base and on the battlefield. In this way, chaplains are not to be considered a violent threat. Of course, this makes it possible for chaplains to become targets on the battlefield, but they do wear insignia that informs all around them that they are an unarmed and nonviolent presence. It seems to be an unspoken rule that chaplains are non-targets in active war zones.

Above all else though, by not allowing chaplains to fight in combat a dividing line between what is "of God" and what is "not of God" is established. God is not an active agent in the combat on the battlefield. God is present as a witness to war as evidenced by the presence of the chaplains . . . but not as a participant in war itself.

It cannot be overstated how important this distinction is, Church! All throughout history, wars were declared to have been fought in the name of God. Wars such as the crusades and the inquisition and so many more. By claiming to be by divine mandate, the wars claimed to be fought "because God said so" have left blood stains on the history of the Church. By not allowing chaplains to engage in combat it reminds us that war is born from the agendas of the people and nations of this world . . . war is not of God and war is not part of God's plan for this world!

Our scriptures teach us that it is God's will that one day . . . we will learn war no more (Isaiah 2:4). May God hasten the day when our faith will be sight, and indeed we will learn war no more! Until then Church, let us pray for our military chaplains and for our troops! And if you would like to support our own UCC Chaplain in the Air Force (Chaplain Jeremy Lopez) please contact me to learn more about how you can support him with care packages and cards.

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*

Preaching for Today

Each and every week, I am privileged with the task of bringing a message to all y'all from the bible. The message preached every week from the bible is meant to be a word from God to all of us so that we can continue to follow Jesus in our day to day lives in this present time. Preaching a message to all of you each and every week is an offering of love to you and to God. It is always my hope that the message empowers and equips all of you to walk in the ways of Jesus today and tomorrow and all the days to come.

Church, this is a task that I do not take lightly and it is not a task that I put off until the last minute and it is not a task that I do just to check it off my list. It is a task that is so important to me that I spend a lot of time on it each and every week.

Because of its significance to the ministry of the church, preparation for sermons involves using a toolbox of resources to interpret the sacred scriptures and apply the sacred scriptures to the life of our church.

One of the tools that I use in preparation for preaching is the wisdom offered to us by 20th century theologian Karl Barth. For me to bring a message from God to all y'all today (in this time and in this place and in this context) I must do so by "holding the bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other hand." This means that for a sermon to be applicable to our lives, it must address current events in order to be relevant to us.

Because of this Church, you will hear me bring up current events in the sermon. It may look like bringing up a piece of legislation that will harm our neighbors or it may look like bringing up a tragedy that happened in our community or it may look like bringing up a natural disaster that has taken place somewhere in the world. Preaching for today requires the message being rooted in this current context (what is happening all around us today and in this time). Without addressing current events, sermons will not be relevant to us.

Y'all this is what preaching is all about. If I am to do my job to the best of my ability, I must address current events. And that is because our faith is not simply a mental assent to a set of beliefs, it is a lived and breathed and embodied discipleship. Sermons – at their best – should help us all follow in the ways of Jesus in this time and place. It is not merely what we believe that matters in our faith, it is all about how we live our lives based upon what we believe. It is my aim, each and every week, to bring a message from God to all of us, so that we can be faithful disciples of Jesus today, following in his ways in this time and this place. With God's help, I can. Thanks be to God. Amen.

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*

