

*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

SEPTEMBER 2025

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FALL BACK INTO CHURCH

*The days are getting a little shorter and a little cooler,
vacations are over and the kids are back in school.
Autumn is coming!*

*We gather for worship every Sunday at 11:00 am, as
we continue to make our way through this Season of
Pentecost, and we hope you'll be there!*



THE VINEYARD

A publication of The Lockport
United Church of Christ
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*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:
September 22, 2025**



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.



There's Gonna Be a Pet Blessing!

On **September 28** we are inviting you to bring your pets to church. Our morning worship service will include a blessing of our faithful pet friends. God loves all the creatures of this earth, so this is their chance to receive their blessing!

Disciple Classes Resume

September 11

After taking a break for the summer, our Disciple discussion group will resume on September 11. Class meets every **Thursday, 5:30 to 7:00 pm.**

Our first session will be an orientation class, with pizza, a preview of the year ahead, and a little bit of fun!

The following week, we will begin our first series, "Cross Examined: Reading the Bible in Times of Division". In this 5-week series, we will be discussing ways that scriptures are distorted and "weaponized" in harmful ways.

If you would like to join us, you would be most welcome! Please let Cyndy know in advance so that we can have study materials prepared for you. (And enough pizza!)

Tuesday Study Group Continues

Our Tuesday Bible Study group has moved from morning to afternoon. They now meet at **1:00 PM**, and continue to meet each week. See Nancy Sy if you would like to join them or need more information.

The Church of the BIG Tent



One of the messiest and most miraculous characteristics of the UCC is its identity as a united and uniting church which has earned us the name of the Church of the BIG Tent. One of the most meaningful moments of my time as a delegate at General Synod 2025 was the opportunity to participate in calling the UCC to continue to be a big tent church. To be a big tent church, we must continue to make more room for others, we must continue to build a bigger table, and we must continue to add more chairs for all to join us.

As a delegate, I was granted voice and vote on the work placed before the delegation at General Synod. And in this work, we were presented with two prudential resolutions that reflected the opportunity to make our tent bigger as a church. Our tent would become bigger if we voted yes to establish partnerships with the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland and the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico. None of these churches identify as UCC but instead seek to maintain their own identity while establishing a partnership of full communion with the UCC. Towards this end, full communion would make it so that the churches would allow and acknowledge the ministry of the partner churches in communion, pastoral credentials, and more.

It may seem this would not be a difficult decision to make as a church that is known as the church of the big tent. But there was some discussion about the challenges presented in the establishment of these partnerships . . . particularly of potential partnership with the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico.

Why? Because those gathered for synod found themselves caught up in focusing upon what divided us instead of what united us. What was it that the two churches differed upon? It was on the affirmation of LGBTQIA+ persons in the church. Now, y'all know how important this is to me as a justice issue and theological commitment. But should this position be the dividing line for who is welcome into our big tent church?

I don't think so. You might be surprised and wondering why I would not consider it a line that marks who is in and who is out of the big tent of the UCC. Let me tell you why, Church! It is because of my belief that nothing is impossible for God because anything is possible with God!! Because the UCC is a united and uniting church, I am hopeful that by being in relationship with others from different faith traditions and denominations that we become our best selves when we are together, we grow more together, and we do more together!

Let us be the Church of the Big Tent that makes room for all to come together in unity

Let us be the Church of the Big Tent where everyone is welcome, no matter who they are or where they have been or where they are going on life's journey

Let us be the Church of the Big Tent where we believe with all of our hearts and all of our souls and all of our minds that nothing is impossible for God because all things are possible with God! Thanks be to God. Amen.

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*



Neighborhood Picnic Success!

In August we expanded our monthly free dinner to a Neighborhood Picnic. It was held in the lot next to the church.

We had a big tent, a bounce house, and games. The dinner was grilled hot dogs and hamburgs, along with lots of side salads, beans, fruit, and desserts. It was well attended by folks from the community, who were appreciative and complimentary of our efforts!

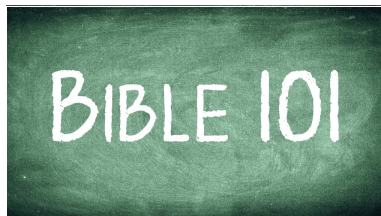
Many thanks to Edna and her crew for the cooking, Donna & David Dye-Sholk for the set up and grilling duties, and to everyone else who came to help or made a dessert for the event!

September Dinner

Our next Neighborhood Dinner will be held on **September 24**, as we return to the Emmanuel UMC kitchen to cook and serve. It will be free as always, and available as take-out from **5 to 5:30 pm**.

Bible 101 Class Begins September 7

New to the Bible? This is a basics of the Bible course for anyone interested in learning about the Bible . . . and all that is in it! If you are new to the Bible or rusty and need a refresher, this class is for you!



Join us for **Bible 101**! We will meet twice a month after church on Sunday! Classes will begin in **SEPTEMBER**. We will be meeting on **the first and fourth Sundays** of the month.

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.



HOW TO REACH US

Our Website - lockportucc.com

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Lockport, NY 14095

If you are Hospitalized or in need of Pastoral Care

please contact Pastor Hope
or the Church Office

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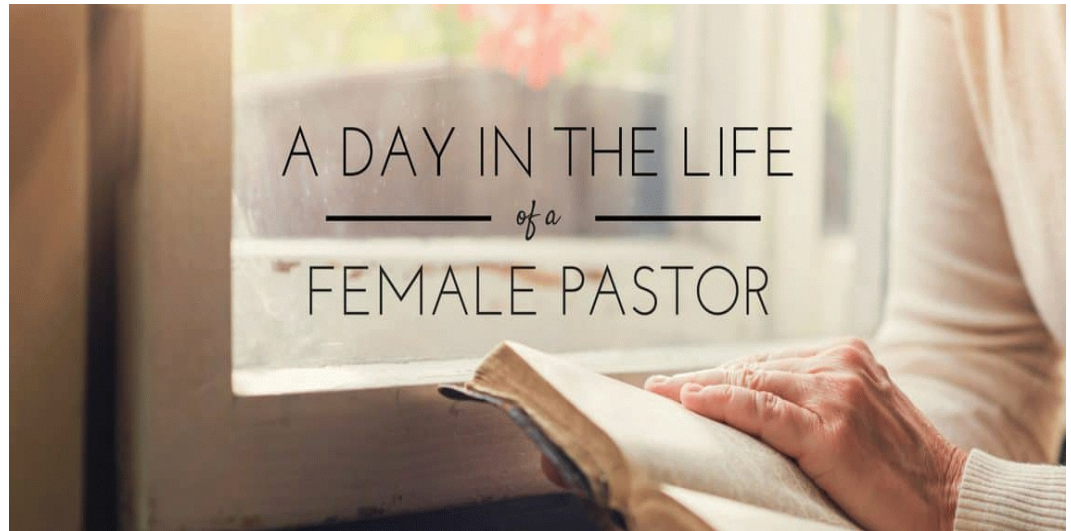
It will help us
reach a wider
audience!



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.

A Pastor's Schedule



Y'all, I have the best job in the world! There is nothing else in the world that I would rather do than be the pastor of Epiphany UCC and Lockport UCC. But y'all know that, for I have said it many many many times! But the reason I love my job is not the reason most people think. Most people think that I love my job because I only have to work one day a week being a pastor!

Did you know that? Apparently, it is common knowledge that pastors only work one day a week! I think I missed the memo! Because y'all, as a pastor I am always on the clock! 365 days a year. 24 hours a day. 7 days a week. This is because as clergy I am always "on-call" to be available to respond to pastoral care concerns, crises, or accidents at a moments' notice.

Even if pastors were not always on-call, there is quite a bit more work to do than only preach on Sunday. Pastors have more work to do than most people think! Let me share with you some of the work assigned to pastors:

- Nurture one's own faith and the faith of others by listening for God's voice through prayer, study of the bible, devotional reading, and worship
- Offer opportunities to others to study the bible, book studies, trainings, sermons, and other educational opportunities
- Visit sick and shut-ins in homes, hospitals, rehab and nursing facilities
- Offer pastoral counseling and spiritual direction
- Officiate funerals and weddings
- Continuing education requirements
- Lead meetings and manage the work of the church
- Foster connection to the wider community and its needs
- Speak prophetically against injustice through protests, statements of witness, and other forms of community organizing
- Build community with other faith traditions, denominations, and houses of worship to strengthen the wider faith community
- Assist with fundraising events, community events, and fellowship events

Y'all . . . it is simply not possible to do all the things on that list while only working one day a week! And truth be told, y'all I am useless after church on Sundays. Like many other pastors, I take a nice nap after worship on Sunday as often as I can! If I had only one day a week to do my job, I could never get it all done and never get a post-church nap!

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*



Happy Autumn

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



The Goodness of Holy Humor

**How do pastors like their orange juice?
With pulp-it!**

**What is a missionary's favorite car?
A convert-able!**

**How do we know God likes coffee?
It says he-brews it!**

Did you laugh or chuckle at these silly jokes? I hope you did because laughter is good medicine. Truth be told Church, the tasks assigned to us at General Synod are holy but hard work. It can be emotionally draining and exhausting to do what is asked of us. Just when we needed it the most, we got a dose of laughter in a moment of holy humor at General Synod. During one of the Speak Outs (time allotted to share with the church about upcoming events or opportunities), one of the youngest attendees had come up to the microphone to offer us the good medicine of laughter in a few jokes. And it was such good medicine for all of us!

Laughter is good for us, Church. Let me share with you a few ways that laughter is good for us. Laughter (1) eases pain by alleviating discomfort (2) reduces stress levels (3) boosts mood positively (4) relaxes muscles, and (5) increases immunity. It turns out that laughter is not only good for us, but laughter is also a gift to us from God!! Of course, God knows that laughter is good for us which is why God has made a time for laughter (Ecclesiastes 3:4). Laughter is found all throughout the bible and belongs in the church too!

Church, laugh a lot and laugh often!
It is good for you and for the world!

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*



GENERAL FUND FINANCIAL SUMMARY June 23 thru August 30

Income from Pledges & Offerings	4,551.00
Other Income	201.00
Mortgage Income	5,222.88
Withdrawn from Investments	5,000.00
Total Expenses	15,692.69

Lockport CARES Special Offering



We at Lockport UCC have been supporting Lockport CARES since it began here in our community. They are the only emergency homeless shelter in Eastern Niagara County. When local residents experience an emergency, such as a fire or eviction, the CARES shelter is there to offer temporary housing. What do they do? Here's a sample:

HOW WE SERVE OUR GUESTS

- Emergency shelter for up to 15 consecutive business days
- Small, comfortable rooms
- A maximum of only one or two other roommates
- Safe, secure, drug/alcohol/violence-free environment
- Homemade breakfast and dinner
- Packed lunches
- Full laundry service (we do it for you!)
- Shower/bathroom with provided personal care kits
- Television viewing space
- Patio and picnic space
- GOD's WORD

We will be accepting monetary donations for CARES throughout the month of September. Please make checks payable to Lockport UCC. Note that it is for CARES, or use one of the special offering envelopes on the table at church.



- 1 Caiden Paul
- 5 Ann Dodge
- 6 Xavier Haseley
- 10 Becky Mietlowski
- 14 Suzanne Wilson
- 16 Enzo Rongo
- 17 Tina Zuba
- 20 Karen Henn
- 20 Trever Mietlowski



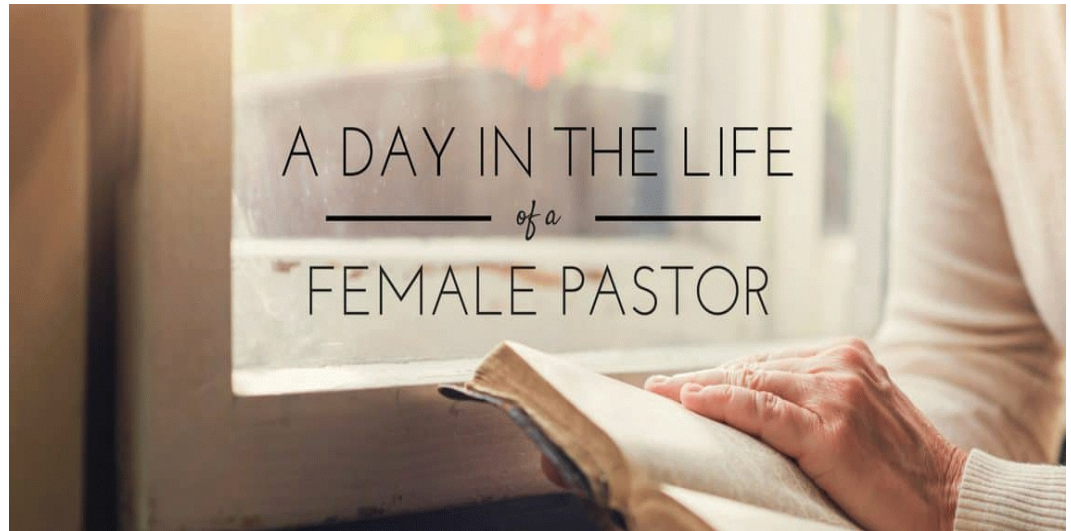
9-29-1990
Dan & Beth Holler



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. (Formerly known as RIP Medical Debt)

Just donating your spare change for this cause can make a HUGE difference! This organization is able to buy \$100 worth of debt for every dollar donated!

Words Matter to Me



Words matter, Church. It matters the words we use to talk about people and to talk to people. It matters the names we call people and the names we are called. But I must share with all of you something silly that happens to me a lot . . . especially when someone first finds out that I am a pastor. People apologize to me profusely, for what I consider to be a silly little indiscretion. What is their indiscretion? They said a swear word in front of a pastor!! Gasp!!

What most people do not know is that there is quite a bit more to being a pastor than policing the language of those around me. Like so much more, y'all. Of course, words matter. But it is not my sole purpose as a pastor to police language. If I were to the police language of others, I would much rather invite them:

- To refrain from name-calling, derogatory words, hate speech, or verbal threats
- To use a person's personal pronouns that are shared with us instead of using the incorrect pronouns
- To reject racist and sexist and ableist and heterosexist language in all of its forms

Church, these are all the ways that I would rather police the language of others rather than catch them accidentally dropping a swear word in my presence. Y'all should know that swear words do not bother me whatsoever, except when the words are being used in a threatening manner to another person. And y'all have already heard a few swear words come out of my mouth too . . . but never in the pulpit!

As you can imagine, as a pastor I am much more concerned how we use words than the words themselves. I am deeply concerned about the use of words to hurt and harm people. The adage "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words could never hurt me" is simply untrue. Words have power when used as a weapon to hurt and harm. Likewise, words have power when used as a remedy to heal and help. Let us be less concerned about policing others for the swear words that slip out and more concerned about how we use words to hurt and harm.

Let us choose to use our words to heal and help others today, tomorrow, and all the days to come. With God's help, we can!

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*





The Church in Action

United Church of Christ Corner

ucc.org

Global Ministries is a common witness in mission between the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ. Their mission is to receive and share the Good News of Jesus Christ by joining with global and local partners to work for justice, reconciliation and peace.

They are supported by donations from our OCWM gifts and other special offerings. They are at work with projects in the US and all over the world. Here are just a couple:

Community at the Asian Rural Institute

by a Global Mission Intern

I arrived here at the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) only five weeks ago, in the middle of the winter season, when the farm population dwindles and prepares for a new class of Participants to arrive. For nine months out of the year, there are about 30 students (called Participants), primarily from Asia and Africa, who study here to learn organic agricultural practices, servant leadership, and sustainable community building.

Ultimately, our work at the ARI is to empower these Participants and their respective home communities to build sustainable, self-reliant, and peaceful rural futures.

At this point, there are still several more weeks until the Participants arrive and begin their nine month journeys here, but I can feel the excitement and anticipation for their arrival building day by day. I feel incredibly blessed to have the opportunity to work and live alongside such a diverse and passionate group of rural leaders.

A Place to Call Home

by a Global Missions Intern

I worked with a nonprofit called The Samaritans in Green Valley, Arizona, United States. Their mission: to offer humanitarian support to migrants facing life-threatening challenges. The Samaritans operate in the Sonoran Desert along the United States-Mexico border, spanning over 260,000 square kilometers. Tragically, the U.S. government has weaponized this desert landscape to deter migration through a policy known as Prevention through Deterrence. The idea behind this policy is to push migrants into more hostile terrain, hoping to force them to turn back or face death.

In response, The Samaritans conduct desert searches to locate and assist migrants. When they find them, they offer medical care, food, and water helping to prevent death in the unforgiving desert. The most significant obstacle they face is the extreme lack of water. Migrants are being forced into vulnerable, dangerous situations because the proper channels for safe migration and support are either inadequate or nonexistent.

The House of Many Cultures

by a Global Missions Intern

I have been placed in Sicily, Italy 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. In addition to adapting to a new culture and language, they face uncertainty in securing basic necessities.

The House of Many Cultures steps in to bridge this gap, offering housing, meals, cultural orientation, language instruction, legal assistance, healthcare support, and more.

At present, there are about 40 residents, which include family units with children (ranging from ages 3 to 19) and young adults.

Faith Over Firearms: Stop the Gun Violence Epidemic!



Every day, 125 people are killed by guns in the U.S. Firearms are the leading cause of death among children and teenagers in the United States. We owe it to our children and to all those we have lost to gun violence to end this epidemic. Children should never have to fear for their lives at school, yet kids as young as five years old must regularly participate in active shooter drills. What does it say about our nation's morals if we value unregulated gun ownership over children's lives?

Even as we mourn the thousands killed by guns every year, our government refuses to act. In fact, the current administration eliminated the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention and cancelled community violence intervention (CVI) programs in March. CVIs are evidence-based programs that seek to end gun violence where it is most prevalent. Critically, these efforts are rooted in community-led and public health-supported models—with the experiences of those most impacted by gun violence informing the intervention programs. Many congregations help support these community efforts and are already important parts of the community violence intervention effort, making it a vital part of our ministry as people of faith.

We refuse to sit by and allow gun violence to be normalized as part of everyday America. Our faith instructs us to grieve with those who are mourning and let our prayers become actions. To not just lament but work to build a world restored. Our faith compels us to declare that a culture of violence and death is not inevitable. We are not powerless in making these changes; we can take steps to end gun violence.

As Congress continues the fiscal year 2026 appropriations process, they must robustly fund CVI with \$200 million and exert their constitutional authority over spending as the first branch of government. Congress must hold this administration accountable for its dangerous actions.

Tell your elected leaders to summon moral courage and take immediate action by calling on Congress to include in its upcoming appropriations bill \$200 million in funding for the community Violence Intervention program.

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THIS
OR OTHER ISSUES, YOU CAN . . .

TAKE ACTION

Contacting your Representative and Senators in Washington CAN make a difference. Send a letter or email, or make a phone call to let them know your feelings on this issue.

The UCC has an easy-to-use letter template on their website that you can use if you like, to contact your US Representative and Senators. Find it here:

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