



The *VINEYARD*

Newsletter of The Lockport
United Church of Christ

*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

DECEMBER 2024 / JANUARY 2025


Advent *A Season of Expectation*

The Season of Advent begins with our worship service on December 1. We will be sharing Holy Communion, decorating the sanctuary Christmas tree, and lighting the first candle on our advent wreath – the candle of *Hope*.

Advent services will continue in the weeks that follow, as we prepare for Christmas and anticipate the birth of the Christ child. Each week, we will lift up the themes of Advent. December 8 the coming of *Peace*, December 15 the *Joy* that Christ brings to the world, and December 22 the *Love* born to us on Christmas.

Christmas Eve *December 24 ~ 6:00 PM*

Then on Christmas Eve, we celebrate the coming of the Christ Child in our candlelight service. The Christ candle on our advent wreath will be lit, we will share holy communion, and hear the lessons and carols of the season. On this night, the Light overcomes the darkness!



*At this Blessed Time
of Year, we direct our
Hearts and our Worship
toward the Coming of
Jesus*

**Christmas
Fellowship
Dinner**

**December 11
5:30 PM**



We are planning a night out to share a fellowship dinner for Christmas and all are invited! It will be at the Fieldstone Restaurant on Wednesday, December 11, at 5:30 PM.

If you would like to join us, please sign the reservation sheet in the church narthex, or contact Cyndy to add your name.

**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 Memorials



Poinsettias have been ordered and will be in place for Advent! We have ordered a few extra plants. If you would like a plant for a memorial, or just to help us cover the cost of decorating the sanctuary, please contact Cyndy by phone, email, or text to see what we have available.

The color choices are Red, White, Pink

6" pot (5-6 flowers) - \$12.00 each

8" pot (12-15 flowers) - \$25.00 each

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

Community Dinner for January

We will NOT be holding our community dinner in December, but do plan to resume in January. Plans are still a bit up in the air, but we hope to hold a free dinner on January 22. We will be serving as take out only, from 5 to 5:30 PM, at First Presbyterian Church.



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:
January 19, 2025**

HOW TO REACH US

Our Website

lockportucc.com

Church Office

80 Main St. - Suite H

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

It will help us reach
a wider audience!



Tuesday Morning Group

Our Tuesday group continues to meet each week at 10:00 am. This is a casual lay-led group, and newcomers are always welcome. See Nancy Sy if you would like to join them or need more information.

Thursday Bible Study

Our Disciple group meets on Thursdays at 5:30 until 7:00 pm. This is also a casual lay-led group who welcomes newcomers at any time.

We will be taking a break for the holidays, from December 19 through January 2. We will resume on January 9.

If you would like to join us, please let Cyndy know so that we can prepare study materials for you.

Building Sale Update

In the last newsletter we told you that we were close to a closing date on the sale of the 98 East Ave. church building, with only the approval of the Attorney General still to be determined. Well, we have just received that approval, so everything is now ready for closing. Although we don't have an exact date yet, it should be very soon.

The buyer, Revolution Elite Wrestling Club, operates a sort of sports complex for kids. He has plans to expand with the possibility of basketball, baseball, and martial arts, as well as the wrestling. They operate as a non-profit, and seek to support the community of Lockport.

We will be holding a mortgage for 3 years for a portion of the purchase price, and will receive monthly payments.

While it is somewhat sad to see the old building pass from our hands, the sale will give us some financial relief and allow us to move forward in our new location.



Unfortunately, many children and families will not have a very merry Christmas unless others lend a hand to make that happen. We have some mission collections that will help to brighten another's holiday, and warm them for the winter.

Mitten Tree

will be in the church narthex ready to accept your donations of mittens, gloves, hats, or scarves. These will be shared with families through the YWCA's Domestic Violence program.



Toy Collection

for the children through the YWCA. New Toys for any age are accepted. Please do NOT wrap your toys.



*Please bring in your toy and mitten donations by **December 22**, so we can deliver them in time for Christmas.*

Pantry Collection

December 15

We will be accepting donations of non-perishable foods to be shared with a local food pantry. So many of our neighbors are in need, and our donations will be a blessing to a family's Christmas dinner right here in our own community. You may bring in your food donations on or before December 15.



Christmas Offering



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

Special offering envelopes are available in the church narthex. Your gift may be placed in the collection plate throughout December, or mailed to the church.

Thank You!



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 health insurance premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

Special offering envelopes are available in the church narthex. Your gift may be placed in the collection plate throughout December, or mailed to the church.

(Checks should be payable to Lockport UCC.)

Are You Afraid of the Dark?

Growing up, one of my biggest fears was the dark. This fear of the darkness has followed me for most of my life, even into adulthood. This fear made it difficult for me to take my dog outside at night and made it difficult for me to go to work early because I did not know if there was anything or anyone outside near my vehicle (as you can imagine, I would run from the door to my car). My fear of the dark stems from not knowing what might be hidden in the darkness. But Church, it wasn't until recently that there was something that causes greater fear in me than what might be hidden in the darkness around me.

It turns out, I am more afraid of the darkness that might find its home within my heart and my soul. The darkness might find its home within me without my notice, without my awareness, and without my knowledge. It can happen when I begin to allow negativity, pessimism, and cynicism to take root within me. And when this happens, it changes how I see the world around me:

Instead of focusing on **the positive**,
my eyes will fixate on **the negative**

Instead of focusing on **hope**,
my eyes will fixate on **fear**

Instead of focusing on **compassion**,
my eyes will fixate on **hate**

Instead of focusing on **joy**,
my eyes will fixate on **despair**

Church, you might find yourselves less afraid of the darkness around you, and more afraid of the darkness that may find itself within you. If this is true for you, know you are not alone. It is a fear of your pastor, and of our spiritual ancestors in the Bible. Because of this, we must pay attention to what we consume in our lives – whether it is on social media, on our news stations, on the radio, in our literature, in our social commentary, or in our relationships.

Take care to minimize your consumption of negativity, of ideas or concepts intended to divide us instead of unite us, of media that tells half-truths or outright falsities, and of anything that dehumanizes and demonizes any person made in God's image (spoiler alert: that means everyone and anyone).

Take care to maximize your consumption of good news, of ideas and concepts that bring us together in unity, of media that tells the truth as objectively as possible, of voices that uplift love, kindness, and justice, of anything that works towards the common good of all people.

Take care to multiply the light in the world. Become so full of light that it shines all around you and from within you into the world around you. With so much light, the darkness disappears. This is true of the darkness in the world around us . . . and the darkness that might be dwelling within us.

Church, let us **be the light** 

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*

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.

Your donation goes a long way. This organization is able to buy \$100 worth of debt for every dollar donated!



December Birthdays

- 7 Debra Mullaney
- 11 Richard Dodge II
- 14 Elizabeth Dodge
- 18 Cheryl Turner
- 18 Rol Sy
- 27 John Wright
- 27 Linda Layer

December Anniversaries

- 12-05-1981 Carl & Linda VanderWeide
- 12-30-1967 Rol & Nancy Sy



January Birthdays

- 2 Savino Pellegrino
- 11 Jim Rongo
- 11 Oliver Mietlowski
- 12 Gary Henning
- 15 Christine Derby-Cuadrado
- 18 Manny Derby-Cuadrado
- 19 Melody Zuercher
- 22 George Cruickshank
- 25 Melissa Gritzmacher
- 30 Carl VanderWeide

January Anniversaries

- 1-5-1973 Sam & Cyndy Corrieri
- 1-16-1987 Al & Bobbi Gritzmacher
- 1-18-1992 Tom & Melody Zuercher

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.

ANNUAL MEETING

January 19

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

Reports from Committees will be reviewed and election of officers will take place.

2025 Pledge Drive

Many thanks to everyone who has made a pledge or donation for 2025. Your support is greatly appreciated!

If you have not yet made your pledge, it's not too late. Cards may be dropped in the collection plate or mailed to the church.

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



General Fund Financial Summary

October 21 thru November 24

Income from Pledges & Offerings	3,629.00
Total Expenses	6,897.47

If you have questions about our finances, please contact me. I am always happy to speak with you.
Cyndy Corrieri, Treasurer

Book Study Continues at Lockport UCC

“Unclobber”

Rethinking our Misuse of the Bible on Homosexuality by Colby Martin

Tuesdays at 6:30 PM
November 12 thru December 17 led by Pastor Hope

Speak to Pastor Hope if you would like to join the discussion



Church Devotional Project

Don't forget to send in your devotional for our church devotional project. If you took a “name” for God, or if you still need to choose one, please send in your submission as soon as possible so we can assemble our booklet. (You can email your devotional to Cyndy)



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

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

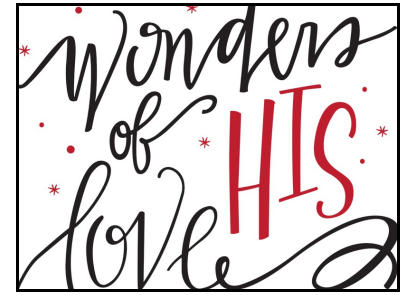
Linda Layer
Kevin O'Connor
Mt. View Assisted Living
5465 Upper Mountain Rd.
Lockport, NY 14094

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



*My prayer for you is that by
being rooted and established
in love, you may have the
power to grasp how wide and
long and high and deep is the
love of Christ*

(Ephesians 3:17-18)



Hidden within the hymn *Joy to the World* is a verse that explores the **wonder** of the width, length, height, and depth of God's love for us. Written by Isaac Watts in 1719, this hymn reflects on the good news of the birth of Jesus. And this good news elicits in us not only joy – but **wonder**. As someone who considers herself a lifelong learner, there are many things I have come to know about God. Yet there is something I can never fully comprehend about God and that is the width, length, height, and depth of God's love for us.

God's love for us is incomprehensible and incalculable, it is immeasurable and immense, and it is expansive and extraordinary. I cannot fully grasp and grapple with how God could love us so much. I **wonder** how it can be that God loves us, when we struggle to love ourselves. I **wonder** how it can be that God loves us, when we struggle to love one another. I **wonder** how it can be that God loves us, when we struggle with loving God in return. I **wonder** how it is possible for God to love us on our good days, let alone on our bad days. I **wonder** how it is possible for God to love us when we are at our best, let alone at our worst. I **wonder** how it is possible for God to love us no matter what we think, no matter what we say, and no matter what we do. I **wonder** how it is possible for God to love us as we are - not as we were in the past, not as we will be in the future, but just as we are in the present! God's love for us never changes . . . I **wonder** how that can be.

As the holiday season draws near, may you all be filled with **wonder**. Not **wonder** about the beauty of the falling snow or the captivating twinkling of the lights, but **wonder** about the width, length, height, and depth of God's love for us. God's love is beyond measure, beyond comprehension, and beyond our wildest imagination. Let us be filled with **wonder** this season, as we celebrate God's love for us in the birth of Jesus.

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*



The Church in Action

United Church of Christ Corner

ucc.org

FAMILY VILLAGE FARM, INDIA

Family Village Farm is a home, community and school for children and adults without families and homes. Children and adults live and work together, creating a community that benefits all.

King's Matriculation School at the Family Village Farm has undergone major reconstruction in recent years as additional needs are identified. The school serves 670 students and is one of Global Ministries' Child Sponsorship Centers.



MEXICAN ROUNDTABLE

The roundtable of our Mexican partner churches is focused on the training of lay and clergy leaders for the growing number of the two denominations' (Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ) congregations.

The long-term goals are to develop a network of support for new mission service projects and further collaboration in areas such as the joint ordination of pastors. Helping develop new funding sources, helping congregations heighten their experience of what it means to be "church" and be in covenant with other congregations are current emphases of its work.

KALAUMAN CENTER

As a community-based center in Dumaguete City, Philippines, the Dumaguete Kalauman Center for Development (Kalauman), whose name means "from where you can draw hope", spreads God's love through holistic services and programs, including educational programs, health services, and Christian education, with family and community engagement opportunities.

Grace and her family participate in the Global Ministries Child Sponsorship program at Kalauman. Grace is 8 years old and attends public school where she is in Second Grade. She was an honor student in Grade 1 and described by her teacher as having great potential towards achieving her dreams. She has a positive attitude and does her school work with great skill. She has one sister and one brother.

She lives in a house without its own source of electricity or water. The father works in construction when opportunities are available. Her mother has a difficult time finding work, because she only has an elementary school education. They came from the countryside hoping to find a better life in Dumaguete City.

Kalauman walks together with families, like Grace's family, and provides practical, holistic services to enable opportunities for a brighter future.



Reflections on Advent & Christmas



Advent

by Bret Myers

What is coming we yearn to know
As fallen leaves herald winter snow
Will what comes be worth the wait?
Will past hungers our future sate?

How ironic it seems and bravely bold
To nurture faith and hope
 when earth grows cold
Hope defies reason's expectation
While faith abides despite realization

Advent beckons us to neither sit nor slumber
Lest resignation our spirits encumber
Our hearts may slacken as cold winds blow
But peace is found when love does grow

With joy we celebrate what is not yet
In homage to the best in us, dare we forget
Welcome the sacred, the good, and the true
For frigid's the soul that will not renew



Each Christmas is a Holy Time

by William Livingstone Wallace

Each Christmas is a holy time
When birthing takes the center stage
A time for dreaming and for love
A time for youth and time for age
For holding all there is as one
A time for turning life's next page

At Christmas-time all things embrace
Each battle line is changed to peace
Opposing forces join to dance
Till all divisions come to cease
Then simple life and grace-filled ways
Will be the norm that shall increase

Dream, dream of all things made as new
All workers given time to gaze
All scholars value childlike truth
And prophets set the world ablaze
The rich and poor will share their wealth
And sing refrains of common praise

Abandon not your Christmas dreams
But dreams alone won't change the Earth
Far reaching visions soon collapse
If other folk don't aid their birth
Blood, sweat and tears are costs we pay
But don't diminish dreaming's worth

Give thanks for Christmas and for hope
Beyond each travail and each tear
Join all creation's sacred song
The song each star and atom share
This song can fill our hearts with joy
Till life becomes a heart-felt prayer



Home Advent Wreath

You are invited to celebrate Advent in your home with an Advent wreath of your own. Use the following Advent celebration each week as you light the candles. This is a good time to consider the meaning of Advent and Christmas and to counter some of the commercialism of the season.



Advent 1 - HOPE

We are getting ready because Christmas is coming; Jesus is coming. Jesus brought hope to his world and to ours. We light the candle of hope.

Light the first candle

Hope is like a candle shining bright. This week we will remember to look for hope in our world.

Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus, and the gift of hope. We remember that Jesus is the hope and the light of the world. Help us to be like Jesus. Amen.

Advent 2 - PEACE

We are getting ready because Christmas is coming; Jesus is coming. Jesus brought hope to his world and to ours. We light the candle of hope.

Re-Light the first candle

Jesus taught his followers and us to be peace-makers. This is the candle of peace.

Light the second candle

Peace is like a candle shining bright. This week we will remember to be peacemakers in our world.

Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus, and the gift of peace. We remember that Jesus is a peacemaker and the light of the world. Help us to be like Jesus. Amen.



Advent 3 - JOY

We are getting ready because Christmas is coming; Jesus is coming. Jesus brought hope to his world and to ours. We light the candle of hope.

Re-Light the first candle

Jesus taught his followers and us to be peace-makers. This is the candle of peace.

Re-Light the second candle

Jesus wants us to be happy and filled with joy. This is the candle of joy.

Light the third candle

Joy is like a candle's dancing light. This week we will remember to be joyful and to make others happy.

Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus, and the gift of joy. We remember that Jesus wants joy and light in the world. Help us to be like Jesus. Amen.





Advent 4 - LOVE

We are getting ready because Christmas is coming; Jesus is coming. Jesus brought hope to his world and to ours. We light the candle of hope.

Re-Light the first candle

Jesus taught his followers and us to be peace-makers. This is the candle of peace.

Re-Light the second candle

Jesus wants us to be happy and filled with joy. This is the candle of joy.

Re-Light the third candle

Jesus brought love to his world and ours. This is the candle of love.

Light the fourth candle

Love is like a candle that brightens our life. This week we will remember to be loving to others.

Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus, and the gift of love. Jesus showed us how to love everyone and to treat others like we want to be treated.

Help us to be like Jesus. Amen.

Christmas Eve or Day - CHRIST candle

We have been getting ready and now Jesus is here. Jesus brought hope to his world and to ours. We light the candle of hope.

Re-Light the first candle

Jesus taught his followers and us to be peace-makers. This is the candle of peace.

Re-Light the second candle

Jesus wants us to be happy and filled with joy. This is the candle of joy.

Re-Light the third candle

Jesus brought love to his world and ours. This is the candle of love.

Re-Light the fourth candle

This is the Christ candle for Jesus' birthday.

Light the fifth candle

Jesus came to the world as a tiny baby but he was a great gift from God. He showed us how to bring hope, peace, joy, and love to others and to the earth. The flames of the Advent candles remind us of all these things.

Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus. Christ is the light of the world. Help us to be like Jesus. Amen.

