



The VINEYARD

Newsletter of The Lockport
United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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

JUNE 2024

The Longest Season . . .

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.
– John 15:26,16:13-14

As we enter the longest season of the church, Pentecost, we recall these words that Jesus spoke to his disciples shortly before his death. Imagine what it must have been like for this early community, facing an uncertain future, feeling lost and unsure how to move forward. One might see some similarities between these first Christians and us today. We also are in a time of transition, and looking toward a somewhat uncertain future.

“Jesus shared this message of hope and encouragement before his death so that the disciples would know that his plan held a long view. I suggest that the church of today, as we look toward our future, would do well to adopt a much longer view of God’s acts in human history.”

(Cheryl A. Lindsay)

We have a lot to be hopeful about, however. We have a loving fellowship of friends, a dedication for ministry and mission, and a wonderful new pastor to help guide us into the future. And although selling our long-time church home might seem like an ending, we can also look forward to it as a new beginning for the life of Lockport UCC and our community.

Our Advocate, the Spirit is with us.

Let’s move into this new season together with excitement and joy!



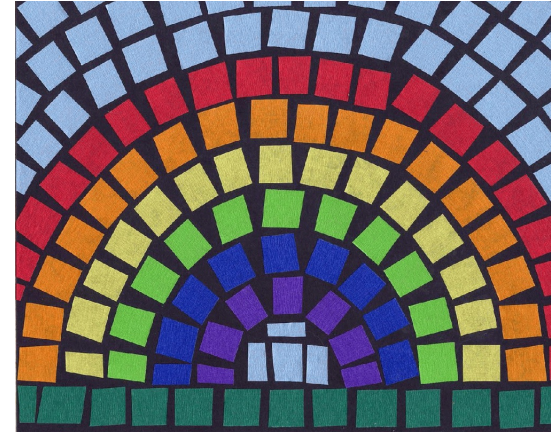
And there’s a lot to look forward to in June, which promises to be a busy month. Keep reading to get all the news about what’s coming up this month!



A Message from Pastor Hope

God's Rainbow Mosaic

Like the image here, the Church is a beautiful mosaic of different pieces that are brought together by God. We are the pieces that make up the mosaic – we all belong, we all are needed, and we all have a place in the mosaic. The mosaic of the church has many pieces, and not a single piece is insignificant. Some pieces are more similar than others and some are quite a bit different than the other pieces, but none of the pieces are “extra” or “not needed” in the mosaic.



It has been said that “we are more alike than we are different.” And it is true! These words of wisdom remind us that all people share things in common with one another and at the same time all people are different from one another because of the beautiful diversity found within the human community. This is true for every person in our church and for every person who is not in our church. Sometimes, we might become overwhelmed by the differences and diversity found in the world around us, but the truth is . . . we have much more in common with one another than we have not in common with one another.

One of the most important lessons I learned when I was taking a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), which is required for ordination in the UCC, was the wisdom from Emmanuel Lartey which is that “**every human person is in some respects (a) like all others (b) like some others (c) like no other.**” If we were to apply this wisdom to the church, in some ways we are “like all others”, in some ways we are “like some others”, and in some ways we are “like no other.” Indeed, if we are “like all others” and “like some others” then it is true that we all share more in common than we don’t because we are only at times “like no other.”

This is why I am excited to have the opportunity to get to know all of you!! Over the last few months, I have had the privilege of getting to know some of you at Lockport UCC, but I have a lot more of you to get to know (if I have not called you yet, be expecting my call). It has been so meaningful to hear your stories and find out that we share a lot more in common than we don’t! Like a mosaic, I have been thrilled to find out that “all of us” are on a spiritual journey, “some of us” have crossed paths with one another at different times and different places, and “none of us” are without a story to share!

As we celebrate the 7th anniversary of becoming an “Open and Affirming” congregation, we have an opportunity to expand our reach into the community through participation in Lockport Pride in June. Pride is a celebration of the beautiful mosaic of human diversity made by God!! Y’all, we never know who God is sending to us or who God will be sending to us. Because of this, we must work to welcome all people – those who are “like all of us”, those who are “like some of us”, and those who are “like none of us”. As an ONA church, we can be a witness to the unconditional love of God, the wide open arms of God’s embrace, and the words of affirmation that “no matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here!” Let us be a safe haven of love for those who find themselves on the margins of the church, those who find themselves rejected by the church, and those who find themselves damned by the church.

Come and celebrate pride with us!! We will be able to witness the diversity of our community and will also find common ground with those who may seem to be more different than similar to us. Indeed, we will find out for ourselves just how true it is!! This is what we are called to do!

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*

Celebrating Our Open and Affirming Covenant

June 30 is the day selected by the United Church of Christ to celebrate Open and Affirming Sunday. In worship that morning, we will join in commemoration of that, as well as celebrating the seventh anniversary of Lockport UCC becoming an ONA congregation.

On June 18, 2017 our congregation voted to become an ONA church and approved the Covenant you see below. We then submitted our application to the Open and Affirming Coalition of the UCC, which was approved on July 13, 2017.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Lockport United Church of Christ Open and Affirming Covenant

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

(Lockport United Church of Christ Mission Statement)

Organized in 2002 through the consolidation of two local United Church of Christ congregations, Lockport United Church of Christ has had a continuing history of involvement in social issues dating to the abolition of slavery in the first half of the nineteenth century. We honor our ancestors' legacy, and seek to carry on their work with the work we do today.

We strive to be a fully hospitable church that welcomes people of every race, gender, age, ethnicity, social status, family structure, mental or physical health status, and most importantly, those who have often been excluded from faith communities. In declaring ourselves to be an Open and Affirming Church, we particularly welcome people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions into the full life and fellowship of the church, including membership, sacraments, leadership and employment by the congregation.

We do so in response to the declaration of our Savior Jesus Christ who, when asked which was the greatest commandment of all, answered "The first is ... 'you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31 NRSV)

We embrace our denomination's promise: "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here" at Lockport United Church of Christ

Help Us Keep In Touch

E-mails are a great way for us to get in touch with members when there is a need – Snow cancellations, a meeting change, etc. If we don't have yours, please take a moment to send an e-mail note to Cyndy, then we'll have yours on file when we need to be in touch quickly.



THE VINEYARD

A publication of The Lockport
United Church of Christ
98 East Avenue
Lockport, New York 14094
(716) 433-2545

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

Submissions Welcome
**Deadline for Next Issue:
June 16, 2024**

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE

Our complete newsletter and lots of other information is available on our website at:

lockportucc.com

RECEIVE YOUR NEWSLETTER VIA E-MAIL

If you would like to receive your newsletter via e-mail, just send your e-mail address to Cyndy. It's a quick and easy way to get your newsletter, and it will save the church money.



Like us on
facebook

HOW TO REACH US

Church Office

98 East Ave. 433-2545
lockportunited@roadrunner.com

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



Pride Event Booth

Lockport UCC will be hosting a booth at the Niagara Pride event on Saturday, **June 22** at the Kenan Center. As an Open & Affirming congregation, this is an

important opportunity for the church to show our support, as well as a chance to invite those attending to consider our church if they are searching for a church home where they can feel welcome.

Volunteers Needed

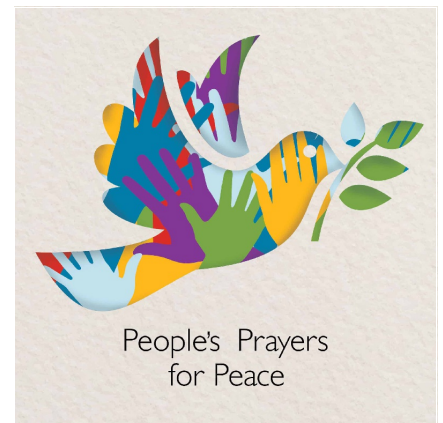
We will be needing volunteers from the church to be present during that time. The event is from **1 to 7 pm**, and we are asking folks to sign up for one of the **2-hour shifts**. There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex. We would like to have at least 2 or 3 people for each shift, so please add your name to the sheet if you are able to help out.

Training Session

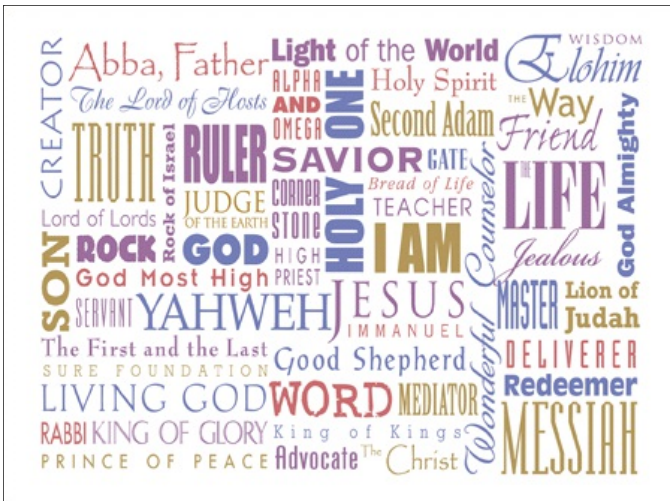
For those who would like to learn more about how to feel at ease when speaking to those who stop by our booth, Pastor Hope will be leading a short training session for volunteers after our worship service on **June 9**.

Prayer Vigil for World Peace

On **June 19 at 6:00 pm**, Lockport UCC will host an ecumenical prayer service, with other local churches and the community invited to attend. Plans are still being made, but Pastor Hope will lead the service, with the possible involvement of representatives from other local churches.



This is an opportunity to join together as a community of churches to pray for peace in our world!



A God of Many Names Devotional

If we were to go on a little journey through the Bible, we would discover that there is not just one name for God. In the Bible, God has MANY names!! God is described as a Parent, Midwife, Judge, Teacher, Lord, Guide, Friend – to name a few! In the Bible, the names for God are all verbs. This means that all the names of God describe something that God DOES in our world. We can know God by what God has DONE, is DOING, and will DO in the future.

Because we all experience God in different ways, we might connect with God more as a Helper than as a Potter, or more as Savior than as a Caretaker, or more as Liberator than as Physician. You might already have a special name for God – a name that helps you connect with God, a name you use in your prayer, or a name that deepens your understanding with God. Each week in worship, we use a different name for God based on the scripture that day. Together, we have learned about God Our Advocate, God Our Friend, and the Out of the Box God. But as you can imagine, there are many more names for God that can draw us into deeper understanding and relationship with God.

As one way (of many) to grow spiritually as a church, God has led me to dream up writing a devotional together, as an out of the box way to grow together as a church. Let's write a devotional together!! In this devotional, you each would choose a name for God that means a lot to you or that matters to you or that makes it possible for you to know God better – and write a brief devotional article about it. And after we collect the articles from our members, we will put them all together in a devotional book to read together as a church. In this way, we will be able to get to know one another better and get to know God better too! On Sunday, there will be a bunch of index cards with a name for God on it. You are invited to choose one of the index cards with a name on it. And you will write your devotional article on that name.

If you are interested in being a part of this church-wide project, please see below for some guidelines for the devotional article:

- 📖 Length: 200-300 words (not including scripture reference)
- 📖 Include a bible verse that uses/describes your chosen name for God
- 📖 Include a reflection on the scripture and name of God
- 📖 Include a simple prayer

It seems important to share an example of a devotional article that I had written in the past so that you can get a better understanding of what a devotional article can be like. This devotional example (found on the following page) is about the "journeys" in the bible and what they teach us about God.

Please let Pastor Hope know if you are interested in this church-wide project!! It is a way to share our faith and our stories with one another!! Thanks be to God. Amen!

We would like to have all of the devotional articles collected by the end of August, so we can assemble them and create our devotional book. So think about what name you would like to choose and start writing your devotional article. (When complete, it would be very helpful if you can submit your devotional to Cyndy via email if possible – but hard copies are OK, too.)

A God of Many Names Devotional – Example

Re-HOME **GENESIS 12:1-5**

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother’s son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.

REFLECTION

As one of the first sojourn stories in the Bible, the calling of God to Abram and Sarai to GO from their home to a new HOME in the land of Canaan reminds us that sometimes we are called to travel to a new destination to call home throughout our lives. For Abram and Sarai, the re-homing experience was full of possibility and promise, for God established a covenant with them to make them a nation of blessing to the world. In our travels, oftentimes we find that many different places can FEEL like home to us. When we talk about these places, we call them our HOME AWAY FROM HOME. At these homes away from home, we feel safe, comforted, and an overwhelming sense of belonging in this place. Do you have a place that you feel to be your home away from home? Take some time and reflect upon how you feel in your home away from home, whenever you visit it.

PRAYER

Home-making God, you have created the cosmos as your dwelling place, your home. Because you are a homemaking God, you have blessed us with a HOME on earth. We thank you for our HOME and our HOMES AWAY FROM HOME, and yet we recognize that there are many in our midst who do not have a home or a home away from home. Together, we pray for an end to homelessness in our world. We are called to action and commit to acts of compassion, advocacy and policy making, and collaborating with community organizations that provides support to unhoused persons in our world. Amen.

Blessings!

To Our
Shut-in Members

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

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

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



Community Dinner

Our Free Community Dinner this month will be on **June 26**.

The dinners are served on the 4th Wednesday of each month, between 5:00 and 5:30 PM, and available as take-out only.

The menu for this time has not yet been announced, but we know it will be good as always!

~~ In Our Prayers ~~

Al Gritzmacher's sister Susan passed away in May.

Richard Woolson passed away on May 24.

We send our condolences and offer our prayers to these families.



Happy Father's Day!

June 16

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.



- 12 Al Gritzmacher
- 13 Skylar Hoste
- 24 James Babcock
- 24 Nancy Sy
- 26 Bobbi Gritzmacher

Happy Birthday!

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.



Tuesday Morning Group

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

Thursday Bible Study

Our **Disciple group** will be taking a break for the summer. We will resume classes in the Fall.

Offering for UCC Open and Affirming Coalition



The Open and Affirming Coalition is an independent non-profit. Although they work closely with the UCC's national ministries, they receive no regular funding from Our Church's Wider Mission. The national ONA program is funded by contributions.

As an ONA church, we would like to show our support for the coalition, as well as our gratitude for the assistance we received during our Open and Affirming process. Our donations will also help insure that the assistance will be there for other churches seeking to become ONA congregations.

Throughout June, we will be accepting your donations to the ONA Coalition. If you would like to contribute, just drop your donation in the collection plate on any Sunday, or mail your gift to the church. Please note that it is for "ONA", and make checks payable to Lockport UCC.

General Fund Financial Summary

March 25 thru May 26

Income from Pledges & Offerings	6,412.00
Other Income	425.00
Withdrawn from Investments	5,000.00
Total Income	11,837.00
Total Expenses	10,426.29

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

Cyndy Corrieri, Treasurer

Looking Ahead

July 27 – Bowling Party

August 4 – Outdoor Worship & Picnic

Details will be in our next newsletter.

Mark your calendar and plan to be with us for these fellowship events!



*Spring is here, Summer's right around the corner.
Everywhere we see trees greening, flowers blooming,
baby birds and animals being born.
It all takes place in God's Divine Garden,
and we are blessed to receive it!*

In the Divine Garden

by Emily Verse

In realms beyond where sunlight dares,
God's garden blooms in silent prayers.
Each leaf a verse, each petal sings,
In harmony, the bell of heaven rings.

A river flows with grace, not seen,
Through fields of gold and endless green.
The trees, they stand, both old and wise,
Beneath the ever-changing skies.

The air, it carries purest love,
A gift from the Creator above.
With gentle touch, the wind composes,
Songs of peace, in rows of roses.

Here, souls find solace, spirits mend,
Where paths of light and shadow blend.
In this garden, time stands still,
Embraced by love, in divine will.

Each creature, each bird, each butterfly,
Speaks of miracles, under the sky.
God's garden, a realm of endless grace,
A tranquil refuge, a sacred space.
Dance of Nature's Harmony



Little Food Pantry

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

Little Library

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

RIP Medical Debt Relief

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

This organization is able to buy \$100 worth of debt for every dollar donated.