



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



MARCH 2025

Lent Begins with Ash Wednesday

We will soon be celebrating another *FIRST* together – our first Lenten and Easter season in our new church home! Lent begins with the Ash Wednesday worship service on **March 5 at 7:00 PM**, which will include the imposition of ashes. Folks from Epiphany UCC will be joining us for the service.

Lenten services will then continue each Sunday leading up to Holy Week, which begins with Palm Sunday on April 13. Lent is a time for reflection. Attending worship services, and hearing the messages that Pastor Hope will have to share with us, can help prepare our hearts and minds to receive the gift of Easter.



Community Prayer Service at Lockport UCC

Our country and our world is certainly in need of some prayers right now. Wars, famine, natural disasters, displaced refugees, disunity among the American people and our politicians . . . the list of problems and suffering seems endless. Yes, this is a time for prayer.

On the World Day of Prayer, **March 7, at 7:00 PM**, Pastor Hope will lead a service to offer prayers for peace and unity for our country and our world. We will be inviting the community to join us.





COMMUNITY DINNER FOR MARCH

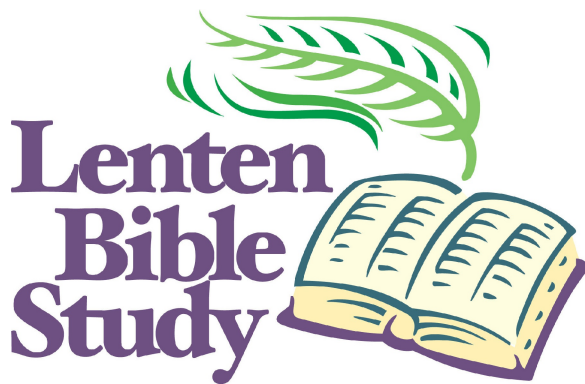


Edna and her crew will be serving up another delicious meal for the local community on **March 26**.

As always, the meals will be available free, served as take out only, from 5 to 5:30 PM, at First Presbyterian Church.

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.



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. The group explores the lectionary scripture readings for each week. 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.

On March 13, we will begin a new 6-week series entitled "The Difficult Words of Jesus." We will explore some of Jesus's most perplexing teachings, how to interpret them, and what they mean for us today.

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



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:
March 16, 2025**

Pastoral

Pondering . . .

*Likewise, the Spirit helps us
in our weakness,
for we do not know how
to pray as we ought,
but the Spirit intercedes
with groanings too deep for words.
(Romans 8:26)*



No words. There are times in our lives when we have no words to respond to what is going on around us. Whether it was a crisis or an unexpected diagnosis or a traumatic experience, there are times in our lives that rob us of words, times when we do not know what to say, and times when no words can be uttered.

In the days following the inauguration of the current administration, so many unexpected things have happened that have left me speechless. As the pastor of two purple churches (churches with a mix of blue voters and red voters and everyone in between), it is likely that the onslaught of rapid-fire executive orders, abrupt change of policies, and unexpected changes has caused many – if not all – of us to feel overwhelmed and rendered speechless, no matter where our personal political affiliation lies. If you are feeling like this, know that you are not alone. It is something that our spiritual ancestors struggled with too. In writing to our spiritual ancestors and to us, Paul the Apostle offers some comfort when we have no words, when we do not know what to say, and when we find ourselves speechless. It is the Spirit of God that dwells within us that speaks on our behalf through wordless groaning. The groaning of the Spirit of God in us is too deep to express in words.

Too deep for words. When we have no words, God does. But the groaning of God is too deep to articulate in words. Words cannot express the deep sense of sorrow in God when suffering is found on every corner of the globe. In other words, God is so grieved by what is going on in the world that even God is rendered speechless. Instead of words, God's own grief is expressed in wordless groans.

Church, God is grieved by what is happening in our families, in our neighborhoods, in our communities, in our nation, and in our world. Do you hear the wordless groans of God in response to the dismantling of all social safety nets and the loss of jobs and the loss of equal rights and the loss of federal funding and the loss of love? Let those with ears, hear what God is saying. The wordless groans of God are deafening, and joins with our own speechlessness at what is happening all around us.

Lest we despair, the Spirit of God is present in us to help us. Because God's own heart is grieved by what is happening to us, God is offering to help us to make things right. And know this: God will! Take heart, Church. God knows what is happening to us and knows what to do about it. Go to God in prayer always . . . but especially when you have no words.

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*

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

Pastor

Rev. Hope Schwartz

Secretary/Treasurer

Cyndy Corrieri

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!

Congregational Vote to Call Pastor Hope

March 16

In January of 2024 the Church Council entered into an agreement with Hope Schwartz (now Rev. Schwartz) for her to be our **Designated Pastor** for a term of one year. She started her tenure with us on April 1, 2024.

The time has flown by! With Pastor Hope we have settled into our new church home, and worshiped together. We've had a chance to get to know her, and she's gotten to know us.

We are approaching the end of that one-year agreement, and now is time for the congregation to vote on the question of **Calling Rev. Schwartz to be our Settled, Permanent Pastor.**

On March 16, following our morning worship service, we will hold a congregational meeting. Everyone will have an opportunity to discuss the issues and express any comments, concerns or questions. Following that discussion, our members will vote on the question to call. Pastor Hope will not be present for the meeting, as is always the custom when taking a call vote.

We encourage all of our members to be present for this important meeting. Friends are invited to be part of the discussion as well.



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.





*Best Wishes
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



- 1 Patricia Hall
- 4 Remington Mietlowski
- 9 Ken Klino
- 11 Beth Holler
- 13 Marlene Westcott
- 30 Jill Driskel

March Anniversaries

- 3-01-1975 Beth & John Granchelli
- 3-20-1976 Cheryl & Tom Reid

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.



*General Fund
Financial Summary*
January 27 thru February 16

Income from Pledges & Offerings	2,410.00
From Investments	5,000.00
Total Expenses	7,768.21

**** Sale of 98 East Ave ****

34,521.59
was received upon closing
30,000.00
has been transferred to our investment account

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

Cyndy Corrieri, Treasurer



Our Lay Readers are the best, and we very much appreciate their willingness to serve the church in this way! Our Liturgist list has gotten a bit short, however, so we have to call on them quite frequently.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A LITURGIST?

We would be happy to have some other folks step forward to take a turn at reading on Sundays.

If you think this might be something you'd like to try, please talk to Cyndy about it. You might find it a very enjoyable way to participate in worship!

LOOKING AHEAD

Special Services in April

PALM SUNDAY

April 13 - 11:00 am Worship

MAUNDY THURSDAY

April 17 - 6:00 pm Worship

GOOD FRIDAY

April 18 - at Epiphany UCC
5:00 pm - Fish Fry
6:00 pm - Worship

EASTER SUNDAY

April 20 - 11:00 am Worship

Order Your Easter Memorial Plants

Please help us decorate the sanctuary for Easter Sunday by ordering one or more plants for the altar. They can be placed in memory of a loved one, or in celebration of a special someone in your life. Memorials will be printed in the Easter bulletin. You may take your plants home after the Easter morning worship service.



You may place your order in the offering plate by April 6, or contact Cyndy by phone, e-mail, or text. Include the number and type of plant(s) you would like, and the dedication that you would like to appear in the bulletin.

(Checks should be payable to Lockport UCC.)

Available Plants

Easter Lilies - \$18.00 ea.

Mums - \$15.00 ea. (assorted colors)

Tulips - \$12.00 ea. (assorted colors)

St. Patrick's Breastplate



“The Walk”

by Ann Weems

*Those of us who walk along this road
do so reluctantly.*

Lent is not our favorite time of year.

All this is too contemplative to suit us.

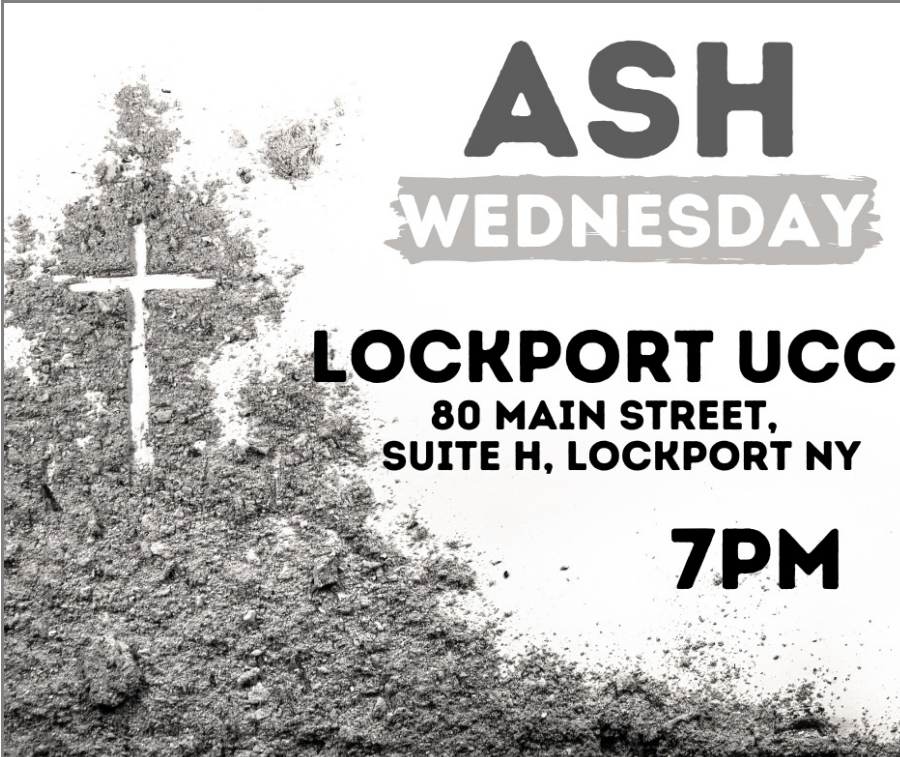
*Besides we don't know what to do
with piousness and prayer.*

*But Lent is a time to take time to let the power
of our faith story take hold of us,
a time to intensify our living into Christ,
a time to hover over the thoughts of our hearts,
a time to place our feet in the streets of Jerusalem
or to walk along the sea and listen to his Word,
a time to ponder and a time to wonder . . .*

Lent is a time to allow a fresh new taste of God!

*Give us the courage, O God,
to hear your word and to read our living into it.*

*Give us the trust to know we're forgiven,
and give us the faith to take up our lives and walk.*



ASH
WEDNESDAY

LOCKPORT UCC
80 MAIN STREET,
SUITE H, LOCKPORT NY

7PM



The Church in Action

United Church of Christ Corner

ucc.org

Be The Light through your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing

For over 75 years, the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering (OGHS) has been helping American and Canadian Christians bring God's hope and healing to hurting people domestically and around the world.

OGHS is a vital mission of the United Church of Christ. It connects you to disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development efforts around the globe. When disasters strike, or when individuals are displaced due to violence or poverty, OGHS ensures immediate response and ongoing recovery.

Through your support, OGHS funds comprehensive development programs in areas such as healthcare, education, agriculture, food security, microfinancing, and women's empowerment. By partnering with Global Ministries and international response networks, OGHS maximizes its impact. Your contributions help meet urgent needs while addressing the root causes of vulnerability, ensuring long-term, sustainable solutions for affected communities.

*We will be accepting your donations to OGHS throughout the month of March. You may place your gift in the offering plate on any Sunday, or mail it to the church. Please use the offering envelopes on the entrance table at church, or note that it is for OGHS and make checks payable to **Lockport UCC**.*

☆ Stories of the Light ☆

Orfelina Portillo is an agricultural technician working with families in northern Honduras. She teaches sustainable approaches to growing crops; monitors water projects; shows women in the community how to prepare more nutritious meals for their families; and leads workshops for things like creating organic fertilizers and sprays. Orfelina proclaims, "This is what I am passionate about: teaching. My profession is a very important part of my everyday life. My work is my joy...I am part of the strong hand that feeds the world."

The Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL) has made significant strides in empowering women and supporting communities through transformative programs. Serving approximately one million church members and nearly three million beneficiaries annually, CCSL is committed to breaking barriers and promoting women's leadership across various sectors.

The YWCA of Palestine, a United Church of Christ partner through Global Ministries and supported by One Great Hour of Sharing, has engaged local Palestinian communities since 1893. Today, it offers programs of economic empowerment, women's rights, youth leadership, and children's education. An example of the latter is the YWCA's nursery schools and kindergartens in refugee camps, schools the YWCA has run for decades. In addition to regular classes, the YWCA offers skill-based camps such as photography and sports, as well as other extra-curricular activities at its schools.





Protect Trans, Nonbinary, and Intersex People's Civil Rights!



Our faith teaches us that transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people are beloved children of God. Recently, this community has come under attack by our federal government. Banned from serving in the military and fired from positions in the federal government. Prohibited from playing on school sports teams. Unable to get passports that reflect their gender identity. Cut off from lifesaving, gender-affirming care.

We are barely two months into 2025 and there have already been 339 anti-trans proposed laws at the state level across the nation. Every day, members of this beloved community wake up to more devastation. The people who love them are mourning. As people of faith, we must act! It is time to:

1) Tell Congress to investigate and block all the attacks on trans, nonbinary, and intersex people that are currently underway across the federal government, including the firing of federal government workers who work on issues of gender and sexuality and the State Department refusing to process gender changes to passports. If an agency or department is found to be violating U.S. law, the Constitution, or civil and individual rights, Congress has the constitutional duty to ensure, through robust investigation, the government corrects course.

2) Urge Congress to re-introduce the Equality Act, a first step towards passage. This law would provide protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. 70% of Americans support the Equality Act. While the Equality Act has been introduced several times in recent years, it has not yet been signed into law. If we are to live into our ideal of equality for all, the entire LGBTQ+ community must be protected against discrimination.

Let us work together for a world where all children of God are cherished, protected, and free to be their beautiful selves. As people of faith, we must be loud and clear in our message that trans individuals are beloved by God, are created in the image of God, and are deserving of dignity and equal protection under the law.

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. If they are not supporting the policies in line with your views, urge them to do so. If you are happy with the policies they are pursuing, let them know you agree and urge them to keep fighting! And don't forget your representatives at the State level. Laws and policies in the States can make a difference, too.

The UCC also 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.votervoice.net/JAWM/Campaigns/121893/
Respond?unregistered=m5ceTLTBZ-uupSdSwiSHuw](https://www.votervoice.net/JAWM/Campaigns/121893/Respond?unregistered=m5ceTLTBZ-uupSdSwiSHuw)



Crisis Fund Launched to Help Local Refugee Aid Programs

The Refugee Partnership of Western New York has launched a \$1.5 million Crisis Response Fund to help local refugee resettlement agencies continue their work in the wake of President Trump suspending the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and its associated funding.

The money will allow the organizations – Catholic Charities of Buffalo, International Institute of Buffalo, Jericho Road Community Health Center, Jewish Family Services of Western New York, and Journey’s End Refugee Services – to press on with assisting 731 refugees who have arrived in the region within the last 90 days.

When refugees are accepted into the United States after being vetted by the federal government, they are promised three months of support, which includes assistance with housing, food, clothing, health care, and finding employment, among other things. The federal government gives money to resettlement agencies to help newly arrived refugees.

Five local foundations have already given \$450,000 to kick-start the campaign. The Refugee Partnership’s goal is to raise the balance within 30 days so they can continue to assist these refugees now that government funding has been cut off.

(Reprinted excerpts from
a Buffalo News article by Natalie Brophy)

We are accepting a special offering to aid this refugee Crisis Fund. If you would like to contribute, there are offering envelopes on the table at the church, or you can mail your gift to the church. We will pass this money on immediately to help the Refugee Partnership meet their goal and continue this critical work. Please make checks payable to Lockport UCC.

We realize that there are a lot of opportunities for giving in our newsletter. The need in our country and around the world is great right now, but you cannot give to every one of them. We simply offer these as choices available if one (or two) of them speak to your heart and you wish to make a gift.

Other Continuing Giving Opportunities Available

We can still accept and pass on gifts to these funds if you wish to make a donation. (All checks should be payable to Lockport UCC)

RELIEF FOR UKRAINE

**RELIEF FOR CALIFORNIA
FIRE VICTIMS**

RIP MEDICAL DEBT RELIEF