



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



SEPTEMBER 2024

We've Moved!

On September 1st we held our first worship service in our new church!

Our new worship space is located at **80 Main Street, Suite H**. It is in the block between Locust and Pine, 2 doors east of the big "LOCKPORT" letters, with black awnings above the two windows on either side of the front door.

The best way to enter, however, it to park in the lot behind the building and come in through the rear entrance, which also has black awnings on either side.

On August 25th we held our final, decommissioning service in the East Avenue church. It's bittersweet to leave the building that has been our church home since 1890, especially for those members who have a long family history in that place.

But our new church is bright and new and will be the perfect place for us to carry on with worship, study, fellowship and mission, as we create new history and new memories!

Our New Mailing Address

We also have a new mailing address for the church. All correspondence through the mail should now be sent to: (note the change in zip code)

Lockport U.C.C.
PO Box 427
Lockport, NY 14095





Building Sale Update *A Good News / Bad News Tale*

In our last newsletter, we shared the happy news that our church building had finally been sold! The couple from Indiana ... full price cash offer ... contract signed. The legal issues were in process and we were preparing to close.

First, the Bad News

Then, only days before the closing was about to take place, the buyers changed their mind and notified us that they were refusing to go through with the purchase. They are not legally within their rights to do that, but our attorney informed us that it would be costly and could take months or even years to take them to court. There was no other practical choice for the Council to make than to let them go and move on.

Now the Good News!

Within a couple of days of receiving that discouraging news, a new buyer surfaced and has made us an offer to purchase the church! This is a local person who envisions our church as a sports complex for Lockport kids. He has plans for wrestling, basketball, baseball and more.

The offer is for \$280,000. The buyer will give us a down payment of \$100,000 and we will hold a mortgage for the balance for a term of three years. During that period, he will make monthly payments to the church, with the balance being due at the end of the three years.

The Council has decided to accept this offer, pending the approval by our attorney, who will check out the buyer's credit and negotiate the terms of the mortgage. This will allow us the money we need to continue our ministry in our new location, and avoid the expense of maintaining the old church building for an indefinite period if we were to put it back on the market. If all goes well, we should be able to close sometime in October.

We have been through a tumultuous year and a half in this process of selling our building – with all the ups and downs of a roller coaster! But things seem to be coming together finally, and perhaps even for the better. With this new buyer, our building will continue to be a community gathering place for kids and families in Lockport. Maybe this is the plan God had in mind for us all along!

Church Clean-Up Day Planned

Saturday, September 14
10:00 am

Our old church building is a bit of a mess, following the move. We would like to get it cleaned up some before we hand it over to the new owner.

We are asking for your help to do this! Anyone who is able to help, please gather at the old church location on Saturday morning, September 14, at 10:00 am. With many hands to help, we should be able to get the building spruced up in a few hours.



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.

Pastoral Pondering

**By this everyone will know
that you are my disciples,
if you **love** one another”**

(John 13:35)

Over the course of the 4,802 days that have followed since my decision to follow Jesus on June 21, 2011, I have often wondered how others will know that I follow Jesus. Is it enough to simply claim the name by saying “I am a Christian” or by saying “I believe in God?” One of my favorite hymns to sing in church offers an answer to this question. The hymn “They Will Know We are Christians” is rooted in the teaching of Jesus in the bible.



Church, how will others know if we are followers of Jesus?

Oftentimes, we tend to think that others will know we follow Jesus because we go to church **or** because we tithe to the church **or** because we wear a cross necklace **or** because we go to bible study **or** because we are members of a church. But none of those things serve as any indication that we are followers of Jesus – for Jesus never mentioned any of those within his teachings. Every single time Jesus taught on how others will know that we are followers of his, Jesus said **it is by our love** that others will know. **Love** is the evidence to others that we are followers of Jesus.

Because it is so easy for us and others to claim the name as a follower of Jesus, we need to pay attention to more than our words or the words of others. We need to look for the presence of **love** in the thoughts, words, and deeds of those who claim the name of follower of Jesus. If **love** is absent, then we are not following Jesus, and the same goes for others who claim the name too.

Love is the evidence of the transformation that happens when we choose to follow Jesus. As a fruit of the spirit, **love** is the defining characteristic of those who follow Jesus. Yet, **love** is not the only fruit of the spirit, is it? The fruit of the spirit is **love** and **joy** and **peace** and **patience** and **kindness** and **goodness** and **faithfulness** and **gentleness** and **self-control**.

If you want others to know you are a follower of Jesus, ask God to produce the fruit of the spirit in your life – in your thoughts, in your words, and in your deeds. Church, this is the only way they will know! Because anyone can claim the name, God has given us a way to know for sure, and that is by the presence of the fruit of the spirit in our lives – most importantly the presence of **love**.

Let us be known by **our love in thought
Let us be known by **our love** in word
Let us be known by **our love** in deed.**

With God’s help, we can! Thanks be to God. Amen!!

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*



On September 8

our worship service will include a blessing for all the students, teachers, and others who will be starting back to school.

We will also be accepting a special offering to help defray the cost of supplies at our local schools.

Community Dinners to Continue

Our new church does not have a kitchen large enough or equipped to prepare our monthly free dinners for the community. But we will be able to continue!

First Presbyterian Church has been gracious enough to allow us to use their kitchen facilities. Starting with our August dinner, and in the months to come, Edna and her crew will be preparing and serving the meals from there.

She will be limited, however, to doing all the cooking and preparation on the day of the meal - rather than doing some prep ahead of time, as she has in the past. This means she will be needing some extra help on that day to accomplish that. So please consider being a regular volunteer to help each month, so that we can continue this long-standing tradition.

The dinners will still be on the 4th Wednesday of each month and served from 5 to 5:30 pm as take-out only.



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.

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
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:
September 22, 2024**



“Praise the Lord”
“Hallelujah”
“Amen”

Talking back to the preacher or pastor is a common practice within many churches. The above phrases (and others) are spoken aloud in response to the message the preacher or pastor brings from God. Even though it is likely that many of us have been taught that **talking back** is not a good thing to do, it is a GOOD THING in church! Yup – you read that right! **Talking back** in the church is known as “call and response.”

The tradition of “call and response” plays a significant role in worship. It transforms worship from a one-sided speech to a communal conversation. It makes it possible for the congregation to respond to what God is saying through the message. It helps the congregation get to know one another in ways we might never say aloud at any other time.

It is like what happens inside of a classroom. The preacher or pastor is like a teacher who brings a lesson (message) to the students (the congregation). Participation is necessary for the teacher to know if the message is making sense, if the message is connecting, and if the message is having any impact. It is the same thing in church! Participation of the congregation in worship helps the preacher or pastor know if the message is making sense, if the message is connecting, and if the message is having any impact.

Talking back to the preacher or pastor helps in all these ways, and so does body language, eye contact, posture, and other forms of responsiveness. In preaching a message to all of you, it is important to me as your pastor that the message sticks, that the message makes sense, and the message connects to all of you. Because of this, I invite all of you to **talk back to me!** I promise you will not get in trouble!

Good preaching is meant to change us, meant to make a difference in our lives, and meant to help us live out our faith. We are not supposed to simply come to church and not be changed. We come to church to be transformed by God. **Talking back to me** in worship gives me an idea about the impact of the message, as does comments or feedback shared after worship. I want to know if the message is making a connection to you. I want to know if the message makes sense to you. I want to know if the message impacts you.

The more you **talk back to me** the easier it is for me to know if I am doing my job as your pastor.

Church – talk back to me!

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*



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.



HOW TO REACH US

Church Office

80 Main St. - Suite H 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



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 will be resuming for a new year of classes on September 12. We meet each week at 5:30 until 7:00 pm. This is also a casual lay-led group who welcomes newcomers at any time.

Our sessions include a variety of topics, which frequently takes the form of a multi-week series. There is often some reading to do for "homework" prior to the class session.

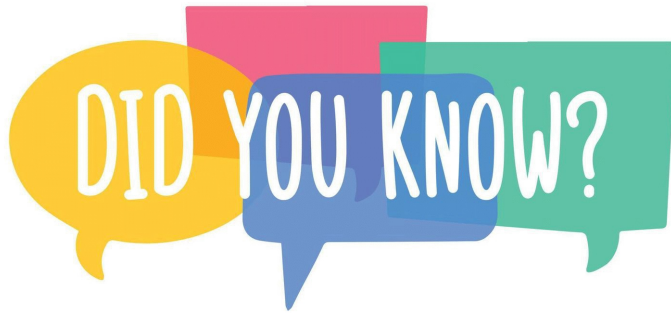
We will start with a series that examines selected scripture passages, placing them in context within the Bible and exploring their relevance for today. In later classes, we will be discussing the life and views of some theologians from the past and today, as well as several other topics throughout the year.

Our first session will be an orientation class, which will include subs for dinner while we watch a short video about ancient Machines of the Gods. Discussion classes will get started in earnest the following week.

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

*This is how everyone will know that you
are my disciples, when you love each other."*

- John 13:35 (Common English Bible)



Clergy Continuing Education is MANDATORY

Did you know that the UCC requires all ministers (yes – even retired ministers) to pursue continuing education for their ministerial practice and standing in the church? Yup – it’s true!! As someone who loves learning, the continuing education requirements for ministerial standing in the UCC is thrilling to me!

Continuing education can look like taking a course on process theology, reading a book on church conflict, participating in an online webinar on new practices in children’s ministry, and so much more!! In August, I will be able take the Culturally Responsive Ministry Training (CRMT) on Sexuality and Gender which is required for all members in discernment and clergy! I am registered to take a webinar on Narrative Budgets offered by the Pension Board!

As a new school year dawns among us, maybe it is time for us to reflect on our attitudes towards learning. Some of us may feel that we got all we needed to know from the school of hard knocks or from grade school. Some of us might think that we don’t need to continue to learn and grow. Some of us might want to learn new skills or learn something new but are not sure what we want to learn about. Wherever you may fall, it is important for us to keep learning. It is God who wants us to always be growing and learning in our lives, in our churches, and in our world.

Church, what are your continuing education goals for this upcoming year? What are you interested in learning about God or about the Church or about the Bible? Maybe you are interested in learning more about the “nones and dones” those who do not attend church and those who have left the church? Maybe you are interested in learning about how to become a WISE Church or a Just Peace Church? Maybe you want to learn more about the Apocrypha, which are the extra books in the Bibles of our Catholic siblings?

Outside of the church, you might be interested in learning a new life skill or how to cook a new recipe. You might be interested in learning how to garden or how to change a tire. You might have always wanted to learn how to make pottery. Just because we have graduated school or college does not mean we need to stop learning, does it? Of course not!!

The children, youth, teenagers, and college students in our lives should inspire us to never stop learning. Spend some time thinking about what our continuing education goals are in our church and our own personal continuing education goals. Let us inspire one another to grow a little bit this year! Let us grow and grow and grow. Let us learn and learn and learn. We will not regret it, I promise! Thanks be to God. Amen.

*Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Hope*



Blessings

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



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.

Jean Boots passed away on August 17.
We send our condolences to her family
and will hold them in our prayers



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



9-3-2001	Chuck & Tina Pike
9-29-1990	Dan & Beth Holler

General Fund Financial Summary

June 24 thru August 18

Income from Pledges & Offerings	5,185.00
Other Income	400.00
Total Income	5,585.00
Withdrawn From Investments	15,000.00
Total Expenses	15,570.00

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

Cyndy Corrieri, Treasurer



*Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters:
You must all be quick to listen,
slow to speak, and slow to get angry.
Human anger does not produce
the righteousness God desires.
Get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives,
and humbly accept the word
God has planted in your hearts,
for it has the power to save your souls.
(James 1:19-21)*

Confession time: more times than I want to admit, I have commented, reacted, posted, and shared something on social media that I deeply regret. You might have found yourself regretting what you have said or done on social media too. Sometimes this happens when our moral compass doesn't alert us to **think twice** before commenting, reacting, posting, and sharing. Sometimes, others have alerted us to **think twice** but we may have ignored them. Other times, it may take a while before we realize that we had done something regrettable, and only found out when we noticed our friends list grow smaller as people unfriended us over a comment, a reaction, or a post on my social media. Maybe, if we had stopped to **think twice**, we might not have lost some of those friendships.

In the letter of James, we are reminded to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. In other words, we are encouraged to listen more, talk less, and do not rush to anger. Applied to social media, it can be said that we are called to **think twice** before posting or commenting or sharing on social media. It takes between 150 and 300 milliseconds to react to something on social media (to like it or dislike it, to comment, to share), which is between .15 seconds and .3 seconds. Because our reaction time is less than a second, we must begin to **think twice** before saying or doing anything on social media. Let us begin to **think twice** before posting, **think twice** before reacting, **think twice** before commenting, and **think twice** before sharing.

It may be tempting for us (myself included) to share a post that is mean-spirited, pokes fun at someone or something, or is intentionally controversial. But James 1:19-21 encourages us to get rid of whatever **dirtyies** our souls (rhyparía in the Greek) and whatever is used **to hurt or to injure** someone or something (kakía in the Greek). Perhaps, we should listen to what is suggested by James as we discern what to post, what to react, what to share, and what to comment on our social media feeds.

If we are exhausted by seeing the contempt, hatred, and division on social media, perhaps we can "be the change" we want to see, as suggested in the wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi. Let us choose to rid ourselves of **whatever dirtyies our souls** and **whatever is used to hurt or injure** someone or something. For us to do this – we must **think twice** before we react, comment, post, or share on our social media. Doing so, we might just save our relationships, save our friendships, and save our souls. With God's help, we can. Thanks be to God. Amen.

*Blessings,
Pastor Hope*

Book Studies to Be Offered

Details below

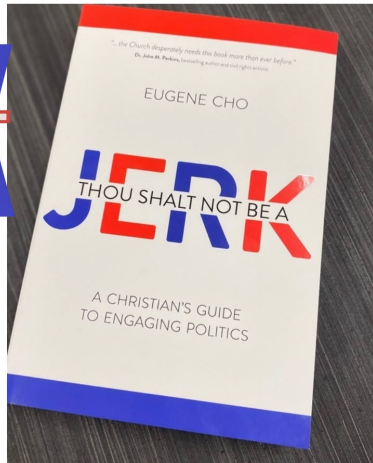
Speak to Pastor Hope if you would like to join the discussion
or if you need more information

at Epiphany UCC

“Though Shalt Not Be a Jerk”
A Christian’s Guide to Engaging Politics
by Eugene Cho

BOOK
STUDY

EPIPHANY UCC
PRESENTS A BOOK
STUDY OF THOU
SHALT NOT BE A JERK
BY EUGENE CHO.



EVERYONE
IS WELCOME

📍 Epiphany UCC,
9365 Clarence Center Rd.

📅 Tuesdays, Sep 3 - Oct 29

🕒 6:30 PM

✉️ pastor.epiphanyucc@gmail.com

DATE

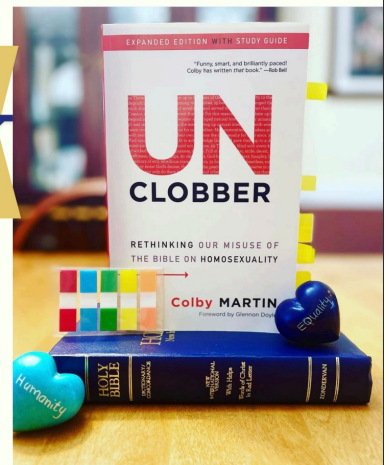
September 3	Intro, Chapters 1 & 2
September 10	Chapter 3
September 17	Chapter 4
September 24	Chapter 5
October 1	Chapter 6
October 8	Chapter 7
October 15	Chapter 8
October 22	Chapter 9
October 29	Chapter 10 & Afterward

at Lockport UCC

“Unclobber”
Rethinking our Misuse of the
Bible on Homosexuality
by Colby Martin

BOOK
STUDY

LOCKPORT UCC
PRESENTS A BOOK
STUDY OF
UNCLOBBER BY
COLBY MARTIN.



EVERYONE
IS WELCOME

📍 Lockport UCC,
80 Main St, Ste H in Lockport.

📅 Tuesdays, Nov 12 - Dec 17

🕒 6:30 PM

✉️ pastor.lockportucc@gmail.com

DATE

DATE	CHAPTERS
November 12	Intro, Prologue, Ch 1
November 19	Chapters 2 & 3
November 26	Chapters 4 & 5
December 3	Chapters 6 & 7
December 10	Chapters 8 & 9
December 17	Chapter 10 & Epilogue



Pet Blessing

Saturday, October 12
2:00 pm

Bring your pet to be blessed!

Whatever form your best friend is – fur, feathers, scales, or other – you are welcome to bring them to the church for a special blessing. If bringing them in person is not an option, feel free to bring a photo, collar, or other representation to receive their blessing by proxy.



All Saints Remembrance Service
and
Dedication of Our New Church
November 3

More Details in the Next Newsletter

You're Invited to Pastor Hope's Ordination

Pastor Hope's big day is coming up soon! Her ordination has been set to take place on Sunday, October 6 and everyone is invited to attend to help her celebrate! The details are in the invitation below.

They are requesting those attending to **RSVP by September 23**. There is a **sign up sheet** at the church which will allow us to RSVP as a group. You may also call or email Cyndy to add your name to the list.

~~~~~

### ***Please Note***

We will NOT have a worship service at our church on the morning of October 6.

~~~~~

**THE WESTERN ASSOCIATION of the NEW YORK CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

and the members of

ST. JAMES UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**invite your presence and participation
for the ordination of**

HOPE LINDSEY SCHWARTZ

into the Christian ministry

Sunday, October 6 • 3:00 PM

**Clergy are invited to robe and process, gathering at 2:30 PM.
The liturgical color is red.**

A Reception of Celebration will follow in the Assembly Hall.



SAINT JAMES
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

76 Main Street • Hamburg, NY 14075

**RSVP to churchoffice@hamburgucc.org
or 716-649-6171 by September 23.**





The Church in Action

United Church of Christ Corner

ucc.org

We can be proud to be a congregation of the United Church of Christ! As part of the UCC we are members of an inclusive and diverse community of Christians connected by faith called to build a just world for all. A quote from their website says, “Our ministries advocate at a national and global level, but our roots are planted firmly in our local churches in communities like yours.”

The UCC has 4,794 local churches in the U.S. with about 773,500 members and over 10,000 authorized clergy leaders. In their mission efforts, they work with over 300 global partners.

WE at Lockport UCC are part of that network of churches, working together for a more just world for all. To help our members be more aware and informed about the work of the UCC, in each issue of the newsletter we will share news about the projects, initiatives, positions, and missions of the UCC.

To begin with, in this issue, a little background about the history of the United Church of Christ and what they stand for.

The UCC Mission Statement is simple enough:
“We welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.”

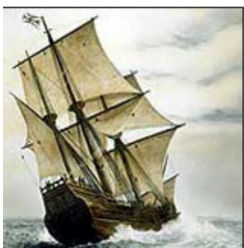
From the UCC website:

“For over 400 years, the United Church of Christ has been the church of firsts, weaving God’s message of hope and extravagant welcome with action for justice and peace. We are a church where Jesus the healer meets Jesus the revolutionary, and where together, we grow a just and peaceful world. Our history is filled with ways our faith and call for justice have effected change in our communities, and our response to the demands of our faith is woven into the history of our country.”

The United Church of Christ continues, a united and uniting church. God alone is its author, Christ alone its head. A biblical church, it continues to witness by the power of the Holy Spirit.

~ UCC Firsts ~

The United Church of Christ is a blend of four historic traditions – Congregational, Christian, Evangelical, and Reformed – as well as many newer traditions. Each has left a mark on U.S. religious and political history. Here are just some of the many ways the UCC and its predecessor bodies have led the way through ministry.



1620: Pilgrims seek spiritual freedom

Seeking spiritual freedom, forbears of the United Church of Christ prepare to leave Europe for the New World. Later generations know them as the Pilgrims. Their pastor, John Robinson, urges them as they depart to keep their minds and hearts open to new ways. God, he says, “has yet more light and truth to break forth out of his holy Word.”

1630: early experiment in democracy

The Congregational churches founded by the Pilgrims and other spiritual reformers spread rapidly through New England. In an early experiment in democracy, each congregation is self-governing and elects its own ministers. The Congregationalists aim to create a model for a just society lived in the presence of God. Their leader, John Winthrop, prays that “we shall be as a city upon a hill ... the eyes of all people upon us.”



1700: an early stand against slavery

Congregationalists are among the first Americans to take a stand against slavery. The Rev. Samuel Sewall writes the first anti-slavery pamphlet in

America, "The Selling of Joseph." Sewall lays the foundation for the abolitionist movement that comes more than a century later.

1730s: The Great Awakening

The first Great Awakening sweeps through Congregational and Presbyterian churches. One of the great thinkers of the movement, Jonathan Edwards, says the church should recover the passion of a transforming faith that changes "the course of [our] lives."

1773: first act of civil disobedience

Five thousand angry colonists gather in the Old South Meeting House to demand repeal of an unjust tax on tea. Their protest inspires the first act of civil disobedience in U.S. history – the "Boston Tea Party."

1773: 1st published

African-American poet

A member of Old South in Boston, Phillis Wheatley becomes the first published African-American author. "Poems on Various Subjects" is a sensation, and Wheatley gains her freedom from slavery soon after. Modern African-American poet Alice Walker says of her: "[She] kept alive, in so many of our ancestors, the notion of song.



1777: Reformed congregation saves Liberty Bell

The British occupy Philadelphia – seat of the rebellious Continental Congress – and plan to melt down the Liberty Bell to

manufacture cannons. The Bell is safely hidden under the floorboards of Old Zion Reformed Church in Allentown.

1785: first ordained

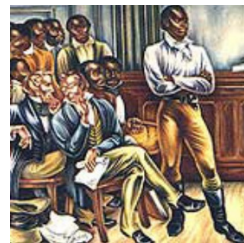
African-American pastor

Lemuel Haynes is the first African American ordained by a Protestant denomination. He becomes a world renowned preacher and writer.



1798: 'Christians' seek liberty of conscience

Dissident preacher James O'Kelly is one of the early founders of a religious movement called simply the "Christians." The Christians seek liberty of conscience and oppose authoritarian church government.



1839: defining moment for abolitionist movement

Enslaved Africans break their chains and seize control of the schooner Amistad. They are arrested and held in a Connecticut jail while the ship's owners sue to have them returned as property. Congregationalists and other Christians organize a campaign to free the captives. The Supreme Court rules the captives are not property, and the Africans regain their freedom.

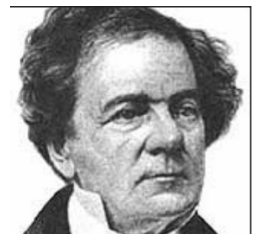
1845: 'Protestant Catholicism'

Theologian Philip Schaff scandalizes the Reformed churches in Pennsylvania when he argues for a "Protestant Catholicism" centered in the person of Jesus Christ. The movement founded by Schaff and his friend, John Nevin, revives sacramental worship in the Reformed church and sets the stage for the 20th-century liturgical movement.

1846: first integrated anti slavery society

The Amistad case is a spur to the conscience of Congregationalists who believe no human being should be a slave. In 1846

Lewis Tappan, one of the Amistad organizers, organizes the American Missionary Association – the first anti-slavery society in the U.S. with multiracial leadership.





1853: first woman pastor
Antoinette Brown is the first woman since New Testament times ordained as a Christian minister, and perhaps the first woman in history elected to serve a Christian congregation as pastor. At her ordination a friend, Methodist minister Luther Lee, defends “a woman’s right to preach the Gospel.” He quotes the New Testament: “There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

1862-77: colleges and universities for Blacks in the South

The American Missionary Association starts six colleges: Dillard University, Fisk University, LeMoyné-Owen College, Huston-Tillotson College, Talladega College and Tougaloo College, all historically black colleges and universities that continue to offer excellence, access, and opportunity in higher education. It also founds Brick School, today part of the UCC’s Franklinton Center in North Carolina.

1887: Poor Wolf becomes Christian

Poor Wolf, Chief and Spiritual Leader of the Hidatsa people, converts to Christianity. In 1971, the UCC Council for American Indian Ministry is formed. to provide ministry and witness in Indian settings, and understanding of Indian communities to the wider church.



1889: Deaconess Movement
The Evangelical Deaconess Society and the Evangelical Deaconess Home and Hospital begin in St. Louis. Katherine Haack, a trained nurse and widow of an

Evangelical pastor, is the first deaconess to be consecrated. At a time when women were often silenced at church, women such as Haack were leaders in the administration and guidance of the home and hospital.

1897: Social Gospel movement denounces economic oppression

Congregationalist Washington Gladden is one of the first leaders of the Social Gospel movement, which takes literally the commandment of Jesus to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Social Gospel preachers denounce injustice and the exploitation of the poor. He writes a hymn that summarizes his creed: “Light up your Word: the fettered page from killing bondage free.”

1943: ‘Serenity Prayer’

Evangelical and Reformed theologian Reinhold Niebuhr preaches a sermon that introduces the world to the now famous Serenity Prayer: “God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.”

1952: ‘The Courage to Be’

Evangelical and Reformed theologian Paul Tillich publishes “The Courage to Be” – later named by the New York Public Library as one of the “Books of the Century.” “Life demands again and again,” he writes, “the courage to surrender some or even all security for the sake of full self-affirmation.”

1957: Spiritual and ethnic traditions unite

The United Church of Christ is born when the Evangelical and Reformed Church unites with the Congregational Christian Churches. The new community embraces a rich variety of spiritual traditions and embraces believers of African, Asian, Pacific, Latin American, Native American and European descent.

1959: Historic ruling that airwaves are public property

Southern television stations impose a news blackout on the growing civil rights movement, and Martin Luther King Jr. asks the UCC to intervene. Everett Parker of the UCC’s Office of Communication organizes churches and wins in Federal court a ruling that the airwaves are public, not private property. The decision leads to hiring of persons of color in television studios and newsrooms.



1972: Ordination of first openly gay minister

The UCC's Golden Gate Association ordains the first openly gay person as a minister in a mainline Protestant denomination: the Rev. William R. Johnson. In

the following three decades, General Synod urges equal rights for homosexual citizens and calls on congregations to welcome gay, lesbian and bisexual members.

1973: Standing with farm workers

Meeting in St. Louis, the UCC General Synod suspends business after learning from Cesar Chavez that farm owners have unleashed a campaign of violence and beatings against strikers. The church flies delegates to Coachella Valley to show support.

1973: Civil rights activists freed

The Wilmington Ten – 10 civil rights activists – are charged with the arson of a white-owned grocery store in Wilmington, N.C. One of them is Benjamin Chavis, a social justice worker sent by the UCC to Wilmington to help the African-American community overcome racial intolerance and intimidation. The UCC's General Synod raises bail. Chavis' conviction is overturned and he is released after spending four-and-a-half years in prison.

1976: First African American leader of an integrated denomination

General Synod elects the Rev. Joseph H. Evans president of the United Church of Christ. He is the first African American leader of a racially integrated mainline church in the United States.

1977: National UCC disabilities ministries

Harold Wilke (standing in photo) is first to lead national UCC disabilities ministries. Born without arms, the internationally known disabilities advocate serves as pastor, author, denominational executive. When President George H.W. Bush signs the Americans with Disabilities Act, newspapers worldwide carry a photo of Bush handing Wilke one of his pens, which Wilke accepts with his left foot.

1989: Ecumenical Partnership

The United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) approve a historic partnership of full communion. The two denominations proclaim mutual recognition of their sacraments and ordained ministry.



1993: Apology accepted

Sometimes "being first" means being the first to admit a past mistake. In Hawaii, UCC President Paul Sherry apologizes on behalf of the church for the complicity of

missionaries in the 1893 overthrow of Hawaii's government and leader, Queen Lili'uokalani. \$3.5 million is pledged to native Hawaiian churches and a non-profit organization.

1995: Singing a new song

The UCC publishes The New Century Hymnal – the only hymnal released by a Christian church that honors in equal measure both male and female images of God. "Although its poetry is contemporary, its theology is traditional."

2005: Marriage equality

On July 4, the General Synod overwhelmingly passes a resolution supporting same-gender marriage equality. UCC General Minister and President John Thomas says that the Synod "has acted courageously to declare freedom, affirming marriage equality, affirming the civil rights of same gender couples ... and encouraging our local churches to celebrate and bless those marriages.

2023 First woman and first woman of African descent elected as General Minister and President

General Synod elects the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson as the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. Rev. Thompson became the first woman and first woman of African descent to serve as leader of the denomination.

