Community UCC

We're worth our words

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A Just Peace, Progressive, LGBTQ Open & Affirming Congregation

e-Communigram

This month's newsletter features:

Letter from Leah ● Moderator Musings ● Dispatch from Director of Youth Ministries ● Notes from Our Music Director
Upcoming Events ● Opportunities to Get Involved ● Fall Newcomer Sessions Underway!
Get Your New CUCC Travel Mug! ● Check out CUCC's Library Inventory from the Comfort of Your Own Couch!
CUCC Building Use This Fall ● Did you miss worship? ● Yes! We went to Synod!

Letter from Leah

Dear Community,

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." -- Jeremiah 29:11

For a large part of the summer, in worship we focused on trees and the variety of trees found in the Psalms, each unique, with its own characteristics meant to expand both our understanding of what it means to be the people of God and our understanding of the Holy itself. This fall, we will continue to look to the natural world for insight into the Divine Mystery. The older I get, I find the less it is that I actually know, and the more I need to look to nature. It's not like the answers are written in the sky, on the leaves of the trees, on the wings of a butterfly, nor in the pattern of the seeds inside the fruit, and yet, they are.

The growing things, and the progression of their growth, offers us a way to focus on our own growth as the part of God's Creation. We are afforded the opportunity to ask the question: who we are, and what we are called to do and be? In a time when hope is needed so desperately by so many, it is good to be reminded that not everything is a quick fix - patience is required. Cultivating hope takes practice.

This month, we are preparing the ground to begin the public phase of our much anticipated Deeply Rooted Capital Campaign in October. This month's worship series will give us the opportunity to think and pray about the future God has for us, to remind ourselves that God is the gardener, we are merely stewards of the garden and fruits produced therein. As we launch and live out our capital campaign, in this place, the seeds for a "Future with Hope" are planted. IN reality, they were planted long ago. By our contributions, we nurture the soil so that the future may flourish.

May our Community UCC deeply root where God has planted us. May we grow. May we, indeed, flourish!

On a practical note, worship will have a brand new beginning you won't want to miss. Here's what you have to look forward to in worship:

September 8 –

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11, “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”

Theme: A Future with Hope -- The opening worship service of the series introduces the theme of hope and invites us to take the long view, stretching our imaginations to take in God’s time, shifting from immediate gratification to the discipline of dreaming and building for future generations.

Special Event in Worship: We will have communion.

September 15 –

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:37, “And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain."

Theme: The Opening -- The image of seeds germinating, just having burst open captures our hope this Sunday. It is a release from that which binds us to the past, an in-breaking and indwelling of God, an infusion of the Spirit. What must break open in us in order to create new life and possibility?

September 22 –

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:10, "The who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness."

Theme: The Planting -- Germinated seeds must be planted in order for roots to begin to dig deep in the soil. Is the soil in which we plant our hopes fertile? Inherent in the action of planting is an action of belief that something will come of our effort. Can we imagine what will be? This is a work of the people for the sake of those who will come after them. What are we planting for future generations?

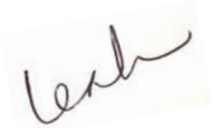
September 29 –

Scripture: James 3:8 -- "And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace."

Theme: The Nurturing -- We cannot abandon what we have planted. We must attend to our hopes, nurture them with living water in order to sustain growth. To attend over time is to know the fruit of discipline. What spiritual disciplines nurture our faith and hope? We affirm the abundance of God’s grace poured out for us and we ask God to let the waters of justice and righteousness flow freely.

Special Event in Worship: Pride Sunday and a special Name Blessing Ceremony

Blessings,



Moderator Musings

The onset of another presidential campaign has led to the usual array of articles about the varied relationships between religion and politics. In contrast to the normal emphasis on conservative evangelicals, however, there has been a growing interest in the rise of a "Christian Left." Of course, progressive Christianity has never gone away; the blind spot for most of these authors has been race. The Black Church in its many forms has led the fight for social justice throughout its long and difficult history. That church did not begin and end with the civil rights movement.

Yet what may be important to notice are the issues which have energized a new generation and built connections across denominational lines. In July, for example, 70 Catholics were arrested in the Russell Senate Office Building. They held pictures of migrant children who had died in US custody and formed a cross with their bodies in the main foyer. The current administration's brutal treatment of immigrant families and children has led to a powerful coalition that unites people previously divided by traditional "social issues" like abortion. Climate change is another such concern. The Young Evangelicals for Climate Action was formed in 2012. A group of twelve wanted to meld their Christian faith with their concern for the environment in order to change policy. I invite you to visit their website (www.yecaction.org). It defies the usual stereotypes about evangelical Christians. A year later, the Reverend William Barber II, pastor of the Greenleaf Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Goldsboro, NC began the "Moral Monday" protests, prayer vigils and demonstrations aimed at protecting voting rights, preserving the environment, reversing cuts to social programs, improving public education, and more. These events have energized a multi-racial progressive coalition across the nation.

So, our flags do not fly alone. Members of this congregation put their faith into action in our community, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the orphan, and vigorously protesting injustice wherever it might be found. You might say protest is in the DNA of our church. Founded by abolitionists, we cannot seem to let not good enough alone and I suspect we will continue to do so for quite some time to come. As we move forward into a capital campaign and think about the future of our community, I think we should keep this legacy in more than our thoughts and prayers. We build in order to act. We act because we come from a difficult, stiff-necked people. The times we live in cry out for those who take the Bible not literally, but seriously.

In community, John

Dispatch from Director of Youth Ministries

I am excited to start the fall programs with your youth who are in sixth grade through twelfth grade. If you have a youth enrolled in sixth grade this year or if you have a youth that is new to our community, would you please send me your contact information? I would like to include you in correspondence about upcoming events and activities for our youth. You can email me at jessica@community-ucc.org.

I have created the fall schedule for our youth. We will finalize activities for the each date as we get closer but I wanted to give you dates to put on your calendar. Youth group generally happens following the worship service. We meet in the Tower Room until 1:00 p.m. Youth are generally asked to bring their own lunch. Snacks and drinks are provided.

We will have youth group on the following Sundays:

Sunday, September 22
Sunday, October 20
Sunday, November 17
Sunday, December 1

I am looking forward to seeing all of your youth this fall. I'm excited about the relationships that we will be building with the 6th graders and older youth. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions. You are welcome to call/text me at 217-552-8063 or send an email.

Interested in filling in for Youth Sunday School? I will be out of town on **Sunday, September 8th** and **Sunday, September 15th** so I'm looking for someone to teach Sunday School for these two days. Please let me know if you are interested/available to teach our youth (6th-12th grade) on one of those dates. I will give you the curriculum and supplies that you need. I appreciate your help in advance!

Take care,
Jessica

Notes from Our Music Director

Welcome to the 2019-2020 season of music at CUCC! If you have not already heard, I began serving as the Music Director at CUCC on August 14. I am excited to make music with many of you and offer music to all of you this year.

I have two main goals for us as a congregation this year. I would like to continue to foster a level of excellence in the choir while making it a welcoming environment to all who are interested in participating. I would also like to widen the options for music-making in our services. We are a diverse and flexible congregation, and I would like to find new ways to include all interested parties!

Regarding choir, rehearsals are generally Wednesday evenings from 7-8:30PM, and we meet on most Sunday mornings at 9:15 to prepare for the morning's service. There are no pre-requisites for joining us at choir, and the section leaders and I are willing to offer extra assistance to anyone who needs it. We simply ask that you come to choir with a willingness to try your best. If you would like to sing with the choir but cannot make into the loft, need to sit with your family, or have any other obstacle, please let me know. We would like to accommodate you.

Regarding other music, if you have a child who is interested in music at church, if you play an instrument or would like to offer another type of music (solo or group), or if you have interest in participating in a chime choir, please let me know. I'd like to build our music program around the gifts and talents of our members and friends.

Offering the gift of music to our congregation on Sundays is truly a blessing and a privilege. Tell me how YOU would like to get involved! You can reach me at: 203-605-3830 or K.Kew.Lee@gmail.com

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Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars for these CUCC events!

Sunday, September 15 - Sidney Dairy Barn Bike/Drive/Kickball/Pizza/Ice Cream Event

This very fun annual event for all ages will happen on Sunday, September 15. Here is the schedule (please feel free to come to all of it or any part of it you wish):

2:30pm - Bikers meet Tom Ward at the southwest corner of the Urbana Meijer parking lot (be sure to have a light or some type of reflector on your bike as it may be getting dark on the ride home).

4:00pm - Drivers and bikers meet up at Witt Park in Sidney.

4:15pm - Play a game of kickball, play at the playground or just relax, visit and cheer on the kickball folks.

5:00pm - Enjoy pizza and veggies in the park pavilion.

5:45pm - Head to the Sidney Dairy Barn for ice cream and more visiting.

Sunday, September 15, 3:00pm - Interfaith Vigil of Remembrance, Hope, and Action in Response to Local and National Gun Violence | Randolph Street Community Garden, 1001 N. Randolph Street, Rain or shine

Sunday, September 22 - Youth Group

Sunday, September 22 - Chad O'Neil's Ordination/Reception

Saturday, September 28 - Pride Fest

Again this year, CUCC will be well represented at CU's Pride Fest. We will march in the parade and hand out rainbow hearts. Pastor Leah will lead her Biblical Self Defense Workshop and we hope to offer Mom and Dad hugs again this year! We will have our booth with a duck pond for kids and our ever popular prayer door. We have lots of opportunities for you to serve at Pride…..give hugs, set up and tear down, welcome people to the workshop…. The Identity Team and office are in charge of sign ups. The sign up sheet will be in the parlor and we'll have a sign up genius. Happy Pride!

Sunday, September 29 - Pride Worship

Monday, September 30 - Jubilee Café 2nd Birthday

Opportunities to Get Involved

Jubilee Cafe at Community United Church of Christ

Jubilee Café

Jubilee Café continues to serve a free meal each Monday throughout the year, and we need you to volunteer! Sign up here, https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090e45a5ae2caa8-volunteer12, or go to our Facebook page, Jubilee Café CUCC.

Questions? Contact Johnell Bentz | Johnell.bentz@gmail.com | 217-840-6483, call or text.

Round Up For Good: Common Ground Food Co-op Owners Needed

Would you like Jubilee Café to be among the organizations chosen by Common Ground Food Co-op (CGFC) owners to be a recipient of their Round Up For Good donations? This crowd-funded program, founded in 2010, has donated over $250,000 to organizations within 100 miles of the co-op. Any CGFC owner with a valid owner number can nominate and vote for nominees in the September owner elections. The top 11 organizations receiving votes receive an entire month of Round Up for Good donations in 2020.

To be on the electronic ballot, Jubilee Café must receive at least one valid nomination from an owner (maybe you?) between Sept. 1 and 16. On Thursday, Sept. 19, all owners who have shopped at the co-op within a year will be sent an electronic ballot; voting starts on Sept. 19 and ends a week later. Questions? Please see Pastor Leah or Johnell Bentz.

FROM RE: Sunday School Teachers and Shepherds Needed

The children at CUCC would love for you to join us in teaching them this year! A group of three teachers leads the kids each week in a video discussion, bible reading, and an activity. You sign up in one of these roles and just follow that short section of the curriculum. With support from the other teachers and two shepherds, teaching Sunday School is fun for everyone!

Or, if you are not interested in teaching, assist us as a shepherd in safely escorting the children to and from Sunday School. With a room full of kids, you will sit as a calming presence during the lesson, and join in the fun activity afterwards. If you are not sure about teaching, this is an easy way to observe and see if you might try it.

Please sign up for as many or as few slots as you would like this fall. We hope to see you as either a teacher or a shepherd. The sign up sheet is in the Parlor and you can email me if you have questions.

Lance Larkin, inzimbabwe@yahoo.com

FROM WORSHIP: Worship Team Looking for Sunday Greeters and Liturgists

Please consider joining our team of greeters whose role it is to welcome people into our sanctuary each week. This is a great way to meet our church community members and give a moment of undivided attention to someone who might need a handshake, kind word, or hug Sunday morning. We are looking for people to help welcome at the door as well as at the "name tag trees".

We'd also love to hear new voices from the lectern. Please consider serving as liturgist one Sunday. Pastor Leah will train you and make sure you have readings ahead of the service. Contact Alison Anders (amanders@illinois.edu) to be added to the Greeter and Liturgist sign-up sheets or sign up using the links below:

Greeters - https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0B4AADA823A0F94-cucc1

Liturgists - https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0B4AADA823A0F94-cucc

Carry the Banner - https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0B4AADA823A0F94-banner

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Fall Newcomer Sessions Underway!

Session 2 - Opportunities to Plug In at CUCC - September 8th, 11:45am - 1:15pm (Fellowship Hall) - Leaders from our Ministry Teams will come to this meeting to talk to you about their roles here at CUCC and opportunities for participation in the life and ministry of CUCC. As usual, we'll eat something as part of this gathering! We are good at sharing food here at CUCC!

Session 3 - How do Your Gifts and Talents Mesh with CUCC's Ministry? - September 15th - 11:45am - 1:15pm (Fellowship Hall)- Partners in Faith who are members of the church will be invited to this meeting to meet each of you and begin connecting with you. We will look at the spiritual gifts each of us brings to CUCC, and talk about the values we have as individuals and as a community. We'll begin to look at specific ways to get connected to the church and its work that will help fill your soul. We'll share in a potluck as we talk.

Session 4 - Committing to CUCC - September 29th - 5:15pm- 6:45pm (TBD)- You will attend with the Partner in Faith you have been paired with. We will share food, faith stories, discuss what a commitment to the church means, and answer your questions. And of course....food.....

Please let me know if you are able to join us so that I can have enough food and organize childcare for those who need it! Also please do contact me with any concerns or questions you might have. You can either call me at 344-1619 or e-mail at jeawa@comcast.net.

Jeanne Ward

Welcome Team Facilitator - CUCC

Get Your New CUCC Travel Mug!

Take your love of CUCC on the go with a shiny new "We're worth our words" logo travel mug for only $10. You can pay by cash or check in the offering plate or directly to the office (please clearly mark that your payment is for the mug) and then take your new mug from the display in the old entryway across from the parlor door.

Hungry? We're selling our "Recipes for Success" cookbooks for $10 as well--you can pay in the same way.

Check out CUCC's Library Inventory from the Comfort of Your Own Couch!

Our library is catalogued online at Library Thing-- www.librarything.com. Our username is Community-UCC (or community-ucc-- capitalization doesn't seem to matter). Our password is NB2016cucc. Or stop by the library in person and see what we have to offer!

CUCC Building Use This Fall

The International Hospitality Committee (IHC) is a volunteer organization founded in 1952, when it was noticed that the students in the increasing international student body were often bewildered, homesick and lonely. The IHC offers programs to help international students, faculty, staff and their families during their stay in the Champaign-Urbana community. The goals of the IHC are to promote an enjoyable experience for international visitors, to facilitate their adjustment to their new environment, to aid them in improving their English skills, and to encourage understanding and friendship between local residents and people from other countries. You can learn more about this group at https://isss.illinois.edu/involved/intl_hospitality.html.

Beginning the week of September 2nd, IHC's International Friendship Group will begin using the Fellowship Hall on Thursdays from 10:00am-12:00pm. In addition to the International Friendship Group, IHC will hold three English language conversation courses in the Conference Room. The first class will meet Tuesdays from 12:00pm-1:30pm. The other two classes will be held on Wednesdays 9:30am-11:00am and 1:00pm-2:30pm.

Three AA groups and Covenant Fellowship Church will continue using the church.

Did you miss worship?

Don't fret if you missed worship last week, or even a month ago! Sermons are recorded live each Sunday and can be found at: www.youtube.com/communityucc. Just give us a couple of days to get the previous Sunday uploaded.

Yes! We went to Synod!

Update from Ken and Ruth Gilbert

Minneapolis UCC Synod 2019 - Installment #1

Synod is an ancient name for a conference of Christians. The UCC has held a national Synod every two years since the 1957 merger of denominations created us. That makes this the 32rd time we have gotten together in this way to worship, make decisions and think together as a whole community.

Sometimes a person doesn't have a solid idea of why a decision got made. It was that way with us in our plans to go to Synod this year. Maybe that is one of the privileges of being semi retired – you can just decide to do something for the fun of seeing how it turns out. We took Amtrak to Chicago and then jumped on the Minneapolis train – which runs five times a day – for the shorter trip to the Minneapolis Conference Center which is in walking distance of the train station.

Each Conference of the UCC designates specific people to be their delegates to Synod. Delegates have the obligation to go to meetings and vote on resolutions. Delegates had yellow name tags.. Our white badges identified us as non-voting participants. We had no clear "task" but could watch the whole process. So what did we do?

Over the five days of Synod there were four major blocks of structured program. Each of these blocks began with a significant worship service. Along with about two thousand other people, we would take our seats in Auditorium B of the Conference Center. We could follow the service on one of several megatron video screens, read it from the multipage large bulletin, or watch it live in front of us. Maybe it is jumping ahead to tell you that the featured preacher at all four of these events was a woman, but that will tell give you an idea of how strong the women in our denomination have become. Each of these worship services was built around a theme – the first one, for example, was built around repentance for the damage done to indigenous communities by the well-intended (or sometimes not so well intended) work of Christian missionaries. That service featured Native American drummers and a carefully orchestrated formal request for permission to the chief of the local Indian tribe to hold our Synod on their traditional lands. Group worship in a space that big is a different experience. We were both aware that we were simultaneously in two different modes, one of worshiping and one of observing this whole great event unfold.

Generally worship was followed by formal business of the Synod. But before the formal business of the first block started we went through a procedure of reporting on the diversity of the delegates. Several synods ago the denomination legislated that the delegations from each conference should manifest the diversity of Gods people. Our denomination has instructed the Conference delegations to include young people, minority people, and disabled people. And to put real legs under this instruction, the clerk is required to publicly report that our Synod has this diversity representation. Ken and I noted the impact that this physical representation of diversity had on us as we mingled with other delegates and visitors. This was not a Synod of reasonably prosperous, reasonably established, professional people who you think of as "good church people". This was the church as we wanted it to be! After the clerk confirmed that conferences had designated a diverse set of delegates, and the work of the Synod could begin.

At the Synod one realizes how diverse we are as a denomination. At the national level we are about a third black congregations. But we are also congregations of Native Americans, climate change refugees from the Marshall Islands who immigrated to California, Spanish speakers, GLBT, urban and rural. It is evident that a great many of our pastors are female. Also in evidence are those who are young and idealistic, wheelchair enabled, and a fair number people who have been in the church for a long time – such as Ruth and Ken. It was quite an assembly of people! We loved it.

Contact CUCC:
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