



Community UCC

We're worth our words

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A Just Peace, Progressive, LGBTQ Open & Affirming Congregation

e-Communigram



Letter from Leah

Dear Community,

CUCC's first ever retreat, held last month with the purpose of giving folks a space to set an intention for the holiday season, began with these words. "To all that is chaotic in you, let there come silence." In her poem, Blessing in the Chaos, Jan Richardson invites us to allow calm and stillness to take hold in the midst of the clamor.

And, so, I ask you as Advent begin: what's the source of clamor in your life? Will you allow calm and stillness to take hold?

Richardson continues, "Let what distracts you cease. Let there come an end to what diminishes...."

I wonder, as we enter this heightened season of overload: what diminishes you in this season? If you could really focus on what brings about the most joy, reveals more of God's love, and lets the light shine in the shadows, what would you do, and not do?

Richardson talks about "voices that have laid their claim" on us and "made their home" in us.

She raises the question: what (or who) has taken up residence in you? Whose expectations? Whose want? Which obligations?

The poem ends with a hope for the reader. "Let there be an opening into the quiet that lies beneath the chaos, where you find the peace you did not think possible and see what shimmers within the storm."

May this blessing find you this season. I hope that you will set an intention for this Advent season and the twelve days of Christmas that follow. Set an intention that creates an apt atmosphere for that inner peace to nest and that shimmering to shine. My deepest hope, always, is that we will each know that we are loved by God in life-changing ways, and that by knowing that love, we will be moved to love others in the same Way. May we who receive this blessing know this Love that Knows No End.

Jan Richardson's poem seemed to be a perfect accompaniment to the work of John Pavolovitz in his Advent devotional book entitled "Low" which we will be reading throughout the coming season. You can purchase a copy in the CUCC Boutique (the original entryway to the church). The daily readings are short and easily digestible, yet full of keen insights for the days leading up to Christmas. Pavolovitz's work will shape our Advent season.

On December 1, Advent 1, we will read Isaiah 2:1-5 and consider what it means for us to be *Agents of Love*. Our lives are messy. We manage a myriad of intersections—relationships, expectations, hopes, fears, etc. Nevertheless, we are called to remember our purpose: to live as agents of love, bearing the light of Love into the world.

On December 8, Advent 2, we will read Isaiah 11:1-10 and Romans 15:4-13. Our theme is *Put on Love—and Simply Come As You Are*. On this day, we will affirm that while the realization of God’s peaceful reign is not yet complete, God’s presence is right here with us in the messiness of the journey; we need not lose heart. This Sunday is my 10th anniversary with you as Pastor of CUCC. We’ll have a special guest preacher that day, Dr. Scott Haldeman from Chicago Theological Seminary, and a luncheon will follow worship.

On December 15, Advent 3, we will read Matthew 11:2-11 as a reminder that As God’s realm draws near, it brings both joy and relief, as well as discomfort. And yet, we can continue to shine with the Light of God’s because of God’s constant love and faithfulness toward us. Our theme for the day is *Brilliant Light, Dark Place*.

Later on December 15, at 7 pm, we will have our annual Longest Night worship service. This worship service comes in the midst of what we are told is “the most wonderful time of the year”. We know, though, that the holidays are a time of deep struggle for many. This reality need not be ignored – at this service, we name it and turn to God, and our community, for hope. Sometimes called a Blue Christmas worship service, this is a special one that many at CUCC relish. Invite your friends.

On December 22, Advent 4, we will read Matthew 1:18-25 and focus on *The Sound of Love Makes*. On this day, we are reminded that birthing something new calls forth vulnerability and love (which can get a little messy—so we are back to where we started). It also requires great strength. What is God birthing in us these days? How are we called to bear God to the world?

December 24, we will gather in the sanctuary for our annual lessons and carols service with wassail and cookies to follow. It is a gorgeous service filled with all the stories and songs of the season. It is truly a joy – again, invite your friends. It’s not to be missed.

Friends, we’ve shaped this worship series to be used with or without the Pavlovitz book. So, if you just aren’t going to have time to read, don’t worry, you won’t be lost in worship. But, if you do long to deepen your practice of faith this season, pick up a copy and read along. And, may you be blessed in the midst of the chaos this season – may the angels bend low.

Blessings,



Moderator Musings

Winter's coming early. Or, at least, it feels early this year. Cara has cleaned out the garden and we're mowing, raking, picking up, making sure that all is settled down and put away for the quiet dark days. Yet we can't quite make ourselves stow the porch. We have a large back veranda, one of the major reasons we bought our home. Someone, I no longer remember who, told us, "This is bigger than a New York apartment!" and it is. We love the porch. So, the move inside truly means an end to the season.

It's hard for me to give up on fall, on the beautiful leaves and crisp air. As a teacher, I've always loved the fresh start of fall, the new school year, optimistic faces, plans galore and ideals intact. By November? Time has roughed up the plans and ideals. Yet I love the cold in its own way, for the grace it gives us and the wisdom it imparts. It's good to come to Sunday church on a winter's day, shaking off the cold, feeling the warmth of new life in our old sanctuary. Much has passed beneath these walls. Mary Oliver said it better than I ever could:

Ah, world, what lessons you prepare for us,
even in the leafless winter.
Even in the ashy city.
I am thinking now of grief,
And of getting past it.

I feel my boots
trying to leave the ground,
I feel my heart pumping hard. I want

To think again of dangerous and noble things.
I want to be light and frolicsome,
I want to be improbable beautiful and afraid of nothing,
as though I had wings.

Together in faith,

John

Dispatch from Director of Youth Ministries

Dear Community,

The youth had an exciting time this October. We had Sunday school, youth group and took a trip to one of the local escape rooms.

We went to "Rise of the Zombie Pets" Escape Room. It was a fun trip that was well attended (10 of us!) and the youth were great participants even though we technically didn't "escape" from the room. We were pretty close to getting out on time. We have some smart, brave young people in our congregation!

We are having great discussions on what it means to be community - loving God, our neighbors and ourselves. These youth are great young people and it is wonderful to see so many new sixth graders.

We would like to have CUCC youth (6th grade and up) participate in the National Youth Event (NYE) 2020. It will take place at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana July 22-25th. This event is centered around faith, leadership, service and social justice. The cost is \$300 per youth the church is providing a \$75.00 campership to offset the original cost of \$375.00. Additional assistance is also available. Registration is not yet needed but I invite parents/guardians to put this event on their calendars.

More information can be found here: <http://www.uccpages.org/nye/>.

We are also looking for an adult male chaperone for NYE 2020. If you are interested, please email me at jessica@community-ucc.org.

We are planning to have youth group following worship on Sunday, November 17th. More details to come!

Take care,
Jessica



Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars for these CUCC events!

Wednesday, December 4- Wednesday January 1

Wednesday, December 4, 4:30pm-6:00pm - Christmas Carol Sing and Hot Chocolate Give Away

We welcome everyone - all ages- to join us outside on CUCC's east steps on Wednesday, December 4th, anytime between 4:30-6:00pm. We will be singing Christmas Carols and handing out cups of hot chocolate to UI students and staff as they leave school/work for the day. It's a fun way to spread holiday cheer to our UI friends and neighbors.

Wednesday, December 4, 6:00pm - Advent Evening Prayer (A.J. Good Library)

Join Pastor Connie in the A.J. Good Library at 6pm Wednesday evenings in Advent-- December 4, 11, and 18-- for a brief time of quiet reflection and prayer in the midst of a hectic season. The space will be open around 5:30pm. The time will include a short scripture reading, time for reflection, and sharing of concerns and joys before we close with prayer, ending around 6:30-40pm.

Thursday, December 5, 7:00am, - Men's Breakfast (Urbana Garden Family Restaurant)

Sunday, December 8, after church - Pastor Leah's 10 Year Anniversary We will CELEBRATE Pastor Leah's 10 year anniversary as our pastor here at CUCC. Watch for more details soon. Dr. Scott Haldeman will be preaching and sharing a meal after church.

Wednesday, December 11, 10:30-11:30, -Photography as a contemplative path.

Wednesday, December 11, 3:00 to 4:00, Care Team event--Conversation and Communion we'll be meeting at the Clark-Lindsey Village Simon Room for Conversation and Communion for will be a special conversation and communion (of course), but also treats and carol. This is our opportunity to bring Church to some of our members and others who are not able to get out much anymore. If you need a ride or additional information, contact Marilou Hinrichs (mhmail@comcast.net, 217-637-6107).

Wednesday, December 11, 6:00pm - Advent Evening Prayer (A.J. Good Library)

Saturday, December 14, from 2:00 to 5:00 Care Team event--Caroling for At-Home Members: We especially need your voices for this fun and often very touching event. Several of our faithful carolers from prior years are not available, so we need you. You bring your warm clothes we carpool from the church at 2:00 and travel from there to several residential facilities and member homes. There will be a signup sheet on the Hospitality board in the parlor to help with planning and communication; but if you don't sign up, please show up anyway. Contact Marilou Hinrichs (mhmail@comcast.net, 217-637-6107) if you need more information.

Sunday, December 15, 7:00pm - Longest Night Service

Tuesday, December 17, 11:00am - Retiree's Lunch (Industrial Donut and El Rancho Grande II) We will start out at 11:00am at Industrial Donut (501 Commerce Drive, Savoy) for a warm donut appetizer and go next door at 11:30am to El Rancho Grande II for lunch.

Wednesday, December 18, 6:00pm - Advent Evening Prayer (A.J. Good Library)

Sunday; December 22, The New Social Group will be going to see everyone's favorite Christmas movie, "It's a Wonderful Life"

Tuesday, December 24, following Christmas Eve Service, - Wassail/Cookie Reception (Parlor)

Tuesday, December 24, 4:00pm-5:00pm Canteen Run (Kitchen) Canteen Run is one program of a group called Partnering Against Homelessness. Four nights a week, volunteers drive a borrowed Salvation Army truck throughout downtown Champaign and Urbana with the sole purpose of offering food, drinks, clothes, blankets, and information about resources to anyone who needs it. Canteen Run volunteers pick up our contributions at 5:00pm.

Wednesday-Thursday, December 25-26, CUCC Offices Closed.

Wednesday, January 1, 2020, Offices Closed.

Jubilee Cafe

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.

Goodie Bags for Our Campus Ministry Student to Help Them Through Finals

We will once again this year give the campus ministry students goodie bags before finals start in December. If you would like to help with these goodie bags, here are a couple ways you can help:

- donate money (any amount will help) toward the bags. Each bag is generally about \$15
 - donate gift cards to include in the bags
 - donate baked goods to include in the bags
 - help collate and put the bags together sometime during the 2nd week of December
 - talk to Peg Wade for more details or to help with any of the above: call or text: 369-0474 email: peg.wade@Comcast.net
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Tenor and Alto Church Section Leader Positions Available

Community United Church of Christ (CUCC) is seeking one tenor and one alto section leader for rehearsals and services from September 2019-May 2020. Full details can be found on CUCC's website at

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<http://community-ucc.org/section-leader-openings/>. Please contact Music Director Kathy Lee to schedule an audition or discuss the position further: K.Kew.Lee@gmail.com, 203-605-3830.

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>

New Social Group Is Forming at CUCC

This is a group for members of our CUCC church family who currently live alone (for whatever reason). The group will provide a way to connect with others on a monthly basis, for fellowship and fun activities of the group's choosing.

If you're interested in joining this group, or have any questions, please contact Linda Morgan, Faith Community Nurse at 217-352-6375 or lindamorgan@sbcglobal.net.

News and Notes

Celebrating a Season of Generosity

The CUCC family gathered in worship to give praise and gratitude to God on Thanksgiving Sunday, November 24. During that service, Jennifer Robbenolt, Team Leader of the Deeply Rooted Capital Campaign and the concurrent Annual Pledge Campaign, announced the results of months of planning, communicating, praying and conversing. This has been a season of remembering our heritage in which God has led us, and a time of looking to the future as God calls us to deeper, wider ministry and mission. Holy conversations between members during the fall brought us to this day of celebrating our response. Our Deeply Rooted Capital Campaign has received 62 pledges to date totaling \$443,732 and other gifts amounting to \$6,400 for a current total of \$450,132. Other pledges are expected during December. Although this total falls short of our announced goal of \$500,00, the Building Projects Team advises us that most of the major projects can be completed.

The Annual Campaign received 60 pledges to date totaling \$194,732, and again, there are several pledges expected later. This total already exceeds last year's pledge amount and ensures that the Church Life Board can prepare a budget to fund the vital ministries of the congregation during 2020.

After worship, the Hospitality Team hosted a celebration with good food and exciting conversation. Many stayed and prepared the sanctuary for the season of Advent and Christmas.

Over the next three years, members are encouraged to fulfill their commitments so that the projects are funded on a timely basis. A number of advance gifts have already begun to come in. The Finance Team will be working with the CLB to prepare a loan package which will be presented to the congregation for approval. The projected date for this meeting is Sunday, January 12, 2020.

There are about 40 people who were actively involved in the details of this campaign season. Our deep thanks go to them as they led us, using the variety of gifts that are so abundant in this CUCC family!

Photography as a Contemplative Path

The Photography as a Contemplative Path group will be visiting the Conservatory (1201 S. Dorner Dr., Urbana) again on Wednesday, December 11. You're invited to come, too! We plan to arrive there around 10:30 a.m. and finish up around 11:30 or so. Several of us will be coming from the no-agenda, just-for-fun breakfast at Perkins which starts at 8:30 that morning-- you're welcome there, too!

Pub Theology Update

On Monday, December 9, Pub Theology will begin reading and discussing a new book, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari. "From a renowned historian comes a groundbreaking narrative of humanity's creation and evolution - a number one international best seller - that explores the ways in which biology and history have defined us and enhanced our understanding of what it means to be 'human'."

We meet on Mondays at 7:15pm in the Parlor for about 75 minutes. Get a copy of the book and come join us. Any questions can be directed to Tom Ward.

Advent Evening Prayer

Join Pastor Connie in the A.J. Good Library at 6pm Wednesday evenings in Advent-- December 4, 11, and 18-- for a brief time of quiet reflection and prayer in the midst of a hectic season. The space will be open around 5:30pm so that you can come relax and enjoy a cup of tea or hot chocolate before our simple liturgy begins. The time will include a short scripture reading, time for reflection, and sharing of concerns and joys before we close with prayer, ending around 6:30-40pm.

All Church Adult Mission Trip -- Save the Date!

August 1-8, all CUCC adults are invited to travel to Biloxi, Mississippi to spend a week working at the United Church of Christ's historic Back Bay Mission. Mission trips at Back Bay Mission are some of the best service-learning experiences in the United States. During our week on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, we'll have the chance to serve in three of the Mission's ministries, learn about the work Back Bay does on the Coast, explore how we can deepen the work we do in our community, and grow in both faith and fellowship. We are still determining cost, but think the trip will be in the \$350 range with individuals paying for 4 meals out of pocket. (Financial assistance is available, see Pastor Leah.) You can reserve a spot by signing up in the Parlor and paying a \$50 non-refundable registration fee. Place a check in the offering plate and mark "Back Bay mission trip" in the memo line. We can take up to 30 people on this trip. It will be a life changer. Save the date today!

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!



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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.

Contact CUCC:

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Office Hours: Monday - Thursday | 9am - 3pm