



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,

Remember when the year 2020 seemed so far in the future and everything about it was the stuff of science fiction? I sure do. It didn't seem possible for us to even arrive at this far flung year. If we ever did, reality certainly wasn't supposed to look like this. For real, where is my flying car? When the clock strikes midnight on January 31, 2019, we will arrive in a futuristic year and, since it is clear that my Rosie the Robot maid is not going to be delivered any time soon, I wonder what that year really holds? What does it hold for us as individuals, members of families, friends, and the folks who make up Community United Church of Christ? Where might we go, and what might we do in 2020, and beyond? Where might God be leading us?

Before we wonder as to where we might go, we need to take a look at where we are. This importance of this part of any goal-setting, visioning, or planning process was reinforced at the Collaborative Church conference which Anna Barnes, Rocio Jameson, Julie McClure and I attended this past fall. Accounting for your current situation is the first step in any such process. You'll be hearing more about that conference and what we took away from it later this year. Stay tuned. I hope that each of you will take some time in the first month of 2020 to do some personal accounting, and likewise, with your household. Have you noticed the Spirit's nudge? What areas of personal growth will you attend to in the next year? Paying attention to where you are now, what shifts inside yourself might you need to do to make room for growth?

As a church, a cursory lay of the land tells me that our current situation is immersed in construction both inside and out. Demolition across the street has already disrupted our parking lot's traffic flow a time or two. I expect this to continue. We've had our power cut unexpectedly and drive blocked. Today, I spent 20 cold minutes outside finding out what the power company was up to in our lot. The day before Christmas Eve, an engineer and worker from the construction site came to install a seismograph machine in our building, as they have done in all the surrounding buildings. I certainly didn't expect that! May the seismograph machine be a reminder to us: we should expect the unexpected as we watch the new building to the east of us rise over the coming years. How might we navigate the ever present possibility of the unexpected with grace?

Inside, work has also begun according to our plans. More will follow. This will mean things will be out of place; dust, noise, and construction mess will follow. That's our current and impending situation. And, in assessing our situation as a church, I would love for us to not get tunnel vision with construction. As we are assessing our current situation, let us also take a good look at our people situation. Worship attendance is holding steady, as is participation in fellowship and faith formation groups for adults. The new Individuals Together group is a joy both for those participating and those of us

watching it take shape. Jubilee Café continues to move along week to week. Music, under Kathy's leadership, with her ethos of valuing participation as much as quality of product, is booming. While it is true that Jubilee Café continues to chug along, its success has posed questions about how we ought to best manage it and its resources from week to week. The Church Life Board and many of Jubilee Cafés early adopters have asked this question. We hope to address this and speak about it at the Annual Meeting.

A few things need our attention. In the past, by this point in the calendar, the Nominations Committee has had a potential slate to present to the congregation. We are behind. We would still appreciate your input. Consider your willingness to say yes if the Nominations Committee calls you. Church only happens because we make it so. If you haven't filled out the crowd source form, please do so. <https://forms.gle/9CkVYDxhapQtK5K36>

Over the 10 years I have been your pastor, I've seen Christian Ed ebb and flow. We seem to be in an ebb moment with Sunday School needing to be canceled a couple of times in the fall semester because we didn't have enough adult volunteers to provide adequate coverage. This raises the question of how we might solve this problem, but it also begs the question of why this is the case. When, Pastor Connie transitioned out of her role staffing Christian Education, the Staffing Task Force recommended to the congregation that we hire an Associate Pastor, but without a plan in place and increased giving that accounts for such a budgetary increase, that possibility is off the table. Not having Christian Ed oversight staffed might only be a sliver of the situation, though. So, we need to keep assessing the situation: If we are going to be a church that values the faith formation of the youngest among us, what are we willing to do as a church to ensure that it happens? And, equally important, how might we structure it so that support office of C.E. for both kids and their families, as well as the adults who help make the program happen? Consider these questions over the coming weeks. We have time set aside in our Annual Meeting agenda to consider them.

As I wonder where we, CUCC, might go and what might we do in 2020, as we begin to assess the current situation and ask how God is calling us, it seems as if this futuristic sounding year brings rather old fashioned problems around again for us to solve. How might we adapt to change? How might we remain filled with grace in the face of disruption? How do we use our resources wisely? How do we each participate in the life of our church so our faith community might grow more vibrant for the whole? There may not be flying cars in our immediate future, but there is the opportunity to be community together in ways that enrich our lives and the lives of our neighbors in profound ways. I will take that over a flying car any day.

Blessings,



From the bottom of my heart, thank you for the special Worship Service and party on December 8th. What a celebration! Your love and affirmation are deeply felt. I am lucky to serve such a vibrant congregation. Let's see what God has for us in the next 10 years.



Moderator Musings

As the year comes to a close, it's good to remember those who have made our lives better over the past twelve months, and that includes our church family. The Apostle Paul generally begins his letters by identifying himself, but he also identifies those to whom he is writing. For example, Romans begins: "To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints." Corinthians uses that same phrase--those who are "called to be saints." I don't know about you, but I sure never thought of myself or those around me as saints. And yet.

To those saints who filled our church with flowers, decorations, and art of all sorts, thank you.

To those who saints who filled our church with music, thank you.

To those saints who fed the church, both the one within our walls and the one outside, thank you.

To those saints who made us think as they pondered God's word, thank you.

To those saints who comforted the sick and afflicted, thank you.

To those saints who cleaned our church and grounds, thank you.

To those saints who dotted the i's and crossed the t's, who planned administered, reminded, fixed, and met, thank you.

To those saints who guided our children in the ways of God, thank you.

To those saints who came together, week in and out, to worship, thank you.

To those saints whom I have somehow forgotten above, thank you.

To those saints I will meet anew and again in the New Year, thank you.

Together in faith,

John

Dispatch from Director of Youth Ministries

Dear Community,

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. More information can be found here: <http://www.uccpages.org/nye/>. CUCC will provide \$75.00 camperships to offset the cost. Additional fundraising will happen. Registration will be open February 1st I invite you to put this event on your calendars. We will also be planning a couple of fundraisers as well. Youth will have Sunday School following the children's moment on Sunday. 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.

Take care, Jessica

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Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars for these CUCC events!
Thursday, January 2- Saturday, February 1

Tuesday, December 31, Offices Closed at 1:00 pm due to building maintenance

Wednesday, January 1, 2020, Offices Closed.

Thursday, January 2, 7:00am– 8:00am Men's Breakfast, Monthly on the first Thursday, Urbana Garden Family Restaurant

Friday, January 10, 6:00pm, Sanctuary Dressing for Epiphany, and pizza supper.

Sunday, January 12, Special Congregational Meeting following Sunday Worship

Sunday, January 26, Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner following Worship

Friday, January 31, 5:45pm-8:00pm, CUCC Leadership Retreat

Saturday, February 1, 8:45am- 1:30pm, CUCC Leadership Retreat

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.

Nominations Committee

Everyone -- Each year, the Nominations Committee meets to discern who from our Community might have the gifts, skills, talents, and time to be able to serve our church in particular roles. The Nominations Committee discerns, asks potential candidates, and slates elected positions only – we have many appointed positions that are appointed by either the Ministry Team leaders who oversee their work or the Church Life Board (CLB) itself. This year, we would like to crowdsource the nominations process. (If this works well, in January, we will crowdsource appointed positions – so, thank you for your help!)

Who would you like to see in these positions? We want to hear your opinion. Click on the hyperlink below, and fill out the questionnaire Everyone -- Each year, the Nominations Committee meets to discern who from our Community might have the gifts, skills, talents, and time to be able to serve our church in particular roles. The Nominations Committee discerns, asks potential candidates, and slates elected positions only – we have many appointed positions that are appointed by either the Ministry Team leaders who oversee their work or the Church Life Board (CLB) itself. This year, we would like to crowdsource the nominations process. (If this works well, in January, we will crowdsource appointed positions – so, thank you for your help!)

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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

<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

The worship committee needs volunteers to help change the sanctuary decoration's after Christmas. Please come on Friday, Jan 10 at 6pm for a pizza supper followed by sanctuary dressing. Please let Alison Anders (amanders@illinois.edu) or Peg Wade (peg.wade@comcast.net) know if you're able to help.

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>

News and Notes

Annual Report Reminder

Church Leaders -- your Annual Report is getting closer to the due date. On December 12th an email went out with an attachment that included a template to create your report. Please complete and email back to Miranda (info@community-ucc.org) by January 9.

Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner

The annual meeting will be Sunday, January 26th immediately following church down in the Fellowship Hall. An all church potluck will precede the meeting. Please bring a dish to share and your own table service. The Hospitality Team will provide drinks.

Jessica Smiley's work with Mental Illness

We are excited to share with you that Youth Ministries Director, Jessica Smiley, had an article published through NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) this week. Read it here: <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/December-2019/It-s-Okay-to-Not-Be-Okay-Even-If-You-Are-a-Professional?>

Jessica will also lead a TEDx Talk at the Decatur Public Library (130 N. Franklin St., Decatur) at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 28th. The title of her talk is "Living Unexpectedly." You are welcome to come and be a part of this event! The information

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about the event and registration is not yet available. She will keep you posted as information is shared on the Decatur TEDx Decatur Public Library FB page.

Pub Theology Update

Pub Theology is 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.

Special Congregational Meeting

Now that we have pledges in hand from the Deeply Rooted Capital Campaign, it's time to apply for a loan to begin our construction work. But the congregation must first authorize the CLB to do this. There will be a special congregational meeting on Sunday, January 12 immediately following worship where we will take this vote. Please plan to stay for this brief, but very important, meeting. We need as many members in attendance as possible Sunday, January 12 so we have

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!

Christmas Fund Results!

A huge thank you, to you CUCC! We received \$815 for the Christmas Fund between Christmas Eve and the Sunday following Christmas.

CUCC and The Peace Light!

Please take a minute to read this amazing article published in the News Gazette about CUCC and the Peace Light. You can get to it via this short link: <https://tinyurl.com/cucc-peace-light>

This is the complete version of the story that was "edited for space" in the print version.



***New Social Group is Underway,
"Finally, a Group for ME!"***

"Thank you for planning the Friendsgiving Meal. I don't have any family here, so I really appreciated having this holiday meal with church friends."

These are a couple of the comments when the announcement was made that a new social group was starting at CUCC. The group (we are still working on an official name!), is designed for members of our CUCC church family who live alone either full time, or part time. The group's goal is to provide monthly opportunities, based on input from group members, for fellowship, connecting with others, and fun.

Activities planned so far:

For our kick-off event in November, we enjoyed a festive potluck Friendsgiving meal complete with holiday foods and decorations.

In December, we will see everyone's favorite Christmas movie, "It's a Wonderful Life", and then meet to have warm beverages and conversation together.

In January we plan to have a game night at Riggs Beer Company.

"So far, we have eight people who have voiced an interest in or have joined this group. There's always room for more!". There's always room for more!

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

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.

Care Team Notes

On December 11, eleven people came to Conversation and Communion at Clark-Lindsey Village. We talked about Christmas memories, read the Christmas story, sang carols, ate treats, and shared communion.

Eighteen different singers participated in the Christmas caroling for "at-home" members and friends that took place on Saturday afternoon, December 14. We visited four different sites (one home and three residential facilities) where we caroled and delivered Christmas cards and treats to seven CUCC members and friends. Additional facility residents and family members who were visiting their loved ones joined us to listen or sing at some of the stops.

Conversation & Communion, Christmas caroling, and home communion visits are some of the ways that the Care Team reaches out to CUCC residents and friends who cannot attend church on a regular basis. It is wonderful to have a variety of people (not just the Care Team members and pastors) make these connections. Throughout this year we've been blessed to have many other members of our congregation join us for these events as well as make personal visits to members who otherwise would be more isolated from our church. Thank you to everyone who has participated.

We'd also like to take this opportunity to thank others who volunteer for our Care Team programs.

- Prayer Shawl Ministry—Elena Kasper, Coordinator, and everyone who has used their time and creativity to make (cut, knit, crochet, and sew) or donate material for prayer shawls
- Meals Ministry ("Meal Train")—Jennifer Robbennolt, Coordinator, and everyone who has provided food for the body and soul when our members have needed that help
- Drivers' Ministry—Becky Sheridan and John Osborne, Coordinators, and everyone who has provided rides (as well as conversation and a helping hand) to those needing transportation to church services and events
- Card Ministry—Peg Wade (but also Cara Finnegan and Chase Skye earlier in the year) for reaching out and touching our members with cards and messages in times of need and celebration

We'd also like to give a special thanks to Pastors Leah Robberts-Mosser and Connie Bandy and Faith Community Nurse, Linda Morgan, for all they do with all the Care Team programs and with our members in their times of need.

Marilou Hinrichs and Sue Osborne, Care Team Co-chairs

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!

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