

News from the Vine

March 2026



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SUNDAY

10:30 am Worship
11:30 am Fellowship Hour

SUNDAY SCHOOL

9:30 am (all ages)
(September – May)

OFFICE HOURS

Monday – Friday
10:00 am – 2:00 pm

MISSION STATEMENT

To Love and Serve Each Other
and All Creation

NEWS FROM THE VINE

A monthly publication of Vine Congregational UCC. Article deadline is the third Friday of each month. Please send news items to the church **office**.

A Word from the Pastor

March is a month of transition and transformation, marking the beginning of Spring. We observe the spring equinox around March 20th, when darkness and daylight are equal. This year, five of the six weeks of Lent are observed in March. Lent is observed as a time of repentance which, by its emphasis on self-reflection, can lend itself toward heightened self-negativity as we soul-search those things that keep us from having a deeper relationship with God. It is often promoted as a time of giving up in order to gain.

I wonder if we would be more productive in our approach to Lent with a mindset of “renewal” instead of so much focus on “repentance”? Renewal takes that which is within us and re-awakens it, which seems a much better way to approach change than the idea of discarding or rejecting. Is it not possible that some of what we may think of as negative is actually nothing more than the positive that has become dormant for one reason or another? Maybe we have built walls as a way of protecting ourselves, and, instead of trying to break down those walls, could it be those walls just need some reconfigurations that allow for the renewal of what has seemed to disappear?

Here are six areas of renewal that can be found in scripture for us to contemplate. In the story of Noah and the flood, we see **renewal of the earth and humanity** and of God’s commitment to creation through the symbol of the rainbow. In

the story of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt, there is a **renewal of identity** of who they are, through the giving of the Ten Commandments. There are themes of **renewal of the heart** in the story of King David’s repentance story. In the story of the prodigal son, we see **renewal through forgiveness** as the father runs to greet his lost son and throws a celebration party in honor of his return. As we think about Easter, the theme of **renewal of hope** is told through the resurrection stories, marking spiritual renewal available to each of us. And through Paul’s conversion story on the road to Damascus, **renewal of purpose** can come when our heart has a profound awakening.

Lent is not just about forgiveness and turning back. It is about renewal of life. March is the month known as the turning point between the season of dormancy to the awakening of new life. Let us embrace this truth within our Lenten journey this season as we awaken our heart, our soul, and our mind to God’s gift of life. Amen

Pastor Steven

Mark Your Calendar

➤ Month at a Glance

Mar 1	Baker Anniversary Celebration
Mar 7	Scout Pancake Feed
Mar 8	Daylight Saving Time
Mar 9	Council Meeting
Mar 15	Lunch after Church – Potluck
Mar 15	One Great Hour of Sharing Special Offering
Mar 15	Scout Sunday
Mar 17	Men’s Breakfast
Mar 22	Easter Spring Flowers Orders Due
Mar 25	Confirmation Banquet
Mar 28	New Members Class
Mar 29	Confirmation Sunday
Mar 29	No Children’s Sunday School

➤ A Brief Look Ahead

Apr 2	Maundy Thursday Service
Apr 4	Easter Egg Hunt & Duck Derby
Apr 5	Easter Sunday and Breakfast
Apr 19	Lunch after Church
Apr 25	Spring High Tea



Ongoing Events

- **Men’s Breakfast** meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 8:00 am at Village Inn (48th & Van Dorn).
- **Ladies Coffee Talk** meets every Thursday morning at 9:30 am. Join us for coffee and conversation.
- **Lunch After Church** is the third Sunday of each month in the fellowship hall.
- **Treat & Topics** is the last Sunday of each month in the fellowship hall.
- **The Church Council** meets on the second Monday of every month at 7:00 pm at the church and via Zoom.

Music Ministry

- **The Joyful Noise Bell Choir** practices every Wednesday evening at 6:30 pm in the fellowship hall.
- **The Youth Melody Ringers** (grades 6 - 12) practice every Sunday morning from 9:30-10:15 am in the youth room on the lower level.
- **The Chancel Choir** practices every Sunday morning at 9:15 am in the sanctuary.

Give Online



Scan to learn more about us!





We invite you to share in the joy as our youth affirm their faith and officially become members of Vine on Confirmation Sunday on March 29 at 10:30 am. Confirmation Sunday is the conclusion of a one-year process of faith formation, which included classwork, Bible study, discussions, service projects, fellowship and some fun too!

Vine will welcome the following nine new members into our church during worship. What a blessing to welcome these young men and women into the life of faith!

- Isabella Back
- Addison Back
- Scout Huenemann
- Parker Matzen
- Charleigh Smitsek
- Oliver Smitsek
- Ella VanCleave
- Galen Wilken
- Adly Wright

We hope you will come and be a part of this joyful moment of transformation, belonging, and renewal. A reception will follow worship in the fellowship hall.

Thank you to the congregation of Vine for your continued support of our youth. Vine is a place of growing in our love, faith, and hope for the future. Our children are our future!

LUNCH *after* CHURCH

Everyone is invited to join us for Lunch after Church following worship in the fellowship hall on March 15. This month we are having an all-church potluck. Please bring a ready-to-serve dish to share and deliver it to the kitchen prior to worship. The church will provide tableware and drinks. We hope that you will join us for an opportunity to connect with each other over lunch.

No Children's Sunday School

There will be no Children's Sunday school on Confirmation Sunday, March 29 to allow families and children to participate together in this special worship service and rite of passage.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

We are excited to share that beginning in the fall, Pam Cuttlers and Erin Schuessler will be organizing our Vine Sunday school program. We look forward to what is in store for our children at Vine. Jennie Ress and Anica Brown are stepping down after May.

We are still seeking someone to organize our Vacation Bible School for this summer for a one Saturday morning adventure together. If you are interested, please contact the office and you will be put in touch with Jennie or Anica to pass along information.

YOUTH SUMMER MISSION TRIP

All youth currently in grades 5 - 12 are invited to join us for the Vine Youth Mission Trip this June. The group will travel to Kansas City, Missouri on Sunday, June 28 to stay in a local church working with Uplift KC and Tiny Houses Veteran's Housing Project KC on Monday and Tuesday before heading home Tuesday afternoon.

This will be an amazing opportunity to work together, play together, and grow as a group. Registration is \$25 and we would like to have youth commit in March so we can budget and plan the trip. We will work as a group to raise funds for the additional cost for the trip. Reach out to Karen Bratton for more information.

SAVE THE DATES

- **Vine's Spring High Tea** has been planned for Saturday, April 25 from 2:00 – 4:00 pm. Mark your calendars and invite friends to join us.
- **Vine's Easter Egg Hunt and Duck Derby** will be on Saturday, April 4. Mark your calendar!
- **Vine's Plant and Bake Sale** will be on Sunday, May 3 after worship. Despite the white stuff on the ground, spring is not far away and our annual plant sale is close behind. To make the fundraiser even more fun, we throw in a bake sale. So . . . be ready to divide your perennials, bring any houseplants that need to be rehomed, bring some of your favorite baked goodies ready to sell, and plan to take home stuff you had no idea you needed. Of course, our garden pros, Ken and Etta Kokes, will have plant starts so that you can get a head start on your own vegetable garden once the soil reaches the right temperature. Watch for AND READ the May newsletter for more details! Questions? See Ken, Etta, Mona, Jennie, Phyllis, or Jean.



Order Your **EASTER**

Spring Flowers

Let's fill our sanctuary with the beauty of spring flowers this Easter! After consideration of the options, Council decided to have a variety of spring flowers decorating the sanctuary for Easter, rather than the traditional lilies. This will help address the issue of allergic reactions while providing a colorful display. You are invited to order either daffodils or tulips in memory or in honor of a loved one. Dedications will appear in the Easter bulletin, and the flowers may be taken home after service, gifted to a homebound member, or left for the landscaping team to plant in the church yard.

Order forms will be available in the Narthex. Please return the completed form and payment to the church office or place in the offering plate. Make checks payable to Vine with "Easter Flowers" in the memo line. Thank you for sharing the beauty of flowers with us for Easter morning! Forms and donations are due by Sunday, March 22.

Scout SUNDAY

Please plan to join us for a special Scout Sunday worship service on Sunday, March 15. The Scouts will participate in the worship service by delivering the sermon and being the greeters, ushers, and scripture readers.

Vine Church has been the faith-based charter for the Boy Scout Troop 8 since 1951, and Larry Holmes has been its scoutmaster since 1993. Troop 8 meets on Mondays at Vine. The weekly meetings include a flag ceremony, merit badge class or other program, and a closing. The troop also has monthly camp or outdoor activity. Troop 8 has over 150 Eagle scouts in its heritage and at the present time has 47 registered scouts.

Scout Sunday helps raise awareness about Scouting and highlights all Scouts' duty to God. Join us as we celebrate and recognize the scouts.

New Members Class

Are you thinking about becoming a member of Vine? Are you a current member and would like to refresh your understanding or reaffirm your membership? Our membership class is designed to help you become better acquainted with Vine, our values and beliefs, and our relationship to the United Church of Christ. This is an informal class led by Pastor Steven.

The next new members class is on Saturday, March 28, from 9:30 am - 12:00 pm. If interested, please contact Pastor Steven or the church office to register your interest.

TREATS & TOPICS

There will be no Treats and Topics in March because the last Sunday of the month is the Confirmation Sunday reception.

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

The church office will closed on Friday, March 6.

50th Anniversary Celebration

Bruce and Kate Baker invite you to join them in celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary on Sunday, March 1 in the fellowship hall after worship. There will be a light lunch and dessert. Please join us in wishing them many more years of happiness and love! They have requested just your presence. No gifts or cards please.

One Great HOUR OF SHARING

The theme for this year's One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering is "Our Love Offering," based on *2 Corinthians 9:7 (NIV)*. "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

Please join us in supporting the OGHS Special Mission Offering on Sunday, March 15. Please make checks payable to Vine Church with "OGHS" in the memo line. Your gifts are welcome any time during March.

OGHS's mission supports partners worldwide with ministries that fund health, education, and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries, and both international and domestic disaster response.

OGHS is our love offering to and for the world. Let us share generously and cheerfully.

CHOIR DIRECTOR

Jacob Schultz Cummins resigned his position as chancel choir director effective February 15, 2026. We wish him well in his future endeavors. For the near future, Jeremy Duck and Russ Workman will collaborate in directing the choir.

BRANCHING OUT

The Emergency Fund for families of Lincoln Public School's students will be the focus of Branching Out in March. This fund enables a family to make a onetime request for help with an emergency need such as getting their electricity turned back on to enable students to do homework or filling their tank with gas to get to work and/or children to school. Molly Oglesby of the LPS Foundation spoke at Treats and Topics after worship on February 22 explaining the focus and work of the Foundation. Donations may be put in the collection jar in the narthex or in the collection plate starting March 1. Please make checks payable to Vine with LPS Foundation in the memo line.

Thank you for Packing the Sacks in February! Donations are being taken to the Open Shelf Pantry at Connection Point. April will be again taking part in the One Day Without Shoes collection for the People's City Mission. Please do not bring donations before the collection barrel arrives in April, just start checking your closets or picking up a new bargain at a store to donate.

Branching Out – Ongoing Mission Collections

These small ministries make a big difference! To donate, please place items in the appropriate collection container on the shelves just inside the Fellowship Hall. Please feel free to drop off donations at any time

- **Eyeglasses:** Donate your used glasses, including sunglasses, reading glasses, and cases. Items are donated to the Lions Club. 100% of public donations to Lions Clubs are used for charitable causes.
- **Personal Care Items:** Collecting unused, unopened, and unexpired personal care travel-size items and toiletries. These items are donated to Connection Point.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Cheryl Svoboda.

When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us.

Titus 3:4-5, NIV



CONFIRMATION SERVICE BLITZ

On the weekend of February 21 & 22 our confirmation youth participated in a service blitz serving the Lincoln community and growing in their faith.

They prepared meal bags for the little pantries, made and served lunch with We Can Do This, sorted donations with the Peoples City Mission Help Center then shared dinner with Pastor Katherine as they worked and volunteered at Connection Point. This gave them a taste of some of the many places where they can make a difference.

FAMILY KAMP

Kamp Kaleo FAMILY Kamp is May 22-25. For the first time ever, Kamp Kaleo is hosting Kaleo Family Kamp. Registration opens March 1. Share the Kaleo experience with the whole family during a faith-filled weekend of connection and adventure. All kinds of families and children of all ages are welcome, with activities designed to include everyone. See the bulletin boards for additional information.

CONFIRMATION BANQUET

A Confirmation banquet for the confirmands and their parents will be on Wednesday, March 25 at 6:00 pm in the fellowship hall. This event honors the young adults and serves as a celebratory culmination of months of study, service, and spiritual growth, and a joyful gathering in anticipation of Confirmation Sunday, which will take place on Sunday, March 29 during worship.

We encourage all confirmands and their families to attend this special event. It's a wonderful way to connect with one another, celebrate the journey of faith, and build a sense of community within our church family.

From the MODERATOR

At their February meeting, the Council finalized the draft budget was presented to the congregation for approval at our February 15 meeting. The resignation of the membership clerk and the Sunday school organizers, the plans for the budget and annual report, and other options for Easter flowers were all discussed.

Please continue to pray for our church and for the people who make up our church. If you have a question or concern, please contact me or a Council member.

Joan Humphrey

Council members: Phyllis Schuessler, Jim King, Gertrud Finkbeiner, Diane Robie, Rick Heiliger, Alex Gross, Karen Hemmerling, Jeffrey Schultz-Cummins and Bruce Baker. Cathy Anderson, Church Clerk

Let's Dine Out!

A Youth Summer Mission Trip fundraiser will be at Raising Canes (403 N. 48th in Lincoln) on Sunday, March 15 from 4-8 pm. As you order, mention Vine Youth and 15% of proceeds go to the youth's summer mission. No extra steps, no obligation -- just an easy way to support our youth. Thank you for your support!



Troop 8 Pancake Feed

**Please Come Out and
Support our Scouts!**

Boy Scout Troop 8 Pancake Feed fundraiser is on Saturday, March 7 from 8:00 – 11:30 am in the fellowship hall. Tickets are \$5 per person with children 6 and under free. Unlimited pancakes! Sausages and eggs served while supplies last.



Thank You Note

We received a note of thanks from member, Anne O'Neal.

*Sorry I am late to
thank you for coming
& singing at Christmas
time. Appreciate very
much
Sincerely
Anne O*

Earnings in full bloom

Spring into a whole new season. SCRIP is the way to earn for Vine with every purchase - stock up on Earl May, Home Depot, and Lowe's gift cards. Shop for all your garden needs with SCRIP.

Stop by the SCRIP sales table any Sunday morning to continue your support for this program!



In Sympathy

We mourn the passing of long-time member, Delores Wenz, who passed away on January 28, 2026. She joined Vine UCC in October 2004. We celebrate her life and ask God to surround her family and friends with comfort in their time of grief.

Bible Quiz

King David wanted to build a glorious temple for worshipping God and for housing the ark of the covenant. God, however, did not permit him to build it. Instead, God chose Solomon, David's son, to head up the building program. Why wasn't David allowed the honor of building the temple?

- A. David was getting too old to supervise such an undertaking.
- B. David had been a warrior and had shed blood.
- C. David had stopped taking God seriously.
- D. David's attention was required elsewhere.

Answer: B (1 Chronicles 28:3)

But God demonstrates

his own love

for us in this:

While we were still sinners,

Christ died
FOR US.

Romans 5:8, NIV

Cradle Roll Bible Presentation



Our Cradle Roll ministry is for families of infants and toddlers (from birth to age 4). Through this ministry, *The Beginner's Bible* is given at age three. During worship on Sunday, February 8 Treyson was presented with his first bible.

Souper Bowl & Bingo Fundraiser

Thank you so much to everyone who helped prepare food for the Souper Bowl fundraiser and those who stayed to eat soup and play bingo. We raised over \$600 towards our mission trip, and we are so grateful for your support!



UCC Daily Devotional

Both Straps On, by Phiwa Langeni

[Jesus said,] “Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I’m gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light.” - Matthew 11:28-30 (CEB)

Back when I was a teen, I used to wear my backpack slung over one shoulder, the bulk of the bag sliding halfway down my back. It supposedly looked cooler that way. Never mind the inconvenient readjusting or constant aches it put on my shoulder and back.

As the years went on, I learned the painful way that sustainability beats cool every time. Both straps on. Properly adjusted. Snug against my back. Turns out, backpacks work much better when used as designed to distribute the weight correctly.

And I haven’t gone back to using the single strap method since. The shift was permanent and simple, because it had nothing to do with my willpower or discipline. I finally came to understand what my body knew all along: I wasn’t made to carry things a certain way. Fighting against that design only left me in pain.

Jesus offers us a yoke. Not because we’re beasts of burden, but because yokes are designed for sharing weight between two. They fit. They balance. They turn solo struggling into partnered movement.

When we finally adjust both straps, when we finally accept the support we were designed to receive, our posture changes. While the weights never go away, the carrying of them changes. We stop performing independence and start experiencing the gentle, humble presence of Jesus redistributing what we cannot bear alone.

Responsibility is inevitable. And because of the Presence of proper support, rest is possible.

Prayer: Teach us to carry well, Jesus. Help us accept the yoke that fits instead of the burden that breaks. Amen.

Vine Congregational UCC Foundation

During our most recent meeting in January, we challenged ourselves to think about what dreams our founding members had for the Vine Foundation. I am old enough to have heard some of them in person back in the early ‘90s and recall their hopes that we might expand Vine’s ministry and provide additional financial support for Vine’s “big picture items” and by that, I heard, not so much the day-to-day type expenses but larger and more long-term type support. We are exploring several ideas that we hope to bring forward as they develop.

If you attended Vine Church’s annual meeting in February, the discussion on the budget focused on both the expenses and the income concerns. I personally was pleased by the overwhelming vote to support the proposed budget and of our council’s work in being as frugal as possible.

The Vine Foundation is governed by members of Vine Church, and I am assured by our discussions that we want to be part of the conversations and participate in finding solutions.

Bill Huenemann

Spring forward in faith!

CHANGE YOUR CLOCKS and
join us on time for worship

Daylight saving time begins on Sunday, March 8. Don’t forget to “spring forward.” As we adjust our clocks, let’s also reset our hearts—ready to embrace the new mercies God gives each morning.