



News from the Vine

August 2026



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Lincoln, NE 68506

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💻 www.vineucc.org

SUNDAY

10:30 am Worship
11:30 am Fellowship Hour

SUNDAY SCHOOL

9:30 am (adult)
10:40 am (children)
(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

“Surrender your anxiety! Be still and realize that I am God. I am God above all the nations, and I am exalted throughout the whole earth.” Psalm 46:10 (The Passion Translation)

In my morning devotional reading, I came across some thoughts by Thomas Merton on the subject of contemplation, an activity that I believe is needed in order for our spiritual life to grow and mature. In an article titled, “Thomas Merton, A Monk in Action”, Father Richard Rohr shares some thoughts of Merton on the topic of contemplation, which has led to the name of his organization known as Center for Contemplation and Action.

Fr. Rohr writes: “Merton is credited with the renewal of contemplation within the modern Christian lifestyle. By living a contemplative life, Merton grew in love for God and all of God’s children and creation—so much so that he became committed to doing what he could for the common good. Amidst the societal disruptions of the 1960s, it was not enough for him to simply pray. He also devoted himself to action—writing, teaching, and collaborating with others—though he never lost his deep yearning for solitude and contemplation.”

“As Merton began to seriously wrestle with the injustices plaguing the United States and the world, he published “Seeds of Destruction”, a book urging Christians to reflect on their moral responsibility to take a stand on issues such as racism, war, and poverty.”

Merton writes: The contemplative life is not, and cannot be, a mere withdrawal, a pure negation, a turning of one’s back on the world with its sufferings, its crises, its confusions and its errors....”

Fr. Rohr states: “I hold that the contemplative life of the Christian is not a life of abstraction, of secession, in order to concentrate upon ideal essences.... The freedom of the Christian contemplative is ... the freedom to go out and meet God in the inscrutable mystery of [God’s] will here and now, in this precise moment in which [God] asks [humanity’s] cooperation in shaping the course of history according to the demands of divine truth, mercy and fidelity.” Center of Contemplation and Action, Father Richard Rohr, July 21, 2026

We are living in perilous times still. The need for Christian perspectives to be spoken and lived is as great today as it was in the 1960’s. As members of Vine Church, we are a part of a citywide coalition, “Justice in Action”, that seeks to take action on issues that are rooted in racism such as the impact of poverty within our community, accessibility to mental health, and the opportunity to find justice within our legal system. As a congregation we support this work because of a core value of justice for all!

The energy to sustain, the wisdom sought, and the vision for moral action are grounded in the action of contemplation.

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Mark Your Calendar

➤ Month at a Glance

Aug 2	Backpack Blessing
Aug 6 – 8	Kamp Kaleo Rummage Sale
Aug 9	Worship in the Park & Potluck
Aug 10	Council Meeting
Aug 16	Lincolnaires Perform During Worship
Aug 16	Treats & Topics
Aug 18	Men's Breakfast
Aug 25	Sunday School Registrations Due
Aug 30	Hymn Sing
Aug 30	Listening Post

➤ A Brief Look Ahead

Sept 13	Fall Kickoff
Sept 11	9/11 Prayer Vigil
Sept 18 -20	JAM (Joint Annual Meeting)
Sept 27	Treats & Topics



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 (September – May).
- **Treat & Topics** is the last Sunday of each month in the fellowship hall (September – May).
- **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** is on summer break. The regular schedule will resume in September.
- **The Chancel Choir** is on summer break. The regular schedule will resume in September.

Give Online



Scan to learn more about us!



Connect with us:





Sunday, August 2
10:30 am

Join us for our special Blessing of the Backpacks! We'll pray over students, teachers, and families as a new school year begins. Be sure to bring your backpack, briefcase, tote, or digital device for a blessing.



Start the new academic year with prayer & receive a special gift.

SAVE THE DATE

Mark your calendar for a fun and faith-filled Sunday as we relaunch our ministries for all ages at our Fall Kick Off on Sunday, September 11. Expect great worship, fellowship, food, and Bingo. More details will be coming soon but save the date!

A Word from the Pastor

Continued from page 1.

We each have a responsibility to not let the needs of the day distract us from taking that daily time for contemplation. As the Psalmist says: *Surrender your anxiety! Be still and realize that I am God.* It is through contemplative time with God, that we will find our anxiety level lowered and the answers to that which we seek. As August begins a ramping up of fall schedules and commitments, peace be with you.

Pastor Steven



AUG 9 | 10:30 am
Bethany Park

Join us for a multi-church shared worship service in the park with First Baptist Church, Northeast UCC, and Bethany Christian Church. We'll have uplifting music and an encouraging message. Come as you are, and let's worship together in the park!

The worship service will be inside the enclosed park shelter at Bethany Park (NE corner of Cotner & Vine Street). Following the service, stick around for a potluck picnic. Please bring a dish to share. Tableware and beverages will be provided.

All are welcome - invite your friends & neighbors!

JOINT ANNUAL MEETING 2026

The UCC JAM (Joint Annual Meeting) is a regional gathering, bringing together clergy, lay leaders, and church members from the Nebraska, Iowa, and South Dakota Conferences. JAM will take place at the First Congregational Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, from September 17 – 20, 2026. Registration is now open. The registration fee is \$150 and the deadline is September 8. Please see the bulletin boards for additional information.

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

The church office will be closed on Friday, August 7 and Monday, August 17.



We had good participation in the Shred Vault fundraiser - we earned \$2,250! We deposited a total of 239 bags: 211 registered with the app and 28 without. The day with the most deposits was July 17 - my birthday!

If you used the app, be sure to check your 'Rewards' tab in it. You received **free bags** to use now that the fundraiser is over simply by registering in the app, and you may have earned even more free bags from the ones you have already deposited in the kiosk.

Thank you to all who participated!
Joan Humphrey

Lincolnaire Chorus to Perform

The Lincolnaire Chorus, part of Sweet Adelines International, a worldwide organization of women singers, will perform a variety of songs on Sunday, August 16 during our morning worship service. Please plan to attend and invite your friends and neighbors. Their music is sure to delight!

Kamp Kaleo Rummage Sale

Kamp Kaleo Rummage Sale Fundraiser is August 6 - 8 at the First Christian Church (430 S. 16th St.) in Lincoln. All proceeds to benefit Kamp Kaleo and its campers. Let's support Kamp Kaleo and shop for treasures or volunteer to help with the sale. For additional information, please see the bulletin boards.



Like us on Facebook! Did you know that simply 'liking' or 'commenting' on our church's Facebook posts increases the church's visibility, bringing Vine's name and upcoming events into the feeds of new people and it may encourage others to click on the church's page to learn more about our service times, location, and community. Join in boosting our reach!

✓ Sunday School REGISTRATION

Vine Children's Sunday School 2026-2027

Kickoff for the children's Sunday school will be Sunday, September 13. We are excited again to get Sunday school underway at Vine with ages 4 through grade 5.

Based on responses to this spring's Sunday school timing survey, most families preferred holding Sunday school during worship after the Children's Message. Students in grade 3 and above will also help with candle lighting again.

Registration is now open for new and returning students. For safety reasons, all attending children must have a current registration form on file. This form provides us with pertinent information about the children we serve, including contact information, allergies, etc. Registration forms are available in the narthex and at vineucc.org (under Learn and Connect/church forms).

- If your student is returning, we will have your student's past registration form available to update any information.
- If you have a new student, please return the completed form to the church office by August 25.

The children's Sunday School coordinators are Pam Cuttlers and Erin Schuessler. If you are interested in teaching and/or being an adult volunteer, please contact the church office, Pam or Erin.

Teachers and volunteers help on a rotating basis, so it's not a commitment every Sunday. Please consider helping as we need at least two unrelated adults each Sunday. Thank you.

Scripture Reader NEEDED

Make a difference and volunteer to read the scripture during our worship service. We need a reader for August 30. The signup sheet is in the fellowship hall on the volunteer opportunities board.



We are inviting youth in grades 6-10 to join us for the JAM Youth Rally. We will travel as a group to Sioux Falls, South Dakota to join other UCC youth from Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota for the Rally. The event is September 18 & 19. Let Karen Bratton know if you have questions or you are interested in attending.

Disciple Adult Bible Study

This September, we are offering a 24-week Disciple Adult Bible study. We will walk through the old and new testament (12 weeks on each) during which participants will read the scriptures, listen to professionals talk about the passages and share in conversation. We will meet on Wednesday afternoons for an hour and a half. To assist with planning, please add your name to the signup sheet in the fellowship hall. If you have any questions, let Karen Bratton or Barb Smisek know. We hope you will join us!

CHURCH CALENDAR

Are you planning a meeting/appointment at the church? Please let the church office know so it can be entered on the church calendar. We want to avoid scheduling conflicts such as double booking or overlapping events.

FREEZER DOOR

Please make sure the freezer door is fully closed to prevent food spoilage, save energy, and avoid messes. Recently, the door was left slightly open, causing frozen juice concentrate to be thrown away and bags of ice to melt onto the kitchen floor.

BRANCHING OUT

Branching Out for August and September will be branching out much further than usual. We will be collecting specific school supplies and cash to support **Rise Literacy Zambia** that our own Megan Huenemann is a part of. The supplies will be shipped, and cash donations will cover shipping costs to **Zambia**. They will be used in a literacy camp for youth in the Livingstone Zambia area that Megan will be a part of in July of 2027. The youth use the public library setup and is supported by a group of librarians that Megan works with. Supplies may be put in the Branching Out basket and donations in the collection jar in the basket. Checks may be made out to Vine with "Zambia" in the memo. Shopping lists will be available in the basket as usual. Remember that school supplies are on sale locally now, so shop soon!

TREATS & TOPICS

Join us for Treats and Topics on Sunday, August 16 after worship in the fellowship hall. A representative with Rise Literacy Zambia will share information about this educational ministry to Zambia. Come for the information, stay for the conversation - and, of course, the treats! Be sure to attend.

School Supplies, Supplied!

Back-to-school season means shopping trips and the start of new routines. When you shop for all the season's essentials using gift cards from SCRIP, it means extra earnings for Vine.



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



ShopWithScrip®

MISSION Distributions

We disbursed just over \$10,000 for the second quarter mission distributions! Your generosity provides essential funding for local, regional, and national ministries that spread love and justice. Thank you for your support!

• O.C.W.M.	\$6,908.28
• CUE Mid America Seminaries	\$552.66
• Strengthen the Church	\$265.00
• The HUB	\$650.37
• Connection Point	\$650.37
• Food Fort	\$650.37
• We Can Do This	\$487.77
	\$10,164.82

IN OUR Thoughts and Prayers

We extend our sympathy to these families. Please join us in surrounding them in prayer.

- ✝ The family of **Taryn Abourezk**. Taryn's father, Tyrone Quade, passed away on July 10, 2026.
- ✝ The family of **Jeff and Anica Brown**. Jeff's aunt, Doris Knox, passed away on July 7, 2026.
- ✝ The family of **Karen Bratton**. Karen's brother, Ron Bratton, passed away on July 18, 2026.

Joyful NEWS

John & Lois Evans will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary on August 14th. They were married at St. John's UCC in Syracuse, Nebraska.

From the MODERATOR

The storage space in the lower level we are providing for We Can Do This is quite full. The organization's volunteers who maintain the supply want us to know that the food is available to any of our members who need it, or to people in the neighborhood who might approach us with a need. They ask that we list what items are given out on the form on the clipboard on the counter.

The church gutters have been cleaned by an independent contractor. He followed up with another session to re-secure the fasteners that hold the gutters in place, some of which had loosened, allowing sections of the gutters to sag. Overall, they are still in good shape.

So far, we haven't received any responses to our ad seeking a new director for the chancel choir.

We had outstanding attendance at our listening post on May 31. At our July meeting, the Council discussed some of the ideas presented, and will continue to consider options. I hope you will be able to attend the second revenue listening post on August 30 as we continue our conversation on church finances.

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 and Bruce Baker. Cathy Anderson, Church Clerk

Thank You Note

Dear Vine Family,
Thank you so much for the prayers and support during my recent surgery. Knowing that you were keeping me in your thoughts gave me so much comfort heading into the procedure. I am now resting and recovering well. I appreciate your kindness!

Paul Humphrey

Brent Vernon Performs

We were thrilled to have singer, songwriter, and storyteller Brent Vernon and his pal Sam perform for us on Wednesday, July 15! Brent is from Hobe Sound, Florida, but travels throughout the entire United States. He is a gifted singer, songwriter, pianist, ventriloquist, children's book author, and illustrator--and has a heart for God, using those talents to minister to others!



Youth Mission Trip to Kansas City

The Youth Group traveled to Kansas City, Missouri for their summer mission trip on June 28-30. The youth team prepared 400 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and added chips to the to-go bags. The food bags were handed out to the Uplift Homeless ministry. That night doing the route they fed 75-100 people.

Uplift Organization is a mobile street outreach for the homeless of Kansas City. Three nights a week, they take four Sprinter vans loaded with food, clothing, and other essential supplies out to the homeless. They meet the homeless at parks, under bridges, at their camps, or wherever they are. They typically serve 250-400 people each night and we never miss a night! Uplift started 36 years ago in 1990. They are 100% donation-based and run completely by volunteers.



**WAYS to
GIVE**



IN PERSON
Place gift in the
offering plate



ONLINE
Give online on
our website



MAIL
Mail your gift to
the church office



AUTOMATED
Auto-draft from a
bank account



MOBILE APP
Use the Vanco
Mobile App

UCC Devotional

Seek, by Molly Baskette

The mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. - Isaiah 55:12b (NRSV)

I went to Tokyo for the first time recently. Even as a lifelong city kid, I was ready to be intimidated by the crush of 23 million people, the sea of glass and steel unvaried by green growing things.

I couldn't have been more wrong. Everywhere, cherry blossoms rained on me. Azaleas blazed as brightly as Moses's burning bush. Peonies posed like beauty pageant contestants on graves in quiet Buddhist shrines. Pocket parks whispered me within, detouring me from city streets to walk alongside secret creeks for a couple of blocks. One block from Harajuku's mayhem bloomed a giant park of towering trees, delighted to welcome me and thousands of others - a place where each of us could find solace and solitude.

Even in the built environment, nature was a Broadway star, impossible to ignore.

Back home, I visited a friend at golden hour, looking down from the heights to the flats next to San Francisco Bay. Travel had changed my vision. Now instead of the dreariness of buildings, power poles, endless cars, I saw only the trees rising up silent and silver in the mist above them all.

So many trees! How had I missed the forest for them? It was like the old Magic Eye books, where you have to let your gaze go soft to see the hidden image living within the synthetic pattern.

These days I'm using a new app called Seek to discover the names of every plant and tree I pass. Not just in parks but in every sidewalk crack, freeway shoulder, empty lot. It's helping me keep this new second sight.

Prayer: Wonderful Creator, give us magic eyes to recognize your glory pushing up behind and within all we've built. Especially the applauding trees.

Bible Quiz

When Jesus asks a Samaritan woman for a drink, at which site related to the ancient Israelites is he resting?

- A. the edge of the Jordan River
- B. beside the Red Sea
- C. Jacob's well
- D. the Pool of Bethesda

Answer: C (See John 4:6.)

UCC Presence at United Nations, by Sherry Warren Advocacy at Commission on Status of Women

*United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women
Highlights Global Challenges for Women and Girls*

Every March the United Nations hears from one its largest commissions, and the only one that focuses specifically on the human rights and living conditions of women and girls around the world. This year's priority theme is Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective. Poverty intersects with so many other social problems that affect individuals in both developing and more highly developed nations. Gender equity is at the root of solving many of the problems that continue to affect and limit the empowerment of women and girls. Concerns such as lack of bodily autonomy, the right to own land or property, access to culturally responsive healthcare, and stigmatization of the needs of the female body are all barriers to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by the target date of 2030.

