

News from the Vine

December 2025



1800 Twin Ridge Road
Lincoln, NE 68506

☎ 402-483-4781
✉ vinechurch.ucc@gmail.com
🌐 www.vineucc.org

SUNDAY

10:30 am Worship
11:30 am Fellowship Hour

SUNDAY SCHOOL

9:30 am (Adult)
10:30 am (Children's)
(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

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. Luke 2:38

A Season of Advent! The turkey dinner has been prepared, family and friends have gathered, feasting and recalling significant family events of the past, thanking God for the many blessings that we have received. Some of us even did our "Black Friday" shopping on Thursday evening, either in stores or online, or both! What a great feeling of satisfaction, to have so much going on in one day! Then comes Friday and many days afterwards dealing with leftovers!

Why, why, why did we fix so much food, more than what we could possibly eat in two days? But this is just the beginning of a season of excess! Over the next four weeks we will eat too much, attend too many events, over shop, purchasing items that are not really needed, over decorate, and physically overextend ourselves all in the name of Christmas. What is wrong with this picture?

To begin with, we do not start the season of Christmas until December 25, the day we have deemed the birthday of baby Jesus. Secondly, the season of Christmas only lasts for twelve days following the birth of Jesus. *(Please note I do not use the word 'Christ', as Christ was not born until the resurrection.)* We have now entered the season of **Advent!** Four weeks of reflection; reflection on *hope, preparation, love, and joy.*

As I started my morning, I thought of Luke's story of a young pregnant woman and her betrothed making their way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. What they found upon their arrival was no room to stay except a stable, bedding down with the animals. I am amazed at how this simple story is talking about our lifestyle of present day, a life that is filled during this season with excesses. Excess that leaves little room in our hearts for God to enter, leaving only "out of the way" places in which God's *hope, love, and joy* can be born. Advent is a season of *preparation*, the making room for God in our lives. Advent is a season of saying, "no" to excess, making room for reflection to occur; to prepare for the joy and hope that is born through love.

As a church, we live in a season of Advent! We continue to seek God's guidance as we discover new ways to share hope to a world that sees little hope; to share love in a world that does not exercise much love; and to bring joy to those who are heavy in heart.

Like Mary, we too must accept the request of God to come and dwell among us; to be willing to travel unfamiliar roads, trusting God in our journey. Making room for the baby Jesus is an ongoing invitation, saying, "**We are your servants Lord, may your word to us be fulfilled.**" We are the "Mary" in the birth story, pregnant with the future joy of the World! May this season of Advent be filled with reflection and anticipation of the hope, joy, and love to come! Amen

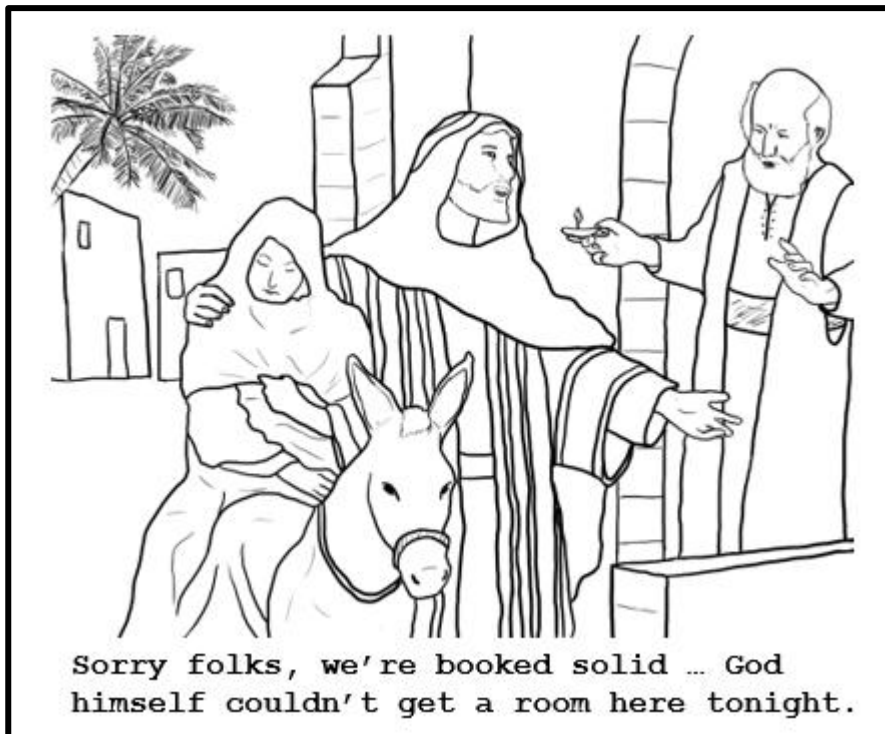
Mark Your Calendar

➤ Month at a Glance

Dec 5-6	Christmas Market
Dec 8	Church Council Meeting
Dec 10	Advent Study Begins
Dec 14	Christmas Program
Dec 16	Men's Breakfast
Dec 18	Blue Christmas Service
Dec 21	Christmas Fund Offering
Dec 21	Caroling to Homebound Members
Dec 24	Christmas Eve Service
Dec 28	Lessons & Carols Service

➤ A Brief Look Ahead

Jan 18 Lunch After Church



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

Give Online



Scan to learn more about us!



Christ is
BORN
WONDERFUL
COUNSELOR
MIGHTY GOD
EVERLASTING FATHER
PRINCE OF PEACE



Candlelight
CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

O Holy Night

As the Advent season comes to its close, we gather on Christmas Eve to remember and rejoice in the birth of Christ—Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. We invite you to join us in this holy celebration.

Wednesday, December 24 | 7:00 pm



The Christmas Eve service open plate offering (general giving; not pledged giving) will go to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. This fund is a pass-through fund supported by donations from church members. The money is used to provide financial aid to families or individuals in the church or wider community.

Your gift makes it possible for Vine to respond immediately to the needs of the community.

Christmas Eve

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Special Music Volunteers

Would you be interested in being a part of our Christmas Eve service? We are seeking music-loving volunteers to provide special music such as solos, duets, groups on vocals, and/or instruments. All ages are welcome to share their gifts of music during our Christmas Eve service. Please let Pastor Steven or the church office know if you'd like to volunteer.




A Season of Preparation

Advent Worship: Hope, Peace, Joy, & Love
Each Sunday in December, we'll light the candles of the Advent wreath and reflect on the gifts Christ brings. Join us in worship as we prepare our hearts to welcome the Savior.



Thursday, December 18
at 7 PM

— Join us for —

A Service of Healing & Hope

Join us for our Blue Christmas service, a quiet, reflective gathering for those who find the holidays difficult due to grief, loneliness, or other hardships.

All are welcome to this community worship service of hope, strength, and reflection.



**The Children & Youth of Vine Present
“Christmas Isn’t Christmas”
Sunday, December 14 | 10:30 am**

It’s almost time to deck the halls and fa la la, but what happens when our decorating doesn’t work out as expected? Do you need some help finding meaning and bringing joy back to the holiday season? The children and youth have just the cure!!!

Refreshments following the service in the fellowship hall. Invite your friends and family to hear the good news!

We would love to have all our school age children and youth participate. Please reach out to Barb Smisek, Karen Bratton, or Anica Brown with questions.

Homebound Christmas Post Office

The holiday season is a time for connection, warmth, and shared joy. Let’s ensure our homebound members feel especially remembered and cherished with a Christmas card from the Vine family.

Our Homebound Christmas Post Office will be open on December 7 - 21. You are invited to write a heartfelt message and sign the cards. The cards and collection box are located in the narthex. Our Christmas Carolers will deliver the cards on December 21.



Let's spread the love and light of the season together!



Poinsettia
Volunteers Needed

Care for the Poinsettias! We are seeking a volunteer to water and care for the poinsettias during the weeks leading up to the Christmas Eve service. If you want to volunteer, please let Sheri in the office know.

ADVENT

2-Week Study

Join us for a two-week Advent study on “The Marvel and Miracle of Advent” by authors Christine Cain and Lisa Harper. We will meet on Wednesday, December 10 and December 17 from 1:00 – 3:00 pm in the New Hope Chapel. We will watch video presentations and discuss how the Advent story is more than a season of waiting and preparation but is also a season of action to share the hope of Jesus with others.

Throughout the Old Testament, we find descriptions, allusions, prophecies, and even foreshadowing of the long-anticipated Messiah. The Messiah is Jesus, whose purpose and promise was not limited by His humanity. In this Bible study, you will learn that it’s not your behavior that earns the kindness of a holy God; it’s the presence of Jesus coming to Earth to be with you, always.

Everyone is invited to attend. No registration needed. Feel free to invite a friend.

December 5 - 6, 2025

Friday 4 pm – 8 pm ★ Saturday 9 am - 4 pm

The Vine Christmas Market returns! Come shop, bring a friend, enjoy a meal!

The Vine booths will include:

- Fresh greenery arrangements and bags of cut greenery.
- Bakery and sweet shop.
- Handmade items of all kinds.
- Kitchen café during all Market hours.

There is still time to help:

- Bring your baked items and sweets for packaging:
 - Wednesday, Dec. 3 @ 11 am - 2 pm & 2 pm – 5 pm: candy and cookies
 - Thursday, Dec. 4 @ 11 am - 2 pm & 2 pm – 5 pm: sweet breads and bars.
 - Questions? Call or text Gertrud at 650.436.7306 (bakery) or Becky at 402.430.7393 (sweet shop)
 - Help package these bakery items and sweets during those same hours.
 - Jams, jellies, pickles, and relishes are welcome too!
- Sign up to staff a booth or greet shoppers.

We keep saying it because it’s true: It’s fun to work together on events like this, and your participation makes it successful!

For questions and further information please contact your Christmas Market team: Jean Jordan, Becky Wright, Joan Humphrey, Mona Beatty, Margaret Schaefer, Barb Smisek, and Gertrud Finkbeiner.



Sunday, December 21 | 1:00 – 3:00 pm

All ages are invited to join us for an afternoon of Christmas caroling, as we share the joy of the season with our homebound members.

The carolers will gather at noon for a pizza lunch in the lower-level conference room. Directions and song sheets will be provided. A singing voice is not necessary – just a wonderful holiday spirit and a willingness to share joy.



Christmas Gift For Pastor Steven



As is our tradition, the Council made a request to the SCRIP Committee to organize a Christmas gift for Pastor Steven. A box for collecting monetary gifts for Steven will be on the SCRIP table; he will redeem the funds for SCRIP cards of his choice. The deadline for donations is prior to worship on December 21 at the SCRIP table in the fellowship hall. Please make checks payable to "Vine UCC SCRIP". You may also send donations to the church office. Our gift will be presented to him at fellowship on December 21.

WELCOME
New Members

Please join us in welcoming our newest members, Barb Smisek & Lisa Locoh, to the Vine family. Be sure to introduce yourself and welcome them to Vine!

STEWARDSHIP Dreaming God's Dream

Thank you to all who have already pledged for the 2026 year, we are deeply grateful. As of November, we've received 42 pledges for the general budget, totaling \$170,047.

If you haven't yet made your pledge, it's not too late! Please prayerfully consider making a commitment and returning your pledge form to the church office by Tuesday, December 30. Pledge forms are available in the narthex, or the form may be found on our website (home page). Every contribution, no matter the size, makes a difference and supports the vital ministries of Vine.

Scripture Reader Needed

A Scripture reader is needed for December 28. Please consider sharing the word of God with the congregation. The sign-up sheet is in the fellowship hall on the volunteer opportunities board.



The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

The Christmas Fund special offering will be collected on December 21. Please join us in supporting the Christmas Fund Special Mission Offering. Offering envelopes are available in the narthex at the usher stand. Please make checks payable to Vine Church with "Christmas Fund" in the memo line. You may also give online at vinechurch.org/giving or scan the QR code in the weekly bulletin

Contributions may be made any time during December. Thank you for giving generously!

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Winter is quickly approaching, and that means wind, snow, rain, and ice. In the event of inclement weather, we will make every effort to remain open for our worship services. If we cannot assure reasonably safe conditions for people to park, enter and exit our facility, we will cancel service. This decision will be made by 8:00 am on Sunday morning at the discretion of the moderator, moderator elect, and the pastor.

We will communicate cancellations by the following means:

- **Email:** An email will be sent to the congregation.
- **Facebook:** A notice will be posted on our Facebook page.
- **Website:** A notice will be posted on our Website.
- **Television:** Channel 10/11 – KOLN (CBS), which will also appear on their website 1011now.com.

The Magic of
Christmas
is not in the presents
but in
His
presence

Justice In Action - *In Action*

We have 28 congregations involved in working together for justice in Lancaster County. Our Problems Assembly meeting was held Monday evening, Nov. 3, at St. Paul's Methodist Church. Justice In Action hosted 71 house meetings this fall. Through these meetings, three problems arose: Child Care, Food Insecurity, and Homelessness. At the Problems Assembly, with 350 people attending, Food Insecurity was chosen as our next research issue for the 2025-2026 year.

During our meeting, we updated our current issues:

- Pre-Filing eviction mediation for Affordable Housing - 12 trained volunteer mediators are ready to work with landlords and tenants with easy scheduling and mediation options.
- Mental Health Navigation - meets monthly with several mental health organizations to discuss and plan the implementation of the navigation system with Lutheran Family Services.

JIA is still in the process of working with County Attorney Pat Condon regarding implementing the Pre-Trial Diversion program for non-violent offenses. It costs \$12 for someone to enter the diversion program, while it costs at least \$132 a day to keep them in jail. This research is ongoing, asking for restoration over punishment.

JIA Board positions were elected:

- Co-Presidents: Rev. Tobi White, Our Saviour's Lutheran, Rev. Thomas Dummermuth, Eastridge Presbyterian
- Vice President: Rev. Andy Frazier, Christ Methodist UMC
- Secretary: Kath Haake, First Mennonite
- Treasurer: Dick Vautravers, St. Mark's UMC
- At-Large Members: Barb Straus, South Street Temple and Rev. Steven Mitchell, Vine Congregational UCC

Please consider joining Vine's Network. Current members are: Anica Brown, Pastor Steven, Bruce Baker, Kate Baker, Mary Owens, Amy Barker, and Susan Emanuel. If interested, contact a JIA network member.

Save the Date: April 30, 2026, for our Nehemiah Action Assembly. Bring 3 friends so that we can surpass our 1500 in-person goal. We appreciate Vine's continued commitment to funding Justice In Action as we work together to better our Lancaster County systems with justice in action for our communities.

BRANCHING OUT

Annual Vine Mitten Tree returns for December's Branching Out. Let's decorate the Christmas tree with **new or gently worn and clean mittens/gloves, hats, scarves for children and adults**. This year let's add **new socks** for all ages to help keep feet warm as well during the winter months. Donations will go to Connection Point.

Thank you for your generous Open Shelf pantry donations of personal care items and dried beans/rice during October and November.

LINCOLNAIRE CHORUS

The Lincolnaire Chorus is performing a Christmas show at Vine for family and friends on Sunday, December 14 at 2:30 pm. Vine is invited to share their love of barbershop! This is a free event. Refreshments will follow the program.

THANK YOU

Furnace Repairs Update

In October, the furnace repairs were completed with a final cost of \$2,695. Through your generous donations, we were able to cover this unexpected expense. The congregation raised \$870, SCRIP donated \$1,500, and the remaining \$325 was expensed to budget. We are so grateful for your generosity.

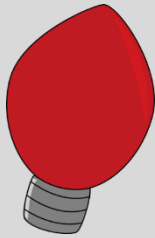
**No Lunch after Church
or Treats & Topics
in December**



LIGHT UP THEIR WISH LIST

Give the gift of SCRIP gift cards and bring joy to the people you love and raise money for Vine.

The SCRIP Committee can special order gift cards from a variety of vendors that are not typically kept in stock. Smaller denomination cards are available for the holiday season which make great stocking stuffers. Special orders need to be submitted by December 14.



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



YEAR END GIVING

As 2025 comes to an end, we want to take a moment to thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the ministries of Vine.

While you are planning your seasonal giving, please consider a Christmas gift to Vine. There are a variety of ways to do that. You may give with gifts of cash or check during worship or through online giving or mobile giving. Other options to explore are an IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution, employer matches, or using a donor-advised fund. Please consult with your tax advisor.

Please remember that gifts to the church for the 2025 year must be received by Tuesday, December 30. If you would like to review your current giving statement, please contact the church office.

Your support throughout the year makes our work possible, but during the holidays, we are especially aware of your generosity.



- **The church office** will be closed on December 24 & 25 and on December 31 and January 1, 2026.
- **Sunday School (children and adult)** will not meet on Sunday, December 21 or 28. Sunday school for all ages will resume on January 4, 2026.
- **Confirmation Youth Group's** last meeting in 2025 will be on December 3. Meetings will resume on Wednesday, January 7, 2026.
- **Chancel Choir** will not practice on Sunday, December 28. Practices will resume on Sunday, January 4, 2026.
- **Joyful Noise Bell Choir** will not practice on Wednesday, December 24 & 31. Practices will resume on Wednesday, January 7, 2025.
- **Youth Melody Ringers** will not practice on Sunday, December 21 & 28. Rehearsals will resume on Sunday, January 4, 2026.

Worship Service VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Listed below are our worship service volunteer needs. All dates for 2026 are open and available for you to consider.

Worship Volunteers

- **Scripture Reader** – read the Scripture lesson during worship service.
- **Fellowship Host** – prepare beverage service and provide a small/light snack for fellowship hour.
- **Greeters** – Roll out the welcome mat and welcome people to Vine on Sunday morning.
- **Alter Flowers** - Provide altar flowers to beautify the altar, commemorate an important person or event, or to glorify God.

The 2026 signup sheets are in the fellowship hall on the volunteer opportunities bulletin board. Please consider serving and sign up today – a little time goes a LONG way!

Sunday School Mission - BraveBe

Vine's Sunday School's mission this fall was to fundraise for BraveBe Child Advocacy Center. This is a non-profit organization providing a safe, child friendly location for conducting forensic interviews and medical evaluations for abused children in Southeast Nebraska. Our Sunday School goal was to raise \$200.00. Our two-week fundraiser collected \$408.83 which bought 24 brand new stuffed animals from BraveBe's wish list. We donated 4 bears, 8 dogs, 2 penguins, 4 dinosaurs, 4 rabbits, and 2 hedgehogs to be cuddled by these children in need. Thank you to our Sunday School students who collected the funds and our congregation for your generous donations that helped to exceed our fundraising goal.



Bell Choirs Perform

Our adult bell choir, Joyful Noise Bell Choir, and our youth bell choir, Melody Ringers, shared their music with us on Sunday, October 26. We appreciate their joyful melodies!



Our Halloween Party was a success!

With games like Make a Guess for the Candy Jar, Witch's Hat Ring Toss, Jack's Boneyard Bowling, Fortune Telling with Fiona, Winifred's Potion Walk, Pin the Nose on the Pumpkin, Cauldron Duck Pond, Eye of Nute Obstacle Course, Oogie Boogie's Corn Hole, Spider Ring Toss, Halloween Crafts, and Halloween Town Photos, fun was had by all! Snacks were provided, too!

We thank our awesome confirmation class for hosting a fun Halloween party. They helped our facilitators of this ghoulish event, Karen Bratton and Barb Smisek, in setting up and manning the myriads of games.



UCC Daily Devotional

Rest Assured, by Kaji Douša

[Jesus said to them,] "The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." - John 5:25b (NRSV)

What you hear, you hold. Every day your memory is building. Most of what happens flows through like water in a sieve. But some things stick. Those things shape recognition. They shape whether you hear God's voice when it calls you.

I remember memory-building with an acronym: NAME. Novelty. Affect. Meaning. Echo. Novelty is surprise. Affect is emotion. Meaning is the values you attach. Echo is repetition. These anchors lodge experiences into memory. And this matters, because God uses these same anchors to write Godself into your life.

The risk is real. Doomscrolling. Passive intake before sleep. Endless noise. Whatever lodges in your memory will echo. It can clutter your spirit, stir your anxiety, and crowd out the things of God. But there is hope.

Right before rest, claim your threshold. Silence the outside noise. Let the quiet belong to God. If silence is too much, choose your noise intentionally. A meditation. A prayer. A question: Where did God surprise me today? What do I want to carry with me into my rest? Even a pause before sleep can reassign your memory's work.

This small practice can change everything. Because the promise is this: the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God. Even when numb. Even when distorted. Even when unalive. If you can recognize it, you will rise.

Guard what you hear. Guard what you hold. Guard your NAME. Because Jesus is calling it. And he is saying: Rise!

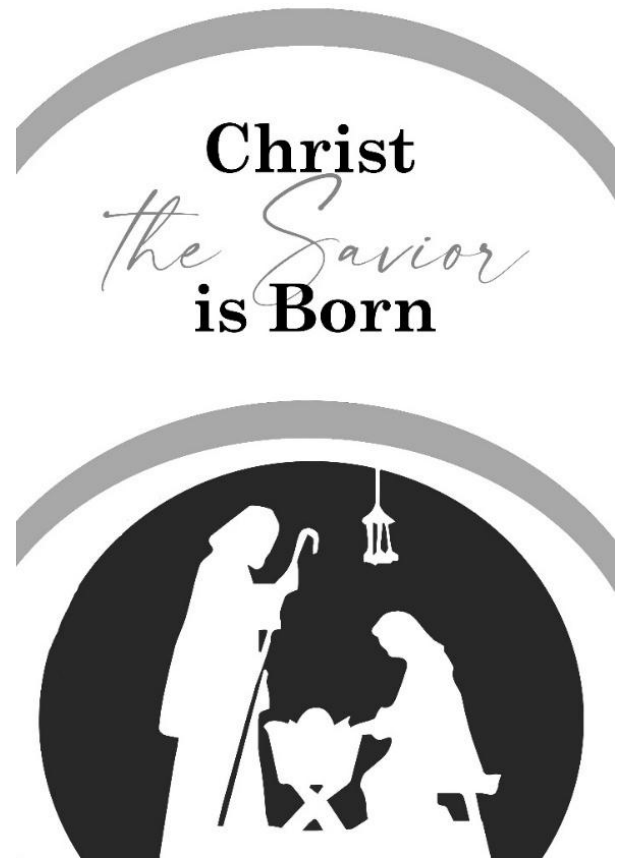
Prayer: God, anchor my memory in you. Let what lodges in me be your voice. Amen.



From Our Members

I would like to thank everyone for their cards, notes, texts and calls after my surgery earlier this year. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Jennie Ress



Some parts of the Christmas story, as commonly told, aren't actually recounted in Scripture. Which of the following details is recorded in the Bible?

- A. Mary rode a donkey to Bethlehem, and Joseph walked alongside her.
- B. Angels announced that a Savior, the Messiah (or Christ), had been born.
- C. There were three wise men.
- D. Shepherds and wise men (or Magi) worshiped Baby Jesus together.

Answer: B (See Matthew 1:18-2:12 and Luke 2:1-20, especially v. 11.)

Sunday Volunteers

DECEMBER

BIRTHDAYS

December Membership Anniversaries

Scripture Readers

12/7 Karen Lichty
12/14 Youth Group – Karen Bratton
12/21 Janette Robb
12/24 Joyce Scheneman
12/28

Dishwashers

12/7 Ken & Etta Kokes
12/14 Lanny & Nancy Goering
12/21 George Robie
12/28 Barry Hemmerling & Karen
DeVries

Coffee Makers

12/7 Paul Svoboda
12/14 Wade Remmenga
12/21 DeLoyd Larsen
12/28 Barry Hemmerling

Fellowship Hosts

12/7 Ivan & Karen Lichty
12/14
12/21
12/28

Greeters

12/7
12/14
12/21
12/28

Alter Flowers

12/7
12/14 Jacob & Jeff Schultz-Cummins
12/21
12/24 Jacob & Jeff Schultz-Cummins
12/28

12/4 Brandon Hemmerling
12/4 Isabella Back
12/5 Judy Workman
12/7 George Robie
12/7 Jessica Wilken
12/9 Luella Rinehart
12/12 Nancy Rinehart
12/13 Jazlyn Abourezk
12/16 Marie Yost
12/17 Markus Finkbeiner
12/19 Mark Jeter
12/23 Samuel Abourezk
12/23 Amanda Hawley
12/29 Samantha Back
12/29 Diane Robie

Diane Robie 4 yrs
Waylon Hullinger 8 yrs
Randy & Stasha Back 14 yrs
Don & Cathy Anderson 20 yrs
Jeff & Anica Brown 20 yrs
Betty Calder 20 yrs
Max & Janelle Breed 39 yrs
Bruce & Kate Baker 42 yrs
Jean Jordan 42 yrs
Terry & Pat Criger 43 yrs
Laura Williams 48 yrs

Monthly Memory Verse

Matthew 1:21 ~ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Prayer List

Everyone at Vine is invited to share the name of a loved one (or themselves) for the Prayer List in our weekly bulletin. If you are submitting the name of someone other than yourself, please obtain their permission. Please let the church office know of your prayer requests by Wednesday of each week. We are grateful for the opportunity to pray for your needs.

Volunteers, please look for an email on Thursday or Friday of the week you are scheduled. If you are not available for the Sunday for which you are scheduled, please find a replacement.



Share your joyful news with the church family. Let the church office know by Wednesday of each week.