

News from the Vine

September 2026



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Lincoln, NE 68506

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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

A Word from the Pastor

"And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."
Mark 2:22

Have you given thought lately as to "Who you truly are?" "Am I the person I truly desire to be?" These are questions about self-perception. What follows is an article by Fr. Roher of Center for Action and Contemplation, titled "Releasing Our False Self."

Our false self is not our bad self, our inherently deceitful self, the self that God does not like or we should not like. Actually, our false self is quite good and necessary as far as it goes. It just does not go far enough, and it often poses and substitutes for the real thing. That is its only problem, and that is why we call it "false." Various false selves (temporary costumes) are necessary to get us all started, but they show their limitations when they stay around too long. If a person keeps growing, their various false selves usually die in exposure to greater light.

Our false self, which we might also call our small or separate self, is our launching pad: our body image, our job, our education, our clothes, our money, our success, and so on. These are the functional trappings of ego that we all use to get us through an ordinary day. However, they are largely projections of

our self-image and our attachment to it. When we are able to move beyond our false self - as we are invited to do over the course of our lives - it will feel precisely as if we have lost nothing. While this "moving beyond" almost always entails some suffering, it ultimately feels like freedom and liberation. When we are connected to the Whole, it lessens our need to protect or defend the mere parts. We no longer need to compare and compete. We are now connected to something inexhaustible.

To not let go of our false self at the right time and in the right way is precisely what it means to be stuck, trapped, and addicted to our self. (The traditional word for that was sin, the result of being separated from the Whole.) These costumes are transitory and impermanent, useful to us in our development, but also largely created by the mental ego. The false self is what changes, passes, and dies when we die. Only our true self lives forever.

Before we have encountered our true self, our false self is who we think we are. The false self is primarily a social construct to get us started on life's journey. It is a set of agreements made during childhood with our parents, family, neighbors, school friends, partner or spouse, and religion. Jesus might call it an "old wineskin," which he points out cannot hold any new wine (Mark 2:22). Tuesday, August 25, 2026, Center for Action and Contemplation

Maybe now is a time to put on a new wine skin! Peace, Pastor Steven

Mark Your Calendar

➤ Month at a Glance

Sept 11	9/11 Prayer Vigil
Sept 13	Fall Kickoff
Sept 13	Youth Group – Ice Cream Social
Sept 13	Vine Connect Signup Deadline
Sept 16	Disciple Adult Bible Study Begins
Sept 18 -20	JAM (Joint Annual Meeting)
Sept 20	Adult Sunday School Starts
Sept 23	Youth Group – Wacky Wednesday
Sept 27	Treats & Topics
Sept 27	Youth Group – Game Night

➤ A Brief Look Ahead

Oct 11	Blessing of the Pets
Oct 18	Lunch after Church
Oct 25	Treats & Topics
Oct 25	Children's Halloween Party



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** meets every Wednesday evening at 6:30 pm in the fellowship hall for practice.
- **The Chancel Choir** will meet every Sunday at 9:15 am in the sanctuary for practice once we have a choir director.

Give Online



Scan to learn more about us!



Connect with us:





We're gearing up for an exciting season of ministry and connection. Sunday School, music ministry, youth group, and more are all starting back up in September.

Join us on Sunday, September 13 as we officially kick off the new church program year with a fun, faith-filled Sunday. Expect great worship, food, fun, & fellowship!

**There's a place for everyone -
come grow, serve, and belong!**

Join us in the fellowship hall after worship!

Sloppy Joes • Coney Hot Dogs • Dessert



Sunday SCHOOL

Classes for all ages

Sunday School is Back! Welcome back to Sunday School! We are so excited for the 2026-2027 Sunday School year – a new program year of learning, exploring, experiencing, and growing in faith. The new children's session begins on Sunday, September 13 and the adult session begins on Sunday, September 20.

Children's Sunday School

We will have Sunday School, age 4-Grade 5, during worship again for the 2026-2027 program year. Students will join their family at the beginning of worship. After the Children's Message around 10:45, students follow their teachers to their classroom. They will have a Bible story, a worksheet, and an activity or craft until 11:25 am, when students will rejoin their family in worship. This allows our students in grade 3 and up to participate in candle lighting.

We would love more volunteers to help with Sunday School! If you are interested in helping our students, please let Erin Schuessler or Pam Cuttlers know. 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.

We are looking forward to engaging with the children again and hope this provides your student with valuable Bible and community time while also participating in the life of Vine.

Youth Group

All youth in grades 6-12 are invited to join us for youth group! We will kick off the new program year with an ice cream social on Sunday, September 13, at 6:00 pm.

This year the Vine Youth Group will join some other area youth groups for youth activities as well as a mission trip next summer.

Mark your calendars for these upcoming activities:

- **Wacky Wednesday: In A Pickle** on Wednesday, September 23 from 6:00-7:30 pm at First United Methodist Church (50th & St Paul).
- **Game Night** on Sunday, September 27 from 6:00-7:30 pm. The location is to be determined.

Adult Sunday School

Join us for our Adult Sunday School on Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:20 am in the New Hope Chapel, taught by Rev. Barb Smisek. **Please note that classes will begin on Sunday, September 20.**

Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do we continue to serve God if there are no guarantees? This fall we are going to study the book of Job. Job cuts straight to the heart of what it means to be human. It is one of the Bible's most profound explorations of the life of faith, wrestling with some of life's most perplexing questions.

There was never a time when Job was not relevant, but it is especially so today. If there are no answers to some of our biggest questions, we—like Job—must learn how to live without them. The real theme of Job has to do with the limits of human wisdom. We do not have all the answers; God does. Faith, as Job understands it, is an exercise in radical trust.

Come and join the fun and warmth of fellowship centered around scripture, life experiences and hope. No prerequisite biblical knowledge required, just open minds. The more folks that join, the better the experience for us all.



HANDBELL CHOIR

Now that the summer hiatus is at an end...bell choir will be back in the "ring" of things starting with our first rehearsal on Wednesday, September 9. Bell choir is a fun and inclusive way to participate in Vine's music ministry. No experience is necessary, and reading music is not a requirement, either!

We are a fun musical family that meets weekly on Wednesdays from 6:30-7:30 pm in the fellowship hall. This year we will be implementing several changes to the bell choir program, including encouraging our youth in grades 6-12 to join us! We would love to expand our numbers, and we hope to see all our experienced faces as well as some new ones this year. Other exciting changes include ringing more frequently during the year and incorporating work with the bell tree. We will also have a bell choir for the Sunday School kids and will aim to have them ring during the service several times this year.

If you are interested in joining us, please contact the bell choir director, Jessica Wilken, or just join us at rehearsal on September 9! To all our existing members, welcome back! And to everyone else, welcome!



Disciple Adult Bible Study

Join us as we kick off a 24-week Disciple Adult Bible Study. We will walk through the old and new testament (12 weeks on each). Participants will read scriptures, listen to professionals talk about the passages and share in conversation.

We will meet on Wednesdays from 12:30 – 2:00 pm beginning on September 16. We will begin in the Old Testament and the New Testament study will begin in January.

If you are intested, please add your name to the signup sheet in the fellowship hall by Sunday, September 6 so we may plan accordingly and order the correct number of participant books. The cost of the book is \$15. Please make checks payable to Vine with "bible study" in the memo line. On a budget? Don't let your budget keep you from participating. Contact the office and we'll make sure you have the book.

If you have any questions, reach out to Karen or Barb. We hope to see you there!



PAUSE TO

REMEMBER

**Friday, September 11
at 7:00 pm**

Please join us for a community 9/11 prayer vigil. On this 25th anniversary, we will pause to remember the innocent lives lost, honor our brave first responders, and lift up families forever changed.

BRANCHING OUT

Branching Out in September will continue support for Rise Literacy Zambia. Shopping lists for school supplies are in the envelope attached to the collection basket in the narthex. Monetary donations are also welcome to purchase sets of books for the children and to help pay for postage to ship the donated items to Zambia. Monetary donations may be placed in the collection plate or dropped in the collection jar in the basket in the narthex. Please make checks payable to Vine with "Zambia" in the memo line. Megan Huenemann will be a part of a group traveling to Zambia next July to use the donated supplies with the children. Thank you for all of the supplies already donated!

VINE CONNECT

Want to build relationships within Vine? This fall, we're planning informal Vine Connect gatherings where small groups will come together and share a meal, dessert, or snacks while connecting with each other! Vine Connect is an intentional outreach for building a deeper community.

Vine Connect will bring people together in small groups each month for fellowship in homes, the fellowship hall, or another chosen location. Small groups will be formed (about 6-8 people), and new groups will be formed quarterly. Each group will decide on the host, date, time, and location. To participate, please add your name to the list in the fellowship hall and indicate whether you are willing to host. Please sign up by Sunday, September 13.

This is great opportunity to make new friends and dig deeper with old friends within the Vine family.

Anica Brown

TREATS & TOPICS

Join us for Treats and Topics on Sunday, September 27 after worship in the fellowship hall. Karen Bratton and the youth group will share information about their summer mission trip. Come for the information, stay for the conversation - and, of course, the treats!

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.

Pastor Out of Office

Pastor Steven will be out of the office from September 17 - 20. He will be back in the office on Monday, September 21. He is attending the JAM - Joint Annual Meeting in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. If you need a pastoral visit during this time, please let the office know.

G Review us on Google

Are you glad to be a part of the Vine family? Help others find us with a Google review.

When people look for a new church, they often check Google to read reviews and get a feel for the church community. If you have a quick minute, would you share your experience on our Google Business Profile? Your kind words make a big difference for others searching for a church home. Leave a review here: <https://g.page/r/CQQ3svurvBO1EAI/review>.

Google reviews improve Vine's search visibility and help other people in our area find our church. Having positive reviews helps Vine appear higher in Google Maps and "near me" search results, acting as digital word-of-mouth testimony.

Thank you for your support!

FAITH OVER FEAR

Trusting God in Uncertain Times

Wash, rinse, sanitize - Dishwasher Needed!

We are looking for an individual or a couple to wash dishes after fellowship hour once every other month on the third Sunday of the odd months. If you are interested in serving, please contact the church office.

Kamp Kaleo AMAZON WISHLIST

Do you shop on Amazon? Support Kamp Kaleo from home! Pick an item from Kaleo's Amazon Wishlist and Amazon will deliver your donation right to their door. If you'd like to chip in, please visit their Amazon Wishlist to see their most urgent current needs at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/kampkaleo).

K a m p K a l e o WORK WEEKEND

Join Kamp Kaleo for a Fall Work Weekend on September 11-13! Come lend a hand as we work together to prepare and improve our grounds. Whether you can help for a few hours or the whole weekend, we'd love to have you. Every helping hand makes a difference!

Meals and lodging are provided Friday night to Sunday breakfast. See bulletin boards for additional information.

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

The church office will be closed on Tuesday, September 1 and Monday, September 7.

The Ducks are Back! Kamp Kaleo Rubber Ducky Regatta

Kamp Kaleo is excited to host the fourth annual Rubber Ducky Regatta on Saturday, September 26 at 2:00 pm. While past regattas have included additional activities, this year will be the duck race only. Adopt one duck for \$5 or five ducks for \$20 for a chance to win prizes. Every duck adopted helps support Kamp Kaleo's mission.

Buy your ducks at: <https://kampkaleo.com/junk-jaunt/#ducks>. If you would rather not purchase online, Vine will collect rubber duck entries and mail one check to Kamp Kaleo with a list of the names for each entry. Please make checks payable to Vine Church with "Duck Race" in the memo line.



We will collect entries through Sunday, September 20. You do not need to be present to win. Prior to the race, you will receive a list of your duck registration numbers. The race will be live streamed on Facebook, so you can cheer on your duck.

For additional information, please see the bulletin boards.

Use SCRIP Gift Cards to Buy the Necessities!



Clothes Groceries Gas Restaurants

Use SCRIP for everyday purchases and earn revenue for Vine. Stop by the SCRIP sales table any Sunday morning to continue your support for this program!



LOVE God
LOVE Others

Justice In Action A New Year Begins. Come, Be Involved!

Justice In Action begins each year with house meetings and a wonderful opportunity to help in directing where we are headed this year.

We are excited to share that Barb Smisek and Anica Brown will be Justice in Action team leaders at Vine. Two house meetings have been planned, with Barb and Anica each hosting a meeting at their homes. The house meetings are designed to encourage the sharing of personal stories of injustices that you have experienced.

If you are interested in joining a house meeting, please contact either Barb or Anica.



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

✝ The family of **Jennie Ress**. Her husband and Vine member, Steve Ress, passed away on Monday, August 24, 2026.

✝ The family of **Margaret & Terry Williams**. Their son, Dillion Williams, passed away unexpectedly on Friday, August 21, 2026.

In our waiting, God is working.

Psalm 27:14

Resolution Calling for a Fiduciary Review of the Tri-Conference Ministry Partnership:

In 2018, the Nebraska Conference of the UCC, the Iowa Conference of the UCC, and the South Dakota Conference of the UCC entered into an experiment known as the Tri-Conference. Each Conference has retained its separate identity but shares resources. To date there has not been a review of the effectiveness of this experiment. During this current year, Rev. Ochoa has pulled together a team of people from each conference to begin an assessment of the Tri-Conference. In addition to this process, there has been a resolution submitted to the Nebraska Board of Directors asking for an independent and immediate fiduciary review on the part of Nebraska Conference. The Nebraska Board of Directors has agreed to place this resolution on the annual meeting to be held during the JAM gathering in September.

If you are interested in learning more about what this resolution is requiring, please contact the church office and the letter of resolution will be emailed to you.

From the **MODERATOR**

Unfortunately, we still haven't received any applications for our position of chancel choir director. Members are helping us with our efforts to widen the search, and the Council will consider options at our September meeting.

We had outstanding attendance at our listening post on May 31, and 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

I am Kind – VBS loads of Learning and Fun!

Our VBS "I am Kind" was held on Saturday, July 25. Northeast UCC, Bethany Christian Church, and Vine joined together to create this fun day. All of our activities, projects, songs, and stories focused on the importance of being kind and sharing with others. A great lunch was served for more than 70.

Kids were excited about our prize drawings. A special thank you to the following businesses for their generous donations: Wal-Mart, Hy-Vee, Lincoln Children's Zoo, Lincoln Children's Museum, Cause for Paws, Amigos, and Culver's.

A special thank you to Katrina Beil of Bethany Christian Church for co-leading and to all the volunteers who made this VBS successful.

Thanks,
Lisa Locoh



Summer Special **MUSIC**

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! A very special thank you to EVERYONE who participated in our Summer Special Music!! Everyone's talents greatly enhanced our worship services. When the call for volunteers was given, you responded!



I'm Fine, by Quinn G. Caldwell

*For though the Lord is high, God regards the lowly;
but the haughty God perceives from far away.* -
Psalm 138:6 (NRSV, adapted)

Just exactly why it's so hard for so many of us to ask for help is a mystery. From asking what ails the thing is in, all the way up to going to therapy or joining a twelve-step group, admitting we aren't masters of the universe, that we could use an assist, is the hardest thing some of us can imagine.

And even though this is self-evidently a terrible way to go through life, God seems to have made it a core principle that she will respect our wishes in this regard.

God will watch, will be aware—the fall of every sparrow, remember? But God will keep God's distance while you grunt, "It's not heavy, it's just awkward." While you stagger through life with the weight of the world hanging off you like someone insisting they can bring all the groceries from the car in one trip. While you get more and more lost rather than just stopping and asking someone who's been this way before what you ought to do.

Is this a preservation of our autonomy, our free will? Is it a strategy, like parents letting kids work it out themselves instead of intervening? Something else? I certainly don't know.

All I know is that God has promised to perceive your foolish haughty self from far away. Until that is, you just do the hardest thing and ask for help. Then God has promised to be as close to you as your own breathing.

Prayer: Come, God, come. You know exactly what it meant when I said I was fine. Amen.

Bible Quiz

King David wanted to build a glorious temple for worshiping 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 for 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)

**THE LORD
BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU;**

**THE LORD
MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE
UPON YOU
AND BE GRACIOUS TO YOU;**

**THE LORD
LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE
UPON YOU
AND GIVE YOU PEACE.**

NUMBERS 6:24-26, ESV