

# News from the Vine

February 2026



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## 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

*Psalm 51:10 "Keep creating in me a clean heart. Fill me with pure thoughts and holy desires, ready to please you."*  
(The Passion Translation)

February marks the half-way mark through winter. I think of February as the month when we can receive the coldest temperatures and the greatest possibility of snow. This month also holds two important dates of observances.

On February 14 many couples will celebrate Valentine's Day, a time filled with gifts of candy, cards, romantic dinners, and possibly dancing. Somewhat like Christmas, Valentine's Day seems to warm the heart in a way that other days throughout the year do not. It's a time when we honor that very special person in our life, reminding them of how important they are to us.

Then on February 18, we will begin a more solemn journey of introspection that will last 6 weeks, referred to as Lent. We begin this annual journey with the observance of Ash Wednesday. The purpose of this journey is to help us reflect upon our lives and how well it mirrors what we understand to be our relationship with God as exemplified through the life and words of Jesus.

As I was thinking about this month of February, realizing that we celebrate both Valentine's Day (an observance often filled with excess) and that of Ash Wednesday (a time of repentance and restraint), I realized

that when we look deeply into the intention of both of these events, there is a correlation between them. Both of these celebrations address love, sacrifice, and renewal.

We think of the love we have for those significant in our lives. We also reflect upon the love that Jesus displayed throughout his life and of how we honor God's love toward his creation. The love we feel for our significant other is sweetened by the memories of those sacrifices love demands of us in that relationship. It is in these rituals that we speak of the renewal of that love and of the willingness of continued sacrifice to nurture and grow in that relationship.

Maybe it is in these two events that helps moderate the harshness that February brings and warms our heart and soul in very meaningful ways. Let's make our mantra for February be Psalm 51:10 "Keep creating in me a clean heart..." May God bless your February. Amen

Pastor Steven



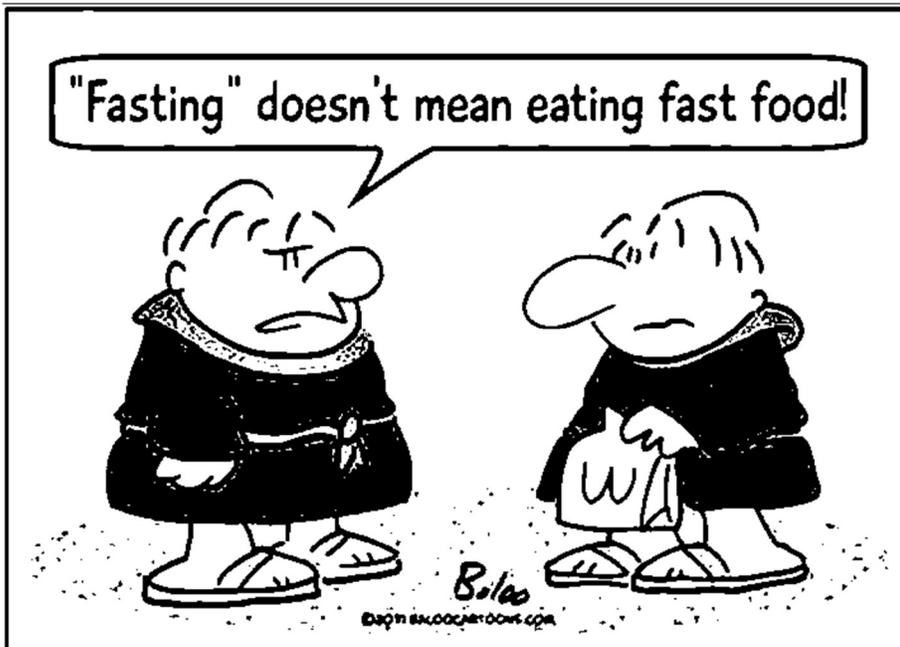
# Mark Your Calendar

## ➤ Month at a Glance

Feb 8	Youth Souper Bowl & Bingo Fundraiser
Feb 9	Council Meeting
Feb 13	Bunco Game Day
Feb 15	Congregational Meeting
Feb 17	Men's Breakfast
Feb 18	Ash Wednesday – Joint Service
Feb 21	Confirmation Youth Service Blitz
Feb 22	First Sunday in Lent
Feb 22	Treat & Topics – LPS Foundation
Feb 25	Lenten Study Begins

## ➤ A Brief Look Ahead

Mar 7	Scout Pancake Feed
Mar 15	Lunch After Church - Potluck
Mar 22	Confirmation Banquet
Mar 29	Confirmation Sunday



# Ongoing Events

- **Men's Breakfast** meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 8:00 am at Village Inn (48<sup>th</sup> & 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!



I will sing of  
the Lord's great  
love forever.

PSALM 89:1



**Wednesday, February 18**

Soup Supper | 6:00 pm  
Worship Service | 7:00 pm

We will gather at Northeast UCC for a shared service to begin the season of Lent through worship and the imposition of ashes. Join us as we prepare our hearts and walk together toward the cross and the joy of Easter.

Pastor Steven will co-officiate with Reverend Dr. Lisa Sherman, settled pastor at Northeast UCC. The soup supper is provided by Northeast. Please bring a non-perishable food item or toiletry item for the Free Little Pantry.

Please help Northeast with planning and RSVP by February 8. The signup sheet is on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall.



Have you ever considered that Lent can be a time of transformation rather than abstinence? This year, try something a little different for Lent by Fasting AND Feasting to make a positive impact. Join us in this journey and consider new ways to approach Lent.

- Fast from criticism, and feast on praise.
- Fast from self-pity, and feast on joy.
- Fast from anger, and feast on patience.
- Fast from resentment, and feast on contentment.
- Fast from jealousy, and feast on love.
- Fast from complaining, and feast on appreciation
- Fast from pride, and feast on humility.
- Fast from selfishness, and feast on service.
- Fast from fear, and feast on faith.

**CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING**  
**February 15**

Please join us for our annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, February 15, immediately following worship in the fellowship hall. This meeting includes the approval and acceptance of the 2025 Annual Report and the 2026 Budget.

The 2025 Annual Report and proposed budget will be available for review prior to the meeting. Please note, we will not have hard copies of documents at the meeting. If you prefer a hard copy, please print prior to attending the meeting or you may contact the church office.

Your participation matters! Everyone is welcome to attend this meeting, however, only members have voting rights. You may join this meeting in-person in the fellowship hall or online via Zoom. We look forward to seeing you there!



Join us for Treats and Topics on Sunday, February 22 after worship in the fellowship hall. Molly Oglesby with the Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools will share information about how they support students, empower educators, and strengthen our public schools. Come for the information, stay for the conversation - and, of course, the treats!





**Friday, February 13**  
**1:00 – 3:00 pm**

Join us for an afternoon of Bunco, snacks, and fellowship. New to Bunco? Bunco is a fast-moving dice game and it's very easy to learn and loads of fun! Bring a friend!

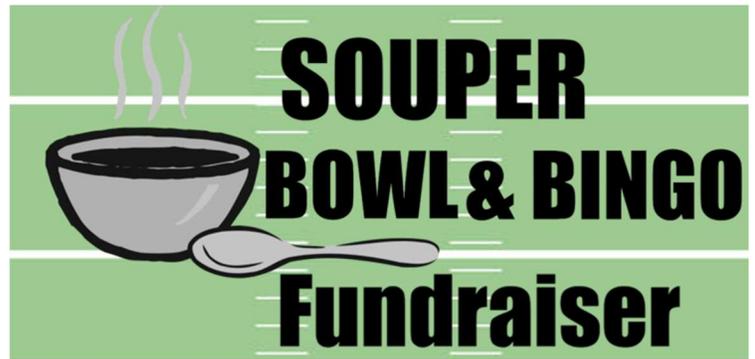
Bring your own beverage and a snack to share (optional). Some snacks will be provided. Please RSVP on the signup sheet in the fellowship hall so we may plan accordingly.



At the annual budget meeting in February 2025, the church treasurer suggested that an ad hoc committee evaluate our budgeted mission giving to local nonprofit agencies. The group identified six programs aligned with Vine's values that serve vulnerable, food-insecure populations with limited resources. Each nonprofit agency was featured during worship, and congregation members were invited to vote for four of the six, since only 19% of the mission budget goes to local missions. Forty people participated in the vote. These are the nonprofit agencies that were selected:

- Connection Point      31 votes
- Food Fort                31 votes
- The Hub                  31 votes
- We Can Do This        29 votes

Task Force members were Janette Robb, George Robie, and Laura Williams with Pastor Steven as an advisor.



**Sunday, February 8 | 11:30 am**  
**Fellowship Hall**

The Vine confirmation youth will host a Souper Bowl & Bingo lunch as a mission project fundraiser. Please plan to wear your favorite team's gear (jerseys, hats, or shirts) and join us for lunch and bingo!!

We are seeking Bingo prize donations. If you have a bingo prize item, please place the item in the bingo prize box in the fellowship hall or bring that Sunday.

Please plan to join us! If you are unable to attend and want to contribute, please make check payable to Vine Church with "Confirmation Mission" in the memo line.

Thank you for supporting our confirmation youth's mission project.



On February 21, our confirmation youth, along with their sponsors, will participate in service projects throughout our community. This event provides a valuable opportunity for our youth to gain a deeper understanding of the different agencies and programs that work to serve our community.

We are excited to share more about our experiences and look forward to providing you with stories and photographs from our day of service in next month's newsletter.

# *From the* **MODERATOR**

I am grateful for your support in electing me to be your Moderator for a second term. I will do my best to listen to and consult with you as together we do the work of God through our congregation.

At their January meeting the Council voted to appoint Cathy Anderson as Clerk. She is stepping into the position which Jean Jordan so capably occupied for a number of years. The Council accepted the recommendation of the missions review committee of proposed organizations to support through our 2026 missions budget. These recommendations will be included in the final draft budget which will be presented to the congregation for approval at our February 15 meeting.

Following the process outlined in the Vine by-laws, the Council voted to change the status of 38 individuals from active to inactive. This brings Vine's active membership to 189, which is a more accurate reflection of our participants.

Just a reminder that the position of Moderator-Elect remains open – an opportunity for someone to serve Vine.

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.

Thanks, 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

## **Save the Date**

Vine's Spring High Tea has been planned for Saturday, April 25 from 2:00 – 4:00 pm. Please mark your calendars and invite friends to join us.

## **BRANCHING OUT**

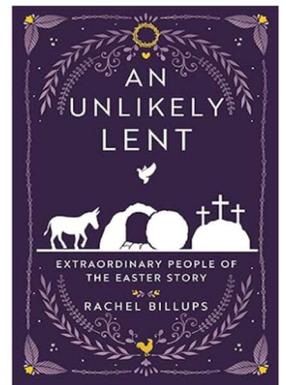
**Pack the Sack** is back for February Branching Out! The Sunday School children will be handing out grocery bags with shopping lists attached after worship in February. Fill the bags with items needed by Open Shelf Pantry at Connection Point. Certain personal care items are needed and food items are for the Welcome Shelf. The Welcome Shelf contains food needed by immigrants and refugees to help them cook foods of their culture. Please just fill with items on the list. Filled bags may be returned to the steps in front of the pulpit and lectern.

**Towels needed at the HUB** – If you have any gently used bath towels, hand towels or dish towels that you would like to donate, please bring them to Cheryl Svoboda, who will see that they are delivered.

## **LENTEN STUDY**

Join us as we kick-off a 6-week Lenten study on the book, "An Unlikely Lent: Extraordinary People of the Easter Story" by Rachel Billups. We will meet on Wednesday afternoon at 1:00 pm in the New Hope Chapel beginning on February 25 and ending on April 1.

Rachel Billups, in "An Unlikely Lent," introduces us to some of the unlikely characters who play underestimated and supporting, if not forgotten, roles in the Easter story. Billups masterfully illustrates how they each offer unlikely gifts - opposition, freedom, companionship, alliances, courage, and faith - as an example to us, so that we, too, may become an "unlikely you" in the story of resurrection in today's world.



Books may be purchased online at Amazon for \$17.99 or Kindle for \$9.99. If you would like to participate but don't do online orders, please contact the church office by February 10. On a budget? Don't let that keep you from participating. Contact the office and we'll make sure you have the book.

Join us in this year's study ... Walk through this season with eyes wide open, ready to see where God is moving!

# 4TH QUARTER - 2025 MISSION DISTRIBUTION

Through the generosity of our congregation, we collected and disbursed \$4,500 for the fourth quarter 2025 mission distribution. Our gifts to these important causes can be felt locally, nationally, and worldwide. Thank you for your ongoing support.

• Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM)	\$1,278.83
• CUE Seminaries	\$102.31
• Neighbors in Need	\$790.00
• Christmas Fund	\$385.00
• Barnabas Community	\$385.65
• Matt Talbot Kitchen	\$231.39
• ConnectioN Point	\$154.26
• Center for People	\$231.39
• Habitat for Humanity	\$154.26
• Malone Center - African American	\$179.80
• Asian Community Center	\$179.80
• El Centro – Hispanic	\$179.80
• Indian Center - Native American	\$179.80

**TOTAL: \$4,432.29**

## Pastor's Discretionary Fund

During the Christmas Eve Candlelight service, we collected \$488. Through your generous contributions, we will be able to provide emergency financial assistance to individuals and families. Your donation will appear on your giving statement.

## Thank You Note

Thank you, Paster, for the phone calls and thank you to the congregation for their thoughts, prayers & cards. Our holiday plans were definitely changed. We are so blessed for Vine Facebook ministries. We are getting stronger & appreciate our church so much.

John & Lois Evans

## In Sympathy

We mourn the passing of long-time member Shirley Beckman who passed away on December 17, 2025. She joined Vine on October 31, 1971; she served as the Sunday school secretary for many years.

We celebrate her life and ask God to surround her family and friends with comfort in their time of grief.

## SPREAD THE *Love* WITH SCRIP

This Valentine's Day impress those you love with SCRIP gift cards selected for their unique tastes and interests.



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



# UCC Daily Devotional

## Multiple Choice, by Vicki Kemper

*[Elijah said to her,] "For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth." - 1 Kings 17:14 (NRSV)*

The widow of Zarephath had a choice to make: Use what little she had to make one last supper for herself and her son or, instead, use it to feed the bossy prophet who promised that his God would provide.

We don't have to be in dire straits to recognize these basic life options: to withhold or to give, to cower in fear or to step out in trust, to settle for perceived scarcity or to recognize and embrace abundance.

Play it safe or take a risk. Trust what we think we know or put our faith in the promise of an unimaginable love. Barely survive or bet on the fullness of life.

Most of us face some version of these choices every day: To forgive or to grow embittered. To stew in our worries or be grateful for what is. To open our hearts or wall others out. To get involved or remain a bystander. To go to the march or to the movies. To say what we think or to be kind. To stop and pray or to kill another hour on Insta.

Rarely are our options so clear or binary or conscious. Still, our choices shape our days, and our days shape our lives.

The widow had very few options, but still she chose empowerment over surrender, the hope of life over certain death.

What will you choose today?

**Prayer:** Holy One, thank you for giving me choices. Help me to recognize them, and to choose what makes for life.



The New Testament uses several Greek words to describe love. Which of the following best represents the selfless, sacrificial love that God shows to humanity?

- A. Eros
- B. Phileo
- C. Agape
- D. Storge

# Thanks FOR SERVING VINE

Jean Jordan has resigned as Clerk. For a number of years, Jean Jordan served with distinction as Clerk for Vine Church. She ably and conscientiously discharged her duties, and also provided valuable counsel to pastors, moderators and the Council. Thank you, Jean – we appreciate you!

Nancy Goering has resigned as membership clerk of Vine Church after serving for almost 15 years in this position. From a jumbled collection of files and boxes, she developed an organized record of memberships and baptisms. We are so very grateful for Nancy's dedication to creating a precise, useable archive of this valuable data. Thank you, Nancy!



There are more and more items accumulating in our lost and found. We hope to return these belongings to their rightful owners!

A table with these items will be setup in the narthex on Sunday, February 1 - please check it out. Any items that remain unclaimed will be donated.