



Hope

United Church of Christ



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This congregation knows how much I love the Lenten journey. This Lent feels especially significant and important to me for so many reasons.

Our theme this year is *Repent and Return in Troubled Times*. The theme of repentance during Lent is an obvious choice, but what about the idea of return? And what do we mean by 'troubled times'? To answer that, I invite you to look at the design that is part of our theme: the infinity sign with the heart and cross attached to it.

We know that our faith and spiritual journeys are ongoing and ever-changing. On these journeys we will encounter challenges – as a result of our own actions and decisions as well as circumstances that are beyond our control. It is in these challenges that we can faithfully and grace-fully seek the healing and renewal that repentance brings. Repentance—rooted in the word *metanoia*—is about turning toward a new direction, returning to God, and moving forward with purpose. It's not about feeling terrible; it's about finding hope, joy, and empowerment, even in challenging seasons.

We often speak of repentance – and now we are intentional in remembering that return is a beautiful healing aspect of repentance. Returning to God's loving embrace – just like the Prodigal Son returned to his father's embrace.

And troubled times? Troubled times are a timeless idea shaped by the unique context of our lives. Grief, a health crisis, economic hardship, relationships, politics: these are but a small sample of reasons to feel troubled. Again, the infinity symbol is a reminder that, despite all of our best efforts, troubled times, in some form or another, will inevitably exist. However, the heart and the cross embedded in this symbol are there to remind us that the Good News of God's love, mercy, and justice endure and are always part of our journeys.

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Lenten Journey (continued)

I pray that this season together is both relevant and empowering for you. May this Lenten journey toward Easter and the celebration of the resurrection be transformative and meaningful for you. Together with you on this infinite journey,
Pastor Santina



Ash Wednesday Service with Imposition of Ashes: *The Gift of Broken Vessels* **March 5 at 6:30 P.M.**

Begin your Lenten journey with this quiet worship service as we consider our humanity, frailty, and the gift of repentance and God's grace and mercy. The first step of this journey calls us to confession and examination of our lives in light of God's grace. This service includes the imposition of ashes and time for contemplative prayer.

Tuesday Night Soup Dinners and Contemplative Worship Services

Tuesdays, March 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8, 15

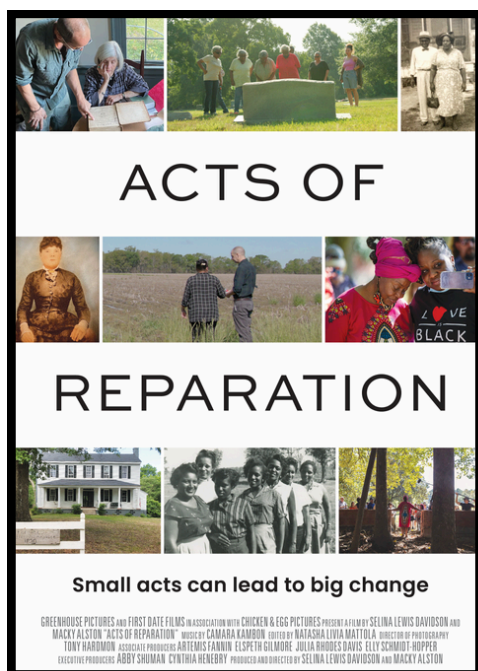
Soup Dinner at 5:30 P.M. Service begins at 6:00 P.M.

Join us for a weekly time together to spend time in fellowship and quiet contemplative prayer and worship. If you would like to come early for a light soup dinner together, be here at 5:30. We will then transition to the sanctuary for contemplative style service, engaging our senses through prayer, music, meditation, scripture, and movement. Join us and share this time in community and deepening of our commitment to a Lenten spiritual practice.

Film Screening at Hope UCC: Acts of Reparation

Friday, March 14

Potluck Dinner at 5:00 P.M. & Film Begins at 6:00 P.M.



Join us to view and discuss this important documentary that follows two friends – one who is Black and one who is white – who travel South to their ancestral lands to explore what reparations mean to them. From kitchen tables to porches, lost cemeteries to discovered diaries, their journeys lead to unexpected opportunities that transform their friendship, families and communities. Together they reclaim and reckon with their roots and find that small acts can lead to big change.

We will meet for a potluck dinner at 5:00 p.m. and the film will begin at 6:00 with discussion to follow. Invite a friend to join this screening- we are the only location in this region to host a screening of this film that illustrates so beautifully our Lenten theme of repent and return. Any questions, please contact Pastor Santina.

*Repent and Return
in Troubled Times*

LENT AT HOPE UCC



How To Meaningfully Observe Lent

Lent is a 40-day period of reflection, repentance, and renewal leading up to Easter. Many Christians observe Lent through the practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Here are some suggestions for how you can prepare for and observe Lent:

PRAY

- Spend time each day in prayer. This can be a few minutes in the morning or evening, or longer periods of time for deeper reflection.
- Try different kinds of prayer: traditional liturgical prayers, spontaneous prayers that come from the heart, and lectio divina (a practice of slow, meditative reading and reflection on a passage of scripture).

LET GO

- It is common for people to let go of something ("fast") during Lent by giving up a particular food or activity for the 40-day period.
- If you let go of something, it should be something that is meaningful and challenging for you, but also realistic and sustainable. You can let go of activities or habits that distract you from your time with God, such as social media.

SHARE

- This is the practice of giving to those in need, whether through donations or acts of service.
- Consider giving to organizations that support the poor, the sick, or other vulnerable populations.
- It is not just about giving money or time, but also about giving of yourself. Be open to the ways in which God may be calling you to serve others and to be a presence of love and compassion in the world.

Please remember that these practices are not about public displays of piety or reaching 'earthly perfection.' These practices are meant to deepen our relationship with God and growing our love and compassion for other human beings.

Lent & Easter Choir

During Lent, Hope UCC will once again offer the opportunity to join together for a vocal choir. The choir will offer anthems at different services in Lent, Holy Week, and Easter Sunday. Please see our Ministers of Music, Greg and Laurel, if you'd like to sign up. Remember, no choir experience is necessary!

Pulpit Exchange with First Congregational UCC Moline

Sunday, March 30, 2025

This year, we will celebrate Holy Week with our friends at First Congregational UCC in Moline, combining our congregations for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services. We thought it would be a good way to prepare for this by having a pulpit exchange during Lent. I know Hope UCC will offer a warm welcome to Pastor Duane on March 30th. I am looking forward to preaching and leading worship over at First Congregational. Both Pastor Duane and I will be preaching from the same text: the Parable of the Prodigal Son. We are looking forward to getting to know each other's congregations.



Ash Wednesday, March 5 The Gift of Broken Vessels
Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

March 9 Until an Opportune Time
Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16; Luke 4:1-13

March 16 God's Longing in the Face of Evil
Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Luke 13:31-35

March 23 We Have Everything We Need to Bear Fruit
Isaiah 55:1-9; Psalm 63:1-8; Luke 13:1-9

March 30 Pulpit Exchange with FCC Moline
Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 32; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

April 6 Giving and Receiving
Isaiah 43:15-21; Psalm 126; John 12:1-8

Helping Our Neighbors: Part II

On January 28 our country learned that federal dollars that provide funding for many necessary programs, including the majority of funding for the resettlement of refugees who are legally admitted to the United States through World Relief of the Quad Cities, would be frozen. The chaos this decision is causing is immeasurable. World Relief is decimated: 80% of their funding is impacted, resulting in almost a 90% reduction in their staffing. The staff that will be terminated include the caseworkers assisting hundreds of refugee families in the Quad Cities.

As a result, Hope UCC held a community meeting with representatives of World Relief to find out how we can all help. 35 people from our sibling congregations and community organizations attended. Now it is time for us to act. **We will hold a meeting following worship on Sunday, March 9 for anyone interested in helping with World Relief's efforts.** There are many ways to help, from donating needed items, volunteering to be a driver for various clients' appointments, to accompanying a family in their resettlement journey. Please plan to attend so we can coordinate the next steps with George and Samatha from World Relief. Please consider how you might join this mission to support our neighbors and live into our call to serve as God's hands, feet, heart, and voice in this world.

Special Offering for World Relief Quad Cities: March 1st - 23rd

If you feel called to financially support the ongoing resettlement efforts of World Relief Quad Cities during this challenging time, we will be receiving that offering through March 23rd. Please indicate "WRQC" on the memo line of your check or on your envelope if it is a cash offering. Thank you for your thoughtful support of our neighbors in the Quad Cities.



Please Keep Our Confirmands in Your Daily Prayers

We have a great group of young people discerning and learning (and teaching this Pastor!) all about their faith and spiritual journeys. What a special time in their lives and what a special time in our faith community at Hope UCC. Please keep them in your prayers as they work throughout the year confirming their faith together.

Our Confirmands this year are:

- Kendall Johnson & mentor Judy Hawotte
- Eli Powell & mentor Julie Bustard
- Emily Campbell and mentor Caridad Ramos
- Selah Filzen Etzel and mentor Bek Svetlick
- Evelyn Smith and mentor Barb Hawotte
- Kinley Sederquist and mentor Audrey Sederquist (Kinley attends Church of Peace UCC with whom we are partnering with for Confirmation)



Hope UCC Men's Breakfast

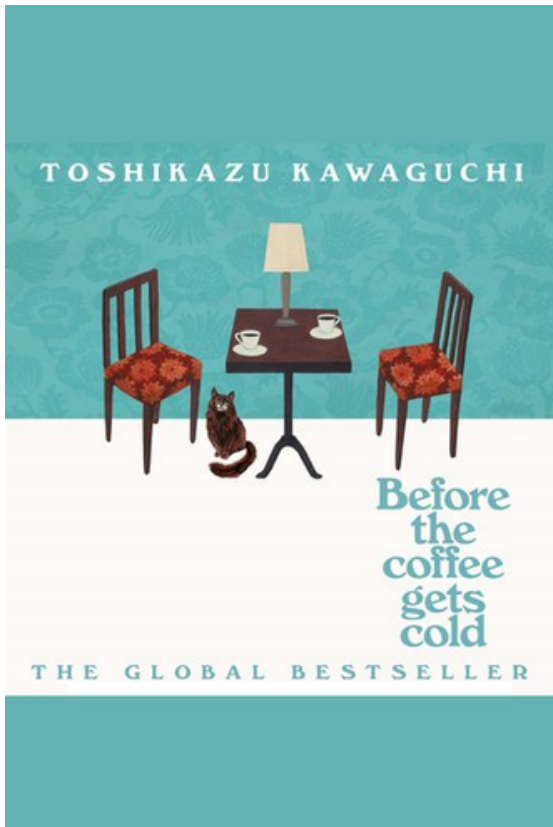
Join us for our monthly
First Saturday gathering at
Deerfield Restaurant in Silvis.
Saturday, March 1
8:00 a.m.

Remember, Men's Breakfast meets the first
Saturday of every month at Deerfield Restaruant.
Same time too! See you there!



Ruth Circle March 17

Please join us for our monthly meeting at Hope UCC. Bring a friend for a time of fellowship, planning, and good energy together.



Hope UCC Book Club: *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* Monday, March 31 at 2:30 at Hope UCC

Join us for our discussion of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold: A Heartwarming Novel of Time Travel, Magical Realism and the Power of Healing* by Toshikazu Kawaguchi. This is always a wonderful gathering filled with laughter, good discussions, and great insights. See you there and please contact Dorothy Burdick if you have any questions.