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United Church of Christ

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Hopes and Dreams

I had an epiphany this week. It all started when I noticed that I reference gardening, flowers, birds, and nature a lot. Even before I received “bloom” as my Star Word a couple years ago, I noticed my dependence on the beauty of the natural world around me for inspiration and if I am honest, a daily mental health boost. As I gazed out my window at our sweet sunflower growing out of the bricks in our chimney, I wondered, “When did I start fixating on nature like this?” The answer all started to come together for me when I started working on our plans for Hope UCC’s annual Stewardship Mission Plan. This year’s theme, “Dreaming God’s Dreams: The Story of Hope” is an extension of our worship series The Roots of Hope. As I was considering the many ways hope is at work around us, I realized it is Hope that opened my eyes and heart more fully to the beauty, healing, and inspiration that Creation brings to my life.

When I say Hope did this for me, I mean Hope in all the ways I am learning that Hope means. In his book, *Hope Is Here*, Rev. Lucas Smith writes this about Hope: “Hope is purposeful. As a force of God, it enlivens us to life. Acting upon and within us, hope inspires us to imagine creatively, perceive reality anew, persevere in despair, risk with opportunities, and trust beyond our control. Hope exists with the purpose of expanding our awareness and hearts to experience God’s abiding love through all creation – including ourselves.” Amen! I think Hope UCC’s founders, many of whom are still active at Hope UCC today, knew this in their hearts when they built this church and chose the name Hope when they reincorporated – actually lived resurrection – at 3324 41st Street.

8 years ago, when Hope UCC called me as pastor, so much changed for me – way too much to summarize here. One change is the view from my window. Moline (and the whole region, in my opinion) is so beautiful! The farms, the trees, the birds, the deer, the flowers, the beautiful open sky- daily, I am overwhelmed with the natural beauty all around me here. (*continued on pg.2*)



(Hopes and Dreams, continued)

My desk at home looks out over our backyard and the ravine behind our house. Watching and listening to the birds just feet away from me brings me immense joy. While I loved living in San Diego, the view from my desk there featured more cars and palm trees than cardinals, deer, hostas, oak trees, orioles and daffodils. Time stands still for me here when I'm watching the birds or scanning the trees and plants, looking for changes in their color, density, and blooms. I have way too many photos of the blooms in my vegetable garden (not too many of actual veggies though!). And this brings me to the epiphany I mentioned at the beginning of this reflection: The inspiring, healing, and calming beauty of all of this – right outside my window – is a gift that Hope UCC has brought to my life story. I never imagined I would be able to have view like this every day.

It has inspired me to ask you to join me in this spiritual exercise. As we enter the fall season together and witness the beauty of God's creation preparing for winter, I invite you to reflect on the many ways hope is felt in your life. How is the story of hope part of your story? As you think about this, go a bit deeper and ask yourself how the story of Hope UCC is part of your story.

In large and small ways, God is so active in our lives. Sometimes it takes watching a deer eating out of the birdfeeder while a cardinal patiently waits his turn to help us remember this beautiful truth. And, most of all, thank you for putting up with 8 years of my obsessing about the view from my window in sermons and reflections!

With you in this journey,

Pastor Santana



NAMI Walk October 4 – Join Hope UCC's Walking Team!

Save the date, register to walk with Hope UCC's Team, and support NAMI – the National Alliance on Mental Illness Greater Mississippi Valley Chapter. Join Hope's team on Saturday, October 4 at 9:30 A.M. to walk together as we raise mental health awareness and raise funds for NAMI's mission. By walking together in this important community event, we are letting our friends, family, and neighbors who live with mental health issues and their loved ones know they are not alone! This year's walk will be held once again in East Moline at the Bend Expo Center. Hope UCC's team will walk together and all funds raised will go directly to NAMI's programs helping our friends and neighbors in the Quad Cities. If you are unable to walk that distance, consider cheering us on from the sidelines or making a donation to our team. It's a great way for us to be present in the community, representing our church, and supporting those who are facing this critical health issue. Whether you are walking or cheering, remember to wear your Hope UCC tee shirt! To register to walk on Hope UCC's team and/or to make a donation, please go to <https://www.namiwalks.org/teams/78361>

Or contact the church office for more help to connect.





Dreaming God's Dreams: The Story of Hope
Hope United Church of Christ
Stewardship 2026

Sometimes the world feels like it is changing too rapidly and not always in a positive direction. These are the times when we can look to our faith traditions that assure us to hold onto hope and be assured that God's love and God's activity in our world is steady and always present.

We are grateful for the gift of this worship and faith community at Hope UCC. It is here that we can explore what it means to be the Body of Christ, striving to live the lessons Jesus taught. It is here we can study, question, pray, explore, and discuss our holy scriptures together so that we can discern what God's dreams and hopes for Creation are and what that means to us. Importantly, we take all that and venture out into the world to live that Good News God's word and be the light that God has created each of us to be. Together we strengthen our faith by making God's dreams and hopes for Creation a reality. Of course this is challenging and holy work.

And this is what stewardship is all about. As stewards, together we can build up, care for, and share the Kingdom of God. Together we can live and share the story of God's hope for this world. Together we build beloved community sharing God's love for all Creation. Throughout our 2026 Stewardship Campaign we will explore the many ways we align our hopes with God's hope for humanity. We will kick off our 2026 campaign on Sunday, October 19 when you will receive a packet of materials explaining Hope UCC's Mission Plan. Our Mission Plan is our story – Hope UCC's story describing how each of us has a part in dreaming God's dreams and creating a beloved community. Hope UCC cannot do what happens here without your participation. We are so grateful for each of you and many ways you all share your gifts. We hope you will join us in Dreaming God's Dreams and discerning how the story of God's Hope is part of your story. Together we can be stewards of the gifts God has given us as we join together to use these gifts to God's glory.

Annual Blessing of Our Pets, Saturday, October 11th

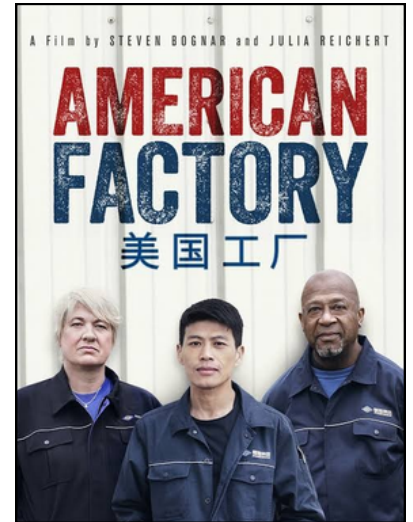
11:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.

We're a week late, but we will honor the feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals and the environment, with a Blessing of the Animals on Saturday October 11th from 11:00 – 2:00. All pets and their humans are invited to come any time between 11:00-2:00 to meet with Pastor Santina for a blessing. We'll be set up in front of church by the front entrance. All pets are welcome to receive a blessing! Bring your pets and tell your friends to bring theirs to Hope UCC for a special blessing that day. If your sweet pet is unable to make the car ride to church, please let Pastor Santina know and she is happy to arrange a house call!



Reel Theology October 10: American Factory

Join us to watch and discuss *American Factory*, an Academy award winning American documentary. This film explores the story about Chinese company Fuyao's factory in Moraine, a city near Dayton, Ohio, that occupies Moraine Assembly, a shuttered General Motors plant. In post-industrial Ohio, the factory that a Chinese billionaire opens in the abandoned General Motors plant, leads to the hiring of two thousand Americans in that area. The documentary studies the early days of hope and optimism that then give way to setbacks as high-tech China clashes with working-class America. The film is not rated and all ages are welcome to attend Reel Theology. If you would like to eat together before the film, please bring your own dinner at 5:30. The film will begin at 6:00 with the discussion and dessert to follow. All ages are welcome!



October Weekly Themes and Scripture Selections

September 21: Hope in a Challenging World: Luke 16:1–13; Jeremiah 8:18–9:1; Psalm 79:1–9; 1 Timothy 2:1–7

September 28: Hope Beyond the Grave: Luke 16:19–31; Jeremiah 32:1–15; Psalm 91; 1 Timothy 6:6–19

October 5: Hope in a Seed: Luke 17:5–10; Lamentations 1:1–6; Psalm 137; 2 Timothy 1:1–14

October 12: Hope that Heals: Luke 17:11–19; Jeremiah 29:1, 4–7; Psalm 66; 2 Timothy 2:8–15

October 19: Hope that Won't Let Go: Luke 18:1–8; Jeremiah 31:27–34; Psalm 119:97–104; 2 Timothy 3:14–4:5

October 26: Hope for the Humble: Luke 18:9–14; Joel 2:23–32; Psalm 65; 2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18



Inquirer's Gathering Sunday October 5

If you are new to Hope UCC or have been attending and have questions about this faith community, Pastor Santina and our church leadership invite you to our next Inquirer's Gathering. This time together is good opportunity to get to know each other a little better and share information about Hope UCC's ministries and mission. This is a great opportunity to spend some time together and have a conversation about faith and our shared journey. Lunch is on us as we'll meet following worship on Sunday, October 5 at 12:30 for lunch, laughs, and time to get to know each other. If you have any questions about the Inquirer's Gathering or would like to sign up to attend, please speak with Pastor Santina or call or email the church office: office.hopeuccqc@gmail.com or 309-762-1419.

Singles and Doubles Annual Wiener Roast
Saturday, October 18 at 5:00 P.M.

Hope UCC's Singles and Doubles group will have their annual wiener roast on Saturday, 18 October at 5:00pm. Be prepared: we're changing things up this year. We will not be having this out in the garden due to the unpredictable weather and also because of the danger of standing around the huge fire pit. We are all getting older and more wobbly!!! So, instead we will be inside Fellowship Hall. We will be having a very simple menu: Hot dogs, chips, and s'more bars- all the essentials! There is a suggested donation of \$5.00 that is appreciated and please bring your own beverage.



We will be singing some campfire songs (minus the fire) as we did last year. We're hoping for another great turnout for this fun evening. All adults of the church are invited. Feel free to bring a friend. Please let me (Barb Hawotte) know if you plan to attend so we know about how many will show up. Any questions, please let me know!

Come and Sing at Hope UCC!

Attention anyone who likes to sing! Our trial pick-up choirs have been pretty successful and we would like to continue having a fun time singing and worshiping through song! We will be starting a choir that will rehearse for 30 minutes once per week on Wednesday from 6-6:30 pm. The plan is for the choir to sing once per month in worship, typically the 4th Sunday of the month. Join us if you can - ALL are welcome even if you don't read music! If you have any questions contact Greg Etzel at gregory.etzel@gmail.com or call/text 309-737-4029; or Laurel Filzen Etzel at laurel.filzen@gmail.com, or text/call 309-256-256-7993.

The Bells Are Ringing!

Bell Choir rehearsals will resume on Wednesday, September 3 at 6:30 pm. ALL are welcome to join bell choir, even if you don't read music and have never played handbells before. Bell Choir usually plays in worship on the 3rd Sunday of the month. If you have any questions contact Greg Etzel at gregory.etzel@gmail.com or call/text 309-737-4029; or Laurel Filzen Etzel at laurel.filzen@gmail.com, or text/call 309-256-256-7993.



Sojourners Sunday on October 19

Every 3rd Sunday after worship, our Hope UCC family – all ages – are invited to be sojourners as we move together through worship, mission, and fellowship, while growing our connection to God and sharing God's love through Christ to one another and the local community. Lunch will be served after worship and Pastor Santina and Lindsey Svetlick (MiD for ordination) will lead an exciting program filled with laughter, exploration, storytelling, and mission. Each month will be a little different, but each month will be fun and interesting together.

Hope UCC Book Club Meets Monday, October 27

Stay tuned for the October selection title, but make sure you save the date so you can join the discussion. All are welcome to read and meet to discuss the book selection. We meet at 2:30 in Hope UCC's Conference Room. Any questions? Please see Dorothy Burdick for more information.

Ruth Circle Meets Monday October 20 at 1:00 P.M.

Get together with the ladies of Hope UCC for a time of laughter, fellowship, and adventure. We'll meet in September to do some planning and scheming and hope you'll join us! See Dorothy Burdick for more information.



October Birthdays

As always, if you note any inaccuracies or missing birthdays of any friends or members, please do not hesitate to let the office know, and we will correct and update our information in an expeditious, speedy, quick, prompt, swift, and efficient manner.

Abbey Jones	October 2
Christine Green	October 3
Kendall Johnson	October 15
Jan Birdsell	October 17
Jerry Etzel	October 19
Phebe Head	October 22
Wanda Poor	October 25



Hope UCC Men's Breakfast

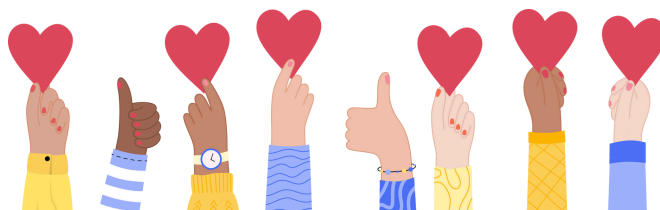
*Join us for our monthly
First Saturday gathering at
Deerfield Restaurant in Silvis.
Saturday, October 4
8:00 a.m.*

Hope UCC T-Shirts Available! Get yours in Fellowship Hall \$20 each

Many sizes available but if you don't see yours, please let Lindsey know and we'll get it ordered. Wear your shirt and let everyone know you're part of this wonderful faith community!

Men's Breakfast Group: Saturday, October 4

Get together with the men of Hope UCC the first Saturday of each month for breakfast and conversation. We meet at Deerfield Restaurant at 8:00 A.M. for laughter and fellowship (and not as much adventure as Ruth Circle but we do okay).



Volunteer and Join in Mission at Hope UCC

There are a variety of ways to share in Hope UCC's mission and ministries. Please look for more information about these and other opportunities in Fellowship Hall throughout the month of October

Prayer Shawl Ministry: Would you be able to knit or crochet a small wrap that will be given to a member or friend who is ill or struggling in some way?

Prayer Ministry: Would you like to be part of a group who covenants to pray for those in need of prayer? We pray individually and we will gather for a monthly meeting together via Zoom. This is a great group for someone who is not able to be at Hope for meetings because we will communicate by email and Zoom.

Blessing Box: Would you like to help keep the Blessing Box filled either by keeping our inventory organized or by coming by to check the Blessing Box and refilling it as necessary (or both?). Refills happen 3 or 4 times a week but you can just sign up for a once a week section.

Befrienders Ministry: We will be working with World Relief Quad Cities to help accompany and befriend recently resettled refugees. There are many ways to help!



Did You Know...?

Did you know that Hope UCC is blessed to be the church home to a wonderful person who is in the process of completing all the academic, administrative, and spiritual requirements to be eligible for ordination in the United Church of Christ? Lindsey Svetlick has started her second year as a Member in Discernment (MiD) for Ordination. In our denomination this process is guided by our Western Association of our Illinois Conference's Committee on Ministry. Lindsey is completing the academic coursework required of all individuals seeking ordination in the UCC – and she's doing this while working and raising her daughter, Jaiden! Hope UCC is her home church and we are her nest, safe space, encouragers, and her laboratory too – it is here she can try out what she is learning in her coursework with all of us! Lindsey has a Local Church Discernment Committee made up of Hope UCC folks that meets regularly with her to encourage and offer feedback and support in her journey. Our plan is that Lindsey will lead worship and preach at least once a quarter. Please continue to pray for Lindsey as she continues this wonderful journey toward ordination – and please remember to pray for her wife Bek and daughter Jaiden too! Lindsey, we are so thankful God led you to Hope UCC and you listened to that call into ministry that God set upon your heart.



OPEN DOOR YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

Calling All Youth!!

All youth in 6th through 12th grade are invited to join us for fun and fellowship! We'll be meeting once a month right here at Hope UCC. Come hang out, play games, and enjoy some snacks! We'll also spend time talking about how our lives and our faith walk together, and we'll plan service projects that make a difference in our community. This is a great chance to connect with friends, old and new. We can't wait to see you there!

Here is the schedule (but it may be subject to change). All meetings are from 3:00-5:00 PM unless otherwise noted:

October 19th ; November 16th ; December 14th ; January 25th ; February 22nd ; March 22nd ; April 19th ; May 17th ; June: Pride Month Activities

Our Whole Lives/OWL Program Continues

This fall, our church will continue its Our Whole Lives (OWL) program for the same group of youth who participated last year. This class will pick up where they left off, continuing their exploration in this comprehensive, lifespan, age-appropriate sexuality education curriculum.

Because this is an ongoing program, we are unable to add new youth to the class at this time.

Please note that our Member in Discernment, Lindsey Svetlick, will continue to serve as the teacher for this group.

Here is the schedule (but please note that changes are possible). All meetings are from 1:00-3:00 PM unless otherwise noted:

October 5th ; November 2nd ; December 14th ; January 11th ; February 8th ; March 8th ; April 5th ; May 3rd ; June: Pride Month Activities