

The Communicator

February 2026

From the Pastor's Keyboard . . .

“Stay”

“Stability is not about standing still.

It is about remaining faithful when everything else is in motion.”— St. Benedict

Benedict of Nursia was a Catholic monk who lived in central Italy in the sixth century, the son of an affluent Roman family. He was sent to Rome for a classical education, but was disappointed in setting of academic rigor void of spiritual development. He ran away from school. He wound up coming under the care of a monk named Romanus; a hermit who lived in a cave in central Italy. He adopted this hermetic lifestyle for three years, learning from Romanus before venturing out on his own.

Benedict was called to be the abbot of a nearby monastery, but that relationship was not a good fit. After an attempt on his life, he fled the monastery and founded his own religious order. He eventually founded 12 monasteries in central Italy, which became the basis for the Benedictine Order, one of the largest Catholic orders in the world today. Members of the Benedictine Order follow “The Rule of St. Benedict,” which is a series of wisdom principles designed to bring the adherent closer to God through the common choices we make every day.

St. Benedict lived in a time when everything was falling apart. The fall of the Roman Empire, which was occurring in the early years of his life, wreaked havoc on the common people. Moral codes were collapsing, economies were shrinking, cruelty was being normalized, and minorities were seen as a threat. In those moments, people were fleeing and fighting and lashing out with hostility towards one another. It seemed, at times, that all was lost.

But Benedict and his wisdom orders did not advocate either fight or flight. He did not try to save the world by propping up the failing cultural systems, but he also did not advocate abandoning the world. Yes, his monastic orders were a retreat from the world, but they were not modeled in the hermetic lifestyle of his younger years. They were modeled on lifestyles based on stability, shared labor, prayer, and care for the vulnerable. These monasteries did not prevent the collapse of the Roman Empire, but they did preserve humanity within that collapse. They became places where intellectual pursuit survived, along with spiritual development. They became places where the poor were fed, where dignity was restored, and where power was dismissed. But they did not do this by being boastful or boisterous; they did so by being steadfast and stable. They did so by “staying.”

Rev. Cameron Trimble shared this wisdom about St. Benedict and his stability recently in her devotional series, “Piloting Faith.” She equated this stability to our current cultural dumpster fire and how we, as progressive Christians, are called to be stable. She tells us that *“being stable is about committing to a place, a people, and a way of living that resists chaos without mirroring it. Stability is not passivity. It is disciplined faithfulness. It is the refusal to let fear decide who we will become.”*

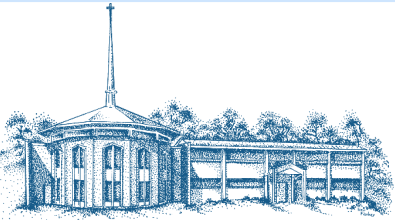
In our world, it would be easy to fight, it would be easy to flee, it would be easy to check out and bury our heads in the sand of apathy. But, following St. Benedict, we must rise above all of those intuitive practices. The counter-intuitive practice of simply being is resistance as well. If we can simply be the loving people who God calls us to be, despite the pressures against us, we are following the wisdom of St. Benedict and the Benedictine orders of stability (and Jesus).

This stability comes in the form of prayer, education, restorative justice work, lifting up the dignity and value of each person, caring for those in need, and trying to apply the wisdom teachings of Jesus in our every day life. If we can just continue being Jesus’ hands and feet to those in need, we are being the resistance. We do a good job of that here at CUCC. As we live into 2026 (what a year it has been already) it will be even more important for us to simply “stay.”



We have had some great worship events this year already, as we celebrated Epiphany, remembered our baptisms, investigated the peaceful ministry of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and celebrated the seven-year anniversary of our Open and Affirming/Inclusion Covenant. As we head into “love month” let us remember that the most loving thing we can do is to “stay.” Stay faithful, stay true, stay strong, stay in love with Jesus Christ and all that he empowers you to do. We are the church, together and they will know we are Christians by our Steadfast- “staying” love.

-Pastor Rick



Columbia United Church of Christ

**3201 I-70 Drive NW
Columbia, MO 65202**

Rev. Rick Oberle
Pastor

Rev. Fred Brandenburg
Pastor Emeritus

Mike Pierson
Music Coordinator

Alexandra Roper
Office Administrator

Sara Koenig
Director, Little One's Day Out

Caleb Berry
Custodian

Sunday Schedule:

9:00 a.m. Faith Education
10:00 a.m. Fellowship Time
10:30 a.m. Worship

Office Hours:
Monday through Friday
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Phone:
(573) 445-7931

Email:
office@columbiaucc.com

Website:
www.columbiaucc.com



News & Updates

ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP - FEBRUARY 18

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the Lenten Season for the liturgical church; a time for Christians to examine their own mortality and God's blessed gift of life eternal, in this world and the next.



On February 18, at 7:00 p.m., we will celebrate our eternal communion with God as we reflect on the parable of Creation found in Genesis 2 where God forms humankind from dust and lovingly breathes life into them. We will have the traditional imposition of ashes as a symbol of penance, and receive communion as well. We hope you will join us as we kick off the Lenten season and our 40-day walk with Jesus to Jerusalem and the cross.

OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONVOCATION IN ST. LOUIS - MARCH 7

The annual Open and Affirming Convocation in St. Louis will be here before you know it! We would love to have you join us. There will be several guest speakers and workshops. Pastor Rick and Ashley Ramirez will be hosting one of the workshops on behalf of our congregation! The event will be at Parkway UCC from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Lunch will be served. If you would like to be part of our CUCC delegation, talk to **Pastor Rick** or **Ashley Ramirez**. We do need to RSVP by March 1 for the lunch count. We will be taking the church bus in to St. Louis for this! Let us know if you would like to ride on the bus, or if you will meet us there. The bus will be leaving at 7:00 a.m.

SOLARIZE UCC UPDATE

We are awaiting our turn on Dogwood Solar's list of 2026 installations and expect the work to begin around April. Meanwhile, we're preparing for the necessary paperwork to receive the federal tax credit once installation is complete. Generous financial support from the congregation (\$50,500 donated as of this writing) will reduce the need to withdraw funds from other investments. If you wish to contribute, just select "Solar Panel Designated Fund" on Kindrid or write it on the memo line of your check.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

The CUCC Women's Fellowship will host their monthly gathering on February 12 at 9:30 a.m. in the Gathering Area. A wonderful breakfast will be served, and the women will continue their Bible study based on the curriculum "Finding Resilience, Joy, and our Identity in Jesus Christ." This month, they will be focusing on "I Will Say It Again, Rejoice" based on scripture from Philippians 4:1-23. All women of the church are welcome! Come and join us!

Moderator's Moment

As February unfolds, we stand at the doorway of Lent- a season that invites us to slow down, reflect, and walk more intentionally with Christ. Lent is not only about personal devotion; it is about paying attention to where Jesus goes and whom he chooses to see.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus consistently drew near to those considered second-class citizens by the world around them- the poor, the sick, the outcast, the overlooked. He did not merely offer charity; he offered relationship, dignity, and unconditional love. As we follow Christ through this Lenten journey, we are reminded that loving God and loving our neighbors are inseparable.

At Columbia United Church of Christ, we strive to live out that calling in concrete ways. Through our support of the Institute in San Cristóbal, Chiapas, through Loaves and Fishes, and through our financial gifts to other organizations, we extend Christ's love beyond our walls. These ministries are not just line items in a budget- they are expressions of who we are and what we believe.

Yet Lent also gently asks us to look inward. How are we, as individuals, sharing God's love in our daily lives? Where are we being invited to listen more deeply, to serve more generously, or to welcome more openly? Christ's love is unconditional, freely given, and endlessly expansive- and he invites us to share that same love with others.

As we enter this sacred season, may we walk with Jesus attentively, love boldly, and remain open to the ways God is calling us to be a blessing.

So I leave you with this Lenten question: **How will you share that love?**

In God's Love,
Jerry Kiesling,
Council Moderator



COLUMBIA UCC CHURCH COUNCIL

Moderator:	Jerry Kiesling	rollzierp50@gmail.com
Vice Moderator:	Corinne Remeika	remeikas@tranquility.net
Secretary:	Alethea Tennill	atennill108@gmail.com
Treasurer:	Deborah Long Birkes	dlong@elon.edu
Recording Treasurer:	Christine Staelens	tigersfour@gmail.com
Building & Grounds:	Ted Dachroeden	gpadoc4gd@gmail.com
Fellowship & Hospitality:	Mary Lorber-Solt	eldercow@gmail.com
Finance & Stewardship:	VACANT	
Inclusion & Affirmation:	Ashley Ramirez	ashknight0628@gmail.com
Little One's Day Out:	Kristin Veteto	kristinnoelveteto@gmail.com
Membership & Care:	Judi Privitt	judiprivitt811@gmail.com
Nurture & Education:	Lena Muench	cfc323@yahoo.com
Outreach & Advocacy:	Mahree Skala	skalamahree@yahoo.com
Worship & Music:	Edie Diel	edie@thedandegroup.com
Pastor:	Rev. Rick Oberle	rick@columbiaucc.com



February Sunday Volunteer Schedule

Date	Greeter	Ushers	Worship Leader	Tech Booth
02/01	Carol Duermeyer	Mary Lorber Audrey Lasley	Tricia Soncasie	Brent Marcks Ted Dachroeden
02/08	Jessica Lucas	Pat Forward Phillip Neale	Llona Weiss	Lorry Dreier Josh Muench
02/15		Llona Weiss Charlie Marcks	Jessica Lucas	Judi Privitt Doug Privitt
02/18		Mahree Skala	Ashley Ramirez	
02/22		Keith Birkes Deborah Birkes	Mahree Skala	

February Birthdays

Amanda Forward - 02/02

Lori Melton - 02/06

Melba Shaffer - 02/07

Elias Nieman - 02/08

Zabibu Kibaro - 02/09

Sofia Marienfeld-Crenshaw - 02/09

Tricia Price - 02/09

Maia Marienfeld-Crenshaw - 02/11

Cindy Deegan - 02/14

Danielle Dreier - 02/14

Teddy Eveler - 02/14

Debby Duermeyer - 02/15

Imani Kibaro - 02/15

Abigail Dennis - 02/16

Liz Fischer - 02/16

Andrew Hill - 02/17

Donna Wilmsmeyer - 02/17

Pat Forward - 02/18

Mike Rapp - 02/20

Jane Klick - 02/21

Lorry Dreier - 02/23

Stefanie Zimny - 02/25

Gene Lavelly - 02/26

Samantha Hall - 02/27

Tim Grace - 02/28

Darla Privitt - 02/28

Camryn Woolford - 02/28

Columbia UCC Council Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. on December 16, 2025 by Jerry Keisling. Pastor Rick began with a devotion from 1 Thessalonians 3 highlighting the importance of fellowship and the bonds that we share as a church family. Pastor Rick followed with a prayer. Present: Pastor Rick, Jerry Kiesling, Ted Dachroeden, Christine Staelens, Corrine Remeika, Judi Privitt, Ashley Ramirez, Deborah Birkes, Edie Diel, Mary Lorber-Solt, and Kristin Veteto. Edie Diel made a motion to approve the 12/16/25 meeting agenda with a second by Ashley Ramirez. The motion passed. Christine Staelens made a motion to approve the November minutes with slight changes (remove Edie's name from present because it is mentioned twice and change "Kasper" to "Ashley" for the motion at the November meeting to adjourn - Judi will make edits). Motion second by Mary Lorber-Solt. The motion passed.

Unfinished Business:

- ♥ Volunteer Sign-Up: most spots filled for January.
- ♥ New Light for Sign: Ted is still waiting to hear about choices and options for the light.
- ♥ Nominating Committee for 2025: a member is interested and will observe at next month's meeting.
- ♥ Solar Columbia: motion passed and Solar committee members will be meeting this week to sign the contract and pay the initial downpayment of \$7,000.
- ♥ Historical Documents/Photos - Alexandra will continue to work on this project.
- ♥ Accompanist update: We had a candidate that was going to be hired today and they changed their mind. The search continues with a few prospects in mind.

New Business:

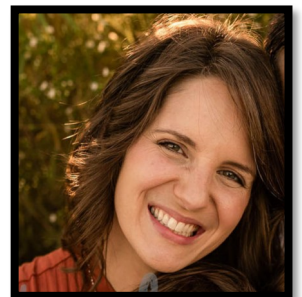
- ♥ LODO: New Ministry Team Member recommended (Mona Dachroeden) - Motion made by LODO Chair (Kristin Veteto) and motioned passed
- ♥ Christmas Bonuses: Motion made by Edie Diel to allocate Christmas bonuses to CUCC staff in the following amounts (Pastor Rick \$450; Alexandra \$350; Mike & Caleb \$200). Council members recommended that the budgeted bonus for the "accompanist" position be given to Gina and Connie (\$100 each). The motion passed.
- ♥ Vision and Strategic Planning (Corrine Remeika) - Corrine is hoping to attend each Ministry Team's next meeting and engage the team in a discussion of their evaluation of how they have moved towards their goals this past year and where they need/want to go this coming year. Ministry Team chairs provided dates for their next meetings.
- ♥ Closed Session Discussion: Committee was appointed to develop a security policy: Edie Diel, Jerry Kiesling, Judi Privitt, Corrine Remeika, & Pastor Rick

Pastors Report and Ministry Team Reports are attached throughout.

It was mentioned that as a church we need to schedule a Safe Church Training and have all Sunday school teachers, nursery aides, and anyone involved in Nurture and Education of children attend the event and sign the Safe Church form.

Pastor Rick closed us in prayer. Motion to adjourn by Ashley, second by Edie. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristin Veteto,
on behalf of Alethea Tennill, Secretary



Finance & Stewardship Ministry Team

Financial Update

	Actual	Budget	Over/(Under)
December Income	\$53,925.29	\$59,917.00	-\$5,991.71
December Expenses	\$53,233.06	\$37,465.00	\$15,768.06
YTD Income	\$427,534.58	\$439,161.00	-\$11,626.42
YTD Expenses	\$431,851.60	\$426,487.00	\$5,364.60
Surplus/(Deficit)	-\$4,317.02	\$12,674.0	-\$16,991.02
December Joyful Giving	\$52,593.29	\$58,850.00	-\$6,256.71
YTD Joyful Giving	\$414,884.67	\$424,361.00	-\$9,476.33

Worship

12/07	107
12/14	135
12/21	81
12/24 7 p.m.	120
12/24 10 p.m.	18
12/28	52

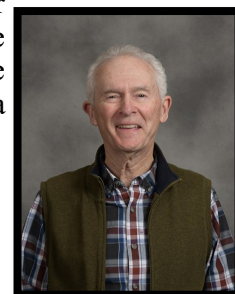
A GOOD ENDING FOR 2025 IS A GOOD BEGINNING FOR 2026

The financial condition of CUCC was very good at year end and that bodes well for 2026! For the last three years, our Joyful Giving has fallen approximately \$40,000 short each year; but 2025 ended only \$4317 short and that is a huge improvement. Thank you to all members and friends of CUCC. Our expenses slightly exceeded our budget but only because we had unexpected expenses connected with ice and snow removal and large trees which fell in our parking lot and required professional removal.

The 2026 budget decreases spending by approximately \$25,000 compared to the 2025 budget and anticipated Joyful Giving is decreased by approximately \$38,000. These decreases do not suggest that CUCC reduce any of our current activities but anticipates more efficient operations and that will slightly reduce the amount of Joyful Giving necessary to support all our important activities.

The Finance & Stewardship Ministry Team has resolved to regularly inform our congregation about all of the important activities we support every year and their cost. We will do that through direct reports at church services and with monthly articles in the Communicator. The table above is a summary of our 2025 income and expenses. For a finer look, check out the Annual Report for more details.

Respectfully submitted,
Keith Birkes
Finance & Stewardship
Ministry Team Member



Inclusion and Affirmation Ministry Team

The Columbia Values Diversity Celebration has taken place each January since 1994 to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King's teachings. I have attended for several years, and I always find it inspiring just looking around at all the hundreds of people who have taken time out of their busy lives to gather and commemorate Dr. King. Along with individuals who purchase tickets, many churches, schools, and businesses purchase whole tables' worth of tickets and send representatives. Each year, different incredible local musical groups perform and keynote speakers come in; if you've never heard Rochara Knight sing the national anthem, that in itself is worth the price of the ticket!

The Inclusion and Affirmation Ministry Team has purchased a table on behalf of our church for the last several years. Some years we haven't filled all ten seats, but the people who attend always comment that it's a great experience, and it's a shame that more people can't come. Granted, it is a breakfast event that takes place from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. on a weekday morning, so that doesn't fit in everyone's schedule.

This year, our own Pastor Rick was nominated for the individual Diversity Award, awarded annually to an individual or family who has made a great contribution to promoting appreciation for diversity in Columbia, along with an award for a group or organization doing diversity work. This Communicator will go to print before the celebration on Jan. 28, so as I'm writing this, we don't know yet if Pastor Rick got the award, but it is quite an honor to be nominated. Past winners include Elliot and Muriel Battle, Beulah Ralph, Almata Crayton, Barbra Horrell, and Dr. Peter Stiepleman. Organizational award winners include Rock Bridge Christian Church, Church Women United, Show-Me Central Habitat for Humanity, Columbia CROP Hunger Walk, Wilkes Blvd. United Methodist Church, Room at the Inn, and City of Refuge; which means we can all take a little bit of the credit, because many CUCC members have been involved with several of those groups!

As a teacher, one of my favorite parts is the writing program. Students submit writings around the annual theme, which varies but is always based on Dr. King's teachings. This year's theme is "Our Beloved Community: Why We Stand Together," which seems very timely given current national and international events. Student writings are published in a booklet given out at the celebration and a select few students are chosen to read their writings aloud on a video which is played at the celebration. I always enjoy the video and take the booklet with me to read later. Many of the students' writings give me hope for the future.

Between the musical performances, the inspiring keynote speakers, the student writing video, hearing about the great work the award nominees are doing, and just seeing how many people are committed to doing the work of appreciating diversity and promoting inclusion in our community, I would highly recommend attending the Columbia Values Diversity Celebration. It's too late for this year, but we'll let you know when the date for the 2027 one is announced!

CUCC OPEN AND AFFIRMING/INCLUSION COVENANT

Columbia United Church of Christ celebrates God's boundless and unconditional love by intentionally welcoming and affirming all God's children.

- * No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey;
- * No matter where you are on your faith journey;
- * No matter your sexual orientation, gender expression or identity;
- * No matter your race, culture, ethnicity, nationality or politics;
- * No matter your age, ability, health, relationship status or family structure;
- * No matter your social, economic, educational, legal or life circumstances;
- * You are welcome here!

Called by Jesus to be an Open and Affirming, inclusive faith community, Columbia United Church of Christ commits to welcoming everyone into the full life of our congregation. Our paths and voices may differ, but we journey in faith together.



LODO Ministry Team

We are looking ahead with excitement as we plan for summer programs, upcoming events, and the next school year at Little One's Day Out (LODO)! Math & Science Night will be held on February 2 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. This fun and interactive evening will give students and families the opportunity to explore hands-on activities together. We welcome volunteers and are excited to see everyone there!

LODO Day Camp will be offered during the first three weeks of June, meeting Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This program is open to both LODO families and the community as a whole. The registration fee is \$425 and families who enroll during the month of February will receive \$25 off the registration fee. Please note that a minimum of 10 students must be enrolled in order for this program to take place.

We are also thrilled to announce the launch of extended LODO Plus hours beginning in the 2026–2027 school year. These extended hours will run from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., providing added flexibility for our families. Enrollment will open as for current families on February 1 through February 15. Starting February 16, new families will be able to enroll. Make sure to enroll as soon as possible to ensure your students spot. Please be sure to check your student's cubby and watch Bright Wheel for important information, enrollment forms, and updates.

Finally, our Ministry Team Meeting will take place on January 26, and we are excited to roll out a new calendar following this meeting. More details will be shared soon!

Thank you for being part of the Little One's Day Out family—we look forward to an exciting season ahead.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sara Koenig,
LODO Director



2026-2027 Enrollment **August 24, 2026 - May 21, 2027**

Lightning Bugs Class: 1 year old before 8/1/26
(Only available 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.)

Lambs Class: 2 years old before 8/1/26

Lions/Leopards Class: 3 years old before 8/1/26

Leap Frogs/Leopards Class: 4 years old before 8/1/26

Additional information about the LODO Program in available at www.columbiaucc.com/lodohome.

*Our Leopards Classroom will be assigned and utilized as either a 3-4's class or 3,4,5's class.

Contact us for information, openings, to schedule a tour, or to enroll!

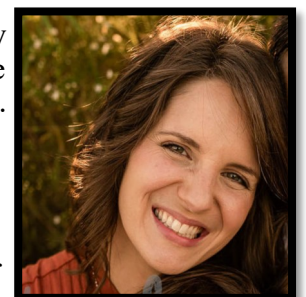
lodo.sara.koenig@gmail.com
573-445-2661

It feels as if we are now fully into the New Year and the work of the church continues with vigor. The LODO Ministry Team will be meeting at the end of January and expect to approve the 2026/27 tuition.

The ministry team remains attentive to the LODO program and Director Koenig as they enter into this second half of the school year. There are many changes ahead for the 2026/27 school year and LODO also plans to host a 9-day camp in June.

Please continue to keep the LODO program in your prayers.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kristin Veteto,
LODO Ministry Team Chair



Membership & Care Ministry Team

We are pleased to announce that Sue Ann Schaefer has joined our team. Joining a team is a great way to know people better. You can be as involved as you wish. We have eight ministries in the Membership and Care Ministry Team. There is a place for you!

In our secular lives, this month the emphasis is on buying floral or heart shaped items to express our love for one another. In our religious lives, we practice an active love for others called “agape.” Agape love is an intentional choice to care about the well-being of others without expecting anything in return. It is a commitment to actions, not just an emotional reaction. This love extends to strangers and to enemies. Examples of agape love by our team are giving a ride to the eye doctor, making a meal for a person recovering from surgery, replacing a smoke alarm battery and talking with someone who feels a bit lonely.

Sometimes you’re the helper and sometimes you’re the recipient.
Don’t hesitate to let us know your needs! Happy Valentine’s Day!

Respectfully Submitted,

Helen Schulz
Membership & Care
Ministry Team Member



NEW NAMETAGS

The Inclusion & Affirmation and Membership & Care Ministry Teams have worked together to bring us new name tags! We are also using this opportunity to update info in our church membership database.

Our new nametags were distributed in church last year for everyone who filled out an information update form. If you did not receive a nametag, or you need your nametag changed in any way, fill out an update form! There are forms available in the coatroom, as well as online. Please fill out a paper form, found to the right of the nametags in the coatroom, and drop it in the wicker basket; or [CLICK HERE](#) to do it online

Pastoral Relations Committee

The Pastoral Relations Committee (composed of Kristy Hayward, Sue Ann Schaefer and Mark Duncan) met with Pastor Rick on January 6. We shared some of the positive things we are experiencing.

We appreciate Pastor Rick working through the hectic but very successful Christmas season while providing care for members needing pastoral support. The Children’s program, Choir Cantata and Banquet, and the beautiful Christmas Eve services presented unique opportunities for worship and celebration for all. Thirteen new members joined us in 2025! Membership and Care did some work to communicate and accurately reflect current membership, and the official count of members is 275. Solar power is coming to UCC. The December 7 deadline was met for the government funding help. Contributions for the project continue to be made reducing what may be needed for a loan. Joyful Giving is in the best position we have seen in a few years as we ended 2025!

We discussed the challenge of still looking for an organist/accompanist and the limited supply of active musicians with those skills. The vice moderator position has been filled and we are still seeking a Finance and Stewardship chair, so leadership for council positions and for the church remains an issue important for the life of the congregation.

The Pastoral Relations Committee meets with Pastor Rick throughout the year in an effort to share open communication. We appreciate input and want to share ideas on how we continue to support each other in the congregation and Pastor Rick’s leadership. Thanks to all who work to make CUCC a community of faith supporting each other and making an impact beyond the place we gather.

Nurture & Education Ministry Team



WE ARE SHINING BRIGHT!

**LET'S PACK
GOD'S HOUSE.**

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR KIDS & YOUTH AGES

3-12TH GRADE 9:00-10:00 A.M. EACH SUNDAY!

WE'LL TAKE CARE OF BREAKFAST!

WE'RE CONTINUING OUR JOURNEY THROUGH "THE BIBLE IN A YEAR" - THE MORE THE MERRIER!



NOW THRU FEB 8

Bring non-perishable goods to church to benefit the Food Bank Market Pantry

Donate \$ to benefit Loaves & Fishes: (cash, check, Kindrid @ columbiaucc.com)

Thanks to our Youth for helping collect donations!



Outreach & Advocacy Ministry Team



Oh my, thank you CUCC! You continue to step up and support our Partnership in Education (PIE) with Alpha Hart Lewis Elementary School (AHL) in so many ways, and AHL is so appreciative.

On January 14, Tricia Soncasie provided child care during their PTA meeting and on January 21, Pastor Rick, Darla Privitt, and Llona Weiss worked the Good Dads program. On December 17, 2025, CUCC started helping every Thursday at 10:30 a.m. packing food bags (called Buddy Packs) for students who need the extra food to take home on the weekends. We are looking for volunteers each week Thursday morning; to sign up [CLICK HERE](#). If you have extra grocery bags at home, please bring them in so we can transport the Buddy Packs. It is fun and the Home School Coordinator and Teachers really appreciate our being there! Thank you Mark Duncan, Pastor Rick, and Llona Weiss. The sign-up link will also be in future CUCC Friday Emails, or talk to [Llona Weiss](#).

Dates for CUCC regular activities with AHL are on the CUCC Calendar through the rest of the school year. AHL is having "Fancy Lunch" on February 6 from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. where AHL writers will read pieces of their work during lunch while having fancy lunch food and drink. February 11 is AHL PTA meeting (child care at 6.00 p.m.) and February 18 is Good Dads (7:00 a.m.). Last, but not least, we will be collecting for Stock the Lounge for Parent-Teacher Conference Week March 2-6. That same week, March 2-6, is Read Across America Week where we/CUCC can read in the classrooms. Thank you!



Come join the team that helps feed hungry people in our community! The next group shift is on Tuesday, February 24 at 5:30 p.m. and the sign-up link is [Columbia United Church of Christ at The Food Bank – 2026](#). Have fun and get some exercise while doing good. If you have questions or want more information contact [Mahree Skala](#).

Volunteers are also needed at the Food Bank Market on the Business Loop, where people come to receive food. For more information, [CLICK HERE](#) visit or talk with [Pastor Rick](#), who is volunteering there on Wednesday afternoons.



TEAM EARTH LUNCH AND LEARN FEBRUARY 8

Please plan to stay after worship on February 8 to continue to explore Creation Justice. Mike Williams will continue to lead us in examining the scriptural foundations of this concept, and move into a discussion of concrete actions we can take to protect and preserve God's creation. The goal is to eventually develop a Creation Justice covenant to present to the congregation for discussion and possible adoption. As the UCC website notes, "As Christians, we seek justice- to be in right relationship with God, our neighbors, and all of creation."



The January 19 meal at Loaves and Fishes consisted of spaghetti and chili mac (made by Mary Lorber and Audrey Lasley), salad (provided by Patty Beeson), coleslaw (left from Jim Elliott's funeral luncheon), bread, and a variety of desserts. The chili and desserts were leftover from the chili cookoff (thank you Men's Fellowship). Tricia Soncasie contributed a pan of brownies also! Mahree Skala prepared the peanut butter and jelly sandwiches which were made with peach preserves donated by Women's Fellowship! Servers/dishwashers for the evening were: Doug and Judi Privitt, Tim and Tricia Soncasie, Patty Beeson, Tom and Mary Lorber-Solt, Debby (Mary's Sister), and Mark Duncan and his friend, Kreg. We served approximately 135 firsts and 28 seconds. It was a busy evening and so glad we are able to help with this project in our community. THANKS to everyone!

Worship & Music Ministry Team

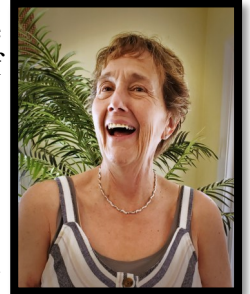
Happy New Year continues. We're still praying for an organist. I know that God has a great one in mind for us! Fastnacht is rapidly approaching and then Lent starts and there are several exciting things happening this year in our Lenten Worship, followed by Easter Sunday, Alleluia!

Do plan to join us for Ash Wednesday worship at 7:00 p.m. on February 18. We will have communion together, as well as the traditional imposition of ashes. This somber time of reflection kicks off our Lenten season well.

Our next Music & Worship Ministry Team meeting is February 19 at 6:30 p.m. and all are welcome to join us in the fun and fellowship as we do God's work.

Looking forward to the Holidays!

Respectfully Submitted,
Edie Diel,
Worship & Music
Ministry Team Chair



WELCOME TO QUORUS!

Columbia United Church of Christ is pleased to be in partnership with [Quorus, the LGBTQIAA Choral ensemble of Columbia!](#)

Quorus uses our facility for rehearsals, and we will the opportunity to work with them as they schedule performances around the area. We are also always thrilled to have Quorus join us for worship, praising God with their inclusive repertoire.

Quorus would love to have CUCC members join their choir! To learn more about Quorus, [CLICK HERE](#).



Fellowship & Hospitality Ministry Team

Greetings and Salutations! I sincerely hope the New Year is treating you all well. With spring around the corner, I'm sure many are making plans for when the weather breaks, but until then, put our Fastnacht celebration on your calendar!

Tuesday, February 17, at 5:30 p.m., we will be enjoying bratwursts, sauerkraut, German potato salad, fastnachts, and music, compliments of the Loehnig Family Band from Herman, MO.

Just a little history on Fastnacht- many countries have different traditions for the celebration preceding Lent, it is a combination of pagan rituals, used to ward off winter, with Christian customs of fasting and penance. In order to use up all the foods prior to Lent, Christian communities would have a big feast, in order to eat the foods disallowed during the Lenten season (waste not, want not). Traditions include, costumes and masks, parades, feasting, dancing, and music. Keeping with New Orleans style Mardi Gras, we will have contests for the best mask (funny or scary), the best hat (funny or unique), and the best dancer (utilizing our awesome German band). So, if you have any free time, please sign up to help with this fun, awesome event.

Until then my friends, be safe, be warm, be grateful, and always be yourself!

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Lorber
Fellowship and Hospitality
Ministry Team Chair



Scouting America

Troop 708 wrapped up a busy and memorable stretch of activities, starting in the fall and ending with a December Court of Honor that recognized an impressive wave of rank advancements and merit badges. Over 30 Scouts came together for a lively end-of-year holiday party filled with basketball and other games before a quiet holiday break. January brought a cold-weather campout with about 15 Scouts who practiced winter outdoor skills and handled the 21-degree temperatures with confidence thanks to solid preparation and gear. While the Klondike winter skills competition was canceled due to severe incoming weather, a small group of determined Scouts may still venture out to chase the elusive clear bead by camping in below-zero conditions.

Pack 5183 had our first meeting of the year January 12. This semester, Cub Scouts will be working on individual den level achievements as well as working on the Duty to God and Protect Yourself activities with their families. We handed out blank Pinewood Derby cars so Cub Scouts can prepare for Pinewood Derby on February 9!

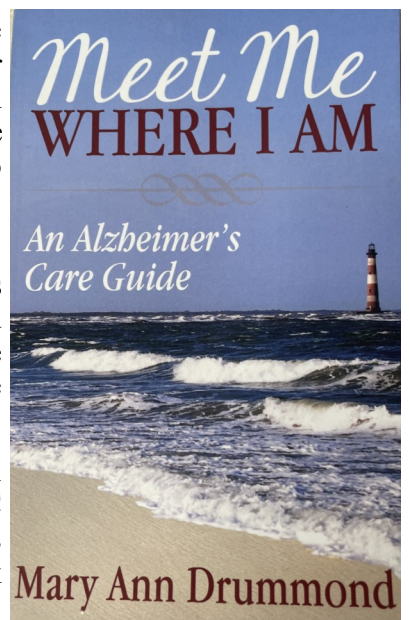


MEET ME WHERE I AM: AN ALZHEIMER'S CARE GUIDE A CUCC Book Study in March

Mary Ann Drummond, RN, is a dementia educator, speaker, and author of the book "Meet Me Where I Am: An Alzheimer's Care Guide" among other books. She has a passion for presenting innovative and successful strategies in both caregiver and provider settings to assist individuals with dementia to "live their best" each day. Her special skill is facilitating ways for caregivers to meet the person with dementia where they are, not where we want them to be; and bring them the comfort and care that Christ calls us to have for each other.

The book "Meet Me Where I Am" talks about understanding Alzheimer's Disease, preparing for the journey with your loved one, minimizing losses and maximizing successes, providing therapeutic environments, and managing the difficult symptoms that accompany this progression. It is a very valuable guide to anyone whose life is touched by someone with dementia issues.

We will be journeying together through this book Thursdays in March (March 5, 12, 19 & 26) at 6:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. All are welcome, CUCC members and friends from the community, to take this walk together. Copies of the book are available in the church office. If you have any questions, talk to [Pastor Rick](#).



Habitat for Humanity **Pancake Breakfast**

Feb. 28, 2026

Join us for a breakfast
of pancakes and
sausage in the
Fellowship Hall from
7 a.m. to 11 a.m.
All proceeds go to
Show Me Central
Habitat for Humanity.

TICKETS:

\$8 for adults

\$4 for 6-12

Free for 5 and under



THANK YOU!

A heartfelt thanks from Women's Fellowship to everyone in the congregation for your support in our recent fundraising efforts. We raised approximately \$1500 to be used for charitable works both locally and globally. Kudos to Mary Lorber-Solt for her donation of honey, to Jessica Jenks for her donation of crafted bookmarks, and to John Muench for the beautifully crafted bench.

If there is anything you would like to see us offer next year- a jam we ran out of, more beets or pickles? Just let us know. That will help with the items we order for selling next year.

P.S. Once your jars are empty, please bring them to church for Women's Fellowship to recycle. We receive credit for the empty jars we return to the Amish. Thanks!

-Women's Fellowship

Thank you for your generous donation of \$2,600.00 to VAC's FISH Fund received on 1/12/2026. Your gift will immediately impact the lives of individuals and families we serve daily through the Faith in Service to Humanity (FISH) Fund.

Meeting the immediate basic needs of our community members is at the heart of VAC's mission. Your support strengthens our ability to continue this work and helps our community thrive. Together, we are creating a stronger, more resilient Boone County.

In 2024, VAC's FISH Fund served 1,537 individuals and supported 1,407 households in Boone County. Thanks to contributions like yours, the top three services provided through the FISH Fund in 2024 include:

- ♥ \$41,880.36 for 2,184 gasoline vouchers, ensuring essential transportation needs are met.
- ♥ \$13,151.36 for medical expenses, including prescriptions and doctor's appointments, to support health and well-being.
- ♥ \$122,605.38 for identification-related expenses, such as driver's licenses, state IDs, and Missouri birth certificates, enabling access to vital resources.

At VAC, we exist to empower possibilities, and your generosity fuels our mission. Your investment in our work is an investment in our community's future, resilience, and hope.



With heartfelt gratitude,
Stacie Pottinger,
Chief Development Officer

Thank you Columbia United Church of Christ, for your generous support throughout 2025. Because of faithful partners like you, City of Refuge is able to walk alongside individuals and families in need-offering hope, dignity, and tangible support when it matters most.

Each gift you have given represents a life touched and a story changed, and we are deeply grateful for your partnership in this work. We look forward to continuing this journey with you in the year ahead and sharing how your generosity is making a lasting difference in our community.



With sincere appreciation,
Debbie Beal,
Executive Director

International Missions

CUCC IS WORKING IN EGYPT

The Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) stands as one of Egypt's most influential and compassionate development organizations, guided by its commitment to promoting life's sanctity, equity and harmony. CEOSS is a beacon of hope for millions; Muslims and Christians; delivering integrated education, health, agriculture, environment, and economic development programs. CEOSS alleviates poverty and improves food security. It champions women's empowerment, gender equity, disability inclusion, and inter-religious dialogue, reinforcing social development and justice where respect, opportunity, and inclusive community are present.

Through [Global Ministries](#), CUCC is a partner in mission with over 200 mission partners around the world, including the CEOSS. Keep Global Ministries and the people of Egypt in your prayers this month as they do God's work on our behalf!



GLOBAL MINISTRIES MISSIONARY ELENA HUEGEL TO SPEAK AT CUCC ON FEBRUARY 22

Elena Huegel is “our” missionary in Mexico. She is a mission co-worker at the Instituto de Estudios e Investigación Intercultural, A.C. (IESII), as the coordinator for *Retoños en las ruinas: esperanza en el trauma* (Roots in the Ruins: Hope in Trauma) in Chiapas, Mexico. Highlights of her ministry in Chiapas include learning from the wisdom of the Mayan and the Mexican cultures and traditions and bringing together the people and threads of the *Retoños en las ruinas* program to create an intricate tapestry of personal and community stories and experiences around diverse themes including trauma healing, resilience development, nourishing of dignity, grief process accompaniment, and exploring different paths for justice.

Originally from Houston, Texas, she is a graduate of Houston Baptist University and Eastern Mennonite University. She began working with Global Ministries as a Global Mission Intern from 1996 – 1999. She also served as the project director, international education coordinator and chaplain at Shalom Center in Chile. The author of several publications, she received the first place literature prize in the 2018 Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding Alumni Storytelling Contest for a piece entitled: “Acompañamiento: The Privilege of Walking Alongside.” She is a member of Iglesia Cristiana del Buen Pastor, Chiapas, Mexico and Iglesia Cristiana Ebenezer, Los Fresnos, Texas. She enjoys outdoor activities, painting, journaling and crafting.



Elena is the person with whom we coordinate most closely in Chiapas, as we participate in our Mission Immersion Experiences. She is our host and translator, educating and empowering us as we build relationship with Chiapas. She has hosted delegations from CUCC twice in the past few years, welcoming 13 CUCC members with open hands and an open heart. She also helped coordinate Pastor Rick's sabbatical in 2022, and the wedding of Keith and Deborah Birkes in 2023!

Elena is currently touring the US and will be with us the week of February 16-22. She will be at Fastnacht and Ash Wednesday services, and will lead worship at CUCC on Sunday, February 22. She will also be hosting an educational forum during the 9:00am Sunday School hour on February 22 in the Fellowship Hall. If you would like to arrange a personal visit that week, let Pastor Rick know. She has a lot of availability that week!

We are also negotiating dates for a Mission Immersion Experience to Chiapas in October, 2026. More information will be forthcoming when we have those dates firmed up. If you are at all interested in participating in this experience, talk to Pastor Rick!

On the Church Calendar in February

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
01 9:00 a.m. - Faith Education 10:00 a.m. - Fellowship 10:30 a.m. - Worship 12:00 p.m. - Inclusion & Affirmation Ministry Team	02 4:30 p.m. - LODO Math & Science Night 7:00 p.m. - Scouting America	03 10:00 a.m. - Quilters	04 6:00 p.m. - Chapel Ringers 7:00 p.m. - Celebration Singers	05 6:30 p.m. - Troop 4475 Meeting	06 Troop 4475 Campout	07 Troop 4475 Campout
08 7:30 a.m. - Men's Fellowship 9:00 a.m. - Faith Education 10:00 a.m. - Fellowship 10:30 a.m. - Worship 12:00 p.m. - Team Earth Lunch & Learn	09 7:00 p.m. - Scouting America	10 10:00 a.m. - Quilters 6:00 p.m. - Columbia Girl Scout Service Unit 6:30 p.m. - Troop 708 Meeting	11 6:00 p.m. - Prayer Shawl 6:00 p.m. - Chapel Ringers 7:00 p.m. - Celebration Singers 7:15 p.m. - Confirmation Class	12 9:30 a.m. - Women's Fellowship 5:30 p.m. - Finance & Stewardship Ministry Team	13 LODO OFF	14
15 9:00 a.m. - Faith Education 10:00 a.m. - Fellowship 10:30 a.m. - Worship	16 - PRESIDENT'S DAY OFFICE CLOSED 4:30 p.m. - Loaves & Fishes 6:30 p.m. - Music & Worship Ministry 7:00 p.m. - Scouting America	17 - FASTNACHT 10:00 a.m. - Quilters 10:00 a.m. - Staff Meeting 1:00 p.m. - Pause to Color 5:00 p.m. - Fastnacht	18 - ASH WEDNESDAY 7:00 a.m. - Good Dads @ AHL 6:00 p.m. - Chapel Ringers 7:00 p.m. - Ash Wednesday Worship Service	19 6:30 p.m. - Council Meeting	20	21
22 9:00 a.m. - Faith Education and forum with Elena Huegel 10:00 a.m. - Fellowship 10:30 a.m. - Worship	23 7:00 p.m. - Scouting America	24 10:00 a.m. - Quilters 10:00 a.m. - Staff Meeting 5:30 p.m. - Food Bank	25 6:00 p.m. - Chapel Ringers 7:00 p.m. - Celebration Singers 7:15 p.m. - Confirmation Class	26	27	28 7:00 a.m. - Habitat for Humanity Pancake Breakfast

The Communicator

Columbia United Church of Christ
An Open and Affirming Congregation ONA #1575

3201 I-70 Dr. NW
Columbia, MO 65202-3296
573-445-7931



ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

The Communicator is a publication of Columbia United Church of Christ. The stated purpose is to communicate with the congregation and our friends concerning the organizations and events of the church. It is published once each month. The deadline for articles is the 20th of each month.



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Interested in Church Membership?

If you are interested in joining,
please contact **Rev. Rick Oberle**.
rick@columbiaucc.com

**Become
Part of
Our
Church
Family**

LODO PLAYGROUND RESPECT

Please help us keep our playground safe for all children by following these guidelines:

- ♦ The CUCC playground is designed for, and should be used by, **only children ages 8 and younger**.
- ♦ Adult supervision is required while children are on the playground.
- ♦ Mulch must stay on the ground. When children dig up mulch it creates holes that are tripping hazards. Children should only dig in the sandbox.
- ♦ Sand should stay in the sandbox. Please do not allow sand to be carried and dumped in the playhouse or on play structures.
- ♦ Use playground equipment in the manner it is intended.

Columbia United Church of Christ Open and Affirming/Inclusion Covenant

Columbia United Church of Christ celebrates God's boundless and unconditional love by intentionally welcoming and affirming all God's children.

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey;

No matter where you are on your faith journey;

No matter your sexual orientation, gender expression or identity;

No matter your race, culture, ethnicity, nationality or politics;

No matter your age, ability, health, relationship status or family structure;

No matter your social, economic, educational, legal or life circumstances;

You are welcome here!