

The Communicator

October 2026

From the Pastor's Keyboard . . .

“Homecoming”

The world was very different in 1911. At that point in history, there had not yet been any “World Wars.” The United States was entering its adulthood as a country, after the adolescent growing pangs of revolution and Civil War. Education was becoming more mainstream, with middle class attendance increasing in institutions of higher learning. Racial disparity issues were beginning to be addressed, and the establishment of Historic Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) led to an elevation of living standards for all US citizens.

It was in this environment that Mizzou football coach and athletic director Chester Brewer came up with the idea of a “homecoming.” Prior to 1911, the annual Missouri-Kansas game had been held in Kansas City, at a public arena. This annual event drew thousands of Mizzou alumni to Kansas City, which was a great financial boon to the town, and to both teams. But in 1911, the Missouri Valley Intercollegiate Athletic Association decreed that all Conference games must be played on college campuses. Brewer (and, no doubt, his superiors) were concerned that alumni would not journey to Columbia and the financial revenue would be lost. To that end, Brewer issued a call for all alumni to a “homecoming” event, coinciding with the annual football game. He made the weekend of the game a destination event, and encouraged all alumni, no matter how scattered they had become, to “come home” for the weekend. The response was great. Over 9000 alumni returned for that weekend-long homecoming event, and it became an annual tradition at Mizzou. The idea of “homecoming” spread to other colleges and high schools and now, homecoming is an integral part of most academic circles.

I do acknowledge that there are some who dispute the idea that Mizzou held the “first” homecoming event; but every disputation of Mizzou’s claim has not been proven valid. The NCAA, Trivial Pursuit, and Jeopardy all credit Mizzou with “inventing” homecoming; so, for the purposes of this article, let’s just go with it!

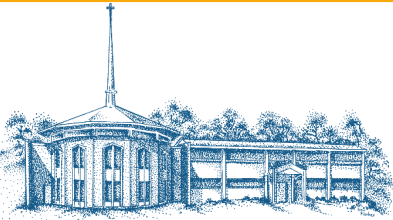
The idea of “homecoming” is central to the stories of our tradition. Some homecomings are stories of repentance, such as Jacob’s homecoming, 20 years after betraying his brother, Issac, or the parable of the Prodigal Father, where the son comes home after years of dissolute living. Other homecoming stories are wrapped in sorrow, such as Naomi returning to her homeland after the deaths of her husband and three sons. Other homecoming stories are stories of great joy, such as the Israelites “coming home” to the Promised land after captivity in Egypt, or the Israelites return after the time of diaspora during the Babylonian Exile. Homecoming can be a challenge, a struggle, a processing of grief, a new beginning, a time of renewal; but reflecting on the stories of our traditions, these homecomings are often joyful.

As we enter the season of homecomings, we see a homecoming of sorts happening in our culture in regard to faith. There is a resurgence happening in the world of faith exploration. Lauren Jackson recently reported in The New York Times (April 5, 2026) that the numbers of folks “leaving church” (a number that has increased steadily every year since 1969) has leveled off, and the number of people claiming “no religious affiliation” had actually dropped. People are searching, she says, for richer, more meaningful lives. Rabbi Sandra Lawson, in that article, says, “there is a hunger, especially in this climate, for spirituality.”

Certainly, there is a difference between “decline leveling off” and “resurgence.” But after 50+ years of decline, leveling off is good news! Let’s take the “win” where we can! Our current culture is seeing the value in faith formation again, and as a loving, progressive, faith community, we are ready to receive them with open arms. In this homecoming season, it is time for a homecoming at CUCC. Every Sunday, we celebrate the Peace of the risen Christ, the Hope for salvation he offers us, and the love that is inherent in Progressive Christianity. Every Sunday, we proclaim a Joy that is not found in some church settings; a Joy that is fired up and inspired by the wisdom of Jesus Christ and the Inclusive power of God’s Holy Spirit, working in our midst. We have a great homecoming buffet here at CUCC; and folks are enjoying our spirit. This is a wonderful time for a faith homecoming; what can you do to share the joy that is CUCC with your family and friends and invite folks to come back to faith?

-Pastor Rick





News & Updates

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

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office@columbiaucc.com

Website:
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NEIGHBORS IN NEED - 10/04

Gifts to Neighbors in Need support the United Church of Christ's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). The other two-thirds of the offering support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, direct service projects, and grants. Neighbors in Need grants are annually awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities.

In 2025 the Neighbors in Need Offering supported 26 grant recipients across the UCC who were engaged in projects of direct service and advocacy. We will receive the offering on October 4. Thank you for your support and generosity!



NOVEMBER BALLOT ISSUES FORUM - 10/18

Several issues will be on the November ballot, and the wording may be confusing at times. Come check out the nonpartisan information provided by the League of Women Voters so you'll be prepared. We'll meet in the Fellowship Hall at 9:00 am. on October 18. Most importantly, make a plan to vote! Early in-person voting at the courthouse begins on October 20, and Election Day is November 3.

CROP WALK SUCCESS

The CROP Walk on Sunday, September 20 was a success! The Columbia CROP Walk had 12 Teams registered and raised a total of \$12,139. Of that amount, \$1,342 was donated online by Columbia UCC members. We still have a check for \$2,300 to write out to them as well. That brings our total contribution to \$3,642!!!

We had 11 preregistered walkers on our team and 5 additional walkers registered the day of, bringing us to 16 total walkers this year. Next year we can have even more!

Thank you to everyone who brought in canned goods, donated financially, and came out to the walk. It's because of you that people around the world and here locally will have food for another day.

Moderator's Moment

Each fall, the Council proposes a budget for the next year and brings it to you, the congregation, to review and approve. Last year we trimmed some items from the budget to bring spending in line with giving. Church clean-up days, careful use of resources, and continued giving put us on budget so far this year. We will need to see strong giving over the last quarter to end the year on budget. Adding solar, repairing the roof, replacing the last several heating and air conditioning units, and resurfacing the floor downstairs have been highlights of maintaining our building. Throughout this year, our congregation continued to support groups and services that provide essential services. Our Treasurer, Aimee Andersen, put together the budget with about a 5% increase over last year. The increase takes into account higher prices for things we use and raises for our dedicated staff and Pastor Rick. If you have questions about the budget, you may reach out to Aimee Andersen and Sue Ann Schaffer.

I often say in my articles that I am appreciative of each of you and the many ways you strengthen our church family. I appreciate everything you do in Christ's name to make Columbia United Church of Christ a place of Christ's love. The budget allows our church to support many groups that provide essential services to our community. I am reminded of the hymn "The Servant Song", which reminds us that we are helping others on our journey in this world. There will also be times when we need the help of Christ through others.

*Brother, sister let me serve you.
Let me be as Christ to you.
Pray that I might have the grace
To let you be my servant, too.*

*We are pilgrims on a journey.
We are brothers on the road.
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.*

*I will hold the Christ-light for you
In the night time of your fear.
I will hold my hand out to you;
Speak the peace you long to hear.*

*I will weep when you are weeping.
When you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey through.*

*When we sing to God in heaven,
We shall find such harmony
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.*

*Brother, sister let me serve you.
Let me be as Christ to you.
Pray that I might have the grace
To let you be my servant, too.*

Grace and Peace,
Jerry Kiesling,
Council Moderator



COLUMBIA UCC CHURCH COUNCIL

Moderator:	Jerry Kiesling	Finance & Stewardship:	Sue Ann Schaefer
Vice Moderator:	Corinne Remeika	Inclusion & Affirmation:	Ashley Ramirez
Secretary:	Tricia Soncasie	Little One's Day Out:	Darla Privitt
Treasurer:	Aimee Andersen	Membership & Care:	Judi Privitt
Recording Treasurer:	Christine Staelens	Nurture & Education:	Jessica Lucas
Building & Grounds:	Allen Posz	Outreach & Advocacy:	Mahree Skala
Fellowship & Hospitality:	Mary Lorber-Solt	Worship & Music:	Kitty Rogers
Pastor:	Rev. Rick Oberle		

October Sunday Volunteer Schedule

Date	Greeter	Ushers	Worship Leader	Tech Booth
10/04	Jolene Kirchhoff	Dorothy Williams Yvonne Williams	Judi Privitt	Brent Marcks Ted Dachroeden
10/11		Llona Weiss Pat Forward	Mahree Skala	Carissa Graves John Graves
10/18	Mary Lorber	Christine Staelens Fred Malicoat	Confirmants	Josh Muench Lorry Dreier
10/25	Carol Duermeyer	Mark Ducan Jane Duncan	Ashley Ramirez	Doug Privitt

October Birthdays

Laura Lentz - 10/01	Stephanie Lee - 10/03	Eric Dreier - 10/04
Gina Pierson - 10/05	Hugo Wilmsmeyer - 10/05	Wesley Wells - 10/6
Dean Barry - 10/11	Jane Duncan - 10/13	Cassandra Schmittel - 10/13
Christopher Tennill - 10/13	Dominick Lee - 10/14	Alicia Wilson - 10/15
Charles Marcks - 10/16	Ruth Hotle - 10/18	Norah Schultz - 10/22
Ron Tennill - 10/22	Caleb Muench - 10/25	Dorothy Vetter - 10/25
Carissa Graves - 10/26	Mariann Bullerd - 10/27	Jessica Jenks - 10/28
Hazel Keithahn - 10/28		

Columbia UCC Council Minutes

The Church Council met on August 18, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Present: Jerry Kiesling, Darla Privitt, Corinne Remeika, Mahree Skala, Sue Ann Schaefer, Christine Staelens, Allen Posz, Ashley Ramirez, Judi Privitt, Kitty Rogers, Tricia Soncasie, Pastor Rick Oberle. Judi made a motion to approve the meeting agenda, amended with the addition of the Earth Creation Justice Covenant, second by Christine. Passed unanimously. Mahree made a motion to approve the July Council minutes, amended with the date corrections of Western Association Fall Meeting and Conference Annual Gathering meetings, second by Sue Ann. Passed unanimously. Mahree discussed *Recreating the Church: Leadership for the Postmodern Age*, focusing on how dramatic changes in our culture, organizational obsolescence, and the high pressure of anxiety impact churches today. Aimee will lead our discussion on pages 45-74 at our next meeting.

Unfinished Business:

- ♦ Sunday Volunteer Sign up for September: Church openers will touch base with closers. Judi proposed the possibility of more formalized training for new council members.
- ♦ Sign Lights: Allen will seek bids for a new light on our front sign.
- ♦ Solar Project: we are next on the list; payment has been made.
- ♦ Rally Day, 08/23: Sunday School has special events planned; educators will be blessed during worship; fish will be served at our potluck meal after services.
- ♦ Ministry Teams Fair, 9/13: Recruitment tables with signup sheets will be set up for browsing during fellowship time and each team will speak for three to five minutes during worship.
- ♦ Budget requests due to Aimee by 9/1
- ♦ Western Association Fall Meeting, Springfield, MO on 9/13. We will take the church bus, leaving around 7am and returning by 6pm. Financial assistance is available. Western Association meeting in Springfield September 19
- ♦ The Conference Annual Gathering (CAG) St. Charles, MO 11/6 and 11/7. Registration and hotel due by 10/1. Financial assistance is available. Pastor Rick is on the planning team. The podcasters from Pulpit Fiction will serve as keynote speakers; a silent disco is also in the works. Conference Annual Gathering November 6-7

New Business:

- ♦ Nursery Attendant Job Description adopted unanimously.
- ♦ All-church work day 8/22, 9 a.m. to noon: will focus on window cleaning and caulking, as well as outdoor bed maintenance and bush trimming.
- ♦ Homecoming, 10/4: We would love to have alumni returning to Columbia for Mizzou's homecoming join us in worship that weekend. Please speak with Kitty or Pastor Rick with any ideas or suggestions.
- ♦ Team Earth: The CUCC Creation Justice Covenant was read. Corinne made a motion that we approve the statement and submit it to the congregation for approval, second by Ashley. Passed unanimously. If approved by the congregation, this statement will be included in our application to become a Creation Justice Church.
- ♦ Pastor's Report: Pastor Rick spoke of the opportunities of new beginnings as he enters his tenth year as our minister. With the academic year approaching, he encourages each team leader to plan for the next nine months. Council members ending their terms in May should plan for succession and help their replacement transition into a new role.
- ♦ Financial Report: Sue Ann stated we are \$9,100 under budget currently. She praised teams for cutting budgets last year without compromising mission or day-to-day operations. Window replacement may be our next big project in a few years, with a possible campaign. Ministry Teams Reports are attached.

Pastor Rick closed us in prayer. Ashley made the motion to adjourn, second by Christine. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Tricia Soncasie,
Secretary



Finance & Stewardship Ministry Team

Financial Update

	Actual	Budget	Over/(Under)
August Income	\$28,081.20	\$27,912.47	\$168.73
August Expenses	\$37,792.45	\$28,171.83	\$9,620.62
YTD Income	\$215,236.7	\$228,299.76	(\$13,063.05)
YTD Expenses	\$270,822.80	\$268,652.14	\$2,170.66
Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$55,586.09)	(\$40,352.38)	(\$15,233.71)
August Joyful Giving	\$27,411.20	\$26,972.47	\$438.73
YTD Joyful Giving	\$207,095.75	\$215,779.76	(\$8,684.01)

The Finance & Stewardship team is always seeking to ensure we are offering viable options for congregants giving to the church. Currently, we are reviewing the use of giving envelopes. We know that for some of us the envelopes are a great resource but for others it is an unnecessary expense to the church. We are exploring alternative envelope options to make sure we are getting the best value for the expense and meeting the needs of our congregants.

We are looking for input into this decision. If you have any input about the use of giving envelopes please let me know. Also, if you currently are receiving envelopes and are not interested in receiving them please let Alexandra in the office know so we can get that change made. Email the office at office@columbiaucc.com.

Respectfully Submitted,
Brent Marcks
Finance & Stewardship
Ministry Team Member



Have you remembered Columbia United Church of Christ in your will? What a great way to leave a legacy that keeps on making an impact in the world! If you have any questions about how to do this, contact [Aimee Andersen](#), [Paula Wilson](#), or another member of the CUCC Finance & Stewardship Ministry Team!

Inclusion and Affirmation Ministry Team

Many individuals with physical, emotional and/or cognitive challenges find support and comfort via animal therapy. The United Disabilities Services Foundation recognizes three types of animal therapy:

- ♦ **Assisted Therapy Animals:** Assisted therapy animals typically work with physical or occupational therapists to help people reach specific rehabilitation or movement goals. These objectives may include limb movement, fine motor skills, or other motion-related activities of daily life. Assisted therapy animals usually work in rehabilitation facilities alongside a trained handler.
- ♦ **Facility Therapy Animals:** Facility therapy animals are most frequently found in retirement communities, nursing homes, and hospice facilities. They're trained to keep individuals with mental illnesses, or cognitive decline, from wandering or getting confused.
- ♦ **Therapeutic Visitation Animals:** Therapeutic visitation animals are household pets that owners take to visit rehabilitation facilities, nursing homes, and hospitals. They may also visit schools, workplaces, and other public facilities to reduce anxiety, brighten spirits or provide motivation, among other things.

When my husband, Gary Sieckman, and I married, I had three large dogs and a cat. Gary often said that he would like a small dog. I replied that small dogs were just 'glorified cats' and that we already had a cat. This went on for years. Then, a local rescue needed a foster home for a small dog that was in a 'witness protection' situation. We took her in to foster. Gary was over-the-moon with this little blond chihuahua and before I knew it, she was ours. Within three years we would adopt two more small dogs and, yes, I became a convert.

Fast forward to 2021 when Gary was diagnosed with cognitive decline at the same time that our last little dog died. It was obvious that Gary was in need of another lap dog as part of his happiness therapy. Walter, a nine pound terrier, arrived via a local rescue, and was the perfect match. He was protective of Gary, would walk by his side (at Gary's slow pace), cuddle up next to him, and make him laugh.



Almost any type of animal can provide assistance and/or comfort to folks with disabilities. The most common are: dogs, cats, horses, pigs, rabbits, and guinea pigs. Gary passed in 2023; Walter crossed the rainbow bridge last April. I cherish the memories of them, together, giving each other comfort and joy.

"Animals teach us to love without words and heal without conditions" -Portage Family Healing



Respectfully Submitted,
Alisa Lau Sieckman
Inclusion and Affirmation Team

LODO Ministry Team

October is always a fun month at LODO!

This month, we'll have some special visitors as we celebrate Fire Safety Week and Community Helper Week. We'll be welcoming a fire truck, an ambulance, and the State Highway Patrol to visit with our students! We'll also close out the month with one of our favorite events: Pumpkin Fun Day! This special event will be held during the school day on October 23.

Be on the lookout for a volunteer sign-up sheet on the community board outside The Sanctuary. We would love to have our congregation join us! If you're interested in volunteering, please email me at lodo.sara.koenig@gmail.com and let us know a few things you enjoy doing. We'll do our best to find a fun station for you to help lead.

We are currently at 70% enrollment and have already received a wonderful response to our call for volunteers. Thank you so much for supporting LODO and for being such an important part of our family! We are grateful for each of you.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sara Koenig,
LODO Director



LODO's school year is off to a roaring start! Enrollment is higher than it has been in a few years, and everyone seems to be settling into the routine. As of September 14, total enrollment was at 70%, with the infant class completely full. The teachers are enthusiastic about their students, and are looking forward to the year ahead, full of wonderful growth and knowledge!

As I mentioned at our Ministry Teams fair on the 13th, if you are interested in supporting LODO and its ministry, there are opportunities for you to offer your time and talents. Sara could really use some help in the morning on October 23 for their Pumpkin Fun Day. She needs people to run the different activities at each booth (similar to what you would have at VBS) so that the teachers can help with students and parents transitioning to the different activities. The more volunteers, the more activities (and fun!) provided. If you can help, please email Sara and let her know.

If mornings don't work for you, on Thursday, November 19 LODO will have their Thanksgiving feast! Sara needs 2-3 more volunteers to help with cutting the turkey, serving, and washing dishes. This allows LODO staff to enjoy the evening with their parents and get to know the families better. The more "the village" is able to communicate and work together, the stronger that village will become!

The Scholastic Book Fair will be back again this year just in time for Christmas. From December 7-18, books will be available for you to purchase. Sara has requested more book choices for older children and adults this year, so there should be an even better variety! Part of the proceeds from the sale go toward LODO, so be sure to browse the books when they arrive to see if anything strikes your interest! Finally, if you would like to volunteer during the week with the students in the classrooms, please contact Sara to coordinate with her.

One opportunity that I failed to mention at the ministry teams fair is the opportunity to be a baby snuggler! If you love those babies and would like to spend some time snuggling those little ones, please contact [Sara](#)!

Respectfully Submitted,
Darla Privitt
LODO Ministry Chair



Membership & Care Ministry Team

WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS TO COLUMBIA UCC:

Mary Ruth Motsinger (she/her) grew up at Lake of the Ozarks, and prior to her injury, she was a caregiver, house cleaner, and animal rescuer. She is the mother of four grown children and three grandchildren. She loves spending time with friends, family, and pets (she has five animals of her own). She is a thriver with a spinal cord injury and a complete C4 Incomplete tetraplegic. Mary has a heart for elderly and disabled individuals. [pictured right]



Jared Hortsmann (he/him) is married to Kate and the proud father of Hugo. Jared grew up in New Haven, MO, and works at Hubbell in Centralia, MO. Jared and Kate love hosting dinners with friends and attending Mizzou games when they can. They also enjoy traveling to Mark Twain Lake and the Missouri River to boat with the family. [pictured left]

Kate Hortsmann (nee Weiser) (she/her) is married to Jared and a proud mother of Hugo. Kate was formerly a member of St. Peters UCC in New Haven, MO. Kate is an educational technology trainer at Mizzou. They enjoy traveling to Mark Twain Lake and the Missouri River to boat with family. Hugo (3 years old) currently attends LODO. [pictured left]

Fellowship & Hospitality Ministry Team

Come one come all to the Halloween Party for all! On October 25, after worship service, we will have a Halloween Party in Fellowship Hall. This is a potluck party so bring your spookiest and tastiest foods to share. We will have festive games to play and a few rounds of BINGO as well. Of course, we will host a costume contest! Wear your favorite costume and enter for a chance to win some special prizes. If you have any questions, contact [Mary Lorber](#).



As always, be blessed, be thankful, be healthy, and always, be yourself!

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Lorber-Solt
Fellowship and Hospitality
Ministry Team Chair



Nurture & Education Ministry Team

JOIN US

SUNDAY

- **Sunday School**– 9:00–10:00 a.m., ages 3–12th grade. Meets weekly upstairs. WE'LL TAKE CARE OF BREAKFAST! So much fun planned for our kiddos and youth!
- **Adult Bible Study**– 9:00–10:00 a.m. (upstairs in Education Wing, last room on the left). Meets weekly.
- **Fellowship Time** from 10:00–10:30 weekly with coffee, snacks, & beverages.
- **Nursery** for kiddos ages Kindergarten and younger during 10:30 Worship.



One of the requirements for working with CUCC children & youth is to participate in **Healthy Relationships Training**. Linda Neale will be leading the next session at 9:00 a.m. on 10/4 in the Fellowship Hall.

Rainbow Bells will be playing during worship on 10/18 and 11/15. The more the merrier!



"Spooky Sunday" 10/25
Special activities in Sunday School, along with all-church fun later courtesy of the Fellowship/Hospitality Crew!

CHECK THIS OUT

Our new **CUCC Young Adult/College Ministry** faith formation program is in full motion! Our next gathering is 10/18 from 5–8 at the Lippencotts' house. All young adults/college students are welcome! For more information, talk to Ashley or Kasper Ramirez, Rev. Lauren or Jesse Lippincott, or Rev. Mike or Lilly Santoro-Williams!



Our 6th–12th Grade **Youth Group** has been busy playing Bingo at the Bluffs, Walking in the CROP Walk, and enjoying lots of other fun and fellowship! Next up–Festival of Sharing Sharefest on 10/17. We will be working on various mission kits to be distributed across the state and then helping with distribution.

Outreach & Advocacy Ministry Team



CUCC, you are such loving and supportive members! Thank you for your donations of extra snacks to help the AHL students through the day, along with the plastic bags to use for packing Buddy Packs. Thank you to Jolene and Barry Kirchhoff, Pastor Rick, and Llona for assisting with Good Dads-Strong Schools on September 16 where we had around 88 attendees! Thanks to Jolene K. for often bringing containers of homemade cookies for the Teachers Lounge to help them get through the day! Ted and Mona Dachroeden, Sharon and Mike Rapp, Audrey Lasley, Tricia Soncasie and Llona have been there on Thursdays to pack

Buddy Packs so our students have food assistance on the weekends, with the latest count at 80 bags. Melba Shaffer and Mahree Skala are volunteering in the school library again this year. Pastor Rick and Llona met with Principal Minear on September 9 to discuss our Partnership work for the school year.

Upcoming AHL events where CUCC members are invited to participate by being supportive or help supervising can be found on our [church calendar](#).

CUCC members can also support Read Across America Week in 2027 by signing up to read to students. If you have questions, want to know more, just talk with Llona or Pastor Rick. If you plan to help with Buddy Packs or Good Dads, let Llona know so we are sure we have the CUCC support needed. Thank you for ALL you do! We also may be receiving some art work for display from AHL in the future.



It's a great feeling to know you've helped someone get enough to eat. CUCC volunteers are working regularly at both the Food Bank and the Food Bank Market. Sometimes we get to see it go full circle- in August we packaged frozen corn at the Bank, then saw patrons of the Market taking it home in September. There have been steep federal cuts in the SNAP (food stamp) program and in aid to food banks, which leaves more and more people hungry. Please come join us on October 27, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Food Bank on Vandiver. To sign up [CLICK HERE](#). If you'd like to be added to the email reminder group, or have questions,

please contact [Mahree Skala](#).

Many thanks to those who packaged over 2,000 pounds of frozen corn on the cob in August: Ted and Mona Dachroeden, Jo Ellen Grace, Jolene Kirchhoff, Audrey Lasley, Connie Loveless, Mahree Skala, and Tricia Soncasie. If you're interested in learning more about volunteering at the Food Bank contact Pastor Rick, Jolene Kirchhoff, or Mahree Skala.



The September 21 meal at Loaves & Fishes consisted of spaghetti (made by Mary Lorber, Judi Privitt and Audrey), applesauce, garlic bread, and brownies. A donation from another group was baked sweet potatoes. The brownies were made by some of our amazing CUCC ladies... Patty Beeson, Lena Muench, Christine Staelens, Jo Ellen Grace, Tricia Soncasie, Llona Weiss, Jane Duncan, Carolyn Malicoat, Brenda Muench, and Kim Oberle. The peanut butter and jellies were made and provided by Mahree Skala and Jessica Jenks. Servers/

dishwashers for the evening were Lena & Landon Muench, Tom & Mary Lorber-Solt, Debby (Mary's sister), Doug Privitt, Patty Beeson, and Tim & Tricia Soncasie. We served approximately 188 servings with 160 of those being firsts. Thank you to everyone for making this happen for those less fortunate in our community.



We are on our way to being a [Creation Justice Church](#)! This covenant was vetted and approved by Team Earth as well as the Church Council. A copy of the document is on the next page. This will be brought to vote on October 11 at the Congregational Budget Meeting. Don't forget our field trip to the Wolf Sanctuary in St. Louis on October 10. Contact [Alisa Lau Sieckman](#) or the [Church Office](#) to attend. We will be leaving the church at 8:30 a.m.

In August the CUCC Council unanimously approved the Creation Justice Covenant developed by Team Earth. The congregation will vote on it at the Fall Budget/Visioning Congregational Meeting (date TBA). The full text is below. Many thanks to the Team Earth members who have worked diligently on this, to all who made comments and suggestions, and especially to Mike Williams for his able leadership.

CUCC CREATION JUSTICE COVENANT

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof” (Psalm 24:1)

We, the members of Columbia United Church of Christ, are eternally grateful for the extravagant love we have experienced through God’s bountiful blessing of creation and acknowledge our calling to be faithful stewards of these divine gifts.

As Christ’s disciples, we seek to love our neighbors as ourselves, recognizing that the scriptures teach that all creatures, stars, and planets proclaim the glory of God, and are therefore included in that divine covenant. This concern for all our neighbors also calls us to acknowledge those who are unfairly impacted by environmental injustices.

Living into the joy of being stewards of God’s creation and viewing the scriptures of our tradition through the lenses of compassion and dignity of all creation, we seek the Spirit’s guidance to pursue a life of worship and service that celebrates and supports the divinity of creation and a theology of abundance.

We care for God’s world and our relation to all God’s children, creatures, and other life by being responsible for our impact on nature. We covenant to educate and inspire CUCC ministry teams, church members, families, and friends to adopt environmentally sustainable practices where possible at church, home, and in our personal lives, and to evaluate and update CUCC goals for continued progress.

Columbia UCC covenants to connect to the broader movement of creation justice as an advocate for all, regardless of who they are or where they are on life’s journey- by supporting legislation and public policies that benefit the environment, by building partnerships with environmental justice allies to advocate for initiatives that address local and global threats to our environment.

Guided by this covenant, we desire that a passion for creation justice be manifested in every dimension of our congregation’s life as we seek to take this commitment beyond the walls of this church to make good on our promises to God our Creator, to Jesus the Redeemer of Creation, and to the Holy Spirit the Sustainer of Creation.



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.



Worship & Music Ministry Team

CUCC LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

Advent is quickly approaching- which means it is time to start thinking about Lent?

Yes, it seems a bit early; but Lent begins on February 10 this year (Ash Wednesday) and your Worship & Music Ministry Team is already putting plans in place. One of the ideas that has emerged is to try something new this year- a Lenten Devotional written by CUCC members. Every year, we supply church members with a Lenten Devotional produced by outside publishing companies. But what if this year we published our own?

Wouldn't it be fun to have a devotional written by your friends and family, rather than unknown authors? That is what we are working towards. This will give us a chance to stretch our faith muscles as we produce it, and enhance our faith life as we utilize it. But to make it happen, we need to start working on it now.

We are asking CUCC members and friends to pick a psalm and write a 250–350-word devotional based on that psalm. In an effort to not be too repetitive, we are asking folks to “sign up” for particular psalms, and we will sort them and arrange them as we produce the booklet. There is a sign-up sheet on the table in the rear of the Sanctuary, and a sign-up link will be included in future Friday emails. There is also a sheet detailing the parameters for the devotionals; please pick one up as you begin your reflection. We are asking that all devotionals be turned in by December 31, to give us time to put the devotional together.

This will be an exciting journey of faith formation and reflection as we prepare for and participate in the Lenten season at CUCC. If you have any questions, ask [Pastor Rick](#) or [Kitty Rogers](#).

Worship	08/02	08/09	08/16	08/23	08/30
Attendance	67	42	66	100	69

STEWARDSHIP THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a key part in expanding our church's presence and outreach in the modern era. Even if you rarely use social media, like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. it is important to interact with social media posts made by Columbia UCC. You might be thinking to yourself “social media doesn't do much for me, why is it so important to do this?” It is important because sharing our social media posts means more people get to learn about CUCC and will be more inclined to join!

So, how does it work? Social media uses algorithms to determine what to show you. You often see things from groups, pages, or people you follow. This is direct content. When you like, comment, save, or share a post, this creates “engagement” and can make the post pop up on other peoples feeds.

When you “like” a post it has a small chance of popping up on a friends feed. “Liking” is a good start, but does very little for the algorithm. Commenting on a post is even better. Commenting on our posts will help boost our post to other people. These can be as simple as “wonderful service today” or “beautiful photo” or you can even put your favorite emojis! This tells the algorithm “this is an interesting post and more people would probably want to see it.”

But “sharing” our posts are by far the best thing you can do! “Sharing” a post on your page allows others to directly see our content. People who may not follow our page are then able to see what we have going on without having to go and find our page - you bring it to them! This allows new people to discover who we are and our mission to spread the Good News. They might even end up coming to church the more they see our wonderful congregation and ministry teams at work.

Scouting America

Troop 4475-

Troop 4475 has begun activities for the new school year with a Back to School BBQ and swearing in our new Scout Leadership at the end of August. We awarded over 100 merit badges and 6 rank advancements at our Court of Honor on Sept. 21st. The Troop is preparing for our first campout with more to share next month! If you are a female in fifth grade or above (ages 11 through 17) and interested in joining our Troop come check us out at CUCC in The Sanctuary on September 14 or October 5 at 7 p.m.

Additionally, we'll have a Recruitment Campout on Oct. 10, email Scoutmaster Rachel Redburn at 4475Scoutmaster@gmail.com for more details!



Troop 4475

Females age 11-17 interested in Scouting

Location: CUCC Sanctuary

Date: Sept. 14 or Oct. 5

Time: 7pm

Scouting America
Great Rivers Council

THANK YOU!

As we move into another fall blanket season, I want to thank you for being part of CWS Blankets. A blanket may seem simple, but during a difficult moment, it can offer warmth, comfort and a reminder that someone cares. Through CWS Blankets, congregations like yours put faith into action by caring for neighbors facing difficult times. Jesus said, "I was in need, and you cared for me." — Matthew 25:40

Whether your congregation has already chosen a Blanket Sunday or is still making plans, thank you for being part of this ministry of care. Every Blanket offering is an opportunity to come together, share God's love and remind our neighbors that they are not alone. Together, we can Blanket the World in Love.



With gratitude,
David Costellow
CWS Blankets

Thank you for putting hope into action with your generous donation of \$150.00 on August 31, 2026 to the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ. You are invaluable to the Coalition and to our work.

It's because of your faithful giving that we are able to continue advocating and teaching throughout the entire United Church of Christ. We have certified more than 1,900 churches and that number continues to grow. Every month, new congregations join our movement. Our ambitious program of webinars, workshops, and coaching is bringing churches together and opening up new possibilities for ministry with and for our LGBTQ+ neighbors. The results: an unprecedented growth in the number of Open and Affirming congregations in the United Church of Christ, and a revival of existing Open and Affirming churches who through the Coalition's ministry are discovering radical and effective ways to work in their communities for justice, freedom, and dignity.



By giving to the Coalition, and by taking action in your church and community, you are growing our movement in numbers and spirit. The Staff and Leadership Team of the Open and Affirming Coalition thank you and ask you to hold us in your hearts and in your prayers. The work is sometimes difficult, but knowing we have your support gives us the confidence we need to face the future with hope.

Wishing you every blessing,
ONA Coalition Staff and Leadership Team

Thank you for your generous donation of \$500 to Fun City Youth Academy. On behalf of our students, staff, volunteers, and board of directors, we appreciate your continued support!

Fun City Youth Academy Staff

First and foremost, thank you to your entire congregation for your extremely generous donation to The Food Bank. Thanks to your donation, we can provide over 9,000 meals to our neighbors here in Missouri.

God Bless,
Kelly Scharff, Manager of Community Giving
Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri

Thank you for your continued partnership with Columbia Older Adult Ministry. We recently received your check for \$500, thank you! We continue to see many of your members in the communities we serve. We appreciate the leadership of Pastor Rick on our Board.

Blessings,
Rev. Sally Robinson
Executive Director of Columbia Older Adult Ministry

International Missions

CUCC IS WORKING IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo (CDCC) works across the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to support communities through healthcare, education, and economic empowerment. They operate hospitals, schools, and nutrition centers, while their vocational training programs provide young people with skills in trades like sewing, masonry, and carpentry. CDCC also runs microcredit and women's training initiatives, helping women improve livelihoods and strengthen their communities. Their work reflects a holistic approach, combining practical support with spiritual care to uplift people throughout the DRC.

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



30 YEARS LATER, THE GARDEN STILL BLOOMS

(condensed from www.globalministries.org)

A Palestinian pottery plate dated 1997 still sits among Rev. Dr. Tracy L. Hughes' treasured belongings. Nearby are photographs of smiling schoolchildren, teachers, and a young Global Mission Intern who could not yet know how deeply one year in East Jerusalem would shape her life and ministry. Those keepsakes tell a much larger story.

In 1996, Tracy walked through the metal gates of Rawdat El-Zuhur Elementary School for the first time. Rawdat El-Zuhur means "Garden of Flowers." As a Global Mission Intern, she came to teach Palestinian Christian and Muslim children. She had no idea, she says, how profoundly they would transform her life and call to ministry.

Rawdat El-Zuhur has long created a place where Palestinian Muslim and Christian children learn together in an environment shaped by "cooperation, kindness, compassion, peace, strength of character, and mutual respect." The teachers and students taught her about resilience grounded in faith and helped deepen her understanding of justice and peace. For Tracy, however, some of the most enduring lessons happened outside the classroom.

Every afternoon, she walked toward the Old City with a small group of students who enthusiastically became her Arabic teachers. First, Musa would catch his bus. Mohamed would meet his father. Then Tracy and Amir would continue into the Old City until they reached his father's shop. Along the way, the children pointed to objects and called out their Arabic names so quickly that Tracy finally had to limit them to only a few new words each day.

She also witnessed the difficult realities surrounding the children and their families. Teachers and students had to pass through security checkpoints simply to get to and from school, and there were days when violence made holding school impossible. Yet what remained with Tracy was their determination.

The school also taught Tracy something about honoring differences. Fridays and Sundays were days away from school so children and teachers could observe their respective religious traditions. She appreciated the intentional care given to each person's religious identity while focusing on equipping the children to build a better future. Tracy still keeps photographs of her students. She still has the beautiful Palestinian pottery plate presented to her when she completed the academic year in 1997. Years later, Tracy was able to reconnect with friends from Rawdat. She and Rana shared tea with Amir one time while he was home from medical school. Then, in 2026, another remarkable connection arrived. Salwa Zananiri sent Tracy a photograph of Amir and Hasim- two of the fifth graders Tracy had known. Both had become doctors with families of their own.

For Tracy, her year at Rawdat El-Zuhur profoundly altered the trajectory of her ministry. Over 28 years of ordained ministry, she has served local United Church of Christ congregations and worked internationally through Community Peacemaker Teams, with ministry experiences in Palestine, Chiapas, Mexico, Colombia, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Tracy dreams of returning to the Garden of Flowers to reconnect with a community that helped shape who she became. Thirty years after that first walk through the school gates, the photographs remain. The pottery remains. The friendships remain. The calling remains. And the Garden of Flowers is still blooming.

On the Church Calendar in October

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				01 6:30 p.m. - Troop 4475	02	03 11:00 a.m.- Hispanic Heritage Festival
04 9:00 a.m. - Healthy Relationships Training 9:00 a.m. - Bible Study & Sunday School 10:00 a.m. - Fellowship 10:30 a.m. - Worship	05 6:30 p.m. - Nurture & Education Ministry Team Meeting 7:00 p.m. - Scouting America	06 10:00 a.m. - Quilters	07 6:00 p.m. - Chapel Ringers 7:00 p.m. - Celebration Singers 7:15 p.m. - Confirmation Class	08 9:30 a.m. - Women's Fellowship 5:30 p.m. - Worship & Music Ministry Team Meeting	09	10 8:30 a.m. - Team Earth Field Trip to Wolf Sanctuary
11 7:30 a.m. - Men's Fellowship 9:00 a.m. - Bible Study & Sunday School 10:00 a.m. - Fellowship 10:30 a.m. - Worship 11:30 a.m. - Cong. Budget Meeting	12 7:00 p.m. - Scouting America	13 10:00 a.m. - Quilters 10:00 a.m. - Staff Meeting 10:30 a.m. - Prayer Shawl Group	14 6:00 p.m. - Chapel Ringers 7:00 p.m. - Celebration Singers 7:15 p.m. - Confirmation Class	15	16 6:30 p.m. - Inclusion Movie Night	17 7:00 a.m.- Youth trip to Festival of Sharing 10:00 a.m. - Walk to End Alzheimer's @ Stephens Lake Park
18 9:00 a.m. - Ballot Initiatives Forum 9:00 a.m. - Bible Study & Sunday School 10:00 a.m. - Fellowship 10:30 a.m. - Worship 5:00 p.m. - Young Adults Group	19 4:30 p.m. - Loaves & Fishes 7:00 p.m. - Scouting America	20 10:00 a.m. - Quilters 10:00 a.m. - Staff Meeting 1:00 p.m. - Pause to Color 6:30 p.m. - Council Meeting	21 6:00 p.m. - Chapel Ringers 7:00 p.m. - Celebration Singers 7:15 p.m. - Confirmation Class	22	23 9:15 a.m. - LODO Pumpkin Fun Day 5:00 p.m. - AHL Trunk or Treat	24 11:30 a.m. - Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk @ Stankowski Field
25 9:00 a.m. - Bible Study & Sunday School 10:00 a.m. - Fellowship 10:30 a.m. - Worship 12:00 p.m. - Halloween Party	26 7:00 p.m. - Scouting America	27 10:00 a.m. - Quilters 10:00 a.m. - Staff Meeting 5:30 p.m. - Food Bank	28 6:00 p.m. - Chapel Ringers 7:00 p.m. - Celebration Singers	29	30	31 - HALLOWEEN

The Communicator

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

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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!