

UNION CHURCH OF HINSDALE

137 S. Garfield Avenue, Hinsdale, IL 60521 • UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Cookies of Joy

First Sunday after Christmas Day
10:00 A.M. Worship Service
December 28, 2025

Our Welcoming Statement, adopted January 28, 2024:

We are all called by God as disciples of Christ. We affirm & welcome all persons as precious to God, just as they are. As a community of faith, in the service of God, we are enriched by our differences including diversity of gender identity & expression, age, marital & economic status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, race, and physical & mental abilities and qualities. We affirm that the Holy Spirit gathers us as a congregation in which all persons are invited to participate equally in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, concerns, & joys of our community of faith. We pledge to love, encourage, & support one another as the Body of Christ.

As Union Church, one of our core commitments is:

We strive to live lives of love for God and all people.

You are welcome here!



PRESERVICE MUSIC

WELCOME AND LIFE OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY

Rev. Timothy C. Rhodes

PRELUDE

Worship the King (with O Come, Let Us Adore Him)

arr. Smiley and George

* CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Friends, we gather today, wrapped in compassion and kindness.
All: **We come together, seeking forgiveness and sharing love.**
One: Let us lift our voices with gratitude, letting joy fill our hearts.
All: **May the peace of Christ guide us and stir our spirits.**
One: As we sing our beloved Christmas carols, may they inspire and unite us.
All: **Together, we celebrate the season, bound by love and understanding. Let us worship God!**

* HYMNS

Christmas Carol Call Out

The Congregation will be choosing the carols today!

Ollie and Stephen have three hymnals, so if it is not in The New Century Hymnal, we may have it in another one.

* INVOCATION PRAYER

With the birth bells announcing the Prince of Peace and the Author of Joy, we come to you today seeking your help to sustain our joy. Fill our hearts with songs of praise that we may find our joy in you and your community. Then, abide with us so we may radiate your joy to others. Amen

* RESPONSE # 793

Glory to God in the Highest

Haas

Glory to God in the highest, sing glory to God.

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth.

INTRODUCTION TO PRAYER

PRAYER SONG

Waiting for You

Grundy

We are waiting for you, knowing that you always abide.

*We are waking to your presence, and our hearts are open wide,
open wide, open wide*

PASTORAL PRAYER, ENDING WITH A PRAYER WE LEARNED FROM JESUS

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

ANTHEM

Is He Fair?

Alberta Childs Wright

Stephen C Edwards • Ollie Townsend

OFFERING POEM

The Work of Christmas

Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,

To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart

OFFERING



At this time, also please sign and pass the Attendance Sheets – they help us care for members & welcome visitors.

For e-giving, use the QR code on the right for Zelle (no transaction fees), the QR code on the left to give through Realm, or text "GIVEUCH" to 73256.

Thank you for contributing to the life & work of Union Church!



* HYMNS

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 126

Zelle (preferred)

Please memo designated fund/special offering

HOMILY

Cookies of Joy

Janet Birchenough-Koehn

MOMENT OF REFLECTION

Rev. Timothy C. Rhodes

* HYMNS

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Angels We Have Heard on High

arr. Bish

FLOWERS - Today's flowers are given in memory of loved ones by Jane Foster and Family.

STAFF AND WORSHIP LEADERS

(h = he/him/his, s = she/her/hers, t = they/them/theirs)*

Bridge Pastor – Timothy C. Rhodes (h)

Dir. of Audio & Visual Media – Adam Nakutis (h)

Section Leaders

Associate Pastor – Grant Glowiac (h/t)

Dir. of Handbells – Elizabeth Jung (s)

Manda Gervase (s)

Associate Pastor – Robb Knuepfer (h)

9:00 a.m. Worship Leader – Bree Gordon

Tierra Whetstone-Christian (s)

Dir. of Music & Worship – Stephen C Edwards (h/t)

Organist – Oliver Townsend (h)

Adam Fane (h)

Dir. of Christian Education – Penny Johnson (s)

Jess Koehn (h)

Ushers – Barb Herber, Diane Kurtz, and Sharon Bodziak

Trap Set – Kalyan Pathak (h)

* Go to <https://tinyurl.com/ymabnh5t> for a guide to gender identity terms

Guitar – Andrew Sudhibhasilp (h)

Bass – Ben Dillinger(h)

RESTROOMS

To find the gender-neutral restroom, exit through the main doors of the *Sanctuary* into *The Gathering Place*.

Follow the glass doors on your left until a hallway opens on your left. It is a few steps down that hallway on your right.

Gendered restrooms are located just off *The Gathering Place* – complete with changing tables on the lower and main levels.

FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

We welcome children and their energy in all aspects of worship! We're glad you're here!

Is it helpful for your child to move around? Consider sitting near the *Narthex* (under the balcony) and using that space. Also, help yourself to the red activity bags hanging in the *Narthex* designed to educate and engage the youngest amongst us.

We won't have Sunday school today for elementary school children, since it's winter break.

There is always Sunday School & nursery care for younger children (under 5) in classroom 129 on the lower level during the 10am service. You may drop off children before the service. Don't hesitate to ask an usher for help!

DON'T MISS A THING!

Keep up with all our upcoming events by following us on Facebook & Instagram and subscribing to our weekly newsletter. Head over to www.hinsdale.church, and click on the 'Connect' button for more info!



JANUARY + FEBRUARY 2026

THE UNION CHURCH OF HINSDALE

The Power of Voice

EPIPHANY

SUNDAYS @ 9 & 10AM



Listening Other Voices

Join us
during
Epiphany as
we gather to
listen to
speakers
that
represent
other voices.

JAN
4

Rabbi Jessica Wainer was ordained by the Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in 2016 and previously served as the associate rabbi and director of congregational learning for Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation in Reston, VA. She loves to develop creative worship experiences, walk with families through their times of sorrow and joy, and bring Torah to life for people of all ages. In addition to her ordination, Rabbi Wainer earned a Master's degree in Hebrew Letters in 2015 from Hebrew Union College, as well as a Master's in Education Administration from Xavier University in 2015. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Jewish Studies, with honors, and minored in Hebrew and Psychology from Indiana University - Bloomington. Rabbi Wainer currently serves as the head of faculty for the Union of Reform Judaism's Six-Points Creative Arts Academy where she is a founding faculty member. She also previously served on the Central Conference of American Rabbi Taskforce on Women's Experience in the Rabbinate.

JAN
11

Imam Tariq El-Amin has served as the Resident Imam & Chairman of the Board of Masjid Al-Taqwa since 2013. Servant, and Participatory, leadership ground his leadership and community building philosophy. He is an active part of local, national, and international Inter & Intrafaith Community efforts. Imam El-Amin's convictions have led him to serve as a board member of The Abolition Institute (an international anti-slavery nonprofit), supporting their work here and abroad. In the past, Imam Tariq has served as the nightly host/producer of Radio Islam, a live talk program where he conversed with politicians, artists, activists, etc, and also gave social commentary on the issues of the day. He is the former Director of Civic Engagement & Interfaith Services at the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago and a past appointee to the Illinois Muslim Advisory Council, established by former Governor Pat Quinn. Imam Tariq is completing a Masters Of Divinity, with a focus on Islamic Chaplaincy from Bayan Islamic Graduate School/Chicago Theological Seminary.

JAN
18

Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder is a Bible in/and pop culture educator. Her focus on New Testament literature provides the lens for traversing the re-contextualization of such texts in present media. While engaging what she terms "womanist maternal thought," she explores ways in which the Bible speaks to current-day motherhood through an African American lens. As a dually-aligned National Baptist and Disciples of Christ minister, Professor Crowder employs creative code-switching means to communicate in both the church and the academy. From 2018-2023 she was the first African American and first woman to serve as Vice President of Academic Affairs/Academic Dean at Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS). In 2021 she became the first African American woman to become Full Professor at CTS..



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JANUARY + FEBRUARY 2026

EPIPHANY



The Power of Voice

SUNDAYS @ 9 & 10AM

Join us during Epiphany as we gather to listen to speakers that represent other voices.

Listening Other Voices

JAN
25

Dr. Ken Stone, *God and Animals* | Professor Stone, a Lambda Literary Award winner, focuses his research on the relationship between critical theory and biblical interpretation and matters of gender, sexuality, animals, and ecology. "I always encourage students to question their own assumptions about the content and interpretation of the Bible. Such a process of questioning need not be destructive, but rather creates opportunities for pursuing a two-fold goal. On the one hand, we must obtain a thorough knowledge of both the surprising diversity of the biblical writings and their historical and socio-cultural contexts. On the other hand, we must reflect critically on the difficult process of interpreting and teaching those writings in a manner that will help us transform our own world toward greater justice and mercy."

FEB
1

Andrew Johnson, *Native Spirituality* | Andy Johnson is the executive director of the Native American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois and a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. He lobbies for legislation as part of the Chicago American Indian Community Collaborative.

FEB
8

Antoinette Daniels, *Differently Abled and Faith Communities* | Rev. Daniels is a healthcare Chaplain (BCCI – ACC) at the Shirley Ryan Abilitylab in Chicago. A native of Meridian, MS, she grew up in Los Angeles and has traveled the world while working for the Episcopal Church in various capacities. She has earned a B.A. in Psychobiology (UCLA), an MBA (Baruch College, NYC), and an M.Div. (Loyola University, Chicago). She is a member of St. Paul and the Redeemer Episcopal Church in Hyde Park, where she met the Rev. Tim Murray, an Episcopal Deacon, in the parking lot, and they subsequently married in 2021.

FEB
15

Where Faith Meets AI

AI provides this biography of Artificial Intelligence: AI traces its evolution from ancient myths (Talos, Golems) and early mechanical concepts (Pascal's calculator, Da Vinci's knight) through foundational theories (Turing Test in 1950), the coining of the term "Artificial Intelligence" at Dartmouth in 1956, the first expert systems (DENDRAL, SAINT), and key milestones like Deep Blue (1997) and AlphaGo (2016). The modern era is defined by deep learning, GPUs, Large Language Models (LLMs like GPT-3/4), and generative AI, transforming it from a niche research field into ubiquitous technology impacting daily life through virtual assistants, search, and creative tools.



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE "HANG IN THERE" CURRENT EVENTS GROUP

Sunday, January 4, 11:15 a.m., in the Kitchen Classroom

Feeling the need to connect with others as we all navigate our way through what can be disorienting current events? This group began coming together in February to do just that. We meet monthly on the first Sunday. Feel free to join us anytime!

SENIOR MINISTER SEARCH COMMITTEE

On December 2, the Senior Minister Search Committee had our first Search and Call meeting with Rev. Shernell Edney Stilley and Rev. Dr. JJ Flag of the Illinois Conference United Church of Christ. It was a great first session with them and we are now embarking on the 'meat' of the search process as we put together our search profile, and they guide us on the most important part of this process - kicking off the search! We will continue to meet with them & learn from their significant depth of experience. As always, please continue to keep the entire committee in your prayers. ~ The Senior Minister Search Committee

CHOATE NAMED UCECP DIRECTOR

After a nationwide search, Union Church of Hinsdale is delighted to welcome Kimberly Choate as Director of UCECP beginning January 1, 2026. "I'm honored to be joining a fantastic preschool that has the teachers at its core & is dedicated to developing young children through play-based academics. We're going to have a bright future at UCECP." said Choate. Search Committee Chair, Nadine Woodle said, "Kimberly's experience & passion for children aligns perfectly with the values of UCECP."

Having served as a Preschool Director for ten years, an Assistant Director for seven years, and a preschool teacher for eleven years, Choate brings an abiding passion for early childhood education to the Director position. Choate has a Master's in Education and a Bachelor of Arts in Human Development from National-Lewis University and serves on the Current Birth to Five, Illinois State Advisory Committee. Choate is the Acting UCECP Director.

Please plan to join Kimberly for a **welcome celebration, Sunday, January 11, 9:15-10:00 a.m. in the Gathering Place.**

FINANCIAL MANAGER'S YEAR END MEMO:

Here are a few reminders for fulfilling your pledge commitments with as little difficulty as possible:

1. If you will be using stock to pay your 2025, 2026 pledge, remember to contact Ann at extension 6654 or email her at agleason@uchinsdale.org when you arrange the gift with your broker. This insures that we know who is making the gift and your desired allocation. In order to allow time for the paperwork required, your broker should be contacted right away, for donations you want recorded in 2025. This is the busiest time of year for stock transfers, and you do not want your gift to be lost in the shuffle!
2. A qualified charitable distribution (QCD) allows individuals who are 70½ years old or older to donate up to \$108,000 total to one or more charities directly from a taxable IRA instead of taking their required minimum distributions. The money is a direct transfer to Union Church of Hinsdale that never passes through the hands of the IRA holder. Instead, the IRA custodian can either send an electronic transfer of funds or a check directly to the charity. Please contact your CPA or financial advisor for additional help.
3. Make all checks payable to Union Church of Hinsdale and note on the memo line of your check what you are paying – for example: 2025 pledge, 2026 pledge, Christmas Offering-The People's Resource Center etc. Any checks with no memo will be presumed as loose offering during Special Offerings, so please make sure to note your checks.
4. Remember that all checks must be postmarked no later than December 31, 2025. All online donations must be made by midnight on December 31, 2025 Central Standard Time. A check deposited in the church offering on Sunday January 4th of 2026 will not be included on your 2025 tax receipt, even if the check is backdated to 2025.
5. Accounting will be here during normal business hours on December 31, until 5:00 p.m., to receive any hand delivered payments. Please plan accordingly!

Have a wonderful holiday season! – Gaby Gleason, Financial Manager





SAVE THE DATE

Trivia Mixer

Union Church Membership



A new tradition

Thursday, Feb 12

Neat Kitchen | Westmont

Cost is \$25 & includes food

Do you see familiar faces in the church pews each week, catch a name on an email or new member bio and think to yourself, "Gee, I'd like to get to know them better..." Well, here's your chance!

Join us for a NEW Union Church tradition and have some fun this winter: a Trivia Mixer!

Look for sign-ups in January, then be placed on a team.

Remember its a mixer – so everyone will be mixed up and not necessarily with people you know well, but working with their teammates to answer trivia questions.

Get ready to share your trivia knowledge and have some fun, while getting to know your fellow (new and old) Union Church members.

Everyone welcome!



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Union Church is a *thinking church*.

Together we ask questions and explore the world beyond ourselves. We aim to grow in kindness and generosity with *all people*.

Join us.



UNDERSTANDING (and maybe even embracing)

AI

SUNDAY | JANUARY 11

11:15 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

IN ROWELL HALL

An Adult Ed discussion to prepare us for a sermon about AI in February as a part of our "Other Voices" Epiphany Series

Join Alice Locatelli as she helps us make sense of change, especially when it comes to new technology.

Alice Locatelli has spent her career translating complicated systems like AI/ChatGPT, blockchain, and crypto into something real people can actually use. She's led teams through major transformations, launched new digital products, and taught everyone from board members to book clubs how to adapt without needing a teenager to translate.

Alice holds degrees from Emory (Computer Science), Stanford (Education), and Chicago Booth (MBA). She's currently an executive at a international professional association, where she oversees technology, customer experience, and innovation. More than titles, she's known for being clear, kind, and fiercely effective.

A local mom, Alice brings a grounded, practical voice to a fast-moving world. She believes learning new tech doesn't have to be intimidating... and that everything goes better with good coffee and a few honest questions.



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