WRESTLING
with the text

FALL 2026

HIT THE BOOKS

Falling in Love with the Bible Again

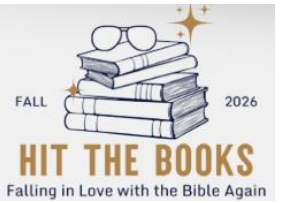
MEDINA UCC CONGREGATIONAL

September 13, 2026

HIT THE BOOKS: Falling in love with the Bible again

The Bible isn't a rulebook to master but a living library that invites us into wonder, wrestling, and transformation. When we release the need for certainty and control, we discover a text that is less about having the right answers and more about learning how to ask better questions, see more deeply, and live more faithfully.

Fall in love again with a book you assume you already know. Like rediscovering an old trail and realizing it was never a straight line to begin with, but a winding path full of switchbacks, shade, and sudden vistas. *August 30th – September 27th*



**Those who are able please stand*

PRELUDE "Here I Am, Lord" – D. Schutte/arr. Jack Schrader Cathy Fafrak, Piano

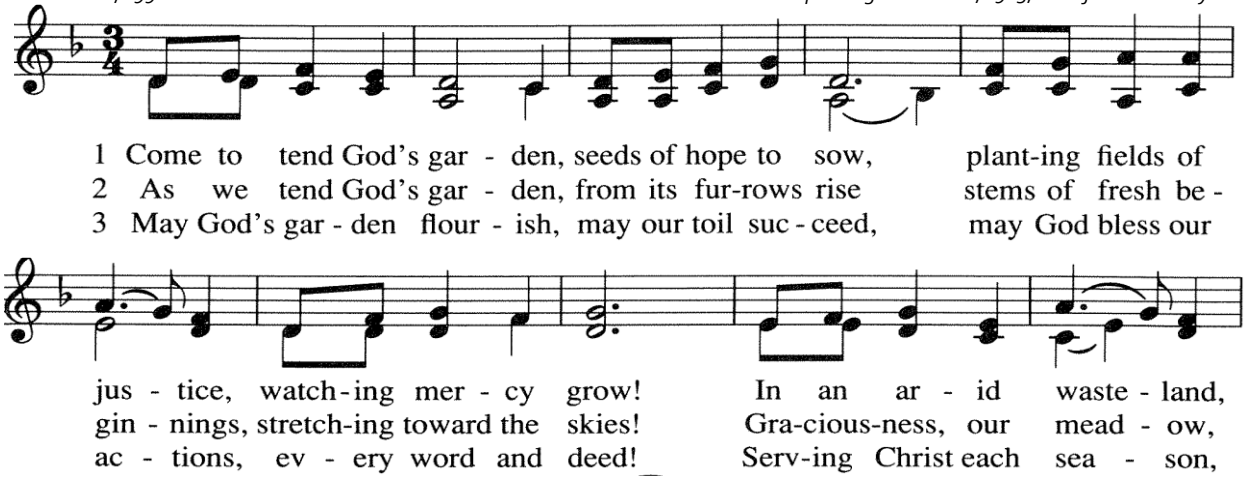
WELCOME

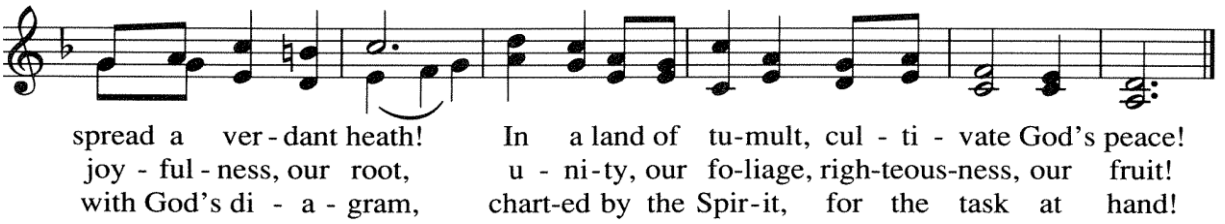
***CALL TO WORSHIP** (NCH #838)

Help us, O God our Savior
Deliver us and forgive us our sins.
Look upon your congregation;
Give your people the blessing of peace.
Declare your glory among the nations;
And your wonders among all peoples.
Let not the oppressed be shamed and turned away;
Never forget the lives of the poor.
Continue your lovingkindness to those who know you;
And your favor to those who are true of heart.
Satisfy us by your lovingkindness in the morning;
So we shall rejoice and be glad all the days of our lives.

***OPENING HYMN** **"Come to Tend God's Garden"** KING'S WESTON 6.5.6.5.D.

John A. Dalles, 1992 *Ralph Vaughn Williams, 1925; © Oxford University Press*





***DAILY PRAYER** (NCH #836 by Ruth Duck)

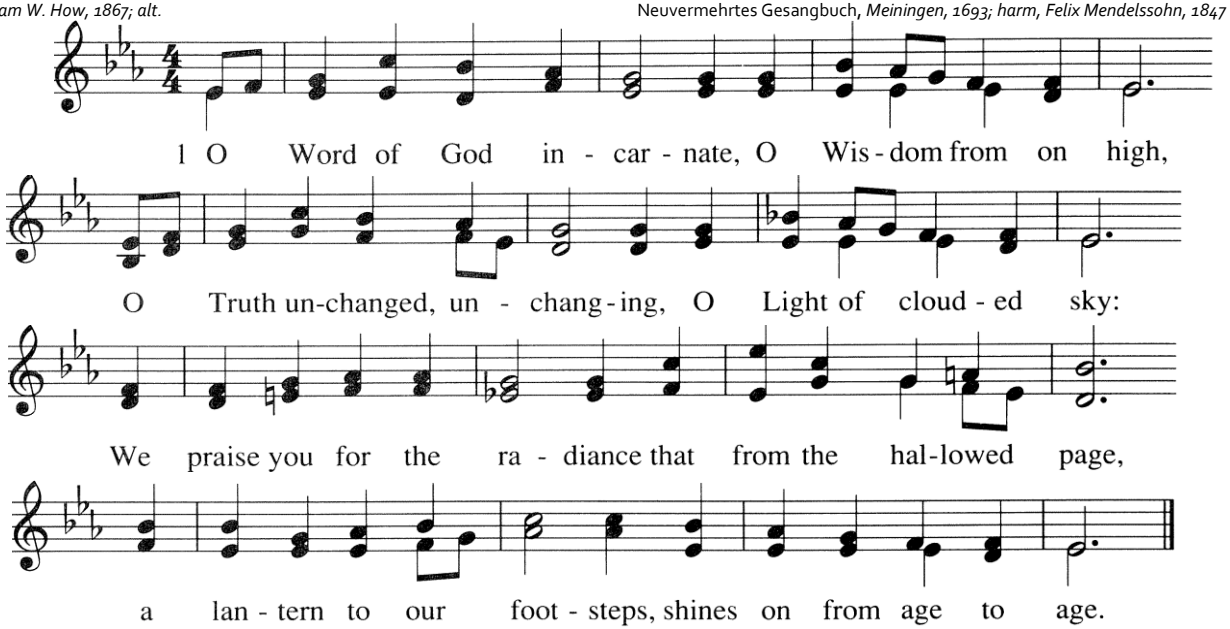
God of love and justice, we long for peace within and peace without. We long for harmony in our families, for serenity in the midst of struggle, and for commitment to each other's growth. We long for the day when our homes will be a dwelling place for your love. Yet we confess that we are often anxious; we do not trust each other, and we harbor violence. We are not willing to take the risks and make the hard choices that love requires. Look upon us with kindness and grace. Rule in our homes and all over the world; show us how to walk in your paths, through the mercy of our Savior. Amen.

ANTHEM The Lord Loves a Laughin' Man – Sy Miller & Jill Jackson/arr. Norman Luboff
Chancel Choir, Milo Armbrust, percussion, Amos Armbrust, bass

SCRIPTURE Exodus 14:19-31 *(O.T. pg. 58)* Dave Butler, Liturgist
Romans 14:1-12 *(N.T. pg. 152)*
Matthew 18:21-35 *(N.T. pg. 19)*

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE **"O Word of God Incarnate"** MUNICH 7.6.7.6.D.

William W. How, 1867; alt. Neuvermehrtes Gesangbuch, *Meiningen, 1693; harm, Felix Mendelssohn, 1847*



MESSAGE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY OF GOD Stacie Yates

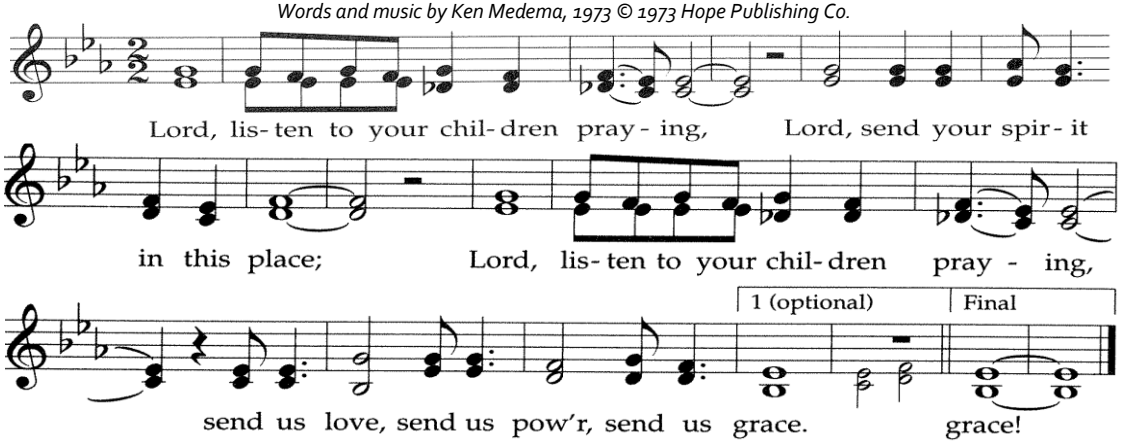
The Lord's Prayer

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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE Joys and Concerns, Pastoral Prayer

PRAYER RESPONSE **"Lord, listen to Your Children Praying"** CHILDREN PRAYING Irr.

Words and music by Ken Medema, 1973 © 1973 Hope Publishing Co.



SERMON "Wrestling with the Text The Rev. Dr. Luke Lindon

REFLECTION HYMN **"Here I Am, Lord"** HERE I AM, LORD 7.7.7.4. w/ refrain

Words and music by Dan Schutte, 1981; *Harm, James Snyder, 1994*

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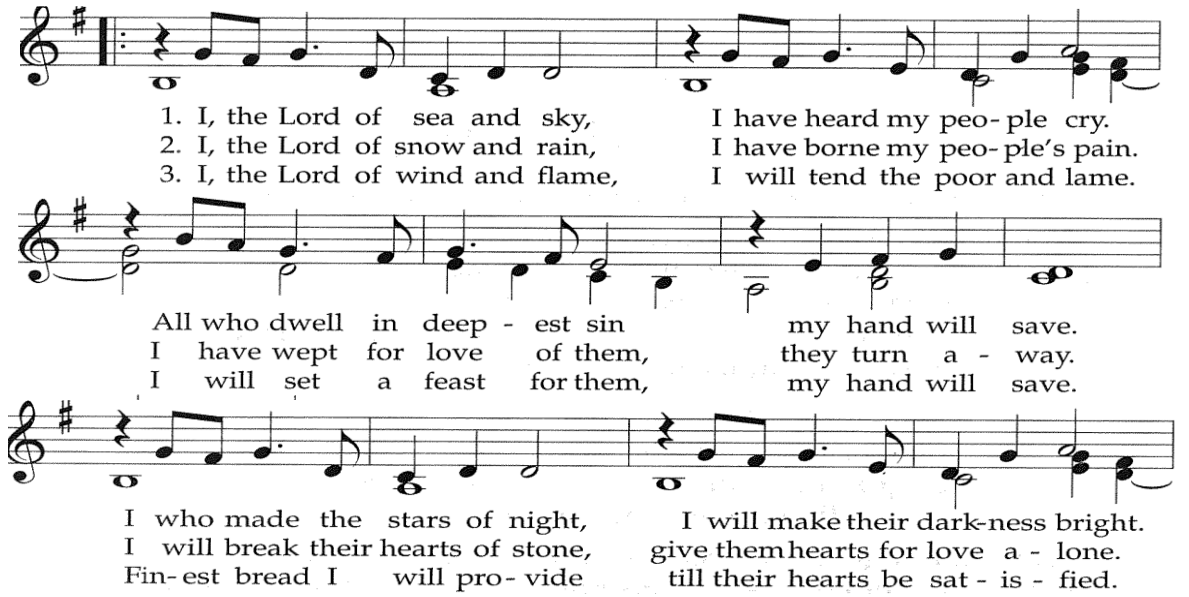
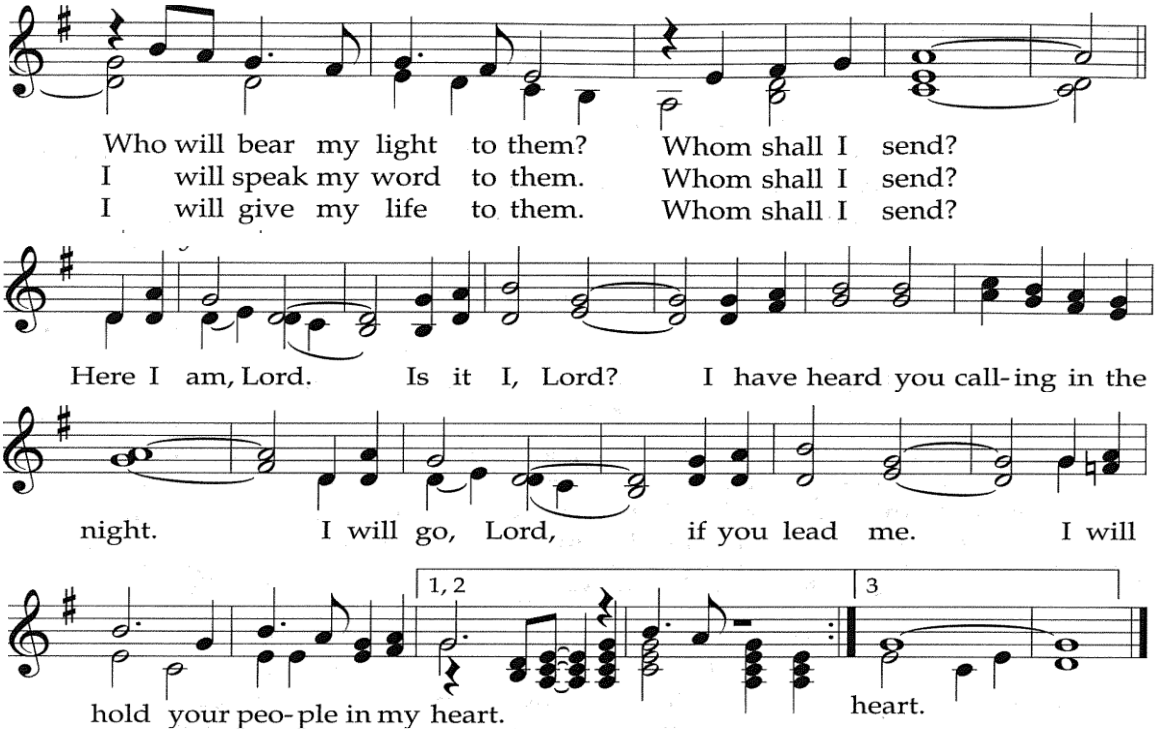




INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

There is an offering plate if you feel led to deposit your envelope or an offering there. You can also give through our Realm app or get the link to give by texting UCCMEDINA to 73256 or give through VENMO. Thank you for your prayerful consideration!

UCC Medina
@uccmedina
venmo

Offertory Invitation

For truth spoken in love, for the challenge and comfort of scripture, and for the life we find in Christ Jesus, let us rise and sing our praise.

***Doxology** *(words, Ruth Duck, ©2005, GIA Publications)*

Praise God, the Source of life and birth; Praise God, the Word, who came to earth;
Praise God, the Spirit, holy flame; All glory, honor to God's Name! Amen.

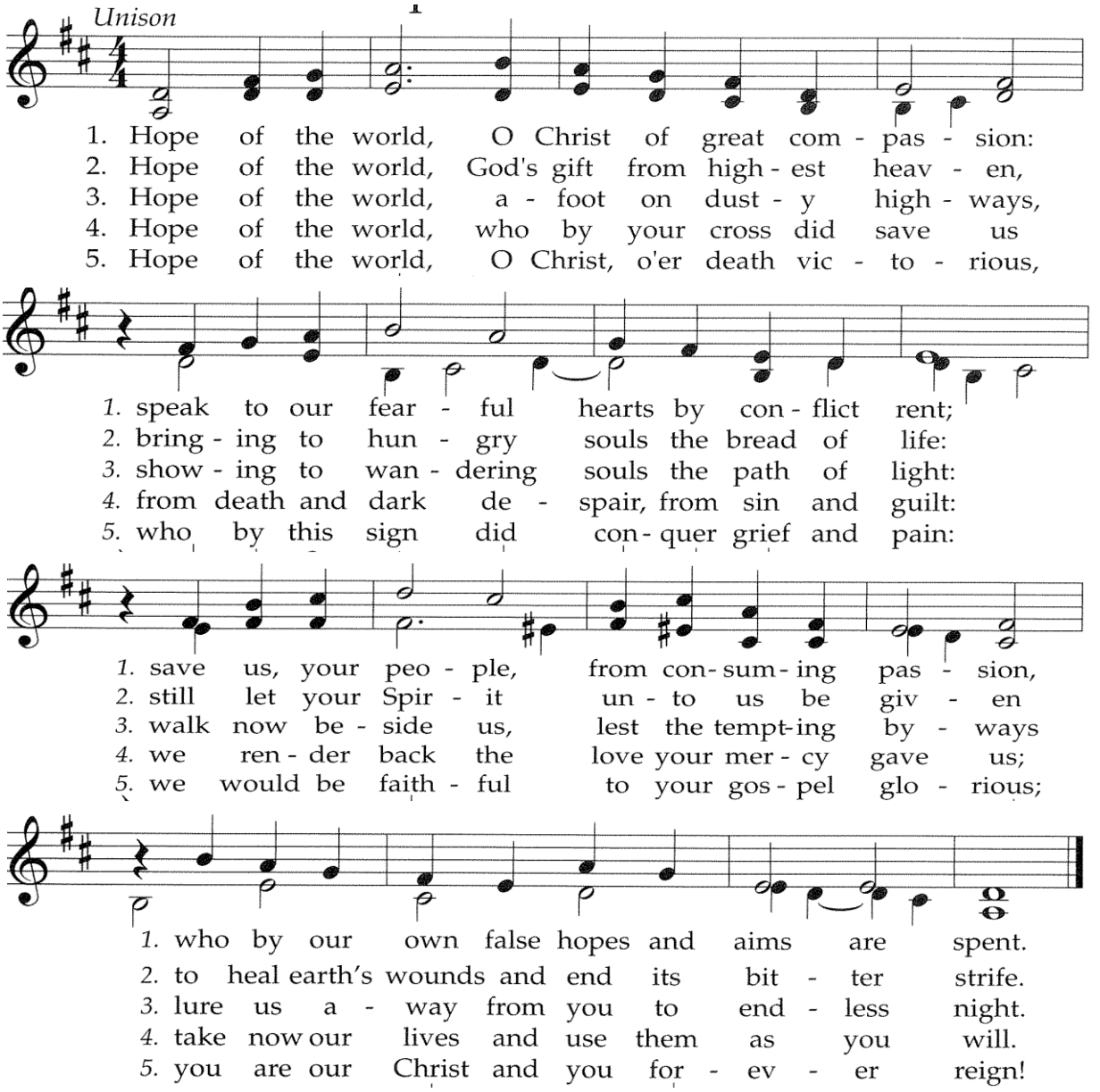
***Prayer of Dedication** (NCH #845)

O God, most merciful and gracious, of whose bounty we have all received: accept, we pray, this offering of your people. Remember in your love those who have brought it and those for whom it is given; and so follow it with your blessing that it may promote peace and goodwill among all people and advance the realm of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

***SENDING SONG** **"Hope of the World"**

Georgia Harkness, 1854, alt. VICAR 11.10.11.10.
V. Earle Copes, 1963

© 1954, renewed 1982, The Hymn Society, *used by permission of Hope Publishing Co.*
©1963 The United Methodist Publishing House



***ANNOUNCEMENTS**

***BENEDICTION** (NCH #873)

May the blessing of the God of Abraham and Sarah,
and of Jesus Christ born of our sister Mary,
and of the Holy Spirit, who broods over the world
as a mother over her children,
be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE "God Be With You"**

God be with you 'til we meet again; By His counsels guide uphold you;
With His sheep securely fold you; God be with you 'til we meet again.

***POSTLUDE** "Finale" – Paul Fauchey/arr. Harry Rowe Shelley Cathy Fafrak, organ

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****Please join us for Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following the service****

Coffee Hour is hosted this week by the Wolff family

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Give online at www.uccmedina.org/give

The deadline for submission of articles for NEXT Sunday's Messenger is this Sunday at 11:30 am
Please submit articles to the church office at office@uccmedina.org
CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: 9 am – 3 pm MONDAY THRU THURSDAY; FRIDAY 9 am – 12 pm

BACK TO WORK WITH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY!

We have been assigned to some more workdays with Habitat for Humanity! The dates are:

Saturday, September 26th
Thursday, October 1st
Saturday, October 10th
Thursday October 15th

Just like before, up to 8 people may volunteer for each workday! Each workday begins at 8:30am, breaks for lunch at 11:30am, and ends by 2:30pm. Lunch is not provided so groups are welcome to coordinate or just have everyone pack a lunch. Habitat for Humanity will provide all the tools that will be needed. They also have safety gear such as hard hats and glasses available, but if you have your own feel free to bring them. Please dress comfortably and with the mindset of getting dirty. Boots are ideal but tennis shoes are the second-best thing. Please keep in mind that there could be cancellations due to weather or subcontractors not being completed with their work.

Sign-up at the link or use the QR code! https://tinyurl.com/habitat

UPDATE FROM THE CITY'S UPTOWN PARK PATH PROJECT

This past Tuesday morning (9/8), the contractor had removed and is beginning to replace our Broadway St. driveway apron. Typically, the removal and replacement process with cure time for the drive aprons will take about 4 to 5 days assuming we do not encounter any major construction or weather-related issues.

*****THIS MEANS THAT QUITE POSSIBLY, OUR BROADWAY ST. ENTRANCE MIGHT NOT BE AVAILABLE ON SUNDAY, 9/13. PLEASE BE AWARE AND USE THE E. LIBERTY ST. ENTRANCE WITH CAUTION.

Again, we apologize for the inconvenience, and we certainly appreciate your patience and cooperation. The contractor is moving ahead of schedule and is trying to get this completed as quickly and as safely as possible. We will continue to update you periodically with information about this project.

THE PILGRIM MESSENGER
SEPTEMBER 13, 2026

"Welcoming, Loving, Serving, Where God Has No Limits.

More Than Church On Sunday!"

Live streaming of the 10:30 a.m. Sanctuary service is available at www.uccmedina.org/live

September 13 thru September 20, 2026
WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sun	8:15 am	Chapel Worship
	9:00 am	Gathering Worship
	9:45 am	Choir Warm up
	10:00 am	Children's Choir rehearsal
	10:30 am	Sanctuary Worship
	10:30 am	Teen church
	10:30 am	Jesus Vibes Begins!
	11:45 am	Mission Team
	3:30 pm	Confirmation Kick-off
Mon	6:00 pm	Spirit Moves Yoga
	7:00 pm	Finance/Stewardship Meeting
Tues	**7:00 pm**	**Bible for Normal People**
Wed	10:30 am	Quilters
	6:00 pm	Bell Choir
	7:00 pm	Just Wondering
	7:00 pm	Gathering Band
	7:00 pm	DELTS
	7:15 pm	Choir rehearsal
Thurs	3:00 pm	Coffee & Chat
	6:30 pm	Bible Study
	7:00 pm	**Book Study: Separation of Church from Hate**
Fri		
Sat		
Sun	8:15 am	Chapel Worship
	9:00 am	Gathering Worship
	9:30 am	Bell warm up
	10:00 am	Children's Choir rehearsal
	10:30 am	Sanctuary Worship
	10:30 am	Jesus Vibes
	11:45 am	Hospitality Team
	3:00 pm	Vibes Video Crew
	4:30 pm	Youth Group

Worship Highlights: 8:15, 9:00 & 10:30 a.m.

Scripture: Exodus 14:19–31, Romans 14:1–12, Matthew 18:21–35
Sermon: "Wrestling with the Text"

Communion Table: The flowers on the communion table are given by Kyle & Kathryn Vuchak in honor of September birthdays and Charlotte Vuchak.

FAITH FORMATION: SEPTEMBER

The Bible for Normal People
Join Pastor Luke for a guided discussion on *The Bible for Normal People* videos at 7 p.m. in the Library:

- **Tuesday, 9/15:** Reading the Bible Like Adults
- **Tuesday, 9/22:** History of Interpretation
- **Tuesday, 9/29:** Anti-Apologetics

Special Event
This **Thursday, September 17th at 7:00 p.m.**, we'll gather for a discussion of John Fugelsang's bestselling book: *Separation of Church and Hate*.

NEIGHBORS IN NEED OFFERING

Sunday, October 4th

The Neighbors in Need offering of the United Church of Christ supports ministries of justice and compassion through the UCC, with one-third of the offering given to the Council for American Indian Ministries and the remaining two-thirds supporting UCC justice ministries. In 2025 the Neighbors in Need Offering supported 26 grant recipients across the UCC who were engaged in projects of direct service and advocacy. Please use the provided special offering envelopes found in the pews. Thank you for your support and generosity!

SEPTEMBER DONATION

Please consider donating to help families with small children in Medina! The preschool is asking for boys and girls underwear (size 4T to 7/8), small bottles of laundry soap, bars of soap, toilet paper, and shampoo.
Place your donations in the bin across from the elevator, at the bottom of the stairs. Thank you for your generosity!

TREKKING THROUGH AUTUMN

Get out and explore your Medina County Parks with your church friends! Hike 8 trails this fall to receive an award from the Park District (backpack for first timers, pin for veterans). Hikes leave at 2:00 PM on Sundays. All hikes under 2 miles. Award sheets will be available at the first few hikes and in the church office. No RSVP, come to any you can. Rain or shine except if storming.
Look for Pastor Luke or Kate Lindon. Email Kate at katewlindon@gmail.com to be added to the email reminder list.
9/13: Plum Creek South, 2500 Plum Creek Parkway, Brunswick, 1.5 miles
9/20: Allardale Park, 141 Remsen Rd., Medina (Lodge Entrance, park in horse trailer lot), Medina, 1.8 miles
9/27: Letha House Park West, 5800 Richman Rd., Spencer, 1.4 miles
10/4: Liverpool Meadows, 6601 West Law Rd., Valley City, 1 mile
10/11: Schleman Nature Preserve, 6701 Wedgewood Rd., Medina, 1.5 miles
10/18: Litchfield Wetlands, 3005 Avon Lake Rd., Litchfield, 1.7 miles
10/25: Shotwell Gardens, 4581 Foote Rd, Medina, 1-1.4 miles
11/1: Alderfer-Chatfield Sanctuary, 6100 Ridge Rd, Wadsworth, 1.5 miles (no pets, turn in award sheet here)

HOST A COFFEE HOUR

Please consider signing up to host a coffee hour. There are still open dates through November. If you have any questions, you can contact someone on the Hospitality Team or call the church office. Signups are in the East Room Hallway.

STEP UP TO PREVENT SUICIDE WALK – SEPTEMBER 27th

Every year, it is incredibly meaningful to see our community come together to support suicide prevention awareness, honor loved ones and remind others that they are not alone. As a WISE congregation (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged regarding mental health and neurodivergence) we are a proud sponsor of the Walk. The walk will take place at Medina Public Square. After you sign in with the Walk organizers, meet Patrick at the Bandstand on the Square if you'd like to walk together as a church group. Use this link to sign up: STEP UP TO PREVENT SUICIDE COMMUNITY WALK — Alternative Paths

HELP NEEDED! - FALL FEST

On Saturday, September 26th our church will once again have a table with a craft for the children attending Fall Fest. The Community Engagement Team needs some help with this. We need volunteers to help with setting up at 8:00 that morning. Also volunteers to help the children from 10:00 a.m. till Noon. No experience necessary for the craft. The volunteers on the first shift will explain the craft.
If you are able to help please sign up at **https://www.signupgenius.com/fallfest**

NEW YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

MUCC Youth Group Open to all students in 3rd to 12th grade, an inclusive space to hang out, serve others, and have fun.
1st & 3rd Sundays from 4:30 – 6:00 p.m.

Teen Church A time for high school students to gather, refill our hearts for the week, and discuss the themes and scriptures from Sunday morning worship. *2nd & 4th Sundays @ 10:30 a.m.*

Just Wondering A new discussion group for high school students to talk about God, the universe, and everything. *Wednesday nights at 6:00 p.m.*

Coffee and Chat At Cool Beans with Pastor Meghan. You bring the topic, I'll buy the coffee!
1st & 3rd Thursdays at 3:00 p.

DONATIONS REQUESTED

In an effort to support the parents of our youngest churchgoers, please consider donating some diapers or wipes to stock the changing tables in the upstairs men's and women's church bathrooms. Please sign up to donate from the list of requested items by scanning the QR code. You may also click this link for the list: https://tinyurl.com/diapers. Thank you!

JESUS VIBES SUNDAY SCHOOL BEGINS SEPTEMBER 13TH

Starting on September 13th we will be kicking off another year of "Jesus Vibes" Sunday School! During the 10:30 service, youth can head downstairs after the Children's Sermon to learn, play and grow! We are excited to begin year two of our custom Sunday school curriculum, which follows along with the current sermon series in a way that is engaging, fun and age-appropriate.
First, stop by the Sign In table to receive youth name tags and pick-up tags. Adults will pick up their children from these classrooms following the service:

PreK - K - Dino Den Room (Hobby Horse Preschool wing)
1st - 2nd grade - Busy Bee Room (Hobby Horse Preschool wing)
3rd - 5th graders - Maker Space/Room 9/10
6th - 8th graders - Room 7

Age 2 yrs and under - You are invited to the Prayground! In the south ⅓ of the East Room, adults with children 2 and under are welcome to utilize the comfortable seating, quiet toys and books to entertain your little ones, while still being a part of the 10:30 service.

ACTION!
VIBES VIDEO CREW IS BACK STARTING SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20TH!

The Vibes Video Crew is for kids 2nd grade and up who are interested in writing, acting, filming and editing awesome videos that explore scripture in a new and creative way! Want to join the fun? We meet at the church on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month from 3:30-4:30pm (right before youth group.) Contact Miss Stacie with any questions!

ENDOWMENT FUND APPLICATIONS

The Endowment Committee is pleased to announce that applications are available to apply for funding for special projects and improvements for operating year 2027. Last fall we received a record number of applications and were able to help fund two mission trips, add additional funds to three Mission accounts as well as sponsor two Pastor Lunches just to name a few. Maybe the Endowment Fund can help fund your next special project or event. Applications are available in the rack outside the office or can be emailed if necessary, by contacting the office. Deadline for submission is Friday, November 20th to the Endowment mailbox in the office or emailed to: charnleykmf@gmail.com. Questions? Contact Kelly Charnley 330-421-3313 or Matt Yates 330-321-9679.

September 13, 2026
Exodus 14:19-31

Road to Freedom

Even if you have not spent much time in church or in Bible study, the story of the crossing of the Red Sea is probably a little familiar. Take a look at the story with new eyes today, reading it through a lens that is new to you. What new message or insight do you get from this story by reading it in this new way?

A literary reading considers the story from the point of view of literature. How does the plot arc and flow keep you, as the reader or listener, engaged? What are some of the literary devices, such as use of language? Who are the characters and how are they developed? What is your point of view as a reader or listener? How does the story change if you consider it from another point of view?

A historical reading considers the story from the point of view of its place in history. Take into account the place and time that the story takes place. What is the culture of God's people and of Pharaoh's people at the time? What are other forces at work in these societies?

Another way to read a Bible story is as a story of **God's work in the world**. In reading this way, pay attention to where God is and what God is doing. What is God like in this story and how does this compare to God's presence in other stories? How does God look and sound? In what ways does God circumvent expected or natural law in order to accomplish Divine goals?

You may also want to read a scripture story **devotionally**, as a way to intentionally deepen your walk with God. In reading this way, read the story slowly three times. The first time, pay attention to any words or phrases that jump out at you and make note of them. The second time, read while asking God to show you God's purpose in the world. The third time, read asking God to reveal something that you need for your own particular faith walk.

Yet another way to read the Bible, and perhaps a particularly helpful one on this Just Peace Sunday (https://www.ucc.org/just-peace/), is through a **liberation theology** lens. Liberation theology is based on the fundamental value that God's preference is always for the marginalized and oppressed. As you read this way, look for clues that God is working for freedom for the enslaved, and disruption of systems of oppression.

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ONA Statement

"We, the congregation of Medina United Church of Christ, Congregational seek to be followers of Jesus Christ, taking as our own his example of extravagant welcome and love of all people. As an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ, we welcome into our fellowship persons of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, abilities or disabilities, genders, gender identities or expression, sexual orientations, age, socioeconomic status, marital status or family structure, religious background, physical health, mental health, or any other life circumstance. All are invited to participate in the full life, ministry, leadership, worship, fellowship, and rites and sacraments of the church. In the living of these values, we hope to more fully follow Christ's commandment to love our neighbor and to create a safe space where love abounds."

Approved by unanimous congregational vote May 19, 2024