



6273 Eichelberger St. | St. Louis, MO 63109

2026 Annual Report of Staff, Council and Ministries of Hope United Church of Christ

 Never place a period where
God places a comma.
God is still speaking.

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2026 Pastor's Report to the Congregation

Sarah Fredriksen McCann

As I look over the reports within these pages, I am reminded again and again of the UCC phrase (adapted from Gracie Allen!): “Never place a period where God has placed a comma: **God is Still Speaking.**”

God is indeed still speaking through Hope United Church of Christ. As you read the following reports of our ministries and mission, that is evident in diverse and ever-evolving ways. From the growth in participation in our children's ministries to the growth of our Chapel of the Arts ministry, we are finding ways to reach out and welcome in not only the people of our faith community but the wider community to which we are all called to serve.

God is still speaking through our worship, the center of our faith and community. My thanks to the many people who share their gifts and time to provide our weekly sacred experience of praise and thanksgiving to God. The tech team enables us to not only hear and see what's happening in the sanctuary (important, indeed!) but share our service with the wider community. The music ministry, from our Director of Music Jim Threlkeld to members of the choirs, provides moments of spiritual reflection and inspiration that shape and deepen our worship. Our liturgists, acolytes, ushers, communion stewards and others all play essential roles.

God is still speaking through our Outreach and Justice ministries, not just in efforts planned by our leadership team, but in every aspect of congregational life that seeks to support those in great need, speak out against injustices, and find ways to care for God's creation.

God is still speaking through ministries of care and compassion, including the One Body Ministry, the support of the Pastoral and Staff Relations Ministry, as well as individual moments of prayer and fellowship, when we share in each other's sorrows and give thanks for each other's joys.

God is still speaking through the ministries of our youth and children. Participation of children continues to grow, and this year included a Youth Mission trip as well as the start of a new Confirmation class. Under the leadership of Director of Youth and Children's Ministries, Sara Karcher, the YAC team, our Director of Children's Music Laren Loveless, and our volunteer teachers, we are striving to guide the next generation in the stories of our faith and show them the ways the church can make a difference in the world.

God is still speaking through our Chapel of the Arts ministry and the care of our facility that enables us to be a welcoming community resource. The hard work of our Building and Property team, the volunteers for workdays and other building projects all enable us to provide a safe, welcoming space for HopeMark Preschool, community groups, a Spiritualist Church, music classes, multiple artistic performances and more, as we live out our calling to serve and be in partnership with the neighborhood and wider community in which we all live.

God is still speaking through our leaders. The thoughtful leadership of our Council and ministry teams functions as the heartbeat that keeps our ministries going, adapting, forming and reforming as times change and challenges arise.

God is still speaking through our staff. I give thanks to Jim, Amy, Sara, Laren, Ethan, Lamont, our bookkeepers June and Abby, and our social media coordinator Jen, all of whom work on behalf of the whole congregation, often in ways unseen but never unappreciated.

Most of all, **God is still speaking** through you, a Hope Church member or friend whose presence, commitment, generosity, and faith are at the heart of this Body of Christ, and essential to its presence and purpose. May God continue to speak through you, through us, and throughout the world!

Peace, prayers, and hope,
Pastor Sarah

Message from the Hope Council 2026

President Autum Jennings

2026 was a year of growth at Hope United Church of Christ—not only in numbers, but in relationships, faith, and community. We welcomed new faces, strengthened friendships, and continued creating a church where children, families, and people of all ages can feel that they truly belong.

Throughout the year, Hope UCC made space for families to worship, learn, laugh, and grow together. Children and young people brought energy and joy to our congregation, reminding us that the future of our church is being shaped right here among us. Family activities and opportunities for fellowship helped us connect beyond Sunday morning and build relationships that extend throughout the week.

We celebrated the simple things that make church feel like home—sharing meals, gathering for fellowship, supporting one another, enjoying music and the arts, and creating opportunities for children and adults to participate together. Each gathering gave us another opportunity to welcome someone new and strengthen the bonds within our church family.

As Hope UCC continues to grow, we are especially grateful for those who have chosen to make Hope their church home and for the many members and friends who help create a warm, inclusive, and joyful community. Hope UCC is a reflection of what happens when people come together with open hearts and a shared commitment to being guided by God with love for all.

Music Ministry Annual Report 2026

Jim Threlkeld

The Music Ministry has been able to move solidly through the Church Year. The Chancel Choir continues to sing at the 10:30 service each Sunday...September-May.

The Handbell Choir continues ringing with 10 ringers. The choir is still able to make music that enhances our worship services. The choir will begin rehearsals soon for the 2026/2027 year. You will be hearing them ring at the 10:30 service. We would like to recruit additional ringers so we can play our full 5 octaves of handbells and chimes.

As we keep making progress, the choirs will begin rehearsing for the annual Festival of Carols on December 20th, during the 10:30 service. You will be hearing more about this as we get into the Advent Season.

We are always excited to have guest musicians join us in our worship services. This year we welcomed our longtime friend, Adrian Lepique playing his trumpet. We will be hearing more from different

musicians in the coming months. We thank those in the congregation that make contributions to continue this ministry.

There is a standing invitation extended to you to come join the music program in some way. The Chancel Choir rehearsal is on Sunday mornings at 9:00. Handbell rehearsals are on Monday evenings 6:30-8:00. Please talk to me about how you can become involved in this important ministry. There is a lot of music we can make together to honor and praise God.

Statistical Report for 2025/26

Deaths

Lydia Lewis	2-8-2026
Harold Franks	3-11-2026
Susanne Casey	8-17-2026

New Members

Alexandra Bush-Kaufman	4-12-2026
Tucker Bush-Kaufman	4-12-2026
Beth Holbrooke	4-12-2026
Jennifer Pacheco	4-12-2026
Michael Yanczer	9-27-2026

Wedding

Abby Mueller and Ben Geigle	9-19-2026
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Baptism

Michael Yanczer	9-27-2026
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Statistics for the year October 2025-2026

Total Congregation 2025:	268
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This year's activity:	5	New Members Added
	3	New pre-confirmation age children
	-3	Members Deceased
	0	Members moved/transferred
	-8	Members removed due to inactivity

Total Congregation 2026: 265

Annual Report of the Building and Property Ministry 2026

Ethan Hale, Chair

“The goal of the Building and Property Ministry is to provide a suitable facility for the worship of God, Christian education, fellowship, and mission of the congregation, through the responsibilities of the care, operation, use and maintenance of the church facilities.”

The Building and Property Ministry oversees the operation, maintenance, and preservation of the building that is home to Hope United Church of Christ and HopeMark Pre-School.

Our active members include Randy Hall, Max Ryan, John Whitacre, Ron Zimmer, Ron Geisel, Eric Jennings, and Ethan Hale. Ethan Hale is the ministry leader. Robbie Van Nest is our Council Liaison

This past winter we installed a new wall mounted electric heater in the hallway under the Narthex. The original radiant heat system that is in the floor is no longer functional in this portion of the building due to a suspected leak somewhere.

In the spring we continued seeing floor drains back up like we did in the summer of 2025. Once the problem of roots completely blocking the main sewer drain from the Sanctuary portion of the building was identified, we had Maplewood Plumbing out to clean out the entire line and get everything flowing properly again. No issues have occurred since.

In June we once again hosted a successful workday full of great progress, fellowship, laughs, and lunch. This year we had to move our date around a little bit to be able to find a Saturday that worked for our volunteers. We noticed that the end of school year time frame was very busy for people this year and not many were available. Even our June date saw a bit smaller number of attendees, but we are very grateful for all the help we can get! Our usual task list of indoor deep cleaning kept people busy and outside we mostly focused on spreading mulch and general clean up.

Also in June, we had Galati and Sons Tuckpointing address some much-needed tuckpointing all around the exterior building. We addressed the areas that were in the worst condition first, and we are also looking into some other areas that aren't in poor condition but will need some attention soon to get the exterior sealed up again. The first round of tuckpointing was just over \$17,000.

The air conditioning system needed plenty of attention once again. Outside of the general maintenance we dealt with some clogged condensation drain lines, dead motors, loss of system pressure, and a cold-water solution leak. With the combination of available time for Ethan and the knowledge from John Whitacre we were able to save some money and make these repairs in-house. With the issues that our aging interior A/C system continues to have we know that we need to start looking more into upgrades to new equipment and will be discussing this more as the next A/C season approaches.

Our security camera system is close to completion. We are currently in the process of finalizing the exact equipment that we will be ordering that does the recording and storing of video footage. We have 4 cameras mounted and wired around the alley, parking lot, and playground. Due to recent issues some other churches in town have been having with metal theft, we will be adding another camera to overlook the large A/C unit outside. The motion lighting around this area will also be upgraded.

Earlier this year Critical Incident Response Training Services (CIRTS) assessed our building for the possible scenario of an active shooter and provided suggestions of procedures and methods to secure the building and keep as many people safe as possible. The Hope UCC Security Executive Team has been

discussing the assessment of the building and Building and Property has been providing feedback where we can. The only idea that has been carried out is the removal of the door handle from the left door of most sets of double doors so that the building cannot be forcibly secured from the outside. At this time, we do not know if anything else will be done to the building, but the options are being explored so we at least have the information.

The Building and Property committee is always appreciative of everyone's eyes in helping us see issues around the building. If you see something that needs attention, you can let one of the members know, let Amy in the office know and she will pass it along to us, or you can fill out an "It's Broke" form in the office and put it in our mailbox. You can also reach us by sending an email to buildingproperty_2025@hopeuccstl.org. If anyone has any interest in helping with any of the responsibilities of our ministry, we would love to have you as a member or even a friend of the committee who is willing to help from time to time.

Annual Report of the Finance and Insurance Ministry 2026

Dan Emerson – Chair

The Finance and Insurance Ministry was established in 1995 by the Church Council to advise Council on the investment of the church's endowment and insurance coverage. The ministry meets as needed to review the progress of the investment program and to evaluate our insurance. Robbie Van Nest is currently serving as our Council liaison.

Investments: Our portfolio with Stifel, Nicolaus & Company performed moderately in 2026 despite inflation, economic headline news, and market volatility. The portfolio is made up of two accounts which are managed using a moderate growth asset allocation: a Fundamental EFT account and a Mutual Fund account. The model investment portfolios are well diversified and have been designed for lower risk/moderate growth.

Insurance: Our property, liability, and worker's compensation insurance coverage continue to be purchased through the UCC Insurance Board. Our coverage includes general liability, as well as fire, storm, and earthquake damage.

Ministry members: Dan Emerson – Chair, Sue Rainer, Kay Thurman -- Secretary, Ron Zimmer, Kristine Wentzien, Larry Gooden, Lonnie Davis, Robbie Van Nest/Lonnie Davis – Council Liaison.

Annual Report of the Outreach and Justice Ministry Team 2026

Ministry Team: Clint McCann (co-chair), Vicky Moss (co-chair), Jerry Webb (Council liaison), Lonny Davis, Drew Florian, Katherine Fritz, Randy Hall, Randee Lodes, Vicky Moss, Diane Muehlenbeck, Carolyn Mulhall, Bridget Rapp, Kathy Swaller, Robbie Van Nest, and Ron Zimmer.

A HUGE THANK YOU to the members and friends of Hope UCC from the Outreach and Justice Ministry team. We appreciate your compassion, generosity and loving ways you support the ministries of Hope UCC.

The Outreach and Justice Ministry is responsible for developing, administering and supporting the mission and justice work of Hope UCC. We oversee our congregation's commitment to being an **Open and Affirming, Creation Justice, and Global Mission congregation**.

As an **Open and Affirming congregation**, members participated in the annual Gateway Open and Affirming Convocation in February, celebrated our annual Open and Affirming Renewal Sunday, donated \$300 to Gateway ONA (organization comprised of all St. Louis Association ONA churches), and made efforts throughout our building to affirm our welcome, support and advocacy of the LGBTQ+ community.

As a **Creation Justice congregation**, we celebrated Environmental Justice Sunday in April, shared periodic resources for ecologically sound practices, and continued our efforts to reduce, re-use, and recycle here in our facility. This past year we added a Holiday Free Store of recycled holiday decorations and gifts.

As a **Global Mission Congregation**, we once again supported ministries that help God's people throughout the world and in our own communities. Details of this support are described below:

OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission): Denomination-wide offerings supported by Hope UCC include: **Basic OCWM**, which funds the ministries of the national level of the denomination, including strengthening our ecumenical relationships and global partnerships and providing resources and programs to nurture the vitality of UCC congregations; UCC Special Support appeals: **One Great Hour of Sharing** (provides hope to people in more than 80 countries); **Strengthen the Church** (grows the UCC's future by funding new church starts and invigorating existing congregations, building youth and young adult ministries and more); **Neighbors in Need** (supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the USA); and **The Christmas Fund** (helps provide supplemental monies for pension and health insurance premiums to low-income retirees)

The St. Louis Association of the United Church of Christ serves about 44 congregations in the greater metropolitan area. Hope's contributions to the Association help fund three main areas: program costs, administrative costs, and Outreach ministries. St. Louis Association is one of only four in the nation that feature an outreach portion.

Blanket Sunday: Hope supports Church World Service which provides blankets to people around the world during crisis situations. Hope's 2026 Blanket Sunday raised \$750.

Bridge Bread: ‘Making the Table Bigger’: Bridge Bread is a non-profit enterprise that provides employment to unhoused persons. Hope’s support includes bread baked at Bridge Bread regularly used for our communion table as well as purchasing loaves of bread twice a month from Bridge Bread that are sent to clients at Isaiah 58 Ministries.

Heifer International: Through the Alternative Gift Fair during Advent, Hope supports the work of Heifer International and raised \$3900 in December of 2025. Heifer’s mission is to end world hunger and poverty.

Isaiah 58 Ministries: In addition to our regular offerings throughout the year, one special campaign included the Buy-a-Bird campaign. Hope raised a tremendous and generous \$2125 in 2025 to help Isaiah 58 provide gift cards for their guests to purchase complete holiday meals. On Harvest Home Sunday in November of 2025, Hope members and friends brought many fresh food offerings for Isaiah 58’s *Fresh Food for Thanksgiving* collection. In addition, our annual Summer Food Drive raised gifts of money, food, cleaning products, toiletries, school supplies and diapers. We are also supporting Isaiah 58 Ministries’ Capital campaign, with a gift of \$6000 over the course of one year and encourage congregational members to contribute individually as well.

Lydia’s House: Lydia’s House provides transitional housing for abused women and their children while working to end domestic violence. In December of 2025, Hope members and friends again generously bought several Lydia’s House pins, totaling \$200. Other generous donations were made in gift cards in support of Lydia’s House holiday program.

St. Louis Metro CROP Hunger Walk is part of the fund-raising wing of Church World Service, the mission of which is to transform communities around the world by just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster. The total amount Hope donated this year was \$3180. The total amount donated for the entire St Louis Metro CROP Walk is over \$16,000. 75% of funds raised go globally, and 25% stay in our area. Local beneficiaries for 2026 are Circle of Concern, Webster-Rock Hill Ministries, and Growing Food, Growing People.

Welcome Neighbor STL: Welcome Neighbor STL connects new refugees with the people and opportunities that will empower them to build and live their best life in their new country. Hope UCC supported this non-profit in 2026 with a delicious luncheon made by our new neighbors from Syria. The money raised from the luncheon returned to the family who made our meal, which totaled \$1,200.00.

Annual Report of the One Body Ministry 2026

Andrea Aughinbaugh, Chair

The mission of the One Body Ministry at Hope UCC is to maintain a personal “family” connection with Hope’s members and friends who need or ask to be contacted when they are not able to physically participate in weekly church services and activities. Our primary goal includes making personal visits and phone calls, sending texts, emails, cards, letters, or any other means of interaction or communication with our Hope family members. Our shared vision is to provide a personal connection and positive interaction.

Three deeply loved and respected members of Hope who were a part of the One Body Ministry passed away in 2026. Lydia Lewis, Hal Franks and Sue Casey will all be dearly missed.

It is a privilege for the members of One Body Ministry to visit Hope Church family members who are no longer able to participate at church, physically, and get to know them even better. We would like to provide an opportunity for everyone at Hope to get to know each of them better, also. One Body Ministry will be highlighting a Hope church family member in the monthly Builder, periodically throughout the year, and also sharing pictures from visits.

One Body Ministry has given holiday gifts and cards in the past to our Hope friends. At our next meeting we will brainstorm and choose a Christmas gift and/or activity to share with our One Body friends. One possibility would be to ask interested members and friends of Hope to go Christmas caroling to One Body members’ residences. Another possibility is to collaborate with the Youth and Children’s Ministry team to have the children of Hope make and mail Christmas cards to our friends who are homebound.

In collaboration with the Prayer Is Essential (PIE) group, we submit prayer requests for and from our Hope family members. PIE uses them to continuously pray for, and on behalf of our Family members. This process will continue throughout 2026-2027.

2026 One Body Ministry Team members: Andrea Aughinbaugh, Lynn Bodicky, Paul Conner, Kathy Hall, Susan Meyer, David Moss, Carol Zimmer

Friends of One Body Ministry: Gail Geisel, Dave Porterfield, Penny Steffen

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Aughinbaugh– Chairperson, the One Body Ministry

Stewardship and Community Engagement

2026 Ministry Update | Autum Jennings

At Hope UCC, we believe the good news is something we share—in the care we offer, the welcome we extend, and the ways we show up for one another. This year, our team found meaningful ways to celebrate generosity, share Hope's story, and connect with our wider community. Thank you to everyone who helped make it possible.

Growing in Generosity

Our 2026 stewardship campaign celebrated the generosity that sustains Hope's ministries and mission. Members shared personal reflections on stewardship, reminding us that giving is one way we care for one another and help make a more hopeful, loving community possible. We're grateful for everyone's commitment as we look ahead to 2027.

Sharing Hope's Message

- Pride Month: We shared Pride pins as a sign of welcome, affirmation, and support.
- Social media: Working with our social media manager, Jen Maddox, we continued creating thoughtful, engaging posts that reflect the people, values, and life of Hope.

Showing Up in Community

- Art in the Park: Hope volunteers welcomed neighbors at our booth, creating space for conversation, creativity, and connection. We were glad to share the joy and spirit of Hope with the community.
- Gateway Cup bike races: Over Labor Day weekend, our Hope family gathered on the lawn to cheer on the racers and connect with the many local residents and visitors taking part. We hope to grow this gathering next year—weather permitting!

Annual Report of the Pastor and Staff Relations Ministry 2026

The mission of this ministry is to provide support and guidance for the pastor, church staff, and any student-in-care member. We serve as liaison between these people and the church membership. We confer regularly and are on-call to address any issues that may arise.

This year we met in person or virtually with Pastor McCann; staff members Jim Threlkeld, Amy Escobar, Sara Karcher and Ethan Hale; and member in discernment David Moss. We anticipate continuing these discussions, and look forward to the ordination of David, as well as Dee Dee Yanczer, Eden graduate, in our church sanctuary.

Ministry Team Members:

Emma Aughinbaugh, Kay Thurman, Dan Fagnani, Lynne McCall, and Council liaison Fred McCall.

Annual Report of the Worship Ministry 2026

Jim Threlkeld, Chair

Over the course of the year, the members of the Worship Ministry have concentrated on ways to support and enhance the worship experience of Hope United Church of Christ. We have focused on décor, delivery and delegation. Décor is the look and feel of our worship space. Delivery relates to worship content and how the liturgy is presented. And delegation is the coordination of décor and delivery...who will do what.

Totenfest was observed on the first Sunday of November. It has been a long-standing tradition to remember, recognize and honor Hope members that have passed away during the past year. Family members of the departed are invited to come and worship with us during this service of recognition. Ringers from our Handbell Choir rang bells as each name was read and a candle was lit in their remembrance.

The annual Harvest Home service was observed the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Fresh Produce was collected from Hope friends and members and taken by Hope youth and children (and adults) to Isaiah 58 Ministries food pantry.

The Advent/Christmas season meant coordination the Hanging of the Greens-decorating our worship spaces in anticipation of the birthday of Jesus. Of course, that meant coordination of Unhanging of the Greens when Hope friends and members took down and put away the decorations.

Baptism Renewal was celebrated in January with a special baptismal display. The congregation was invited to come forward and take a “glass stone” from the water to carry with them, reminding them of their Baptism in Christ.

The Annual Lenten Prayer Vigil was held beginning at 9:00 PM on Maundy Thursday through 9:00 AM Good Friday. During the twelve hours there were two individuals present for the Prayer Vigil during each hour.

Palm Sunday we were delighted with the children presenting the Annual Procession of the Palms.

On Easter we continued our long-standing tradition of the Flowering Cross on the front lawn of the church.

For Pentecost, the sanctuary was decorated with colors of fire and the congregation was invited to wear colors of fire to celebrate the day.

In addition, the Worship Ministry has been responsible for the coordination of monthly communion preparation and clean-up (made simple by Hope’s dedicated Communion Deacons!) and ushers. Various organizations of Hope volunteered to provide ushers different months throughout the year.

Annual Report of the Youth and Children's Ministry 2026

The Youth and Children's Ministry has had another wonderful year filled with joy and adventure! From the Snowball Mountain Challenge (Vacation Bible School), a mission trip to Columbia Missouri, and Music Sundays we have experienced God in so many ways.

The Sunday school class (PreK-5th) continues to meet during the 10:30 service after the Children's Message. This past year we continued using the same curriculum as in past years. We have decided that this fall we will reuse the curriculum from the past few years since many of the lessons had been skipped due to Music Sundays and the addition of many new children that have not experienced the lessons before. This year Katie Mulhall, Tim Mees, Carol Zimmer and Bethel Hale are teaching on a rotation. We also have continued with the first Sunday of the month being Music Sunday, which is led by our Music Director, Laren Loveless. The turnout for these new Music Sundays has been amazing, and the children are loving it!

The Youth Group, made up of 5th - 12th grade kids, went on a mission trip to Columbia, Missouri. They had the opportunity to work at the Food Bank, sorting frozen corn. They went to the Center for Urban Agriculture where they helped plant some crops. They visited Love Columbia where we learned about the organization and how they are able to help people in various financial, housing, and other situations. They also got to help work on two houses for Habitat for Humanity where some painted doors and door frames, while others learned how to and installed exterior siding. It was a wonderful long weekend and all of the youth and adults that attended had a great time helping and spending time together. This year the group is meeting on the 2nd Sunday of the month after church for food, fellowship and service opportunities.

In addition to Youth Group, this fall started the newest confirmation class which is composed of Alice, Camille, and Danny. They will be working with Pastor Sarah from August to April learning about our faith, our church and how they become a member of the church. Thank you to the mentors and families. We look forward to the coming year.

Our current childcare workers are: Claire, Lily, Aubrey and Chloe. They continue to rotate each week and are available for childcare from 10:00am - 12:00pm every Sunday. Sadly, two of our childcare workers will be graduating this year and leaving for college. So, if anyone has any leads on some older teens looking for a fun part-time job, please reach out!

Finally, VBS this summer was called Snowball Mountain and was winter sports themed. While it was smaller this year, due to a conflict with another church's similar program the same week, we still had a lot of fun. Kids rotated in small groups doing science experiments with Bethel Hale, playing fun games with Tim Mees, and making tasty snacks led by Claire Johns. They got to play in the playroom with Sara Karcher, made crafts with the Mulhall family, and heard Bible Stories from Carol Zimmer and Lindsey Moore. Thank you to everyone that volunteered or donated materials. We couldn't make these weeks happen without you! Next summer is a carnival theme! Dates to be determined in January.

Sincerely,
Sara Karcher and the Youth and Children's Ministry Team

2026 Annual Report of HopeMark Preschool

HopeMark Preschool is excited to begin another wonderful school year! This year, we are serving 63 children ages 2.5–5, including 30 new families joining the HopeMark community. Since 2024, enrollment has grown by approximately 16%. We offer three programs—2-Day, 3-Day, and Pre-K—as well as optional Lunch Bunch and extracurricular classes that allow families to extend their child’s day. At the heart of HopeMark is our commitment to play-based learning, inclusivity, and community connection, while maintaining the small, welcoming environment that makes our preschool so special.

Our team includes Director Sophie Prosser, Lead Teachers Jennifer Barber and Cheryl Reiter, and administrative and assistant teachers Mollie Morton, Rachel Osborn, Kelly Kittinger, Judy Macek, Karen Kloess, and Jeff Vaninger. We are also fortunate to have Laren Loveless, who provides a weekly 30-minute music class for every HopeMark student. Music has become a beloved part of our program and another wonderful way to build community and help more families discover HopeMark. Our preschool is also supported by a dedicated Board of Directors that includes current and former HopeMark parents, teachers, staff, and Hope UCC representation.

As HopeMark continues to grow, we remain committed to keeping tuition accessible so that our program can remain an option for families throughout the community. Fundraising helps us support that goal, including our first HopeMark Trivia Night, which was such a success last January that we plan to make it an annual tradition, as well as our annual Big Wheel-a-Thon each spring. We are incredibly grateful for the continued support of Hope UCC and value the connection between the church, our preschool families, and the greater community.

Sophie Prosser, Director of HopeMark Preschool

Hope United Church of Christ: Annual Congregational Meeting 2025 Minutes

November 9th, 2025

I. Convening Prayer and Opening Hymn- Pastor Sarah McCann

Meeting was called to order at 11:26 am

II. Call to Order and Establishment of Quorum- Autum Jennings

Quorum was established with 62 members present.

III. Approval of Minutes of 2024 Annual Congregational Meeting- Autum Jennings

The minutes were approved as presented with no discussion or corrections.

IV. Convergence Church Vitality Report – Pastor Sarah McCann

Report highlights and recommendations.

V. 2025 Stewardship Pledge Report- Autum Jennings

The stewardship report as presented in the Hope UCC 2025 annual report was shared with congregation.

VI. Proposed 2026 Council and Ministry Team nominations- Andy Karcher

After a brief discussion, it was moved that: The slate of Council and new ministry members, as presented in the Report of the Nominating Committee, as amended, be approved.

Motion: Andy Karcher, on behalf of Nominating Committee **Vote:** The motion carries

VII. 2026 Narrative Budget Presentation- Pastor Sarah McCann

A narrative budget overview was given by Pastor Sarah highlighting worship, music, faith formation, discipleship, pastoral care and fellowship.

VIII. Proposed 2026 Budget – Robbie Van Nest, Treasurer

After a budget overview from Robbie Van Nest, the budget committee, and brief discussion, it was moved that: The 2026 Proposed Budget (as presented in 2025 Proposed Budget meeting handout) be approved.

Motion: Robbie Van Nest, on behalf of Budget Committee **Vote:** The motion carries.

IX. Closing hymn “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” vv.4-6

X. Closing Prayer and Benediction – Pastor Sarah McCann

XI. Adjournment- Autum Jennings at 11:57 am.

HOPE UCC 2027 MINISTRY TEAM NOMINATING SLATE

Bolded & yellow highlighted indicates new members for 2027.

CHURCH COUNCIL

Autum Jennings
Robbie Van Nest
Tim Mees
Jerry Webb
James Beal
Fred McCall
Kristine Wentzien
David Moss
Drew Florian
DeeDee Yanczer
Katherine Fritz
Lonny Davis

UCC MISSOURI MID-SOUTH CONFERENCE & ST. LOUIS ASSOCIATION

Carolyn Mulhall
Diane Muehlenbeck

Clergy Delegates – All persons in good standing with, and authorized for ministry (licensed, commissioned or ordained) by one of the three associations within the Conference: Sarah McCann, Tom Haller, Gail Geisel, Meredith Jackson, Donna Farrar

BUILDING & PROPERTY MINISTRY TEAM

Ethan Hale
Ron Geisel
Randy Hall
Eric Jennings
Max Ryan
John Whitacre
Joyce Edinger – Friend
Ron Zimmer – Friend
Bethel Hale – Friend
Don Hanson – Friend
Shawn Ryan – Friend
Kathy Swaller – Friend

STEWARDSHIP & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MINISTRY TEAM

Autum Jennings
Andy Karcher
Kathleen Mees
Jim Richmann
Bridget Rapp (Friend)

FINANCE & INSURANCE MINISTRY TEAM

Dan Emerson
Kay Thurman
Robbie Van Nest
Sue Rainer
Kristine Wentzien
Lonny Davis
Ron Zimmer
Larry Gooden
Andy Karcher
James Beal

ONE BODY MINISTRY TEAM

Andrea Aughinbaugh
Paul Conner
Carol Zimmer
Lynn Bodicky
Kathy Hall
Susan Meyer
Jerry Webb
Jen Pacheco
Penny Steffen (Friend)
David Moss (Friend)
Gail Geisel (Friend)
Dave Porterfield (Friend)
Donna Farrar (Friend)

OUTREACH & JUSTICE MINISTRY TEAM

Clint McCann
Lonny Davis
Drew Florian
Katherine Fritz
Randy Hall
Ranee Lodes
Diane Muehlenbeck
Carolyn Mulhall
Bridget Rapp
Vicky Moss
Katherine Swaller
Robbie Van Nest
Ron Zimmer
Andrea Aughinbaugh – Friend
Tiffany Beardslee – Friend
Ken DeNeal – Friend
Anna Mennerick – Friend
Gail Geisel - Friend

PASTORAL & STAFF RELATIONS MINISTRY TEAM

Emma Aughinbaugh
Dan Fagnani
Lynne McCall
Kay Thurman
Donna Farrar
Tom Haller (Friend)

YOUTH & CHILDREN MINISTRY TEAM

Sara Karcher
Liz Buck
Bethel Hale
Tim Mees
Kathy Hall – Friend
Kristine Wentzien – Friend
Carol Zimmer - Friend

WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Jim Threlkeld
Denise Buck
DeeDee Yanczer
Donna Farrar

Outreach Ministry Actuals Through September 30, 2026

Account Name	Received YTD
OCWM (OUR CHURCH'S WIDER MISSION)	7,593.09
ST. LOUIS ASSOCIATION	2,882.67
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST LOCAL MINISTRIES	
Camp MoVal	
Eden Seminary	400.00
Emmaus Homes	
Every Child's Hope	220.00
Shannondale	
UCC Habitat for Humanity	180.00
Unleashing Potential (Neighborhood Houses)	200.00
TOTAL LOCAL MINISTRIES	1,000.00
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NATIONAL MINISTRIES	
One Great Hour of Sharing	1,551.83
Strengthen the Church	335.00
Neighbors in Need	200.00
Christmas Fund (Veterans of the Cross)	
TOTAL NATIONAL MINISTRIES	2,086.83
OTHER MINISTRIES	
All Among Us	160.00
Children's Mission (Heifer International)	70.00
Crop Hunger Walk	2,030.00
CWS Blanket Sunday	750.00
Doorways	100.00
Gateway ONA	340.00
Heifer International	165.75
Isaiah 58 Ministries	1,000.00
Isaiah 58 Ministries Bridge Bread	2,530.00
Isaiah 58 Ministries Buy-a-Bird	
Isaiah 58 Ministries Capital Campaign	3,000.00
Isaiah 58 Ministries Souper Bowl	866.52
Lydia's House	100.00
Outreach Miscellaneous	1,829.00
Welcome Neighbor STL Organization (Financial Support)	1,380.00
Welcome Neighbor STL Lunch	1,320.00
TOTAL OTHER MINISTRIES	15,641.27
TOTAL OUTREACH	29,203.86

2027 Proposed Budget / 2026 Actuals through September 30, 2026						
	2027 Proposed Budget	2026 Budget	% Change	2026 YTD Budget	2026 YTD Actual	2026 YTD Actual vs. YTD Budget
INCOME						
Weekly Operating Fund Offerings	\$280,000.00	\$240,000.00	16.67%	\$180,000.00	\$203,793.10	\$23,793.10
Contributions to Building Use	\$22,100.00	\$15,400.00	43.51%	\$11,550.00	\$17,064.00	\$5,514.00
Corporate Matching Funds	\$3,000.00	\$300.00	900.00%	\$225.00	\$3,390.06	\$3,165.06
TRANSFERS						
Endowment Fund Earnings - Operating Fund Support	\$9,000.00	\$6,500.00	38.46%	\$4,875.00	\$0.00	(\$4,875.00)
Endowment Fund	\$0.00	\$20,643.65	n/a	\$15,482.74	\$0.00	(\$15,482.74)
Rueweller Memorial Fund	\$49,997.39	\$66,696.74	-26.24%	\$50,022.56	\$0.00	(\$50,022.56)
TOTAL INCOME AND TRANSFERS	\$364,097.39	\$349,540.39	4.16%	\$262,155.30	\$224,247.16	(\$37,908.14)
PERSONNEL EXPENSES						
Pastor McCann's Salary and Housing Allowance	\$90,383.00	\$90,383.00	0.00%	\$67,787.25	\$73,570.39	\$5,783.14
Pastor McCann's Insurance/Pension/Expenses	\$29,957.62	\$25,073.62	19.48%	\$18,805.22	\$17,213.01	(\$1,592.21)
Pastoral Care Minister Compensation	\$5,000.00	\$2,000.00	150.00%	\$1,500.00	\$400.00	(\$1,100.00)
Director of Children's Ministries Compensation	\$8,480.00	\$8,233.00	3.00%	\$6,174.75	\$6,326.77	\$152.02
Director of Music Compensation	\$33,094.00	\$32,130.00	3.00%	\$24,097.50	\$24,691.17	\$593.67
Director of Music - Education Reimbursement	\$800.00	\$800.00	0.00%	\$600.00	\$0.00	(\$600.00)
Director of Children's Music Compensation	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	0.00%	\$2,700.00	\$2,700.00	\$0.00
Office Administrator Compensation	\$19,275.00	\$18,713.00	3.00%	\$14,034.75	\$14,380.49	\$345.74
Social Media Strategy Contractor Compensation	\$7,200.00	\$7,200.00	0.00%	\$5,400.00	\$5,400.00	\$0.00
Contract Bookkeeper Compensation	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	0.00%	\$4,500.00	\$1,964.50	(\$2,535.50)
Building Caretaker Compensation (Ethan Hale)	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	0.00%	\$4,500.00	\$5,632.50	\$1,132.50
Employee Benefits Compensation Expenses	\$6,332.00	\$6,332.00	0.00%	\$4,749.00	\$4,997.38	(\$248.38)
TOTAL PERSONNEL EXPENSES	\$216,121.62	\$206,464.62	4.68%	\$154,848.47	\$157,276.21	2,427.74

2027 Proposed Budget / 2026 Actuals through September 30, 2026						
	2027 Proposed Budget	2026 Budget	% Change	2026 YTD Budget	2026 YTD Actual	2026 YTD Actual vs. YTD Budget
MINISTRY, PROGRAM AND DELEGATE EXPENSES						
Adult Education Program	\$200.00	\$200.00	0.00%	\$150.00	\$0.00	(\$150.00)
Church Council Expenses	\$400.00	\$400.00	0.00%	\$300.00	\$1,000.00	700.00
Conference & Association Delegates	\$150.00	\$150.00	0.00%	\$112.50	\$0.00	(\$112.50)
Outreach & Justice Ministry	\$350.00	\$350.00	0.00%	\$262.50	\$0.00	(\$262.50)
Stewardship & Community Engagement Ministry	\$650.00	\$650.00	0.00%	\$487.50	\$49.99	(\$437.51)
Hospitality Ministry	\$250.00	\$250.00	0.00%	\$187.50	\$0.00	(\$187.50)
One Body Ministry	\$250.00	\$250.00	0.00%	\$187.50	\$0.00	(\$187.50)
Pastoral & Staff Relations Ministry	\$150.00	\$150.00	0.00%	\$112.50	\$360.00	\$247.50
Worship Ministry	\$5,175.00	\$5,175.00	0.00%	\$3,881.25	\$1,603.32	(\$2,277.93)
Youth & Children's Ministries	\$4,450.00	\$4,450.00	0.00%	\$3,337.50	\$3,039.14	(\$298.36)
TOTAL MINISTRY, PROGRAM AND DELEGATE EXPENSES	\$12,025.00	\$12,025.00	0.00%	\$9,018.75	\$6,052.45	(\$2,966.30)
OFFICE AND BUILDING OPERATIONS EXPENSES						
Inova Payroll Service	\$2,150.77	\$2,150.77	0.00%	\$1,613.08	\$1,447.43	(\$165.65)
Office Operations	\$9,550.00	\$8,900.00	7.30%	\$6,675.00	\$6,664.04	(\$10.96)
Building Operations	\$29,600.00	\$29,600.00	0.00%	\$22,200.00	\$22,046.15	(\$153.85)
Repairs & Maintenance	\$9,500.00	\$9,500.00	0.00%	\$7,125.00	\$6,554.33	(\$570.67)
Utilities	\$35,150.00	\$30,900.00	13.75%	\$23,175.00	\$26,846.33	\$3,671.33
Property & Liability Insurance	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	0.00%	\$37,500.00	\$36,711.00	(\$789.00)
TOTAL OFFICE AND BUILDING OPERATIONS EXPENSES	\$135,950.77	\$131,050.77	3.74%	\$98,288.08	\$100,269.28	\$1,981.20
TOTAL INCOME	\$364,097.39	\$349,540.39	4.16%	\$262,155.29	\$224,247.16	(\$37,908.13)
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$364,097.39	\$349,540.39	4.16%	\$262,155.29	\$263,597.94	\$1,442.65
INCOME LESS EXPENSES	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%	\$0.00	(\$39,350.78)	(\$39,350.78)