

# THE COMMUNICATOR

January 2025

*From the Pastor's Keyboard...*

*"Happy New Year"*

The week before Christmas, while many are wrapping presents and addressing Christmas cards, I was in the church office planning worship for the first few months of 2025. As of December 17, tentative worship plans for January, February and March were completed, hymns selected, and worship themes penciled in. Certainly, those worship plans are subject to change as the weeks unfold, as new music opportunities arise, and world situations become more complex; but first we must have a foundation on which to make those changes. The broad strokes are there, and the finishing touches will happen as we live into the new year.

This is the life of church work. Pastors are typically planning Lent while the rest of the church is celebrating Advent; and we plan Advent while others are purchasing their back-to-school gear. Living in the future is a must for efficient church management and worship planning, and it is a good idea for the rest of us in our day to day lives as well and in our intentional involvement with our faith.

But as we plan our future, we don't do so uninformed. We look to the past to inform us how we will behave in the future. Assessing the past year is vital to planning the next year. What worked this year, and what did not? What things were left undone that we would have rather done? In the life of the church, 2024 was a great year for CUCC, for our ministries and our work together; but what could we have done to have made it even better?

As we enter 2025, I would encourage you to have this same sort of outlook: planning ahead for the future, informed by the past. What goals do you have for 2025? How can you make plans now to get there? How does your faith figure into those plans? How can you be helpful and influential in the church as we live into 2025?

There are several ways to live into the future. One way is to plan ahead, set goals and objectives, and identify benchmarks on the way to reaching your goals. Another is to just drift through life, letting the ebb and flow of culture push us along the way. Obviously, I advocate the former. But sometimes, we are good at setting goals in our professional life, our family life, but not in our faith life. God gets the leftovers as we drift through our faith.

It is a New Year and for some, it is time to set New Year Resolutions. As we do so, let us make sure that faith goals are part of our resolutions. What can we "resolve" to do to bring us closer to God? Intentional time spent in Bible Study or prayer? Commitment to participation in worship? Serving God in intentional ways, such as working at Loaves and Fishes, Room at the Inn, Ronald McDonald House, or the Food Bank? Make God a part of your New Year Resolutions, and it will be a great 2025, indeed!

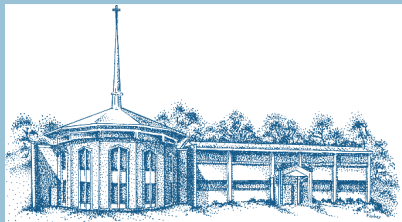
## **Some exciting things happening at CUCC in 2025:**

- Coffee and conversation with Pastor Rick: I plan to schedule frequent times at local coffee shops to visit with church members in a casual setting to talk about whatever comes up; church, Bible, culture, etc. The first round will be at 2:00 p.m. on January 6, 13, 20 & 27 and February 3 at Toasty Goat Coffee Company. Come visit! All are welcome. Future sessions will be scheduled as the year progresses.
- COMO Mission Experience: This summer, we will have youth travelling to CUCC to stay at our church and do mission work in Columbia. It will be an exciting way for us to interact with others, and enable God's mission work in the world.
  - Trip to Chiapas: We will participate in another mission immersion experience with our partners in Chiapas this June! See page 16 for more details.
  - Ongoing partnership with Scouting America: Our relationship with "our scouts" will be developed even further this year with shared activities and worship opportunities. Watch for ways you can be part of this relationship!
  - Team Earth: There will be more opportunities this year to learn more about ways we can live more sustainably and respect God's gift of Creation



We hope you will jump on board and be part of the excitement at CUCC in 2025! Make a resolution now to join in the fun!

*-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

[Shelly Adams](#)  
Student Pastor

[Casey Wood](#)  
Music Coordinator

[Steven Jannetti](#)  
Organist/Accompanist

[Alexandra Roper](#)  
Office Administrator

[Erika Maltzbarger](#)  
Director, Little One's Day Out

[Caleb Berry](#)  
Custodian

### Sunday Schedule:

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

### Office Hours:

Monday through Friday  
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Phone:  
(573) 445-7931

Email:  
[office@columbiaucc.com](mailto:office@columbiaucc.com)

Website:  
[www.columbiaucc.com](http://www.columbiaucc.com)



### SUNDAY MORNING SAFETY

For the safety and security of our church, and the people present, a Church Council member is available in the Gathering Area each Sunday during worship. The Council Steward is available to greet visitors who arrive after worship has begun, assist those who may not feel well, answer questions and give directions to people who need to step out of worship, and monitor the Gathering Area as needed.

The Nurture & Education Ministry Team has been talking to our children and youth about being safe at church, including walking - not running - inside our church building, and staying only in the Gathering Area or the sanctuary during Worship. We ask that parents and guardians help reinforce these safety standards and ensure that our children and youth follow these guidelines.

### COFFEE AND CONVERSATION WITH PASTOR RICK

Let's meet up for coffee! Mondays in January, Pastor Rick will be hanging out at the Toasty Goat Coffee Company at 515 Scott Blvd. from 2:00-3:30 or so. Come by and visit and talk about whatever is on your mind! Maybe the discussion will revolve around the previous Sunday's sermon, maybe current events, Bible questions, or things happening in the life of the church. Whatever you want to talk about, the Toasty Goat is the place! Conversation is free, but you'll have to buy your own drink!



Pastor Rick will be at the Toasty Goat 1/6, 1/13, 1/20, 1/27 and 2/3 for coffee and conversation. We hope to see you there!

### YOU CAN HELP PUBLICIZE COLUMBIA UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST!

One of the greatest challenges for our congregation is our location – many people do not know we are here. Our new signage helps; but social media publicity would help even more. YOU can help make this a reality!

Two ways you can help: first of all, give us a 5-star review on Google! To do so [CLICK HERE](#). This will take you to a "Google Search" of CUCC. Click "Google Reviews" and "write a review." This will give you the opportunity to "review" our church. A five star review will help direct others to our church, and will cause our church to "pop up" more prominently on searches. The other way to help is to "share" our CUCC posts on Facebook. Don't just "like" them, "share" them. If you "share" our Facebooks posts, you will exponentially increase our social media presence and advertise our church to a wider community of people. Get the word out – share the Good News! Don't let CUCC remain the best kept secret in town!

# Sunday Volunteer Schedule for January

Date	Greeter	Usher	Worship Leader	Tech Booth
01/05	Jolene Kirchhoff	Charlie Marcks Phillip Neale	Jessica Lucas	Brent Marcks Josh Muench
01/12		Keith Birkes Deborah Long- Birkes	Pat Forward	
01/19		Christine Staelens Llona Weiss	Audrey Lasley	
01/26		Pat Forward Jim Loveless	Sue Ann Schaefer	Judi Privitt Doug Privitt

## January Birthdays

<i>Dorean Crowley - 01/01</i>	<i>Riley Hayward - 01/01</i>	<i>Brian Marcks - 01/01</i>
<i>Eloy Montenegro - 01/01</i>	<i>Kristi Saylor - 01/01</i>	<i>Carol Duermeyer - 01/03</i>
<i>Fred Malicoat - 01/04</i>	<i>Mahree Skala - 01/05</i>	<i>Blake Forward - 01/07</i>
<i>Sarah Smith - 01/14</i>	<i>Lydia Whitacre - 01/14</i>	<i>Steve Devenney - 01/15</i>
<i>Kristy Hayward - 01/15</i>	<i>Dennis Marienfeld - 01/15</i>	<i>Joan Schmidt - 01/16</i>
<i>Asa Zumwalt - 01/16</i>	<i>Judy Kaiser - 01/17</i>	<i>Makayla Smith - 01/18</i>
<i>Donna Marsh - 01/20</i>	<i>Jessica Wolfe - 01/20</i>	<i>Bret Arms - 01/21</i>
<i>Kalyn Brookshire - 01/21</i>	<i>Kasper Ramirez - 01/21</i>	<i>Stephanie Hall - 01/22</i>
<i>Brandon Schoeneberg - 01/22</i>	<i>Seth Smith - 01/22</i>	<i>Jolene Hackman - 01/26</i>
<i>Polly Fuller - 01/28</i>	<i>Dartanian McBane - 01/28</i>	<i>Sue Ann Schaefer - 01/28</i>
<i>Jane Beckett - 01/30</i>	<i>Alice Moon - 01/31</i>	

# Moderator's Moment

## Which Comes First? Gratitude or Stewardship?

(Shelly Adams was recently elected by the Church Council to fill the vacant position of Finance & Stewardship Ministry Team Chair. To introduce her to the congregation, she will be writing the Moderator's Moment this month.)

Which comes first - gratitude or stewardship? That's likely a chicken-or-the-egg question. And perhaps it doesn't matter. I believe that starting with either will lead to both.

Our lives are gifts from God, gifts that arise from God's generosity and love. That's something to be grateful for, isn't it? But gratitude isn't a cup we can fill once then draw on for the rest of our lives.

Instead, gratitude is a lifelong practice. I recently read an article online about a woman whose life was transformed by a very simple act: writing down 1,000 things for which she is grateful. This woman had suffered much tragedy. Her younger sister was crushed under a truck's wheels. She mourned alongside her brother-in-law as he and his spouse buried two of their infant sons. She raised a large family on a limited income. But recognizing the many little blessings she receives - a sunrise, a cup of hot coffee, a baby's belly laugh - changed her life. Her gratitude and her openness to seeing things for which she ought be grateful have made her more present to her loved ones, and brought her closer to God.

So how do we cultivate - or grow - our gratitude? There are lots of ways: prayer, looking for the positive in all situations, expressing gratitude to those you love, recalling things for which you are grateful at the end of each day, and maybe even writing down the 1,000 blessings for which you are grateful.

We are called to gratitude: *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

And gratitude can inspire us all to lean into stewardship in new ways - time stewardship, talent stewardship, environmental stewardship, spiritual stewardship, and financial stewardship. Our world needs our gratitude and our stewardship - right now, perhaps more than ever - to serve God, creation, and one another.

New Year's blessings to all!

Respectfully Submitted,  
Shelly Adams



## COLUMBIA UCC CHURCH COUNCIL

<b>Moderator:</b>	Kurt Heine	<a href="mailto:heinekurt@gmail.com">heinekurt@gmail.com</a>
<b>Vice Moderator:</b>	Jerry Kiesling	<a href="mailto:rollzierp50@gmail.com">rollzierp50@gmail.com</a>
<b>Secretary:</b>	Alethea Tennill	<a href="mailto:atennill108@gmail.com">atennill108@gmail.com</a>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Deborah Long Birkes	<a href="mailto:dlong@elon.edu">dlong@elon.edu</a>
<b>Recording Treasurer:</b>	Christine Staelens	<a href="mailto:tigersfour@gmail.com">tigersfour@gmail.com</a>
<b>Building &amp; Grounds:</b>	Ted Dachroeden	<a href="mailto:gpadoc4gd@gmail.com">gpadoc4gd@gmail.com</a>
<b>Fellowship &amp; Hospitality:</b>	Mary Lorber-Solt	<a href="mailto:eldercow@gmail.com">eldercow@gmail.com</a>
<b>Finance &amp; Stewardship:</b>	Shelly Adams	<a href="mailto:shellyraeadams@gmail.com">shellyraeadams@gmail.com</a>
<b>Inclusion &amp; Affirmation:</b>	Tricia Price	<a href="mailto:tricialprice@gmail.com">tricialprice@gmail.com</a>
<b>Little One's Day Out:</b>	Kristin Veteto	<a href="mailto:kristinnoelveteto@gmail.com">kristinnoelveteto@gmail.com</a>
<b>Membership &amp; Care:</b>	Judi Privitt	<a href="mailto:judiprivitt811@gmail.com">judiprivitt811@gmail.com</a>
<b>Nurture &amp; Education:</b>	Lena Muench	<a href="mailto:cfg323@yahoo.com">cfg323@yahoo.com</a>
<b>Outreach &amp; Advocacy:</b>	Mark Duncan	<a href="mailto:markduncan2@mchsi.com">markduncan2@mchsi.com</a>
<b>Worship &amp; Music:</b>	Jedd Schneider	<a href="mailto:elusive4thtenor@icloud.com">elusive4thtenor@icloud.com</a>
<b>Pastor:</b>	Rev. Rick Oberle	<a href="mailto:rick@columbiaucc.com">rick@columbiaucc.com</a>



# CUCC Church Council

CUCC Council Meeting - November 19, 2024. 6:30 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Kurt Heine via zoom. Pastor Rick opened with a prayer. Present: Kurt Heine, Jerry Kiesling, Deborah Long-Birkes, Christine Staelens, Ted Dachroeden, Mary Lorber-Solt, Tricia Price, Kristin Veteto, Judi Privitt, Mark Duncan, Jedd Schneider, Pastor Rick Oberle, Alethea Tennill, and Shelly Adams. Jerry Keisling made a motion to approve Shelly Adams as the new Finance and Stewardship chair. Judi Privitt seconded the motion. Motion passed. Judi Privitt made a motion to approve the agenda with a second from Mary Lorber-Solt. The motion passed. The minutes were not available at this meeting and will be approved in December. Mark Duncan will discuss the next chapters in *A Real Good Church* in December.

## **Unfinished Business:**

- \* New light for the sign at the front of church: Ted has a quote from Fred Malicoat that the lights will hang down from the top of the sign and will not exceed \$500.
- \* Forensic Financial Review: Christine is working on getting the information needed to complete this item.
- \* Advent Banquet: December 8. We need volunteers to help in the kitchen who are not involved in the choirs on that date. Hope to set up the table decorations on Saturday, December 7.
- \* COMO Mission Experience update: We have a flyer to advertise the CoMo Mission Experience starting in Summer 2025. This is to provide groups the opportunity to stay at our church during the week and interact with our mission partners during the day. Pastor Rick and Alexandra are working on meeting with our mission partners to determine what they need our help with and time needed from the participants.

## **New Business:**

- \* Bus Wrap: Membership and Care committee has received an anonymous donation to pay for the graphics on our new bus to be changed to our name. We have received some bids. The committee recommends we accept the bid from Image 360 and accept the donation to change the name on the bus to our church. Motion passed.
- \* 2023 financial review is done and report is attached.
- \* Pastor's Report: Pastor's Report is attached.

## **Ministry Reports:**

- \* Building & Grounds: Ted put TV sets in classrooms.
- \* Fellowship & Hospitality: 43 people were at the Fall Festival, including Scouts and their families. 250 bags were made for Trunk or Treat and they needed more bags. Suggested making 500 bags for next year. Served 54 participants at the Veterans Breakfast. They had two speakers present.
- \* Finance & Stewardship: Shelly Adams is the new chair.
- \* Inclusion & Affirmation: 27 people showed up for movie and pizza night.
- \* LODO: LODO is included as a preschool for CoMo Gives starting December 1. Also we are saddened to learn that Erika has submitted her resignation. She will stay until the end of the school year or until we can find a replacement, whichever comes first.
- \* Membership & Care: Report is attached. Care ministry teams are going well.
- \* Nurture & Education: Report is attached.
- \* Outreach & Advocacy: Report is attached.
- \* Worship & Music: Hanging of greens will be November 30.

Pastor Rick closed us in prayer. Motion to adjourn by Ted Dachroeden, second by Jedd Schneider. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alethea Tennill, Secretary



# Finance & Stewardship Ministry Team

CUCC is a wonderful Church with a capable and dedicated Pastor and staff, a membership that always supports our Church, industrious ministry teams, projects that support our community, and an open and affirming Christian philosophy that is reflected in everything we do. The Finance and Stewardship Ministry Team has a simple and straightforward task which is to explain to our congregation our financial status, to communicate our church's needs, and to offer advice on the ways we can meet those financial needs.

In recent years we have asked for additional funds to renovate our sanctuary and generally improve our physical building and grounds. You have generously given us everything we have asked for. 2024 has been a year that we have not needed to ask our members to support capital needs as we have in past years.

As I write this article I don't know if we will meet our Joyful Giving Budget but we are close. We are fortunate to have reasonable reserves if we miss our goal but I think we will be successful.

A very important objective in 2024 was to bring attention to Planned Giving opportunities beyond our annual financial support. Particularly important is estate planning which involves remembering CUCC in your will. We have distributed information about various planned giving options. Every Sunday you will find in the back of each chair a detailed discussion of those opportunities. Please keep these options in mind.

We have a very capable Chair for the F&S ministry team in Shelly Adams. The members of our team are long time CUCC members who are always happy to discuss finances with you and answer any questions you may have. To all members and friends of CUCC thank you for your wonderful support and we all look forward to another great year in 2025!

Respectfully Submitted,  
Keith Birkes



## Financial Update

	Actual	Budget	Over/ (Under)
November Income	\$40,997.95	\$33,650.00	\$7,347.95
November Expenses	\$33,843.82	\$30,616.38	\$3,227.44
YTD Income	\$332,264.57	\$332,200.00	\$64.57
YTD Expenses	\$376,432.92	\$354,553.93	\$21,878.99
Surplus/(Deficit)	<b>(-\$44,168.35)</b>	<b>(-\$22,353.93)</b>	<b>(-\$21,814.42)</b>
November Joyful Giving	\$39,878.95	\$32,500.00	\$7,378.95
YTD Joyful Giving	\$318,625.45	\$319,500.00	<b>(-\$874.55)</b>

## Worship Attendance

Date	Attendance
11/03	103
11/10	108
11/17	87
11/24	92

## CUCC ONLINE GIVING

You can now give online to Columbia United Church of Christ through our online giving partner, Kindrid!

There are several ways to make a one time or recurring gift through Kindrid:

1. Click on this link (or type into your web browser): <https://www.kindridgiving.com/app/giving/cucc>
2. Access the Kindrid giving site through our CUCC website: [www.columbiaucc.com](http://www.columbiaucc.com) and click on the "Donate to CUCC" button.
3. Text "GIVE" to 573-240-4041 and follow the prompts to set up your one time or recurring gift.

# Inclusion and Affirmation Ministry Team

An annual event since 1994, the Columbia Values Diversity Celebration honors the life and teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Hosted by the Office of Cultural Affairs, the celebration includes live music, speakers, artistic performances and presentation of the annual Columbia Values Diversity Awards. These awards, presented to an individual/family and an organization/group, recognize those who significantly impact cultural understanding by fostering individual dignity, racial equality and peacemaking. Additionally, students are invited to submit original writings for possible publication in a booklet or feature in a City of Columbia video. Highlighting the rich diversity of our community, this year's theme is "Embracing the Dream: Columbia Commits to Action." This year's celebration is Wednesday, January 29, 2025, from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. at the Holiday Inn Expo Center. Let Pastor Rick or Tricia Price know if you'd like to join our table.

You are invited to attend our next meeting, Sunday, January 5, 2025, after church. We will meet in the Adult Bible Study classroom upstairs.

## 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.

# Membership & Care Ministry Team

## Join me in welcoming our newest members at Columbia UCC!

Welcome to **Bert Wrinkle**. She grew up in Eldon, Missouri. Bert enjoys sewing; she was a tailor at Bingham's for 50 years. Bert has a son who lives in Florida, and a daughter who lives in Iowa. She was drawn to Columbia UCC because of her friend, Kitty Rogers.

Welcome to **Ashley Nicole Ramirez**. Ashley is the spouse of Kasper Ramirez. Ashley grew up in Salem, Illinois. Ashley is a lead preschool teacher. She enjoys singing, playing video games, watching Marvel movies, as well as vacationing in Disneyland. She was drawn to Columbia UCC through Quorus.

Welcome to **Kasper Adrian Ramirez**. Kasper is the spouse of Ashley Nicole Ramirez. Kasper grew up in Los Angeles, CA, and is a Starbucks manager. He enjoys drawing, artistic things and video games. He was drawn to Columbia UCC through Quorus (his wife, Ashley, sings in Quorus.)

**Tracie Elizabeth Huffman** was born in Baldwin City, KS. She is a school teacher and counselor. She has a twin brother, Travis, and a sister, Amber. She graduated from Stephens College. Amber was drawn to Columbia UCC through Quorus as well.

**We are delighted to have you at Columbia UCC.**

The Membership and Care Ministry Team's next meeting will be January 13 at 5:00 p.m. All are welcome; come and join us!

Respectfully  
Submitted,  
Judi Privitt  
Membership & Care



# LODO Ministry Team

December was a month full of Christmas joy! Our Christmas program filled the sanctuary with LODO families as our students participated in singing praises to the baby Jesus. Many thanks to our staff for their hard work preparing for the program, Pastor Rick for leading us in prayer, and Judi Privitt for running the sound booth!

LODO will return from Christmas Break on Monday, January 6. We look forward to beginning the second part of our school year and all the enjoyments to come in the new year!

LODO is currently looking to fill two open teacher positions in our 3-4's and 1-2's classrooms. If you know of a great candidate for these positions, please refer them to the employment section of the [website https://www.columbiaucc.com/lodoemployment](https://www.columbiaucc.com/lodoemployment) and have them contact Erika at [littleonesdayout@yahoo.com](mailto:littleonesdayout@yahoo.com).

In Love and Laughter,  
Erika Maltsbarger



## January Learning Themes



**"Even the smallest person can  
change the course of the  
future."**

- J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Lord of the Rings"

LittleYellowStar

## LODO DIRECTOR SEARCH TO BEGIN IN JANUARY

The CUCC Church Council sadly received a letter from Erika Maltsbarger at our November Council meeting informing us that this would be her last year of employment with our Little One's Day Out Pre-school Ministry. After seventeen years as director, teacher, and LODO parent, she has come to the point in her life where it is time to step away and spend more time focused on her health and her family. We are very sad to see her go! She will be here through the end of this school year.

The Church Council appointed Alethea Tennill, [Kristin Veteto](#), and Pastor Rick to begin a search for a new director, which will commence in earnest in January. We are working on updating the director job description, wording for the advertisement, and how to best publicize the position. Talk to Kristin Veteto if you have any questions!

## IMPORTANT LODO DATES

LODO Back in Session  
January 6

MLK Jr. Day - School Closed  
January 20

## THE LODO MINISTRY TEAM

Lydia Whitacre  
Christine Mseke  
Susan Dunham  
Darla Privitt  
Carissa Graves  
Kim Oberle  
[Kristin Veteto](#), Chair



# Nurture & Education Ministry Team

Wow, what a December! Our entire congregation did SO MUCH this last month to support the kids and youth of CUCC. Thank you!

Our **Christmas Program** was wonderful! Thank you again to Lindsey Oberle as well as Kristin and Adam Veteto for taking charge and executing it flawlessly! This is always such a joyful part of the Christmas season. Thank you to Men's Fellowship for the treat bags for the kiddos and youth, those are ALWAYS a highlight!



**Cookies by the Pound** was a great success because of YOU! That's right, YOU! Whether you provided goodies to sell, bought some, or admired all of the deliciousness, thank you! Thank you, also, to our youth group for preparing different treats. We had lots of fun at "Sugarpalooza" (what we named our treat-making gathering!) When it was all said and done, YOU helped raise roughly \$600 for the Nurture and Education Designated Fund, which supports all sorts of things for our kiddos and youth.



**SUNDAY MORNING**

**Sunday School for ages 3-12th grade will resume on Sunday, January 5.** We will celebrate Epiphany in our classes! Make plans to join us - and don't forget we'll take care of breakfast. The fun starts at 9:00 a.m.

**Adult Bible Study:** Sundays, 9:00-10:00 a.m. Upstairs in Education Wing, last room on the left. Meets weekly.

**Sunday School:** Sundays, 9:00-10:00 a.m., ages 3-12th grade. PreK-2nd Grade and 3rd-5th Grade classes upstairs in Education Wing, 6th-12th Grade downstairs in Youth Lounge.

Help us, please! We need help filling openings for Sunday morning class leaders and greeters/floaters. We've made things easy-peasy. Please consider helping! Here's the link to sign up for January and February dates (you can also scan the QR code): [CLICK HERE](#)



I am always happy to field ANY questions or ideas that you may have! My cell is 573-881-2571.

Cheers to a new year, full of possibilities for our learners of all ages!

With Love,  
Lena Muench  
Nurture & Education  
Ministry Team Chair



## HOW TO FIGHT RACISM BOOK STUDY CONTINUES IN JANUARY

We began studying the book, "How to Fight Racism" by Jamar Tisby back in September, looking at the first three chapters and the introduction. We will continue our study in January with part two: "Relationships." The topics include "How to do Reconciliation Right" (Chapter four); "How to Make Friends" (Chapter five); and "How to Build Diverse Communities" (Chapter six). We will study these at 9:00 a.m. on January 12, 19 & 26 in the Fellowship Hall. Each session includes a video we will watch and then discuss the book.

If you would like a copy of the book, there are a few available in the church office, or you can order it online. Even if you don't read the book, however, the study and discussion will be very rich. Come and join us! [Pastor Rick](#) will be leading the study; let him know if you have any questions!

# Outreach & Advocacy Ministry Team

Present: Mark Duncan, Shelly Adams, Jessica Jenks, Keith Birkes, Deborah Birkes, Pastor Rick Oberle, and Judi Privitt. Meeting called to order at 6:37 p.m. Mark began with words of encouragement, light, and hope through various quotes, sayings, and Bible verses. He then led a prayer. Minutes of the September 10 meeting were read. Shelly moved the minutes be approved with a second from Keith. Minutes approved. The next meeting will be on December 9 at 1:30 p.m. It will be a working meeting to sort and organize the VAC Christmas donations.

## Ongoing Business

- \* Thank you notes for donations were shared.
- \* CROP Walk update: Jessica reported the Walk Committee is meeting the following evening and final numbers will be distributed. She will submit an article for the Communicator announcing the results. So far CUCC has collected \$3,073.76.
- \* Exploring Creation Justice Team: Shelly reported the November 17 “Lunch and Learn” topic is energy efficiency. There will be a speaker from the city.
- \* The last “Lunch and Learn” on recycling had about 30 people in attendance. There is a field trip to the landfill on November 13, leaving from the church at 9:30 a.m.
- \* Missourians for Constitutional Freedom: abortion is legalized with the passage of Amendment 3.
- \* Christmas in August: \$495 donated.
- \* Strengthen the Church: \$542 donated.

## New Business:

- \* Goals for Outreach and Advocacy:
  - \* Support the building and function of The Opportunity Campus to resource our community.
  - \* Include The Center Project, an LGBTQ community center, with Outreach funds.
  - \* Become a Creation Justice Congregation through our exploration of the issues lead by Team Earth.
- \* Special Mission Project for 2024: The Opportunity Campus donation of \$5,000 has consent of the Council and approved to fund in full.
- \* VAC Christmas: CUCC will sponsor 45 individuals. LODO and the Scouts will be sponsors as well. Food money is not required this year. However, monetary donations can be made through Kindrid Giving or a check payable to VAC or cash. The deadline for gifts and donations is December 8 with delivery on December 11.

## Team Reports

- \* Alpha Hart Lewis: none
- \* Loaves and Fishes: none
- \* Food Bank: CUCC service cancelled for November and December due to conflict in dates with special events and lack of availability of other dates. CUCC work will resume in January 2025.

## Mission Moments

- \* November 17: Bone Marrow speaker. VAC reminder of sponsorship, monetary donations and deadline by Pastor Rick.
- \* November 24: Shelly will report on what has been done and what is upcoming for the Earth Team.
- \* December 1: VAC reminder that gifts and monetary donation are due December 8 by Pastor Rick.
- \* December 8 and December 15: Announcement that LODO is now a recipient option through CoMo Gives.
- \* December 24: In conjunction with our Green mission, Judi made a motion that the Columbia Center for Urban Agriculture receive the Christmas Eve offering. With a second by Keith, the motion passed.

Pastor Rick closed with a prayer and meeting was adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

Mark Duncan,  
Outreach and Advocacy



# Outreach & Advocacy Ministry Team

The December 16 meal at L&F consisted of lasagna, spaghetti (made and provided by Mary Lorber and Audrey Lasley,) lettuce salad (provided by Patty Beeson,) and leftovers from our Christmas banquet. The PB&J's were made and provided by Mahree Skala. Servers for the evening were Tom & Mary Lorber, Debby (Mary's sister,) Jo Ellen Grace, Doug & Judi Privitt, Patty Beeson, and Jim Loveless. It was a busy evening and we had approximately 166 servings. Thank you so much to everyone who volunteered!



Pastor Rick and Llona attended the Columbia Public Schools (CPS) Faith-based Advisory Committee meeting on December 5, 2024, where we talked about CPS's Annual Performance Report (APR.) CPS's APR rating in 2022 was 70.0% and rose to 86.5% in 2024! This was accomplished with a lot of work on the part of teachers, students, and staff. CPS is one of the fastest growing public school districts in the state and CPS had the highest APR growth among its 15 comparison districts. These accomplishments were under the leadership of Dr. Brian Yearwood, who recently resigned from CPS, but CPS will continue with its growth processes and with the mission, vision, and goals with the Interim Superintendent, Dr. Chris Belcher. It is part of our job as an Advisory Committee to help communicate with our faith communities the happenings in CPS and look for supportive opportunities for our students.

Again, thank you CUCC members for your support of AHL through your donations (time and talents)! I delivered a monetary donation from a CUCC member earlier this month and AHL was so grateful!

Respectfully Submitted,  
Llona Weiss  
Liaison for CUCC to AHL



The CUCC Food Bank shift will resume on Tuesday, January 28 at 5:30 p.m. If you haven't tried this volunteer opportunity before, the new year is a perfect time to start! Email [Mahree Skala](mailto:Mahree.Skala) to join the team for this fun, productive activity to help those in need. We always have a great crew joining in the fun, and many hands make the workload lighter. Come serve with us in the new year!



## Fellowship & Hospitality

Greetings one and all. WOW! It's a New Year! So many possibilities, potential, and even expectations for the coming year, yet I am saddened, somewhat, to see the end of 2024. We had some good times, there was the 'duck dance,' pot luck dinners, a fish fry, fall festival, and our annual Advent Banquet, to mention a few. Yet the saying "out with the old, in with the new" has some merit. As we look back with fond memories, our intent should be to also look forward, to all the exciting possibilities awaiting us all. Pending interest shown, we will be planning a family game night at the end of this month: popcorn, hot chocolate, and fun times. It is something to look forward to in the dreary, cold month of January. So to enhance your experience, volunteer: set-up tables, help with food prep, or even help clean-up. It is always appreciated. A huge shout-out to everyone that helped clean up after the Advent Banquet- so much help and love everywhere! It makes me smile just thinking about it!

My favorite saying, "Many hands make light work."  
As always, be Blessed, be Grateful, and be Happy...

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary Lorber-Solt  
Ministry Team Chair



# Worship & Music Ministry Team

I hope you enjoyed our presentation of this year's Advent Cantata. Thank you to all the musicians who contributed their talents. A special thank you to Steve Jannetti and Gina Pierson who helped as collaborative pianists, and Jedd Schneider who sang as a tenor soloist. Additionally, we were very excited to be performing at services on Christmas Eve. I hope our music added to your Christmastime worship.

The month of December in the life of a musician tends to be very busy. We typically fill the month with many different types of work. We all sing in our home churches, but we typically get invitations to sing at other churches as well. Additionally, I do a lot of work as a pop keyboardist in party bands. This can mean family or corporate Christmas parties and even background music in shopping malls. For some, the sheer quantity of December-related music work can be overwhelming, and it can take away from the enjoyment of the season. But for me, I enjoy the business, as performing during the Christmas season is a way for me to give back to my community.

On Christmas Day, I flew back to Utah for a concert season with the ensemble I direct there, The Summit Singers. It is a 50-voice mixed ensemble, and we will be collaborating with the local high school and middle school choirs. At this concert, we premiered four new compositions of my own. We also featured a new composition from a local composer, Brigitta Broadbent.

While in Utah, I've also been asked to run workshops with a children's choral organization, TaVaCi located in Brigham City, Utah. This organization has 100 members between ages 5 -18 and has franchises across the Rocky Mountain Region.

I look forward to doing all this work, but also look forward to being back in Missouri in the middle of January to begin my final semester at the University of Missouri.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Casey Wood



## **EPIPHANY WORSHIP– JANUARY 5**

On January 5, we will celebrate Epiphany, the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus, based on the story found in Matthew 2:1-12. The term “Epiphany” means “a moment of sudden revelation or insight” and we believe that this act of worship, on behalf of the Magi, was the first “revelation” of the divine nature of the Christ child. This revelation was manifest in the royal gifts brought to the manger: Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh.

**As we celebrate this revelation and the gifts of the Magi on January 5, let us also bring our gifts to the manger to reveal our love for the ministries of Christ.** Please bring hygiene items: soap, shampoo, toothpaste, etc. to worship that day, and we will leave them at the foot of the manger. These gifts will be donated to our mission partners in Columbia. Thank you!

## **WELCOME TO QUORUS!**

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

Quorus will be using our facility for rehearsals in the coming months, and we will have an opportunity to work with them for upcoming performances. We hope to have a Quorus fundraiser here next spring, as well.

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

If you are interested in joining them or talking to Audra Sergal, their director and coordinator, [CLICK HERE](#).



# THANK YOU!

Thank you for your recent gift of \$1,206.00 to go toward distributing food to individuals who need it most in our 32-county service area.

As the holidays are well upon us, we remember families who are facing particularly difficult circumstances this time of year. However, it is because of generous supporters like you that we are able to help neighbors who are struggling to fill their tables this season and beyond.

Thank you for entrusting The Food Bank with your charitable donation. We will use your gift efficiently and effectively to provide vital nutrition to 100,000 neighbors per month.

Gratefully,  
Lindsay Young Lopez  
President and CEO of The Food Bank for Central & Northeast Missouri

Dear Congregation of Columbia United Church of Christ,

Thank you so very much for your generous donation. Your kindness will help us to house and feed many individuals in our community who are unsheltered. Your \$1,100.00 gift is so appreciated! Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Laura M. Bolerjack  
Board Member of Room at the Inn

Thank you for sending Christmas joy to Coyote Hill homes this year.

Thank you for donating to our Christmas Fund. Because of gifts like yours, we are able to fulfill the wish lists of 430 children. Merry Christmas!

Your friends at Coyote Hill

Dear CUCC and Church Council,

Thank you for your generous graduation gift. I cannot tell you how much it means to me. As you can imagine seminary is expensive! CUCC graciously awarded a scholarship for my tuition in 2023. That blew me away. I am truly grateful, not only for the gift but also for God leading me to CUCC and the wonderful people here. It is a special place, and I'm so glad I'm here.

Peace to you!  
Shelly Adams

Thanks for Your Generosity at Christmas!

CUCC members and friends sponsored 45 individuals in 12 households this year, so a lot of folks had a Merry Christmas because of you! We also collected \$1,095 for food vouchers and to assist even more people who weren't sponsored by anyone else. As followers of Christ, you have truly made a difference in so many lives.

Mahree Skala

# Team Earth

## Fear, Hope, and Action in the Changing of God's Creation

2023 was the hottest year on record. Greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, trapping the sun's heat, advancing global warming. Wildfires, droughts, heat waves, hurricanes, and deforestation are increasing in frequency and severity. Changing land-use (particularly increasing conversion of habitats into agricultural land,) is threatening the world's population of animals. More than 500 species of land animals are likely to be lost to extinction over the next 20 years.

In the midst of all of this, fear is natural. We fear for the wellbeing of God's creation. We fear for the marginalized peoples in the world who are experiencing the impacts of climate change much more than middle class Americans. We fear the changes we see in the natural places we love. And we fear the impact that climate change will have on our children, our grandchildren, and our great grandchildren.

But as Christians, we also have hope. In Romans 8:24-25, Paul writes, "For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." We care about creation because we are part of creation. We are inexorably intertwined in it. Hope for creation also means hope for ourselves.

We're all familiar with James 2:17 - "So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." We had a recent discussion in Adult Sunday School about James and Paul, and discussed how James isn't actually contradicting Paul's assertion that we are saved by faith alone. Rather, when we have faith, our works arise from that faith. In other words, our faith compels good works.

Just as faith inspires work, I believe that hope inspires action. Moving from fear to hope to action regarding the changing climate puts our faith in motion to mend and heal God's creation. As we do this, we build up God's community and work to eliminate the injustices in the use of the gifts of creation - water, land, and air. And as a bonus: the fear subsides and our hope expands.

Team Earth wishes you all hope, and action, in the New Year!

Respectfully Submitted,  
Shelly Adams



## TEAM EARTH LUNCH AND LEARN OPPORTUNITIES IN 2025

Team Earth met on December 1, 2024 with 11 members in attendance. Barry Kirchoff is still checking on the possibility of touring the Columbia Wastewater Facility. Earth Day is celebrated in April, and CUCC usually picks up trash along the highway at that time. We also talked about planting a tree on CUCC property. We discussed having more "Lunch and Learn's" in summer 2025 after worship services, having "green mission moments" during worship, having a UCC national speaker come speak to us on creation justice, posting photos of nature on the pre-church slide shows, having some worship services outside during appropriate weather, having a Native American worship service, educational opportunities about bugs and insects and their impact on earth, having a pollinator garden or rain garden on CUCC grounds, having a nutritionist talk to us about the true meaning and value of "organic," installing all LED light bulbs in the church, and motion light detectors.

We also discussed a tentative schedule for the Lunch and Learn events:  
(schedule is tentative, subject to change)

January 19: Gardening & Composting - Shelly  
February 16: The Science of Climate Change - Mahree  
March 16: Water and Climate Change - Llona  
May 18: Solar - Mahree

Respectfully Submitted,  
Llona Weiss



# Scouting America

SUPPORT SCOUTING AMERICA TROOP 4475

# Pancake

BREAKFAST

ADULTS

\$15

ALL YOU CAN EAT!

KIDS UNDER 10

\$5

Saturday  
January 11  
7am - 10am



Columbia United Church of Christ  
3201 Interstate 70 Dr NW  
Columbia MO



## EAGLE SCOUT AWARD EARNED BY CONNOR MALTSBARGER

Scouting America Troop 708 held an Honor Court on December 9, 2024 at which the rank of Eagle Scout was awarded to Connor Maltsbarger. Connor is the son of LODO Director Erika Maltsbarger and her husband, Bob. Bob also served as a scoutmaster for the troop, and is currently serving as training coordinator.

To earn the rank of Eagle Scout, a Scout must fulfill certain requirements. These requirements include a series of knowledge and skill advancements, earning at least 21 merit badges, and evidence of leadership skills. A candidate for Eagle Scout must serve in multiple leadership positions in the Troop, and must plan, develop, and lead others in a service project helpful to a religious institution, school, or other community organization not affiliated with Scouting America. An Eagle Scout candidate must also demonstrate that they live by the principles of the Scout Oath and Law in their daily life.

Connor's Eagle Scout project was to build the shelving units in the CUCC storage room. This project involved many challenging details, largely due to the curved walls of the room. A special jig had to be constructed to deal with the curvature. Connor organized this task, coordinated the helpers, and secured the materials needed.

Jim Smith, current Scoutmaster, presented Connor with the Bronze and Gold Palm signifying the Eagle Scout, along with the Eagle Scout neckerchief and slide, and other awards. Congratulations to Connor Maltsbarger, "our" Eagle Scout!



# International Missions

## CUCC IS WORKING IN INDONESIA

Located in Kupang, Indonesia, House of Hope is a shelter for former victims of human trafficking, providing a safe haven for emotional recovery and assistance with transitioning back to community life. The project is a ministry of Global Missions partner, the Evangelical Protestant Church of East Timor (GMIT). Because the experience of each candidate is unique, House of Hope takes a social work approach to assessing the social resources, needs, and interests of each participant. With personalized care, each woman has the support she needs to begin the healing process. The organization strives to provide hope and transformation, reflecting the love and teachings of Christ while fostering sustainable development and holistic well-being in the region.

Through [Global Ministries](#), CUCC is a partner in mission with the Evangelical Protestant Church of East Timor (GMIT) and, through them, we are actively working with many families in Indonesia. This month, please keep Global Ministries, GMIT, and the people of Indonesia in your prayers!



## MISSION WITH CHIAPAS– IMMERSION EXPERIENCE JUNE 18-25, 2025

Churches of the Missouri Mid-South Conference have travelled to Chiapas six times in the past twelve years, working alongside the [Institute for Intercultural Studies and Research](#), one of our Global Ministries Mission partners in Chiapas. We have worked alongside them in towns and villages, learning about the people of Chiapas and the ways of life in the communities of Chiapas. We have also helped construct a new facility on the grounds at [The Institute](#), a facility that has more than tripled their institutional capacity and ability to do ministry with the people of their communities.

[The Institute](#) is not the only Global Ministries Mission partner in Chiapas. On our last trip, we had the opportunity to work with another one of our Mission Partners, [Melel Xojobal](#), an agency that works solely with children in need. [Melel Xojobal](#) means “True Light” in the indigenous Tzotzil language, and they focus on being a light of hope for children whose only other alternative is the dark of hopelessness.

**Our next “Mission Trip” to Chiapas will be the summer of 2025! We will leave St. Louis on June 18 and return on June 25.** While we are in Chiapas, we will spend most of our time in the city of [San Cristobal](#) working with [The Institute](#) and Melel Xojobal. We will have the opportunity to see several indigenous museums, including the Chocolate Museum, and immerse ourselves in the culture of Chiapas. We will spend time in the marketplaces and worship at an indigenous church. We will learn about the life and context of the Indigenous Mayan communities that make up Chiapas, and we will even do some work, but work is not the focus of the trip. Education and relationship are the focus. The work will be suited for all abilities; all are welcome to come along, from age 16 up to age 90+! (Due to the nature of the trip, we are not encouraging anyone under 16 to participate.)

The cost for this trip is \$1,500. This includes airfare, lodging for 7 days and 6 nights, food for that timeframe, transportation to and from the airport in Tuxtla Gutierrez and other transportation, and other incidentals. All expenses are included in that price except souvenirs you may wish to buy. For a week-long mission trip, it is very economical. **Everyone who participates must have a current passport. It is also highly recommended that you have a current COVID vaccination.** We will schedule a forum in early February to discuss more details about the trip, for anyone who has questions.

**There is a limit of ten people for this trip – so make your commitment early!** Due to transportation issues, we cannot have more than this number. If you would like to go, talk to me ([Pastor Rick](#)). I have packets with detailed information and registration materials. Registrations and deposits must be turned in by April 1. Registration will include the completed registration form and, a copy of your passport.

This will be an amazing, life changing experience! Make plans now to come along!



# On the Church Calendar in January

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 - OFFICE CLOSED HAPPY NEW YEAR DAY!	2	3	4
<b>5</b> 9:00 a.m. - Sunday School 10:00 a.m. - Fellowship 10:30 a.m. - Worship 12:00 p.m. - Inclusion & Affirmation Ministry	<b>6 - LODDO BACK</b> 2:00 p.m. - Coffee with Pastor Rick 6:30 p.m. - Fellowship & Hospitality Ministry 7:00 p.m. - Scouts	<b>7</b> 10:00 a.m. - Quilters 10:30 a.m. - Staff Meeting 6:30 p.m. - Finance & Stewardship	<b>8</b> 6:00 p.m. - Chapel Ringers 7:00 p.m. - Celebration Singers	<b>9</b> 9:30 a.m. - Women's Fellowship 6:30 p.m. - Clergy Personnel Meeting 6:30 p.m. - Troop 4475 meeting	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 8:00 a.m. - Troop 4475 Pancake Breakfast
<b>12</b> 9:00 a.m. - Book Study 9:00 a.m. - Sunday School 10:00 a.m. - Fellowship 10:30 a.m. - Worship 12:00 p.m. - Nurture & Education Ministry	<b>13</b> 2:00 p.m. - Coffee with Pastor Rick 5:00 p.m. - Membership & Care Ministry 6:30 p.m. - Worship & Music Ministry	<b>14</b> 10:00 a.m. - Quilters 10:30 a.m. - Staff Meeting 6:30 p.m. - Troop 708	<b>15</b> 6:00 p.m. - Chapel Ringers 7:00 p.m. - Celebration Singers	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b> 9:00 a.m. - Book Study 9:00 a.m. - Sunday School 10:00 a.m. - Fellowship 10:30 a.m. - Worship 12:00 p.m. - Chili Cookoff 12:00 p.m. - Team Earth	<b>20 - MLK Day</b> <b>Office Closed</b> 9:00 a.m. - LODO Staff Meeting 2:00 p.m. - Coffee with Pastor Rick 4:30 p.m. - Loaves & Fishes	<b>21</b> 10:00 a.m. - Quilters 10:30 a.m. - Staff Meeting 6:30 p.m. - Council Meeting	<b>22</b> 6:00 p.m. - Chapel Ringers 7:00 p.m. - Celebration Singers	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> 9:00 a.m. - Book Study 9:00 a.m. - Sunday School 10:00 a.m. - Fellowship 10:30 a.m. - Worship	<b>27</b> 2:00 p.m. - Coffee with Pastor Rick 7:00 p.m. - Scouts	<b>28</b> 10:00 a.m. - Quilters 10:30 a.m. - Staff Meeting	<b>29</b> 7:00 a.m. - CoMo Values Diversity 6:00 p.m. - Chapel Ringers 7:00 p.m. - Celebration Singers	<b>30</b> 5:30 p.m. - LODO Ministry Team meeting	<b>31</b>	

# The Communicator

Columbia United Church of Christ  
An Open and Affirming Congregation - ONA #1575  
3201 I-70 Dr. NW  
Columbia, MO 65202-3296  
573-445-7931



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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.



**Columbia United Church of Christ is home to four Scouting America Units, chartered through our congregation:**

Cub Scout Pack 5183  
(Kindergarten through fifth grade)  
Scouting America Troop 4475  
(Girls Troop)  
Scouting America Troop 708  
(Boys Troop)  
Venture Crew 5334 (older youth)



### Interested in Church Membership?

If you are interested in joining, please contact [Rev. Rick Oberle](mailto:rick@columbiaucc.com).  
rick@columbiaucc.com

**Become  
Part of  
Our  
Church  
Family**

**Columbia  
United Church  
of Christ is a proud  
sponsor and  
supporter of Quorus!**



### 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!

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

### LODO 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.