

# Living Waters Association

# NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

of the Nebraska Conference of the United Church of Christ.

February 2025

## The Yearbook/DataHub is Now Open for Reporting!

The United Church of Christ (UCC) DataHub is now available for 2024 data submissions! This secure, web-based database is designed to keep our church community connected and serves as the primary repository for all UCC congregations and authorized ministers.

### Why is the Yearbook/DataHub Important?

Your participation ensures that our denomination has an accurate and comprehensive record of:

- Membership numbers - Association Dues are based on the number entered.
- Clergy information
- Other essential church-related records

These contributions are used to create valuable resources such as:

- **The Printed Yearbook**
- **Access UCC Directory**
- **Find A Church Tool**

By submitting your church's data, you help maintain a clear picture of our denomination's needs.

### Important Deadlines

The DataHub is now accepting data submissions through **March 20, 2025**. To avoid last-minute delays, we encourage you to submit your data as early as possible. If you need assistance, support is available to guide you through the process.

## How to Access Yearbook/DataHub Reporting

To make the reporting process as easy as possible, the Living Waters Association has provided a printed copy of the 17-page instruction guide to every church in January. This guide offers step-by-step instructions for accessing the DataHub and includes a helpful checklist to ensure you have all necessary information ready before starting.

### No Internet Access?

If your church lacks internet access, or if you do not know someone who does, don't worry! Simply gather all the required information based on the form provided and reach out to the conference office to schedule an appointment for assistance.

### Conference Support Contact:

Jane Estrada: **(605) 338-8738**

We are committed to making sure every church can complete their reporting successfully. If you have any further questions or need additional support, please contact Adam at (402) 910-8111.

### Reminder:

*Completing your Yearbook/DataHub report is a requirement for receiving the Small Church Grant!*

### In case you were unaware:

- *Your church's 501(c)3 status is dependent on a current updated listing in the UCC Yearbook.*
- **When your church is searching for a Pastor you will need current and updated data which comes from the UCC Yearbook. If no reports have been submitted for your church for five (5) years, all data reverts to zeros.**



THESE CAMPS ARE SPONSORED BY THE YOUTH AND OUTDOOR MINISTRIES COMMITTEE A JOINT UCC AND DCC ENDEAVOR

REGISTER BEFORE MARCH 1ST FOR \$100 OFF

REGISTER BETWEEN MARCH 2ND AND APRIL 1ST RECEIVE \$25 OFF



**2025**  
CAMPING SEASON  
REGISTRATION  
OPENS DEC. 1ST

JUNE 8-12 - JUNIOR KAMP  
JUNE 13-15 - LITTLE KAMPERS #1  
JUNE 15-20 - JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH KAMP  
JUNE 26-30 - AGAPE KAMP

JULY 6-9 - ROBOTICS KAMP  
JULY 6-11 - CREATIVE ARTS KAMP  
JULY 11-13 - LITTLE KAMPERS #2  
AUGUST 1-3 - AIC KAMP

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE**

## Kamp Kaleo Summer Camping Season is Here!

While the weather outside may be frightful now, it won't be long before we're trading our winter coats for sunscreen and complaining about the summer heat. The 2025 summer camping season is just around the corner, and Kamp Kaleo has announced its exciting lineup of camps for all ages! Registration is now open at [kampkaleo.com](http://kampkaleo.com).

This year's schedule offers something for everyone, whether you're a young camper excited to explore nature and faith, or part of our "young at heart" mature family looking forward to the unique **AGAPE Kamp** experience.

### Kamperships & Scholarships: Making Camp Affordable for All

The Living Waters Association is committed to ensuring cost is not a barrier to your camping experience. With Kamperships covering approximately 30% of camp costs and additional scholarships available directly from Kamp Kaleo, every effort is made to make camp accessible. Plus, register by **March 1st** to receive an extra **\$100 off** your camp fee!

If financial assistance is still needed, please don't hesitate to contact the camp office—they are more than willing to work with you.


### Summer Lineup Highlights

Here's a sneak peek at the incredible camps Kamp Kaleo has planned for this summer:

#### Junior Kamp June 8-12 \$400

For children entering **3rd–5th grades**, this camp is packed with outdoor fun, games, crafts, and faith-building activities like nightly vespers services around the fire. Activities include canoeing, archery, fishing, tie-dyeing, hiking, and more.



#### Little Kampers

 Session 1: June 13–15 | Session 2: July 11–13

 \$170 for first child / \$50 for the second


Designed for kids entering **Kindergarten–2nd grades**, this camp introduces little ones to the magic of Kamp Kaleo with an adult (21+) companion. Enjoy canoeing, fishing, river play, and fun traditions like silly songs and crafts.


#### Junior High/Senior High Kamp

 June 15-20  \$425

For youth entering **6th–12th grades** (and 2025 graduates), this camp fosters faith and friendships. Activities include tubing, archery, hiking, and trips to local attractions like Calamus Reservoir and Fort Hartsuff.

#### AGAPE Kamp

 June 16-30

 \$80/Night or \$300 for the week

This create-your-own-adventure camp is perfect for self-care retreats, family bonding, or clergy renewal. Enjoy faith discussions, outdoor recreation, and personal reflection on your own schedule.

#### Robotics Kamp July 6-9 \$375

Combining coding, robotics, and outdoor fun, this camp is ideal for children entering **3rd–6th grades** who want to explore both tech and nature. No prior experience needed!

## Creative Arts Kamp (formerly FaFA)

📅 July 6-11 📍 \$425

For artistic youth entering 7th–12th grades (and 2025 graduates), this camp offers creative exploration in visual arts, drama, music, and more, alongside classic outdoor camp activities.

## Adventures in Community (AIC)

📅 August 1-3 📍 \$200

Tailored for adults with developmental disabilities, this camp features activities like bingo, dances, hayrack rides, and visits to a local ranch. Volunteers serve as companions to ensure a fun and inclusive experience.



## How your congregation can prepare for the 2025 Small Church Grant Applications!

We're excited to announce that applications for the 2025 Small Church Grant program will open this spring. This grant is a meaningful opportunity for smaller congregations, less than 250 members to receive financial support, empowering their ministries and their work in our communities.

### Requirements to Apply for the 2025 Small Church Grant:

- 1. Update Your Yearbook/DataHub Information**  
Ensuring your church's details are up-to-date is a crucial first step.- Information has been included in this newsletter on how to do this.
- 2. Attend the Association Annual Fall Meeting**  
A representative from your congregation must participate in the fall gathering to remain eligible.
- 3. Keep Your Association Dues Current**  
This simple step reflects your commitment to the shared goals of our association and ensures continued support for all congregations.

### Stay Tuned!

We'll share more details about the application process as spring approaches, so keep an eye out for updates. This is an excellent opportunity to secure funding to further your church's mission and enhance its impact in your community.

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Whether you're a first-time camper or a Kaleo veteran, this summer promises to be unforgettable.

Don't wait—secure your spot today at [kampkaleo.com](http://kampkaleo.com)! We look forward to seeing you at Kamp Kaleo, where faith, fun, and friendship come alive under the summer sun

## Web Addresses for Camp Information

[Kampkaleo.com](http://Kampkaleo.com)

Remember : There is \$100 dollars off of the registration fee if you are registered ( but you don't have to pay when you register) by March 1st, 2025.

[Livingwatersassociation.org](http://Livingwatersassociation.org)

Remember: The Living Waters Association will cover 30% of your camp cost on a first come first served bases when you fill out our application online opening February 17th, 2025 until we run out of our allotted funds.





## Celebrating the Lives and Legacies of Joyce A. Cook and Rev. Jane L. Ellefson

Our association family is grateful for the faithful service and unwavering dedication of Lay Leader Joyce A. Cook and Rev. Jane L. Ellefson, who have now entered into eternal rest. Their remarkable contributions to our community and beyond have left an enduring legacy of love, leadership, and faith that will continue to inspire us all.

### A Legacy of Leadership and Love – Joyce A. Cook



Joyce faithfully served the congregations of Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ in Coleridge, First Congregational United Church of Christ in Hartington, and Congregational United Church of Christ in Newcastle for several years with tireless devotion. She offered her gifts of leadership and compassion, guiding each congregation in faith and love. Her warmth and encouragement were a source of strength and inspiration to all who knew her. A celebration of Joyce's life took place on December 6, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. at Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ in Coleridge, where friends and family gathered to honor her memory and her profound impact on our communities.

Our prayers are also with these congregations at this time.



### A Passion for Service and Mission – Rev. Jane L. Ellefson



Rev. Jane dedicated her life to ministry, serving faithfully within the Living Waters Association of the Nebraska Conference, where she was an invaluable member of both the Council and the Church and Ministry Committee. Her deep commitment extended to the Nebraska Conference of the United Church of Christ, where she served on staff, and to the world through Global Ministries, passionately serving in Ghana. Even in retirement, Jane's heart for mission remained steadfast, leading numerous trips back to Ghana and continuing to share her gifts in local church ministry.

Beyond her many roles, Jane served as a mentor and guide to numerous Licensed Ministers within the Living Waters Association. Her wisdom, encouragement, and servant-hearted leadership profoundly influenced the spiritual and professional journeys of many. A celebration of Jane's life will take place in the spring, where her legacy of faith and service will be honored.

### Grateful Hearts, Lasting Memories

We celebrate the profound impact of Joyce and Jane, cherishing the many ways they enriched our lives and strengthened our faith community. Their dedication and unwavering commitment to God's work serve as an inspiration to us all.

### A Prayer of Thanksgiving and Comfort

*Gracious God, we give thanks for the lives of Joyce and Jane, for the love and leadership they so generously shared. We ask for Your comforting presence to surround their families, congregations, and all who mourn. May their faithful example inspire us to continue serving with joy and dedication. Amen.*

As we honor their remarkable journeys, let us continue to live out the love and faith they so beautifully embodied.

## Sacramental Servants Applications Are Continuing To Be Accepted For Initial Cohort.

In response to the growing challenges faced by smaller churches in finding or accessing licensed or ordained ministers to celebrate the sacraments, the Living Waters Association of the United Church of Christ has developed a groundbreaking solution: the role of Sacramental Servant with Lay Ministerial Standing.

### What Is a Sacramental Servant?

**A Sacramental Servant** is a unique and distinguished role within the local church, created to meet the needs of congregations unable to secure the services of a licensed or ordained minister due to financial hardship or physical distance. **When authorized by the association, Sacramental Servants who are members of their local congregations, in covenant, are trained, authorized and entrusted to administer the Sacraments of Baptism and Communion within their own church.** This voluntary role reflects a deep commitment to service and community.

Beyond the vital role of administering the sacraments, **this position also assists congregations in meeting the requirements of many insurance companies, including the Insurance Board, which often require an authorized minister with an accountability structure as part of a church's policy.** This ensures that congregations remain in compliance and maintain necessary coverage for their operations.

While Sacramental Servants receive no financial compensation, the local church is responsible for the costs of initial formation and the required background check for candidates. However, **don't let concerns about cost hold your church back!** The association has set aside funds to assist churches for whom training and authorization costs would be a burden. These funds cover the costs of textbooks and training, ensuring all congregations have access to this vital ministry.

## Role and Responsibilities

The role of a Sacramental Servant is temporary, voluntary, and highly specific:

- **Primary Responsibilities:**  
Administer the Sacraments of Baptism and Communion.
- **Limitations:**  
Sacramental Servants are not trained or authorized to lead entire worship services, conduct funerals or weddings (except for the sacraments), preach, provide pastoral care, or manage church administration.
- **Support in Worship:**  
Sacramental Servant may participate in other parts of worship as desired but are not expected or train to lead an entire worship service.

**Annual Renewal:** Authorization for this role must be renewed annually.

### Initial Formation Training

To prepare for this ministry, candidates must complete an initial formation training of approximately 15–20 hours which includes home study and in person hands on lab. This training is intentionally designed to be low-tech and accessible, conducted primarily through one-on-one phone conversations and an in-person hands-on lab study. If there is enough interest, training could also be offered in a group setting, providing flexibility to meet the needs of group participants.



## Mentorship and Covenant Support

In covenant with the United Church of Christ, each candidate will have a supervising mentor to provide guidance during their initial formation and throughout their authorization. This mentor serves as a resource for consultation and support, ensuring Sacramental Servants have access to experienced counsel as questions or challenges arise. This mentorship reflects the association's commitment to collaborative ministry and ongoing spiritual growth.

## Learning Together: Theology in Community

To ensure candidates do not undertake this journey alone, we encourage participation with a friend or even as part of a theological study within the local church. The association will provide materials to support this shared learning experience. While only the candidate is responsible for completing the written assignments, these can serve as discussion prompts for group exploration and deeper theological reflection. This collaborative approach enriches the learning process, fosters communal growth, and strengthens bonds within the congregation.

## Join the Initial Formation Cohort

The Living Waters Association is now forming the first training cohort of Sacramental Servants. If your congregation is interested in this opportunity, we encourage you to act now. For more information, application packets, or questions, please contact **Adam, the Living Waters Association Registrar, at 402-910-8111.**

## Attention Ordained Clergy: Time to Schedule Your Periodic Vocational Support Conversation!

As we prepare for the 2025 ministerial review process, we want to highlight an important opportunity: **Periodic Vocational Support Conversations.** These conversations provide a chance to check in, reflect on your ministry, and engage in dialogue with members of the Committee on Ministry. According to the *Manual on Ministry, Section 2:6, "Accountability and Support,"* these

conversations are intended to support ongoing vocational development and discernment, strengthen our covenantal relationships, and clarify the Association's expectations for ministerial standing.

***A Friendly but Firm Reminder:*** Participation in this process is a required step to maintain your standing as a UCC minister. And before you ask—no, "retired" is not an ecclesiastical status in the United Church of Christ. While "retirement" is a great financial planning tool, within the UCC, the only official standings are **Active, Exempt, or Leave of Absence.**

### Ministerial Standing Options:

- **Active Standing:** You are actively engaged in ministry and fulfilling all requirements, including boundary training and continuing education.

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- **Exempt Standing:** This applies if you have stepped back from public ministry but still wish to honor your covenant with the UCC. Exempt Standing does not mean disengagement; you are still expected to uphold the UCC Ministerial Code and engage with the Committee on Ministry through an Exempt Standing covenant. ***Choosing this status means refraining from public ministry, including pulpit supply, sacraments, weddings, funerals, and leading worship. Yes, this means even that "one last wedding for your friend or family member!"***

- **Leave of Absence:** This is for those taking a temporary break with the intention of returning to active ministry generally with defined time frames.

### Thinking about moving to Exempt Standing?

Remember, ordination is for life—but public ministry doesn't have to be forever. Exempt Standing allows for flexibility while maintaining accountability and connection with the church.

We know these conversations may not be your favorite thing—kind of like going to the dentist. Necessary? Yes. Fun? Not exactly. But they provide vital support, help you grow, and keep us all connected in meaningful ways. Think of it as a spiritual tune-up—nobody likes them,

### **Schedule Your Conversation:**

The Church and Ministry Committee has scheduled three face-to-face meeting dates, each lasting approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. Please select the date and location that best fits your schedule:

- **April 25 or 26** at Arlington United Church of Christ
- **May 2** at Norfolk United Church of Christ

### **Pre-Meeting Reflection:**

Before your meeting, you'll need to submit a brief (1-2 page) written reflection to help guide the conversation. Consider these prompts as you reflect on the past 3-5 years of your ministry:

How would you describe your vocational discernment journey?

What makes authorized ministry the best way to live out this call?

What surprises have you encountered in your call?

What aspects of your ministry do you want to celebrate?

What are your sources of support in ministry?

What areas of ministry are you exploring or considering for change?

Which *Marks for Faithful and Effective Ministry* do you consider strengths, and which ones require further growth?

What aspects of the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* stand out to you now?

### **Congregational Members:**

If you're reading this, please check with your pastor to ensure they have scheduled their conversation. Your support in encouraging them is greatly appreciated!

### **Schedule Your Conversation Today:**

Visit the Living Waters Association website at [livingwatersassociation.org](http://livingwatersassociation.org), scroll to the bottom of the page, and click on the scheduler to book your appointment. No, we didn't hide it—promise!

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to ministry. We look forward to these conversations and the opportunity to support you in your ongoing vocational journey.



### **Join Us for a Historic Celebration – Neligh First Congregational UCC's 150th Anniversary!**

You're invited to a momentous occasion as Neligh First Congregational United Church of Christ celebrates 150 years of faith and service! Mark your calendars for March 23, 2025, at 2:00 PM and join us at the church in Neligh, Nebraska, for a joyous celebration of our rich history and vibrant future.

Founded on March 22, 1875, in the Neligh School House, the church has stood as a beacon of faith and community for a century and a half. The first church building was erected on its current site in 1886, and the congregation played a vital role in supporting Gates College, which operated in Neligh from 1882 to 1899. Students and faculty from the college contributed immensely to the early growth and success of the church, with Gates Academy continuing its legacy until 1913.

In 1957, the church became part of the United Church of Christ following the historic union of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

Join us as we reflect on our incredible journey, honor our past, and look forward to the future. Whether you're a long-time member, a friend of the congregation, or simply curious about our history, we welcome you to be part of this special celebration.

**For more information, please contact Rich Burgess at 402-649-9720.**





Don't miss out on this amazing opportunity to refresh your spirit and reconnect with what truly matters. Stay tuned for more details, and in the meantime, check out the Kamp Kaleo website or follow us on Facebook at Nebraska Youth and Outdoor Ministries: UCC and DOC for updates, registration info, and sneak peeks of what's to come!

Start counting down the days – we can't wait to see YOU at Kamp Kaleo!

## Save the Date: Spring Youth Retreat 2025 – An Unforgettable Adventure Awaits!

Calling all youth in grades 6 through 12! The Youth and Outdoor Ministries Committee of the Nebraska Conference is thrilled to invite you to mark your calendars for an unforgettable experience – the Spring Youth Retreat, happening March 21-23, 2025, at the beautiful Kamp Kaleo in Burwell, Nebraska.

Get ready for a weekend packed with adventure, friendship, faith, and fun as we explore what it means to grow in our faith, connect with others, and embrace the great outdoors. Whether you're seeking new friendships, spiritual growth, or just an exciting escape, this retreat has something for YOU!

Why should you come?

- Inspiring Worship: Deepen your faith in a welcoming and vibrant community.
- Epic Activities: Outdoor adventures, games, campfires, and more!
- New Connections: Meet friends from across Nebraska who share your journey.
- Memories to Last a Lifetime: Laugh, learn, and leave inspired.

## Spread the Word – Share This Newsletter with Your Congregation!



This newsletter is a valuable resource filled with important updates, inspiring events, and opportunities to grow in faith and community. But it's only useful if it reaches **everyone** in our congregation!

We encourage you to **spread the word**—whether it's through email, social media, or simply handing it out in person. **Your involvement makes a difference!** By sharing this newsletter, you're helping ensure that no one misses out on exciting events, meaningful messages, and opportunities to connect.

Let's work together to keep our church community informed and engaged. Please take a moment to share this with your entire congregation—**because staying connected starts with you.**

Thank you for being an important part of our church family!