November 22, 2026

Matthew 25:31-46

Reigning Compassion

Today we celebrate the Anniversary of the United Black Christians (UBC) group of the United Church of Christ. From the ucc.org website: United Black Christians represents lay and clergy persons who faithfully minister in more than 278 predominately African American congregations of the United Church of Christ and those African American members in congregations that are not predominantly African American.

UBC seeks to preserve our tradition as a people of faith and hope. UBC recognizes that it is the Black Church that has meant survival for African Americans on these shores.

UBC affirms that it is the Black Church that will assure our continued growth, development, endurance and ultimate liberation.

UBC affirms that each of us has gifts to offer and is entitled to the full rights and privileges of the United Church of Christ.

United Black Christians (UBC) is an officially recognized special interest group of the United Church of Christ (UCC), providing voice and vision for more than 70,000 African Americans.

United Black Christians seeks to:

Provide voice for the African American members of the United Church of Christ
To strengthen Black churches in the UCC
To train and nurture leaders of our churches for Gospel inspired service to the Black community
To provide relevant ministry for our youth and young adults
To empower the laity for present day ministry
To create ecumenical and worldwide partnership for service and evangelism
To be active advocates for liberation and racial justice at home and abroad
To provide spiritual nurture for our members
To enhance clergy-lay ministry partnership
To provide support to African American Seminarians

You can learn more about United Black Christians at their website:

https://www.ucc.org/domestic-policy/ourfaithourvote_about/about-us_united-black-christians/

November 22, 2026 | Alternative Option for Reigning Compassion

Devotional from Rev. Dr. Elyse Berry of CHHSM

In Northeast Ohio where I live and the UCC National Ministries is located, there is an annual sheep festival in the spring. Over the weekend activities, there are two special time slots for folks to participate in sheering a sheep with the shepherd. As I gathered in the barn for the event, I noticed one sheep was with the shepherd and the other, who would be sheered the next day, was in a pen a few feet away. Suddenly, everyone heard this gut-wrenching bleat from the sheep in the pen. Some people looked concerned, others laughed, and many of us asked what was going on. The shepherd told us that the sheep was crying out for her fellow sheep out of concern and worry that she was being taken away. Over generations, sheep have learned that a sheep missing from the flock could mean it is lost, hurt, or taken to be slaughtered. Like humans, sheep are a deeply social species. It turns out that the behavior of the penned-up sheep did not mean it was stupid, as the insulting stereotype tries to make us believe. She was not stupid, she was separated. She was not scared not for herself, but for the one missing. We humans call this feeling “compassion” when we can recognize it, in ourselves at least. The shepherd then shared how deeply relational tending to sheep truly is.

In the final chapter of her book The Salt Stones, shepherd Helen Whybrow invites all of us to be shepherds—that to be a “shepherd” is to belong and to care. “Belonging requires participation. We need to step toward something and care for it and find something outside of ourselves that will ultimately make us whole. Not just wait for others to accept us. But to devote yourself to something, some place, some people, some sense of wholeness.” Active devotion to the greater whole. Loving attention to the ground and creatures and people and rocks right beneath you. Where is Spirit asking your loving attention to be drawn to today?