



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



THE LINK

76 South Wisconsin Street Elkhorn, Wisconsin 53121

Office Hours: Mon. Tue. Fri. 9:00 am - 1:00 pm
Wed. 11:00 am - 1:00 pm Thurs.- Closed

E-mail: ElkhornUCC@gmail.com
Pastor: Rev. Carly Gaeth

Web: ElkhornUCC.org
Phone: 262-723-3246

OCTOBER 2026

Pastor Carly's Corner:

In case you were not aware, I am a frequenter of Trader Joe's. It's one of my favorite places to go, after World Market and JoAnn Fabrics (may she rest in peace). And I am lucky, because there is a Trader Joe's not far from my apartment, so I can go and check it out whenever I need a little hit of whimsy.

When I was there last week, doing my usual grocery shop, the cashier who was checking me out was making polite conversation when she asked me what I do for a living. When I told her I was a pastor, she asked me "What flavor?" which is honestly the best way to ask about denominational ties. When I told her that I was a minister in the UCC, she had never heard of it and she asked me all about it— how would I describe it? what are our values? who are we? It was a fun challenge for me to try and summarize the denomination in which I've been immersed my entire life in a few phrases before all of my groceries were bagged and the next customer in line was ready to go. And it got me thinking about this beautiful faith community— that reaches across the nation, with roots all over the world— and the values that make up our identity. It reminded me of how grateful I am to be part of the UCC.

You know, when I was growing up, there was a period of time when my brother, father, and I attended Saturday night Catholic mass with my mother and grandparents. Despite being heavily involved in all things church-related and attending worship at my father's church every week, my mother felt a certain pull to the parish she had grown up in and the familiar traditions of Catholic mass.

The parish they attended was particularly old-school: they rang tiny bells in procession while incense



filled the sanctuary with the warm aroma of frankincense and a thin haze of light grey smoke. They sprinkled the congregation with holy water and went through all of the traditional liturgy one would expect to hear. It was very different from the kind of worship I was used to and I low-key loved the drama of it.

But, what I didn't love were the homilies given by the priests. So often, they would read passages from scripture that were less than up-lifting. It seemed like every week we heard about a new reason we would be condemned, about lakes of fire, brimstone, and eternal damnation. Such fun! It was just such a juxtaposition from what I heard my father preach about— compassion, love, grace, empathy, seeking justice, etc.— and it affirmed for me what I require from a faith community.

For me, a faith community should serve as a safe harbor for people of all backgrounds, races, genders, and belief systems. It should be open and supportive and affirming. It should be overflowing with love and care and compassion. It should serve those who are less fortunate and should seek justice for all people. It should not condemn anyone for who they are, who they love, where they came from, or where they are going. It should be a place where people leave inspired, rejuvenated, and hopeful. It should be a place where questions and ideas and possibilities are not only accepted but encouraged. It should be a place where all people are free to be their most authentic selves, where we can learn and discern and pray together.

And that's what the UCC is all about. When we say, "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here" we mean it. It makes a difference and sparks light in the darkness.

Peace and blessings,
Pastor Carly



Stewardship

Stewardship season is upon us! Can you feel the excitement coursing through your veins??? I know I can! It's definitely not the pot of coffee I drank this morning before arriving for my office hours.

In all honesty, I know that stewardship isn't everyone's favorite thing to discuss or even to think about, and it certainly is not made any easier by the rising costs of living and inflation we are experiencing. But, even with the financial strain that so many of us find ourselves under, I hope that we can still come together and figure out a way to cultivate a spirit of generosity within our church, and in our beloved community.

In the coming weeks and months, we will begin our annual stewardship campaign. The season of giving here

at First Congregational kicks off on October 18th and Pledge Sunday will take place on November 15th.

The grounding scripture and theme for this year, as determined by the Wisconsin Conference, is Matthew 6:21— "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also..." In the coming weeks, there will be further discussions about what stewardship means for us, and I would like each of us to spend some time thinking about what it is we treasure about this place and one another. We want this stewardship season to be a time of joy and deep gratitude; not only for the pledges we gather from our beloved members, but also in recognition of the privilege we have in being able to serve one another and our community.

If you have any questions, or would like to get involved, feel free to call the church office or email me at: pastorcarlyfcucc@gmail.com. Be well, my friends.

~Pastor Carly

An Opportunity to Volunteer

As many of you know, our church participates in the Meals on Wheels program, delivering meals to Elkhorn area residents one week every month. We are still in need of two people to help out on Wednesdays. Might one of those be you? It would require you and a team member to pick up the noon meals from St. John's Lutheran Church and deliver them to people on your list about one day each month. We rotate every 5 weeks. That day is currently Wednesday but might be subject to change. If you are interested in stepping up, please contact the church office. Or feel free to contact any of our other MOW delivery team members: Bob & Carole Kruse, Jean Lile, Becky Newman, Diane Riese, Jamie & Tom Stepp.



Neighbors in Need Sunday, October 4th

Gifts to Neighbors in Need support the United Church of Christ's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). The other two-thirds of the offering support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, direct service projects, and grants.

Neighbors in Need grants are annually awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities.

Our church will be collecting a special offering to help support this mission on Sunday, October 4th. There will be inserts with more information about neighbors in need as well as special offering envelopes available in your bulletins. Thank you, in advance, for your generosity.

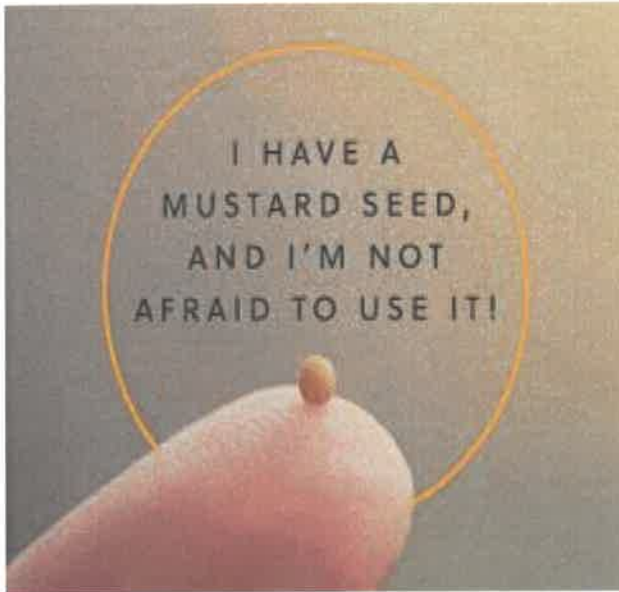
Coat Closet Starting

Our church's newly developed mission is to create a coat closet this fall for anyone in need of warm winter gear. As you go through your drawers and closets in preparation for winter, we ask that you bring any appropriate items for colder weather (any size) that you no longer want or need. These items should be gently used and clean. We are accepting coats, scarves, hats, mittens, and snow pants,—anything that someone might need to keep them warm in winter. You can bring these items to church as an old classroom on the northwest corner of the downstairs Christian Ed building is waiting to be filled. Coats can be hung on the hangers of the coat rack and other items can be unpacked and placed on the tables in that room.



The plan is to have some hours each week that coincide with Food Pantry hours. People who stop in at the pantry could also make a stop at our church if they are in need of warm gear for winter. It would be available at no charge to them. So please consider what you might be able to donate! We are hoping to have enough that we could make items available as soon as colder weather starts in.

Please share this with family, friends, and neighbors. Thank you for our donations.



I HAVE A
MUSTARD SEED,
AND I'M NOT
AFRAID TO USE IT!

Mustard Seed

Grief and Faith

Grief and faith are not opposites. Grief is often thought to be the cost of loving deeply, while faith is the trust—sometimes strong, sometimes fragile—that God is present with us in loss and will not abandon us. Christian faith does not ask us to hurry past sorrow, suppress tears, or explain away loss. Instead, it gives grieving people permission to bring their pain honestly to God. The call to faith is not “do not grieve,” but “do not grieve alone or without hope.”

Here is another way of looking at it, is this: Grief says, “This mattered. This person—this relationship—was precious.” Faith says, “This loss is not the whole story. God is still present, love has not been erased, and

death will not have the final word.” Many people say that grief is love that no longer knows where to go. It remains with us in memory, in longing, in the quiet ways we keep carrying someone with us. If you are grieving, bring your sorrow honestly to God, and allow the people of God to walk beside you. Be present, remember, listen, and pray. In such acts of love, faith becomes visible.
In Faith—

Barb

Monthly Meditation and Self-Care Challenge:

As the temperatures continue to drop and we enter a new month, I find myself engaging in the Danish concept of *hygge*. Hygge is about coziness and surrounding yourself with the things that make life good: friendship, laughter and security, as well as more concrete things like warmth, light, seasonal food and drink. Hygge embodies a feeling of comfort, contentment, and well-being through simple and everyday experiences. It encompasses a range of feelings and experiences related to coziness, togetherness, and an appreciation for life’s small pleasures. At its core, it is about creating an atmosphere of warmth and comfort in both your physical surroundings and your emotional state, often achieved through soft lighting, candles, and natural elements. Think of soft, warm lights and the soft crackling of a fireplace. It’s the feeling you get when you’re wrapped in a warm blanket on a chilly day or when you enjoy a cup of hot tea while reading a book. Hygge encourages being present in the moment and fully appreciating your surroundings and experiences. It’s a way to practice mindfulness and gratitude for the present. The concept of hygge aligns with well-being and self-care. It’s about creating a space and a lifestyle that supports relaxation and mental well-being. It often involves disconnecting from the digital world and embracing face-to-face interactions and analog activities, such as board games, reading physical books, or crafting. Hygge is personal and can be interpreted differently by individuals. What brings a sense of hygge to one person might be different for another. It’s about discovering what makes you feel content and peaceful.

So our meditation and self-care challenge for this month is to embrace this concept and to ready ourselves for the changing season through mindfulness and intentionality.



Oktoberfest Pie Sale ~ We Need Your Help!

Oktoberfest is on Saturday, October 17th and Women's Fellowship is having a pie booth again this year. We need your help to bake pies and to set up and run the booth. You can sign up to bake pies as well as pick up your pie pans and containers in the family room at church as of September 30th. Our goal is to have 50 pies to sell; we hope you can help us reach our goal! We will be selling fruit and pumpkin pies for \$15 each and pecan pies for \$18. Pies can be dropped off at church on Friday, October 16th between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm, or on Saturday October 17th between 8:00 am and 9:00 am.

- We will need 6-7 people to help transport items and set up at the park at 5:00 pm on Friday, October 16th. We will meet at church prior to this.
- We will need 6-7 people to help transport pies and do further setup at the park on Saturday, October 17th before the event begins, and people to help work in the booth.



There is a sign-up sheet for help/workers in the sanctuary. Many hands make light work— please lend a hand where you can! Thank you.

Memorial Garden Update

Thanks to Kevin and Haiden Kruger, the Memorial Garden got a bit of a facelift at the start of September. Earlier this summer, they removed the plantings that had reached their growth potential several years ago. (In other words, they needed to be replaced!) They donated and planted some cone flowers, a hibiscus, and some small ornamental grasses, all of which should provide varied textures and colorful blooms at different times throughout Wisconsin's growing season. The plants have taken root, promising to add more beauty to our garden in coming years.

In addition, the Kruger men cleaned the bricks and replaced a broken brick in the walkway. They also added a total of 13 new bricks memorializing several people in our church family. This was quite the job as the bricks (ordered from the same manufacturer that had supplied the original bricks) were a touch larger, requiring them to be shaved a bit to fit. Thanks to Kevin and Haiden for doing all the work (donated labor, as well!) for this very important project. We are fortunate this garden was created just over 25 years ago for us to preserve names and memories of those who have gone on to join the great cloud of witnesses.



You may also have noticed one of the new banners hanging in our Geneva Street entryway. Several years ago, we decided to paint the walls there as they were in need of a refresh. Unfortunately, that meant painting over the quote on the wall which stated, "Each time we embrace a memory, we meet again with those we love for the heart never forgets". That phrase was made into a banner at Hansen Screen Printing and placed on the wall, finishing the project that was started several years ago.

Next RaiseRight Order - October 11

Our next RaiseRight order will be due on October 11. This helps out our church as we earn money from the cards you purchase. You may purchase these cards for birthday or anniversary gifts—even getting ready for the holidays. Cards can also be used to purchase gas (just put the card in at the pump—no chance of scammers reading your credit card information that way!) or groceries (the cards work just like cash and you will need to be stocking up on pie baking supplies for the upcoming pie sale!). Please turn your order in to the office or to Diane Riese along with your check made out to Women's Fellowship before the due date. The cards will be back the following Sunday. For a complete list of participating retailers, Google RaiseRight or contact the church office—you may be surprised to see all that are included!

Book Club - OCTOBER

CONUNDRUM

I grew up on the north side of Chicago, near the intersection of Bryn Mawr and Pulaski. Running along the east side of Pulaski was a very large fenced in property with buildings just barely visible through the trees and vegetation. This was the "Chicago Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium. I didn't

really understand what the facility was all about, because I didn't know much about tuberculosis. Now, the former facility no longer exists; it has been replaced by a senior center, and nature preserve. I imagine the iron fencing is down as well.

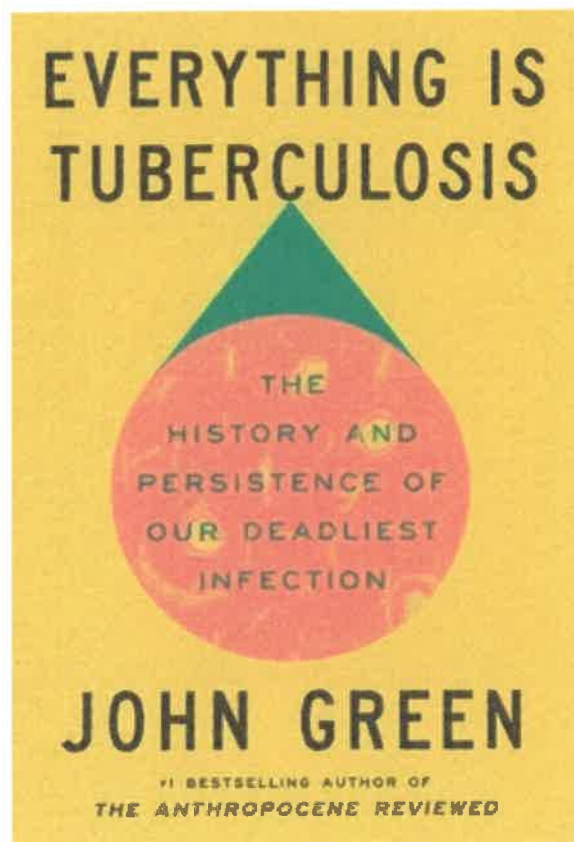
In his book, *Everything is Tuberculosis*, John Green presents not just a history of Tuberculosis, but asks important questions about how a highly infectious disease like it has been treated. When we say "treated", Green is not just talking about the medical treatments which have ultimately resulted in finding cures for the disease, (as evidenced by the disappearance of the Chicago Sanitarium), but how societies have treated those who have been afflicted by the disease.

Green points out how, in the early 1800's tuberculosis was somehow viewed as being a sign of some enhanced artistic inspiration or even beauty within those afflicted by it. Romantic poets like Keats and Shelley were not stigmatized by the disease. Women's beauty was thought to be enhanced by the disease.

As more discoveries were made into the nature of the disease, and the role which bacteria played in the causes of it, Green notes a societal change in the perception of the disease. A shift away from the romanticizing of it to a stigmatization of it occurred. Those afflicted were shunned; gradually,

it became more and more associated with the poor, lower class, minority populations.

To personalize his narrative Green relates the history of a young boy in Sierra Leone, Henry. When he first meets Henry in a hospital in Lakka, Sierra Leone, Green is struck by Henry's, what can only be described as charisma. Henry looked to be around twelve to maybe fourteen. He was helping out at the clinic where he also was a patient. Henry was actually 18; the disease was slowly wasting his body. Even though there are now cures for the disease, Green uses primarily Henry, but also others, to demonstrate how the treatment and cure for tuberculosis is so unevenly handled. There are many reasons for this, and Green tries to cover all of them through the exam-



ples and anecdotes which he shares.

Ultimately, Green really seeks to explore the consequences of capitalism. Millions die from tuberculosis every year. This is despite the fact that effective cures have been found and have existed now for over 60 years. Pills and drug regimens used to treat the disease are effective. Companies which discover, and produce drugs which work seek to profit from their advances. Poorer countries often cannot afford the costs associated with the effective treatments which these companies can provide. Green does not blame the companies; he really is asking how those who possess the means for treating the disease can be induced to make the treatment affordable and accessible enough so that these millions of lives can have a better chance of being saved.

This is the conundrum. It takes the wealth and expertise of the companies who are capable of finding and producing the cures which can alleviate things like the scourge of tuberculosis to develop these cures. They cannot be expected to do it and make no profit from it; that would be a negative inducement. Yet, how can the world justify allowing so many to suffer when the reduction, and even elimination of that suffering is clearly available, but inaccessible due to factors like cost, and administration?

Henry's story personalizes the story. His story does not have a tragic ending (at least not supremely tragic). The answers to the questions posed by his story and all of the millions of others still seems to elude us.

We will be meeting at Tom Bailey's in Lake Geneva, at 6:30 on Wednesday, October 14.
Bill Neis

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Elkhorn, Wisconsin

Church Council Meeting Minutes

September 15, 2026 at 7:00 P.M. Via Zoom

The meeting was **called to order** at 7:02 p.m. by Moderator Jennifer Neis. Those in attendance were Barb Townsend, Jean Lile, Sally Schleiger, Carol Prchal, Pastor Carly Gaeth, Cindy Waller, Bobbi Rader, Tina Kruger and Dorothy Bever.

The **Opening Prayer** was given by Jennifer Neis.

Additions to the agenda: Jean Lile stated that on behalf of Diane Riese, she wanted to talk about the Oktoberfest pie sale under Old Business. Jennifer also had a topic to discuss at the end of the meeting.

Approval of August 18, 2026 Council Minutes: Barb Townsend moved to approve the minutes from the August 18, 2026 Council meeting as presented. Seconded by Carol Prchal. The motion was carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report - Jennifer Neis stated that there will be an increase in health insurance costs for Pastor Carly. Tina Kruger gave an update on the Edward Jones funds and added that she will look into insurance costs and how it will affect next year's budget. Following brief discussion Barb Townsend moved to approve the Treasurer's report as presented, seconded by Jennifer Neis. The motion to approve carried unanimously.

Pastor's Moment: Pastor Carly asked the question of the day. "If you had to choose another name for yourself, what would you choose?" Following fun discussion, Pastor Carly presented her September report of things she has done and things that she is working on. She added that World Communion Sunday is the first Sunday in October, blessings of the animals will be held October 4th and she is continuing to look for options to bring people together.

Ministry Leaders' Reports/Updates: A report was submitted from Faith Formation.

Old Business: Ways to get Carly and the Church more into the public in Elkhorn: Carly said she attended the United Way luncheon with Jamie and enjoyed her time volunteering at the Walworth County fair. Jennifer asked to keep thinking of new ways to involve Carly.

ONA- next steps: Jennifer stated that she, Carol Prchal and Barb Townsend met with Pastor Carly. They are drafting a letter to be mailed to members about the ONA process—what it is and isn't, what it means for us, and asking for anyone who feels uncomfortable or unsure to reach out.

“United States of Kindness” continuing - 6 balloons: Barb Townsend stated that tallies are still accumulating. Keep being kind.

Membership Growth...signs. Other ideas?: Jennifer stated that an announcement will be made that there are more cardboard sunflower signs advertising our church available for those that would like one.

Making the church look more appealing - ideas, plans?: Council discussed looking into removing the white doors to the family room.

Oktoberfest October 17 - working on ideas: Jean Lile stated that volunteers are needed to help haul necessary tent equipment and tables and setting up that Friday, work at the tent selling pies on Saturday from 8:00 to 11:00 and from 11:00 until the pies are sold out, and to help take down the tent at 5:30 and return everything back to the church Saturday when the pie sale is over. Following discussion, an announcement will be made at church and Cindy will look into providing a volunteer sign up sheet.

Tech Help for Barb: Carly will have a flyer put up at the high school and Barb added that a sign has been posted at the Library.

“Critter”: Jennifer stated the situation is still being monitored.

Coat Closet: Jennifer stated that flyers are going out asking for contributions.

New Business: Fall Clean Up: Jennifer Neis stated that a fall clean up is needed for inside and outside of the church to be scheduled for the end of September or first part of October. Following discussion, Jennifer will talk with Tom Stepp about some outside water drainage issues and decide on a date(s) for a fall clean up.

Are you returning next year as a Council Member?: Jennifer asked current Council members to consider returning next year.

Nominating Committee: Jennifer stated that a Nominating Committee is needed to help fill any Council positions needed for next year.

Budget for 2027: As part of the budget process, Tina Kruger informed the council of some budget increases. Following discussion, the Personnel Committee needs to meet to go over the budget increases that affect the pastor, music and office personnel and submit their findings to Council in November.

Stewardship Campaign begins in October: Cindy will forward the stewardship campaign information to Jamie Stilling Stepp of Stewardship of Financial Resources, as soon as the church receives it.

Council Meetings on Wednesdays: Following discussion and review of the church constitution, Council agreed to have our next meeting on Wednesday, October 21, 2026.

Other Business: Jennifer reminded Council that All Saints day is Sunday, November 1st. Cindy Waller added that the new bricks and plants have been installed in the Memorial Garden and thought it appropriate to have some sort of dedication ceremony. Also a huge thank you to the Krugers for all of their work done to make it happen. Cindy added that James Letellier has asked to use the church parking lot to park his car during city winter/snow emergency parking. Barb Townsend moved to allow James to park in the church parking lot during a snow emergency, seconded by Bobbi Rader. The motion was carried unanimously.

Closing Prayer: With nothing further, Pastor Carly gave the closing prayer.

Adjournment: Barb Townsend moved to adjourn, seconded by Bobbi Rader. The motion was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

The next **Council meeting** for Church Council will be **Wednesday, October 21, 2026** at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dorothy Bever, Church Clerk

*Please note that final approval of the minutes will be made at the September Council meeting.



OCTOBER 2026



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON Neighbors in Need Sunday 11:30 a.m. Pet Blessings	5	6	7	8 9:30 a.m. Women's Fellowship 1:00 p.m. ONA Meeting	9	10
11 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON RaiseRight Due	12	13	14 11:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Book Club— Home of Tom Bailey	15	16 5:00 p.m. Set up in park for Pie Sale	17 9:00 a.m. Pie Sale Oktoberfest 
18 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON Stewardship Kickoff	19	20	21 7:00 p.m. Church Council	22	23	24
25 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	26 J LILE & L MCCORMICK	27 B & C KRUSE	28 11:00 a.m. Bible Study NEED VOLUNTEERS	29 T & J STEPP	30 B NEWMAN & D RIESE	31 HAPPY HALLOWEEN 

Thank you!

First Congregational UCC,

On behalf of EASD I thank you for the school supply donation.

Donations like this make a big impact for our students and staff. Thanks for being a great community partner.

All the best ,

Jon Anzalene, EASD Committee Engagement Coordinator



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Assistant Tech Support
Sunday mornings and special worship services

- Flexible hours, determined by our technology manager and yourself
- On the job training
- A warm and welcoming community
- Qualifies as service hours for NRS or similar organizations

LET US KNOW IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS!

elkhornucc@gmail.com
(202) 773-3246

www.elkhornucc.org | 1015 Wisconsin St., Elkhorn, NE 68021

Tech Help Wanted

We are looking for new help with our recording technology for worship. It would be nice to have someone who can run the powerpoint slides and camera during worship.

So if you are interested or know of a neighbor or friend that might want to help out for 1-2 hours on a Sunday, please let us know.

You can email the church office or talk with Barb.

Pet Blessings
Sunday, October 4
11:30—1:30 p.m.
Bring your friends!



Our hungry hippo jar that sits on the coffee table in the family room, is still collecting your donations for the :

Lakeland Animal Shelter.

When you visit the table during coffee time, you may add your support by dropping your donations in the jar to help our church support this important mission.

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Catherine Whiteman	04
Rosalyn Skala	06
Suzie Reed	06
Malena Loch	06
Jason Morris	08
Tony Serpe	08
Chad Stoltz	09
Jennifer Ringhand	11
Bonita Breit	12
Carol Prchal	13
Donna Riese	16
Kevin Heckert	17
Melinda Morris	20
Keelin Kruger	20
Ashley Stoflet	21
Jacob Truesdale	21
Meghan Loch	22
Candace Kramer	24
Donovan Loch	30
Jena Barr	31



OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

Michelle and Tim Beine	05
Jean and Eugene Bednarski	14
Bobbie and Bob Rader	14
Kathleen and Ed Krostal	20
Cheryl and Eric Truesdale	22
Mindy and Chip Brunswick	28
Donna and Bill Riese	29



Lay Worship Leaders

Oct 4 **Jean Lile**

Oct 11 _____

Oct 18 _____

Oct 25 _____



Ushers



Oct 4 **Dorothy Bever & Becky Newman**

Oct 11 _____

Oct 18 _____

Oct 25 _____

Coffee Fellowship Time

Hosting coffee fellowship is easy. Bring a treat, brew a small pot of coffee (coffee and pot provided) and sign up on the sheet on the table in the back of the sanctuary. It is always great to gather together after worship for conversation, coffee, juice and a little treat.

Thank you for hosting!

Coffee Fellowship



Oct 4 _____

Oct 11 _____

Oct 18 _____

Oct 25 _____

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
United Church of Christ
76 South Wisconsin Street
Elkhorn, WI 53121
Phone: 262 723-3246



SUNDAY
WORSHIP
10:00 a.m.

Join us for worship
every Sunday in person
starting at 10:00 a.m.
Watch our recorded service
online on YouTube or
on our website: *elkhornucc.org*

Sunday School 10:00 a.m. September through May