



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

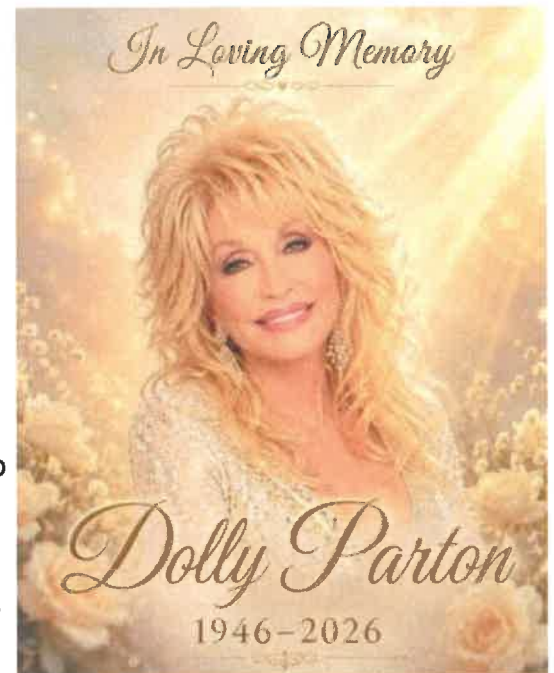
SEPTEMBER

Pastor Carly's Corner:

I've been pretty disconnected from the world this last week as I've been battling a particularly brutal bout of illness—the mystery virus that seems to be making the rounds took up residence in my body and had me fighting for survival with shocking humility. When I was finally well enough to plug back in to society in a meaningful way, I logged onto my social media to discover that the great Dolly Parton had passed away and, instantly, I felt my heart race and my eyes tear up, my jaw clench and my muscles tense.

And those things didn't happen because of the tremendous amount of DayQuil I consumed or the steroids that were coursing through my body. It was a physiological response to deep grief for one of the world's most beautiful souls whose earthly journey has come to an end. Not only that but it felt like my body was gearing up for battle in her absence; like something in me knew that it was now up to the rest of us to continue her vast discipleship and take up the torch of her shining legacy.

She could easily have been a billionaire but chose not to and, instead, opted to give most of her wealth to various charitable organizations and philanthropic causes. She gave far more than she took and left this world better than she found it. So, if it's alright with you, I'd like to share some of the things Dolly did to live out the gospel, grounded in her Christian faith and her love of humanity, to inspire us all to dig a little deeper and love a little more openly.



1.) In 1988 she started the Dollywood Foundation in her home county of Sevier County, Ten-

nessee. The goal of this foundation was to decrease high school dropout rates, knowing that education often provides a pathway out of poverty. Within the foundation, she started the Buddy Program which awarded \$500 to every seventh and eighth grader who finished high school, prompting the dropout rate to decline from 35% to 6%. She also offered a \$500 scholarship to every student in Sevier County who wished to attend Hiwassee College.

2.) In 1995 Dolly launched the Imagination Library through The Dollywood Foundation. Originally, the program sent one book per month to each child enrolled in Sevier County from birth until their first year of school. It was founded in honor of Dolly's father who was unable to read. It has since grown into a global initiative that has sent over 300 million free books to children worldwide.

3.) In 2007 Dolly created a benefit concert for LeConte Medical and Cancer Center in Sevier County. The concert raised \$500,000 on its own and both Dollywood and Parton's Dixie Stampede dinner theatre pledged \$250,000 each to the project, raising a total of \$1 million dollars. It opened in 2010 and features a 300,000 square-foot Dolly Parton Center for Women's Services.

4.) In 2016 Dolly organized a Telethon called *Smoky Mountains Rise: a Benefit for the My People Fund* to help residents hit hardest by the devastating wildfires in eastern Tennessee. The Telethon featured artists such as Chris Stapleton, Chris Young, Kenny Rogers, Lauren Alaina, Alison Krauss, Reba McEntire, and Cyndi Lauper, and raised more than \$13 million. To continue her wildfire relief efforts, Dolly launched the *My People Fund* which provided \$1,000 a month for six months to families whose homes were completely destroyed. The fund also donated almost \$9 million to those in need and still helps residents pay for rent, utilities, food, and mental health resources. This fund also helped residents impacted by catastrophic flooding in October 2021.

5.) In 2017 Dolly donated \$1 million to Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in honor of her niece who was treated there for leukemia. Later, in 2022 she donated another \$1 million to Vanderbilt University Medical Center aimed at helping pediatric infectious disease research.

6.) Likewise, in 2020 Dolly donated \$1 million to coronavirus research at Vanderbilt University, which helped to fund Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine which has been proven to be 94.5% effective against COVID.

7.) In 2022 Dolly announced that The Dollywood Co. would cover 100% of tuition, fees, and books for any employee who is furthering their education. The program is available to all seasonal, part-time, and full-time employees at Dollywood Parks & Resorts and they can enroll in the program on their first day of employment.

In her decades-long music and acting career, Dolly encountered people of all backgrounds and walks of life. Many of those who worked with her have shared that they were touched by her generosity of spirit and her deeply caring nature. As a result of meeting people with different stories and experiences, Dolly developed deep love and empathy for all kinds of folks and was a champion for underrepresented and marginalized communities. She spoke out against misogyny, against homophobia and transphobia, and against racism (among other things) and fought for the least of these. She loved people fiercely and gave so many of us permission to be our most authentic selves. She talked the talk and walked the walk, and we are all better for it. We would all do well to follow her example of discipleship in whatever ways we can.

Rest easy, good and faithful servant. We will always love you.

Peace,
Pastor Carly



An Opportunity to Volunteer

Someone once said that “volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.” Unfortunately, the wise person who said that neglected to leave their name so no credit can be given. But you can’t really argue with that as it is very true—to live in a community where people take care of and help each other. What could be better than that?

As many of you know, our church participates in the Meals on Wheels program, delivering meals to Elkhorn area residents one week every month. Tom Bailey and Ray Knutson have been a part of our delivery team for quite a few years. Due to the fact that they have both moved outside of the Elkhorn area, they have both decided to end their time with this organization. We are appreciative of their many years of service and to consider the numerous meals they have delivered is a bit mind boggling! Thank you, Tom and Ray, for your dedication to this program.

That said, we are in need of two people to take their places. 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.



Coat Closet Coming Soon — We Need Your Coats!

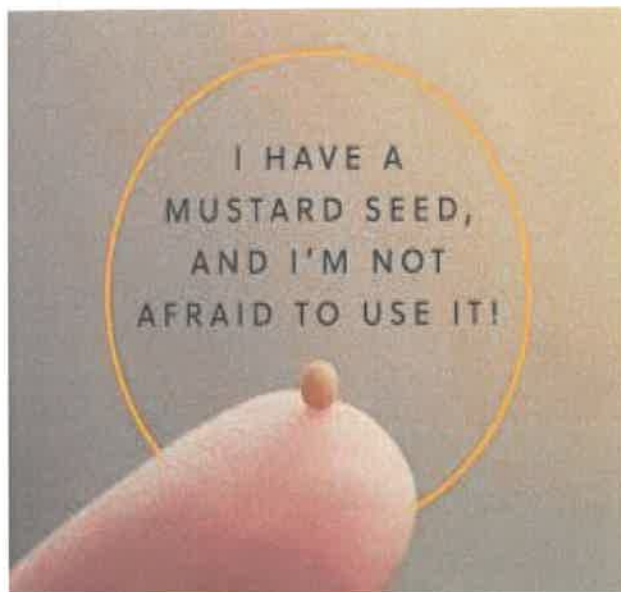
Our church’s newly developed mission is to create a coat closet this fall for anyone in need of warm winter gear. At their meeting in August, Women’s Fellowship discussed it and felt it would be great for us to take on this endeavor. At their most recent meeting, Church Council endorsed the idea, as well. Now we need YOUR assistance!

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, snow pants, and boots—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 by these items. Coats can be hung on the hangers of the rack there 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 hope to gather items in September and beyond, hoping to have enough that we could make items available as soon as colder weather starts in.

Please feel free to share this with family, friends, and neighbors. We will accept donations from anyone as long as they meet our qualifications of being gently used and clean. We thank you in advance for your donations of winter wear!



Mustard Seed Overflowing with Joy

Have you ever poured too much soda into a glass and watched it bubble over the top? Joy is like that. When we trust in God, God fills us with joy so much that it overflows! It's not just about being happy when life is easy—real joy comes from knowing that God is with us no matter what.

Sometimes life is stressful. Maybe you're dealing with pressure, complicated friendships, or even family struggles. When we focus on God's promises and trust God's love, God fills us with joy and peace. That joy doesn't stay inside us—it spills over to others! Have you ever met someone whose smile and kindness made your day better? That's what can happen when God's joy

overflows through us.

How can you overflow with joy this month? Create a mindset to receive and give joy—you will be amazed at how life-changing it can be! That said, I leave you with a poem from Mary Oliver who is one of my favorite poets.

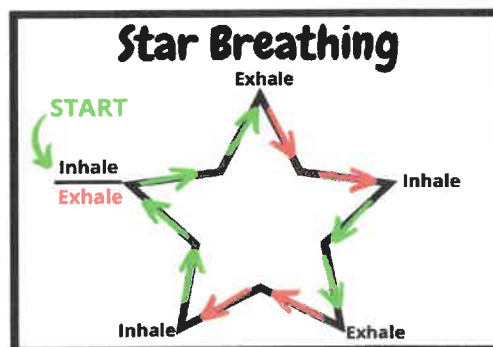
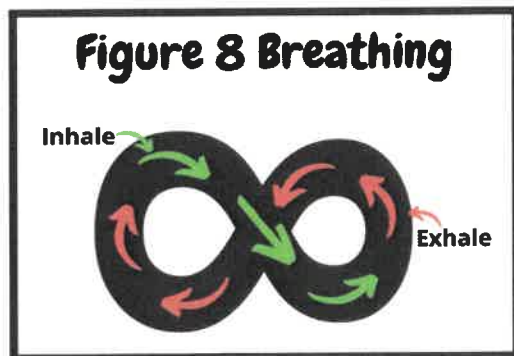
If you suddenly and
unexpectedly feel joy,
don't hesitate. Give in to it.
...Whatever it is.
Don't be afraid of its plenty.
Joy is not made to be a crumb.

In faith—

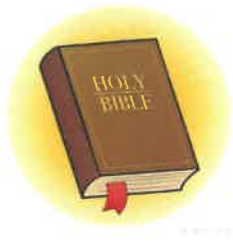
Barb

Monthly Meditation Practice

This month we are sharing a couple breathing mindfulness techniques you can use to prepare for a time of meditation. You can either physically have cards like these with you or simply picture it in your mind as you practice the breathing and ready yourself for meditation. We hope you find them helpful!



Bible Study Happening



Our Bible Study continues on every other Wednesday, at 11:00 a.m. Come join us for conversations as we look at the scriptures. All are welcome to attend.

The next gathering will be on September 2nd and following on 16th. If you have not attended yet, you are welcome to join in. We would love to have more of you join us.

Next RaiseRight Order - September 13

Our next RaiseRight order will be due on September 13. There are many good sales going on now, so why not get a card to use for purchasing some of those items? This helps out our church as we earn money from the cards you purchase. You might also purchase these cards for birthday or anniversary gifts—even hostess gifts if you need something like that! 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!

Golf Cart Taxi

Our church will be volunteering at the wheelchair booth and driving the golf cart taxis again this year on Monday (Labor Day), at the Walworth County Fair. The task is simple—follow a preset route, stopping at spots along the way to offer rides to those enjoying the fair. It is a nice way to promote our church as we wear our blue t-shirts while providing this service. An added bonus is that we are paid \$400.00 for volunteering and driving.

Thank you to all of you that volunteered to be in the booth and to those that are driving this year. Enjoy the fair.



Kindness Poll Findings

It seems that news stories and social media posts over the past few years have been filled with highly publicized tensions both political and social that we now face as a nation. Some days it just seems that these stories are increasing in intensity. But the good news is that according to a recent Gallup poll, that is not the case.

Researchers interviewed over 2,000 American adults, asking them to report everyday experiences involving kindness—specifically how often they had witnessed it or been a recipient of it themselves. They also asked about comfort levels when or if initiating kindness toward strangers. They found that kindness in the United States is actually more alive and well than might have been expected!

Here are some statistics from the recent poll:

- 60% had seen people acting in respectful and kind ways often, but this answer came more from the older people in the survey. Younger people were less likely to observe acts of kindness.

- 65% reported they had been the recipient of a kind act within the last week, but again, young people were less likely to have a positive response for this question.
- 73% viewed other Americans as “generally very kind” or “somewhat kind”.
- Overall, 90% felt they would be “very comfortable” or “somewhat comfortable” initiating an act of kindness toward a stranger. This statistic was broken down further to show it resulted from 35% of 18 to 29-year-olds, 49% of 30 to 49-year-olds, and 64% of adults 65 and older feeling this way.

The differences between the ages can be attributed to several reasons but generally speaking, younger people report more mental health challenges which means they may have less energy or emotional bandwidth to reach out to others. They may also be more plugged in to the negativity in social media leading them to expect less kindness in the world.

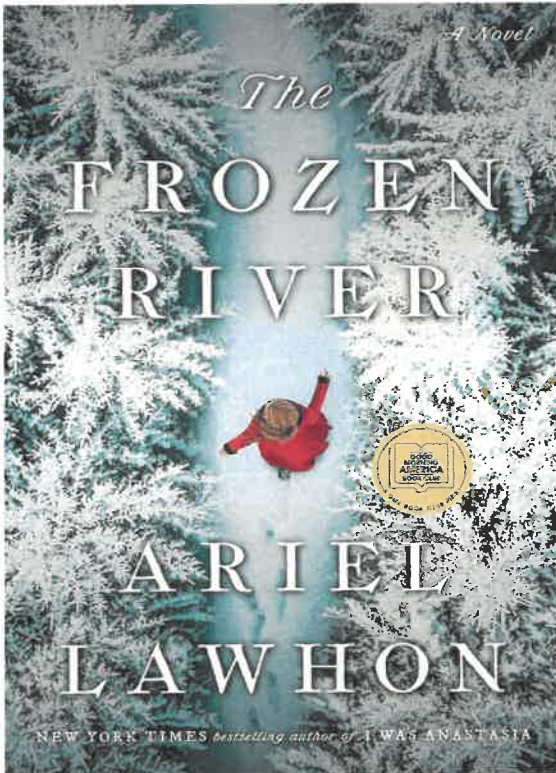
Regardless of the age differences, all of us could be encouraged to be a little kinder in our lives. Kindness is vital to the health of us all—nationwide. And it is sort of contagious because it has a ripple effect. So go—be kind! You never know how many people might be affected by one or two simple acts of kindness!

Book Club - September

LIFEGIVER

Set in 1789-90, *The Frozen River* takes place in Hallowell, Maine. Martha Ballard is a midwife who serves the local population. While not a doctor (no woman could be at that time) our protagonist does more than deliver and help babies and their mothers. She tends to many of their other medical needs as well. Additionally, she is asked to perform non obstetrical situations as well.

As the novel opens Martha is called to determine the cause of death of a man found drowned in the Kennebec River which flows through the town. It is late November. The body of Joshua Burgess was discovered lodged under the ice when Sam Dawin fell overboard while transporting a load of logs down the river. Martha's examination leads her to conclude that Burgess had been beaten, then hanged and subsequently thrown into the river. This had to have occurred within the past 12 hours or less. The main plot of the novel revolves around this discovery. Who murdered Burgess, and more importantly, why? How is it connected to another crime committed months before?



Briefly, months before the Burgess murder, Rebecca Foster accused him and Colonel North of raping her. North is the town's richest and most powerful citizen. Rebecca is the wife of the local minister. He has been displaced from his position in the church at the instigation of North. Will the murder of Burgess be solved? Will North be brought to justice?

The author, Ariel Lawhon, really is not that interested in telling a mystery. She is much more interested in using the basic plot to shine a light on the status of women, and not just women who lived in 1789. It is pretty obvious that North is guilty of the charge which Rebecca has lodged against him. Like many potential villains in novels of this sort, North is villainous in almost every way. He has cheated, or attempted to cheat anyone in order to enrich himself. He clearly hates females, uses intimidation as a weapon. Lawhon gives him no redeeming characteristics.

North's defense against Rebecca's rape charges centers around the lack of witnesses. Despite

Martha's observations taken very soon after the rape, Lawhon demonstrates that the word of the victim pales in comparison to the word of the accused. Like rape at any time in history, there are seldom any witnesses. Rebecca's sexual assault has resulted in a pregnancy. The shunning of unwed mothers is portrayed in numerous ways throughout the novel.

When the legal proceedings take place women cannot testify unless accompanied by their spouse or parent. The fact that no jury has a woman on it only highlights the inferior position in which women were placed. Lawhon's primary objective is to show how the powerful can and do, take advantage of the powerless. Setting the novel in 1789, just after the ratification of the Constitution, seems designed to contrast the ideals of the new nation with the situation which at least half of the population faced. By extension, Lawhon clearly argues that, despite significant progress, the ideals have not yet been fully realized.

Ultimately, the novel is about Power. It demonstrates the consequences of allowing those with power to abuse it. Male domination of females is as old as human society has existed. Lawhon recognizes this, but in exaggerating the evil of North and contrasting it with the "perfection" of Martha tends to oversimplify the situation.

We will be meeting on, Wednesday, Sept. 16th at 6:30 p.m. Barb Townsend will host.

Bill Neis

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Elkhorn, Wisconsin

Church Council Meeting Minutes

August 18, 2026 at 7:00 P.M. Via Zoom

The meeting was **called to order** at 7:03 p.m. by Moderator Jennifer Neis. Those in attendance were Barb Townsend, Jean Lile, Sally Schleiger, Carol Prchal, Diane Licht, Jamie Stilling Stepp, Tom Stepp, Pastor Carly Gaeth, Cindy Waller, Bobbi Rader, Tina Kruger and Dorothy Bever.

The **Opening Prayer** was given by Barb Townsend.

Additions to the agenda: None at this time.

Approval of July 21, 2026 Council Minutes: Barb Townsend moved to approve the minutes from the July 21, 2026 Council meeting as presented. Seconded by Bobbi Rader. The motion was carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report - Treasurer Tina Kruger presented the July treasurer's report. Following brief discussion Barb Townsend moved to approve the Treasurer's report as presented, seconded by Diane Licht. The motion to approve carried unanimously.

Pastor's Moment: Pastor Carly has provided her report informing what she has done this past month and things she is working on. She has numerous projects in the works including confirmation with the Damascus Project, LGBTQ and support group project and rally day fun. Following discussion, Barb Townsend, Jennifer Neis, and Pastor Carly will get together to talk more about rally day possibilities.

Question of the Day? Pastor Carly asked Council, "Who is someone you have known the longest and what you like about this friendship". Numerous, positive responses were given by council members.

Ministry Leaders' Reports/Updates: A report was submitted from Faith Formation and Women's Fellowship.

Old Business: Ways to get Carly and the Church more into the public in Elkhorn: Carly said she

will be attending a luncheon with Jamie, she also will be attending the Walworth County Fair along with the church pie sale during Elkhorn's Oktoberfest.

ONA- conversation: Tom Stepp suggested that Council approve looking into the possibilities of an ONA designation for our church, putting together a plan of action for the coming months. Following discussion, Barb Townsend moved to go forward with the ONA process by contacting the WI UCC Conference as to how to proceed. Seconded by Tom Stepp. The motion was carried unanimously. Pastor Carly agreed to be the UCC contact person.

"United States of Kindness": Barb Townsend stated that tallies are still accumulating. Keep being kind.

Membership Growth...signs. Other ideas?: Jennifer noted the cardboard sunflower signs advertising our church which Carol Prchal had made and placed in the yard last week. There are eight additional signs available if anyone would like one to place on their property.

Making the church look more appealing - ideas, plans?: Jennifer also noted that two banners are now hanging on the wall in the Geneva Street entry. One replaces the Memorial Garden saying that had been painted on the wall. (Each time we embrace a memory, you meet again with those we love for the heart never forgets). The other banner is the UCC "Be the church" banner.

Bible Study: Jennifer Neis stated that Bible Study is going well.

Oktoberfest: Jennifer Neis stated that the Women's Fellowship is moving forward with the pie sale and council discussed ways to get children involved. Jamie Stepp suggested making seed packets and having the children help hand them out.

Tech Help for Barb: Carly has made a flyer asking for tech help to put up at school and Barb added that a sign is up at the Library as well.

"Critter": Jennifer Neis stated that this issue is ongoing and working on getting taken care of. Tom Stepp added that \$550 in costs have been accrued so far and will make an announcement asking for help to defray the costs.

Church Software: Cindy Waller is working on purchasing the computer program Canva. This was approved by council last month and that this will replace "Publisher" which will no longer be available in fall.

Versita-blood drive: Cindy Waller stated that the Chamber of Commerce is having a November blood drive. Our church is not able to host at this time but will assist with promoting the blood drive in other ways.

New Business: Coat Closet: Jennifer Neis stated that Women's Fellowship has agreed to start up a fall "Coat Closet". This will include outerwear of coats, gloves, hats, boots, scarves etc. Items will be made available once a week when the Food Pantry is open with donations to begin in September. More information to follow.

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

Adjournment: Bobbi Rader moved to adjourn, seconded by Jamie Stilling Stepp. The motion was adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

The next Council meeting of the Church Council will be **September 15, 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.





SEPTEMBER 2026



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
AUG 30 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON 3:30 p.m. Manda- tory Training for golf cart Taxis at Park Stage –	AUG 31	1	2 11:00 a.m. Bible Study Fair Starts 	3	4	5
6 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	7 LABOR DAY Church office closed 8-2:30 p.m. golf cart Taxis at WCF	8	9 6:30 p.m. Book Club— Home of Barb Townsend	10 9:30 a.m. Women's Fellowship	11	12
13 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON Official Start of Sunday School RaiseRight Due	14	15 7:00 p.m. Church Council	16 11:00 a.m. Bible Study	17	18	19
20 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	21 J LILE & L MCCORMICK	22 B & C KRUSE	23 NEED VOLUNTEERS	24 T & J STEPP	25 B NEWMAN & D RIESE	26
27 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	28	29	30 11:00 a.m. Bible Study	OCT 1	2	3

School Supplies

Thank you to everyone that brought in school supplies for children in the Elkhorn Area School District.

Once again, our church came through and brought in more than we thought! You are awesome!

Thank you all for your generosity.



**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 NHS or similar organizations

LET US KNOW IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS!

elkhornucc@gmail.com
(262) 723-3246

www.elkhornucc.org • 76 S Wisconsin St, Elkhorn, WI 53121

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.



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.

Thank you in advance !

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

David Opitz	01
Paul Brandenburg	03
Judy (Brandenburg) Shaffer	05
Laurie Fiegel	13
Tim Beine	14
Katie Godfrey Matter	16
Mike Breaman	17
Elizabeth Gaeth	18
Steve Reed	19
Gerry Stoflet	24
Joe Reed	24
Duane Newman	27
Mark Newman	27
Jacob Ringhand	27
Bill Trewyn	30

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Barb and Al Majkrzak	03
Anita and David Stohl	04
Julie and Jim Forster	08
Becky and Duane Newman	08
Joyce and Jeff Wilson	13
Cindy and Larry Waller	17
Stacey and Tim Forster	19
Sally and Bob Schleiger	19
Stacy and Jeff Whiteman	24



Lay Worship Leaders

Sep 6	Carol Prchal
Sep 13	Sally Schleiger
Sep 20	_____
Sep 27	_____



Ushers

Sep 6	Jean Lile & Dorothy Bever
Sep 13	_____
Sep 20	_____
Sep 27	_____



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

Sep 6	_____
Sep 13	_____
Sep 20	_____
Sep 27	_____



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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