



# 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](mailto:ElkhornUCC@gmail.com)  
Pastor: Rev. Carly Gaeth

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# JUNE 2026

## Pastor Carly's Corner:

Pride month is upon us! I know that for some, pride month and the events thereof might seem obnoxious or needlessly loud—in every sense of the word. You might be thinking to yourself: “does the LGBTQ+ community really need a whole month of celebrating? What about other folks?” And I hear that. I do. I know that every time we lift up a specific group of people, there is an inherent element of exclusion for those whose identities are not named or defined. It doesn't seem fair that one person's individuality is celebrated and another is not. But what affirms the necessity of Pride celebrations for me, year after year, is twofold:

1. Pride is undoubtedly about the LGBTQ+ community, but there are countless intersectional celebrations as well—pride within the Latinx community, pride within the Black community, pride within the trans\* community, pride within different spiritual communities, and so many more. It's not just about having pride for your sexuality or gender identity. It's about having pride for every part of yourself; embracing the fullness of humanity and allowing ourselves to be our most authentic selves. It's about learning from other people's experiences and opening ourselves up to other ways of being. It's about celebrating differences and uniqueness. It's about lifting up different kinds of love and different kinds of people. It's recognition for the beauty that's all around us.

2. When I hear stories of my LGBTQ+ siblings from around the world, I'm reminded of the harsh realities some of us have faced:

- So many of our trans\* brothers and sisters have been killed in acts of horrific violence that every November we observe Transgender Day of Remembrance.



- There are countless people who have been disowned and shunned by their friends and family members, forced to live on the streets and fend for themselves to survive.
- LGBTQ+ folks were imprisoned and killed in the Holocaust— when concentration camps were liberated, LGBTQ+ survivors weren't freed. They were simply moved to other prisons and labor camps.
- There are children who have been taken from their homes in the middle of the night and brought to "Christian" centers where they undergo damaging and harmful things like: conversion therapy; physical, mental, and spiritual abuse; shame or fear based "therapy"; physical and chemical alterations to their bodies; starvation and deprivation of basic necessities; and countless other things.
- People have been assaulted, ostracized, banned from public spaces, called horrible and degrading names. People have called me and my LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters "disgusting" and "unnatural" and "perverted" and label us as dangerous or sinister.
- Many of us have been killed— Matthew Shepard, Harvey Milk, and Marsha P. Johnson to name a few.
- Identifying as LGBTQ+ was classified as a mental illness until 1987.
- People are still being targeted and attacked for the people they love and the way they express themselves— children are being bullied to the point of suicide; legislation is being passed to take away the rights of the LGBTQ+ community as we speak, the trans\* community in particular.

It's not just about rainbows and feather boas, parades and protests. There is a real sense of unity and community, of embracing people of every orientation and status with kindness, love, respect, and wonder. Shouldn't that extend to the church? Shouldn't the church be a place where everyone is welcomed and loved and seen— after all, that's what made Jesus' ministry so powerful. And it is up to us to be his hands and feet, head and heart in the here and now.

Food for thought. Happy Pride! ~Pastor Carly

## Kindness as a Superpower!

Have you ever thought about kindness as a super power? Could be, and the great part is that all of us have the ability to make it that way which is a great thing to consider! New research suggests that for most of us, one gesture of kindness isn't just touching one person—it is actually helping many, because people who experience kindness are most likely going to spread kindness to someone else, who then spreads kindness to another, and so on. It's contagious but in a good way!

Here are a few more facts about kindness for you to consider. They were taken from a recent survey (early March) from Gallup and the Values-in-Action Foundation:

- Younger adults are less likely than older adults to initiate acts of kindness toward strangers. Of those surveyed age 50 or older, 72% said they felt comfortable initiating an act of kindness after being a recipient themselves. Only 40% of adults age 18 to 29 who also received act of kindness said they felt comfortable initiating an act of kindness.
- 60% of Americans across every region said they had experienced kindness multiple times in the week prior to the survey. 62% of southerners reported seeing people treat others with kindness more often. Midwesterners were lower with 56% of those surveyed reporting seeing people treat others with kindness more often.



- People in the city experienced more acts of kindness in a week (67%) which was slightly more than suburban or rural residents (62%).

Last month, we jumped into “United States of Kindness” to boost the acts of kindness in our country. How are you doing? We continue to have tally marks recorded on our giant tally sheet in the front of the sanctuary and we hope to continue to see those marks multiply in coming months. And based on the facts shared above, we (an older congregation in a small, midwestern town) need to get busy being kinder. Maybe we could think of “kindness” as being our new SUPER POWER! An ultimate one at that!

What are you waiting for? Go! Be kind!

## Strengthen the Church Sunday

The Strengthen the Church Offering reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC. Conferences and the national setting equally share the gifts given by members and friends through their local congregations. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. **By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ.**

As God calls our congregations to be the church in new ways, your generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches, and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults.

The theme for 2026 is Sent Forth in Love. Our church will be collecting donations on Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>. There will be an insert in your bulletin as well as special offering envelopes provided. Thank for your donations.



## Rummage Sale/Bake Sale June 5 and 6

Just a reminder that we will be hosting a rummage sale in Fellowship Hall during the Elkhorn City-Wide Rummage Sale on Friday and Saturday, June 5-6. As last year, items in the sale will not be priced. Buyers will be able to state the price they wish to pay. Items can be brought to church the week before the sale. Each person is responsible for setting up the items they bring in on the tables in Fellowship Hall, but also for taking away any items that do not sell.

Scheduled times to bring items in include the following:

- Thursday, May 28, later afternoon—contact Barb (262-903-6509) if this works for you.
- Friday, May 29, from 9am to 1pm. Afternoon times available by contacting Barb.
- Saturday, May 30, contact Barb to set up a time.
- Sunday, May 31, from 9am to 1pm (with a break for the service from 10-11)
- Monday, June 1, from 9am to 1pm
- Wednesday, June 3, from 11am to 1pm
- Thursday, June 4, from 3pm to 6pm

If none of these times work for you, contact Barb!

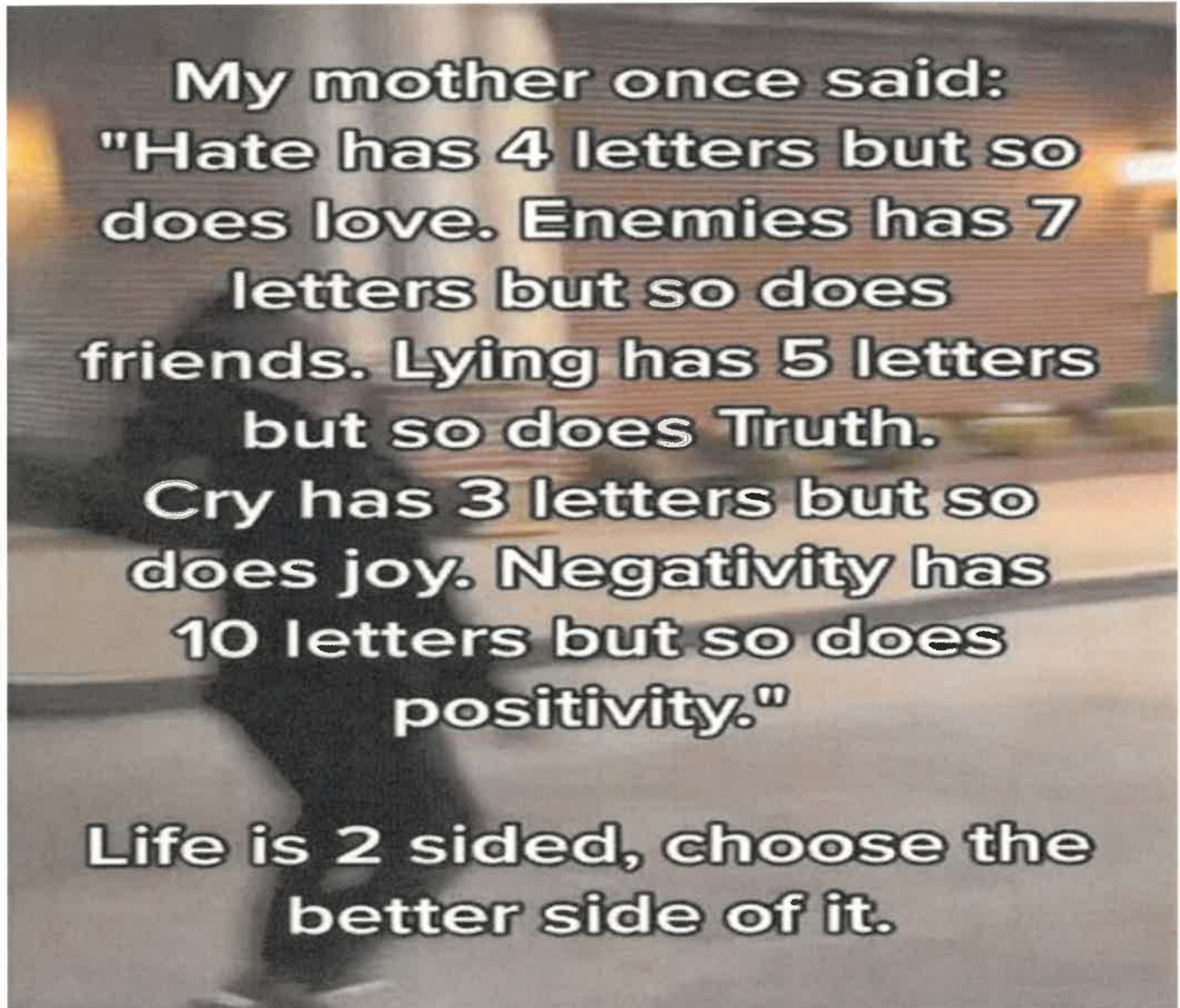
We will also be having a bake sale at this time. We are asking for cookies, bars, or small breads—something that is easy to grab and go. Please have baked items delivered to church by

Thursday, June 4 by 4pm at the latest. This will allow us to have everything bagged, priced, and ready the following morning.

Thank you for all your help with the sale!

## **Mustard Seed Choices in Our Two-Sided Life**

The picture included with this month's Mustard Seed column speaks volumes.  
Read it and choose wisely.



## **RaiseRight Order - June 14**

Our next RaiseRight card order is due on Sunday, June 14th. What cards might you need? These cards come in handy for graduates, wedding gifts, birthdays and baby showers and they are extremely easy to wrap! Perhaps the grad that you know likes Culvers or Starbucks and

would enjoy a treat for their hard work during the school year. Maybe they need a gas card so they can get to a summer job without too much of a hit to the money they are earning. And don't forget about using the cards for your own projects. A card from Lowe's or Home Depot will allow you to purchase plants to beautify your yard! One from Piggly Wiggly will allow you to do the shopping needed for any upcoming barbecues! And don't forget gas—everyone needs that!

A complete listing of the cards available from retailers is available in the office. Thank you for your purchases and happy summer!



## Monthly Meditation Practice



Mantra meditation is prominent in many teachings, including Hindu and Buddhist traditions. This type of meditation uses a repetitive sound to clear the mind. It can be a word, phrase, or sound, one of the most common being "om." Your mantra can be spoken loudly or quietly. After chanting the mantra for some time, you'll be more alert and in tune with your environment. This allows you to experience deeper levels of awareness. Some people enjoy mantra meditation because they find it easier to focus on a word than on their breath. Others enjoy feeling the vibration of the sound in their body. Create your mantra—i.e. I deserve peace, I'm worthy of love, It will be okay, This too shall pass, etc.—and see how it colors your world!

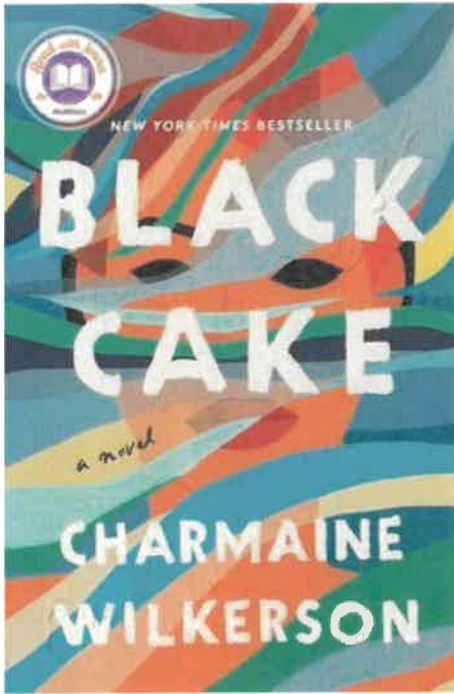
## Women's Fellowship Scholarship Winners 2026

Women's Fellowship is happy to announce the scholarship winners from Elkhorn Area School District's class of 2026. In total, five scholarships were awarded this year. Four of them are from the Adolph Piek Family Scholarship Fund. The fifth scholarship was awarded in the name of Ardelle Baur. Winners of the scholarships include the following students:

- Camber Bruinswick—Camber will be attending UW Madison this coming fall. She will be studying biology in hopes of going into the medical field. (Adolph Piek Family)
- Hailey Cunningham—UW Oshkosh was the chosen school for Hailey. Medical Imaging will be the focus of her studies at UWO. (Adolph Piek Family)
- Saria Juaregui—Saria is attending Gateway Technical College where she will be going into the nursing program. (Ardelle Baur)
- Kyrin Lile—Kyrin will be going to UW Green Bay. In addition to playing for the Green Bay Phoenix (Women's Basketball), Kyrin will be majoring in human biology. (Adolph Piek Family)
- Brett Ringhand—Brett has been accepted to Carthage College in Kenosha. Accounting is his chosen field of study. (Adolph Piek Family)



Congratulations to all of this year's graduating seniors. We wish them luck as they begin this next chapter in their lives!



## Book Club - June

### *Black Cake*

*Black Cake* by Charmaine Wilkerson is the book that was chosen for June's book club read. The story follows two siblings (Byron and Benny) as they learn about the death of Elenore (their mother) who leaves them a voice recording as well as a black cake made from a family recipe with a long history.

The story covers many years and involves a journey across the world. It includes family traditions and secrets, but also (most importantly) forgiveness. *Black Cake* deals with identity and heritage, but it is also a lesson about growth and moving forward.

We will meet at the home of Jennifer and Bill Neis on Wednesday, June 10, at 6:00 p.m.

## Self-care Challenge

My own path of self-care has been paved with affirmations— small phrases or kindnesses I extend to myself to help negate harmful self-talk or internalized shame. On the surface, it sounds a little woo-woo. And it feels *incredibly awkward and silly at first but, over time, it starts to make a difference.*

Our self-care challenge this month is to write affirmations for ourselves. Whether it be on post-it notes that you stick to your laptop, messages you leave on your bathroom mirror with dry-erase markers, or voicemails/emails you send to yourself— look at the whole of who you are and affirm the good. If you need examples, here are a few I like:

1. I am whole
2. I am loved
3. I am capable
4. I make a difference
5. I bring light wherever I go

## Salad Luncheon - Wrap Up

Our 30th Annual Salad Luncheon is in the books!

Thank you to all who helped by making those delicious salads, cookies and bars or assisted behind the scenes in some way.

Those who attended had great things to say about the meal and everyone enjoyed it!

Our next meeting will be Thursday, June 11, at 9:30am. All are welcome to join us!



# Holton Elkhorn Band Concerts

If you are ever in need of something to do on a Friday night this summer, consider a Holton Elkhorn Band concert.

The Holton Band is privileged to play six concerts for the community every summer in the band shell at Sunset Park. These concerts (free to the public) have been available for many years.

This summer they will be held at 7:30pm on June 12, 19, and 26. Dates in July are Friday, July 3 (prior to the fireworks), July 10 and 17.



## FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Elkhorn, Wisconsin

**Church Council Meeting Minutes** Via Zoom

May 19th, 2026 at 7:00 P.M.

The meeting was **called to order** at 7:04 p.m. by Assistant Moderator Carol Prchal in the absence of Jennifer Neis. Those in attendance were Barb Townsend, Pastor Carly Gaeth, Tom Stepp, Jamie Stilling Stepp, Jean Lile, Sally Schleiger, Cindy Waller, Diane Licht, Tina Kruger and Dorothy Bever.

The **Opening Prayer** was given by Carol Prchal.

**Question of the Day:** Carol stated that as a way of getting to know each other a little better, something new has been added to the agenda. Each month, Pastor Carly gets to pose a question to council members, allowing all of us to get to know each other even better. This month's question is, "If you could instantly acquire a new skill, what would you choose?" Members gave great answers as to something new they would like to be able to do.

**Additions to the agenda:** Those additional items to be discussed later include interior of the church appearance, use of the building by the meditation group, and the Chamber ad.

**Approval of April 21, 2026 Council Minutes:** Pastor Carly moved to approve the minutes from the April 21, 2026 Council meeting as presented. Seconded by Diane Licht. The motion was carried unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report** - Tina Kruger presented and explained the April treasurer's report. Following slight discussion, Barb Townsend moved to approve the Treasurer's report as presented, seconded by Tom Stepp. The motion to approve carried unanimously.

**Pastor's Moment:** Pastor Carly submitted her monthly report on what things she has done in the last month and the things she is working on. Council discussed the LGBTQ support group with opinions and ideas. Jamie Stilling Stepp and Pastor Carly will be attending the United Way breakfast this Wednesday, May 20th.

**Ministry Leaders' Reports/Updates:** Reports were submitted from Faith Formation, and Women's Fellowship.

**Old Business: Ways to get Carly and the Church more into the public in Elkhorn:** Council discussed the importance of and getting Pastor Carly and the Church more into the Elkhorn public.

**ONA- conversation continuation:** Carol opened up conversation for discussion. Pastor Carly will keep looking into options and Barb stated the importance of keeping this open for future conversations. **“United States of Kindness”:** Barb Townsend stated that she has counted 76 tally marks for the kind gestures made so far.

**Chamber Ad:** Cindy Waller showed our UCC church ad that is in the new Elkhorn Visitors Guide.

**New Business: Scholarships and possibly graduation recognition during church service:** Jean Lile stated that Women’s Fellowship is giving out 5 scholarships this year and following positive discussion, Pastor Carly will talk to the families of our graduates to see if there would be interest in recognizing them during a worship service.

**Membership Growth...suggestions? Signs:** Following discussion of ideas and suggestions, Council agreed to keep this on the agenda for next month.

**Outside cleaning day around the church:** Following discussion, Tom Stepp agreed to organize and have the roadside clean up (Hwy H to O) at 9:00 am on May 30th and for those who can help with the church clean up, to follow at 10:30 am.

**Other:** Carol Prchal added with the question how does our church look to visitors? Following discussion as to how to possibly make the Geneva Street entryway more appealing, Carol, Cindy Waller and Dorothy Bever will meet at church on May 30th at 10:30 to go over ideas and suggestions as to how to possibly make the entryway more appealing.

**Council meetings in person:** Carol stated that she talked with Moderator Jennifer Nies and she would like to bring the Council meetings back to the church and meet in person. Following discussion, Council agreed to hold the June 16th, 2026 Council meeting in person at church. Note that Pastor Carly will not be at the June 16th Council meeting as she will be in DC at that time.

**Blue Lotus Meditation Group:** Cindy Waller wanted to add that the group extended a sincere “thank you” for letting them use the church for their Thursday evening meetings while the library was under construction. Now that the library is available again, they will no longer need space at the church.

**Closing Prayer:** Barb Townsend led us in closing prayer.

**Adjournment:** Barb Townsend moved to adjourn, seconded by Carol Prchal. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

The next Council meeting of the Church Council will be **June 16th, 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 June Council meeting.





# JUNE 2026



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5 City Wide & Church Rummage	6 City Wide & Church Rummage
7 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON  Strengthen the Church Sunday  Graduate Sunday	8    <b>J LILE &amp; L MCCORMICK</b>	9    <b>B &amp; C KRUSE</b>	10   6:00 p.m. Book Club— Home of Jennifer & Bill Neis  <b>R KNUTSON &amp; T BAILEY</b>	11   9:30 a.m. Women's Fellowship  <b>T &amp; J STEPP</b>	12    <b>B NEWMAN &amp; D RIESE</b>	13
<b>MEALS ON WHEELS</b>						
14 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON  RaiseRight Due	15	16  7:00 p.m. Church Council	17	18	19	20
21 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	29	30	JULY 1	2	3	4 

Great  
JOB

**Congratulations!**

**To all of the  
Graduates  
Of 2026!**



Our hungry hippo jar that sits on the coffee table in the family room, will be 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 !

**JUNE BIRTHDAYS**

Ty Brown	03
Randy Licht	03
Chloe Stoltz	07
Roxanna Kramer	08
Brent Reynolds	11
Ron Kramer	13
Brenda Pesyea	13
Carolyn Morris	16
Kristi Hay	18
Kathleen Krostal	22
Jenell Reynolds	25
Kevin Morris	29
Abbigail Whiteman	30
Elizabeth Whiteman	30



**JUNE ANNIVERSARIES**

Katherine and Bart Turk	06
Carole and Bob Kruse	08
Hannah and Jim Brown	10
Diane and Randy Licht	13
Jennifer and Chad Stoltz	17
Jennifer and Bill Neis	23
Brooke and Jaime Lile	25



**Lay Worship Leaders**



<b>June 7</b>	<b>Sara Gould</b>
<b>June 14</b>	_____
<b>June 21</b>	_____
<b>June 28</b>	_____

**Ushers**



<b>June 7</b>	<b>Jennifer &amp; Bill Neis</b>
<b>June 14</b>	_____
<b>June 21</b>	_____
<b>June 28</b>	_____

**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**



<b>June 7</b>	_____
<b>June 14</b>	_____
<b>June 21</b>	_____
<b>June 28</b>	_____

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United Church of Christ**  
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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*