



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

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Pastor: Rev. Carly Gaeth

Web: ElkhornUCC.org
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DECEMBER

Pastor Carly's Corner:

Well, friends... we have officially entered the holiday season. Christmas decorations will soon hang in the sanctuary— the advent wreath waiting to be adorned with candles— and sooner or later (hopefully later) there will be a thin layer of snow on the ground. And, with all of these things and so much more, we begin a new liturgical season and lectionary year.

I've always found it fascinating that the church calendar begins again with the season of Advent— not Easter or Pentecost, Epiphany or Lent, but Advent. When I think about it, it makes sense that this should be the case. After all, the season is about waiting and preparing for the birth of the Christ child; the magic of beginnings whose catalyst is love incarnate, God with us. But, this time of year feels so much more like an ending. It's a time when we reflect on all that the last 11 months have brought us, when we take stock of the things that have transpired and the people we've become, when we set goals for the coming year and wait to see how each month will unfold. Therein lies the paradox— that endings are beginnings and beginnings are endings. They are one and the same and, yet, entirely different.

And, when I take a minute to really think about the world we live in, about all that 2025 has brought to the table, and where we stand as a people right now, I feel as if the endings and beginnings we face happen even more frequently than we realize— it's as if the spirit of Advent is always at play; as if we are perpetually waiting in the space between *no longer* and *not yet*.

We are no longer the people we used to be and not yet the people will become. And maybe the beauty of our church year beginning at this time is that we



get to relish and lean into the space between. We get to celebrate that we are no longer in the season after Pentecost and not yet in the immediacy of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. So, in this holiday season and with the swift approach of Advent, I hope that you allow yourself to embrace both the peaceful quietude of winter and the expectant energy of what's to come.

Peace and blessings to you all,
Pastor Carly



Celebrating Advent and Christmas

Since we are now in December, it is once again time to celebrate the seasons of Advent and Christmas! But the season of Advent has already begun as we lit the first Advent candle—the candle of hope—on Sunday, November 30th. Join with us as we continue the season of Advent, lighting the remaining Advent candles representing peace, joy, and love we celebrate the Sundays leading to Christmas.

The fourth Sunday of Advent (December 21st) will include the kids' Christmas program. This year, the girls will tell the story of a little star who wants to shine for millions to see. This program by the kids is always fun and helps in the celebration of all that is Christmas!

We will be lighting the fifth candle on our Advent wreath during our Christmas Eve service, which will start at 5:00pm. As always, it will conclude with the singing of "Silent Night" by candlelight—a meaningful tradition for our church family.

Sharing Our Blessings and Preparing a Meal

Women's Fellowship has once again decided to assist Spirit of Hope by preparing meals for the men's shelter in Delavan. Spirit of Hope runs the shelter, which is located at Delavan United Methodist Church on South Second Street. They have asked area service organizations to help out by providing meals during their dates of operation (November 3, 2025 through April 24, 2026).

Our church has signed up to provide a meal on four nights this year. The first date was Wednesday, November 19—thank you to those people who already delivered that meal! Our remaining dates include Thursday, December 11; Sunday, January 11; and Saturday, March 7. Teams will be needed to work together to coordinate a prepared meal that will be dropped off at the church on our assigned nights. In addition to the dinner meal and two gallons of milk, they are asking for other food items (lunchmeats, cheeses, bread, juice, etc.) to cover other meals the following day. The shelter houses up to ten men at any given time, but we will be calling prior to each meal to determine how many to prepare for.

Please watch for the sign up sheet on the table in the back of the sanctuary. We have been blessed with the necessities of food and home—time to share our blessings with those who may be struggling at this moment. Thank you for your willingness to help out in this project! Questions? Talk to Barb!



Helping Hope Now and Families in Need

Thank you to everyone that purchased gift cards on your own or through our RaiseRight orders, to be given to Hope Now, for the families in need for Thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving gift cards are given to the families to buy their own Thanksgiving meals! Your generosity of cards given, with a total value of \$750.00, is a blessing for these families. Thank you all so much.

Cards for Christmas will allow families to purchase both food as well as gifts. You may purchase gift cards on your own, **OR** you may choose to support Women's Fellowship sale of *RaiseRight* cards and order the cards in that manner. *RaiseRight* card orders for our church will be due on Sunday, November 30th. Gift cards are due to Hope Now by December 7th. Hope Now families could use Piggly Wiggly, Walmart, Kohls, and Target cards for Christmas. Thank you in advance for helping Hope Now and the families in need, for Christmas.



Salvation Army Bell Ringing We Need Your Help!



Our church will be ringing the bell for the Salvation Army, along with other churches and community groups this year. All of the donations made to the red kettle in Elkhorn will be used to help those in need, in Elkhorn.

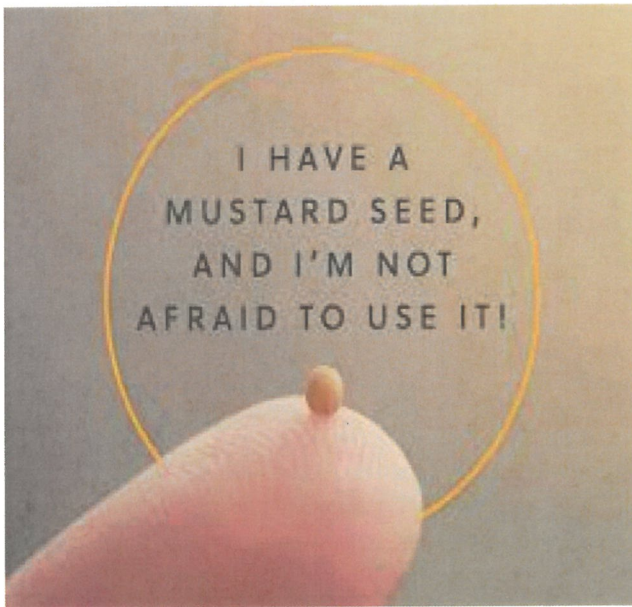
Our church rang the bell at Hansen's IGA Market on Wednesday, November 26th. Big thank you to all of the volunteers that were able to help. We will be ringing the bell again on Wednesday, December 24th, Christmas Eve. If you are able to help out, there is a sign up sheet in the back of the sanctuary or you may call Cindy at the church office to volunteer. If this date does not work for you, talk with Cindy and she will let you know if there are more openings on other dates.

Ringling the bell for salvation Army, only takes an hour or two of your time and you get to greet your neighbors as they are shopping at Hansen's and wish people Happy Holidays as you stand by the red kettle, and most importantly you are helping those in need with the funds raised. Thank you for supporting this ministry.

Stewardship Success

Our Stewardship campaign for this year has come to an end. We thank everyone for attending worship and hearing our stewardship moments, thanks for filling out your time and talent sheets and for returning your pledge cards. Thank you also, for attending our Pledge Sunday Fellowship hour! There was coffee, food and treats, as well as a bookmark craft to make, guessing of how many peanut M & M's in the jar, and a fund Jeopardy game provided by Pastor Carly.

Time and talent sheets are available at church, if you still need to fill one out. Thank you.



Mustard Seed

Set an Advent Intention

We just entered the season of Advent and realize Christmas will quickly follow. That's because we often get caught up in the buzz of the whole holiday season and things seem to get too fast and too frazzled. Before we know it, holiday decorations are being boxed up and we flop into the closest comfy seating available, thinking, "Where did the season go? I'm exhausted!"

Well, we are early in the season and you can make a change if you consider a few things now by planning an Advent intention. What would you like the season to look like? Would you like to intentionally limit the number of outside invitations you accept as a family in order to have

more peace and less rush? Would you like to set aside one day of the week for family time? Maybe you would like to be guided by an Advent word such as hope, peace, joy, or love. Get the whole family in on the discussion! Here are some examples of possible Advent intentions:

- This Advent, we will focus on the Advent values of hope, peace, joy, and love.
- We will not be overscheduled this Advent, but instead, we will take time for one another.
- Every Sunday evening during Advent, we will do a spiritual practice together.
- Advent will be a time of peace and quiet for our family—not noise and hustle.

Whatever you decide to do, may your Advent and Christmas seasons be filled with hope, peace, joy, love, and anything else that makes you happy. May you experience all the wonders of the upcoming seasons as we anticipate the birth of a newborn babe!

In faith—Barb

RaiseRight—For the Holidays!

RaiseRight can still help with all your holiday needs! We will be ordering gift cards one more time in December. If you still need gift cards to use as gifts for your family and friends, or to purchase your own groceries and gas. *RaiseRight* is a great way to do all of your shopping.

The next order is due Sunday, December 14. Cards ordered on any given Sunday should be available for you to pick up the following Sunday. Your orders can be given to Diane Riese or turned in to the office. Don't forget to include a check made out to Women's Fellowship with your order. And remember—any card you order helps the church so we appreciate it when you make use of these cards! Thank you and Merry Christmas!



Monthly Meditation:

I am a chronic leg-bouncer and fidgeter. Some part of me is always moving, always thinking, always going. That's mostly my ADHD talking, but also is just how I've always been. So, a lot of the time when I prepare this section of the newsletter—when I try and think about meditation—I have to

think outside of the box. I'm not someone who is able to sit still for 20 minutes and focus on my breath. It simply isn't possible for me. So, I have to challenge myself to come up with other ways of being intentional and reflective and centering myself.

One of the things I find most helpful is simply to have something for my hands to do. For some of you that might look like knitting or crocheting—I don't know how to do either of those. For others, fidget toys are helpful—I get way too sucked in to them.

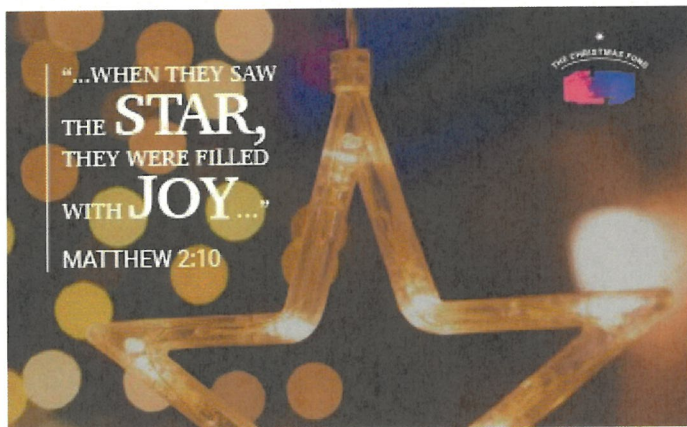
For me, I have to do something repetitive but boring. And this time of year my go-to for that is making paper chains—a tradition I've brought here to First Congregational. I cut pieces of construction paper into strips and adhere the ends together to make a ring, then make another and interlock it to the previous, and so on and so forth. It's easy to do, mindless, and rather boring—although ours is a bit different, with different colors corresponding to various prompts and ideas.

But, it serves a stepping stone for other forms of meditation and creativity! For example, you could water color paint the paper before you cut it to make a paper chain that is ethereal and colorful, or you could write the names of friends and family as a memento of the love that binds you to so many others, or even hang it on your family Christmas tree. Give it a try and see if you don't feel just a bit more grounded.



Christmas Fund

For over one hundred years, The Christmas Fund has provided direct financial assistance to United Church of Christ ministers, church workers, and their families. Last year, over 1,800 congregations joined together to secure the physical, financial, and spiritual health of those engaged in the life of the Church. Thank you to our community for your continued support!



This year's Christmas Fund theme is "When they saw the star, they were filled with joy" (Matthew 2:10), which invites us to celebrate the light of the UCC that shines through our faithful community.

Receiving The Christmas Fund this year ensures more ministers, church workers, and their families receive the loving support of the Church in their moment of deepest need.

Our church will have special envelopes available for your support on Sunday, December 21, 2025. You may place them in the offering plate at the back of the sanctuary.

Book Club - December

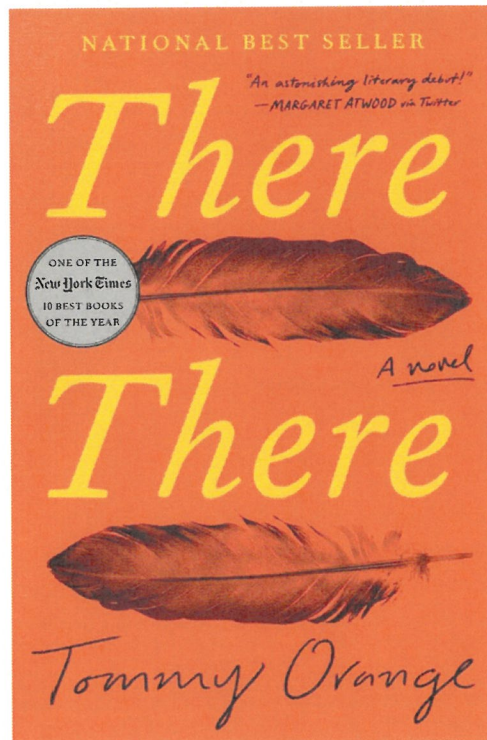
Forgotten or Ignored

What is history? If it is important, why is that so? All of us are a product of it. On personal levels, of course our family history shapes who we are. But, how often do we consider other aspects of the societal events, ideas, and behaviors which also have shaped us. Do we often pause and say to ourselves, "What are the things that make me who I am?"

Now, our December novel, *There, There* by Tommy Orange explores this question. In a way,

Orange, an enrolled member of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe tribes presents this question on a personal and societal level. The novel's plot centers on the "preparations" which a number of characters make in relation to an upcoming Powwow which is to be held at the Oakland Coliseum. All of them are either full-blood or partial-blood native 'Americans.

In the opening "Prologue" Orange stresses the subject of the question I posed. Clearly, a significant part of the "history" of these (and all native peoples by extension) has been shaped by the violence and dislocation visited upon them. Many reviewers partially praise the novel because it reveals a world which, to this point, is almost completely unknown, the world of the Urban Indian.



At the beginning of the novel Orange presents a "cast" of characters, similar to what one would see on a playbill for a stage play. He states who they are and something significant about them. After the "Prologue" the individual chapters are devoted to each character, alternating and continuing throughout the novel, with the exception of an "Interlude" which is inserted just prior to the actual coming together of most of these characters at the Powwow.

Let's consider the title for a minute. *There, There* Orange points out, comes from a quote attributed to Gertrude Stein, who, upon revisiting Oakland she wrote, "There is no There, there." Suggesting that its past had been so obliterated that it ceased to exist as she knew it. The obliteration of history is one of the chief tragedies which Orange presents. Of course, the reader can look at the title and consider and reconsider its meaning as he or she goes through the story.

As each chapter unfolds we learn about the situation which the individual character faces in the present. What we also are asked to think about is the wealth of information which we learn about the character's past. They reflect about the things which

got them to where they are, or which were significant influences.

Tony Loneman, who is the subject of the first and last chapters, (among others of course) was born with fetal alcohol syndrome. Here Tony's present is fused with his past, "The Drome, my power and my curse. The Drome is my mom and why she drank. it's the way history lands on a face..." Tony's tragedy is both personal and societal. He bookends the story for that reason.

Orvil Red Feather is fourteen. he has found powwow regalia tucked away in his home, and has donned it. He practices before a mirror, intending to dance at the powwow. His aunt, Opal Viola Victoria Bear Shield is sister to Jacque Red Feather. Opal's first chapter is devoted primarily to her recollections of a protest she became involved in as a teen. She and Jacque went to Alcatraz for the protest which was there. They intermingled with other teens who were present. This episode has direct and indirect effects upon them and many other characters.

Jacque became pregnant while there. This pregnancy sets off a train of events which involve an ever-widening circle of the novel's characters. Again, Tommy Orange uses the characters to stress how identity is shaped by events. Some of these events the characters have control over, but many they do not.

We readers, unfamiliar with the circumstances which are shown to us, might be bothered, even repelled by the characters' use and abuse of drugs, and/or alcohol. Orange uses the section called "The Interlude". to talk about the loss of identity which his characters have experienced and the tragedies which have ensued. Also, he states the hopes which Native peoples cling to, signified by the powwows. "We made powwows because we needed a place to be together. ...We keep powwowing because there aren't very many places where we get to all be together, where we get to see and hear each other."

Probably this quotation most closely sums up forces which Orange's characters have contended with. "When we go to tell our stories, people think we want it to have gone differently. People want to say things like "sore losers" and 'move on already ', 'quit playing the blame game.' But is it a

game? Only those who have lost as much as we have seen the particularly nasty slice of smile on someone who thinks they're winning when they say 'Get over it.' .

We will meet at Sybil Klug's home, at 2:00 p.m. on December 3rd, Wednesday. Bill Neis

December? Time for Cookies!

December calendars in our church membership automatically list "COOKIES" on that first Saturday in December. This year is our 31st annual sale and many of us already have both recipes and ingredients lined up to get baking for the sale on Saturday, December 6th.

As always, we need workers on Friday, December 5th, at 1:00pm for an hour or two of setting up tables and filling cookie trays. Cookies can be brought in on Friday from 9:00am until 4:00pm or on Saturday from 9:00 to 9:30am.

Workers should report on Saturday the 6th at 9:30am to assist with tray refilling, weighing cookies, bagging purchased cookies, and generally spreading the holiday spirit! Please feel free to wear Christmas "gear" to help spread that wonderful Christmas spirit that always accompanies this sale.

As a reminder, our front entryway is a great place from which to view Elkhorn's Christmas parade when the sale is over. And who knows—you might have a few cookies to eat while you watch!

Thanks in advance for all your help with this sale—it is one of the things that makes our church so very special!



Clean Cars Via Women's Fellowship

Women's Fellowship is proud to announce our newest fundraising opportunity: car wash cards from Kwik Trip! We already have the cards in our possession, too, so this does not require any wait time. The cost is \$36 per card (cash or check made out to Women's Fellowship) and it will give the cardholder 5 basic car washes at any Kwik Trip location. These would make great stocking stuffers for the holidays, but it would also be nice to have in your own vehicle so you can get a wash whenever your car needs it. FYI, if you request a receipt at the machine that reads the card at the entrance to the car wash, it will count down the number of washes left on your card—wrap it around the card and it will keep track for you! Keeping your car washed is a great way to protect the finish—especially with the salty Wisconsin winter we all know is headed our way! Contact any member of Women's Fellowship or the office to purchase your cards. And while the card does state that it is re-



chargeable, we would prefer that you buy another one from us so we get the benefits!

Self-care Challenge:

So much of the holiday season is focused on extending hospitality to others—hosting parties and family Christmases, making special foods and observing certain traditions, buying gifts for others. But how often during this joyfully chaotic time do we extend hospitality toward ourselves? When's the last time you made a charcuterie board and festive beverage just for yourself? Or got dressed up and took yourself on a coffee date? When's the last time you indulged in a plush new bathrobe or festive new mug? In this time of giving it's important to remember to fill your own cup as well. So I challenge you—I challenge all of us—to offer radical hospitality to ourselves; to allow for a little holiday magic to make its way into our hearts and spirits too.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Elkhorn, Wisconsin

Church Council Meeting Minutes Via Zoom

November 18th, 2025 at 7:00 P.M.

The meeting was **called to order** at 7:02 p.m. by Moderator Bobbi Rader. Those in attendance were Barb Townsend, Pastor Carly Gaeth, Cindy Waller, Diane Licht, Ray Knutson, Tina Kruger, Jean Lile, Becky Newman, Tom Stepp, and Dorothy Bever.

The **Opening Prayer** was given by Pastor Carly Gaeth.

Additions to the agenda: None at this time.

Approval of October 21, 2025 Council Minutes: With slight discussion, Bobbi Rader moved to approve the minutes from the October 21, 2025 Council meeting with the correction that under approval of the previous month's minutes, it should read September 16th not August 19, 2025. Seconded by Diane Licht. The motion was carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report - Tina Kruger went over October's treasurer's report. She stated that we are 83% through the 2025 budget. Council discussed options of making sure the remainder of the 2025 expenses are covered. Ray Knutson moved to approve the October treasurer's report as presented, seconded by Barb Townsend. 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. It was noted that Pastor Carly became an official member of the Elkhorn First Congregational UCC on Sunday, November 16. Barb Townsend added that James Letellier will be providing music for Christmas Eve service. Pastor Carly added that her father's church is taking high school aged kids on a mission trip to NYC/Staten Island in the summer of 2026 and is extending an invitation to our church's high school aged kids as well.

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

Old Business: Stewardship Campaign: Stewardship Campaign Sunday was November 9th. Ray Knutson gave a short report and added that estimate of giving cards are still coming in.

Nomination Team: Bobbi Rader stated that Jennifer Neis has graciously agreed to be Moderator for 2026. Positions still needing to be filled are Vice Moderator and Stewardship of Resources Financial-Fundraising. **Edward Jones Trust Fund:** Cindy Waller stated that this is a follow up from last month and has already been discussed.

Annual Reports Due: Cindy said that all reports are in except two. Those should be in this week.

New Business: Church's Wider Mission 2026 Goal: Cindy explained that each year Conference asks for our church to set a goal to be submitted by February. Last year our goal was \$1600. Following discussion, Tina suggested our goal remain the same at \$1600.

Finance Team/Proposed Budget: Ray Knutson presented the proposed 2026 budget for discussion. Cindy added to rental income that Al-Anon pays \$300 per year. Tina will make that adjustment to the budget. Following additional discussion, Tom Stepp moved to approve the 2026 proposed budget to be submitted at the December 7th Annual meeting. The motion was seconded by Barb Townsend. The motion was carried unanimously.

Annual Meeting December 7, Announce 2 weeks prior/Agenda: Bobbi Rader said she would make the Annual meeting announcement the next two Sundays. She will also announce for those interested that haven't done so already, to give their email addresses to the church office by November 30. This would make a zoom meeting accessible to them.

Other - Pastor Carly wanted to add that if anyone knows of someone that could benefit from pastoral support, to please let her know.

Closing Prayer given by Bobbi Rader.

Adjournment: Ray Knutson moved to adjourn, seconded by Tom Stepp. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

The **next Council meeting** of the Church Council will be **December 16, 2025** at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dorothy Bever, Church Clerk

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



DECEMBER



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
NOV 30 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON Start of Advent RAISERIGHT DUE	1 Poinsettia Order Due	2	3 2:00 p.m. Book Club— Home of Sybil Klug	4	5 Bring in Cookies Set up for Cookies	6 10:00 a.m. Cookie Sale
7 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON Annual Meeting	8 Hope Now Inc. Cards Due	9	10	11 6:00 p.m. Meal for Men's Shelter	12	13
14 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON RAISERIGHT DUE	15 J LILE & L MCCORMICK	16 7:00 p.m. Church Council B & C KRUSE	17 R KNUTSON & T BAILEY	18 T & J STEPP	19 B NEWMAN & D RIESE	20
21 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON Children's Program	22	23	24 5:00 p.m. Candlelight Christmas Eve Service 	25  CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	26	27
28 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	29	30	31	JAN 1 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	2	3

ADVENT FOR EVERYONE! FOLLOW ALONG AND COUNT DOWN TO CHRISTMAS!

MAKING ROOM
A COUNTDOWN CALENDAR

Make some extra room for conversation this season by answering the daily questions. Don't forget to mark off each day!

2	What makes you say, "Wow!"?	3	If you could touch hope, what would it feel like?	4	What is something you wonder about God?	5	What does hope sound like?	30	If hope was an animal, what would it be?	1	Where do you see hope in the world?
8	Where do you see peace in the world?	9	What food tastes like home?	10	Grab something in our home that reminds you of what peace feels like. Talk about why.	11	What smell reminds you of our home?	6	What is one small way we can bring hope into our home this week?	7	If peace was a color, what would it be?
14	If joy was an animal, what would it be?	15	Where do you see joy in the world?	16	What food tastes like joy?	17	What is the last thing that caused you to do a happy dance?	12	If peace was a sound, what would it be?	13	How can our family make our home a welcoming place?
20	What is one thing our family can do to share joy today?	21	If love was a color, what would it be?	22	Where do you see love in the world?	23	What does love feel like?	18	If joy was a smell, what would it smell like?	19	What sound reminds you of joy?
								24	What sound reminds you that you are loved?	25	What is an action that our family can do today to show love?

HELP SUPPORT

The hungry hippo jar that sits on the coffee table in the family room, is collecting for New Beginnings APFV.

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

Thank you in advance for your donations!



New Beginnings
—APFV—



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Mark McCabe	02
Rusty Newman	03
Luke Wilson	04
Larry Waller	05
Tyler Stohl	06
Michelle Mandell	08
Rebecca Prien	16
Peter Mol	17
Brett Ringhand	18
Jeff Whiteman	18
Kyle Stohl	21
David Remer	22
Steve Knutson	23
Denise Bigelow	25
Joel Remer	26
Eleanor Vierck	26



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!

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES



Lay Worship Leaders

Dec. 7 Bobbi Rader

Dec. 14 _____

Dec. 21 Haiden Kruger

Dec. 24 _____

Dec. 28 _____



Ushers

Dec. 7 Jean Lile & Cindy Waller

Dec. 14 _____

Dec. 21 Kruger Family

Dec. 24 _____

Dec. 28 _____



Coffee Fellowship

Dec. 7 Church Council

Dec. 14 _____

Dec. 21 Sunday School

Dec. 24 _____

Dec. 28 _____



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

SUNDAY WORSHIP 10:00 a.m.



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP
5:00 p.m.

Join us as we come together to celebrate the joy of Christ's birth!
There will be only one candlelight service this year.
Bring your family on Wednesday, December 24th at 5:00 p.m.