



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

JANUARY 2026

Pastor Carly's Corner:

Sometimes I can hardly believe how quickly our time together has gone. Our Christmas decorations and vestments will be put away just as hastily as they were taken out of storage and strewn about. We're preparing for the celebration of Epiphany and looking forward to the liturgical season of Lent. Everything is whirring past us at a rate I can hardly believe or process. And I got to thinking about presence and taking the time to stop and smell the roses. I know that I've not done everything I could to be fully present and to take my time amidst the whirring, and I wonder if others have encountered that same feeling...?

In the seasons of Advent and Christmas, there's always so much to do; the chaos of the holidays is such a whirlwind. But that frantic energy is juxtaposed with the deep darkness that comes with the time change and the winter season. It seems so odd that on the days when we need the most time, daylight is at its shortest. Perhaps that is a nudging from the Holy Spirit, calling us to appreciate the light we have and slow down—even if only for a moment to simply recognize the wonder of it all.

Now that the days are getting longer, we have more opportunities to appreciate the light. But, let's not forget about the quiet stillness of the darkness that makes way for it. This January, I hope you are able to be present in everything—the light and the darkness of it all.



Peace and blessings,
Pastor Carly

Christmas Chain



During the season of Advent, our church created links for our Advent chain that will hang in the church from Christmas until Epiphany.

We were asked to fill in a link with five different thoughts; that let us think about our intentions for the coming year. 1. Something we are grateful for, 2. Something we can let go of, 3. Prayers we wish to lift up, and 5. A joy to celebrate!

We hope you were able to add a link or five or more to this fun project . Join us for worship and see how this chain has grown and where it was placed in the sanctuary.

Thank you to Pastor Carly for making this activity for the congregation and thank you to everyone that filled out their own chain links.

Spirit of Hope Meal Delivery Update

With the help of several members, our church has now delivered two of four meals to Spirit of Hope (county men's shelter) in Delavan for the 15 men housed there. The first was Wednesday, November 19, and the second was Thursday, December 11. Thanks go to the Kruger family, Diane Licht, Jennifer Neis, Merry Kay Opitz, Bobbi Rader, Diane Riese, Katherine Turk, and Barb Townsend for purchasing, preparing, and/or delivering the donated meals.

We have two additional meals to prepare and deliver—one on Sunday, January 11, and the other on Saturday, March 7. If you are interesting in becoming involved, please call the church office or check out the sign up sheets at church.

We are blessed and this is a wonderful way to share our blessings with those in need.



Salvation Army Bell Ringing

Thank you to all of the volunteers that helped with ringing the bell for Salvation Army at Hansen's IGA Market, this year.

You, and along with other churches and community groups that helped also, are making it possible for the Salvation Army to help those in need, in our community.

All of the donations made to the red kettle in Elkhorn will be used to help those in need, in Elkhorn.

We would like to say "Thank you" to all of our church volunteers, thank you to Cheryl Dillner, Bob Kruse, Carole Kruse, Diane Licht, Cindy Waller, Jake Sawyers, Patti Phillips, Mindy Brunswick, Bergen Brunswick, Dorothy Bever, Kevin Kruger, and Haiden Kruger. I apologize, if your name is not listed, we were still signing up people for Christmas eve, at the time that the office was putting this newsletter together.

Thank you to all. Just an hour or two of your time, really helps and is greatly appreciated. Thank you for supporting this ministry.

Thank you for Supporting Hope Now, Inc. and the Families in Need

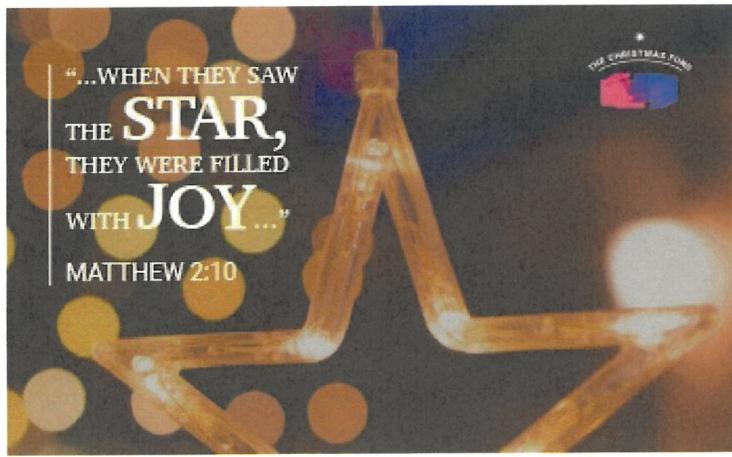
Thank you to the church for supporting the Hope Now, Inc. families in need, for Thanksgiving and Christmas with your gift card orders.

In our last newsletter, we reported that the church was able to give \$750.00 in gift cards to Hope Now for the families to use for purchasing their own food for Thanksgiving.

In December, we were able to raise \$1,090 in gift cards to give to Hope Now. Inc for the families in need, to use to purchase their own Christmas food and Christmas gifts.

Thank you all for supporting Hope Now Inc. with your gift card purchases! This truly helped several families to enjoy the holidays.

Thank you for your generosity of giving and for supporting the *RaiseRight* program for getting some of your gift cards!

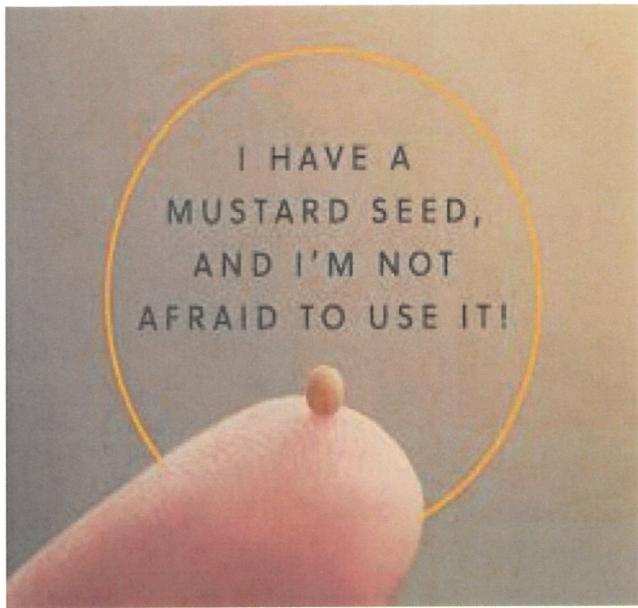


The UCC Christmas Fund

One Sunday, December 21st our church collected a special offering for the UCC 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.

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.

Thank you to everyone for giving and supporting the Christmas fund. Your generosity and caring for others in our wider community is a blessing.



Mustard Seed

Practicing “TIN” in the New Year

For many people, the start of January is marked by the inclusion of some new practice with the hope of an improved life style because of it. Unfortunately, this usually requires breaking some well-engrained habits and often our good intentions fall short of the goal. But here is a practice you can try: TIN or “Today I Noticed”. This one is easy to do, as it requires relatively little effort with the promise of improved health!

Simply put, TIN is the process of mindful considerations of the world around us. It requires specific and memorable reflections—an opportunity to experience

gratitude that we might otherwise take for granted. And studies have shown that people who practice gratitude on a regular basis experience more happiness, resilience, and overall well-being because the act focuses on the positive. In addition, it can reduce stress and even improve sleep as it rewires the brain for optimism and contentment.

Today I noticed the beautiful and breathtaking sunrise. Today I noticed how much fun the kids at the bus stop were having with the snow. Today I noticed the variety of birds at the suet feeder. Today I noticed how the volunteer at the hospital took extra care with those he was escorting to appointments. What might you notice today? The possibilities are wide open and you have much to gain!

In faith—Barb

Meditation Practice

As we emerge from the holidays I find that I’m feeling sluggish and slow to start on most days. I need to get my body moving again and appreciate all of the ways it continues to work for me and carry me through.

For this month’s meditation practice, I’d love for us to explore yoga meditation.

There are tons of yoga routines online and in nearby gyms and classes, routines that are suitable for all people—young, old, disabled, flexible, and not flexible.

It is one of the most accessible forms of exercise available to us.

The practice of yoga is focused on breath work, on stretching our muscles, and holding our body with careful, flowing movement. As you move from pose to pose, I invite you to be aware of your thoughts and emotions; notice where you feel those things in your body and any correlation you find between what your body is doing and your mind is thinking.

Breathe in the breath of God and breathe out tension. Breathe in release and breathe out rigidity. Rinse and repeat.



RaiseRight Cards

Thank you to all who ordered RaiseRight Cards through the holidays, for help with Hope Now Christmas deliveries. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

Our next order is due on Sunday, January 4. These cards would be a wonderful thing to send along with any college kids who are returning to school following the holidays at home!

They would also be great for your everyday needs: gas, groceries, pharmacies, etc. Orders along with payment can be turned in to the church office by January 4. Orders will be returned by the following Sunday. Please make checks out to Women's Fellowship.

There are forms and a list of retailers on the table in the back of the sanctuary.



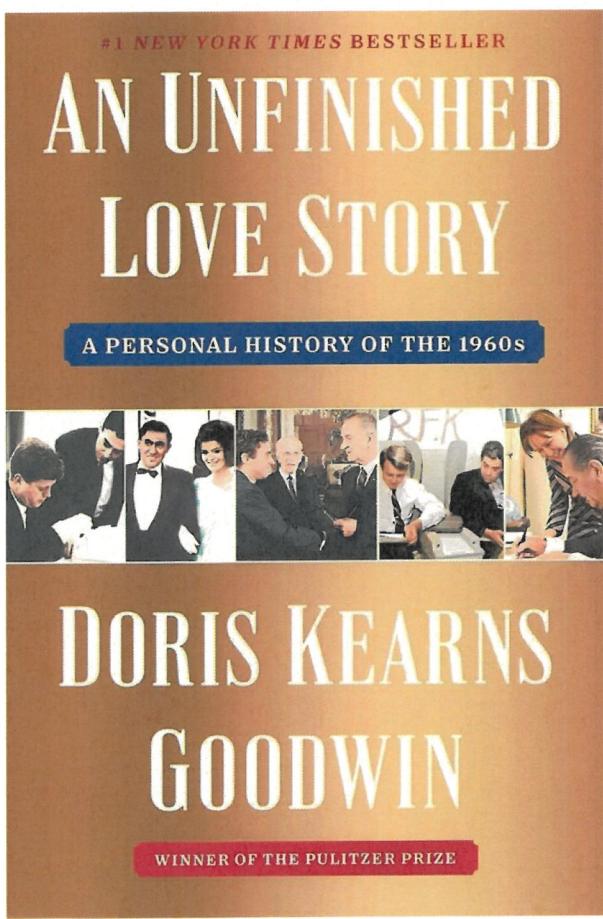
Book Club - January

A LOOK BACK AT THE 60'S

Doris Kearns Goodwin is a respected historian who has written books on the Roosevelts, Lincoln's cabinet, Kennedys, and Lyndon Johnson. Her current book, *An Unfinished Love Story: A personal history of the 60's* on that decade primarily through the "eyes" of her late husband, Dick Goodwin. He was about 14 years older than her; they were married in the 70's. Dick Goodwin kept extensive notes, recordings, clippings, letters, and other records which Doris and he gathered together and went through before his passing. This was done in this century. The book's purpose is stated in the title; it is indeed a labor of love on her part. She wrote the book not only to offer some new insights into that decade's important occurrences, but to let the reader know what an important, but mostly forgotten, part her husband had played in the events of that time.

Dick Goodwin was "discovered" by JFK prior to his run for the President in 1960. Dick was one of his principle speech writers, ("Ask Not...") In addition, Dick was an important player Kennedy's "Alliance for Progress", which sought to mend and solidify relations with Latin American countries. The successful rebellion of Fidel Castro demonstrated the need for the U.S. to forge better relationships. Doris recounts a long meeting which Dick had with Che Guevara. It got extensive press notice, and caused a negative stir as a result. During the Kennedy period Doris and Dick looked back at the announcement which signaled the birth of the "Peace Corps" which took place at the University of Michigan. Doris stresses Dick's work in writing the speeches which Kennedy gave, including the famous inauguration speech.

Doris and Dick reflect upon his special relationship with Jackie Kennedy. They became great friends. He was chosen to be her escort at the very special banquet which was held in the White House for 49 Nobel Laureates. Also, Doris recounts Dick's reflections about Jackie's commanding



presence regarding the sad time surrounding the assassination of JFK.

Since the book deals with so many of the important events which took place during the 60's, it is hard to offer a quick summary of it. One thing which does stand out, and which is something of which most Americans are not aware is the fraught relationship which existed between Lyndon Johnson and Bobby Kennedy. It started after the assassination, but continued for almost all of the rest of the decade.

Dick was asked by Johnson to join his administration. Doris recounts his work on Johnson's speeches and legislative proposals. Doris notes Johnson's skill at getting legislation passed. She writes how Dick and LBJ, along with the staff crafted and eventually passed the Voting Rights Act, Medicare, and other "Great Society" legislation.

LAB had become increasingly suspicious of Bobby Kennedy's motives. The war in Viet Nam eventually served as the breaking point. Bobby had burnished his reputation with a series of speeches and events held in the south and in Africa, particularly his speeches in South Africa which was in the throes of apartheid at the time. As LBJ became more "suspicious" of Dick's motives, he began to be more shut out from the administration. LBJ came to suspect that Dick was now "Bobby's Man".

The war was the breaking point. Dick left LBJ and campaigned for Eugene McCarthy. No one at the time was sure whether McCarthy was a stalking horse for Bobby, Dick had become totally against the war and went to work to work with McCarthy. He came to have great admiration for McCarthy. McCarthy's surprise showing in the New Hampshire, was the beginning of the end for Johnson.

Certainly, almost everyone who has been alive even in the late 1900's, knows about the tragic events of 1968. Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy being assassinated. The promise which Dick foresaw and which he had played an intimate part in trying to achieve began to disappear.

The book is full of recollections and events, both large and small, which will jog the memories of those of us who lived during that time, and for those who did not, it will offer an intimate introduction into the decade which still shapes our country in many ways.

We meet at Barb Townsend's home on, Wednesday, January 14, at 2:00 p.m.

Bill Neis

Women's Fellowship

Cookie Sale Thanks to all who baked and helped with our 31st annual cookie sale. Fellowship Hall was beautifully decorated and, this year, took on a special glow with the new look for both the hall and kitchen! The room had an amazing smell and there were quite a few people who once again took advantage of our sale. After this many years, many of them are repeat "buyers" and comments from people as they left with their trays of cookies were so wonderfully positive. It was a great way to celebrate the upcoming season!

Meetings We will not hold a formal meeting in coming months, but we will be meeting on Thursday, January 8, at 9:30 a.m. to take down Christmas decorations in Fellowship Hall. We will be meeting at Elk Restaurant at 9:00am on February 12 for breakfast and fellowship! Please call the church office or Donna Riese (262-379-1722) if you plan on joining us. If weather is not favorable on that day, we will give you a call. Hope to see you there!

Car Wash Cards Women's Fellowship is still selling car wash cards from Kwik Trip. One card costs \$36 and is good for five washes. Don't let the salt do damage to your car—get it washed with one of these great cards!



Self-care Challenge

In the interest of taking time to stop and smell the roses and being present, I challenge you to take 10 minutes a day to listen. You can sit and listen to the birds outside your window, the gusts of wind clashing against siding and roof shingles, or even listen to your favorite album.

When we listen to ourselves and to the world around us, and take a few minutes a day to stop and simply *be*, our bodies and minds get a chance to reset and reorient which is precisely what we require at the start of a new year.



Snow Shoveling/Snow Angels Update

For the past several years, snow removal from our church sidewalks has been performed by a group of dedicated volunteers. These Snow Angels were “on call” for a week at a time, during which they were responsible for clearing any snow that fell on the sidewalks, and applying ice melt as needed. We all know that despite our best intentions, life happens and our plans don’t always work out. We have busy schedules, we are ill, we don’t get off work till after dark and we still have to clear the snow at home and take care of a million other things, and so on and so on.

This year we decided to hire out this job, and we are fortunate that Addison Dillner has accepted the responsibility. Addison is a senior at Elkhorn Area High School and plans to attend UW Whitewater next year. He is a member of our church, having been confirmed a few years ago. He is an amazingly industrious young man. He has been running his own auto and boat detailing service for years, and his work is impeccable. This new plan is working well so far this winter. Addison has been shoveling before school, as early as 5:00 am! He also shoveled early the Saturday before our cookie sale in preparation for the sale and the parade.

We are planning to collect donations to pay Addison. He will be paid \$30.00 each time he shovels. Forecasts are suggesting that we will have more snow than usual this winter. Please consider donating to the snow shoveling fund. We will have envelopes for this at church, which can be left in the offering plate or given to Cindy in the office. A check can be mailed to the church; please include a note that it is for the snow shoveling if you use this method. Also, donations can be made through PayPal on our church website, www.elkhornucc.org. If you don’t already have a PayPal account, you can quickly set one up through our church website by clicking on the PayPal button. Please leave a comment that your donation is for snow shoveling if you give through PayPal. Thank you for helping to keep our sidewalks safe.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Elkhorn, Wisconsin

Church Council Meeting Minutes Via Zoom

December 16th, 2025 at 7:00 P.M.

The meeting was **called to order** at 7:11 p.m. by Moderator Bobbi Rader. Those in attendance were Barb Townsend, Pastor Carly Gaeth, Cindy Waller, Diane Licht, Jean Lile, Sally Schleiger, Jennifer Neis, Carol Prchal, Tina Kruger, Tom Stepp, Jamie Stilling Stepp and Dorothy Bever.

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

Additions to the agenda: None at this time.

Approval of November 18, 2025 Council Minutes: With slight discussion, Diane Licht moved to approve the minutes from the November 18, 2025 Council meeting as presented. Seconded by Bobbi

Rader. The motion was carried unanimously.

Read Only: Annual Meeting Minutes December 7, 2025: Barb Townsend made a correction/addition regarding the motion made to approve the 2026 roster of Council members. These minutes will be approved at the 2026 Annual meeting in December.

Treasurer's Report - Tina Kruger presented and explained November's treasurer's report. Following slight discussion, Barb Townsend moved to approve the November treasurer's report as presented, seconded by Cindy Waller. 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. In looking ahead at the new year, Carly presented to council that she has been accepted to attend the Center for Faith and Justice certificate program at Georgetown University June 14 through the 18th. With that, she has asked to use her budgeted continuing education funds to help support the cost for the program. Carly will also be pursuing financial support through scholarships available from WI Conference UCC. Congratulations to Pastor Carly for being accepted to attend and representing our Wisconsin Conference. Additional projects include creating a community closet in conjunction with the Food Pantry and VBS planning.

Ministry Leaders' Reports/Updates: A report was submitted from Faith Formation. Barb Townsend added that it is important for each Team to keep activity reports for their records. Bobbi extended a "thank you" to Barb for putting together the children's Christmas program to be presented December 21st.

Old Business: Church's Wider Mission 2026 Goal: Cindy Waller stated that the required form has been signed and mailed, with the approved goal amount of \$1600, for 2026.

Annual Meeting - December 7: The meeting was held with unanimous agreement despite the lack of quorum.

New Business: Snow Removal Payment: Carol Prchal explained that over the years, it has become more difficult to find volunteers to take care of snow removal at the church during the winter months. At the suggestion of hiring someone, Carol stated that Addison Dillner is interested and has come to shovel three times, doing a very good job. Council discussed options of how much and how payment could be made. It was suggested \$30 per shoveling and covering costs through donations. Carol will submit to Cindy an email and Link article explaining the snow removal situation and how donations would cover the costs.

Ministry Leaders Meeting - Schedule date: The ministry team leaders will meet via Zoom 30 minutes prior to the next council meeting on January 20. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss the activities dashboard, making sure all things are in order for the first part of the new year.

Other - Dorothy Bever brought up for discussion having poinsettias in the sanctuary for Christmas Eve. It was agreed that if anyone wants to, they can bring in their own poinsettia plant, real or artificial. Next year artificial poinsettias will be recommended.

Thank You - A huge *THANK YOU* went out to Bobbi Rader for being our Moderator these past four years. We welcome Jennifer Neis as our 2026 Moderator.

Closing Prayer given by Bobbi Rader.

Adjournment: Tom Stepp moved to adjourn, seconded by Barb Townsend. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

The next Council meeting of the Church Council will be **January 20, 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 January Council meeting.



JANUARY 2026



| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|-----|--|---|---|-----|-----|
| | | | | 1 HAPPY NEW YEAR CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED | 2 | 3 |
| 4 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON RaiseRight Due | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 9:30 a.m. Women's Fellowship to undecorate Fellowship Hall | 9 | 10 |
| 11 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON 6:00 p.m. Meal for Men's Shelter | 12 | 13 | 14 2:00 p.m. Book Club— Home of Barb Townsend | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON | 19 | 20 6:30 p.m. Ministry Leaders Mtg 7:00 p.m. Church Council | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| | | MEALS ON WHEELS J LILE & L MCCORMICK B & C KRUSE R KNUTSON & T BAILEY T & J STEPP B NEWMAN & D RIESE | | | | |
| 25 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

Weather Cancellations



Just a reminder...

If the weather is questionable on a Sunday morning, chances are we will be cancelling our Sunday services to keep everyone home and safe.

If that is the case, a group email will be sent from the church Gmail account by 8:00 a.m. that morning. A notice will also be posted on Facebook.

Should the weather make a turn for snowy or icy conditions, please check your email or Facebook before starting out to church!



To the beloved community of First Congregational United Church of Christ,

Thank you so much for your very generous Christmas gift! It was such an unexpected blessing and a truly beautiful gesture—so much so that it brought me to my knees in gratitude. I cannot begin to express to you how thankful I am to be your pastor; it is an honor and a privilege to walk beside you and to ring in the new year with a warm and vibrant community. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you.

I can't wait to see what 2026 has in store for us!

Pastor Carly



Dear Members and Friends,

Thank you all for your generous Christmas gift and for thinking of me at this time of year. I have enjoyed working with all of you through out this past year in the church office and I am looking forward to the new year as we face more challenges together.

Thank you again, and many blessings to you all this holiday season.

Cindy



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!



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Susan Breaman | 6 |
| Kevin Kruger | 6 |
| Ken Reynolds | 13 |
| Joshua Knutson | 14 |
| Debra Mol | 15 |
| Alyssa (Neis) Bucaro | 15 |
| Robert Mol | 16 |
| Jaime Lile | 16 |
| Addison Dillner | 17 |
| Merry Kay Opitz | 18 |
| Eric Townsend | 18 |
| Amanda Hohf | 20 |
| Marie Waters | 27 |
| Tina Kruger | 31 |



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!

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES



Lay Worship Leaders

Jan. 4



Jan. 11

Jan. 18

Jan. 25

Ushers

Jan. 4

Becky and Buck Newman



Jan. 11

Jan. 18

Jan. 25

Coffee Fellowship

Jan. 4

Jan. 11

Jan. 18

Jan. 25



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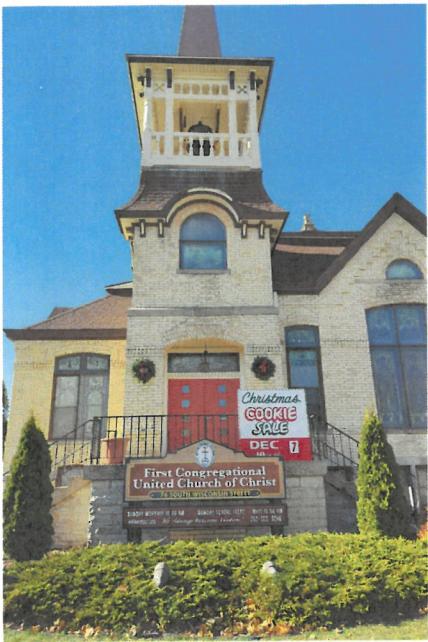


**SUNDAY
WORSHIP
10:00 a.m.**

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



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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 we will become. And maybe the beauty of our church year beginning at this time is that we

Liturgical Calendar



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.

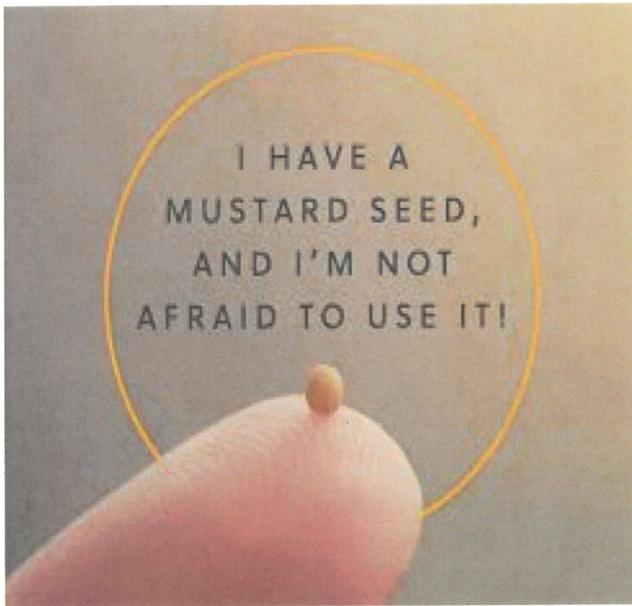
Our church rang the bell at Hansen's IGA Market on Wednesday, November 26th. Big thank you to all of the volunteers that were able to help. We will be ringing the bell again on Wednesday, December 24th, Christmas Eve. If you are able to help out, there is a sign up sheet in the back of the sanctuary 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.

Ringing 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!

RaiseRight
GIFT CARD PROGRAM

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.

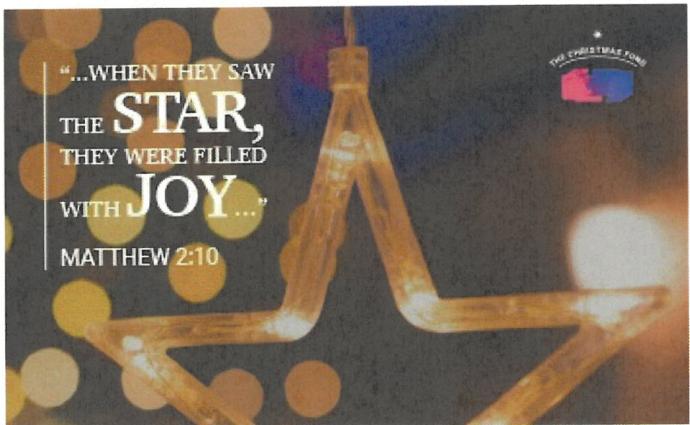
For me, I have to do something repetitive but boring. And this time of year my go-to for that is making paper chains—a tradition I've brought here to First Congregational. I cut pieces of construction paper into strips and adhere the ends together to make a ring, then make another and interlock it to 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

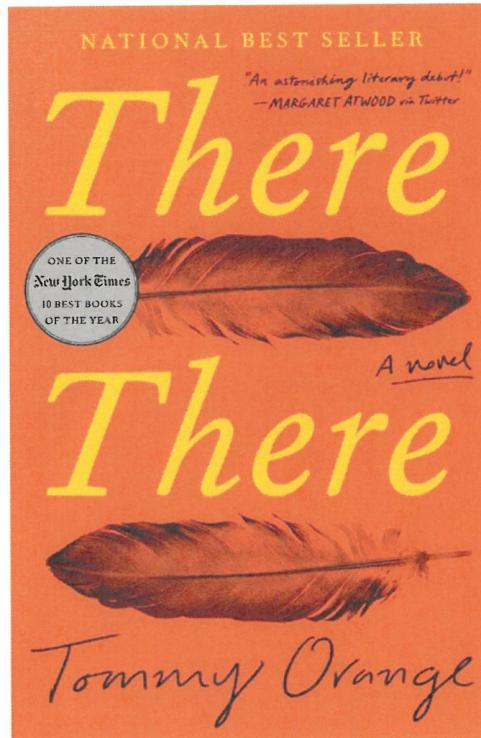
Forgotten or Ignored

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 rechargeable, 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 | 16 7:00 p.m. Church Council | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| | | MEALS ON WHEELS | | | | |
| | | J LILE & L MCCORMICK | B & C KRUSE | R KNUTSON & T BAILEY | T & J STEPP | B NEWMAN & D RIESE |
| 21 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON Children's Program | 22 | 23 | 24 5:00 p.m. Candlelight Christmas Eve Service | 25   <i>Merry Christmas</i> | 26 | 27 |
| 28 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON | 29 | 30 | 31 | JAN 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | | | CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED | CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED | |

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

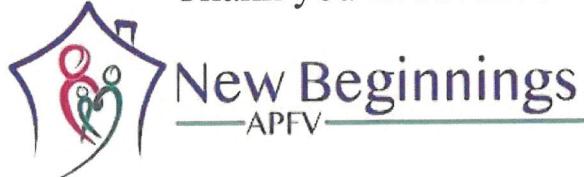


HELP SUPPORT

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!



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.