



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

APRIL 2026

Pastor Carly's Corner:

April is my absolute favorite month for several reasons (October is a close second in case you were filled with a burning curiosity). The first is that my birthday is on April 4th alongside Heath Ledger's, Maya Angelou's, and Robert Downey Jr.'s. The second is that Easter usually falls sometime in April bringing with it true joy and hope eternal. The third is that things start to bloom—the whole world starts to change color from drab greys and browns, to vibrant green with dandelion pops of yellow and tulip bursts of coral. But, my final reason for loving the month of April is that it is unpredictable (at least it is in Wisconsin).

We never know what we are going to get in April. Will it be warm or cold? Rainy or windy? 65 and sunny or 32 and freezing? Will there be a snowstorm? A tornado? Will the ground thaw enough for buds to begin their new life? When will the pollen rear its ugly head turning me into a puffy, teary-eyed, snot machine?

April keeps us on our toes and reminds us that we never truly know what's coming next. And I don't know about you but sometimes that unpredictability helps me to be more spontaneous and to live in the moment; to be truly present in all of the good that's out there for us to find.

If we had sunshine and perfect temperatures every day, we would take it for granted and forget about the many blessings that have been given to us. But when a 70 degree day sneaks its way into the



forecast, we cherish it and do everything we can to soak it up. We forego our mundane routines and everyday to-do lists to find resplendence in the little things.

It's exactly what we need after our Lenten journey of listening and quiet, inward reflection; an outward celebration of effervescent joy, ecstatic hope, and fervent resilience.

Peace,
Pastor Carly

Holy Week Services



Hope you were able to attend some of our Holy Week services that are offered this year.

We began with a Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday service during our regularly scheduled service at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 29th. Great to see you all.

Pastor Carly held a short prayer and meditation time in the sanctuary on Wednesday mornings during Lent. This Wednesday, April 1 at 11:00 a.m. will be the last one. Everyone is invited to share in this peaceful time in our church sanctuary.

On Thursday, April 2 at 6:00 p.m. there will be a special Maundy Thursday service in fellowship hall. This will be our Tenebrae service with communion. This service will not be recorded as it is in fellowship hall.

On Friday, April 3 at 3:00 p.m. there will be a special Good Friday service with reading of the word and meditation. This service will be in the sanctuary.

Finally, our Easter celebration will be held during our regularly scheduled service at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 5th. The sanctuary will be filled with Easter flowers that were ordered by our members, a great message will be given from Pastor Carly, hymns and music provided by James Letellier, with more Easter

surprises may happen after worship.

With a full week of services available for you, hope you may attend one, two three, or all with your family and friends. Happy Easter! Alleluia!

“Giving” for Lent

During the season of Lent we are collecting items for the Elkhorn Food Pantry for our “giving” instead of “giving up” campaign.

We started collecting on Sunday, February 22nd and will continue for one more Sunday, which is this Easter Sunday, April 5th.

You may bring items to church on Sunday or during regular office hours. Place your items upfront in the sanctuary on the small communion table to the left. Our Mission and service team will make sure they are taken to the Elkhorn Food Pantry on the days they are open.

The last items that we are collecting on Easter Sunday for Elkhorn Food Pantry, will be - **pancake mix and syrup**. All your donations are greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance, from
The Mission and Service Team



One Great Hour of Sharing

Our Love Offering to the World

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a vital special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. It connects you to disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development efforts around the globe. When disasters strike, or when individuals are displaced due to violence or poverty, OGHS ensures immediate response and ongoing recovery.

Through your support, OGHS funds comprehensive development programs in areas such as healthcare, education, agriculture, food security, microfinancing, and women's empowerment. By partnering with Global Ministries and international response networks, OGHS maximizes its impact. Your contributions help meet urgent needs while addressing the root causes of vulnerability, ensuring long-term, sustainable solutions for affected communities.



Thank you to everyone that contributed to our collection for One Great Hour of Sharing that was held on Sunday, March 15th. Your donations are greatly appreciated.

Open and Affirming Possibilities

Several people have raised the question of our church becoming an "Open and Affirming" congregation. Open and Affirming (also known as ONA) is the United Church of Christ's designation for any part of the UCC making a public covenant of welcome to persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.

At this time there are more than 1,800 UCC churches with this designation.

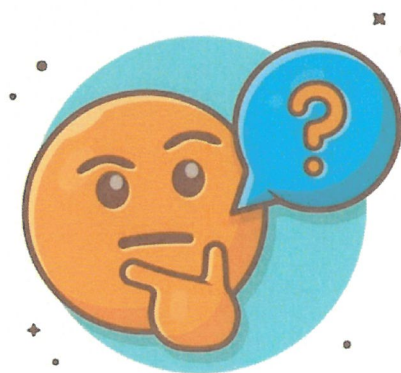
Because each church in the United Church of Christ is independent, we have our own decisions to make with this. If we were to become an ONA church, we would be developing our own ONA covenant after a journey of discussion, study, and prayer.

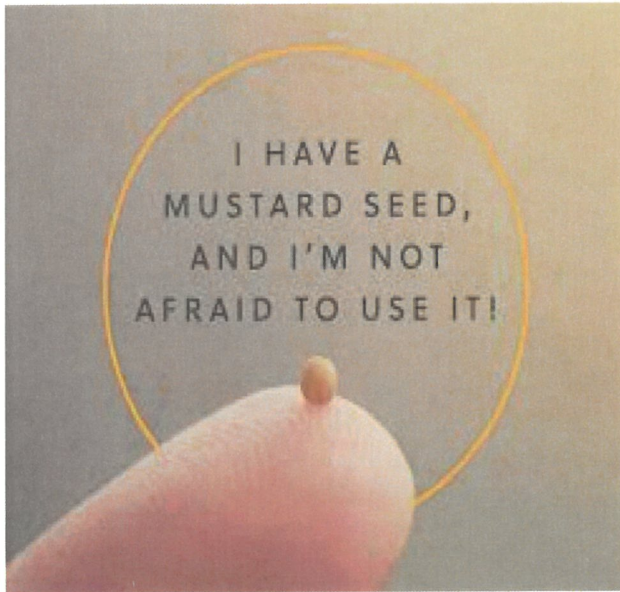
There are a variety of resources available through the UCC should we decide to look into this as a possibility for our congregation.

This topic was discussed at our Church Council meeting and Council determined that due to interest from several members, this might be something we look into.

If you are interested in becoming involved to determine the possibilities of this opportunity for our church, please talk with Pastor Carly or Carol Prchal.

We are still looking for volunteers.





Mustard Seed

Happy Earth Day!

Earth Day has a unique history if you are a Wisconsinite. Many of you may already know that it started in part due to Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson and his idea of a nationwide “environmental teach-in” to suggest the need for environmental protection in our world. That was on April 22, 1970. Since that, it has grown to a world-wide event with over 100 million people around the world observing it’s 50th anniversary in 2020, making it the world’s largest civic observance.

This year, consider celebrating Earth Day with a biblical twist. Listed below are three readings to assist you with this. They include the following:

1. **Genesis 1:1-2:3** Read the first biblical account of creation, pausing to celebrate what God created each day! Consider a walk outside to literally stand near or look at an example of what God created. Repeat the phrase, “And God saw that it was good.” Say prayers thanking God for this wonderful creation, asking what we might do to better care for it.
2. **Genesis 2:4-23** Read the second biblical account of creation and celebrate all that God created from the ground, including man and woman whom God put in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. Adam and Eve were the earth’s first caretakers. Find a unique rock—consider painting it and then place it somewhere in your garden area to remind you of your role as caretaker of God’s great earth.
3. **Psalms 148** Sometime near the end of the day, praise the Lord by reading this psalm for God’s universal glory! This would be a great way to end the day of celebration for all that God has made.

Meditation Practice

As the temperatures climb and spring is in full effect, I think it would be wise for us to bask in the glory of the earth. I, myself, am not what we would call a “nature person” but I do appreciate the many wonders of God’s creation and the blooms of spring the pop up seemingly overnight.

So, this month I invite you to listen to the earth. On days when it’s warm— or even on cooler days— go outside and lay in the grass. You can lay on your back with your knees up or on your stomach with your head turned sideways; lay in whatever way feels most comfortable to you. As you lay there, pressed firmly against the earth, listen to the sounds all around you.

Take notice of the rustle of trees, the whirring of a bumble bee, the squishing sound of sodden ground. Attune your ears to the small noises that make up the chorus of the skies.

Breathe with the rhythm of the earth, with every exhale sinking farther into the soil.

Rest, relax, and listen.



RaiseRight Cards

Our next *RaiseRight* order is due on April 12th and the cards should be back one week later (by April 19).

Since we are now officially in spring, many of you might be starting (or at least thinking about) some of the projects that usually go along with the spring season—clean up from our long winter, prepping the yard and garden for the upcoming growing season, and maybe even some painting projects around the house.

Perhaps you could order some of these cards to assist in your purchase of needed items. Don't forget about the "usual" purchases—*RaiseRight* cards can be used for groceries, gas, and pharmacy, too.

Orders along with payment (a check made out to Women's Fellowship) can be turned in to the office. We thank you for your support!



SALAD LUNCHEON TIME !

It's spring and time to start thinking, "Salad Luncheon". This year's luncheon will be our 30th! Mark your calendars for Wednesday, May 6th.

We are asking everyone to make two salads, each able to serve eight or ten people. As always, one huge salad will work too. We will also need people to make bars or cookies for dessert. Salads, bars, and cookies may be brought to the church on Tuesday, May 5th from 9:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. or on Wednesday May 6th from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. If these times do not work for you, contact Jean Lile and she will make arrangements for you.



Following services on Sunday, May 3rd, we will be setting up the tables in Fellowship Hall. The following Tuesday, May 5th, we will be making turkey salad and setting the tables at 1:00 p.m.

On the day of the luncheon, we will need 10 to 12 workers in our blue church T-shirts to sell and collect tickets, set out salads, serve turkey salad, clear tables, prepare new place settings, serve beverages and do dishes. Many hands make light work so if you are able to help at any of those times, we would love to see you!

There will be a sign-up sheet on the table in the back of

the sanctuary, for letting us know you can bring salads, bars or cookies and to work setting up on the day of the luncheon. Tickets are \$15.00 and are available in the church office and at the door the day of the luncheon.

Book Club - April No One

Escape rooms have become a popular experience for many people. They involve a group of people in the solving of many clues whose purpose is to allow the participants to escape the confines within a specified period of time. These "adventures" have a lot in common with a type of mystery which can be argued began with the publication of Agatha Christie's novel, *And Then There Were None*. This novel popularized the subgenre of mystery usually called the "locked door mystery".

Taken at face value, this type of story asks the reader to try to figure out how the impossible is possible. If all of the doors and windows are locked from the inside, how was it possible for the crime to have been committed, allowing the perpetrator have escaped? And Then There Were None creates the puzzle by creating a specific type of "locked room". Ten individuals are "invited" to a remote island. They all stay in the only residence available on the island, and one by one they are "done away with." Who is doing it? Why is it happening? What's going on?

There is little more that I can add because no one seems to have been able to commit the crime (s) which occur. Anything I might add would detract from the story's puzzlement. So, why is the novel important?

Only look to the many variations on the basic plot lines understand the importance of the novel. The descendents of this story are all over. A very popular British television series, "Death In Paradise" follows a very common, familiar pattern. Each episode presents a mystery in which a crime has been committed with no recognizable way of determining who, what, and why it occurred.

The show's popularity demonstrates the enduring charm of the locked room puzzle.

One criticism of Christie might be that her characters are pretty one dimensional. In her mysteries, she is far more interested in creating and then asking the reader to solve the puzzle. Puzzle solving is a very popular pastime for many people. Humans possess the ability to think. Some animals might possess this ability to some extent, but clearly the ability to reason is our chief attribute. We try to balance this ability with our emotional needs. When our reason conflicts with our emotions, our judgment can become confused.

Because things like puzzle solving involve pure reason, doing this is enjoyable because there really is no conflict with our emotions. We enjoy "using our brain". Puzzles, in all their forms, remind us that being guided by our rational side is not just enjoyable, but it is important.

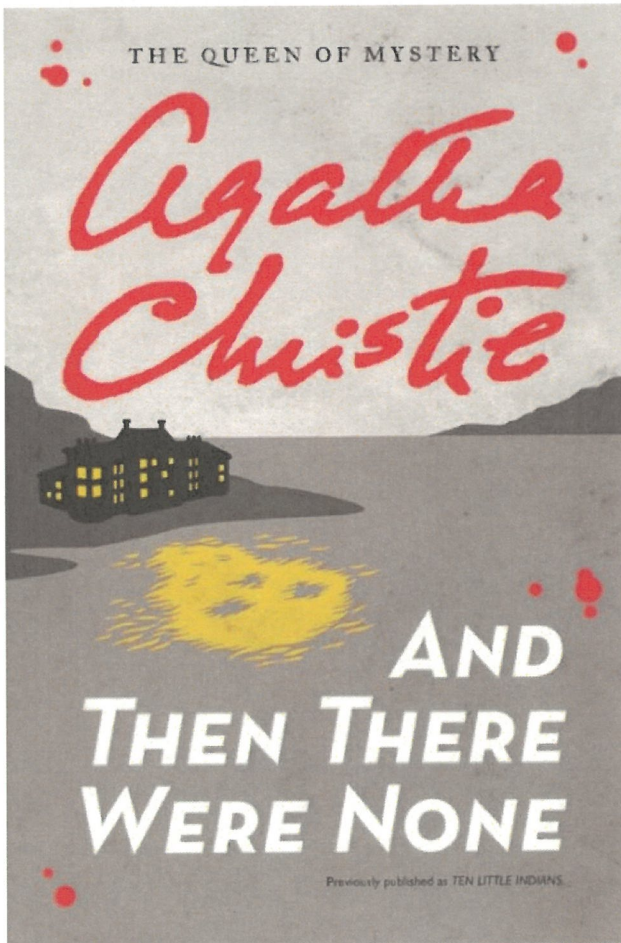
In the locked room mystery, however, we must also remember, and recognize that the perpetrator of the crime is also using his rational side to figure out how to commit, and get away with, his or her crime. Pure reason does not necessarily lead to positive, or beneficial outcomes. To get beneficial outcomes we must find the correct balance between the "good" and the "correct"; "values" and "intelligence."

So read stories like "And Then There Were None" once in a while, and enjoy the sensation of engaging

in the pursuit of pure reason. Remember though Ration can lead to rationalization, which is not necessarily a good thing. That's why these locked room mysteries are cautionary tales.

We will be meeting on Wednesday, April 8th at the home of Sybil Klug. We will meet at 2:30 p.m.

Bill Neis



Self-care Challenge

Spring has sprung and with it come the beautiful colors of flowers, the lush green grass, and clear blue skies. In Wisconsin, however, it takes a bit more time for the earth to shed its winter



skin and new life to break through. In many ways, it can feel like we are still in the grey space that pulls us into melancholic lulls.

So, this month I challenge you to find some color— create it, even— in your life! When you change your sheets, choose something in color. When you buy stamps, spring for (pun intended) a vibrant pattern. When you journal or make a grocery list, use a brightly colored marker and stickers. When you cook dinner, use rainbow bell peppers and heirloom tomatoes, herbs and spices and colors galore!

You'll be surprised at the difference it can make in your heart and mind! :)

Women's Fellowship

The women of the church have been on a well-deserved hiatus from meetings following a busy holiday season! While we did meet in February, it was to enjoy breakfast together. Our March meeting was the first in a few months.

We still have a few Kwik Trip car wash cards left to sell. If you need one, please contact the church office. The cost is \$36 for five car washes. Now that the snow is done for the season (at least we hope it is!), this would be a great time to get your car washed.

We also delivered four meals to Spirit of Hope Men's Shelter in Delavan. Thank you to everyone who assisted with that. We feel it is a program worthy of our participation since the shelter housed 16 or 17 men for the majority of the season. There is a need so we will be signing up to help again next fall.



Women's Fellowship

The women are proud to announce that we will be awarding scholarships to Elkhorn Area High School graduates who will be furthering their education. Four will be Piek scholarships in the amount of \$750 each. One will be the Ardelle Baur Memorial Scholarship for \$500. Students can apply for one of these scholarships through the high school's scholarship program.

Our next project will be the annual Salad Luncheon on Wednesday, May 6th. This will be our 30th Salad Luncheon which is quite amazing! Ticket prices will remain the same as last year. Women of the church will get a reminder note for salads and cookies or bars later in the month.

Finally, we will be participating in the city-wide rummage sale held on Friday and Saturday, June 5th and 6th. More information will be available next month but feel free to start gathering items that we might be able to sell.

Our next meeting will be Thursday, April 9th at 9:30am—feel free to join us!

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Elkhorn, Wisconsin

Church Council Meeting Minutes Via Zoom

March 17th, 2026 at 7:00 P.M.

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

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

Additions to the agenda: None at this time.

Approval of February 17, 2026 Council Minutes: Bobbi Rader moved to approve the minutes from the February 17, 2026 Council meeting as presented. Seconded by Diane Licht. The motion was carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report - Tina Kruger presented and explained the February treasurer's report. Following slight discussion, Barb Townsend moved to approve the Treasurer's report as presented, seconded by Bobbi Rader. 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.

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

Old Business: Pianist - Denise Hohf leaving and James Letellier coming: Jennifer added that the new contract and job description for James has been completed and signed. A group will be getting together with Denise to extend a sincere thank you from the congregation for all her years of providing music to our church.

Pastor Parish: Need another member for team suggestions, volunteers? Jennifer stated that we are in need of someone else to serve on Pastor Parish Relations. As of this time, no one has shown interest or has stepped forward.

Elkhorn Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Guide - Ad for Church: Cindy Waller stated that she is putting together material and information that could be used in the ad that will appear in the Elkhorn Visitors Guide. Council had approved our purchase of this ad at last month's meeting.

Possible Youth Group Meeting: This is still in the works..

Snow Removal: Addison Dillner continues to provide snow removal when needed.

Ash Wednesday/Lent Season: Pastor Carly stated that Ash Wednesday service was well attended. “

Giving Away instead of Giving Up”: Diane Licht stated that all is going well and items will be taken to the food pantry.

ONA: No volunteers have stepped forward as of yet.

Ways to get Carly and the Church more into the public in Elkhorn: Jamie Stilling Stepp said that she and Pastor Carly will attend the upcoming United Way meeting. Jamie also thought that Rotary would be another way to involve Carly in the community.

New Business: Easter: Following slight discussion, Jean Lile stated that flowers and palms have been ordered.

Baptism: Jennifer stated that there will be a baptism March 22.

Church Clean up, restock pews, outside: With the events coming up at church, Council discussed when to schedule a time to tidy up the church, inside and out. This will take place prior to our next Council meeting.

Other: Nothing at this time.

Closing Prayer given by Jamie Stilling Stepp.

Adjournment: Barb Townsend moved to adjourn, seconded by Bobbi Rader. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

The **next Council meeting** of the Church Council will be **April 21st, 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 April Council meeting.



APRIL 2026



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>MARCH 29</p> <p>10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON</p> 	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>	<p>1</p> <p>11:00 a.m. Prayer and Devotional</p>	<p>2</p> <p>6:00 p.m. Maundy Thursday Service in Fellowship Hall</p>	<p>3</p> <p>3:00 p.m. Good Friday Service</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>MEALS ON WHEELS</p>						
<p>5</p> <p>10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON</p>  <p>EASTER</p>	<p>6</p> <p>J LILE & L MCCORMICK</p>	<p>7</p> <p>B & C KRUSE</p>	<p>8</p> <p>2:30 p.m. Book Club— Home of Sybil Klug</p>	<p>9</p> <p>9:30 a.m. Women's Fellowship</p>	<p>10</p> <p>NO MEALS ON WHEELS Delivery</p>	<p>11</p>
<p>12</p> <p>10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON</p> <p>RaiseRight Due</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>
<p>19</p> <p>10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p> <p>7:00 p.m. Church Council</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>
<p>26</p> <p>10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>MAY 1</p>	<p>2</p>

Rummaging in June!

Women's Fellowship has once again decided to take advantage of the citywide rummage sale in Elkhorn, which will be held on Friday and Saturday, June 5th and 6th.



It will be run just as it was last year: items will not be priced so buyers will be given a chance to donate whatever they wish to pay. As last year, we are asking that all items be clean and in working order. That said, it may be time to start some spring cleaning!

Watch for additional details in the May Link.



The 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 us support this important mission.

Thank you in advance !

Snow Shoveling Fund

Thank you to everyone that gave to our Snow shoveling fund this year!

We received plenty of donations to go along with all of the snow that fell this year. Thank you for all your help.

Thank you to Addison Dillner for volunteering to come early in the morning and after school to remove the snow. We appreciate all of your efforts in keeping our sidewalks and steps cleared.

Awesome job!

Can we say Happy Spring now!



APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Tom Stepp	01
Anita Stohl	01
Cindy Reed	02
Carly Gaeth	04
Barry Riese	05
Sharon Jabs	06
Hannah (Bever) Brown	06
Mike Reed	08
Diane Riese	09
Becky Newman	11
David Stohl	13
Dylan Gould	13
Jennifer Neis	16
Curtin Stevens	18
Tim Forster	18
Cameron Stepp	18
Denise Hohf	20
Allen Majkrzak	25



Coffee Fellowship Time

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

Thank you for hosting!

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

Lori and Ken Reynolds 29



Lay Worship Leaders

Apr. 5 **Cindy Waller**
 Apr. 12 _____
 Apr. 19 _____
 Apr. 26 _____



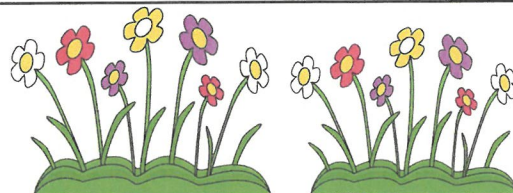
Ushers

Apr. 5 _____
 Apr. 12 _____
 Apr. 19 _____
 Apr. 26 _____



Coffee Fellowship

Apr. 5 **Cindy Waller**
 Apr. 12 _____
 Apr. 19 _____
 Apr. 26 _____



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



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

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

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