



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

AUGUST 2026

Pastor Carly's Corner:

Folks often ask me what I like to do on my day off; if there is anything in particular I spend my time doing on Fridays. And, truth be told, on my days off I rarely have anything special to report. Mostly, I try and take my time. I spend so much of my life racing from one thing to another, trying to squeeze one more task into the day, flitting between church and home, and meetings and visits and whatever else may be on my docket, thinking to myself: "Hurry up, hurry up, hurry UP!"

I don't know when we collectively decided that the busier we are, the better but I, for one, find it exhausting.

It reminds me of the movie "The Shawshank Redemption" when Brooks (played by James Whitmore) is released from Shawshank prison after spending 50 years within its walls. When he was first sent to Shawshank prison, it was the early 1900s; after decades and decades of incarceration, the world to which he returns is far different than the world he left. He's utterly overwhelmed by the fast paced environment of cars whooshing by and people rushing to pick up their kids or make their way home after a long day of work. In a letter to Red (played by Morgan Freeman) he says that he doesn't feel suited to the world in which he now finds himself. "I can't believe how fast things move on the outside. I saw an automobile once, when I was a kid, but now they're everywhere. The world went and got itself into a big hurry," he says. Ain't that the truth?

I find, more and more, that what I really long for when I have time off, is to just let myself be; to not let myself be assimilated into the world's demand of keeping up or being left behind. It sounds insane but I find it rather liberating— and, for me, it's a kind of prayer. It's a prayer of hope that my



quiet defiance of the hurried ways to which we have become accustomed might bring me closer to the world around me and to the sacred mystery in which I am enfolded, and that it might give others permission to do the same.

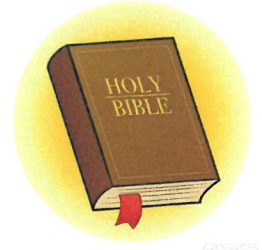
Food for thought, my friends.

Peace and blessings,
Pastor Carly

Bible Study Happening

Our Bible Study started in the month of July with a good turn out of about nine people. It was decided that we could all meet at the same time every other week.

The next gathering will be on August 5 and following on August 19, at 11:00 a.m. If you have not attended yet, you are welcome to join in. We would love to have more of you join us.

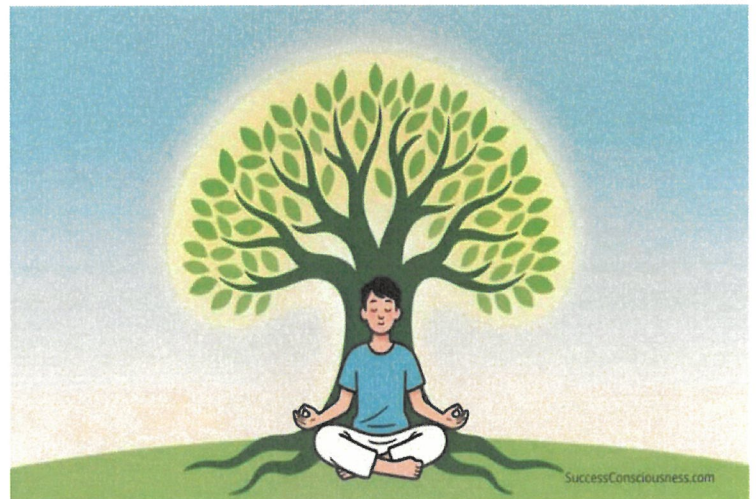


Monthly Meditation Practice

Meditation, to me, is about awareness— awareness of our bodies, our needs, our breath, our place in the universe, and so many other things. It is, so often, focused on who we are and where we find ourselves in a given moment. But, what would happen if, instead of focusing on ourselves, we placed all that awareness and reflection on someone or something else?

This month, our meditation practice is all about removing ourselves from focus— making someone or something else the center of our attention and awareness. It sounds odd, I know. But, maybe instead of spending so much time thinking about how we feel and what we need (although, please don't disregard those things completely), we could consider how others may be experiencing the world. We could attune ourselves to the other people in our lives— to pray for them, talk to them, and walk with them.

You may find that your life shifts in mysterious ways; that your relationships deepen, your sense of self is strengthened, and your world is made more meaningful.



Undie Sunday!

Our first ever Undie Sunday is in the books! Thank you to everyone who brought donations of women's socks and underwear for New Beginnings a few weeks ago. Despite the fact that it was a one-time drive AND that it was in the middle of July when folks are, famously, out of town, we still managed to collect countless pairs of socks and underwear for women escaping domestic violence and human trafficking here in Elkhorn.

New Beginnings does all they can for those who come to them for resources and support, but the cost of helping victims of such violence is not insignificant. When communities like ours help to alleviate some of that financial burden, it affords them the opportunity to support those in need in other ways.

Our donations will be used in go-bags for those who have fled, alongside other daily essentials, to help survivors take their next steps forward. Thank you, again, for your generosity!



Food For Thought

Several months ago, we asked you, the members of our church, your thoughts and interest in our church becoming ONA (Open and Affirming). We really didn't hear from most of you. So, Barb Townsend, Carol Prchal, Pastor Carly, and I started meeting together to discuss if we should attempt to move forward or not. We decided that we needed to gather more information and educate ourselves about what it all meant. We received information from the UCC about what to do and it looked a little daunting.

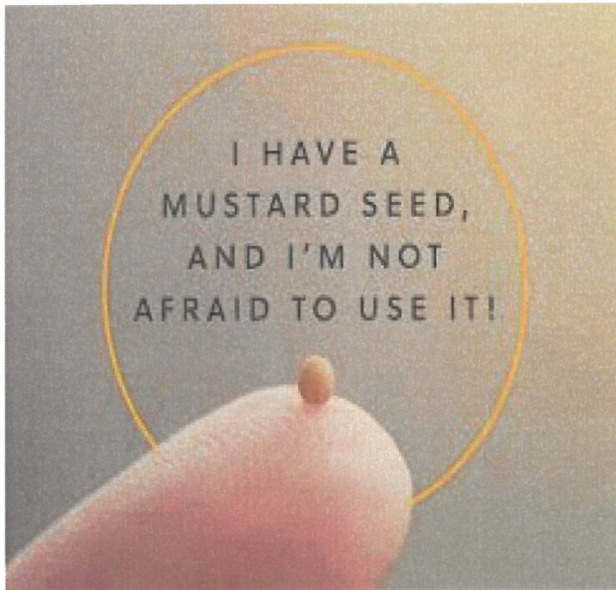
So, we decided to educate ourselves first about the LGBTQ+ community. We started reading a book, *The Savvy Ally* by Jeannie Gainsburg, which was recommended by the information we received. The preface of the book was very meaningful to me, and I shared it with the Council last month. The author had read a book about the women's movement for the right to vote about 100+ years ago and how she would have been there marching and fighting for equality. Then it hit her, why wasn't she doing that today for another population trying to be recognized and treated equally. So, she went and volunteered at a local LGBTQ+ center in her town. She has been working for them for at least 25 years as an educator and her book is a result. I asked myself, "What could I do?"

The answer, of course, is to learn more. So, I think what the four of us would ask of you is to learn more also. We are not asking currently for any commitment from the congregation, just an open mind to learning more about the LGBTQ+ population. Hopefully, we will be providing some education for you in the next few months. We don't know how that will be provided but please be on the lookout for some opportunities.

Many of you may be saying to yourself, we need to increase our membership before doing any of this. Afterall, we are open and accepting. We say that each week in the bulletin "no matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here" and in our Purpose Statement: "Our purpose is to welcome everyone..." But if you are looking for a church and are part of the LGBTQ+ community or have a family member who is, how do you know that you will be truly welcomed in our church. Here are some statistics that you might not realize: 1 in 5 Gen Z kids (14-29) identify as being part of the LGBTQ+ community (and they have parents), over 10% of the 30-40 age population are part of the LGBTQ+ community, in our area, Delavan UCC, Burlington UCC and Lake Geneva UCC are ONA. At the end of our education and discussions about becoming ONA, maybe we will decide it isn't for us, but I firmly believe that we need to investigate it and go through the process (which can take as much as 2 years!)

Thanks for thinking about all of this. Please share any thoughts with Barb, Carol, Pastor Carly or me. Jennifer Neis, Moderator





Mustard Seed

Be the Change

Let's face it—there have been several changes in our country in the last few years. The cost of housing, groceries, fuel, and healthcare have taken huge hikes requiring some families to make very difficult decisions as to what is or is not affordable in their day-to-day lives. To me, decisions made by our elected officials accompanied by the resulting fallout seem to have hit harder on those who find it difficult to pay these higher prices as well as those who may have benefited from the programs that have been cut. That is unfortunate.

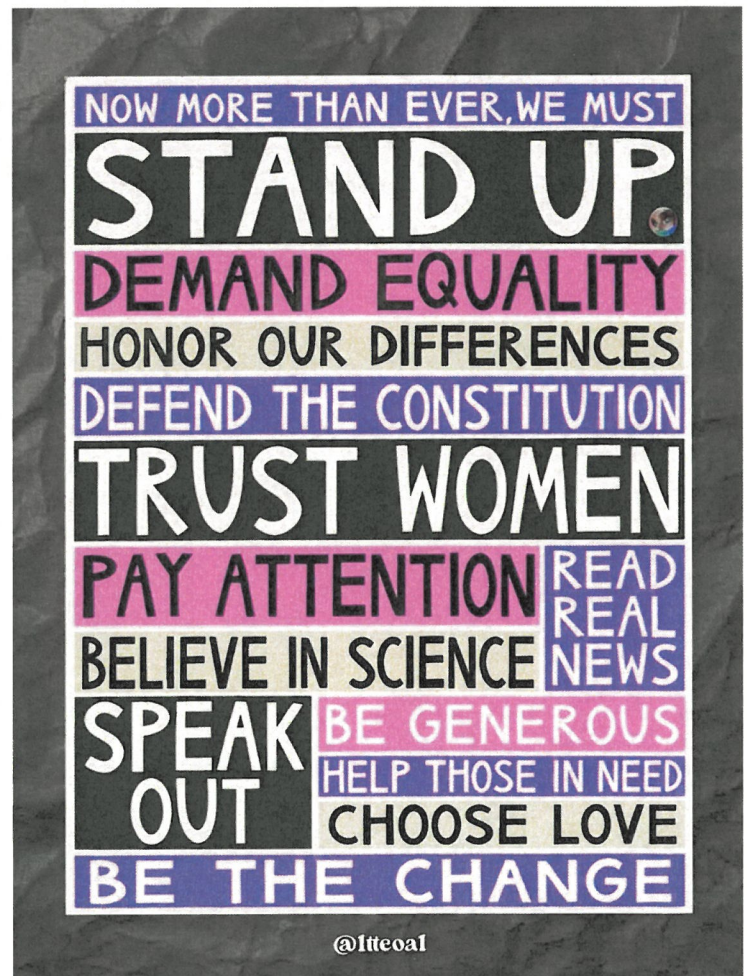
Later this month (August 11th to be exact), all of us here in Wisconsin will have an opportunity to make a difference in our country when Wisconsin's 2026 Partisan

Primary will be held. This is our chance to make a difference by voting for people who share our values and ideals. Be an informed voter! Learn who is on the ballot and how they stand on the issues of concern. Here are a few sites that might help:

- **My Vote Wisconsin** <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/My-Voter-Info> is a great site as it provides information on your registration, the elections in which you have voted, where you can vote, and what the ballot will look like. You can even request an absentee ballot at this site as well as track when it was received by the
- **Public Radio 2026 Partisan Primary Voter Guide** <https://www.wpr.org/elections/2026-primary-voter-guide> has answers from candidates who responded as to how they stand on issues of concern.
- **VOTE 411 Voter's Guide** <https://www.vote411.org/ballot> is another site that will ask for your address to personalize the information given back to you. This site is sponsored by The League of Women Voters and allows you to see how candidates answered their questions.

Please cast your ballot carefully in this election and follow directions—written and verbal (if given). Since it is a Partisan Primary, you can only vote in one party. You will be asked to declare a party at the start of the ballot and, while it is not required, it is a good idea that you do so. You may not cross party lines in this one and we want every vote to count. I can give you a more detailed explanation if you want one since I work the elections here in Elkhorn and understand the process—just ask!

The "Stand Up" poster that goes along with this article has some valid points. This is our chance to stand up and make a difference—one that might result in a change for the better! Get out and vote—be the change!



RaiseRight Order - August 9

It's August and we have now heard those three words dreaded by many kids but also welcomed by some parents: Back to School! If you need items for anyone going back to school, please consider purchasing RaiseRight cards. You can use them to buy clothing or needed school supplies at places like Target, Walmart, or Kohls. If you know any older students returning to college, you might want to get some cards to help them out, as well. College kids would most likely appreciate cards for area food chain restaurants, coffee shops, or convenience stores like Kwik Trip which also has the ability to purchase gas. We are sure anything you buy will put smiles on those faces!



Don't forget your own shopping needs and always remember that RaiseRight cards make great gifts for any occasion you may have. A complete list of available retailers can be found at church on the table in the back of the sanctuary. Your order along with payment (checks made out to Women's Fellowship) can be brought to the church or given to Diane Riese by Sunday, August 9th.

Thank you for your support of Women's Fellowship!

Golf Cart Taxi Opportunity



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

To make this happen again this year, we are in need of eight people to drive the taxis (there are often two shifts: 8:00 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.), but also four people to monitor the wheelchair usage, which is another service offered by the fair. Those who drive are asked to attend a brief training session, which is held on Sunday, August 30th at 3:30 p.m. at the park

stage.

Thank you to all of those that have signed up already, we are looking for a couple more drivers and then we will be all set. There is a sign up sheet at church or you can call the church office.

See you at the fair!

School Supplies

Throughout the month of August we will collect school supplies for children in the Elkhorn Area School District. With the rising cost of living and inflation, many families find themselves in a difficult spot financially and struggle to purchase the necessary items their children need for the upcoming school year. As such, First Congregational has partnered with the Community Engage - School Sup-

plement Coordinator for EASD, Jon Anzalone, to help families in need.

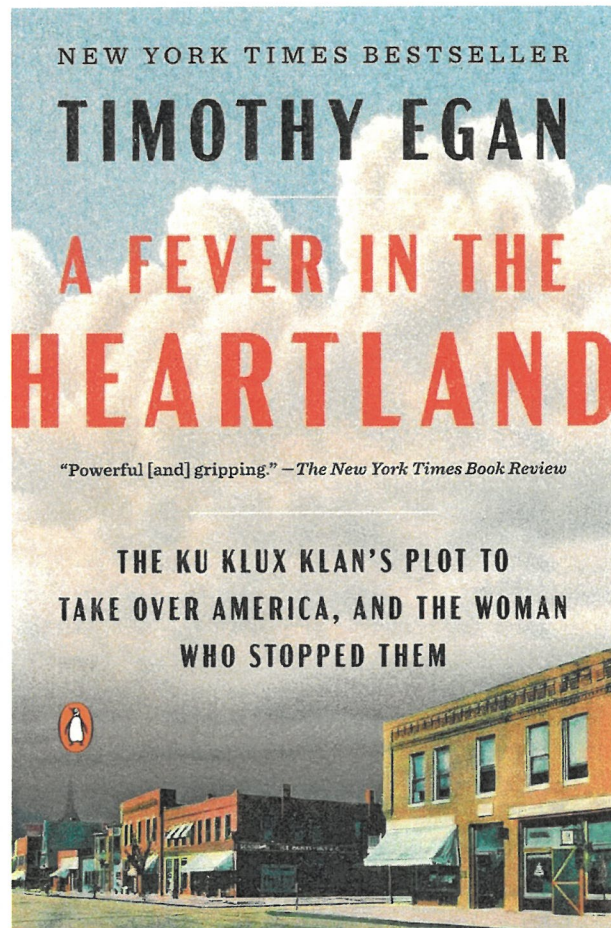
The generosity of our congregation, our love of learning, and our desire for all children to have what they need to succeed will help us serve those in our community as we collect vital school supplies for the 2026-2027 school year.

There is a flyer here in the newsletter, posted around church, and on our Facebook page with specific items requested for donation. Our children are our future-- let's make sure they have the tools and supplies they require for a successful year of learning and growing. If you have any questions, please reach out to Pastor Carly. Thank you!

Book Club - August

WHY?

The book chosen for August forces the critical reader to continually ask "Why?" First, "Why does racism exist?" Second, "Why are (or were, you choose your verb) so many Christian churches complicit in supporting racist causes?". "Why is hate so often the result of ignorance, and fear of the unknown?" Timothy Egan's book *A Fever in the Heartland* forces questions like these upon the reader. Subtitled, "The Ku Klux Klan's plot to take over America, and the Woman who stopped them".



"Powerful [and] gripping." — *The New York Times Book Review*

The book focuses primarily on D.C. Stevenson who became the leader of the Klan in Indiana, but whose influence and power expanded to the point that he became the overall leader of the Klan in the entire nation. Numerous elected officials became members of the Klan. Membership rose in many states to the point where 30 to 40 per cent of the white population were members. Stevenson used intimidation, bribery, and violence, underpinned with the support of evangelical Christian churches to expand and solidify the Klan's and his power. Surprisingly, (at least to me) the time period of the book's focus is relatively short, 1920 to 1925.

Stevenson was a serial woman molester and rapist. He was ultimately exposed by Madge Oberholtzer, who was raped and ultimately was killed due to injuries she sustained at the hands of Stevenson. His trial and conviction led to his disgrace and, ultimately, the destruction and downfall of much of the Klan's power.

Another question rears itself during a reading of the book. "How are the events, personalities, and violent assaults upon others a precursor of future events?" As I read the book and thought about its significance, I

kept coming back to the role which numerous churches and pastors played in the rise and perceived legitimacy of the Klan? The oath which a new Klan member had to take included an admonition to work to eradicate "Catholics, Jews, Blacks, and Immigrants". To take this oath certainly screams that the oath-taker will fulfill the oath by embracing hate, in all of its forms. Since when do proclaimed "Christians" take oaths which proclaim and promote hatred. Hatred which endorses murder, lynching, literal branding with hot iron or acid, and other despicable acts.

It should be emphasized that the term "racism" is somewhat limiting since it suggests the hatred and ultimate discrimination based upon race or ethnicity. Misogyny, intolerance, and other forms of hate were embraced by the "Kluxers". It took the exposure of Stevenson through the trial which

found him guilty of rape and murder to wake some people up. Ultimately, it may have only forced many Kluxers to simply go underground, so to speak.

The rise of the KKK in the twenties, along with the Jim Crow laws which had been passed in many states exposed a deep wound in America. Hatred exists in many forms. It probably will always exist. The book really asks, are we really willing to do something serious about it, if that is possible. You can't legislate feelings and emotions. The so-called Golden Rule admonishes us to love our neighbor as ourselves. That still seems like an ideal which we are not really that close to achieving.

We will meet at the Fontana home of Merry Kay Opitz on Wednesday, August 12, at 6 PM. Maybe we will see you there!

Bill Neis

Self-care Challenge

I know that a lot of people participate in spring cleaning, where they get rid of things they no longer have use for and deep clean their living spaces. It's a wonderful way to reinvigorate a space that has become stale and give oneself a clean slate, so to speak.

But during the summer months, while I'm avoiding the heat and humidity, I find myself leaning into the act of combing through things and getting rid of what is unnecessary. You see, research shows that clutter increases our cortisol levels (the stress hormone that is a risk factor for many illnesses), reduces creativity and focus, and can even make us more sensitive to pain. It's not your imagination that you are more relaxed in a clutter free environment.

So, this month, I challenge you to spend 5-10 minutes a day decluttering your space. You can start small—maybe with a pile of mail on your kitchen table, or the box of products in the bathroom you seldom use.

You'd be surprised how much it can do for your mental health and overall wellbeing.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Elkhorn, Wisconsin

Church Council Meeting Minutes

July 21, 2026 at 7:00 P.M. Via Zoom

The meeting was **called to order** at 7:01 p.m. by Moderator Jennifer Neis. Those in attendance were Barb Townsend, Jean Lile, Carol Prchal, Diane Licht, Jamie Stilling Stepp, Tom Stepp, Pastor Carly Gaeth and Dorothy Bever.



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

Question of the Day: Pastor Carly asked, "What fictional character do you feel represents you?" It was nice to hear that different council members had their own special answers.

Additions to the agenda: Nothing to add at this time.

Approval of June 16, 2026 Council Minutes: Carol Prchal moved to approve the minutes from the June 16, 2026 Council meeting as presented. Seconded by Jean Lile. The motion was carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report - In the absence of Treasurer Tina Kruger, Jennifer Neis presented the June treasurer's report. Following discussion of the church finances, Pastor Carly stated she would look into options of renting out office space. With this, Barb Townsend moved to approve the Treasurer's report as presented, seconded by Pastor Carly Gaeth. The motion to approve carried unanimously.

Pastor's Moment: Pastor Carly has provided her report informing what she has done this past month and things she is working on. She has numerous projects in the works including putting together a flyer for a school supply drive, that bible study is going well, ways to promote membership, a winter wear project for people in need and adding she is making plans for the two confirmands coming up.

Carol Prchal added that she will take on the project of lawn signs.

Ministry Leaders' Reports/Updates: A report was submitted from Faith Formation.

Old Business: Ways to get Carly and the Church more into the public in Elkhorn: Carly said she is reaching out to different groups and Carol has said she would look into lawn signs.

ONA- conversation: Jennifer Neis recommended that Council read the preface that was included with emailed reports for tonight's council meeting, *The Savvy Ally: A Guide for Becoming a Skilled LGBTQ+ Advocate*, in part to help educate the congregation as a place to start ONA. This was followed by much discussion.

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

Membership Growth...signs. Other ideas?: Jennifer stated that this is ongoing and that Carol has agreed to look into signs.

Making the church look more appealing - ideas, plans? Carol Prchal is working on making improvements to the Geneva street entryway flooring and Barb has been working on the "Be the church..." banner. Council discussed finding the right size banner.

Bible Study: Pastor Carly stated that the first gathering was well attended.

Oktoberfest: Jennifer Neis stated that Diane Riese has asked whether to continue participating in having a booth at Oktoberfest. Following discussion, it was agreed to continue having a booth, that Pastor Carly should be there and talked about different ways to get kids to participate.

Tech help for Barb: Council discussed ways to get a tech assistant for Barb.

New Business: "Critters": Council discussed ways to get rid of the "critter" (believed to be a raccoon), that has gotten inside the church.

Church Software: Jennifer Neis stated that Microsoft Publisher, the software used to create and print the church bulletins and newsletter, will no longer be supported by Microsoft as of October. Following discussion, Pastor Carly stated that she uses Canva and would help to instigate and in getting the program for the church along with assisting Cindy in getting familiar with it. Barb Townsend made a motion to purchase the program Canva for the church, seconded by Diane Licht. The motion was carried unanimously.

Versita: Pastor Carly stated she had a conversation with someone from Versita (a blood drive organization) about interest in holding a blood drive. The drive would take about 4 hours and they would need at least 15 donors. Following discussion, Pastor Carly stated she would talk to other churches in the area to see if there was a mutual interest in holding a blood drive.

Closing Prayer: Pastor Carly gave the closing prayer.

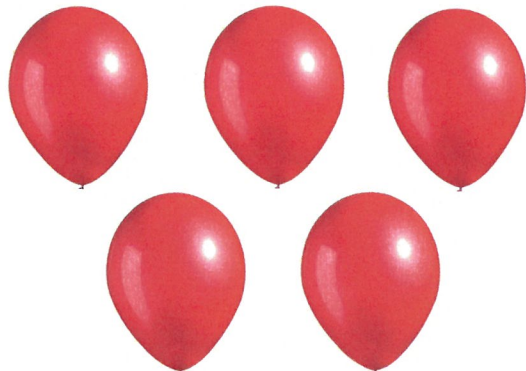
Adjournment: Though a motion was not made, the meeting concluded at 8:45 p.m.

The **next Council meeting** of the Church Council will be **August 18, 2026** at 7:00 p.m. at the church in the council room.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dorothy Bever, Church Clerk

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

Keep being Kind!





AUGUST 2026



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	3	4	5 11:00 a.m. Bible Study	6	7	8
9 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON RaiseRight Due	10	11	12 6:00 p.m. Book Club— Fantana Home of Merry Kay Opitz	13 9:30 a.m. Women's Fellowship	14	15
16 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	17 J LILE & L MCCORMICK	18 7:00 p.m. Church Council B & C KRUSE	19 11:00 a.m. Bible Study R KNUTSON & T BAILEY	20 T & J STEPP	21 B NEWMAN & D RIESE	22
23 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON 3:30 p.m. Manda- tory Training for golf cart Taxis at Park Stage – WCFG	31	SEP 1	2 11:00 a.m. Bible Study Fa 	3	4	5

MEALS ON WHEELS

SCHOOL * SUPPLY DRIVE

AUGUST 2ND - AUGUST 23RD

GLUE STICKS - HIGHLIGHTERS - #2
PENCILS - COLORED PENCILS - KLEENEX
- DISINFECTING WIPES - LOOSE LEAF
PAPER - 3X5 LINED INDEX CARDS -
PENS - POCKET FOLDERS - SCISSORS -
DRY ERASE MARKERS - ERASERS - POST
IT NOTES - SPIRAL BOUND NOTEBOOKS -
3 RING PENCIL BAGS - ZIPLOC BAGS
(SANDWICH & GALLON) - WASHABLE
MARKERS - CRAYONS - WATERCOLOR
PAINTS - BLACK SHARPIES - HAND
SANITIZER

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF
CHRIST - ELKHORN, WI

Tech Help Wanted

We are looking for new help with our recording technology for worship. It would be nice to have someone who can run the powerpoint slides and camera during worship. So if you are interested or know of a neighbor or friend that might want to help out for 1-2 hours on a Sunday, please let us know. You can email the church office or talk with Barb.



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Assistant Tech Support

Sunday mornings and special worship services

- Flexible hours, determined by our technology manager and yourself
- On the job training
- A warm and welcoming community
- Qualifies as service hours for NHS or similar organizations

LET US KNOW IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS!

elkhornucc@gmail.com
(262) 723-3246

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



Our hungry hippo jar that sits on the coffee table in the family room, is still collecting your donations for the :

Lakeland Animal Shelter.

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

Thank you in advance !

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Phyllis Kruger	02
Wendy Peterson	02
Dave Hill	05
Eric Truesdale	12
Brianna Hay	14
Isabelle Gould	17
Camber Brunswick	19
Barb Townsend	21
Adam Stoflet	23
Crispin Waller	23
Julie Forster	25
Aimee Jutz	25
Ray Knutson	25
Mike Mol	26
Brook Hintz Hellmann	31
Heather Waters	31

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



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!

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

Tina and Kevin Kruger	03
Cheryl and Scott Dillner	08
Bridget and Bill Trewyn	19
Phyllis and Bob Kruger	19
Carol and Ron Stevens	27



Lay Worship Leaders

Aug 2	Sara Gould
Aug 9	Mindy Brunswick
Aug 16	Jennifer Neis
Aug 23	_____
Aug 30	_____



Ushers

Aug 2	_____
Aug 9	_____
Aug 16	_____
Aug 23	_____
Aug 30	Jennifer and Bill Neis



Coffee Fellowship

Aug 2	_____
Aug 9	_____
Aug 16	_____
Aug 23	_____
Aug 30	_____



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