



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

MAY 2026

Pastor Carly's Corner:

What's that saying? April showers bring May flowers? One can only hope. As much as I love the month of April, this particular April has been very grey and gloomy and wet. We had one glorious week of sunshine and warmer temperatures, clear blue skies as far as the eye can see and then it was just GONE. And, I find that when it's grey outside— especially if it's been grey for a good long while— I feel myself turning inward. And, let me be clear, turning inward is not a bad thing. It is a helpful tool in self reflection and discernment. But, it can also be incredibly lonely and isolating.

And I think that one of the many beautiful parts of spring is that we receive visual cues and colorful reminders to come out of the shadows, out of ourselves, and be with one another. When we see the vibrant pinks and yellows, oranges and purples something inside of us comes alive and reaches for the light— reaches for other people. We abandon the quiet coziness of home and move forward into the world once more.

It's a kind of reorienting, of shifting our focus from ourselves and our incredibly tiny and momentary existence, to the vastness of God's creation which is eternal. It's incredibly profound and wildly dramatic. It's a delicious shock treatment for the senses.

But, it wouldn't be possible without the rain; without the water that softens the earth, making it tillable and ready for planting. The vim and vigor of spring wouldn't be as appreciated without the gloomy grey of winter. The light wouldn't feel as warm or as alive without the deep, cobalt darkness



from whence we came.

So in this turning of the seasons— as buds form and blossom, and bulbs take root— remember to hold yourselves gently in the unfolding of creation. You, too, are blossoming in the spring.

Peace and blessings,
Pastor Carly



Join Us in Celebrating “United States of Kindness”

A recent Gallup survey related to kindness showed that how we experience and witness kindness is directly related to how well we are motivated to be kind to others, as well as how we perceive the kindness levels of those around us. In other words, if we experience kindness, we are more motivated to be kind. By being kind, we will also see others doing the same. And what could be better than being kind?

The United States of Kindness is a national campaign that launched at the end of April 2026 as a celebration of our country’s 250th birthday. It encourages people (churches, schools, businesses, communities, families, individuals—anyone!) to make a difference through action. The action? Commit to 250 acts of kindness through the end of 2026!

Our church council discussed this at the April meeting and we decided it would be a wonderful thing for our church to take on so get on board to join in! We ask that you track your acts of kindness through the week and then we will have a way for you to record that number.

Let’s see just how kind we can be for the remainder of 2026. And hopefully what is beginning as a more concentrated effort will grow into an unconscious habit. Wouldn’t that be wonderful!

Want to learn more?

Go to www.usofkindness.org for more information, including resources if you need some suggestions to get started. What are you waiting for? Go out there and be kind. And if the Gallop survey is correct, your acts of kindness will cause others to see the kindness, and send it on, and on, and on, and... You get the idea—it could be a fantastic ripple effect!

Go. Be kind. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain!



SALAD LUNCHEON TIME !

The 30th annual Salad Luncheon is almost here! It is happening on Wednesday, May 6th, at 11:00 a.m. through 1:00 p.m.

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. On 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 is 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 or 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.



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.

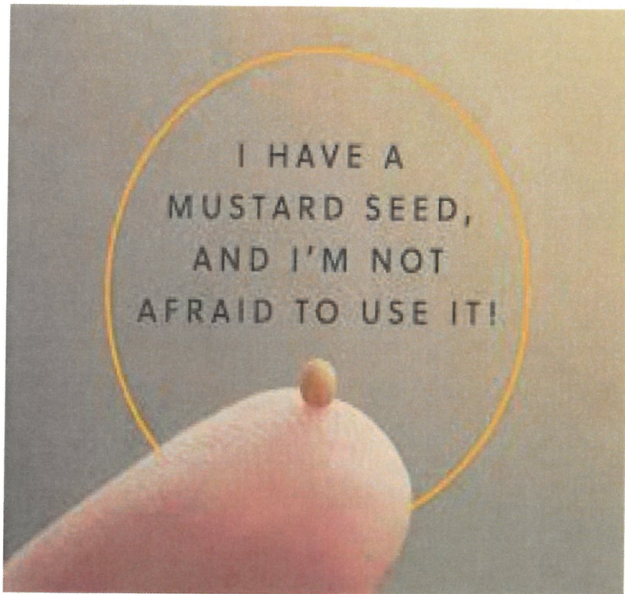
There are a variety of resources available through the UCC should we decide to look into this as a possibility for our congregation.

This topic was discussed at our Church Council meeting again and Council determined that more conversation will be had. We also want to know how everyone feels about this possibility. So you may be asked by a council member about your thoughts. Or you may share your thoughts or interest with Pastor Carly, Carol Prchal or any council member.

Meditation Practice

As we wade through more April showers, quietly waiting for May flowers, I find it hard to be patient. I’m fed up with grey. I want color and I want it now. And what better way to add color to our lives WHILE engaging in quiet solitude than to *actually color*???

A number of years ago, this really took off as a form of meditation— especially for adults with anxiety— and we found ourselves in the midst of massive collections of coloring books and every shade of colored pencil under the sun. Everything from scenes of popular films and TV shows to intricate animals and insects were made into coloring sheets. I, myself, had a coloring book that was incredibly detailed line drawings of silly words (like “spork” or “bubbles” or “pudding”). And I found it rather cathartic to sit and decide for myself what colors would be added to every page— what shade of blue I wanted for the wing of a butterfly or what hue I thought best captured the spirit of a hedgehog. It was a calming and meditative practice for me and, this month, I invite you to give it a shot. What’s the worst that could happen?



Mustard Seed

Collaboration and a Ripple Effect

At some point in your life, you were probably a participant in a collaborative effort of some type or other. The project may have been successful—or not. All depends on the chosen project and the effort of the participants. Just prior to Easter, some of you may have participated in a collaborative effort to create a picture—the final outcome known only to me—but you trusted it would work and it did! A picture of the resulting work of art is included with this article. It is displayed on the back windows of our sanctuary for all to enjoy and will remain there through the Sundays of Easter. Thanks to all who participated!

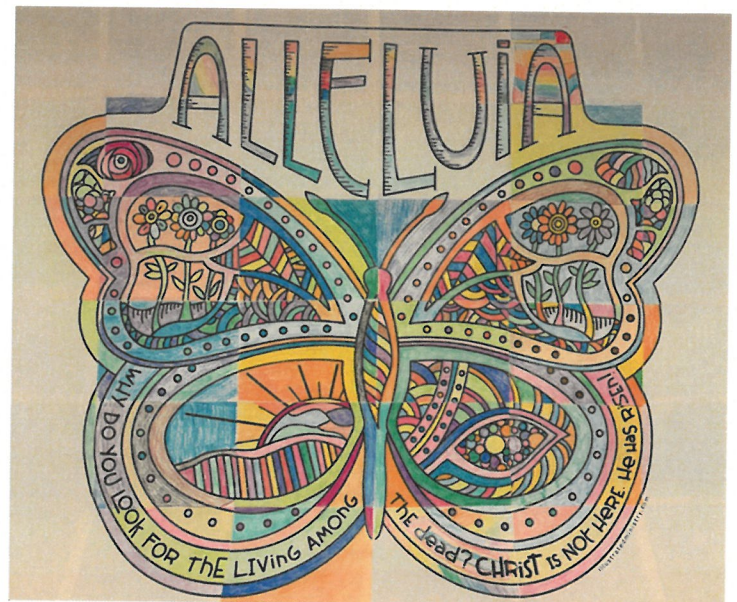
While this project was a very small one and only for our congregation, other collaborative efforts can be on a rather large scale. Our church is participating in just such a project now. And this one has the possibilities of having a marvelous ripple effect as people throughout the United States carry it out in their own lives.

Please look for the article about “US of Kindness” and consider how you can participate with us as a church, but also in your own life.

Together, we can send a ripple of kindness through our entire country!

In faith—

Barb



RaiseRight Order - May 10

Our next RaiseRight card order is due on Sunday, May 10th. What cards might you need? These cards make great gifts for graduates and they are extremely easy to wrap! Perhaps the grad that you know likes Culvers or Starbucks and would enjoy a treat for their hard work during the school year. Maybe they need a gas card so they can get to a summer job without too much of a hit to the money they are earning. And don't forget about using the cards for you own projects. A card from Lowes or Home Depot will allow you to purchase plants to beautify your yard! One from Piggly Wiggly will allow you to do the shopping needed for any upcoming spring barbeques! And don't forget gas—everyone needs that!

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



Book Club - May

TOOKIE AND FLORA

Louise Erdrich's novel, *The Sentence*, is set in a small bookstore in Minneapolis. The narrator, Tookie, works there, accompanied by other female employees. The shop is managed by Tookie, but owned by Louise. Tookie, like all of the other employees, is Native American. What is the book about?

Well, on one level, *The Sentence* is a ghost story. Not a scary ghost story, but a humorous one. On All Souls Day 2019, the ghost of Flora, a former customer of the store begins shuffling around in the store. She had been a very frequent customer of the store. Tookie had found her somewhat annoying. To a degree, the story makes the reader wonder what the purpose of this visitation is.

Connected to the Flora visitation plot is the title reference. The word "sentence" has multiple meanings of course. Is Flora's presence a sentence imposed upon Tookie and her co-workers? Does the fact that Tookie had served a sentence for a crime which she really had not committed relate? As the novel progresses the answer is yes to all, but significantly, *The Sentence* also refers to a line from a book which Flora had been reading. She supposedly died right in the middle of the line. Tookie finds the line which Flora was reading, discovers something unsettling in the sentence and opts to bury the book in which it is written in her yard to ward off the evil she is sure emanates from it.

The novel is so multi-faceted that what I have just recounted is only one fragment of the rich story which Erdrich tells. The primary characters are urban Indians. They feel strong connections to their heritage, but are also very much like most other urban dwellers. Erdrich finds many ways of relating the strong feelings of pride, anger, identity, and disconnection.

Early on in the novel, in a section called "So Grateful" There is a humorous but very telling sequence where a middle-aged white woman enters the store and recounts an episode. The woman recounts a story about her great-great-grandfather coming home to his cabin on a lake, and finding three starving Indians in it. I won't be able to recount the entire passage, but it centers on the fact that many lake homes owned by whites are on land which was formerly Native American.

The lady states, "It turns out that the Indians were very hungry,,, like starving..."

Ansema (a Tookie co-worker, and very passionate about her heritage) responds, "Don't tell me," she smiles in a totally fake way, "He gave their land back!"

"Uh, no," the lady laughed, "...he had his chauffeur drive back to town and pick up provisions, and then he gave the food to the Indians."

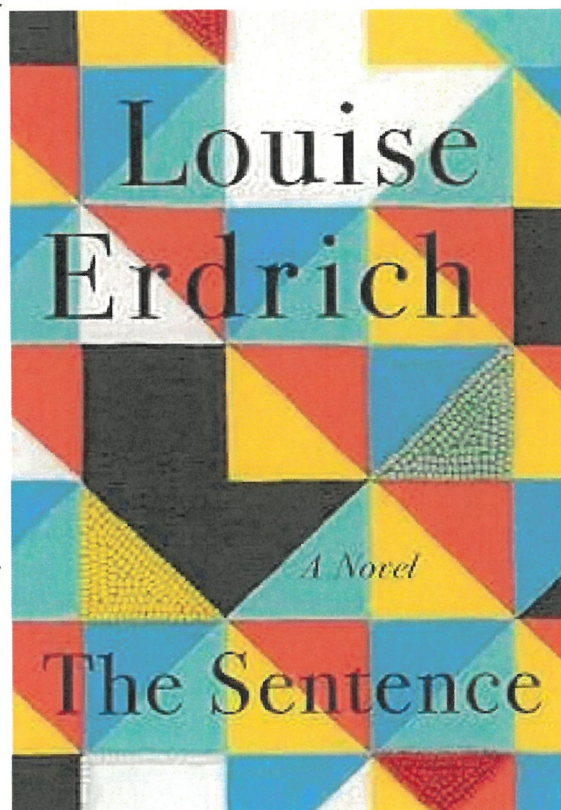
"His what! his chauffeur!" I muttered in outrage.

Ansema, "And then he gave their land back, right?"

The passage goes on, but you can see how skillfully Erdrich creates a scene which displays the deep feelings of the Indian women, but does so in a way which blends humor, bitterness, and anger.

Later in the novel where is an scene where Tookie, her husband, Pollux, and all the co-workers are celebrating at Thanksgiving. Wild rice is a staple food, connected closely to their cultures. They have a long, humorous argument/discussion about the best wild rice, how to cook it, and how it should be collected.

We cannot forget, or ignore the way that the book treasures books, authors, reading, thinking, and discussing. This is certainly not the only novel which uses a book store, library, or other similar setting



to weave a story which revels in the joy of books and reading. It is, I think, one of the best though.

Maybe Flora couldn't leave, because there was so much more to explore, so much love and life to experience, even if only vicariously!

We will meet at Daryl Halstead's house on May 13, at 6:30 p.m.

Bill Neis

Self-care Challenge



You may have already guessed this about me, but I am not really a nature gal. I venture outdoors of my own will and volition very reluctantly and sporadically. But, every now and then I feel an immense urge to go outside and dig my hands in the dirt; to feel the earth below and the skies above. And when I do that— when I allow myself to feel grounded in the dirt and in the mess— I always end up feeling lighter.

This month's self-care challenge is to get outside and get messy. Use your hands to dig the holes for your seeds, jump in the puddles on your street, or make mud pies in your yard. Whatever you do, commit to the mess of the earth and have fun with everything it has to offer.

Women's Fellowship

The women of the church have been busy this spring! We met to finalize the plans for the salad luncheon on Wednesday, May 6th, but you will have to read details about that in a dedicated article elsewhere in The Link. By now, everyone should have gotten a note about specifics for our annual event via USPS. If you have any questions, feel free to give us a call. In the meantime, scour your recipe box for that "just perfect" salad!

We still have a few Kwik Trip car wash cards available for purchase. Treat your car to a wash now that the warmer weather is moving in. Contact the office to purchase one before they are all gone.

Donna Riese and Jean Lile have been reviewing applications from graduating EASD seniors to choose the scholarship recipients for the class of 2026. Stay tuned—details on the winners and their future plans will be available in next month's Link.

Finally, our rummage and bake sale will be held in conjunction with the city-wide sale on the weekend of June 5-6. Specifics on that sale are in another article, but if you have any questions, please contact Barb Townsend.

Our next meeting will be Thursday, May 14, at 9:30am. All are welcome!



Women's Fellowship

Rummage Sale/Bake Sale

If its spring, it must be rummage somewhere! And for the second year in a row, we will be hosting a rummage and bake sale at our church. As before, it will be held in conjunction with the Elkhorn City-Wide Rummage Sale on Friday and Saturday, June 5th and 6th. Guidelines are again

put in place so this doesn't become a burden to a few dedicated workers (the reason it was originally abandoned) so read on to learn the details!

- Anyone bringing in items will have to bring them in starting on Friday, May 29. No early boxes will be accepted. Further, each person will be responsible for unpacking those items for display on tables in Fellowship Hall when the items are brought in.
- We are asking that these items be clean and suitable for resale—nothing stained, chipped, or broken. The items should be things you would consider purchasing if you were in the market for any given item—not just the junk you want to get rid of.
- You will also be asked to donate some time (if possible) to help with the sale at some point on Friday and/or Saturday. You will also be encouraged to come to help with the pack-up of items remaining—reclaiming your items and perhaps passing them on to another charity organization on your own.
- Nothing will be priced. Customers will be asked to judge what they wish to donate for the items they purchase. We will accept whatever is offered and for a family in need, these items may make a huge difference.
- Large items are discouraged unless you are able to provide the manpower to move the item in yourself AND move it out again if it does not sell.
- We will not accept the unsold items from other sales. There is a reason the items are still there and we don't want them, either!
- Linens, towels, and rugs will be allowed but they must be clean and in very good condition.
- Clothing will be allowed, but be advised that this usually does not sell well at rummage sales. As with other items, the clothing should be in very good condition.
- Mismatched or random glasses and mugs are being discouraged as everyone has these!



Baked items will also be available at our sale. We are asking that they be small items—good to grab and go while people are rummaging. We are suggesting that bakers contribute cookies that can be easily bagged or loaves of yummy breads like banana or chocolate chip.

Please contact Barb if you have any questions.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Elkhorn, Wisconsin

Church Council Meeting Minutes Via Zoom

April 21st, 2026 at 7:00 P.M.

The meeting was **called to order** at 7:03pm by Moderator, Jennifer Neis. Others present included Pastor Carly Gaeth, Diane Licht, Carol Prchal, Jamie Stilling Stepp, Tom Stepp, Cindy Waller, and Barb Townsend.

Jennifer Neis led the meeting with an **opening prayer**.

Additions to the agenda: Cindy Waller requested Food Pantry board members be added to the agenda. Barb Townsend requested building use and pulpit microphone be added to the agenda.

Minutes: Carol Prchal made a motion to accept the minutes from the previous March 17, 2026, Council meeting as presented, seconded by Diane Licht. The motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Barb Townsend made a motion to accept the report as presented, seconded by Pastor Carly Gaeth. Motion carried unanimously.

Pastor's Moment: Pastor Carly Gaeth discussed several items in her report including the request to lead an LGBTQ+ youth

support group in Elkhorn, her upcoming trip to DC for the Faith and Justice Certificate program in June (she will seek out pulpit supply for June 14), and the possibilities of an Alzheimer's and Dementia Friendly worship service.

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

OLD BUSINESS

Snow Removal—final?: Carol Prchal stated Addison Dillner has now been paid for all snow-related duties. He did an excellent job, coming to church early in the morning when needed for snow shoveling. We will miss him next winter as he will be attending UW-Whitewater. Carol added that there was \$190 left in the snow shoveling account which will be a good start for next year.

Easter and Baptism: All felt the service of baptism as well as all services Holy Week and Easter related went well.

Pastor Parish: Jennifer Neis report that we are still in need of someone to serve on the Pastor Parish team.

"Giving Away instead of Giving Up" Final Report: Diane Licht reported that all donated food has been delivered to the Food Pantry. They were very appreciative of the donations.

Ways to get Carly and the Church more into the public in Elkhorn: We are still trying to come up with ideas for this but Pastor Carly and Jamie Stilling Stepp will be attending a United Way breakfast on May 20th.

ONA Conversation: No one has stepped forward or shown interest in serving on a committee to pursue ONA at this point. What followed was a good discussion of where Council members are with this whole idea and conversations like this need to continue to happen.

NEW BUSINESS

Carly's Job Description: When Pastor Carly came last year, we had taken a basic job description offered by the UCC to use as a starting point. After being here for a year, Jennifer Neis, Cindy Waller, and Pastor Carly met to come up with a job description that more closely resembles what we expect from Pastor Carly and what she is doing. It was sent out to members for this meeting. If anyone has any suggestions for improvements to the document, they should contact Jennifer Neis.

United States of Kindness: Barb Townsend had seen the UCC's Facebook posting about US of Kindness—an effort currently going through the United States encouraging churches, schools, community groups, families, individuals—anyone—to join it by pledging to commit 250 acts of kindness between now and July 4th, 2026 in honor of our country's 250th Birthday. We will be joining in and hope to keep a tally of the kind gestures that are made by our church members.

Other—Church Use: Barb Townsend asked for permission to use the building for five performances by applicants for the Walworth County Arts Council scholarship. She is involved in the selection of a recipient for that scholarship this year. Council approved the request.

Other—Pulpit Microphone: Barb Townsend reported that the pulpit microphone has had an annoying static noise that has been increasing over the last few months. Metro Sound was contacted—they found the problem to be a faulty cord going from the wall to the pulpit. The cord was replaced and the noise is gone.

Other—Food Pantry Board Reps from our Church: Cindy Waller stated the Food Pantry is in need of two volunteers from our church for the Food Pantry Board. (Area churches are asked to have two representatives on the board.) If anyone is interested, please contact the office.

Closing Prayer: Pastor Carly led us in a closing prayer.

Adjournment: Barb Townsend moved to adjourn, seconded by Pastor Carly Gaeth. Adjourned at 8:12pm.

NEXT MEETING: May 19, 2026, at 7pm

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara L. Townsend



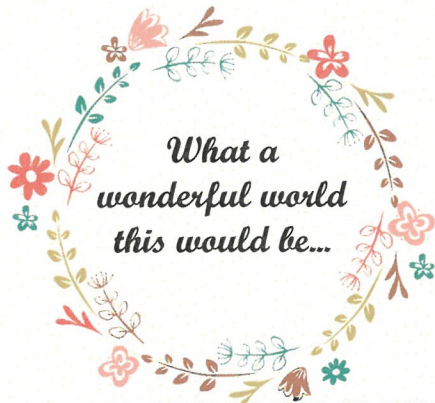
*Please note that final approval of the minutes will be made at the April Council meeting.



MAY 2026



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	4 J LILE & L MCCORMICK	5 1:00 p.m. Set up & make Turkey Salad B & C KRUSE	6 11-1 p.m. Salad Luncheon R KNUTSON & T BAILEY	7 T & J STEPP	8 B NEWMAN & D RIESE	9
MEALS ON WHEELS						
10 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON RaiseRight Due	11	12	13 6:30 p.m. Book Club— Home of Darly Halstead's	14 9:30 a.m. Women's Fellowship	15	16
17 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	18	19 7:00 p.m. Church Council	20	21 9:30 a.m. EAHS Senior Stroll	22	23
24 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	25 Memorial Day Church Office Closed	26	27	28	29	30
31 10:00 a.m. WORSHIP ONLINE & IN PERSON	JUNE 1	2	3	4	5 City Wide & Church Rummage	6 City Wide & Church Rummage



...if everyone were as nice as you.

Thank You!

Thank You!

Dear Members and Friends of the First Congregational United Church of Christ,

Thank you for the thoughtful and generous gift I have received from the congregation.

Also, after 30 years I want to thank you all for a truly rewarding experience as the church pianist and choir director.

It has been a pleasure getting to know each and everyone of you and it has been a pleasure and a blessing to be considered a part of this wonderful church family.

Sincerely,
Denise Hohf

MAY 21st - 9:30 a.m.

**CLASS OF 2026
SENIOR
STROLL**



May 21st, 2026

*Busses leave EAHS at 9:00am
Graduates will be downtown around 10:05am*



Join us as we wish the
graduating seniors well!



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

Lakeland Animal Shelter.

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

Thank you in advance !

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Sally Heckert	01
Stacey Forster	02
Barb Majkrzak	05
Senya Kruger	08
Bob Schleiger	08
Jean Bednarski	12
Daniel Hohf	15
Cindy Waller	16
Joyce Wilson	16
Abby Stoflet	19
Ryan Stepp	20
Scott Dillner	23
Alicia Remer	25
Larry Riese	26
Logan Wilson	27
Sally Schleiger	29
Evan Townsend	29
Bill Neis	30
Diane Licht	30

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!

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

Elisa and Mark Newman 23



Lay Worship Leaders

May 3 _____
 May 10 _____
 May 17 _____
 May 24 _____
 May 31 _____



Ushers

May 3 _____
 May 10 _____
 May 17 _____
 May 24 _____
 May 31 _____



Coffee Fellowship

May 3 _____
 May 10 _____
 May 17 _____
 May 24 _____
 May 31 _____



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