



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Neillsville, Wisconsin
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DECEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Dear Friends,

I hope you had a meaningful and joyful Thanksgiving. I've been thinking a lot about gratitude lately. Sometimes it can be hard to find reasons to be thankful, and sometimes our hearts simply swell with the overwhelming goodness of blessings showered upon us. But most of the time, I suspect the majority of us are somewhere in between: lots of things for which we should be thankful, but so lost in our worries and busy-ness that we forget to fully appreciate the good things that come our way.

Earnie and I were driving to Marshfield on a brisk early morning when the grass and trees were coated in a sparkling layer of heavy frost. The sun was shining and the frost glimmered like diamonds. It was a lovely sight that I always appreciate. On this particular morning, Earnie commented that he had never really appreciated this kind of scene in the past, just frustration with how heavy frost affects his job, but this day he saw the beauty for the first time. He mentioned that his awareness of little blessings has changed since my cancer diagnosis, and he was finally able to see and appreciate this frosty wonderland as a gift from God.

We have found that many things look different since my diagnosis: every day, every moment, is a blessing and a gift. Every opportunity to spend time with a loved one is precious. There is a wonderful gift in being opened up to fully see and appreciate all the blessings that God so graciously bestows upon us every day, the things we see but don't always fully appreciate: every sunrise and sunset, the Northern Lights I got to experience this year for the first time, the first snowfall, a baby's giggle, a toddler's hug, a smile from a stranger, a colorful pheasant by the side of the road, the sound of birds singing in the trees.

As we gathered around the Thanksgiving table this year, I looked around and was so grateful for each and every person gathered there and grateful for the memories of those no longer sitting with us, the love they shared, the legacy they left behind. I thought about the many friends and church family who were gathered elsewhere, and my heart swelled with gratitude for each and every one. You, my friends, have fully welcomed me into your lives, your community and your hearts; you are a treasure to me, an unexpected blessing from God. I can't begin to tell you just how grateful I am for your prayers and support and generosity.

My wish and prayer for each of you this day is that your eyes will also be open to the blessings, big and small, that God has for you each and every day. No matter how hard the road, there is always something to be thankful for. Today, I am thanking God for YOU!!

Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. (Philippians 1:3-7a)

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Julie



Continuing the following in our thoughts and prayers.

- Gayle Schermitzler
- Lisa Schermitzler
- Duane Marty
- Brian Eddy
- Fran Ormond
- Mike & Sherrie Holub
- Pastor Julie Ruegsegger

Please let us know if others not listed (with their permission) would like prayer requests.



To family and friends of those departed – We want to let you know that our thoughts and prayers are with you and your families.

- † Brad Dickey, 50 of Lenanon, IN nephew of **Carole Romens**, cousin of **Jenny Romens-Erickson** passed away on November 3, 2025
- † Judy Groskreutz, 79 of Oshkosh, sister of **Wendell & Linette Kuhn** and **Midge Gumz** passed away on October 27, 2025
- † Karen Flynn, 80 of Greenwood, sister of **Paul & Sandy Schmidt** passed away on October 31, 2025
- † **Janet Harrington**, 90 passed away on November 30, 2025. Her service will be here at the church on December 6th.



A big thank you to Paul Vine & Kelley Burch for donating two beautiful trees to adorn our church for the Christmas season.



Sunday, November 2, the radio broadcast was sponsored by Donita & Phil Follen in appreciation of our church family.

Sunday, November 9, the radio broadcast was sponsored by Howie & Kathy Mathis in appreciation to all our military veterans and in honor of Veteran’s Day.

Sunday, November 16, the radio broadcast was sponsored by Paul Vine & Kelley Burch in fond remembrance of his father, Gordon Vine.

Sunday, November 23, the radio broadcast was sponsored by Doris Bakker in praise & thanksgiving for our church.

Sunday, November 30, the radio broadcast was sponsored by Jerry Quiker, in loving memory of his sons, Mike and Paul.

2025 - 2026 Radio Broadcast Sponsors Needed

Would you like to sponsor a radio broadcast? You may choose to dedicate or honor someone for a particular service date. The cost remains the same - \$75 Please contact Janice in the office or phone 715-743-2147 to reserve a date.

November 2025 Attendance for In-Person Worship

November 2	online 4	Sunday	87
November 9	online 4	Sunday	62
November 16	online 3	Sunday	56
November 23	online 3	Sunday	43
November 30	online 12	Sunday	48



- 1- Lydia Schumacher
- 3- Jeff Raine
- 6- Steve Buchholz
Marla Raine
- 14- Lynne Abel
Janet Meredith
Owen Sigurdson
- 17- Michelle Holub
- 27- Calvin Heck
- 28- Sally Sadowska
- 29- Jenna Ziegler

*Happy Birthday to all who have a December birthday!
Did we miss your birthday or have the wrong date?
Let us know if we did.*



- 8- Bob & Barb Petkovsek
- 27- Steve & Leslie Buchholz



**Christmas Eve Worship
Schedule
Wednesday, December
24th –
Candlelight &
communion served**

- 4 PM - Family Christmas Eve Service**
- 8 PM – “Old Fashioned Carols
& Candles” Service**

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

II Corinthians 9:7

You should each give, then, not with regret
or out of sense of duty;
for God loves the one who gives gladly.



JANUARY 1 -9

We are adding the first days of JANUARY birthdays and anniversaries so as not to miss any if the newsletter comes out late.

January 1-9 Birthdays

- 3- Kathy Mathis
- 6- Allan Hoesly
- 9- Wayne Voss

**Anniversaries
NONE**

The Circle of Friends is looking for more “friends”. No special talents are required, we can do on the job training. We meet on the first and third Mondays of the month at 9 AM in the fellowship hall to work on making cards. On the second Thursday at 1:30 PM we gather for our monthly meeting.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

from Stephanie Heck-



JAM/Christmas program practice at UCC on **Wednesday, December 3rd and 17th.**

The Christmas program will be during worship on Sunday, December 21st.

Confirmation Classes

Confirmation classes will be held **Wednesday, Dec. 3rd and 17th** at UCC from 3:30- 4:30 p.m.



2025 Budget & Committee Election Congregational Meeting

Sunday, Dec. 14th – immediately after worship
Neillsville UCC will review the proposed 2026 budget, as well as vote on committee members. All members & friends are welcome to attend.

AUDIO VISUAL - We are looking for volunteers to help with Sunday worship. Our audio-visual system is an extremely important component of our worship service and our ministry to those in the community who are unable to join us in the sanctuary. Alan Hoesly has done an incredible job of operating and maintaining our system over the years, but he has decided it is time to step down from this responsibility. Al is retiring from this important position at the end of this year, and we are hoping to have volunteers trained by then. If you are interested at all, please contact Al or the church office 715-743-2147.

VANCO – Online Giving

With 2025 coming to an end and you get ready to prepare for the tax season, if you need to have a tax deduction, remember our church by using our online program called VANCO.



If you have any questions or need assistance with VANCO, please contact Emile at 715-937-4626.

The online giving program is not only for your weekly/monthly offering ... you can also donate to any church activity through VANCO. There is one (1) new activity on the website:

- Christmas Fund
 - Stewardship mission

As a committee of our church, if there are any programs that you need added to the VANCO website for online donations, please get a short write up for the webpage to Emile two (2) weeks prior to the date you need it posted.

Your generosity and continued support to the Neillsville UCC is greatly appreciated, whether it is by using your church envelope, a check, cash and/or using VANCO.

Thank you!

- Emile Miller

Donations Needed

Quart Jars for Meal Giveaway





*“...WHEN THEY SAW THE STAR,
THEY WERE FILLED WITH JOY...”*

MATTHEW 2:10

Be the Light

Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. [The Christmas Fund](#) is one of the UCC’s special mission offerings and it will be received on the Sunday before Christmas, December 21.

Thanks to your generosity, last year The Christmas Fund provided over \$1.7 million in pension and health benefits, emergency grants, and thank-you checks to retired clergy and their families. Every gift came from people like you. This year, please give what you can to continue supporting those who have devoted their lives to serving others. This Christmas, celebrate the blessings in your life by making a gift to our ministers, church workers, and their families. Your care and compassion will make a tangible difference in their lives!!

--The Stewardship Committee



Merry
CHRISTMAS
& *Happy*
NEW YEAR

from Julie, Janice & Carol

Approved Minutes Neillsville United Church of Christ Council

The meeting was held on Wednesday, October 22, 2025 in the lounge at the Neillsville United Church of Christ.

Moderator Vine called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Attendance

Council Members Present: Trustee Representative Doris Bakker, Christian Education Representative Stephanie Heck, Vice Moderator Barb Petkovsek, Moderator Paul Vine, Deacons Representative Karlene Wallace, and Treasurer Bonnie Weyer.

Council Members Absent: Emile Miller, Secretary

Others in Attendance:

Prayer

Moderator Vine guided the committee with a prayer.

Minutes

Motion by Karlene Wallace, seconded by Doris Bakker to approve the minutes of the September 25, 2025 meeting. Voice vote taken with all "aye"; motion carried.

Financial Report

Motion by Bonnie Weyer seconded by Stephanie Heck to approve the financial report as presented by Bonnie Weyer reading Assistant Treasurer Don Quicker's written report. Voice vote taken with all "aye"; motion carried.

New Business

Revise Constitution Allowing Combining Congregational Budget & Committee AND Annual Meeting

Motion by Bonnie Weyer, seconded by Stephanie Heck to hold one congregational meeting on Sunday, January 18, 2026. At this meeting the congregation will vote on revising the constitution, the 2026 budget, committee membership and review committee reports and plans. Voice vote taken with all "aye"; motion carried.

Old Business

Long Term Planning

The council discussed long-term planning and agreed to continue discussing future options.

MORE →

Pastor Report/Update

Due to illness, Pastor Julie was unavailable.

Committee Reports and Requests for Action

Trustees

Doris Bakker shared the following:

- Downstairs carpet is being shampooed
- Fire inspection has been completed
- 2026 preliminary budget was reviewed
- Internet was down for Sunday, October 12 and Spectrum has repaired the problem
- Conference room windows are still “sticking”
- Substitute confirmation compensation was discussed and will be reviewed in closed session

Christian Education

Stephanie Heck shared the following:

- Jesus and Me (JAM) is going well with an average of 30 students participating
- Committee is planning the Christmas program scheduled for Sunday, December 21

Deacon

Karlene Wallace shared the following:

- Planning continues for the Sunday, October 26 “Richie Yurkovich Polka” service
- Deacons discussed ceasing the passing of the peace at Sunday services due to flu concerns. The Council discussed and by consensus agreed UCC will continue to include passing of the peace during Sunday services.

Other/Next Agenda Items

- 2026 Budget – Action
- 2026 Committees - Action
- Advent update
- Long term planning

Next Meeting Date and Time

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 19 at 6 PM.

MORE →

Closed Session – WI Statute § 19.85(1) (c)

At 7 PM, motion by Stephanie Heck, seconded by Bonnie Weyer that the committee go into closed session in accordance with WI Statute § 19.85(1) (c) considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility. Topic: Pastor Julie.

Roll call vote taken with all “aye”; motion carried.

At 7:20 PM, motion by Bonnie Weyer, seconded by Barb Petkovsek to reconvene into open session. Voice vote taken with all “aye”, motion carried.

The committee may go in and out of closed session, take any action deemed appropriate from closed session and may return to open session to continue transacting business.

Adjournment

Motion by Bonnie Weyer, seconded by Barb Petkovsek to adjourn. Voice vote taken with all “aye”; motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:21 PM.

Submitted by:

Paul Vine

Acting Neillsville UCC Council Secretary

Future Connections and Outreach Committee Update - Dec. 2025

Paul Vine, Moderator

In January 2025 an ad hoc group of parishioners began the brainstorming process to create more outreach opportunities as well as generate opportunities to raise funds. Members are: JoAnne Voss and Kirk Rodman representing Stewardship; Mike Perkl for Trustees; Byrl Buddenhagen representing Deacons; Barb Petkovsek, Emile Miller, and Paul Vine representing Council; and Pastor Julie Ruegsegger.

The committee initially focused on fundraising but agreed to broaden its scope and discuss ideas and ways to better engage members as well as the community. The committee recommended UCC hold four fundraisers in 2025, focusing on outreach and community presence.

Activity	Coordinators	Date	Funds \$\$
Pie & Bake Sale	Emile Miller, Carla Marty	Sun. April 6	\$6655
Barbecue	Bob & Barb Petkovsek	Sun. April 27	\$876
Pancake Feed	Mike Perkl, Barb Petkovsek	Sun. Aug.24	\$1169
Polka Service	Deacons- Karlene Wallace, Byrl Buddenhagen, Janice Miller, Sally Sadowska, Barb Shoemaker, Wayne Voss, JoAnn Wren	Sun. Oct. 25	\$1,125
		TOTAL	\$9825

Thank you to all members and friends who helped with the above fundraisers as well as attended. The \$9825 will be used to support the church general fund.

For 2026 the committee is continuing to discuss ways and opportunities for parishioners to become involved in Sunday services and other church activities. We also hope to initiate a long term planning process. We welcome members' ideas and suggestions. We look forward to working with the standing committees, Pastor Julie and members in supporting UCC. Stay tuned for more updates and details on the next steps.

Polka Service raised another \$75 (as all leftover brats were sold) =
TOTAL = \$9,825



DECEMBER 2025 United Church of Christ

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 9 AM Card Making	2 1 PM Bible Study 5 PM HCE Mtg/wrap gifts	3 3:30 – 4:30 PM Confirmation here 5– 6 PM JAM at UCC Christmas program practice 7 PM NA	4 Noon- T& C Quilters	5	6
7 <u>Second Sunday of Advent</u> 9:30 AM Worship Communion 7 PM NA	8 5 PM PEO	9 1 PM Bible Study 3:30 PM Deacon's Mtg	10 7 PM NA	11 1:30 PM Circle of Friends Christmas Party	12	13
14 <u>Third Sunday of Advent</u> 9:30 Worship 7 PM NA	15 9 AM Card Making 9 AM- T& C Quilters	16 1 PM Bible Study 5:30 PM Trustees Mt	17 3:30 PM Confirmation 5– 5:45 PM JAM here 6 PM Leadership Mtg 7 PM NA	18	19	20
21 <u>Fourth Sunday after Advent</u> 9:30 Worship 7 PM NA	22	23 1 PM Bible Study	24 Christmas Eve 4 PM Family Service 8 PM Old Fashioned Carols & Candles Serv. 7 PM NA	25 Merry Christmas	26	27
28 <u>First Sunday after Christmas</u> 9:30 Worship 7 PM NA	29	30 1 PM Bible Study 6 PM – HCE Homemakers	31 New Year's Eve 7 PM NA			

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