

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Neillsville, Wisconsin
Church 715-743-2147
Pastor Julie Ruegsegger
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JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light. John 1:5

Dear Friends,

After our Christmas Eve services and candle lighting, I spent a lot of time thinking about how light defeats the darkness. I reminisced about my first Christmas after my dad died. I went to a neighboring church service because I needed to be at a church service where I could simply be in the congregation and not have a job in the service. As the choir passed the candlelight to the congregation, I stared at my tiny flame and thought of the line from "Hamilton", which I had just seen two weeks earlier. "Who will tell your story? Who will keep your flame?"

I noticed a choir member's candle go out, and the person ahead of them turned around and relit it, and suddenly I knew: we are surrounded by friends and family who will help us relight our flame when we burn out. God brought light into the world, and it is our job to keep the flame burning, even when life seems overwhelming. The darkness can never extinguish the light - it only burns out if we let it. We trust the light that God brought into the world, and we trust one another to keep passing the light through the world. No matter how hard we try, we just have to trust that the flame will keep burning, and that someone will be there to offer us new light when we get burnt out.

This is my New Year's prayer for each of you: that the Light of the World will shine brightly in your heart and your life, and that you will share that Light with everyone you meet, and when the Light seems dim in your life, that you will be blessed with shared Light from those around you. Let this be a season of light and love even during the long, dark nights of winter. Wishing you light that never ends!

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Julie



Continuing the following in our thoughts and prayers.

Gayle Schermitzler	Fritz Hediger
Lisa Schermitzler	Fran Ormond
Duane Marty	Mike & Sherrrie Holub
Brian Eddy	Pastor Julie Ruegsegger

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

A New Year Blessing for Faith

May the New Year bless you with unwavering faith that guides your steps, illuminates your path, and fills your heart with hope and strength throughout the year ahead.



Sunday, December 7, the radio broadcast was given in fond memory of Eileen Zank sponsored by her family.

Sunday, December 14, the radio broadcast was sponsored anonymously with the message “May HIS word be heard by ALL”.

Sunday, December 21, the radio broadcast was sponsored anonymously by a “faithful listener”.

Sunday, December 28, the radio broadcast was sponsored by Howie & Kathy Mathis asking for all our friends going through cancer.

2026 Radio Broadcast Sponsors Needed

We have **many open** Sundays to fill for 2026. 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.

December 2025

Attendance for In-Person Worship

December 7	online 0	Sunday	71
December 14	online 8	Sunday	59
December 21	online 0*	Sunday	89
December 28	online 0*	Sunday	38

*streaming problems



- 3- Kathy Mathis
- 6- Allan Hoesly
- 9- Wayne Voss
- 11- Lexi Woods
- 16- Michael Holub, Sr.
- 18- Landon Bergemann
- 21- Emilia Mathis
Bruce Rakestraw
- 23- Dorothy Steiger
Paige Voigt
Parker Voigt
- 25- Haddie Mathis
James Vradenburg
- 28- David Steiger
- 29- Jill Williams
Clinton Woods
- 31- Lisa Hediger

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



- 26- Joe & Marjorie Felser

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Luke 6:38

Give to others and God will give to you.
Indeed you will receive a full measure, a generous
helping poured into your hands – all that you can hold.
The measure that you use for others is the one that
God will use for you.



FEBRUARY 1 -9

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

February 1-9 Birthdays

- 1- Patricia Acheson
Toni Carl
- 2- Sue Vornholt
- 5- Kyson Erickson
- 6- Paul Vine

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 will meet on **Wednesday, January 7th and January 21st** from 5 -5:45 pm at Calvary Lutheran Church.

Confirmation Classes

Confirmation classes will be held **Wednesday, January 7th and January 21st** at UCC from 3:30- 4:30 p.m.



UCC will once again be collecting for the local food pantry. We are challenged by the Calvary Lutheran Church and St. Mary's Catholic Church, along with Living Hope Evangelical Free Church this year to see who can bring in the most cans. Please bring them in before Super Bowl Sunday - February 8th

Donations Needed

Quart Jars for Meal Giveaway



Small or Large Mouth Jars are all welcome.

Drop off at the kitchen. Thanks, Mission & Outreach



Meal Giveaway

January 18, 2026

UCC - Neillsville

515 West Second Street

9:45-10:00 AM

Thank You!

Thank you for your donation of \$250.00. I hope you are all doing well as the Christmas season is nearing. My wish for you is that you

have a blessed Christmas and a wonderful new year. Times are tough for many seniors and families but with the help from good folks like yourself everyone will be okay. Your funds help us to keep the shelves full and the freezer filled. Our mission is to relieve hunger and increase self-sufficiency of our neighbors in need. You have helped us do that.

God Bless,

Judy Morrow, Director

Clark County Food Pantry & Resource Center

Minutes Mission & Outreach Meeting

The meeting was held on Sunday, October 19, 2025 in the Lounge at the Neillsville United Church of Christ.

Bonnie Weyer called the meeting to order at 8:50 AM.

Attendance

Members Present: Carol Harnisch, Carole Romens, Deb Holman, Deb Perkl, Bonnie Weyer and Kathy Mathis

Financial Report

The balance in the M&O Fund is \$1110.66.

Last Year's Donations:

- Mykola and Olesia Hnatiuk
- Loyal Food Pantry
- Neillsville Food Pantry
- Farmer's Chicken Pot Pies

New Business

Spending for 2025

Motion made to give \$250 to

- Emmanuel Lutheran Church-Longwood Fire Fund
- Supplies for Chicken Pot Pies
- Mykola and Olesia Hnatiuk
- Neillsville Food Pantry

Motion by Kathy Mathis , seconded Carol Harnisch. Motion passed unanimously.

2026 Committee Membership – Who is interested in being on for 2026? All the committee members agreed to be on the committee for another year.

Fund Raising for our mission was discussed.

We plan to order Advent Devotion books and sell them for \$5.00

Deb Perkl is going to investigate see if Lenten and Advent Folders are still printed.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made Bonnie Weyer, seconded by Kathy Mathis. Voice vote taken with all "aye"; motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:15 AM.

Submitted by: Bonnie Weyer

Thank You Al Hoesly

Thank you to **Al Hoesly** for more than forty years of dedicated volunteer service as the Audio-Visual Coordinator for **Neillsville United Church of Christ**.

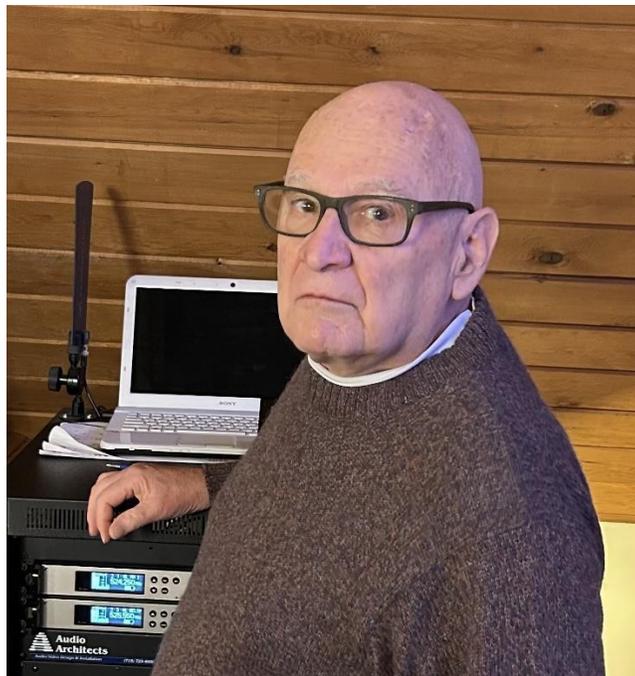
In addition to coordinating the audio-visual ministry, Al has faithfully operated the camera and sound system at nearly every Sunday worship service. At an average of 52 services per year, plus Christmas Eve services, Al has volunteered at **more than 2,345 worship services**.

Over the years, Al has helped ensure that Sunday services were broadcast over **WCCN** and made available on **YouTube**, allowing members and the wider community to participate in worship near and far.

Al shares, *“I am the second person to coordinate the sound and camera since Wayne Grap helped initiate the radio broadcast in the 1960s.”* Pastor Julie Ruegsaegger stated, *“The AV ministry provided by Alan has been a true blessing to this church, I have been so grateful for all that he does for the church and for me in particular.”*

Thank you, Al, for your dedication, faithfulness, and commitment to Neillsville UCC.

We wish you all the best in your well-earned retirement.





The Christmas Program was held on Sunday, December 21st
and the kids did a wonderful job!
Thank you to Lydia Schumacher, Linda Stalsberg, Karen Northup,
and the parents for helping make it a success!!

The kids in the picture are:

Front row: Kate Steinbach, Millie Mathis, Lily Stalsberg, and Emilia Mathis
2nd row: Ben Mathis, Lars Woods, Layne Woods, Alex Vine, Morgan Erickson, Jocelyn Vine,
and Sophie Heck
Back: Theo Vine and Haddie Mathis

**AMENDED AND APPROVED MINUTES at the
December 18, 2025 Meeting**

Neillsville United Church of Christ Council

The meeting was held on Wednesday, November 19, 2025 in the lounge at the Neillsville United Church of Christ.

Moderator Vine called the meeting to order at 6:04 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:

Others in Attendance: Pastor Julie (left at 7:46 PM)

Prayer

Pastor Julie guided the committee with a prayer.

Minutes

Motion by Doris Bakker, seconded by Karlene Wallace to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2025 meeting. Voice vote taken with all “aye”; motion carried.

Financial Report

Motion by Stephanie Heck, seconded by Barb Petkovsek 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

2026 Budget

Motion by Doris Bakker, seconded by Bonnie Weyer to accept the budget as forwarded from the Trustees in written form and present the budget at the Congregational Meeting for approval. Voice vote taken with all “aye”; motion carried.

Budget and Committee Annual Meeting – Sunday, December 14

Moderator Vine asked if there were any changes to the 2026 Committee Membership list as presented in the packet. With no changes, this list will be presented at the Annual Meeting.

MORE →

Long-Term Planning

Moderator Vine contacted Michael Jones and he is willing to work with us regarding planning for the future of our church. Pastor Julie shared that she was informed that Michael Jones has accepted another position but is sure that his replacement will be available to assist us. One suggestion is to contact other churches within our conference to see what has worked, and not worked, for their long-term planning. Paul is working on obtaining a proposal for securing outside assistance with our long-term planning.

Old Business

Future Connections Update

Barb Petkovsek shared that the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 9 AM with the main goal to get the 2026 fundraising and outreach events scheduled.

Holiday Fair Update

Emile Miller shared that over \$9,000 was raised on our 61st Holiday Fair. This was the first year that some supplies were purchased out of the Holiday Fair fund, along with Carla Marty donating multiple crafting supplies.

Pastor Report/Update

Advent Update

Pastor Julie shared the following:

- THANKED everyone for their overwhelming support and love for Earnie and herself during her cancer diagnosis
- Advent
 - Working with Carla Marty and Emile Miller on decorations
 - Working with Corrine Armitage and Karen Mohr regarding the music
 - Two (2) Christmas services
 - 4 PM with communion
 - 8 PM old-fashioned candlelight service with the use of bulletins and hymnals
 - Sunday School program is set for Sunday, December 21
- Pastor Chad's last day will be Sunday, December 28 at Calvary
 - UCC will purchase a flower arrangement for the alter at Calvary in honor of Pastor Chad

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Committee Reports

Trustees

Doris Bakker shared the following:

- Church Landscaping
 - Completed by Dave & Carole Harnisch
 - Harnisch's have resigned from completing the landscaping at the church
- Fellowship Hall
 - The carpet has been shampooed
 - Discussion on replacing the carpet with a different type of flooring
- Lower-Level Downspout
 - Kevin Erickson will complete the redirection of the downspout
- Fire Inspection
 - All recommended suggestions have been completed
- Long Term Planning
 - Update Broiler System
 - Update Heating System
 - Windows in Fellowship Room – difficult to open and close
 - Kitchen Upgrades
 - Flooring
 - Countertop

Christian Education

Stephanie Heck shared the following:

- Christmas Program, Sunday, December 21
 - Theme: Don't be Afraid, the Light has Come
 - **[AMENDED MINUTES 12-17-25]** Pastor Julie **provided the Christmas program that was written by Julie Bechtel;** thank you very much]
 - Fourteen (14) children participating
 - Confirmands to serve as ushers that day
 - Christian Education Committee will oversee Fellowship
 - Bonnie Weyer volunteered to assist

Deacons

Karlene Wallace shared the following:

- Polka Fest
 - Very pleased with the outcome
 - All food items were donated
 - Profit of \$1,100

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Committee Reports Continued

Deacons Continued

- Christmas Service
 - 4 PM service
 - Using both battery and traditional candles
 - Communion served will ALL juice, no wine served
 - 8 PM service
 - Old-fashioned service, using hymnals and bulletin
 - NO communion
- Acolytes
 - Jesus and Me (JAM) kids were asked if they would like to serve as acolytes
 - Stephanie Heck will provide the names to Karlene Wallace of willing participants
- Passing of the Peace
 - After discussion, this will be left up to the Pastor to announce that Sunday, how we will proceed

Other/Next Agenda Items

Other

Nothing currently.

Next Agenda Items

- Long-Term Planning Update
- Ray Fund

Next Meeting Date and Time

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 17 at 6 PM.

Ray Fund Subcommittee Update

Moderator Vine shared that he has been working with the Memorial Committee regarding the Ray Fund Subcommittee and outlined the following timetable:

- In 2019, the church received funds from the Ray family
- In 2020, a committee was formed and established guidelines for the use of the Ray funds
- In 2024, the council modified guidelines to restrict funds to not exceed \$10,000 annually

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Ray Fund Subcommittee Update Continued

The subcommittee recommends that the funds should be:

- designated to benefit the entire congregation
- limited to \$10,000 for any use and create a separate restricted budget line for camp scholarships encouraging people to donate to camp scholarship funds
 - Bonnie Weyer stated there is already a budget line for camp scholarships

Due to some members needing to leave the meeting, this topic will be tabled until our next meeting.

Pastor Julie left the meeting at this time.

Christmas Bonus

Doris Bakker shared the Trustees decision on which staff members will receive a Christmas bonus and how much. Bonnie Weyer will take care of this.

Adjournment

Motion by Stephanie Heck, seconded by Karlene Wallace to adjourn. Voice vote taken with all "aye"; motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:48 PM.

Submitted by:
Emile J Miller
Neillsville UCC Council Secretary

JANUARY

2026 United Church of Christ

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 PM Bible Study	7 PM NA	1	2	3
4 <u>Second Sunday after Christmas</u> 9:30 AM Worship Communion 7 PM NA	5 9 AM Card Making	6 1 PM Bible Study 4 PM Future Connections & Outreach Meeting	7 3:30 – 4:30 PM Confirmation here 5– 5:45 PM JAM at Calvary 7 PM NA	8 1:30 PM Circle of Friends Meeting	9	10
11 <u>Baptism of Christ</u> 9:30 Worship 7 PM NA	12 6 PM PEO	13 1 PM Bible Study 3:30 PM Deacons Mtg	14 7 PM NA	15	16	17
18 <u>Second Sunday after Epiphany</u> 9:30 Worship Annual Congregational Meeting after worship 7 PM NA	19 9 AM Card Making 9 AM- T& C Quilters	20 1 PM Bible Study 5:30 PM Trustees Mt	21 3:30 – 4:30 PM Confirmation here 5– 5:45 PM JAM at Calvary 6 PM Leadership Mtg 7 PM NA	22	23	24
25 <u>Third Sunday after Epiphany</u> 9:30 Worship 7 PM NA	26	27 1 PM Bible Study 6 PM – HCE Homemakers	28 7 PM NA	29	30	31