

**The Shepherd's Word
Our Shepherd UCC
710 Ethan Allen Drive
920-565-3376**

**March 2026
Pastor Nathan Athorp
Howards Grove, WI 53083
ourshepherducc.com**

Send newsletter articles to: OurShepherdNewsletter@gmail.com

Pastor's Cell Number: 920-946-3585

Pastor's e-mail: nathorp70@gmail.com



Our congregation is fully LGBTQ+ Open and Affirming. While some members of our congregation may hold different views, we as a community hold that being LGBTQ+ is fully compatible with being a Christian and is not sinful. LGBTQ+ people are welcome to participate fully in our community and sacraments and take on leadership positions within our community.

Prayer Concerns...

Please keep those who are shut-in or ill in your prayers

Jim Milbrath - 421 Jefferson Circle

Howards Grove, WI 53083

Judy Walkenhorst – 614 Arbor Drive

Elkhart Lake, WI 53020

Fritz & Jackie Grunewald - 749 Audubon

Howards Grove, WI 53083

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Sunday	Monday	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
March 2026 At this time, we are recording worship and posting it to both our YouTube Channel and our Facebook page after our worship service has concluded.		Pantry Item: Canned Fruit				
1 8:30 Praiseworthy Practice/PW sing 8:30 Church School 10:00 a.m. Worship/Sacraments Greeters: Rich & Ann Van Wyk	2 11:00 Chair Yoga	3 <i>Meal Prep for Salvation Army@ 12:00</i>	4 Lenten Service @ 6:00 @ Immanuel	5	6	7 Daylight Savings Turn Your Clocks Ahead
8 8:30 Consistory Meeting 8:30 Church School 10:00 a.m. Worship 11:00 Soup cook-off @ Johnsonville 6:30 Book Study Greeters: Lavonne & Kathleen Athorp	9 11:00 Chair Yoga	10	11 <i>Coffee Break</i> 9:00 a.m. Lenten Service @ 6:00 @ Bethel	12	13	14
15 8:30 Praiseworthy Practice/ PW sing 8:30 Church School 10:00 a.m. Worship Greeters: Karl & Mandi Grube Family	16 11:00 Chair Yoga	17 <i>Meal Prep for Salvation Army@ 12:00</i>	18 Lenten Service @ 6:00 @ Our Shepherd	19	20	21
22 8:30 Church School 10:00 a.m. Worship Newsletter Articles & Raiseright Orders Due Greeters: Nicole & Oliver Twohig, Heidi Widder	23 11:00 Chair Yoga	24	25 <i>Coffee Break</i> 9:00 a.m. Lenten Service @ 6:00 St. John's	26	27	28 March 22-28 Adult Mission Trip to Kentucky – see article in newsletter for more details
29 Palm Sunday 8:30 Church School 10:00 a.m. Worship Easter Basket Donations are Due Greeters: David & Audrey Aardappel	30 11:00 Chair Yoga	31				



Newsletter via E-mail?

Simply let Pastor Nathan or Shari know if you would like to receive our newsletter via e-mail instead of having it sent in the mail.

Vanco Giving

Currently about 30% of our giving flows in via Vanco. As you make your travel plans maybe you would like to consider utilizing Vanco for your giving practices. See Pastor Nathan for details.



Coffee Break
Our Shepherd UCC
710 Ethan Allen Drive

2nd and 4th Wednesday of Each Month
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Howards Grove

Our Shepherd will be hosting a Coffee Break on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month. Please join us for a time of open conversation along with a cup of coffee and, perhaps, a cookie or two.

Bring your ideas, friends and neighbors! ALL ARE WELCOME!!!

Praiseworthy

Sunday, March 1

8:30 practice, sing for worship

Sunday, March 15

8:30 practice, sing for worship



Fall/Winter Worship and Church School September-May

Church School will be held at **8:30 a.m.**

Worship service time **10:00 a.m.**



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Worship Livestream update

We have changed our worship videoing process. We have found the Facebook Livestream option to be too unstable. At this time, we are recording worship and posting it to both our YouTube Channel and our Facebook page after our worship service has concluded.

Consistory

Rich Van Wyk – President
Lloyd Athorp
David Mair
Lee Henschel
Carol Mae Milbrath
Stephanie Wallace
Alicia Thede

Pastoral Relations

Nicole Twohig – Sec.
Carol Mae Milbrath
Ann VanWyk

Officers

Mandi Grube –
Treasurer
Carla Hemb –
Church and
Financial Secretary

The Falls Food Pantry serves the needs of Howards Grove, Kohler, Sheboygan Falls and Waldo. All donations are very much appreciated.

As you do your grocery shopping, consider purchasing a couple extra items for our food pantry donation



God's Blessings on your Birthday - March

2 Danielle Stoffregen	3 Marcella Munger
4 Glenn Ver Straate	5 Jaimie Simon
5 Gary Wiegand	9 James Kalk
12 Elaina Lightle	29 Sophia Knuth



There are Birthday Cards located in the rack in church.

Consider giving a monetary donation to the Scholarship Fund in honor of someone's birthday.

Your contribution will be applied to your annual giving.

"The Upper Room" devotional for March/April is located in the Literature Rack



YOGA

Consider joining the 11:00 am chair yoga at Our Shepherd UCC. There are five Mondays in March so the cost is \$35, to be paid on the first Monday of the month. There is the \$10 drop-in fee should you only be available for one or two weeks. Remember this opportunity is for women and men, and they do not need to be members of Our Shepherd. Start sharing this wonderful opportunity with family and friends. For more information contact Renae at 920-565-2785.

Consistory Meeting – February 8, 2026

* Sacraments will be March 1

Pastor Report:

*Pipes in the men's restroom froze, so a grate was added below the sink to allow more air flow

*Lenten services will rotate between the four congregations of the Rural Church Collaborative, same as last year, with loose offering going to Church World Services.

Treasurer's Report:

Mandi and the Finance Committee will be implementing new software in March

Building & Grounds:

*Committee discussed getting bids for the flooring and windows

Memorial Committee:

*The Marx memorial project at the front of church has been completed. The Marx family is pleased

Next meeting: March 8 @ 8:30

Brat Fry: April 18 @ Piggly Wiggly in Howards Grove, May 1 @ Miesfelds

Check the board in the front hall for a complete Consistory Report

The financial chart for the month of February was not available.

Dates to Remember in March

Sunday, March 1	10:00 Worship Service/Sacraments
Sunday, March 1, 8, 15, 22	10:00 Worship Service
Sunday, March 1, 8, 15, 22	8:30 Church School
Sunday, March 1&15	8:30 Praiseworthy practice and sing for worship
Wednesday, March 4	6:00 Lenten Service @ Immanuel
Sunday, March 8	11:00 Soup Cook-Off @ Johnsonville
Sunday, March 8	6:30 Book Study
Wednesday, March 11	6:00 Lenten Service @ Bethel
Wednesday, March 18	6:00 Lenten Service @ Our Shepherd
March 22-28	Adult Mission Trip to Kentucky
Wednesday, March 25	6:00 Lenten Service @ St John's
Sunday, March 8	8:30 a.m. Consistory Meeting
Tuesday, March 3, 17	12:00 Meal prep for Salvation Army
Monday, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30	11:00 Chair Yoga
Wednesday, March 11, 25	9-11:00 a.m. Coffee Break
Sunday, March 22	Raisright Order & Newsletter Articles Due
Sunday, March 29	Easter Basket Donations are Due



Plans for Confirmation are set for March 29 during the worship service. Watch the bulletin for more information.

Meals for Salvation Army

We are in need of gift cards from Walmart, Piggly Wiggly and Aldi

Anyone who is interested in helping to prepare these meals is welcome.

We meet at church, every other Tuesday, at 12:00, to prepare the meals.

A huge thank you to everyone who has helped by contributing food or gift cards to make these meals possible, your support is greatly appreciated.



March 3 - Chicken Stuffing Casserole:

Items needed : 4 large onions 1 stalk celery 4 bags frozen mixed veggies
1 # butter 4 cans cream of chicken soup 4 cans cream of celery soup
1/2 gal. milk 2 family sized boxes of chicken stuffing mix

Dessert for 40 people



March 17 - Sunrise Breakfast Casserole, Cheesy Hash Browns and Baked French Toast

Items needed: 3 large Red Peppers 2 bunches green onions
5 dozen eggs 1 gal milk 4-30 oz bags hash browns
8 Cups Mexican Shredded Cheese 1 large jar Salsa 1 large sour cream

Dessert for 40 people

Thank you to everyone that has donated time, money for food, or anything else to help make these meals happen.

The Salvation Army volunteers look forward to serving our meals. Anyone can offer to prepare a meal to donate at any time by contacting Carryejo Cony at 920-694-1271 or going to their website: <http://centralusa.salvationarmy.org/sheboygan/el-vo>



It is time to beautify the sanctuary for Easter. Orders need to be in by Sunday March 1. Sign-up sheet is in the Binder.

Church School News



Items for the Food Pantry: March – Canned Fruit

Donations may be placed in the basket, located in the church entry way

Beverage Tabs for the Ronald McDonald House

Birthday Bags - The sign-up sheet for birthday bags is in the binder. Help brighten birthdays for those facing food challenges at this time. To complete a bag, you would donate: a cake mix, a small bottle of oil, frosting, and candles. Eggs are provided by the food pantry. There are large Ziplock bags located in the office for the cake supplies.



B: Be with God **L:** Love God & neighbor **U:** Understand yourself as a child of God **E:** Explore the Bible
Church school is offered to children age 3 to confirmation. Confirmation students are support for our younger members. The program runs from 8:30 to 9:45



During the month of February lessons focused on ways Jesus has touched our lives. The bible verse was: "This is how the love of God is revealed to us. God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him." 1 John 4-9. The Leap of Faith was, "Jesus shows me God's love."



Thank you church school families for returning your food purchases, made with the Walmart gift card, in a timely manner. They have been delivered to the local food banks.

The youth are working on tracking the 40 days of Lent by completing a prayer chart that is focusing on prayer, sharing, helping, being brave and thankfulness. How are you going to walk the 40 days of Lent?

Nice job to the youth that shared their musical talents during the morning worship. Many commented what an enthusiastic job you did sharing God's message through song.

What a wonderful aroma that floated through the air during the Sunday worship service. Many youth were asking, "When do we get the pancakes!" Thank you to everyone that made our annual pancake event a success. Thanks to our kitchen crew: Heidi, Jamie, Charlie, Nicole, and Jason, for planning and preparing a mighty tasty breakfast. Shout out to everyone that supplied items from food to frying pans, and helped clean up after the event. Many hands make for light work. Special thanks to Mark Schueler for securing the sausages. They were mighty tasty! Paying our fortune forward, left over sausages will be used by the women's group. Great day of food and fellowship.





Children's Room

Please consider taking a Sunday to cover the children's room. There is a sign-up sheet in the binder. This room is for children that can independently be with another adult up to first grade. The room is covered from after children's time until the end of the service.

The Church School Program welcomes Rowan Koehler, son of Blake and Katie, to Sunday morning classes. He received his Bible during the children's message.



Scholarship News



On January 25th, the Scholarship committee presented scholarships to three individuals. Tammy Stoffregen accepted for daughter **Danielle**, who will continue her education in **Finance**. Mark Schueler accepted for daughter **Megan**, who will continue her education in **Occupational Therapy**. And, **Katie Schueler**, who will continue her education in **Nursing**. Congratulations to all recipients and good luck in your future endeavors.

VBS 2026

July 27th to July 31st
and Sunday August 2nd.

Please share this opportunity with family
and friends!!

**Ollie has arrived in Howards Grove
for a fun week of VBS.**



The VBS program is looking for no-print white bedsheets. See Renae for details.

Rural Church Collaborative Committee

On January 22, the Rural Church Collaboration Committee gathered to share feedback about last year's activities and plan ahead for 2026.

1. We thought that the shared Lenten services went well and plan to continue this into 2026.
All loose offerings at this years' services will be combined for a donation to Church World Services.
2. The outdoor joint worship service was also well received and will again be planned to take place at Our Shepherd UCC in Howards Grove. A date of July 12, 2026 @ 9:00 a.m. has been set. At this time, we are trying to find a shared mission project that we can all work on together.
3. The joint Thanksgiving Eve service was cancelled due to inclement weather.
4. Christmas caroling at The Bay in Elkhart Lake was enjoyed by the residents even though our numbers were small due to extreme cold weather.
5. We will continue to support Bethlehem UCC, rural Kiel, in their Blue Christmas service.
6. The committee will continue to meet to make plans for these activities and explore more ways that we, as joint congregations, can serve our community.

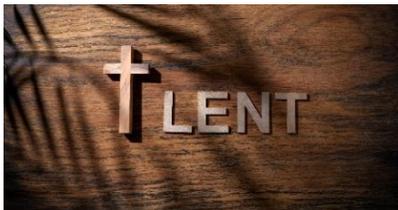
Representatives are:

Immanuel – Pastor Sean Cornell, Rodney Thieleke, Kristy Pahl

St. John's – Diane Weiland, Ross Bender, Kathy Aulik

Bethel – Pastor Diane Cayemberg, Dennis Roethel, Lisa Grubisic

Our Shepherd – Pastor Nathan Athorp, Jaimie Simon, Shari Ver Straate



Rural Church Collaboration Lenten Worship Service Site Schedule Worship Services will start at 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday	March 4 th	Immanuel UCC
Wednesday	March 11 th	Bethel UCC
Wednesday	March 18 th	Our Shepherd UCC
Wednesday	March 25 th	St. John's UCC
Maundy Thursday	April 2 nd	Immanuel UCC
Good Friday	April 3 rd	Bethel UCC

What is Church World Service?

Since its formation in 1957, the United Church of Christ has worked with Church World Service (founded in 1946) to accomplish more together than it could alone, joining hearts and resources to create a tradition of help and a legacy of hope.

When disaster strikes, Church World Service is the primary agency through which the UCC gives support for relief and recovery efforts. This assistance may take the form of winterized family tents for Pakistani earthquake survivors, food packages and tankers full of water for displaced people in violence-torn Darfur, Sudan, or long-term recovery assistance for families affected by hurricanes, tornados, or flooding across the U.S.

Raiseright Program

Members can order gift cards in church through Shari every 3rd Sunday or order online. E-cards and Reloadables are available for some of the cards, they are labeled on the Raiseright Order Form with and “E” or “R”. Physical cards would be available when church order is placed.

To order online, go to <http://www.Raiseright.com/enroll>

Set up your account and enter our enrollment code:

92164F3732736 to have your purchase apply to Our Shepherd UCC



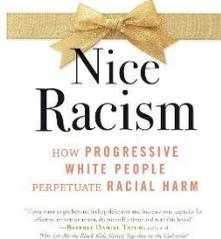
We earned \$197.13 for the month of February.

Spring is right around the corner. Order you Menards, Fleet Farm, Home Depot, Walmart and Meijers cards to help spruce up your yard.

Thank you for your Support

Book Study

ROBIN DIANGELO
AUTHOR OF THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
WHITE FRAGILITY



Come join us as we dive into a new reading! In the coming weeks we will be exploring **Robin DiAngelo's 'Nice Racism, how Progressive White People perpetuate Racial Harm'**. This engaging read will be featured in a Wisconsin Conference wide study. We will strive for safe conversations around perhaps some challenging topics. **We will begin on March 8th at 6:30, looking at Chapters 1&2.**

Bridgeway and Trisha's House

We continue our mission project to spread Easter joy to our friends at the Bridgeway House. These families are working towards transitioning to independent living. Material has been purchased for blankets. The church school youth will work on the blankets on Sunday, March 8th. **There are baskets**

in the entrance of church for your donation. Donations will be divided among the family baskets. At present there are nine children. The children vary in age: There are 2 boys ages 15 and 5, Girls there are 2 age 10, 2 age 6, and a 4-year-old. There are also 2 babies due this spring. At present there are 4 moms. Suggestions: diapers, general snacks (apple sauce, fish crackers, there is one family with a peanut allergy), craft kits, wipes, stuffed animals, lotion for the moms, or any items appropriate for the listed ages. **Please have your donations to church by March 29th. We will be taking a free will offering on March 22nd and 29th, to put towards an Easter meal.** Preparing a meal, for the group, is part of the families learning to be independent. Thank you for your continued support of our out-reach programs.



Church Recycling

One of the ways in which Our Shepherd cares for creation is through our multiple recycling/reusing efforts.

Can tabs – Ronald McDonald House

Egg cartons - to be used for food pantries

Plastic bottle caps

Prescription bottles – to be reused for veterinary medication

Used American flags, ready for disposal

Plastic bags - to be used to make benches

All items MUST be clean, dry and empty. Please leave items in the church office.

Plastic bags can be placed in the container in the choir room. Thank you.

Some of these items are being saved for other church communities that are doing their part for God's creation.

If you are collecting any items, please let us know.



Keeping the Earth Green

WE DID IT!!! We have kept **1,047 pounds** out of the landfills!!! We will continue to be stewards of the earth, and collect bags. We will post every few months our total.

EASTER WORSHIP

Our Shepherd will once again be celebrating Easter with our combined Easter Breakfast and Worship event. Just like we have been doing the last couple of years we will be gathering at **8:00 am on Sunday April 5th** for an Easter buffet and worship combination. Come join us as we share hospitality as a community and explore what the Resurrection might mean for our lives today!

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(See John 19:17-37)

04-09-1998

SO JESUS, HAVE YOU MADE ANY PLANS FOR EASTER YET?

U.C.C. Rural Church Fellowship Sheepshead Tournament



The Sheepshead Tournament was held on Sunday, February 15th at Bethlehem U.C.C. There were 28 participants. There were four tables of players in addition to one table of beginners. Five churches were present which included Bethlehem , Immanuel, Our Shepherd, Saron, St. James and St. Peters. There was \$202.75 raised in addition to food donated. The food was distributed to the four food pantries in our area. The money will also be sent to the pantries.

Three people were prize winners, Sarah Lutze won 1st, Shelly Bonde won 2nd, and Larry Henschel won 3rd place. A small monetary amount was given to the winners.



Rural Church Fellowship Upcoming Events

There are a number of events that are being planned in the next months.

- **A Soup Cookoff** and Raffle Basket event will be held in **Johnsonville on Sunday, March 8th. Doors will open at 11:00.** Money raised at the event will go toward the retreat planned for July. All are encouraged to participate by donating a raffle basket, making a soup or coming to enjoy the food and fellowship.
- **An Adult Mission Trip** is planned to eastern **Kentucky from March 22 to March 28.** Pastor Randy Koppenhaver from Bethlehem U.C.C. is leading this trip. If you wish to participate or get more information you can contact him at (920) 286-2531 or randynmel5@gmail.com. **There is a need for men skilled in carpentry work.**
- **A high school and adult Mission Trip** is planned for the **Appalachia area from July 11 to July 18.** Pastor Nicole Herda from St. Peters U.C.C. is leading this trip. If you wish to participate or get more information you can contact her at pastornicoleherda@gmail.com.

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

Welcome to the season of Lent! With Ash Wednesday being February 18th and Easter on April 5th, by the time you are reading this, Lent will be well under way. Clearly there are multiple different ways a person can recognize this season in their personal lives. In the church we celebrate it by changing the chancel cloths to purple, and participating in special mid-week Wednesday evening worship services. If you haven't participated in those services you might want to check them out. Just like we did last year, Our Shepherd is teaming up with Immanuel, Bethel, and St. John's, rotating between the four churches. All the services begin at 6:00pm and each of the four churches is leading their own services, which is guaranteed to offer us different perspectives throughout this season. Please see the rotating schedule in this newsletter to see what church we are at during any given week.



In addition to mid-week worship there are many things a person can do individually to observe Lent. Some individuals give up something for the season, such as abstaining from sweets or meat. Others choose to pick up new activities, such as a daily devotional, or an exercise program. Any of those examples can indeed be helpful, if a person intentionally asks themselves why they are changing their behavior during Lent in a specific way. These choices are intended to be done with a specific purpose, which is different from your New Year's resolution. When we make the choice to either abstain or take on a new activity during Lent the intention is to foster or grow our individual relationship with God. The purpose of giving up something should be an attempt to make room for God. It is not meant to be some form of punishment. If you choose to take on a new activity it is meant to offer us an opportunity to strengthen our relationship with God and Christ, it is not meant to simply fill idle time. An example of this work comes to us from the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, which we read on Ash Wednesday. In that reading Jesus cautions the listener to be mindful of how and why certain religious practices are being done. Are we doing things in order to impress the people around us, or are we doing them in an attempt to strengthen our own personal relationship with God? That is a good question that we can apply to almost any activity filling our day. Lent can certainly be a rich season of growth if indeed we are intentional about what we do. May your journey towards Easter be a rich and fulfilling one!

-In Christ's Love, *Pastor Nathan*

WISCONSIN CONFERENCE NEWSLETTER

Check out what is happening in our Conference!

<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Wisconsin-Conference-this-Week.html?soid=1102675987700&aid=Q-BJ5IQpTSw>