

The Shepherd's Word
710 Ethan Allen Drive
Howards Grove, WI 53083

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

December 2025
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*

*Jackie Grunewald - 749 Audubon
Howards Grove, WI 53083*

Sunday	Monday	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
December 2025 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.	1 11:00 Chair Yoga	2 <i>Meal Prep for Salvation Army@ 12:00</i>	3 5:30-7:00 Confirmation @ Bethel	4	5	6
7 8:30 Praiseworthy Practice/worship 8:30 Church School 10:00 a.m. Worship/Sacraments <i>Greeters: Carol Mae Milbrath & Pam Knuth</i>	8 11:00 Chair Yoga	9 <i>7:00 Dartball</i>	10 <i>Coffee Break</i> 9:00 a.m. 5:30-7:00 Confirmation @ Bethel	11	12	13 8:00 Cookie Walk 2:00 Caroling in Elkhart Lake
14 8:30 Consistory Meeting 9:00 Praiseworthy Practice 8:30 Church School 10:00 a.m. Worship Raiseright Orders Due <i>Greeters: Amanda & Victoria Eisentraut</i>	15 11:00 Chair Yoga	16 <i>Meal Prep for Salvation Army@ 12:00</i> 7:00 Dartball	17 5:30-7:00 Confirmation @ Bethel	18 8:30 Help Clean the Church Blue Christmas @ Bethlehem 6:30 p.m.	19	20
21 Praiseworthy Practice - TBD 8:30 Church School 10:00 a.m. Worship/Church School Program Newsletter Articles Due <i>Greeters: Sarah & Tim Barber</i>	22	23	24 6:30 Christmas Eve Service	25	26	27
28 10:00 a.m. Worship <i>Greeters: Matthew & Taylor Jacobs Family</i>	29	30	31			Pantry Item: Favorite Food 



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 27% 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!!!



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

Jaimie Simon – President
Lloyd Athorp
David Mair
Lee Henschel
Rich Van Wyk
Carol Mae Milbrath

Pastoral Relations

Nicole Twohig – Sec.
Nancy Henschel
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



LET'S GO CHRISTMAS CAROLING!

The Rural Church Collaboration Committee (RCCC) invites you to join together with other members from all four of our churches in going Christmas Caroling at “The Bay in **Elkhart Lake**” on **Saturday, December 13, at 2 o'clock**. (“The Bay” is the new name of the Assisted Living building part of what was formerly known as “Cedar Landing”)

The address is 101 Cedar Lane, Elkhart Lake.

We'll meet in the lobby just inside the front doors a few minutes before 2:00. We anticipate it may last approximately an **hour and a half**. We will be walking up and down the hallways on both floors entertaining the residents with a variety of favorite familiar songs of the season. A songbook with the words and a song leader will be provided.

EVERYONE - ALL AGES- ARE WELCOME.

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, Jim Raquet, Chuck Grubisic

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

Blue Christmas Worship Service

Bethlehem UCC on Lax Chapel Road is hosting a **Blue Christmas service on Thursday December 18th at 6:30 pm**. A Blue Christmas service honors the reality that it is not always easy to greet the holidays with joy and merriment. For some individuals Christmas can be a very emotionally challenging time of year. This type of service acknowledges this reality and offers an alternative to bright lights and boisterous carols. The service is open to all.

God's Blessings on your Birthday - December

1 Logan Breher	2 April Mair
9 Roger Sheahan	16 Char Gumm
16 Lindsey Stoffregen	17 Emilia Ver Straate
23 Sarah Breher	26 Carol Mae Milbrath



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.

Memorial Project Update

For a little more than a year we have been working on a project which would appropriately honor the legacy of Cleora and Orville Marx. I think we are finally coming close. For quite some time it has been noted that the front wall of the sanctuary is a little bare, with the windows removed. After pondering multiple options and being careful not to detract from the cross, which is the focal point, it has been decided to add two vertical wood columns, one on either side of the cross. These columns would be wood, finished to match the pulpit, altar, and baptism font. They will stretch from floor to ceiling and each be approximately 30 inches wide. If you want to look at the outline of the columns, one is laid out with painter's tape behind the altar. The cost will be fully covered by the Marx memorial. We are hopeful the work can be completed shortly after Christmas. Please see Pastor Nathan if you have questions.

Children's Room



The sound of children in a church is a wonderful sound. It indicates a thriving church with a bright future. With that in mind we offer a children's room from after the children's time during worship until the end of the service, when someone has indicated they will cover the room for the given Sunday. This room is for youth that can independently be with an adult up to those presently in first grade. Please consider taking a Sunday to cover the children's room. There is a sign-up sheet in the binder.

Time to Clean

Time to spruce up the church for the Christmas season. Those that are able to help please meet at the church on Thursday, December 18th at 8:30. Bring along any items you think might be helpful for this project. (Dusting supplies, rags....) For those that have interest we will gather for lunch at Log Cabin after.



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.

December 2 - Tater Tot Casserole with Apple Snicker Salad

Items needed: 4 large onions 6 cans cream of mushroom soup

1 stalk celery 6 bags frozen green beans

3 large bags tater tots 4# Gala or Honeycrisp Apples

3 bags bite size Snickers bars 1 large container of cool Whip

Dessert for 40 people



December 16 - Pork Roast Stew with Jello Salad

Items needed: 6 large onions 1 stalk celery 4# carrots

15# potatoes **Dessert for 40 people**



If you are able to make dessert for either meal, please let June or Char know.

Thanks to all the wonderful donations we have money to cover these meals.

Thank you for your generosity in helping to prepare these meals. 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>



Women's Fellowship

The Cookie Walk – will be held on December 13, starting at 8:00 a.m.

Please have all your cookies to church by noon on Friday, December 12. Don't forget to bring your angels for display. (See Consistory notes for details)

The Women's Fellowship would like to thank everyone that helped decorate our sanctuary with **Poinsettias** for the holiday season.



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Consistory Meeting – November 11, 2025

* Sacraments will be December 2

*Mandi suggested adjusting the dates of our 3 fall fundraisers, seeing they are very close together

Pastor Report:

*Memorial Committee – See article

*Pastoral Relations will meet on December 3

*Rural Church Collaborative Committee is planning a Thanksgiving Eve Service at Bethel with pie

*Cookie Walk – December 13 – Pastor would like to have an angel display this year

*Decorate church for Christmas – on November 30 during worship service

*Front flower Bed – We are looking for someone to care for the flower beds at church. Thank you, Jen & Ed Aschenbach for all of your work.

Committee reports

*Church School Christmas Program will be held on Sunday, December 21 during the 10:00 worship Service

*Senior High Youth - will be joining /meeting with St. Peter's UCC in Kiel

*The Open and Affirming committee would like to offer a book study. The book they are looking to offer is titled "Clumsy Love". The committee has not yet set a date for this event, but information will come soon.

Next meeting: December 14 @ 8:30

CONFIRMATION CLASSES

Confirmation class will be meeting at Bethel for the month of December. We will meet at 5:30 on Dec. 3rd, Dec. 10th, and Dec. 17th.

PRAISEWORTHY'S SCHEDULE

Sunday, December 7 @ 8:30 AM - Practice with Stephanie/Singing for Worship

Sunday, December 14 @ 9:00

Sunday, December 21 – Practice time TBD

*Wednesday, December 24 - Christmas Eve Service at 6:30 p.m.



Not So Silent Night by John Cosper

Are those Christmas songs I have been hearing. YES! The children have started to prepare for the children's program. Parts have gone home, and we will be reviewing them on Sundays. Please have your children review them at home as well. One of the songs does require extra practice and an email has been sent if your child is part of this group. **They will be practicing after church on December 7th.**

Music has been distributed to those participating in the church school band. **The band will practice December 7th, 14th, and 21st at the beginning of church school.** The Christmas program this year will be on **Sunday, December 21nd, at the 10:00 service.** PLEASE join the children and hear the story as told by our youth. **Just a reminder that the loose change in the offering plate on that date will be used for the student's grocery shopping event, another opportunity to teach helping others.**



The Church School presented Bibles to Lincoln Lightle and Chase Munger. Welcome to the Church School Program!



Church School News



Items for the Food Pantry: December donations may be placed in the basket, located in the church entry way: **Favorite Food Beverage Tabs for the Ronald McDonald House**

Birthday Bags -Thank you to those that continue to provide birthday bags. Watch for an opportunity to supply items at the beginning of 2026



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



The month of November found the students exploring the Christmas story as found in the books of Luke and Matthew. On November 23rd the youth did a project that helped them reflect about the many things they are thankful for. The youth are starting to prepare the parts for the children's program.

November has many exciting things being offered during the church school time. Tracy will be leading our fall project on November 23rd. If you think you are hearing Christmas songs you are correct. The youth have begun to learn new songs and review a few favorites that they will share at the **Christmas Program at the 10:00 church service on December 21st**. This year's program is "Not So Silent Night." Join the youth as they retell this ageless story, which may include a few smiles.



Thank You

Thank you for the abundant generosity and variety of items shared for the Thanksgiving food drive. In total there were 252 items collected. During these uncertain times your blessings to help those facing food challenges is greatly appreciated. The items were divided between the Sheboygan Falls and Immanuel food pantries. Thank you, to those who delivered the bounty of food)

The Heart-to-Heart Christmas Tree

Thank you for the quick response to filling the wishes of all the youth found on the heart-to-heart tree. The Our Shepherd family continues to support those facing adverse times and making the holiday season bright for children. The wishes of 18 youth (54 wishes) were filled. Thank you to the Women's Group, Praiseworthy, and Raiseright for your donations. Tracy, Roger, Kay, and Shari thanks for your extra help in making this project a success.

Please consider donating your old Christmas cards to use on next year's tree – I am totally OUT!! Thank you



Yoga



Consider joining the 11:00 am chair yoga at Our Shepherd UCC. The month of December has 3 Mondays so the cost is \$21 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.

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



The holidays are right around the corner. Purchase your grocery and gift-giving cards for all your holiday needs. We will be ordering cards on **December 14** to ensure all cards are available for you.

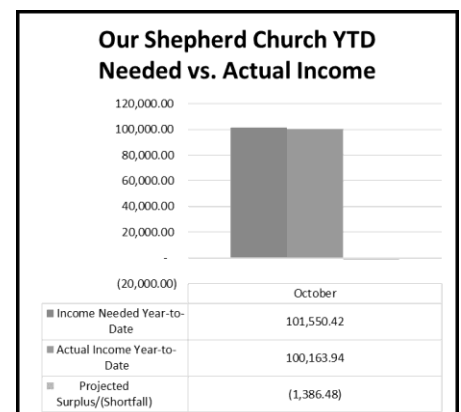


We earned **\$198.62** for the month of **November**.
Thank you for your Support.

OUR SHEPHERD BOOKSTUDY

Our book study group will take a break for Advent and Christmas with the plan to reconvene in early January, more than likely on Sunday January 11th at 6:30. The conversation is open to all and we have a history of exploring a multitude of topics.

We will include a financial chart each month to keep the congregation better informed of our financial status. These numbers reflect our income and expenses through the month of September.



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.

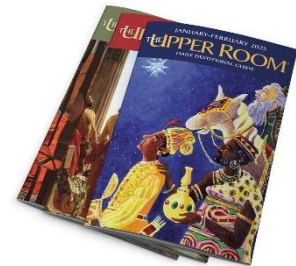
Some of these items are being saved for other church communities that are doing their part for God's creation. If you are collecting any items, please let us know.



Keeping the Earth Green

As we continue to collect plastic, we have reached **944** pounds to put towards benches. Our December 2024 total was 609 pounds)

"The Upper Room" devotional for November/December is located in the Literature Rack



LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

We have a couple of individuals who are doing an amazing job filling some crucial roles during worship and we are very grateful for their efforts. We also would really like those individuals to be able to worship just like everyone else. This requires us to find more volunteers! If you think you would like to help out with one of the following positions, please talk to Pastor Nathan or the person currently filling that role on a regular basis. We are looking for volunteers to; **run our camera, supervise our children's room, and run our sound system.** It would be great if we could get to a point where 3-4 individuals filled those roles one Sunday per month. Interested?

Dates to Remember in December

Sunday, December 7

Sunday, December 7, 14, 21, 28

Sunday, December 7, 14, 21

Sunday, December 7

Wednesday, December 3, 10, 17

Saturday, December 13

Saturday, December 13

Sunday, December 14

Tuesday, December 2, 16

Monday, December 1, 8, 15

Wednesday, December 10

Sunday, December 14

Thursday, December 18

Thursday, December 18

Sunday, December 21

Sunday, December 21

10:00 Worship Service/Sacraments

10:00 Worship Service

8:30 Church School

8:30 Praiseworthy practice

5:30 – 7:00 Confirmation at OS (@ Bethel)

8:00 a.m. Cookie Walk

2:00 Caroling @ The Bay in Elkhart Lake

8:30 a.m. Consistory Meeting

12:00 Meal prep for Salvation Army

11:00 Chair Yoga

9-11:00 a.m. Coffee Break

Raiseright Order Due

8:30 Clean the Church

6:30 Blue Christmas Service @ Bethlehem

Church School Christmas Program

Newsletter articles due



Our Shepherd was a bit more lively than usual, for a Saturday night, as concert goers were clapping, snapping, and singing along with Brendan Brooks and Erskin Anavitarte at the Holy Roar Concert. The singers-songwriters shared their musical talents with many uplifting songs and stories about how God's love and forgiveness has transformed their lives and the lives of others. It was a joy to see concert goers of all ages enjoying the uplifting music and messages. Thank you to all that were able to attend and for your dedication in supporting Brendan and Erskin as they serve God by spreading the message that God is on the move, all around the world!

P.S. A special thank-you to all that made many delicious treats to enjoy after the concert.



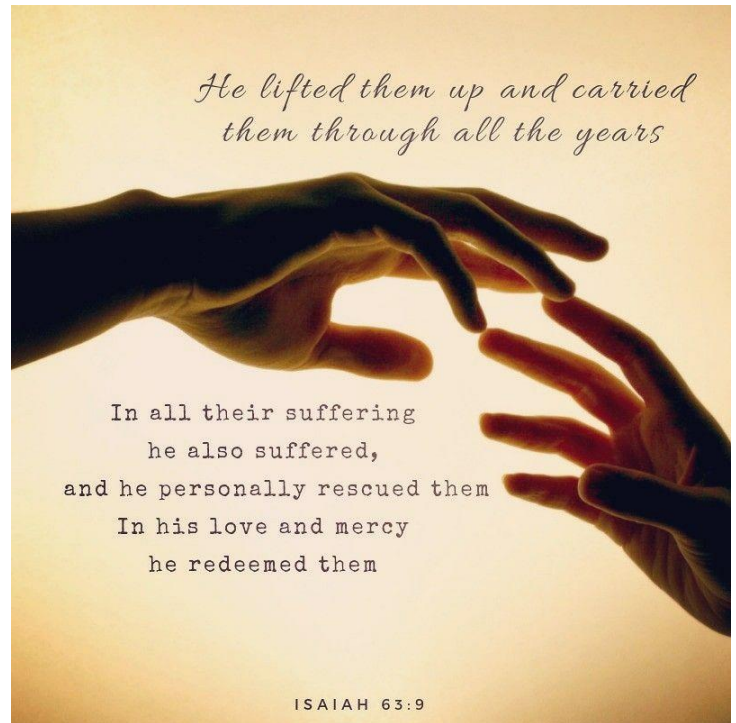
PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

Happy New Year! No, I am not jumping ahead to January, that will be here soon enough. What I am telling you is that with the beginning of Advent we have indeed begun a new church liturgical year. A New Year is often seen as an opportunity for fresh starts, new beginnings, as such I am going to take us in a slightly different direction this Advent season. Advent offers us an opportunity to envision what it looks like for Christ to break into our world just as the baby Jesus broke into the world on the first Christmas. In order to help us envision that, I am going to move away from the gospels this

Advent season. I am turning our attention to the words of the prophet Isaiah. It should be noted these prophecies date back roughly 700 years prior to the birth of Christ. The prophet Isaiah was addressing conflict and turmoil within the Israelite community of his day, but he also foreshadowed the birth of Christ in astounding ways. Time after time, the Book of Isaiah continues to amaze me with how much the Prophet's words are applicable to our world today. Just as the Prophet offered words of hope to the Israelites when the prophecies were originally proclaimed, today those same words offer us hope for our world.

We will walk through the four weeks of Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy as Isaiah proclaims visions of swords being beaten into plowshares, lions lying down with calves, deserts rejoicing in bloom, and a young child eating curds and honey. Those may all be strange and startling images in our world today, but maybe that is the point. Isaiah did not hesitate to name the injustices and violence he saw in his world and his visions offered radically different alternatives. As we journey through Advent and into the Christmas season what radical visions might we identify that offer up alternatives to injustices and suffering in our world today?

-Peace, Pastor Nathan



WISCONSIN CONFERENCE NEWSLETTER

Check out what is going on across our Conference! <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Wisconsin-Conference-this-Week-for-Nov--17.html?soid=1102675987700&aid=Cvy1xjVexwl>

Congregational Stewardship and Church Funds

The Finance Committee spent time reviewing the goals for our congregational stewardship. It was determined that our long-term stewardship goals reflect not only care and support of our congregation, but also care and support for our community and the wider church. The proposed Use of Funds Statement is the result of those discussions and is included in this newsletter for your review. Below are further details about the proposed changes. We are recommending the relabeling of some church funds to better align with and reflect the long-term stewardship goals of the congregation as identified in the Use of Funds Statement. We are not recommending any significant changes to how the funds are already being used, just updating the names to be more consistent with that use.

- A broad category labeled Endowment Funds would include not only the moneys set aside for an endowment many years ago, but all long-term funds that will be used to sustain the congregation going forward. The financial intention for the Endowment Funds will be to grow the principle, while using a portion of annual earnings to meet the needs of the congregation and community. Disbursements of principle will occur only within defined limits or with appropriate approvals for specific projects.
- 1. The Building Fund will become the Church Development Fund. The changes approved 2 years ago regarding use of these funds partially for future church building construction and partially for existing building maintenance would remain unchanged.
- 2. The Scholarship Fund will remain designated as such, but be a part of a broader category called the Outreach Fund. Activities that reach outside of our church walls will be supported with this fund.
- 3. The currently labeled Endowment Fund will become the New Initiatives Fund. The purpose for this fund is to help support new or innovative activities or programs for the congregation, community or wider church.
- The Operating Fund will now include our General Fund and Memorial Fund. The purpose of Memorial money is to honor the legacy of a person who has passed, and to do so in a timely manner. Therefore, it doesn't make sense to invest these monies and incur fees and sales charges for what should be a short amount of time. Memorial Funds will still be tracked separately, but will no longer be placed in our investment funds.

These recommendations are not changing anything in the way we track our existing funds. Folks can still designate contributions to the same categories, just with updated names. The Outreach Fund is a new designation but aligns with many of the things we already do, such as scholarships, and support for special needs in our world today (like hurricane or wildfire relief, or food pantry donations). We welcome your input, questions or comments on any of this information, so please reach out to any member of the Finance Committee: Dave Mair, April Mair, JoAnn Gadick, Charlie Simon, Mandi Grube, Lavonne Athorp or Pastor Nathan.



OUR SHEPHERD UCC

Howards Grove, WI

USE OF FUNDS STATEMENT

The purpose of this church is to provide for the worship of God, to preach the good news of Jesus Christ, and to celebrate the sacraments. We promise to fulfill the functions of this church as set forth in the following covenant, agreed to by all members at the time they join: In the Lord's name we gather together in faith to worship and grow in the Christian tradition, to minister in love to all people, to strive for justice and peace, and to respond to God's word. We endeavor to live in harmony with all creation as stewards of the earth. We celebrate the heritages of this community and give ourselves to its challenges and opportunities. We share in the life and mission of the United Church of Christ and of Christians everywhere.

Operating Funds are the primary financial account used to support the day-to-day expenses of running the church. These funds also include our church's Memorial Fund. Memorial Funds are a special account used to receive and manage donations given in memory of a deceased loved one. These funds are used for meaningful projects that honor that person's legacy and provide

a lasting tribute while supporting the ongoing ministry and needs of the church. The Operating Funds ensure that the church can function effectively and continue its ministries and services.

Endowment Funds are about more than holding onto money. They are about holding onto a mission. The Endowment Funds at Our Shepherd UCC of Howards Grove will reach beyond our own lifetimes to support our congregation as a local church with a global mission. Our Shepherd UCC created broad categories of funds that together make up the Endowment Funds. Some donors may wish to designate their planned gifts to one of these categories. Others may want to leave their gift undesignated so that the future leadership of the congregation can identify the area of greatest need within our community.

- *Church Development Funds* are a designated financial reserve established by the congregation to support the creation, expansion, renovation or maintenance of the physical spaces used for worship, ministry activities and community gatherings. This fund ensures that the church can responsibly plan and manage resources needed for long-term infrastructure projects and improvements. Some funds may be designated for specific capital projects or improvements.

- *Outreach Funds* support the spiritual, social and economic needs of those who call Howards Grove and the surrounding communities home.

- *New Initiatives Funds* support new and innovative projects in any area of the congregation, our local community or the wider church at the discretion of the Church Consistory. It may not be used for ongoing support of projects.