



August Whispers 2026



Hope United Church of Christ

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Dear Friends,

One of the things about being a pastor is having to put up with all the bad preacher jokes and dealing with sad stereotypes. One of those stereotypes is that the only thing a pastor wants from his people is their money. Once, when one church member jokingly told me I only wanted his money, I looked at him and said, “Then you haven’t been paying attention. The message I’m preaching says God wants all of us. I have no intention of letting you out of here thinking God just wants your money. God wants every part of you.”

Stewardship is more than our money. Stewardship is the defining understanding of our relationship with God. In the creation story, God introduces humanity into His story by placing Adam and Eve in the garden. He doesn’t give the garden to Adam. He never gives the deed to Eve. God places them in the garden to work in the garden and tend it. Adam and Eve are to work in the garden so that the garden meets the expectations of the Master. Adam and Eve were stewards of Eden.

Stewardship is often repeated to describe our role in God’s story. In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul describes his ministry as a steward of the mysteries of God. 1 Peter 4 says we are stewards of God’s grace and Colossians we are called to be stewards who make the word of God fully known.

We are stewards of the gospel and stewards of our churches. We are stewards of our friends and members of our families. We are called to manage our resources, our talents and opportunities to the glory of God. As God lavishes our lives with His good gifts, we become stewards of each of those gifts. We are to invest every moment of grace, every touch of mercy and every ounce of love into the lives of those around us to the glory of God who gives graciously to all.

So, what happens if we begin to understand every aspect of our lives as stewards? What if we begin to look at every part of our lives in terms of what God has given to us, what He has entrusted to us and how we maximize each of these gifts for the glory of the Master?

What if husbands saw themselves as stewards of their wives, accountable to God in making sure their wives fulfill all of God’s dreams for them? What if parents saw themselves as stewards of their children? What if the goal of parents wasn’t to raise “successful” children, but to enable their children to fulfill all God had intended for them? What if we looked at our careers as gifts from God to be maximized for His kingdom? What if we saw our friends as people who had been entrusted to us? What would change in our lives if we took our callings to be stewards more seriously?

I’m afraid we have betrayed the covenant God has extended to us. We’ve kept what we were to invest. We wasted what we were called to steward. Think about it, we have been transformed by grace to be in a right relationship with Him and then, graciously invited to join Him in His sanctifying mission to redeem our broken world. Being in possession of these good gifts from God always led to the interesting discussions and debates about tithing. How much of what God has given to us do we keep? How much do we give? Is tithing in the New Testament? And if it’s not, why do we have to give a tenth of everything to God.

To be sure, we don’t have to give anything. Giving should never be a response to law, but to love. In the New Testament, the standard of giving is not actually the Old Testament’s tithe, but the cross. We dare not kneel at the foot of the cross and debate percentages. Because Christ gave all, in response, we also give all. Every aspect of our lives is a gift. Stewardship is our response to the generosity of God. We take the gifts God has given to us and invest them in ways that bring a kingdom return. Authentic stewardship is finding our delight in the things that delight God. Our joy is best found in the joy of God.

And that requires more than our money. Stewardship demands everything – the whole enchilada.

Peace and blessings,
Pastor Gene

PS And, since there is the stereotype, I want to join the A/V Fund Committee in extending a big thank-you to the congregation for how we have responded to this opportunity to give and remind us of our need to finish strong as well.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we begin the month of August, we will also begin using our upgraded A/V system. Of course, there will be a learning curve associated with it; but we still want to hear your ideas for ways you envision it being utilized. Already, it has been suggested that we might use it to play some videos produced by contemporary popular Christian artists. And, we quite possibly can. However, that's a pretty wide spectrum from Lauren Daigle to CeCe Winans; so, if you have specific suggestions be sure to pass them along.

The saying is "Time Flies When You're Having Fun." I hope you've had a fun summer. It's not quite over, but it won't be long till we're back to making fall plans. Among them, a reminder Sunday school will start the Sunday after Labor Day with the **1st day of Sunday school being Sunday, September 13th**. The plan discussed by our Christian Education Committee is to begin Sunday school for children at 10:00 am, just before our worship service starts. Then, after about a half hour of classroom time, the children and youth would join the congregation for worship for Children's Time and remain through the rest of the service. This change allows for our Sunday school teachers to be able to be present for the majority of the service. For young children who can't sit still that long, the cry room would be available. It will be equipped with speakers to hear the service and one can watch everything through the glass.

A reminder related to the start-up of Sunday school. Martha Bailey served our church faithfully for over a decade providing strong leadership to our Christian Education program, and while she isn't going anywhere and promises to continue to help with our Christian education ministries, it's not fair to keep her (or anyone) locked in one role forever. So, she is stepping back from being the Christian education chair and we are still needing someone else who might assist with providing leadership to the committee by calling meetings, helping to create an agenda and keeping the church informed about upcoming Christian education events.

Youth Group will also be starting back up in the fall. Even before the first day of Sunday school, we will also have **a party for YOUth at the church, Sunday, September 6th at 6:00pm**. Yes, there will probably be a few people out of town for Labor Day Weekend, but we're not going to let that stop us. So, come expecting Food, Faith, Fellowship, and a whole lot of FUN! The one requirement – you have to bring a friend with you. So, if YOUth are Middle School or High School this is for you; and if you've got a little brother or sister who just misses the cut-off by one year and you're cool with bringing them, we're cool with having them, too.

October brings with it Homecoming at Weyauwega-Fremont (the game is October 16, the dance the 17th), and we at Hope are going to pick up the theme for our own **Hope Church Homecoming on Sunday, October 18**. This is a great time to invite friends and family who used to be part of the congregation and have moved away to come back and join us for the day. If they're in town for the school's Homecoming activities, be sure they know about our Hope Church Homecoming as well. It's also a great opportunity for folks who still live in the area and have slipped away to come back and greet old Hope Church friends.



Hope Happenings

Debbie Mader, Worship Committee

I *do not* like change. I like routine. I like to wake up, have a cup of tea, go for a walk, eat regular meals, and go to bed about the same time each day. On Sundays at church, I like following the same order of service and singing the old familiar hymns, and I know I'm not the only one!

I need to keep reminding myself, however, that change is often for the better. As Henry Ford said, *“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve always got.”* Or as George Bernard Shaw put it, *“Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”*

With those words in mind, I am excited about the new upgrade to our church’s audio/visual system. I have not yet learned all that the new system can do, but everything I’ve heard sounds like it will be a great improvement to what we now have and give us opportunities to enrich our worship services.

For example, displaying the bulletin on the wall next to the altar will allow for eyes and voices to be raised instead of buried in the bulletin or hymnal. (Bulletins will continue to be printed, and hymnals are not going away, for those of you who prefer to use them.) Images can be displayed to go along with the Sunday message, and photos can be shown during a funeral visitation.

A great big thank you to all who have given financial gifts and/or donated their time and energy to this project. My hope is that you will all benefit in one way or another, and we may attract some new members to join our congregation!

August 2nd -

Liturgist: Kris Steiger

Usher: Katrina Dering, Gordie Vong

August 9th -

Liturgist: Kerry Jones

Usher: Ben Bodoh

August 16th –

Liturgist: Marlyn Hahn

Usher: Dennis

August 23rd -

Liturgist: Edna Welch

Usher: Gordie Vong

August 30th -

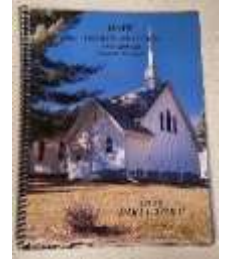
Liturgist: Lori Hahn

Usher: Ben Bodoh



Stewardship

Our New Church Directories are DONE~ If you have not received your copy, stop by the church during office hours to pick up your copy or grab one on Sunday after worship.



THINKING AHEAD--We are hoping to host Thanksgiving Dinner this year! **Would you like to take the lead??** Depending on the response we receive, will determine if we are able to host one this year. Please consider lending us your time & talent!

AV Project Update

Dear Church Family,

As we walk through this summer season together, we are filled with gratitude for the incredible ways God is moving through our congregation. Today, we want to share an exciting update on our **A/V Upgrade Campaign**—and celebrate the remarkable progress we have made together.

First, we want to say a massive thank you for your overwhelming response to our **\$5,000 July Matching Fund Challenge**. Thanks to your exceptional generosity, we met the challenge head-on. We will absolutely be able to maximize that generous gift, effectively doubling the impact of your contributions during this critical stretch. Here is where we stand on our ultimate **\$63,000 goal**:



- **Previous Benchmark:** As of Sunday, July 12, our records showed that **\$47,635** had been received.
- **Current Status:** With the recent influx of gifts from the July challenge (which are currently being processed and uncounted in that previous total), **we are certainly within sight of our goal.**
- **The Timeline:** The new **A/V equipment has now been installed**, and we expect to begin using it to enhance our worship services as soon as August 2.

Because the equipment is now in place and ready to serve our church community, our final payment for the installation is now due.

Thus far, **35 members and member families** have stepped up to donate and turn this vision into a reality. We are so deeply thankful for your leadership and sacrifice. Now that the finish line is right in front of us, it is time for the rest of our church family to lock hands, step forward, and bring this project home.

If you have not yet had the opportunity to contribute to the A/V upgrade, or if you feel led to give a final gift to help us close the remaining gap, you can do so by dropping a check in the offering plate designated for the "A/V Fund" or by giving through our online portal.

Thank you for your continued prayers, your faithfulness, and your shared commitment to making our worship experience accessible and vibrant for everyone.

Blessings,
Your A/V Fund Committee



**Sunday School & Youth Group
are on summer vacation.....
See you in September!**

Birthdays

Michael Hosket	8/2
Edna Welch	8/2
Kathy Forrest	8/4
Ayla Neault	8/6
Dewey Tangwall	8/6
Sandy Lind	8/9
Brooke Kramer	8/12
Keith Hahn	8/17
Ron Mader	8/18
Kerry Welch-Jones	8/18
Madeleine Lemke	8/24
Ron Gehrke	8/25
Doug DeZurik-Otto	8/29
Ron Kramer	8/31



Anniversaries



Dave & Darlene Schmidt	8/14/1970	56 years
Marlyn & Katherine Hahn	8/24/1968	58 years
Dick & Rosie Tellock	8/28/1976	50 years

BY THE NUMBERS

	Income	Expenses	Avg. Attendance
Mthly <u>Beginning Balance</u>	\$155,752.43	\$160,560.66	
January	\$ 7,037.88	\$13,292.17	49
February	\$23,706.33	\$12,452.81	51
March	\$7,750.12	\$12,127.30	44
April	\$11,373.10	\$8,883.62	53
May	\$7,011.63	\$20,446.71	57
June	\$7186.00	\$16,423.00	41
TOTALS:	\$91,687.37	\$76,935.05	49



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Family Worship 10:15	3 Kris off	4 Bible Study 4-5 pm	5	6	7	8
9 Family Worship 10:15	10 Council Mtg 6:30pm	11 Bible Study 4-5 pm	12	13	14	15
16 Family Worship 10:15	17	18 Bible Study 4-5 pm	19	20	21	22
23 Family Worship 10:15	24	25 Bible Study 4-5 pm	26	27	28	29
30 Family Worship 10:15	31					