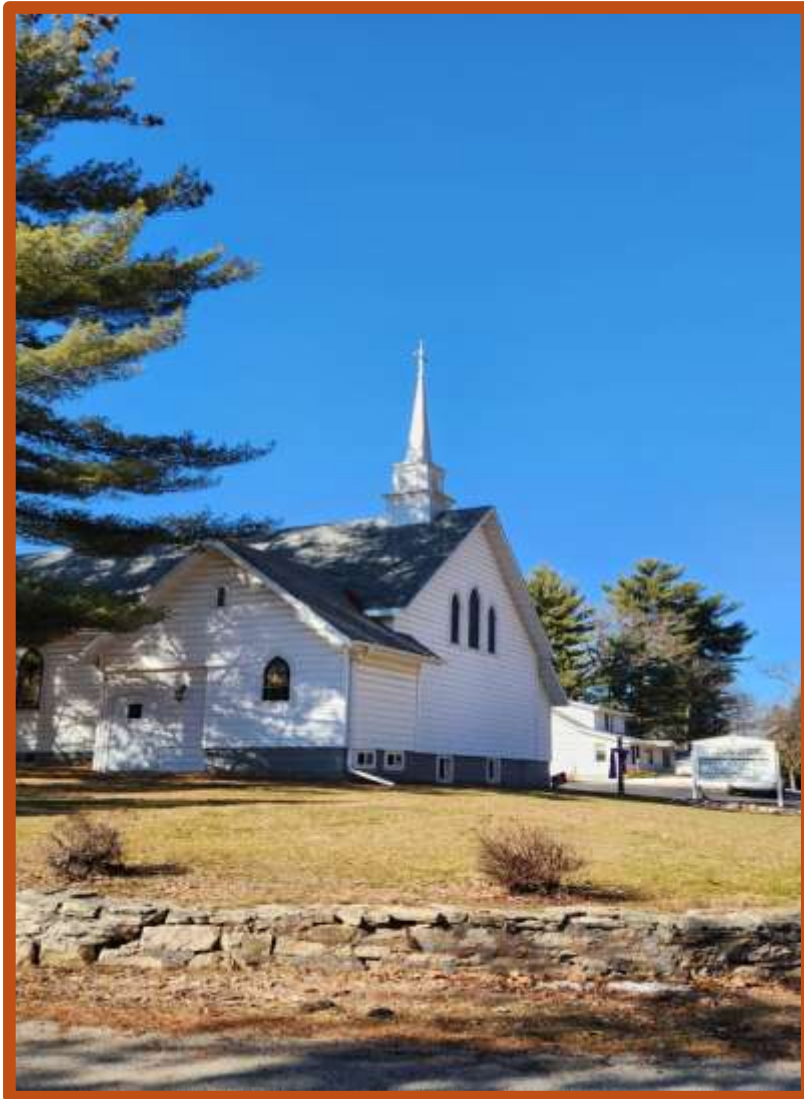




November Whispers 2026



Hope United Church of Christ

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Dear Friends,

November is a time when we often talk about the value of thankfulness. At the same time, the next couple of months can be very hard for people who not only don't feel like they have much to be thankful for but, because of life's circumstances, are ready to question the very goodness of God. If that's you (or someone you know), I hope the following is of some help.

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

Christians have asked why God allows suffering for centuries, but the Bible rarely answers the question in the way modern people ask it. The question becomes sharper when suffering becomes personal. Pain makes abstract theology feel inadequate, and many of the common explanations Christians offer don't hold up well when someone is actually hurting.

In many churches, you'll hear that you just need more faith. Pray harder. Maybe God is teaching you something. Listen, I've heard all of it. And honestly, I've probably said some version of it to someone else without thinking. The problem is that most of it is neither comforting nor helpful.

Three familiar answers appear often. Each contains *some* truth, but none contains the *whole* truth; nor do they fully resolve the tension or problem of pain in the light of a loving God.

- **Human Freedom:** Love requires real choice, and real choice includes the possibility of choosing evil. A world without the ability to harm others would also be a world without the ability to love them. This explains suffering caused by human actions, but it does not explain natural disasters, a child born with a severe illness, or the death of a loved one.
- **Personal Growth:** Scripture teaches that suffering can produce perseverance, character, and hope. Many believers can point to seasons where hardship did indeed shape them. But this describes what God can *do* with pain, not why a specific pain was allowed in a particular life at a particular moment.
- **Redemption:** The Bible repeatedly claims that God can bring good out of evil and weave broken moments into a larger story of restoration. But when you are in the middle of deep loss, imagining how any good could justify what you are experiencing feels impossible. The promise is real, but it is much easier to recognize in hindsight than to trust in the moment.

The Lesson of Job

These three explanations are not wrong, but they are incomplete. The book of Job shows this clearly. Job loses everything without warning. His friends arrive with confident theological explanations, insisting he must have sinned. Yet, God rebukes them for speaking wrongly about Him.

Earlier in the book, the accuser asks whether Job fears God "*for nothing.*" The Hebrew word is **hinnam**, meaning "without cause" or "undeserved." Later, God uses the same word to describe what happened to Job, saying Job was struck "without cause." Job did not earn his suffering, nor was he being punished.

This means Job did nothing to deserve it. The book shows that a person may never learn the reason behind their suffering. Job never receives an explanation; he dies without knowing why any of it happened.

Job's restoration does not depend on understanding his suffering. He never receives the missing piece. Instead, he encounters God. The encounter is not soft comfort. God shows Job the vastness and complexity of creation, reminding Job of his limited human perspective. Job is reminded that he is not positioned to judge whether the world is being run well. God is.

Presence Over Explanation

Scripture consistently emphasizes presence over explanation. In Daniel 3, three men are thrown into a furnace for refusing to worship an idol. God does not stop the fire before it begins. Instead, a fourth figure appears *with them in the flames*. Rescue comes later; presence comes first.

Isaiah promises that when believers walk through fire, they will not be consumed. This is not a guarantee that suffering cannot touch us. Many faithful people have endured severe pain. The promise is that God does not abandon them in it.

The pattern continues in the New Testament. God enters human suffering directly in Jesus. He experiences betrayal, injustice, death, and burial. If the story ended there, we would still have a God who suffers alongside us.

But the resurrection adds a final, powerful claim: **suffering is real, but it is not permanent**. Three days later, there is an empty tomb. Whatever this is costing you, tragedy doesn't get the last word. Paul describes a groaning creation, still waiting—not for the pain to finally make sense, but for it to be over (Romans 8:18-22). This does not make suffering small, but it reframes how we live within it.

How We Can Respond

- **Practice Radical Honesty:** Bring your raw emotions directly to God. Job was not praised for calmness. He was praised for staying engaged with God, even in his confusion and anger.
- **Relinquish the Demand for an Explanation:** Job never received one, and many believers will not either. Faith is not built on receiving reasons.
- **Reject Isolation:** Do not suffer alone. Resist the natural urge to withdraw, which only intensifies pain. Find one trusted person and allow them to sit with you—not to fix your circumstances, but to be a lifeline.
- **Practice Silent Support:** If you are supporting a grieving friend, say far less than you think you should. Job's friends became a liability the moment they tried to explain his suffering; they were most helpful when they sat silently with him.
- **Anchor Yourself to the Core Promise:** Hold onto what is clear when the larger picture is not. Cling to the simple truth found in Psalm 23:4: *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.*

We may never learn why suffering enters our lives. We were never promised that knowledge. But we *were* promised that we would never have to walk through it alone.

Peace and blessings,
And may God be with you,

Pastor Gene

Sunday, November 1st

All Saints Day

We light candles in remembrance of those who, though hid from our eyes, their light continues to shine on our lives. We light them for our grief, our courage, our memories, and for our love. May the glow of the flame be our of strength, courage and love, now and forever. Members of the congregation are also invited to light a candle in memory of departed loved ones.





Hope Happenings

Debbie Mader, Worship Committee



Special services in October included World Communion during the service on the 4th, and Homecoming on the 18th. If you were not able to attend, catch up on what you missed by viewing the services posted on the church's Facebook page...facebook.com/HopeUCCFremont or our website www.hopefremont.com



A shout-out to recognize and thank Nancy Simons for sharing her creative talents! For example, only one of the loaves of bread displayed on the altar during the World Communion service was real; the others were made by Nancy from spray foam! Could you pick out which one was real? I couldn't until I looked up close.



Flags for the World Communion service were provided by Sherry Behm, Brayden Arndt and Pastor Gene. Thank you for sharing them. They served as a visual reminder of our global Christian community.

Nancy Simons also made the decorations (in W-F school colors) that were hanging from the lights in the sanctuary for the Homecoming service. I displayed pom-poms that I've saved since my high school days, but I won't tell you how old they are!

Thank you to those who invited guests to the Homecoming service. I was told some of the people attending had just returned home from Paris that same morning!



Here is what you can look forward to in November...

November 1st - All Saints Day

- **Liturgist:** Dawn Mason
- **Ushers:** Katrina Dering, Ben Bodoh
- There will be special recognition of members who have departed within the last 12 months.
- The congregation will have the opportunity to remember any other departed loved ones by lighting a votive candle at the altar prior to the service.
- Communion will be served.
- Free blood pressure check offered by Dick Tellock.

November 8th -

- **Liturgist:** Marlyn Hahn
- **Usher:** Dennis Vogt

November 15th - Stewardship Sunday

- **Liturgist:** Kerry Jones
- **Usher:** Gordie Vong

November 22nd - Reign of Christ

- **Liturgist:** Kris Steiger
- **Usher:** Ben Bodoh

November 29th - First Sunday of Advent

- **Liturgist:** Edna Welch
- **Usher:** Dennis Vogt

STEWARDSHIP

November 15th The stewardship committee will be performing a short skit: Use what God gave you! Everyone has a gift from God, and we should use it to serve others. Your gift is needed, your service matters and together we can do great things for the glory of God. We will be hosting snack and chat after the service. **Please join us!!**



What Is a Prayer Shawl or Lap Robe?

A prayer shawl or lap robe is lovingly created with yarn and knitting needles or a crochet hook by someone who wishes to offer prayers and blessings to another person. As the shawl or robe takes shape, the creator continues to pray, stitching love, hope, and comfort into every row.

This mantle of love can be wrapped around someone who wants to feel closer to God, spend time in prayer, or experience the comforting touch of someone who cares.

We, the people of Hope Church, pray that God will watch over you and surround you with His love, warmth, strength, and peace. May everyone who receives a prayer shawl or lap robe feel the prayers and love that accompany it. May it bring comfort to the soul and serve as a constant reminder that God is always present and walking with you every step of the way, every day.

A Gift of Love from Hope Church

There are **prayer shawls and lap robes**, in a variety of colors and sizes, displayed in the fellowship hall. Each comes with a prayer card.

They are **free for you to take**—whether you would like to give one to someone who could use a little extra comfort and encouragement or keep one for yourself.

Please consider these shawls and lap robes a warm hug from all of us at Hope Church, wrapped in prayer and given with love.

Questions? Please contact Wendy Weiss.



QUILTS FOR SALE

Lap size \$25

Twin size \$50



Volunteers Needed for Our Community Thanksgiving Dinner!

Our Community Thanksgiving Dinner is coming up on **November 26th**, and we could use a few helping hands!

We're looking for volunteers to:

-  Bring a dish to pass
-  Help with set-up
-  Help with clean-up and take-down

There's a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board, so please consider signing up and lending a hand! Every little bit helps make this a special gathering for our community. Thank you for your kindness and support!



JOIN US AROUND OUR TABLE FOR

Thanksgiving dinner

Thanksgiving Day

NOVEMBER **26th** Serving 11:00-1:00

ALL are welcome!

Hope United Church of Christ
8950 Alpine Rd - Fremont WI

Free Will Offering

Birthdays

Jack Rasmussen	11-05
Kaitlyn Kohl	11-06
Mary Budaj	11-12
Tom Mathwig	11-12
Richard Mielke	11-13
Bryan Hahn	11-14



Anniversaries



Richard & Barbara Bergner	11-2	13 years
Bob & Betty DeWitt	11-6	50 years
Bryan & Lori Hahn	11-7	15 years

BY
THE
NUMBERS

	Income	Expenses	Avg. Attendance
<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
July	\$5,338.00	\$17,788.00	52
August	\$17,940.00	\$17,078.00	54
September	\$ 6,655.00	\$13,851.00	50
TOTALS:	\$249,750.48	\$55,920.05	



Sunday School **EVERY** Sunday at 10am

Faith,
Fun &
Friends!

Come join us for
FUN, FAITH & NEW FRIENDS!
Bring a friend, bring your
energy, and come be part of the
fun!



Sundays at 6:00 PM

Nov 8th

Nov 22nd



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Family Worship 10:15 All Saints Day	2	3 Bible Study 4-5 pm	4	5	6	7 American Legion Chili Supper
8 Circle of Hope Mtg 9:30am Sunday School 10:00 Family Worship 10:15 Youth Group 6:00 pm	9 Planning Comm. Mtg 5:30 pm Church Council Mtg 6:30 pm	10 Bible Study 4-5 pm Worship Comm Mtg 5:30 pm	11	12	13	14
15 Sunday School 10:00 Family Worship 10:15 Stewardship Sunday	16	17 Bible Study 4-5 pm	18	19	20	21
22 Sunday School 10:00 Family Worship 10:15 Youth Group 6:00 pm	23	24 Bible Study 4-5 pm	25	26 Community Thanksgiving Dinner 11-1 	27	28
29 Sunday School 10:00 Family Worship 10:15	30					