



The Union News

Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

401 Lake Avenue East, PO Box 10, Hackensack, MN 56452-0010

"No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey—you are welcome here"
An "Open and Affirming" Congregation



Church Office: (218) 675-6300
Pastor: Rev. Torri Vande Zande

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JANUARY 2019

Notes from the Church Dog

Caesar's Tales

Hi, my name is Caesar and I am the church dog! In the last letter I wrote to you, I told you I was getting a new bed! Well, I had to show you! That is me in the pictures! Yes, that is Bandit (the cat) next to me. Sometimes on cold nights he sneaks up on the bed while I'm sleeping and tries to snuggle. I don't like to snuggle... especially with cats! Yuck!



My human told me that I need to be nice to Bandit (the cat). I can't bite him, chase him or smash his head into the ground with my big paw. Sometimes he deserves it, but my human says that I need to love Bandit (the cat). He is hard to love sometimes.

I have been told that dogs are known to be a good example of unconditional love, but sometimes I don't feel like loving Bandit (the cat). He makes me mad. I don't like it when I try to lick him and he swats his razor blade paw at me. I don't like it when he always wants a treat before me. I don't like it when I come home from a long day of church work and see one of his toys floating in my water bowl. He is NOT a nice cat.

But my human loves him, and therefore, I must do my best to love him.

(Continued on Page 2)

Sunday Worship at 9:30 A.M.

**Communion: First Sunday each Month
Coffee and Fellowship Following Service at 10:30 A.M.**

Church Staff

Pastor.....Rev. Torri Vande Zande
 Church Secretary.....Sabbastian Wilson-Webb
 Financial Secretary.....Don Hoppe
 Treasurer.....Sheryl Kaubisch
 Choir Director..... Sheryl Kaubisch
 Bell Choir Director.....Heidi Hoppe
 Organists.....Sheryl Kaubisch
 Pianist..... Kathleen Millberg, Barb Nish
 Custodian.....Sue Johnson
 "Morning Out".....Sue Johnson

Church Council

Moderator.....Joni Kumpula
 Vice-Moderator.....Tom Cox
 Clerk.....Karen Holle
 Board of Financial Stewardship.....Don Hoppe

 Ministry Teams:
 Christian Learning.....Jo Horak
 Congregational Life.....Margaret Zieffler
 Facilities.....Mike Bohanon and Ron Merritt
 Personnel.....Church Council
 Worship.....Heidi Hoppe
 Men's Fellowship.....Ron Merritt
 Women's Fellowship.....Linda Merritt

(Continued from Page 1)

My human found Bandit (the cat) out on the street several years ago. He didn't have a home, so my human took him in. I don't know if Bandit (the cat) has ever experienced love before being in our family pack. So maybe my job (besides being a church dog) is to be a good brother and love Bandit (the cat) as best as I can. Maybe I need to teach him how much our human loves him and believes deep down he is a good cat.

I know humans have an ultimate command they follow that goes something like this: "Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself." Well, dogs have an ultimate command too. It goes something like this: "Love your human with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love the cat as best as you can, or at the very least try not to kill them."

There are some days I do really good at obeying my human and loving Bandit (the cat). There are other days when I mess up very badly and don't do what my human asks and end up fighting with Bandit (the cat). I love my human very much and I know my human loves me! My human also loves Bandit (the cat) for some reason. So, I must keep trying to love Bandit (the cat) even if he does not love me.

My hope is that one day Bandit (the cat) will understand our human's love for him. Until then, I will do my very best to love my human and Bandit (the cat).

Have a barky day!

Caesar the Church Dog

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- January 2 Brian VanVickle
- January 5 Myra Damm
- January 11 Todd Shaner
- January 12 Jerry Trout
 Jack Nissly
- January 13 Micah Hunter-Small
- January 16 Lois Anderson
- January 18 Gabriel Knutson
- January 20 Don Patterson
 Penny Swanum
- January 21 Michael Rubitschung
- January 22 Jenny Holle
 Sue Wignall
- January 23 Margaret Brown
- January 26 Susan Welter
- January 28 Oral Rubitschung
 Rick Hughes
- January 29 Charlie Tauber



MODERATOR'S NOTES

Happy January. As I'm writing this, December isn't quite over and I'm still in my happy time. However I'm trying to think past all the excitement of the hollidaze. Our numbers have shrunk enough to be in the Friendship Hall for Sunday service and I love the intimacy. It feels good.

We seem to be doing fairly well and have the Semi-annual meeting to do the budget for 2020. Now we really start planning for the New Year. I am seeing good things and lots of excitement for Union Church. Our boards and committees are all functioning well. If you would like to be on a board or team, just ask we still need more active folks. Kokoro, our tenant and local music and fine arts school is doing a bang up job. It's fun to have them in our building.

They are looking for board members if you're interested.

Women's Fellowship is busy making the fleece blankets. They too could use more help. Don't forget both their meetings and Men's Fellowship. They are both great fun! For a rather little church, we are mighty in action. Enough to make us all proud. Well it's getting late so I must run.

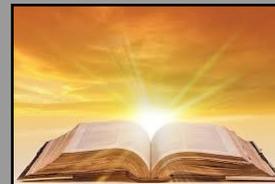
See you in church, Joni

WORSHIP SCHEDULE IN JANUARY

January 5th – Epiphany

January 12th – The Baptism of Jesus

January 19th, 26th – New Four Week Series



A Letter from our Pastor

As I am writing, I am in La Crosse, Wisconsin at a friend's house. I was on my way back to Hackensack from my Christmas vacation when I heard Cass County got hit with 11 inches of snow and had another storm on its way. I decided to make a detour and wait out the storm at my friends. It was an unexpected delay, but it keeps me off the icy roads and out of the snow filled ditches.

Sometimes in life we have unexpected detours and delays. We look at the road ahead and realize we need to change our route or take a break for a bit. This vacation time has helped me realize I need to slow down life sometimes and learn to take mini-vacations. I tend to get caught in a mindset of "go-go-go" and forget to slow down, enjoy the little things, and take in the beauty around me.

This time of the year in Hackensack, the weather often forces us to slow down. I am looking forward to getting back to Hack and enjoying this time of the season. I want to cozy up by the fire, snuggle under a blanket and slow down my brain long enough to be grateful for the people and things in my life that I have come to know and love.

May the beginning of this new year bring you a new awareness of life. May this season of winter slow us down and help us to remember the joys. And may we all snuggle into this year with deep awareness of God's love for us.

In Christ Alone,

Pastor Torri

We took a few photos while we prepared for the Advent meal on December 11th, and wanted to share them with you all!



Caesar decided to take a well-earned break from peeling potatoes!



Back to Hack – “Penguin Plunge”

The Back to Hack celebration in Hackensack will again include the Penguin Plunge. The “Plunge” of jumping into the icy water of Birch Lake will take place on January 18, at 1 PM. Pastor Torri is going to register to take the plunge, but she is at a minimum a very reluctant participant. She really doesn’t like the cold very much, doesn’t like water, and doesn’t swim (yet)! The fact is, Caesar now swims and likes water much more than she does.



I propose that members and friends of Union Church support Pastor Torri. But our support will be **NOT TO PLUNGE!** To help support this **No Jump** effort you can send a check to Union Church with Plunge in the memo line. This is a great way to take Torri off the hook (for at least this year) and the proceeds go to two great causes – they are split between Faith in Action and Hackensack Fire & Rescue.

Let’s support Pastor Torri and these two great organizations!



Men’s Fellowship

will be Tuesday,
January 7th, at 9:00AM
Join them for breakfast!



Join in with
friendly conversation
and desserts,
Thursday, January 9th
at 1:00 PM

Dear readers,

Studies have shown that January is a time of risk for those struggling with suicidal thoughts. One such study (1.) even shows that people without mood disorders (e.g. depression and bipolar disorder) are at a slightly higher risk at this time than those with mood disorders.

If you or a loved one is feeling blue, lonely, or just need a friend to talk to, please call either of the numbers below for the local crisis line in Brainerd.

218-828-HELP (4357) or 1-800-462-5525

For the national hotline, please call 1-800-273-8255.

1. Woo, J.-M.; Okusaga, O.; Postolache, T.T. Seasonality of Suicidal Behavior. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2012**, *9*, 531-547.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

We hope you had a Merry and Blessed Christmas and wish you a Great New Year.

We are entering a new and exciting year at Union Church. Pastor Torri has been at Union over a year now, and has settled into our church, our community, and the north woods. We have many new and existing ministries and activities at Union.

The Church began working on our 2020 budget in October. The preliminary council, board, and ministry team expense requests were in, and we calculated our expected income. The Board of Financial Stewardship presented their preliminary figures to the Church Council at their November meeting, and at that point the proposed expenses exceeded expected revenue by over \$4500!

At this point, our pledges for 2020 are lower than anticipated in our preliminary budget. Thank you to everyone who has made a pledge to our 2020 Stewardship Campaign. If you haven't yet pledged you still can send it in. If you need a pledge card, please contact the Financial Secretary by mail to the Union Church address, email to fin-sec.ucc@gmail.com, or call (218) 839-4341. We will be happy to send information out to you or answer your questions.

Please take time to consider what Union Church means to you and the wider community. Please prayerfully consider an increase in your pledge or giving for next year or a special gift.

When we finalize our 2019 revenue and expense information, we will rework our budget and present it to the Church Council who will determine the final budget to be presented and voted upon at the Semi-annual Congregational Meeting on January 26, 2020.

Don Hoppe, Chair of the Board of Financial Stewardship

Would you like to try your hand bell ringing? Would you consider joining the Bell Choir?

There will be an informational meeting in the near future to learn about our choir and to give you a chance to ring. Previous musical experience is handy but not critical.

We rehearse once a week (date and time to be determined) and perform once a month during worship.

Check the bulletin for more information, and if you have any questions, please give me a call.

Heidi Hoppe, Bell Choir Director
(218) 831-3927



Celebrating the Past – Myra Damm, historian

The Christmas Season

The Christmas season is one of so much preparation – baking cookies, buying presents, planning for company or planning to be with our children and their families. The closer to Christmas, the busier we get. It seems that Santa coming is the biggest event.

As I look back on all Christmas past in my lifetime, the holiday season was more centered on the birth of baby Jesus. The Christmas program was on Christmas Eve, a costume has to be decided, along with a verse we had to learn, and it seems we had about four rehearsals so it was a flawless performance! (In my mind.) It was all about the birth of baby Jesus, anticipation, and joy. We acted out the story of the new born baby in a manger: the three wise men, the angels, the shepherds – the events of that glorious night called Christmas Eve.

A time of great joy and as we move into the New Year, we are reminded again of the birth of our savior and we look forward to 2020. Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year.



Thank You!

Working at Union was an unexpected blessing. You all welcomed me as an "unchurched" secretary and many lasting friendships grew from there. My spirituality has grown tremendously over the past 8+ years and I have many of you to thank for helping me to grow. I look forward to continuing to be a part of Union's purpose. I am sure you will see me popping in or participating from time to time.

-Julie Rono

Bible Study

Monday mornings

10:00 coffee and conversation

10:30 to 11:30 education and enquiry using the Upper Room study material.



GAME NIGHTS

Join us on
January 12th and 26th
at 5:30 p.m.
Bring a dish to share.



How God sees our fears

YOU SAY... GOD SAYS...

YOU SAY

I can't figure it out.

I'm too tired.

It's impossible.

Nobody loves me.

I can't forgive myself.

It's not worth it.

I'm not smart enough.

I'm not able.

I can't go on.

I can't do it.

I can't manage.

I'm afraid.

I feel all alone.

GOD SAYS

I will direct your steps.

I will give you rest.

All things are possible.

I love you.

I forgive you.

It will be worth it.

I will give you wisdom.

I am able.

My grace is sufficient.

You can do all things.

I will supply all your needs.

I have not given you fear.

I will never leave you.

BIBLE VERSES

Proverbs 3:5-6

Matthew 11:28-30

Luke 18:27

John 3:16

Romans 8:1

Romans 8:28

I Corinthians 1:30

II Corinthians 9:8

II Corinthians 12:9

Philippians 4:13

Philippians 4:19

II Timothy 1:7

Hebrews 13:5

CHRISTIAN LEARNING

As we begin the New Year, the Christian Learning Team would like to give a summary of activities in December that happened after the last Newsletter went to print:

Monday Morning Bible Study faced some nasty weather but only had to cancel once. One hearty soul even showed up anyway! She was on the road before the message reached her – you know who you are! We voted and gave her the “Shiny Halo” award! Join this lively group as we share Coffee and Conversation from 10:00-10:30 AM, with the Upper Room Bible Study following from 10:30-11:30 PM. Supportive prayer is a part of this group - we have seen it make a difference! Join us in the Library when you can – all are welcome.

Saturday, December 7th, Sue Johnson and her crew of adults and kids baked cookies for several events at the church. The wonderful treats were served at The Heart Of Christmas program, at the December 11th Advent Meal, and other events yet to happen. It was a lot of cookies! Thanks Sue and Crew!

The Heart Of Christmas program was part of the Sunday Service at 9:30AM. The purpose was to show important Signs Of Christmas - a Wreath, Star, Heart, Bible, Candle, a Gift, and a Cross. The Life of Jesus given on the Cross is the Greatest Gift! Songs and special music were also to be involved. At the mini-rehearsal several days before all seemed well. Sunday morning the flu/virus struck our group; five kids were missing, our guest piano player fell and sprained her wrist, and some kids were joining us for the first time so they did not know the story.

Yet, a 'sign' of answered prayers followed; one of our parents (Linda) was able to play some songs on piano, Cindy found song books, Simon (parent) read an Advent message, Sue Johnson substituted for Mary, Joseph had his drummers and angels showed up, Rebecca played a beautiful violin solo, and Marie stepped up to be a narrator. Several kids had to play more than their assigned parts and did their very best. At the end when the cast was marching out to the strains of “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” (thanks Sheryl who played) one of our little angels looked back at the Nativity Scene and shouted, "Look, we forgot Jesus!" Sure enough, there Jesus still lay in the manger. We made another loop, retrieved the Holy Child, and took him with us. We left out several songs, scenes, and many props but we actually did touch on the Real Signs Of Christmas – helping others, being thankful, celebrating God's Grace, and always taking Jesus with you in your life's journey! Many thanks to cast, crew, congregation, and community!

We had another wonderful event on December 18th when we hosted the **Advent Service** here. Pastor Judy and Heidi sang the beautiful Holden Evening Prayer and Pastor Torri led the narrative. Over eighty adults and families joined us in the Friendship Hall for a turkey meal and fixings. Everyone seemed to have a lovely time. Once again, the Spirit of the Season was present in all hearts – even the Clean Up Crew was singing! Blessings to all those who shopped, cooked, baked, set tables, poured beverages, cleaned up, organized, welcomed guests, and more. It is appreciated!

The next **Community Meal** will be on Wednesday, January 8th, in the Lower Level of Union Church at 5:30 PM. Mark your calendars now. Family and friends welcome!

One of our late December events took place on Friday, the 20th, as our Friday Morning Out group shared their **Breakfast With Santa**. We enjoyed a platter of pancakes and sausage, and Santa arrived at about 11:00 AM.

We are now looking ahead to our 2020 activities. We hope to recognize our Memorial Scholarship Award individuals with a small ceremony in January. The CL Team must wait for transcripts from the students' respective institutions to fulfill this award. Please keep checking our church calendar for details. Support our scholars!

In January we do hope to be part of the **Back To Hack Snow Sculpture Contest** again. Last year we were recognized with a First Place Award!



January 2020

Happy New Year to All!



by Kiki Carter Webb

2020 promises to be an exciting year of growth for the Kokoro Center at Union Church. We look forward to hearing your ideas for new events and activities. Greg Webb is working on a suggestion box for your comments, feedback and inspirations. In the meantime, you can always reach us at kokoroperformingarts@gmail.com.

Thank you to the leadership and membership of Union Church for your steadfast support of the annual Peace Concert. Over the years, the peace concert has grown to be a treasured community event. One concert-goer describes it as the touchstone concert of her year. We're already dreaming up the next one! :)

On Sunday, February 9th, the "Express Yourself" open mic coffeehouse kicks back into gear. February's theme is "The Many Faces of Love." Songs, poems, readings, stories or monologues should express love of something significant to you. Sign up is at 1:30 pm with a 2:00 show. Ryan Pels is our emcee and Greg will be running sound. As usual coffee specialties, teas and treats will be available.

Hope to see you on February 9th!

Warm regards,

Kiki

P.S. If you would like to be included on the Kokoro e-newsletter list, send an email to kokoroperformingarts@gmail.com from the account you would like us to use.

EXPRESS
YOURSELF

OPEN
MIC



& COFFEEHOUSE

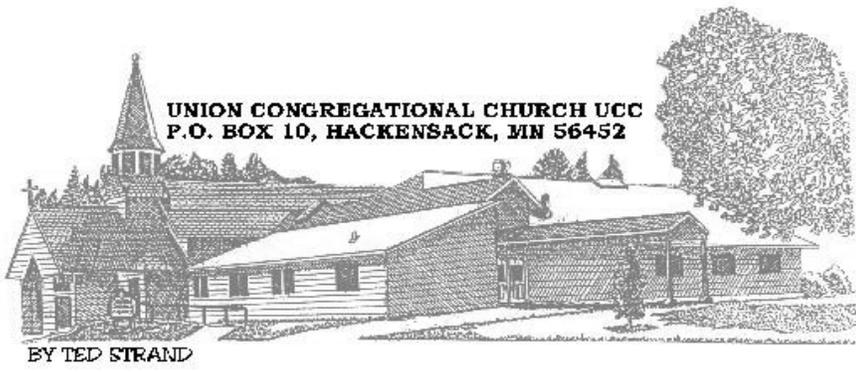
Sunday February 9th, 2020 at 2:00
Kokoro Center at Union Church
401 Lake Ave in Hackensack
Lower Level Parking in Back

Bone Builders
M-W-F 1:30-2:30 pm

Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN

JANUARY 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 5:30pm Community Table	2	3 9:00am—12:00pm Morning Out	4
5 Worship 9:30am Communion Fellowship 10:30am	6 10:00am—11:30am Upper Room Bible Study	7 9:00a,—10:00am Men's Fellowship	8 5:30pm Community Table	9 1:00pm—2:00pm Women's Fellowship	10 9:00am—12:00pm Morning Out	11
12 Worship 9:30am Fellowship 10:30am 5:30pm Game Night	13 10:00am—11:30am Upper Room Bible Study	14	15 5:30pm Community Table 6:30pm NOOMA	16	17 9:00am—12:00pm Morning Out	18
19 Worship 9:30am Fellowship 10:30am 11:00am NOOMA	20 10:00am—11:30am Upper Room Bible Study	21	22 5:30pm Community Table	23	24 9:00am—12:00pm Morning Out	25
26 Worship 9:30am Fellowship 10:30am 5:30pm Game Night	27 10:00am—11:30am Upper Room Bible Study	28	29 5:30pm Community Table	30	31 9:00am—12:00pm Morning Out	



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Happy New Year!

