



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



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DECEMBER 2021

Notes from Rev. Torri Vande Zande

Advent is a season in the Christian calendar which leads up to Christmas. It is a time where people prepare for the celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ (or the birth of Christ). Advent begins on the Sunday nearest to November 30th and is the beginning of the liturgical year (a fancy name for the Christian calendar).

The Advent season has a dual meaning for the "coming of the Christ." The first is the preparation for the birth of Christ (Christmas), and the second is the preparation for the return of Christ (which many Christians believe will happen one day in the future).

You will notice some things as we celebrate this season:

THE COLOR BLUE

You will notice the colors of blue. This is the color associated with Advent. At Union, you will see the altar in front of the church having blue trimmings on the pulpit, lectern, and table. You will also see that the stole around my neck will be blue as well.

The color blue has been passed down for centuries as the color of Advent. However, purple has also been used in some denominations.

CANDLES

During Advent, the Advent wreath appears on the front table on the altar. It is a beautiful (and heavy) candelabra that has

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Sunday Worship at 9:30 AM

Communion: First Sunday each Month

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holders for 4 thin candles (three of which are usually blue or purple in color, and the fourth pink) and one large candle that sits in the middle is white (called "the Christ Candle"). Traditionally the 4 small candles represent hope, peace (or preparation), joy (the pink candle), and love.

One candle is lit each week representing the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. And finally, on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, the Christ candle is lit as a symbol of Christ (the Light of the World) coming to earth.

WAITING

Advent is also called "the season of waiting." As we wait for Christmas, we reflect on our lives and examine our hearts. Some may choose to meditate on the themes, do acts of kindness, or choose to do an Advent calendar and count down the days to Christmas. However people choose to celebrate this season, it is a time to slow life down and do some introspective looking at our lives.

I know that is very difficult with all the Christmas shopping, Black Friday sales, and "to do" lists. But I am encouraging you to take a few moments every day to stop, remember, do some introspective heart checking, and remember why we celebrate this season.

May God bless you this Advent season, slow you down a bit, and remind you of God's many blessings that have been given to you.

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas!

Pastor Torri



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Join us for our Christmas Eve Service
Friday, Dec. 24th, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

Service will be held both in person and streaming on our Facebook page and our website.

We will be reading the story of Jesus' birth and singing some of our favorite Christmas songs.

Masks are highly encouraged for those who are vaccinated. Masks are required for those who are not vaccinated.





COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

November 18th, 2021

Present: Mike Bohanon, Jo Horak, Karen Holle, Pastor Torri Vande Zande, Don Hoppe, Heidi Hoppe, Ron Merritt, Joni Kumpula, Mary Parrish, Cindy Gulbrandson, Stan Kumpula, Marilyn Erikson, Caryl Allan (by zoom)

Mike called the meeting to order. Pastor Torri offered a convening prayer.

The agenda was approved as written. Ron/Stan. The minutes were approved. Heidi/Joni

Pastor's Monthly Report: Torri presented a lengthy report which began by discussing some of the tasks she has recently been performing (due to Covid) that she will be turning over to leaders of ministry teams and secretarial staff. She would like to spend more time and energy on pastoral ministry at this time. Torri also discussed with us "some big ideas" she has. These include updating the lower level of the church, planning a super forum on ecology next year, and updating the supplemental hymnal. Torri is working with the new pastor at St. Paul's church on advent planning. And she will be attending a retreat with other pastors in January of 2022. This will be a time of meditation, worship, conversation, and reflection.

Financial Stewardship Board: Don discussed the October income and expense report with Council. Although income in 2021 is down, the deficit is covered by the PPP loan funds and by the 2020 carryover. We have received 42 pledges for 2022 for a total of \$95,935. Several other pledges are expected. All ministry teams and boards have submitted their budgets, so Don's team can put the 2022 budget together for discussion at our next meeting.

Council looked at a rough draft of the 2022 budget and asked that a "sabbatical" line be added so we begin to fund Pastor Torri's sabbatical which she is eligible for in a few years.

Facilities Board: The old elevator needs to be updated with a new braking system. This will cost about \$10,000. Two furnaces still need updating. They heat the Friendship Hall. Ron thanked people who helped with the fall clean-up day which took about 4 hours to complete. Kerry Swenson replaced a piece of siding that blew off the building last year. Thank you, Kerry!

Personnel Board: Linda will be gone in January, and 9 days will need to be covered for her. Sabbastian will pick up some of her more technical chores. The office substitute will need to answer phones, make copies, and perform other simple tasks. Let Linda know if you can help.

Ministry Team Reports: Congregational Life: Joni reported that four new members will be joining the church on December 5. We are very excited about that! The team is keeping in contact with members that need calls and will be organizing a Christmas card outreach next month.

Worship: Heidi reported that Advent services are being planned and that the bell choir will be playing December 12.

Women's Fellowship: At the next Women's Fellowship meeting on December 9 there will be a luncheon at noon followed by a Christmas card writing party.

Men's Fellowship: Stan reported that the men are generating ideas for next year's programs. On December 7, Teresa from Faith in Action will be talking about the need for ramp building to help people with disabilities access their homes. Thanksgiving boxes will be filled and delivered on November 22.

Christian Learning: Since our last meeting Jo reported that 268 meals have been served at the Community Meal program and \$662 have been donated. The number of people requesting meals is rising

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as we move into winter. Jo thanked her crew for their work. Meals will be offered through Advent, and people will be allowed to eat in our Friendship Hall before the 5:30 service if they wish to. The holiday meal will be held December 15.

Justice Ministry Team: Tom reported that Dale Green, a Leech Lake Ojibwe elder and expert on Native treaties and culture will be speaking on Ojibwe history and culture at Salem Lutheran Church of Longville at 6:00 p.m. on November 18. Tom indicated that the Justice Ministry Team will be meeting via zoom to discuss and develop plans for 2022. If you are interested in being part of this team contact Tom Cox.

Outreach: December and January will feature The Christmas Fund as our mission of the month.

Moderator: Mike thanked members of Council for our hard work this past few months.

Newsletter: The deadline for the December newsletter is November 23. There will not be a newsletter in January as there is no Council meeting in December.

Old Business: 1. Rewrite of the Constitution and By-laws. Karen, Torri, and Marilyn have met to begin this task. On Dec. 7 this project will go to the Executive Committee for discussion. One issue discussed at Council is the need for a person to head the Board of Personnel. Marilyn Erickson agreed to do that job for the church.

2. Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Policy: Council revisited this policy which would require background checks, and applications for all people who work in the church with children and youth. Motion to accept the policy as written. Heidi/Marilyn/passed. The Board of Personnel will be responsible for vetting volunteers who would like to work with youth in our church.

New Business: Heidi asked permission to use the Friendship Hall for an exercise class that would begin in January and would meet at 10:00 a.m. each Wednesday. Approved.

Meeting adjourned. Marilyn/Joni. Torri offered a benediction.

Next meeting, January 20, 2022. Clerk, Karen Holle

JUSTICE MINISTRY TEAM SEEKING NEW MEMBERS

The Justice Ministry Team is looking for additional members.

Please join our Zoom meetings on November 30 at 7:00 PM and December 13 at 7:00 PM.

For these meetings we will share stories about our experiences and passions. As we get to know one another in Justice Ministry, we will use our experiences and passions to create relationships and partnerships within our community.



I want to say a BIG THANK YOU to the members of UCC for the wonderful surprise gift that you gave me. I knew when I joined the church that the people were special, and you have reaffirmed my belief. I did cry with shock and was overwhelmed with gratitude.

Love, Sue Johnson

THROUGH KODA'S EYES



Hi! My name is Koda, and I am "The Church Dog (in training)"! My human says that I am almost ready to become "The Official Church Dog," but I need to wait until January. I do not like that word, "wait." I hear it all the time!

She puts food in my bowl, "Wait."

She opens the door to the car, "Wait."

She dangles treats in front of my face, "Wait."

I am sick of waiting! What do I really have to wait for? It feels like torture sometimes because I really want to just grab my food, or jump out of the car, or devour all the treats in her pocket! What harm is there in NOT waiting?

I guess there was one time it would have helped if I waited. You see, I like to jump into the car. My favorite way is to have my human pop open the back and I jump in really fast! It makes me feel strong and smart! But one day my human opened the car door, she said "wait" and I did not listen. I jumped right away! I was fast! But it did not work out like I planned. I smashed my head into the backend of the car door as it came up. I bounced off the car and landed on the cement. I whimpered a little bit, but I did NOT cry! I just had a sore above my eye for several days.

Maybe waiting is a good thing sometimes. If I wait, then I listen better. If I wait, I learn more about the needs of my human and the other church humans. If I wait, I might be more helpful or loving to someone who needs me. Waiting I think helps me see better because I look before acting (or in some cases reacting).

So, I guess I will work harder on waiting. It is not my favorite, but I think it is important.

That how I see it through my eyes.

Have a Barky Day!

Koda "The Church Dog (in training)"



NEWS FROM THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

News from the Worship Ministry Team

December is usually such a busy time of year, with shopping, visiting, and partying. Hopefully, this Holiday Season will be more normal than 2020. We encourage you to stay connected with family and friends, even if you cannot be with them. They are just a phone call away!

Another way to stay connected with our church and community is to attend our Advent services on Wednesday evenings at 5:30. These services are being held at Union Congregational and St. Paul's Lutheran, and the video will be available on Facebook Live, YouTube, and each church's website. Services will include scripture, carols, a message from Pastor Leif or Pastor Torri, and the Holden Evening Prayer, which we have done during Advent for quite a few years.

Also, please plan to attend church on Sunday, December 12, for our Family Christmas Program. We're planning a special service, with members and friends taking part in the program.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all. Stay warm, stay safe, stay connected!

Worship Ministry Team: Heidi Hoppe, Gracee Rudkin, Caryl Allan, Mary Parrish, and Sheryl Kaubisch



Women's Fellowship—Christmas Salad Luncheon

Thursday, December 9th at 12:00 noon

All ladies come and join the Christmas fun!

Thanks, Joni



NOTES FROM THE BOARD OF FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

We hope you had a good and grateful Thanksgiving and will have a blessed and joyous Christmas. Winter is here, but not yet with its full force. Small lakes have frozen over, but the large or deep ones are still open. We currently only have a small amount of snow on the ground.

We sincerely thank everyone who has pledged for our 2022 Stewardship Campaign. If you haven't yet made a pledge, please do so as soon as possible. It is very helpful in planning for 2022 and preparing the budget. If you need a pledge card or more information, please call Don Hoppe or email the Financial Secretary at finsec.ucc@gmail.com. Please prayerfully consider making your pledge to support our church and community, and be as generous as possible.

As of the writing of this report, we have received 42 pledges for a total of \$95,935.

October revenue was a little lower than last year, but not significantly. November revenue looks good at this time, but no way as high as in 2020. Strong giving by non-pledging units and completion of pledges by pledging units by year end will be essential to our ability to meet our revenue projections for this year and have some carryover

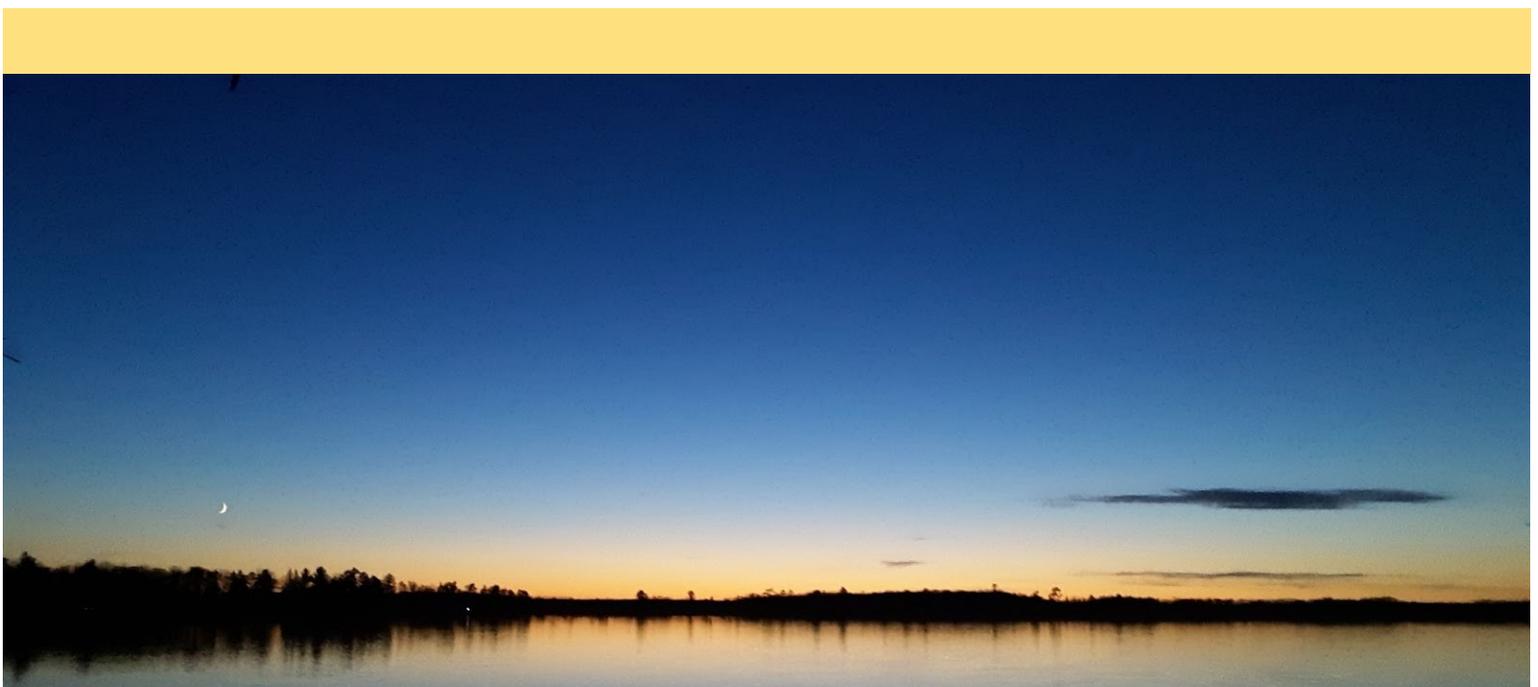
How can you donate to Union Church? There are numerous ways, whether you are here or away.

1. Put an envelope in the offering plate.
2. Write a check and mail it to Union Congregational Church, UCC; Attn. Financial Secretary; PO Box 10; Hackensack MN 56452
3. Set up a scheduled electronic funds transfer payment of pledge or donation amount through your bank or credit union. Talk to them and fill out an ACH form and get it signed by the church.
4. Talk to your bank or credit union about Check Free or Bill Pay services that they may offer.
5. Make payment of pledge, donations, or gifts from your IRA, 401(K), or other retirement saving plans. These donations may be tax free; check with your financial advisor.

Please consider establishing a legacy gift to Union Church. If you are interested in planned giving and wish to discuss options open to you, please contact us for more information.

Christ's Love and Peace to You,

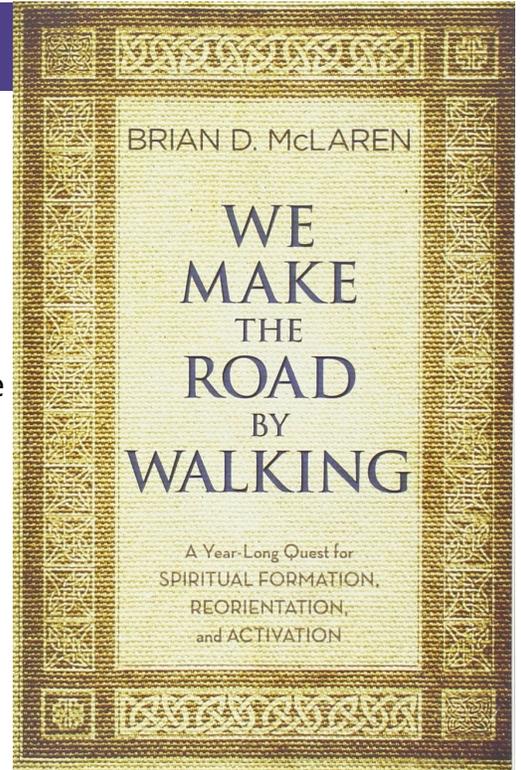
Don Hoppe, Caryl Allan, Sheryl Kaubisch - Board of Financial Stewardship



BIBLE STUDY

Over the past several months, a small group has been meeting Wednesdays at noon for a bible study using Brian McLaren's book "We Make the Road by Walking" as a supplemental resource. We have had many in-depth discussions and have challenged one another in multiple ways. One of the discussions was about the 10 commandments, and we thought it was refreshing and insightful how McLaren interprets the 10 commandments. These commandments were given to the Hebrews (Israelites) as they were freed from Egyptian slavery. We wanted to share these with you and invite you to join us Wednesdays at noon in the church library.

1. Put the God of liberation first, not the gods of slavery.
2. Don't reduce God to the manageable size of an idol - certainly not one made of wood and stone by human hands, and not one made by human minds of rituals and words either, and certainly not one in whose name people are enslaved, dehumanized, or killed.
3. Do not use God for your own agendas by throwing around God's holy name. If you make a vow in God's name, keep it.
4. Honor the God of liberation by taking and giving everyone a day off. Don't keep the old 24/7 slave economy going.
5. Turn from self-centeredness by honoring your parents. (After all, honor is the basis of freedom.)
6. Don't kill people, and don't do the things that frequently incite violence, including:
7. Don't cheat with others' spouses,
8. Don't steal others' possessions, and
9. Don't lie about others' behaviors or character
10. In fact, if you really want to avoid the violence of the old slave economy, deal with its root source - in the drama of desire. Don't let the competitive desire to acquire tempt you off the road of freedom.



NEW BOOK STUDY STARTING IN FEBRUARY

Us Versus Us by Andrew Marin

"For decades now, we have found ourselves caught up in a culture war: US VERSUS THEM. The good news: There is no them. Our culture war has been a civil war: US VERSUS US. This is the untold story of religion and the LGBTQ community. Thankfully, there is a path toward peace.

Surprisingly, 86 percent of the LGBTQ people spent their childhood in church. More than half left their religious communities as adults; three out of four would be happy to return. Drawing on the findings of the largest-ever scientific survey of LGBTQ religious backgrounds, beliefs, and practices, Andrew Marin offers clear direction for both sides of a long cultural battle, sacrificing neither conviction nor integrity, and helping us find common ground and hope rooted in Christ alone."

- Taken from the book's back cover



ONGOING EVENTS



Women's Fellowship

Thursday, December 9th at 12:00 pm in the Friendship Hall. Join us for salad luncheon!

If you have any questions, please call the office at 218-675-6300 or email the church at unionucc401@gmail.com.



Men's Fellowship

Tuesday, December 7th at 9:00 am in the Friendship Hall.

If you have any questions, please call the office at 218-675-6300 or email the church at unionucc401@gmail.com.



Wednesday Bible Study

Wednesdays at noon, in the library, or on Zoom.

If you have any questions, please call the office at 218-675-6300 or email the church at unionucc401@gmail.com.



Book Study

Us Versus Us book study starting in February.



Coffee Hour on Sunday Mornings

Did you know we have coffee hour after each and every service? Come and meet some new and old friends on Sunday mornings. Our treat.



Community Table

Every Wednesday at 4:00pm, drive-through only.

Call Sue at (218) 820-3870 to reserve your meal.

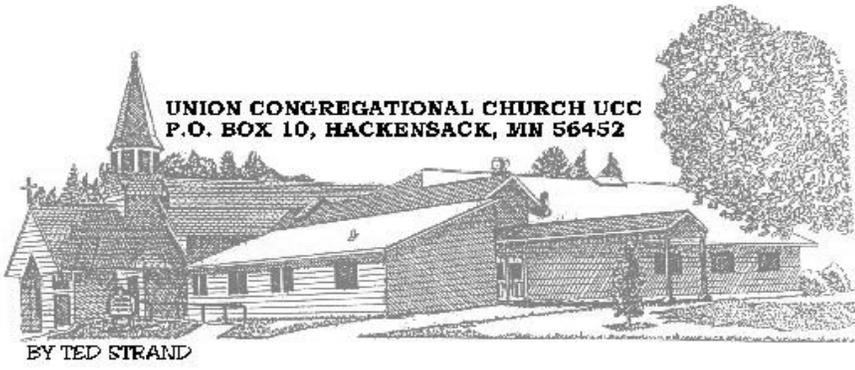
No meal December 22nd or 29th.

Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN

DECEMBER 2021

* = Community Event held at the church

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 12:00pm Bible Study 4:00pm Community Meal 5:30pm Advent Service—UCC	2 1:00pm Fiber Arts*	3 1:30– Bone Builders *	4 SATURDAY
5 9:30am Worship & Communion 10:30am Coffee Hour	6 1:30 Bone Builders* 6:00pm AA Meeting*	7 9:00am Men's Group	8 12:00pm Bible Study 4:00pm Community Meal 5:30pm Advent Service—St. Paul's	9 12:00pm Women's Fellowship Salad Luncheon	10 1:30– Bone Builders *	11
12 9:30am Family Christmas Program 10:30am Coffee Hour	13 1:30 Bone Builders* 6:00pm AA Meeting*	14 5:30pm Financial Board Meeting	15 12:00pm Bible Study 4:00pm Community Meal 5:30pm Advent Service—UCC	16 1:00pm Church Council (Zoom)	17 1:30 Bone Builders *	18
19 9:30am Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour	20 1:30 Bone Builders* 6:00pm AA Meeting*	21	22	23	24 4:00pm Christmas Eve Service	25
26 9:30am Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour	27 1:30 Bone Builders* 6:00pm AA Meeting*	28	29	30	31	



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FORWARD SERVICE REQUESTED



2021

Christmas Eve Service info!
Advent Calendar inside!

THE UNION NEWS