

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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MARCH 2023

Notes from Rev. Torri Vande Zande

What does it mean to be human?

The last several weeks we have been doing a Sunday sermon series called "The Origin Stories." We explored the first 6 stories in Genesis starting with creation and ending with the "Tower of Babel." One of the major themes in these stories was the concept of human beings being image bearers of God.

God created human beings in God's image. That is great! That is wonderful! I am an image bearer of God! Yippy! Hurray! Oh wait!...What does that mean?

Humanity can be cruel, violent, and hateful. You do not have to look far to see humanity's influence. The news is filled with stories about war, shootings, and all kinds of violence. So maybe we need to ask ourselves, "Has humanity lost its ability to be God's image bearers?"



Continues on Page 3

Sunday Worship at 9:30 AM

Communion: First Sunday of Every Month

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor	Rev. Torri Vande Zande
Office Administrator	Linda Ottman
Secretary / Tech	Sabbastian Wilson-Webb
Financial Secretary	Don Hoppe
Treasurer	Sheryl Kaubisch
Bell Choir Director	Heidi Hoppe
Musicians	Sheryl Kaubisch
	Kathleen Millberg
	Barb Nish
	Dick Kimmel

CHURCH COUNCIL

Moderators	Marilyn McKnight & Steve Erickson
Clerk	Karen Holle
Board of Financial Stewardship	Don Hoppe
Ministry Teams:	
Congregational Life	Joni Kumpula
Facilities	Mike Bohanon & Kerry Swenson
Personnel	Marilyn McKnight
Worship	Heidi Hoppe
Men’s Fellowship	Stan Kumpula
Women’s Fellowship	Joni Kumpula
Adult Learning	Linnea Dietrich
Tech Team	Mike Schmitt
Treasure Sale	Cindy Gulbrandson
Justice Ministry Team	Sue Kimmel



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

March 3	Heidi Hoppe
March 7	Chris Swenson
March 9	Dennis Meyer
March 13	Tim Hoppe
March 14	Gunder Austin
	Sue Kimmel
March 17	Kristi Bodahl
March 25	Helen Mankenberg
March 27	Katy Hoover
	Travis Cox
March 28	Chuck Foust
	Katie (Kaubisch) Fasen

Happy Birthday



Karen Holle, Linda Ottman, and Sabbastian Wilson-Webb, Editors

Continued from Page 1

This Lent season we will begin a journey to understand what it means to be human. We will look at stories of Jesus' life and look at not only how Jesus handled being human, but also all the other humans within the story.

We will explore stories that are full of anger, pride and grief... But also see within the same story humanity expressing justice, humility and peace. What is it to be God's image bearers made from dust? What does it mean to be human? Sundays during Lent should be interesting.

My hope is that we come face to face with our own humanity. May we find within ourselves the image of God that becomes angry at injustice while at the same time grieve deeply our loss. May we also find the image of God within us that seeks peace and healing in our woundedness.

I am looking forward to this journey. I hope you journey with us.

Pastor Torri

BOARD OF FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Giving Income-January	\$12,254.00	Year to Date Giving	\$12,254.00
Other Income	\$ 32,620.25	YTD Other Income	\$32,620.25
Total Income	\$ 44,874.25	YTD Total Income	\$44,874.25
Expenses-January	\$7,707.24	Year to Date Expenses	\$7,704.24
Current Month Balance	\$37,167.01	YTD Balance	\$37,167.01

Other income includes Treasure Sale, Community Meal, fundraisers, building use, donations, and all other income sources, except interest and dividends generated from restricted funds and specified donations or grants not going into operating funds

Checking available: \$ 63,764.35

Total Assets \$306,976.95

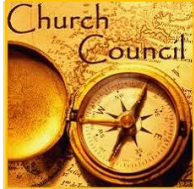
Summary

January giving was much better than January 2022 giving, and expenses were very low. Other income was extremely high, mostly because of the very substantial donation received.

The final total of 2023 pledging is: pledges: 48 of which 9 are new or returning pledging units and 39 are previous pledging units. Total pledged is \$110,267, which includes a 7.8% increase in the pledged amount from the 39 returning pledging units. Pledging for 2023 is more than \$10,000 greater than for 2022. Thanks to everyone who pledged and those who support the church.

February giving through the second week of the month is already better than it was for the whole month of February 2022.

The Board of Financial Stewardship, with Church Council approval, has moved \$125,000 of dedicated Reserve Saving funds into CDs because of the improved interest rates we have been able to secure.



COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

February 16, 2023

Present: Don Hoppe, Linnea Dietrich, Mary Parrish, Mike Bohanon, Sue Kimmel, Heidi Hoppe, Pastor Torri, Karen Holle

Don Hoppe is running the meeting today as our Moderators are absent. The agenda was approved as written. Linnea/Heidi/passed. The minutes of our last meeting were approved as written. Heidi/Sue/passed.

Pastor's Monthly Report: Pastor Torri mentioned that the owner of Birchview Gardens, the senior living facility next door, has asked if our church might be able to provide a worship service for the residents. We discussed helping people from the residence get over to the church on Sunday mornings. We also discussed the possibility of streaming our service into the facility as it happens. Council agrees that more research on this request will be conducted.

The facility owner also asked if residents from Birchview could come to our church in case of an emergency, such as a fire. Council members wondered why the Community Center across the street from the facility couldn't be used as it would be easier to get people in wheelchairs into that building. Pastor Torri will pursue both of those questions.

Pastor Torri gave members of Council information on ways to promote activities of our boards or ministry teams.

Financial Stewardship Board: Don reported that January income for the church was very good, and expenses for the same time period were low. Our year-to-date balance is \$37,167, and total assets are \$306,977. Don requested that Council approve a motion to: **Move \$100,000 of church funds into a 15-month CD at First National Bank and \$25,000 of church funds into a 9-month CD. Mary/Heidi/passed.**

The financial report was approved as written. Sue/Mary/passed.

Facilities Board: Mike reported on a couple of things he has been working on for the church. We discussed the need to eventually determine a way to clean the downstairs of the church. Our cleaning service only cleans upstairs, and the downstairs is beginning to look a little dirty. This spring when we have our spring clean-up, the lower level of the church will be addressed.

Board of Personnel: Pastor Torri's 2023 Letter of Call has been written and signed.

Ministry Team Reports: Congregational Life: There will be a meeting of this team next week to address upcoming needs. The Community Meal was discussed: Community meals will be offered twice a month through May 10. At that point it will be discontinued for the summer.

Worship: Heidi reported that in January the average in-person worship numbers were 29 with 8 people on average online. She also mentioned that there were 14 people at last week's Super Bowl party.

Adult Learning: Linnea reported that about 10 people are participating weekly in the Lectio Divina prayer group.

Women's Fellowship: Nineteen women met in February for lunch at the Char House. Everyone had a really fun time! Future events are being planned.

Men's Fellowship: The men will be preparing Easter baskets again this year. There are sufficient funds in the men's account to handle the cost.

Justice Ministry Team: Sue reported that on May 19 and 20, there will be a community clean-up in Hackensack. People within the city limits can request help with their lawn work, with painting needs, or with trash removal, among other things. Many local organizations will be asked to provide volunteers to help with the work. Karen suggested that perhaps the church could provide the food for the volunteers that weekend as part of our contribution. Other JMT projects mentioned by Sue include the Leech Lake Culture Alliance work with the issue of human trafficking, new signs for our upstairs restrooms, the current book study, The Home Place. Look for more details of this team's work in the newsletter article written by Sue Kimmel.

Outreach: Don mentioned that the Hackensack Food Shelf asked the church to help again this year with the Food Drive which occurs each year in March. Karen will write the letter that will go out to people in the congregation and will provide an article for the March newsletter. Don would like to see us sponsor a "mission of the month" several times a year. He requested that we use the month of May to ask our congregation for donations toward the scholarships that the church has given in the past to youth entering college. Other people are interested in having special offerings for Faith in Action, the Family Safety Network, and the new women's shelter in Akeley. More discussion on this next month. We need an Outreach Coordinator to head this work up.

Fundraising: On Thursday March 2 at 3:00 p.m., the Fire Marshal will be inspecting the lower level of our church to see if our space could be made suitable for a childcare center. Don Hoppe and Mike Bohanon will be part of this visit.

Tech Team: Lighting has been purchased for the front of the church and will be installed soon. This lighting will improve the quality of our video streaming. The tech team needs additional members and will work on attracting people to help.

Old Business: The Conservation Easement papers have been signed and notarized for the Woock-Ness property.

New Business: Pastor Torri's sabbatical – Don asked that we begin to think about the fact that Torri will have a 3-month sabbatical in 2024, and we will need to decide how we want to manage the church in her absence.

Meeting adjourned. Torri offered a benediction. Notes, Karen Holle
Next meeting is March 16, 2023

THROUGH KODA'S EYES

Hi! My name is Koda! I am the Church Dog! I want to tell you about dog friends! This winter has been hard to get together with my dog friends. Sometimes I cannot play with them because of the cold, or maybe my Church Dog schedule is just too packed! Either way.... I do not see my dog friends as much as I would like.

I would like to tell you about my two girlfriends. Yes, I know humans are not supposed to have two girlfriends, but I am a dog. I can have as many as I want. So here are my girlfriends... in no particular order.

First, there is Noel. Her human is named Mary, and Mary is one of my favorite humans because she has snacks in her pocket all the time! So I like Noel simply because of the snack bonus that comes along with her.



Noel is sweet and gentle, and very fun to play with. However, she likes to steal my bones.



Then there is Lucy. Her human is named Caryl. I like Caryl too, however she smells less like snacks. Now, I have known Lucy since she was a puppy, but over the past year she has grown bigger than me! She is feisty and loves to tumble around in the snow!

I really like getting together with my friends even though it is hard in the wintertime. My human says it is good for me. It helps me socialize, keeps me active, and in the long run it is really good for my health (both physically and mentally). I wonder if humans gather with their friends for the same reasons? If so, I think that is great! If not, well... I would encourage you to find a good friend, a good bone, and go play in the snow!

Well, that is how I see it through my eyes! Have a barky day!

Koda (The Church Dog)



CELEBRATING THE PAST

Myra Damm, Historian

Music Committee Report from Annual Meeting 1991

"The music department had a productive year in 1991. In 1991, we started with the formation of the women's Sextette, which is now under the direction of Ann DeGray. This group has been a great addition to the music of the church.

In April, we applied for two grants from the state and the county for the Bell Choir. To our delight, we received both. These monies enabled us to purchase new tables, covers, stands, and music. We also received memorials for Roy Able, which have made it possible to order more bells.

The singing choir has grown. We had four new members join just during the past two months. We are looking for a new director to take Josephine's place and co-direct with Sheryl. Josephine would like to devote her time to the Bell Choir, and Sheryl cannot take on the choir by herself because of her busy schedule.

Another problem to be worked out in the next year is to find an organist to assist Peg Abel and eventually take over the position. We have had several leads, which have not panned out, but there has to be someone out there somewhere."

This is a partial report from this committee. Next month, we will feature the history of the bell choir, which is an important fixture in the music of the church.

NEWS FROM THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

The weather has been keeping us on our toes in the North Woods. We had a "January Thaw" in early February, then an Arctic blast hit us, then we had rain and snow. Makes the head spin! We recently had an eagle visit the deer roadkill Don put out on the lake, which was a magnificent sight.

Our liturgist rotation system is working well. And Pastor Torri has been breaking long passages up between multiple readers, which is very pleasant (and easier on the readers). If you would like to be a liturgist, please let me know.



We have moved into the Lenten season, alternating mid-week services with our friends from St. Paul's. This is a beautiful tradition here in Hackensack, one which I pray will continue forever. Happily, we are again able to get together for supper each Wednesday, and it will be served prior to the service at the hosting church. The theme this year centers around the foundation of the Christian Church - the Ten Commandments, The Lord's Prayer, The Apostles' Creed, Baptism, and Communion. The services will be streamed, so I hope you will join us when you can.

Take care and enjoy the rest of the winter.

Heidi Hoppe, chair; Sheryl Kaubisch, Caryl Allan, Gracee Rudkin, and Mary Parrish

LENT

Wednesday Evening Services at 5:30pm

Date	Theme	Location	Preaching
February 22	Ash Wednesday Service	Union	Pastor Torri
March 1	The 10 Commandments	St. Paul's	Pastor Torri
March 8	The Apostles' Creed	Union	Pastor Leif
March 15	The Lord's Prayer	St. Paul's	Pastor Torri
March 22	Baptism	Union	Pastor Leif
March 29	Communion	St. Paul's	Pastor Torri
April 6	Maundy Thursday	St. Paul's	Pastor Leif



There will be a meal provided from 4:30-5:30pm at the hosting church.

REMEMBERING SANDY



By now many of you know that member/friend, Sandy Tauber died suddenly on February 12th. Sandy came to a Women's Fellowship luncheon on February 9th and seemed to enjoy herself fully. Just a couple of days later we learned that Sandy had died suddenly at home. What a loss for her friends and her family and for those of us who attend Union Congregational Church! Sandy, you were well loved by so many and are greatly missed. Below is a portion of the obituary printed on the Whispering Pines website for Sandy:

"Sandra Kay Tauber, age 74, passed peacefully into eternal life at home on February 12, 2023. Sandra was born in Monticello, IA on December 10, 1948, to Merle and Mayeda Jansen (Weers). She grew

up on the family farm near Amber, IA. After attaining her business degree in court reporting, she worked as a legal secretary in Cedar Rapids, and while in town met her husband-to-be, Charles Tauber. On March 4, 1972, Charles and Sandra were married, and two children resulted, Michael and Angela. When the kids were still small, the family made the move to Hackensack, MN.

Sandra was very involved with Union Congregational Church in Hackensack, where she enjoyed singing in the choir, playing bells, and teaching Sunday School. Sandra had a green thumb and could be found tending to her plants and flowers on warm summer mornings. Sandra was well liked wherever she went and had many fine and long-lasting friendships. Above all, she was a proud grandma who loved each of her grandchildren and enjoyed watching them grow." It was Sandy's wish to not have a funeral; therefore we felt the need to share this information through the "Union News."

MISSION OF THE MONTH — HACKENSACK AREA FOOD SHELF

by Karen Holle

The Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign brings together organizations, businesses, faith communities, and individuals to help keep the 300 food shelves statewide stocked throughout the year. For forty-two years Minnesota FoodShare has campaigned for donations on behalf of our food shelves. One in eleven Minnesotans experiences food insecurity right now, and many of those are children or senior citizens.

Hunger Facts MINNESOTA:

A record-breaking 5.5 million visits were made to food shelves during 2022 in Minnesota, up nearly 50% from 3.7 million visits in 2021.

Minnesota's charitable food system (food shelves and food banks, meal programs, etc.) continues to run at capacity. This has been exacerbated by rising inflation and the end of various financial and food supports established during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I spoke to Cheri Westphal of the Hackensack Food Shelf to see what they were noticing this year. Cheri told me that SINCE JANUARY OF THIS YEAR 15 NEW FAMILIES HAVE COME TO THE FOOD SHELF TO ASK FOR HELP!! Many of these families have senior citizens living in them who are unable to make their income cover the high cost of food.

If you would like to support the local food shelf in the month of March, please send a check to the church and indicate that the money is for the food shelf. This year all money collected will go to the Hackensack Area Food Shelf unless a note is written in the memo line of the check indicating you would like your donation to go to the Walker Food Shelf.

Thank you for your generosity. Working together, not one person in our community will go hungry. **WE CAN AND DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!**

JUSTICE MINISTRY TEAM

The Justice Ministry Team just finished our winter book study of The Home Place, by J. Drew Lanham.

The book is highly recommended for readers who have a relationship with land and birds and are interested in how race and spiritual ties with the Home Place influence a black man's pursuit of nature.

The Justice Ministry Team is planning a city-wide clean-up on May 19 and May 20, 9:00am-3:00pm. This is our second annual Hackensack clean-up event. Please consider volunteering for service projects. Mark your calendars and join the fun!! More information at a later date.

Changes coming to a restroom near you...

The restrooms on the first floor of Union Church will be updated with new door handles and inside door locks. Signage on the doors will change so that all people are welcome to use all three restrooms. The changes to our restrooms are part of the Church's mission to be welcoming and affirming to all.



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Hi ladies! Well here we are in March 2023. We're getting ready to welcome spring weather with more wet snow, rain, and ice...but it's warmer than February. Let's hope for lots of sunshine. Our regular meeting is the second Thursday, March 9th at 1:00 p.m. We have had a series of great and super fun activities, but March is truly about fellowship and special treats, a time to sit back and enjoy each other, get to know each other better, and have fun. Please join us for a lovely time.

See you at church, Joni



BIRCHVIEW SERVICE

One of the most frustrating things over the past few years is having some of our precious members right next door at Birchview Apartments and not having them with us during our Sunday church services. We have tried to figure out ways to get them to join us, but liability and risk of falls have kept us from doing so...until now!

Because of the technology we have invested in, Union Church can be brought to them! We have made arrangements with the Activities Director at Birchview to stream our service to Birchview every Sunday starting on Easter at 1:00 p.m. This is an exciting development!

Our original hope was to stream it live, but their schedule does not fit our live streaming time. The best time to give them church is at 1:00 p.m. after they have had lunch. So why am I telling you all this?

It is my hope that we just don't stream a service to them. My hope is that we bring CHURCH to them! So what do we need to do?

We need 10-12 people who are willing to go to Birchview **once a month** from 12:45-2:15 p.m. to minister to people. Sit with them, sing the songs, take prayer requests, and help them take communion. There will be some training involved, but mostly you are there to BE the Church!

If you are interested in being one of those 10-12 people, contact Pastor Torri or call/email the church.

Thank you,

Pastor Torri



PASTOR TORRI MARCH VACATION DAYS

Pastor Torri will be on vacation March 20-26.

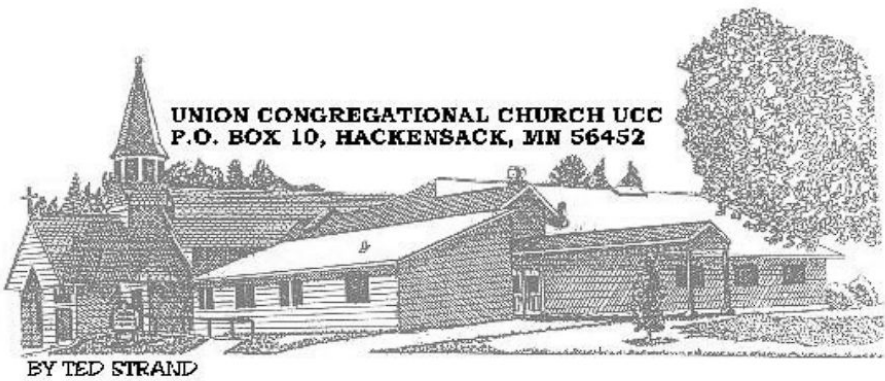


Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN

MARCH 2023

* Community event

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	1 WEDNESDAY	2 THURSDAY	3 FRIDAY	4 SATURDAY
5 9:30am Worship Service 10:30am Coffee Hour 5:30pm Game Night	6 1:30pm Bone Builders* 6:00pm AA Open Meeting*	7 9:00am Men's Fellowship	8 10:00am Exercise in Friendship Hall* 10:00am Financial Stewardship Board Meeting 3:30pm Lectio Divina 4:30pm Community Meal 5:30pm Lenten Service (UCC)	9 1:00pm Women's Fellowship	10 Office Closed 1:30pm Bone Builders*	11
12 <i>Daylight Saving Time Starts</i> 9:30am Worship Service 10:30am Coffee Hour	13 1:30pm Bone Builders* 6:00pm AA Open Meeting*	14 9:00am Tech Team Meeting	15 10:00am Exercise in Friendship Hall* 10:00am Fellowship Time at Ellie's 3:30pm Lectio Divina 4:30pm Sou Supper (SPLC) 5:30pm Lenten Service (SPLC)	16 1:00pm Council Meeting	17 St. Patrick's Day Office Closed 1:30pm Bone Builders*	18
19 9:30am Worship Service 10:30am Coffee Hour 5:30pm Game Night at Happy Pizza	20 1:30pm Bone Builders* 6:00pm AA Open Meeting*	21 9:00am Tech Team Meeting	22 10:00am Exercise in Friendship Hall* 3:30pm Lectio Divina 4:30pm Community Meal 5:30pm Lenten Service (UCC)	23 1:00pm Fiber Arts*	24 Office Closed 1:30pm Bone Builders*	25
26 9:30am Worship Service 10:30am Coffee Hour	27 1:30pm Bone Builders* 6:00pm AA Open Meeting*	28 9:00am Tech Team Meeting	29 10:00am Exercise in Friendship Hall* 10:00am Fellowship Time at Ellie's 3:30pm Lectio Divina 4:30pm Sou Supper (SPLC) 5:30pm Lenten Service (SPLC)	30	31 Office Closed 1:30pm Bone Builders*	



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2023

Lent is here!
Full schedule on Page 8.



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