

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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OCTOBER 2023

Notes from Rev. Torri Vande Zande

The Shiny Gold Plates With the Red Velvet Inlay

It happens right around this time every year. We go to our mailbox and see a little letter from Union Congregational. I don't need to open it to know what it is. I know. It is a letter asking for a financial pledge for the next year.



Then the next thing I think about is my own finances and if I can even afford to be as generous as I want to be. I have bills to pay, I have debt to pay back, and I have groceries to shop for. What can I really afford?

If you are like me, I have grown up giving money to the church. That is what I was taught to do. I watched my mom and dad open their top dresser drawer every Sunday morning and put money into a white envelope for the offering plate. I watched my dad tuck it into his shirt pocket or my mom would slide it into her purse. It was just something they routinely did.

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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 Sabbastian Wilson-Webb

CHURCH COUNCIL

Moderators	Marilyn McKnight & Steve Erickson
Vice Moderator	Gunder Austin
Clerk	Karen Holle
Board of Financial Stewardship	Don Hoppe
Ministry Teams:	
Congregational Life	Joni Kumpula
Facilities	Mike Bohanon & Kerry Swenson
Personnel	Connie Schmitt
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

ADULT LEARNING

Linnea Dietrich

In early September, 36 people filled out the Enneagram assessment and 30 people attended the workshop led by Carol Lawson, a trained facilitator in the Enneagram, who has done this workshop many times across the United States. We learned how each of us is hard-wired through genetics and influenced by events of our lives, particularly in childhood, and how that impacts our decisions, relations, and general engagement of life. Several participants commented that besides the workshop being fun, we have each gained a deeper understanding of our personal motivations and the motivations of others.

Lectio Divina, a contemplative prayer practice, continues on Wednesdays at 4 PM. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Linnea Dietrich or talk to Torri for details. All are welcome!

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

October 4	Lynn Smith
October 5	Karen Wiersma
October 6	Jean Carlson
October 9	Kerry Swenson
October 17	Gary Turnquist
October 18	Rodney Damm
October 19	Sandra Meyer
October 22	Wesley Cline
October 23	Don Smith
October 31	Paul Courneya Miho Adkins

Happy Birthday!



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

Continued from Page 1

Then when we got to church, I would ask if I could put the offering in the plate. They usually handed me the white envelope right before the pastor said, “Will the ushers come forward to receive this morning’s offering.. I held it tightly as I watched the ushers come closer to our row. Then, when the shiny golden plate with red velvet inlay crossed our row, I proudly put the white envelope in the plate and then grabbed the sides to pass it on. I remember feeling good about setting a simple white envelope in a shiny gold plate with red velvet inlay.

One Sunday during Sunday School, I was talking to my teacher about how my mom and dad let me put the white offering envelope in the shiny gold plate with the red velvet inlay. My teacher asked me if I knew what an offering was... I didn’t. She began to explain, “An offering is something you give to God, but here is the twist. The offering we give, is already God’s.” I crinkled my nose at her and replied, “Na-ah! That is my mom and dad’ money!” To which she replied, “And where did your mom and dad get their money from?” I didn’t know. In my defense, I was only 7 years old.

My teacher began to teach the entire class that everything in the creation is God’s. God made it, God takes care of it, God owns everything! God even owns the white envelopes put in the offering plates every Sunday. So whatever we have, whatever we “own,” whatever we care for is God’s.

She went on to say, “God also gives generously to human beings. God gives us the ability to create shelter, grow food, and have jobs so we can take care of ourselves and our family. And what you put in those white envelopes on Sunday, is a thank you to God. It is giving back a portion of what God has so generously given us in the first place.”

Then of course, “Jimmy” who was always full of questions raised his hand, “Why does God need money?” To which my wise teacher replied, “Well, God doesn’t, but people do. One of the ways God works is through the church. The church is full of people who have gifts and passions to help others who might be in need. The church is also a very important part of the community because the church is one of the major things that mold the community into what it is and what it will become. And the church needs money to function so that they can be the hands and feet of Jesus to others.”

In unison, the entire class exclaimed, “OOOHHHHHH!!!” But not Jimmy. Jimmy raised his hand again and said, “So how much do the shiny gold plates with the red velvet bottom cost?”

Thirty years later, Jimmy became the new Financial Treasurer of the church.

In Christ,
Pastor Torri



COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

AUGUST 17, 2023

PRESENT: Gunder Austin, Don Hoppe, Kerry Swensen, Sue Kimmel, Pastor Torri Vande Zande, Mary Parrish, Linnea Dietrich, Heidi Hoppe, Judy Hoopman, Karen Holle, Marilyn McKnight, Steve Erickson, Stan Kumpula, Mike Bohanon, Mike Schmitt.

Marilyn called the meeting to order. The minutes of the last meeting were approved as written. Mary/Don

Board of Facilities: We discussed the recent meeting with the representative of the cleaning company. Our concerns and needs were noted and will be attended to.

Kerry noted that the work on the childcare pod is going well. We discussed signage for the business and looked at a possible logo and discussed locations for signs. One sign will be at the driveway of the church and one sign will be located on the back of the church by the walkway into the lower level. One of the stoves in the pod does not work properly. Kerry will check the thermostat.

In the small shed Kerry noted that there is a pull start gas lawn mower and a gasoline string trimmer. These two items will be sold because they are not needed. (approved by Council) Kerry will get the shed cleaned out and will clean the AC units and change out the furnace filters in preparation for winter. He is still trying to find someone to install heat tape on the roof of the church to avoid ice dams this winter.

Our deepest thanks to Kerry for all he does for the church!

Pastor's Monthly Report: Pastor Torri reported on Union 101, a course she has developed for people wishing to learn more about the United Church of Christ and Union Church. There are currently three couples interested in joining the church this fall.

Leadership Development: We are in the process of making sure we have solid leadership in place at our church. The important position of Vice-Moderator has been vacant for over a year. Pastor Torri approached Gunder Austin about the position and he accepted! **Motion: To accept Gunder Austin as our Vice Moderator. Gunder will be voted on by the entire Congregation at our next July semi-annual meeting as will the other Executive Team members.**

Kerry/Don/passed

Pastor/Parish Training – On October 7 a Pastor's Support training is being offered in Brainerd, led by Kelly Gallagher. Anyone interested in being part of a new Pastor/Parish Committee is encouraged to attend this training which is from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Kokoro Lease – Kokoro has asked to revisit the rental agreement they have with the church for the room they are currently using on the lower level and for a portion of the Art Room which they would like to use for storage. **Motion: Charge \$250 a month for the locked "office" Kokoro uses and charge an additional \$100 for a 20x20 storage space in the art room. The art room has a locked door, but the storage area will not be secured within the room. Mike B., Kerry, passed.** It was noted that Kokoro can negotiate with us on this cost. It was also noted that the church is paying a considerable amount for heat and water and other utilities. Karen will look at the old Kokoro agreement and will modify it to reflect these changes.

Personnel: Connie Schmitt is willing to take over as chairman of the Board of Personnel. **Motion: To accept Connie Schmitt as the chairman of the Board of Personnel. Heidi/Marilyn/passed**

Board of Financial Stewardship: Don reported that August expenses and income were about normal. The 2024 Stewardship campaign began in August. As of September 20 we have received 30 pledges for \$84,220 which is 2/3 of our goal for 2024. Thanks to church members who have been willing to share what Union means to them during our Stewardship moments this past month.

Childcare Pod Update: Sue Kimmel reported that there are two people interested in the position of provider for the childcare pod. They are being interviewed this month. Work on the lower level childcare pod space is progressing.

Ministry Team Reports:

Congregational Life: This past week went well for the Community Meal. Torri took 12 meals to area businesses who were very appreciative. Community members are starting to come in for meals as the word gets out. Pastor Torri is encouraging people from the church to come for the meal and to create a welcoming atmosphere for people in the community.

Worship: Again this year we will join St. Paul's Lutheran Church for our Advent services. Christmas Eve is on a Sunday this year. There will be a regular morning worship and the usual Christmas Eve service at 4:00. There will be no Christmas morning worship.

Adult Learning: The Lectio Divina group will be studying the Lighted Windows book again this Advent season and will be including folks from St. Paul's church who are interested. Linnea mentioned that 36 people took the Enneagram assessment and 30 came for the presentation. The discussion was great, and everyone learned a lot about themselves.

Women's Fellowship: This month's speaker discussed the meaning of the dreams we have when we are sleeping. This was a very interesting meeting with great discussion.

Men's Fellowship: Stan talked about the Men's Fellowship's trip to an open pit mine in Hibbing. Not only was the mine extremely interesting, but the lunch the men had was reportedly great!

Justice Ministry Team: JMT was given permission by the council to use the Union Church logo with Justice Ministry Team written under the logo for posters, newspaper publications, and other charitable events. **Motion by Heidi/Linnea/passed.**

JMT members assisted with water testing at the Chainsaw Event in Hackensack on Saturday, September 23, 9:00-4:00 p.m. Water was tested for nitrates and chlorides.

A followup water quality listening and learning session will be at the HUB on Wednesday, September 27 beginning at 6:30 p.m. The Rural Organizing Project, Isaiah is sponsoring the meeting.

The JMT will be studying the book, Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians But Were Afraid To Ask, by Anton Treuer beginning October 24th at 6:30 p.m. The book study will be offered weekly, in-person and by zoom. All are welcome to participate.

Fundraising: Steve discussed new rate sheets for groups or individuals wanting to use space at the church. His fundraising team will meet to talk about the proposed rates.

Tech Team: Mike Schmitt reported that the tech team's goal is to make the sound system so simple that it requires no tuning during the worship service. Some of our sound system equipment is old and may need to be replaced so that it works well with our new equipment. The Tech Team welcomes new people to join its ranks.

The old organ will be dismantled and removed from the sanctuary very soon.

New Business: Pastor Torri would like us to begin to develop our new Council Meeting room which will be on the lower level across from the kitchen. As soon as the child care pod work is complete we will begin to set up this space.

Moderator's Moment: Marilyn will be having chemo and radiation therapy for cancer over the next few months. She welcomes our support and is optimistic about her treatment.

Adjournment and Benediction

Next meeting is October 19, 2023. Clerk, Karen Holle

THROUGH KODA'S EYES

My Adventure!!!

Hi! My name is Koda and I am the "Church Dog"!

Over this past month, I have watched my human go through a really hard thing. Her mom died.

Over the past few years, I loved going with my human to visit her mom and other family members. It was a long car ride, but it was totally worth it! I got to stay at her brother's house which had a lot of dead animals on the walls. There were deer, foxes, a coyote, and a bear! It smelled fantastic! It is one of my favorite places to stay. My human likes to stay there too!

While there, we would visit her mom in what they call a nursing home. There were long hallways and a lot of doors, but I knew

exactly where my human's mom was located. I found her every time! My favorite part of visiting was when my human went to get food. She would bring it back, set it up for her mom to eat... and I would get fed half of it because her mom would secretly feed me under the table. We were sneaky like that! My human never caught on! Then, I would jump in her bed (after she said it was okay) and take a nap.

But when we went to visit this time, things were different. I stayed in the same place with all the dead animals, but I never went to see my human's mom. I stayed at her brother's by myself a lot more than usual. People would go in and out of the house. They would talk, cry and laugh. It was confusing for me.

As I listened, I heard them say her name a lot, but I did not smell her on anyone's clothes like I used to. I knew something happened. I knew she was not here anymore.

We stayed for about a week and then returned home. My human had a lot of flowers around for a while and she smelled them every day. She really liked them. I thought they smelled funny... I preferred the dead animals.

My human also received a lot of cards and hugs from people. I have learned this is what humans do when they want to support and comfort. She seemed to like that also.

Then, last week two men came over to MY house and planted a tree in the middle of MY yard! I made sure to alert my human there were intruders, but she said they were supposed to be there. They were planting a gift from the church people. I thought that was a very thoughtful and loving thing to do. My human seemed happy that it was there.

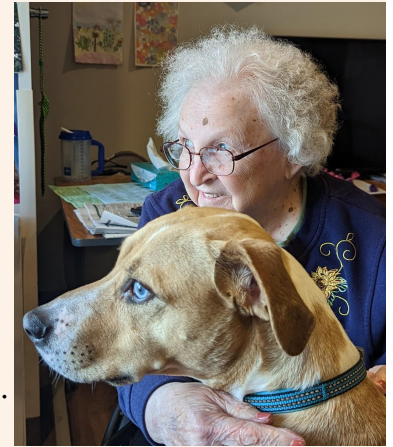
Later that day, my human and I were sitting on the deck. She told me that the tree is a maple tree planted in memory of her mom. She told me stories of how there were 3 maple trees on the farm she grew up on. One was her climbing tree, and one was used for 3rd base during kickball games. The third tree was not used for anything, but when fall came it was the prettiest one. So, a maple tree was very appropriate to plant in memory of her mom. I think she is very thankful to the church people for that gift.

I was also told that I am not allowed to pee on it... but we will see.

That's how I see it through my eyes!

Have a Barky Day!

Koda ("The Church Dog")



BOARD OF FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Operating Income and Expenses

Giving Income — August	\$10,568.00	Year to Date Giving	\$88,306.00
Other Income* — August	\$1,617.00	YTD Other Income *	\$47,352.84
Total Income	\$12,185.00	YTD Total Income	\$135,658.84
Expenses — August	\$14,638.84	Year to Date Expenses	\$113,715.33
Balance — August	\$-2,453.84	Balance — Year to Date	\$21,943.51
		Prepaid & Carryover	\$6,941.24
		Final Balance	\$28,884.75

* 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: \$ 54,550.06
 Total Assets \$ 298,775.45

Summary

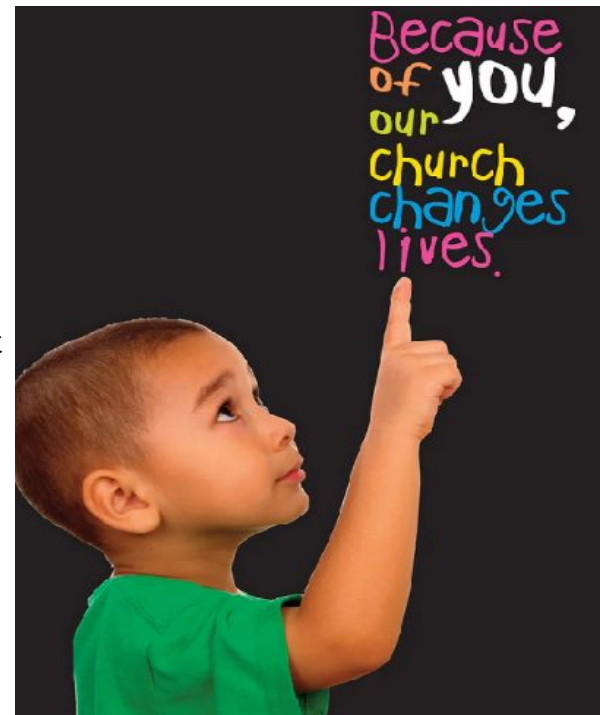
August giving and expenses were about normal.

At this point our position of revenue vs. expenses continues to be fine, especially if looked at on an annual basis and compared to our approved budget. We project a moderate carryover for the 2024 budget.

We had our last Stewardship Moment for the 2024 Stewardship Campaign on September 24. The Board of Financial Stewardship wishes to thank everyone who gave a “Moment” in the last two months! A reminder letter about pledging for 2024 will be sent out in mid October and another concerning the status of 2023 pledged giving in early November.

The theme for the 2024 campaign is “Because of You, our church changes lives.” Our goal is 50 pledges for a total of \$125,000. As of September 24, we have received 32 pledges, of which 29 are current pledging units (with a 5.7% increase), and 3 are new. Total amount pledged is \$89,700 or 71.7% of the \$125,000 goal.

If you haven’t yet made your pledge, please do so as soon as possible. We begin working on our 2024 budget at the end of October. If you need additional info, please contact the Financial Secretary.



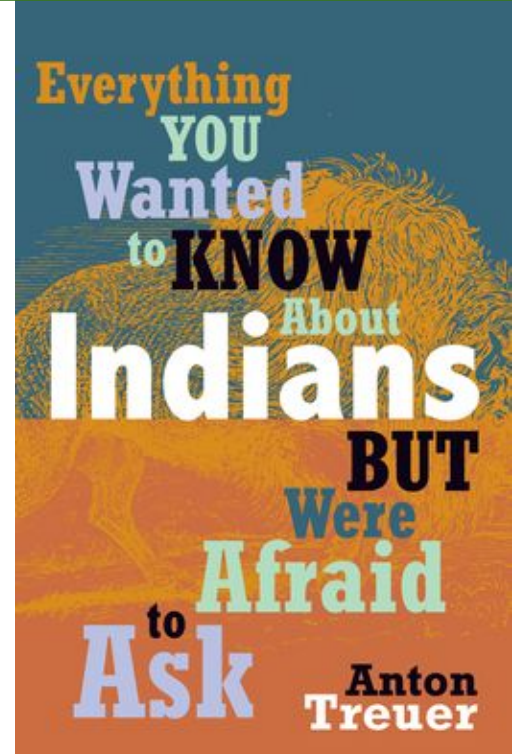
JUSTICE MINISTRY TEAM

The Justice Team will be hosting a book study this fall. The book is called Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians But Were Afraid to Ask, by Anton Treuer. We will start Tuesday, October 24th at 6:30 p.m. We will be meeting in the library of Union with Zoom being an option for those who cannot make it in person.

You can purchase the book online at thriftbooks.com, Amazon.com, or other online resources. The cost is about \$8-\$15 depending on hard or soft cover. It is also available on audio if you prefer. If you have a hard time finding a copy of this book, please contact the office, and we can help you track one down.

This book study is open to the community, and you are welcome to invite friends.

Please contact Pastor Torri at pastor.ucchackmn@gmail.com if you are interested or have any questions.



NEWS FROM THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM



As our beautiful earth heads into autumn, we can only marvel at the beauty all around us - the abundant harvest from our gardens, the trees showing off their lovely fall colors; the birds migrating through on their way to a warmer winter habitat; and the flowers shutting down for the season, to reappear next summer in all their glory.

Mark Blakesly of the Minnesota Conference will be preaching on October 29th. He will be speaking on the Reformation.

On October 29 we will also celebrate Torri's 5th anniversary as an ordained pastor in the United Church of Christ. I hear there might be cake during coffee hour!.

Peace to you,

Heidi

Team Members: Heidi Hoppe, Sheryl Kaubisch, Gracee Rudkin, Gunder Austin, Mary Parrish, and Caryl Allan



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

We have had two excursions further north in Minnesota this summer. The first was on June 14th, a trip to see the Forest History Center near Grand Rapids, a visitor center, and an early 1900 logging camp. The second was on September 18th, a trip to see the Hull-Rust-Mahoning open pit iron ore mine in Hibbing. The actual size of the mine and equipment is hard to imagine until you see it up close!

Our next meeting on October 10th at 9am will be at the church Friendship Hall to detail our Saturday, October 21st Chili and Pie dinner served from 5:00 to 6:30 pm. This is being hosted by both the MF and WF organizations. This will be a goodwill offering for those attending that weekend.

As always, we will be open to hear about a variety of subjects to support the church and community. Hope to see you on October 12th.

Stan Kumpula



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Hi everyone! Glorious October is already here showing off its flaming colors.

Again we had a great program in September thinking about and exploring dreams. We thank Bonnie Mitsch for a fun session. We have had some really great fellowship, enjoying and learning more about each other. To me that's what growing in our faith together is about. I do hope you have the second Thursday of the month at 1:00 In October set aside.

On Thursday October 12, we will meet again. Our own Kirin Christianson will be presenting a program called Poised for Success. She will explain the four P's to a successful and happy life. I know it will be fun! We will also have a short meeting. We will be helping our Men's Fellowship with a chili supper on October 21. We are responsible for the pies. Many have already signed up but we still need more. See me to sign up!!!

Have a happy and healthy month.....see you in church,

Joni and Caryl



ONGOING EVENTS



Women's Fellowship

Thursday, October 12th at 1:00 pm

In the Friendship Hall

Kirin Christianson will be giving a presentation on Poised for Success, and we will be planning for the "Chili and Pie" event!

Any questions, please call the office at 218-675-6300 or email the church at unionucc401@gmail.com.



Men's Fellowship

Tuesday, October 10th at 9:00 am

In the Friendship Hall

Planning the "Chili and Pie" event!

Please RSVP at 218-675-6300 or email the church at unionucc401@gmail.com.



Lectio Divina

Every Wednesday at 4:00 pm
Library

Meaning "divine reading," Lectio Divina is a meditation and prayer practice intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's word.



Fit2Move Exercise Group

Every Wednesday at 10:00 am
In the Friendship Hall

Community Event

COMMUNITY MEALS IN OCTOBER



Every Wednesday 5:00 - 6:30 pm Friendship Hall
All meals will have a veggie side, salad and a dessert

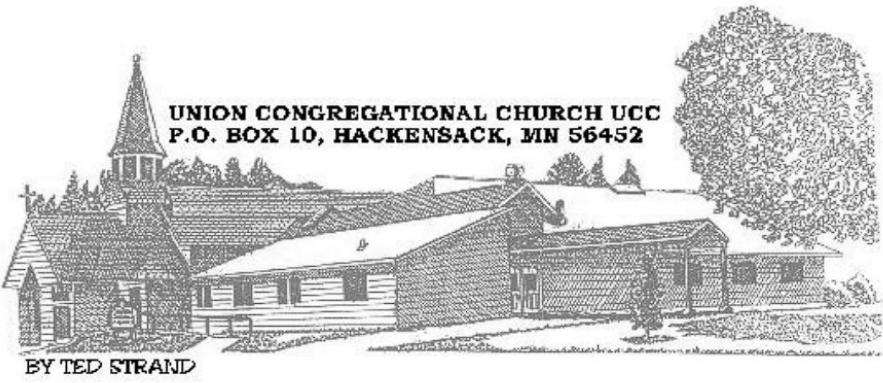


Community Meal Menu

- October 4th — Spaghetti
- October 11th — Chicken Enchilada Casserole
- October 18th — Black Bean Soup
- October 25th — "Ghoul"osh

Wednesday Night Events in September

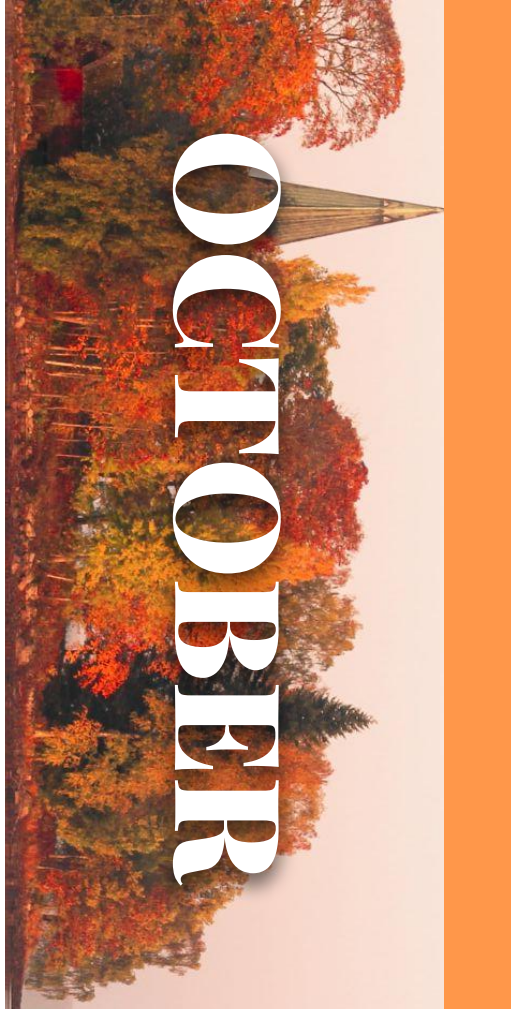
- Game Night — October 11th**
6:00 pm in the Friendship Hall
- Movie Night — October 25th**
Showing: The Way
6:00 pm in the Friendship Hall



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2023

Community Meals are Back!



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