

# 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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## Inside this issue:

Notes from Rev. Torri	1, 3
Birthdays	2
Outreach Team	3
Council Minutes	4, 5
Through Koda's Eyes	6
Financial Stewardship	7
Benefit Meal	7
Worship Ministry	8
Men's Fellowship	8
Adult Learning	9
August Minutes	9
Ongoing Events	10
Calendar	11

## OCTOBER 2025

### Notes from Rev. Torri Vande Zande

It sits majestically in the hallway of our little church. Its multicolored branches stand out, and white lights were added to bring out pops of color. It is impossible to ignore when you walk into our building. This is Union's equality tree!

It was put up a few years ago by members who felt very strongly that if we say we are an open and affirming congregation to the LGBTQ+ community, then we need to show it. This tree is NOT for straight people who go to our church. This tree is NOT for members of the LGBTQ+ community who go to our church. This tree IS for those who may enter our doors, who are from OUTSIDE of our church, who are part of the LGBTQ+ community to let them know we are a safe place for them to be. We welcome them, accept them and love them.

A church building is a very difficult place for many in the LGBTQ+ to enter. It represents rejection and judgment. In some cases it represents hypocrisy. "All are welcome"... except you. Or "Yes, you are welcome... as long as you change and believe what we believe." Or, "Yes, you are welcome... as long as you don't talk about being gay." This is not welcoming. These are not words that any open and affirming church should ever say. I hope we (Union church people) have not been guilty of this.

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	Caryl Allan
Treasurer	Sheryl Kaubisch
Bell Choir Director	Heidi Hoppe
Musicians	Sheryl Kaubisch Kathleen Millberg

BOARDS

Financial Board	Don Hoppe, Sheryl Kaubisch, Caryl Allan
Facilities Board	Mike Bohanon, Kerry Swenson
Personnel	Connie Johnson-Schmitt

LEADERSHIP

Moderator	Gunder Austin
Vice Moderator	John Lindberg
Clerk	Connie Johnson-Schmitt
Board of Financial Stewardship	Don Hoppe

MINISTRY TEAMS

Adult Learning	Linnea Dietrich
Congregational Life	Caryl Allan
Justice Ministry Team	Marilyn McKnight
Worship	Heidi Hoppe
Women’s Fellowship	Joni Kumpula
Men’s Fellowship	Rotation
Online Sales	Cindy Gulbrandson
Tech Team	Mike Schmitt
Outreach	Tammy Lindberg



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- October 1

October 2

October 4

October 6

October 9

October 10

October 17

October 18

October 23

October 31
- Waldo Eisinger

Jan Batman

Dawn Helscher

Lynn Smith

Jean Carlson

Kerry Swenson

Sabbastian Wilson-Webb

Gary Turnquist

Rodney Damm

Don Smith

Paul Courneya

Miho Adkins

Happy Birthday!



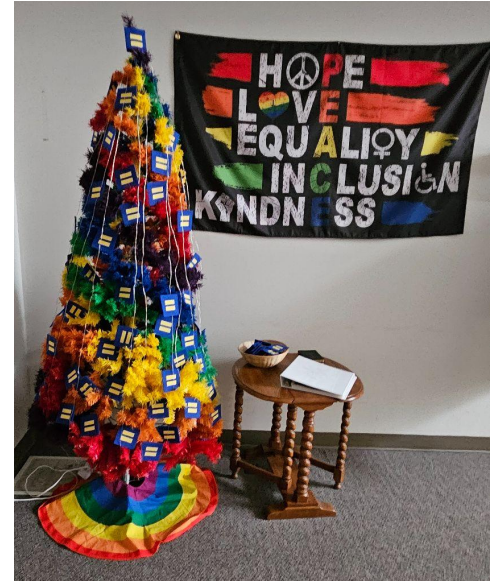


Continued from Page 1

In 2017, Union Congregational United Church of Christ made a decision and voted to become an open and affirming congregation to our siblings in the LGBTQ+ community. We may not understand everything about one another, but we seek to lovingly be curious, gracefully listen to stories, and empower them to become who God created them to be: Beloved children of God.

So the rainbow tree stands, loud and proud for people who walk into our church doors during a monthly meal, an AA meeting, a Faith in Action event, the Book and Art Festival, or a Sunday morning church service and know that they are fully accepted and extravagantly loved by their Creator. And.... that this little church fully accepts and loves them too.

Peace,  
Pastor Torri



### The Outreach Team Update

Benefit Meal - The upcoming Benefit Meal will be held on Wednesday, October 15th, from 5:00 to 6:00 PM. Proceeds from the free-will offerings will go to "Paws And Claws." The menu is pulled pork sandwiches, calico beans, salad, and dessert. Volunteers are always needed and welcomed. Please plan to join us and bring friends!

- Tammy Lindberg





# COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

## SEPTEMBER 18, 2025

**Present:** Pastor Torri, Caryl Allan, Joni Kumpula, Mike Schmitt, Heidi and Don Hoppe, Connie Johnson-Schmitt, Gunder Austin, John and Tammy Lindberg, Mike Bohanon, Marilyn McKnight, and Judy Hoopman

Call to Order by Moderator Gunder Austin, and Pastor Torri led us in prayer.

One change to agenda – correction of date of September 21 for submission of newsletter information, motion to accept agenda by Connie and seconded by Caryl, approved.

Motion to accept last month's minutes with changes to information under Justice Ministry. Corrections made – strike "Izaak Walton League Spaghetti Dinner in Planning for November" and final line of last bullet regarding "when the Izaak Walton League holds its spaghetti dinner as related to JMT environmental goals." Motion made by Connie to accept minutes with adjustments and seconded by Heidi, approved.

Discussion about getting council minutes approved prior to putting them in the newsletter. Minutes will be sent out within a day or 2 from the meeting and virtual approval will take place via email. The minutes will be noted as formally approved at the next council meeting.

### Old business:

#### Child Care Center -

- Connie located and reviewed the original contract with Child Care, updated the amendments and informed the Executive Council.
- Part of the \$600 rent will include the cost of phone and internet services.
- She and Ashley will review changes in the contract.
- As the lessor, UCC is responsible for maintenance of fluorescent light fixtures.

### New Business

- Mike Schmitt provided an overview of the new Solar Project. Discussed infrastructure, what is being generated per month to date (average of 181 kilowatts per day) and church daily usage of about 63 kilowatts. Some line items were slightly over budget with a difference of \$2,487 on prep work (excavating & propane tanks). Final expense of solar units and installation stayed at \$112,500. Mike is looking into the church's usage, the busiest periods and how to control costs as we move into winter.
- Don state the Raising the Roof Campaign is still in the planning process.
- Connie is proposing Saturday October 4<sup>th</sup> as the date for the AED, CPR, First Aid Training with Kerry Swenson.
- Torri shared that the Executive Committee has been discussing succession planning and how to encourage the congregation to share responsibilities of various teams and board duties for rotation of positions. Leadership is not a life sentence, and the goal is to increase involvement with others in the congregation, to gain new perspectives and share the work.
- Policy & Procedures Manual update – The Constitution has been updated, By-Laws are in process of review, Connie has a description for each team that will be reviewed and updated. The Pastor Parrish team has a description that Gunder and John drafted. This is not a ministry team and needs to be outside of the council for effectiveness.
- Gunder stressed the importance of getting reports in a timely manner for Council meetings.

### Pastor's Monthly Report:

- Torri provided a written report and highlighted the upcoming celebration of life being held for Vae Kaiser on Monday September 22. Additional help is needed.

### Board of Facilities:

- Mike B. stated the new doors have been installed, some interior molding needs to be put in place, and he will take care of this. Hanging the allen wrenches in a secure fashion was noted.
- Mike contacted Advantage Heating about furnace issues. The heat exchange is not in good condition. Two estimates were obtained: one for repair of the existing heat exchange \$1598.55 and one for installing a new furnace \$4425. Advantage recommended the installation of the new furnace. Fixing the heat exchange probably would last for only a few years. Don stated there is money in the Reserve MRI funds to purchase a new furnace. Mike B. made a motion to replace the furnace and Marilyn seconded, approved.
- Roof issues – Mike discussed a less expensive option of a spray-on which could extend the roof life about 5 years. Mike is expecting someone to look at the existing roof and provide a quote for total repair and he will bring this back to Council.
- There was some discussion about damage to a kitchen wall as well as the old issue of the exterior wall moving. At this time, a patch job for the kitchen wall will be done.



**Board of Financial Stewardship:**

- Income for August was high, and expenses were low.
- Letters and pledge cards for the 2026 Stewardship have been distributed; 28 pledges have been received for a total of \$65,000. Don is asking for volunteers to speak for the next several Sundays excluding Communion Sunday for a Stewardship Moment.
- Men's Fellowship no longer has a separate checking account and is now a part of the church financial system.

**Board of Personnel**

- Connie updated the Council about continuing with background checks for those assisting with Sunday School.

**Adult Learning:**

- Spirit and Spirituality workshop was held with 17 participants and was enjoyed by all.
- Lectio continues, and Linnea will facilitate a Men's Lectio group on October 13<sup>th</sup>.
- The bible study with Torri at Rendezvous has begun with 10 participants. Torri also sent out a calendar plan of the series she will be teaching about.

**Congregational Life:**

- Caryl stated all is well, no specific news to share and the congregation continues to support those in need.

**Justice Ministry:**

- Presentation with Oby Bellinger regarding PRISM, the multiracial, multifaith, statewide community organizing for LGBTQ liberation has been postponed. We were uncertain about the number of LGBTQ people who would attend, because no one could identify any LGBTQ persons in Hackensack. We will revisit this possibility at a later date.
- JMT discussed the Brainerd Kitchigami Regional Library employees culling books they considered "WOKE," and severe conflicts among library staff. JMT members were offered petitions of support from those staff who were raising these issues.
- Next JMT meeting – plan to consider books to study during the winter months.

**Men's Fellowship:**

- Next meeting will be October 13 at UCC, and Linnea has been invited to facilitate a Lectio Divina session.

**Outreach Team**

The community meal was held at UCC with freewill donations going to the Hackensack Food Shelf with earnings of \$585 with \$299 going to the food shelf. There was discussion about asking Mark's Market or Super One to donate meat for each community meal to help defray costs so the nonprofits would receive more financial support. John and Tammy will look into this.

- Discussion regarding dropping charges for Faith in Action's use of UCC for the Booya Meal and the Spaghetti Meal since each are fund raisers for the organization. Motion made by Heidi to discontinue charging Faith in Action the \$200 fee for each event, seconded by Connie and approved by all.

**Tech Team:**

- Physical hardware – looking for more microphones
- Mike states Tech Team has sold some tech equipment and is continuing to take in donations of items for refurbishing and resale.

**Women's Fellowship:**

- Bone Builders donated \$475 to the church.
- Recipe Book was completed with Sabbastian's assistance and shared at the last Women's Fellowship meeting.
- In October WF will have lunch at the Dam Site in Pine River and visit the local nursery/flower shop.

**Worship:**

- Heidi provided a graph of attendance comparison from May through August for this year and last. Numbers are consistent.
- Months that have a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday will be a Hymn Sing Sunday. The last Sunday of August was a Hymn Sing and quite successful!
- Torri will be on vacation from September 29 to October 5. Laura Baum-Parr will give the message, and Tom Cox will lead worship and serve communion.

**Moderator's Moment:**

- Gunder acknowledges everyone's efforts and work.

Torri closed the meeting with a prayer/benediction.

October newsletter deadline is Tuesday September 22, 2025

Next meeting is October 16, 2025

Team reports due October 10, 2025

Meeting was adjourned. Minutes written by Judy Hoopman



## THROUGH KODA'S EYES

Hi! My name is Koda, and I am the Church Dog! Boy, it has been a crazy month for me! It started off one day when my human saw that I had a small bump on my head. She thought it was some type of insect bite at first, but it grew! She called my doctor, and we went in to see him. Now, going to the doctor is not my favorite thing to do. I need to take a lot of drugs just to get me in the door of that place... it is scary! They poke me and try to stick a thermometer up my butt!



Anyway, it turns out that this bump was a cancerous mass that needed to be taken out. So, I needed an operation. The operation went well, and the doctor says that he thinks he got it all, but it is an aggressive cancer that is unpredictable. It may come back... it may not. We do not know.

So, for the past 3 weeks I have been living with a cone on my head so I don't scratch the stitches out. The cone is very annoying, but I can tolerate it. I can still eat and sniff in the sand.... Although I often scoop up a pile of sand with my cone and get it up my nose.

Whatever happens in the future, my human has reassured me that she will make decisions that will give me a good quality of life. I want to go for walks in the woods, chase squirrels, and be the Church Dog. And when I cannot do that anymore... then it is okay for me to go. I hear that I have a brother named Caesar over the rainbow bridge. I would like to meet him someday.... But not any time soon! I have too much life to live yet!

Thank you for letting me be the Church Dog!  
That is how I see it though my eyes!

Koda (The Church Dog)





## BOARD OF FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

### Operating Income and Expenses

Income - August	\$ 10,936.00	Year to Date 2025 Giving	\$ 87,074.32
Other Income* - August	<u>\$ 7,616.44</u>	YTD Other Income*	\$ 14,718.32
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 18,552.44</b>	<b>YTD Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 101,793.14</b>

<b>Expenses - August</b>	<b>\$ 10,880.74</b>	<b>Year to Date Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 107,285.07</b>
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<b>Balance - August</b>	<b>\$ 7,671.70</b>	<b>Balance - Year to Date</b>	<b>\$ - 5,491.93</b>
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Prepaid & Carryover	\$ 14,738.00
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\* Other income includes Treasure Sale, 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:	\$ 19,272.78
Reserve Saving	\$ 36,229.27
Total Assets	\$ 379,476.05

**Final Balance** \$ 9,246.07

### Summary

Income for August was high, and expenses were low. September expenses will be higher as quarterly payments will be made.

Letters and pledge cards for the 2026 Stewardship Campaign have been distributed, and at this time we have received 28 pledges for a total of \$65,000. If you have not yet made a pledge, we hope you will do so soon, as we start our 2026 budget preparation,

A capital campaign to cover expenses for the re-shingling of the church will be started this year.

Men's Fellowship is now in the church financial system, and their checking account has been closed.

Our new Solar Array is functioning extremely well.

## BENEFIT MEAL



**Wednesday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 - 6:00 pm**  
**Friendship Hall**

Join us for a dinner of pulled pork sandwiches, calico beans, salad, and dessert.

Free will offering to support  
*Paws & Claws.*



## NEWS FROM THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Fall is fast approaching - temps are dropping (as are the acorns!), leaves are changing color and falling, and our summer friends are making the trek to their winter homes. It's sad to see them leave, but this is the rhythm of life at Union. Never fear, hardy souls who stay in the North Woods all year long, for there are still so many things happening here at Union and in Hackensack! We are an amazing community, and I thank God that I can be a part of it.

Pastor Torri will be on vacation on October 5th, and Laura Baum-Parr has agreed to speak that morning on the topic of "Love." It is always a delight to hear her message. Tom Cox will be our Worship Leader and will serve communion for our congregation.

Looking ahead to the very first Sunday in November, at that service we will celebrate All Saints Day. Should you have a friend or loved one you would like remembered, please contact the church office ([media.ucchackmn@gmail.com](mailto:media.ucchackmn@gmail.com)) or our clerk, Connie Schmitt, ([clerk.ucchackmn@gmail.com](mailto:clerk.ucchackmn@gmail.com)) with the pertinent information. Their name will be read and the bell will be tolled in their honor.



Take care, stay warm, and keep in touch. If you are away this winter, please keep us in your prayers as we will do for you.

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



## MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Men's Fellowship meets on the second Monday of each month at 9:00 AM. We will plan the activity and location of our next meeting(s) and have that information in the weekly email updates from the church and in the newsletter.

Our meeting on October 13<sup>th</sup> will be at Union Church. We will meet in the Friendship Hall for a treat, coffee, and conversation, then a short meeting. After the meeting, Linnea Dietrich will lead us in a session of Lectio Divina. Lectio is being well received by many people, but mostly women. Linnea would like to present it to the men.

All men are welcome to join us. There are no dues or other requirements to attend our meetings. We look forward to seeing more of you at our meetings and activities. An email will be sent to remind you! If you are not receiving emails from Men's Fellowship, but want to be updated, please contact Mike Schmitt. Our leadership is passed on a quarterly basis, within our group.

In November we will pack Thanksgiving Holiday Food Boxes for the Hackensack Food Shelf. More information on this will be discussed at the October meeting.

## ADULT LEARNING – by Linnea Dietrich

Learning, praying, meditation opportunities at UCC.

Bible and Beer Bible study is on Mondays at 4 PM at Rendezvous Brewery in the back room. There is a \$15 special for a pint of beer and an 8" pizza from Drake's Pizza. Pastor Torri is leading a study on Matthew following along with her new sermon series on Matthew. We study the passage and then Torri preaches on it. Join us!

Lectio Divina continues Wednesdays at 4 in the UCC library. Please reach out with questions to Linnea. All are invited.

Men's Fellowship has invited me (Linnea) to lead them in a session of Lectio Divina on October 13 at 9 AM. All men are invited to learn about and try this ancient prayer practice. Contact Don Hoppe or myself for more information. Don assures me there will be food!

The dream group that meets twice a month, Thursday mornings at 10 AM, is coming to a close for the 2025 season. Watch for Bonnie Mitsch's return from Arizona in the spring when this in-depth discovery group will start up again.



## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES CORRECTIONS

AUGUST 21, 2025

### Justice Ministry Team:

- Justice Ministry: Fred Smith presented in Marilyn's absence
- Marilyn is the new contact for this team
- Justice Ministry meets the first Thursday of the month by Zoom and interested people should contact Marilyn – [marilyn@ericksonmediation.com](mailto:marilyn@ericksonmediation.com)
- Presentation scheduled soon in the Fellowship Hall by Obie Ballenger about the LGBT/JMT Action Plans
- Leech Lake Culture Alliance Potluck: August 28th 6:00 pm at Onigum
- Pride events happening 8-23 in Bemidji, 9-13 in Brainerd, and JMT is working on a gathering in our area in September
- Don informed the Council about a woman who has researched segregation in the Minneapolis schools, is writing a book about effects of herbicides, and will be presenting at UCC.



# ONGOING EVENTS



## Women's Fellowship

**Thursday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 am**

Meet at church. Lunch at Damsite  
Supper Club in Pine River, then will visit  
the Sherwood Florist and Garden Center

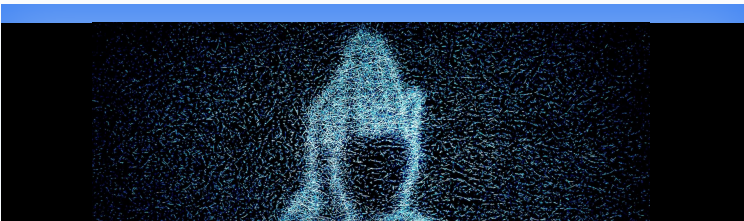


## Northwoods Acoustic Jam

**Tuesday, October 14<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm**

In the Friendship Hall

Any questions, please call the office at 218-675-6300  
or email the church at [media.ucchackmn@gmail.com](mailto:media.ucchackmn@gmail.com).

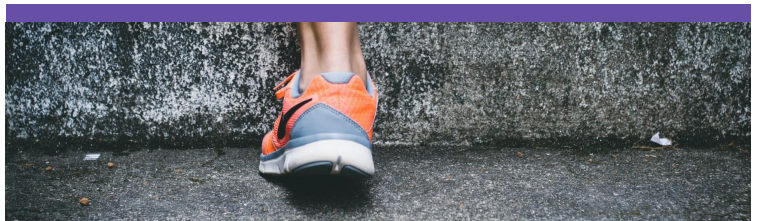


## Lectio Divina

**Every Wednesday at 4:00 pm**

In the Church 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 & Friday**

**at 10:00 am**

In the Friendship Hall

Any questions, please call the office at 218-675-6300  
or email the church at [media.ucchackmn@gmail.com](mailto:media.ucchackmn@gmail.com).



## Bible and Beer

**Every Monday at 4:00 pm**

At Rendezvous Brewing

Any questions, please call the office at 218-675-6300  
or email the church at [media.ucchackmn@gmail.com](mailto:media.ucchackmn@gmail.com).



## Coffee Hour

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.

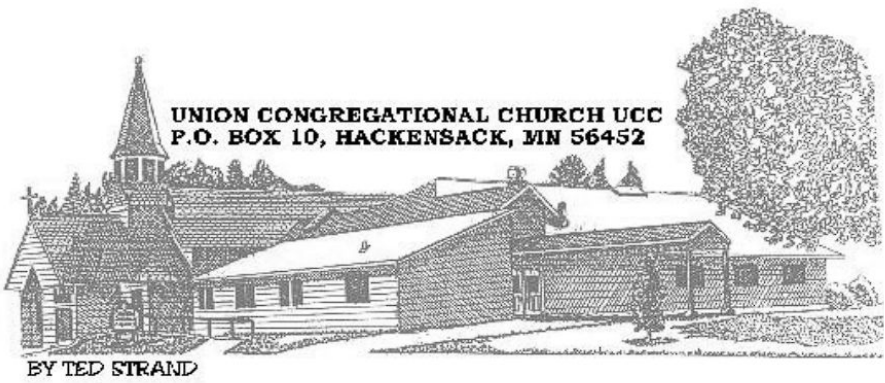
# Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN

## October 2025

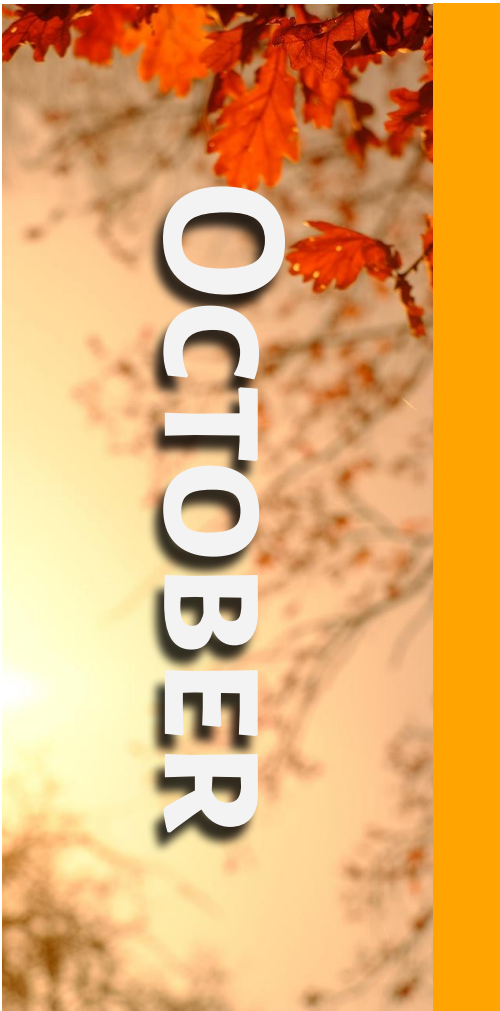
\* Community event

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	1 WEDNESDAY	2 THURSDAY	3 FRIDAY	4 SATURDAY
<b>5</b> 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	<b>6</b> 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 4:00 pm Bible & Beer at Rendezvous 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	<b>7</b> 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	<b>8</b> 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	<b>9</b> 1:00 - 2:30 pm Women's Fellowship - Pine River Nursery and Lunch	<b>10</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	<b>11</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*
<b>12</b> 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	<b>13</b> 9:00-10:30 am Men's Fellowship 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 4:00 pm Bible & Beer at Rendezvous 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	<b>14</b> 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting 10:00 am Executive Board Meeting 5:00 pm Northwoods Acoustic Jam	<b>15</b> 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina 5:00 pm Benefit Meal for Paws and Claws	<b>16</b> 10:00am-12:00pm Dream Group 1:00-3:00 pm Council Meeting	<b>17</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	<b>18</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*
<b>19</b> 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	<b>20</b> 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 4:00 pm Bible & Beer at Rendezvous 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	<b>21</b> 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	<b>22</b> 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	<b>23</b> 1:00-3:00 pm Fiber Arts*	<b>24</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	<b>25</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*
<b>26</b> 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	<b>27</b> 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 4:00 pm Bible & Beer at Rendezvous 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	<b>28</b> 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	<b>29</b> 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	<b>30</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	<b>31</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	





**FORWARD SERVICE REQUESTED**



**2025**

**Join us for a fall dinner  
October 15<sup>th</sup> @ 5:00 PM!**



**THE UNION NEWS**