

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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SEPTEMBER 2025

Notes from Rev. Torri Vande Zande

Dare we ask?

A group of us from church finished our "Union 101" class this past Monday night. In the last class, I teach the history of Union Congregational United Church of Christ. This little Northwoods church started out in the Otterson Hotel as a Sunday School that met each week. It began July 28, 1899. The attendance averaged 85 people. Can you believe that?

This group of people came together because they thought spirituality was important. They had different beliefs, different ways of worship, and came from different faith traditions, but they came together because they believed it was essential to have a faith community.

Hackensack was established as a town in 1903, and our church was organized and established in 1908. Can you believe our church is 117 years old? And in 2028, we celebrate 120 years of worshiping God, extending fellowship to one another, and reaching out to our wider community.

As I think back to those who have gone before us.... I think of all the friendships that were created, all the bonds that were formed, the visions these people had for this little church in the Northwoods. They loved God, and they loved each other. They served God by serving their community. And they created a church where EVERYONE was welcome and safe.

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

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

BOARDS

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



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

September 1	Margaret Zieffler
September 2	John Lindberg
September 4	Phoebe Vosbeck
September 5	Nada Fisher
September 12	Stacy Hirschi
September 13	Don Hoppe
September 14	Ed Curo
September 16	Mike Bohanon
	Steve Merritt
September 18	Lee Moren
	Kathleen Millberg
September 29	Anne McGill
September 30	Benjamin Hoppe

Happy Birthday!



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We as a congregation carry that vision forward to the future. And if we dare ask the question, “God, what can You do through us?”, would we be brave enough to stick around and hear the answer? And would we be courageous enough to try to follow where God leads? Would we be curious enough to try different things?

Dare we ask?

Dare we stick around to hear the answer?

Let's see!

Peace,

Pastor Torri

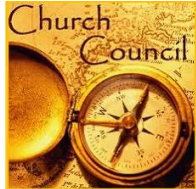


The Outreach Team Update

Last month we had a benefit meal for the Hackensack Lending Library. Eighty-three people turned out for a wonderful meal of scalloped potatoes and ham, and a little over \$1,300 was raised that night. Maggie McGill also updated everyone on the library project and the next steps that will be happening over the next few months.

Wednesday, September 17th we will be doing another Benefit Meal to raise money for the Hackensack Food Self. The menu will be meatloaf, mashed potatoes, salad, and of course there will be a dessert! Join us, and tell all your friends to come. We start serving at 5:00 pm.





COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES (DRAFT)

AUGUST 21, 2025 (*Minutes are not yet approved by the council*)

Present: Pastor Torri, Caryl Allan, Joni Kumpula, Linnea Dietrich, Mike Schmitt, Mary Parrish, Heidi and Don Hoppe, Connie Schmitt, Gunder Austin, Kerry Swenson, John and Tammy Lindberg, Fred Smith standing in for Marilyn McKnight, and Judy Hoopman

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

No changes to agenda, motion to accept agenda by Linnea and seconded by Connie, approved.

Motion to accept last month's minutes as presented made by Don and seconded by Joni, approved.

Old business:

Child Care Center -

- Connie is the new contact for the Child Care Center
- She and Ashley discussed changes in the contract.
- Ashley will purchase a washer & dryer with money from the Lions; Mike S and Kerry will work out details on installation
- Connie is in process of locating a copy of the original lease and will edit it to reflect the updated agreement
- Ashley informed Mike S about four lights flickering and bulbs needing to be replaced. This time Kerry will replace the bulbs, but this raised the question as to who (UCC or Child Care) is responsible for maintenance issues
- Connie will review what the current lease says and will let the Council know.

Policy on Events – This topic was tabled until further notice by Connie

New Business

New Council Format

- Gunder described the changes to the order of agenda items as an effort to streamline meetings
- New format will help in organizing reports by each team which will follow discussions of old and new business

Semi-Annual Meeting

- Discussion of receiving all reports for the semi-annual meeting ahead of time so information, especially in regard to nominations, can be provided to the congregation at the Sunday service one week prior to semi-annual meeting
- Reports will also be emailed to church members

Outreach Team

- Motion made to nominate Tammy Lindberg as team chair made by Heidi, seconded by Linnea and approved
- John Lindberg is now the vice moderator

Changes to Financial Stewardship Team

- Steve Erickson has stepped down as moderator and chair of Fundraising
- Discussion was brought to the Executive Committee, and a recommendation was made that the Board of Financial Stewardship agree to have Fundraising and Memorial Scholarship as subgroups.
- Connie made a motion to move fundraising and scholarship teams to a subgroup under Financial Stewardship, seconded by Don, approved
- Outreach funds earned will be kept separate since they are mostly used for community support of various groups/agencies

Capital Campaign for Roof Project

- Financial Stewardship recommends developing a specific team to move this project forward
- Don is working on this and fundraising efforts for the rest of 2025, 2026, and 2027. The work will be done in 2026 with a projection of about \$150,000 needed.
- Don suggests donations be referred to as special gifts to help the congregation understand the difference between regular monthly pledges to the congregation and additional financial supports or gifts for the capital roof campaign project
- This will require congregation's approval

AED, CPR, First Aid Training

- Connie raised whether UCC may want to offer some form of First Aid training to our congregation.
- Kerry Swenson is a certified trainer and could do the training.
- Decision to offer the short course training to the congregation and if enough interest is shown, Kerry will plan for a half day training this fall.
- A sign-up sheet will be posted in the Fellowship Hall, and Sabbastian will make a slide for Sunday services

Pastor's Monthly Report:

- Children's Ministry will start September 14; Sue Kimmel and Robin Wicker will teach
- "Bible and Beer" is a bible study offered at Rendezvous Brewery starting Monday, September 15 at 4pm and will continue for several consecutive weeks.
- Update on the Minnesota United Church of Christ annual conference; there is a new conference Minister as of November 1, Torri has been selected as the chairperson for the 2026 annual conference
- Sabbastian is working on developing a web page for rental of church facilities.

Board of Facilities:

- Kerry moved the pew as previously discussed
- Kerry and John have been fixing walls, painting, cleaning and general maintenance in the sanctuary
- Follow up regarding contacting Gull Lake Glass about replacing church doors is needed

Board of Financial Stewardship:

- Income and expenses for July were about normal
- The site prep for the Solar Array was done in June, and the solar array was completed and began functioning on July 31. UCC should be receiving a grant for \$5000 from Minnesota Power for the project. The team is working on a 30% refund for the project
- Letters and pledge cards for the 2026 Stewardship will be handed out this Sunday, and the remainder will be mailed next week.
- Men's Fellowship is going to terminate its checking account and will have its finances handled through Union's financial accounts.

Board of Personnel

- Connie updated the Council about the procedure for criminal background checks for volunteers for the Children's Sunday School service. Background checks are good for two years.
- Connie introduced a form she developed to help organize and improve the flow for team reports for Council meeting.

Adult Learning:

- Spirits and Spirituality workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, August 27 in the Fellowship Hall from 4:00 to 6:00pm

Congregational Life:

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

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
- Presentation scheduled soon in the Fellowship Hall by Obie Ballenger about the LGBT/JMT Action Plans
- Leech Lake Culture Alliance Potluck: August 18th 6:00pm at Onigum
- Izaak Walton League Spaghetti Dinner in planning for November
- 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 when the Izaak Walton League holds its spaghetti dinner as related to JMT environmental goals.

Men's Fellowship:

- Don is the team leader until November
- Men's Fellowship meets on the 2nd Monday each month at 9am. Meet at UCC to carpool to the Corner Store for breakfast
- Mike S is planning a presentation for Men's Fellowship on Cell Phone use

Outreach Team

- On August 5th Outreach helped at the hotdog stand for the kids fishing contest
- On August 20th a community meal was held at UCC with freewill donations going to the Lending Library. The donations totaled \$1,457, and after expenses the Lending Library received \$1,261
- September community meal will support the Hackensack Food Shelf

Tech Team:

- In September Mike will provide a detailed report of how the Solar Array is working
- The team is focusing on the sound system in the sanctuary
- No immediate plans for a tech sale but Mike is willing to take items as donations, and he has several laptop computers and TVs for sale. Donations will help support the Child Care Facility

Women's Fellowship:

- There were 22 participants for the napkin folding event
- There has been a lot of positive response for the appetizer recipes, and Sabbastian is working on the recipe collection
- Next month's event: Bring an appetizer, enjoy a glass of wine, and learn about "Happy Hour"

Worship:

- July averaged 52 participants each Sunday at UCC and 8 households online; August averaged 50 each Sunday
- Choir singing at UCC this Sunday 8-24-25
- When there are 5 Sundays in a month, the 5th Sunday will be dedicated to singing our favorite hymns
- Connie shared a new logo for the church, and it will be used during the Lion's 50th anniversary celebration

Moderator's Moment:

- Gunder gave a warm thank you to the Council for his new position and feels confident about a clear and good direction as moderator.

September newsletter deadline is Tuesday August 26, 2025

Meeting was adjourned. Next meeting is September 18, 2025. Minutes written by Judy Hoopman

THROUGH KODA'S EYES

A Conversation with Bandit (the Cat)

Bandit (the cat): "Koda, you and our human leave every morning and go somewhere. Where do you go?"

Koda: OH! We go to church. That is where our human works! It is in a building over by the hardware store where I get treats!

Bandit (the cat): Why do YOU go?

Koda: I work there too! I am the "Church Dog"! It is amazing, Bandit! People come in and out, they bring in new smells, they do different activities, and on Sundays, they howl at their God. And oftentimes.... There is FOOD! IT IS SO ALIVE!

Bandit (the cat): I doubt it is "alive," Koda. That is ridiculous to think that! I am alive. You are alive. Our human is alive. We move, breathe, and grow. But this church thing you are describing is dead. You go to a building! Buildings are not alive!

Koda: But the church is not a building. The church is a living organism! It moves, breathes, grows... it also changes, and shrinks and wiggles!

Bandit (the cat): It wiggles???

Koda: Yes! Wiggles! Church wiggles... like my tail when I am happy to see someone! It wiggles a lot on Sunday mornings! The church wiggles when the people of the church are doing what their God wants them to do.

Bandit (the cat): And what is that?

Koda: To love their God, and love people. But I also think that includes loving other things like animals, water, and the earth. The human's God sounds amazing! I might look into this human/God named Jesus a bit more. I hear an awful lot about Him. I am beginning to like Him. What about you, Bandit?

Bandit (the cat): Koda, I am a god. Haven't you figured that out yet?

Koda: Ummmm..... I may have to have a talk with our human about your illusions of grandeur.

Bandit (the cat): I am going to go nap in the sun. I will meet up with you again around 10:00 p.m. to chase you around the house to create a little chaos.

Koda: OK! Sounds good! See you then!



BOARD OF FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Operating Income and Expenses

Income - July	\$ 9,436.00	Year to Date 2025 Giving	\$ 76,138.32
Other Income* - July	<u>\$ 3,172.19</u>	YTD Other Income*	\$ 9,466.38
Total Income	\$ 12,608.19	YTD Total Income	\$ 85,604.70
Expenses - July	\$ 14,617.56	Year to Date Expenses	\$ 96,404.33
Balance - July	\$ -2,009.35	Balance - Year to Date	\$ -10,799.63
		Prepaid & Carryover	\$ 14,738.00
		Final Balance	\$ 3,938.37

* 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: \$ 63,583.05

Reserve Saving \$ 35,197.10

Summary

Income and expenses for July were about normal. Our current expenses and giving are below our budgeted amounts. We are concerned that our giving and other revenue for 2025 will be less than our expenses.

The site prep for the solar array was done in June, and the solar array was completed and began functioning on July 31.

Letters and pledge cards for the 2026 Stewardship Campaign were handed out Sunday, August 24, and the remainder mailed the next day. Please prayerfully consider your giving and pledge for 2026 and give generously.

After discussion in the July council meeting and a recommendation from the Executive Committee, the Board of Financial Stewardship agreed to have Fundraising and Memorial Scholarship be subgroups of BFS. The Church Council approved this change at their August meeting.

A capital campaign to cover expenses for the re-shingling of the church will be started this year. We hope to have a plan at the September council meeting for approval.

Men's Fellowship is going to terminate its checking account and will have its finances handled through Union Church's financial account system.

Sunday School is starting in September!!!

Starting September 14th children will be dismissed after the "Passing of the Peace" for Sunday School. It will meet on the Lower Level in the Children's Ministry Room twice a month (the 2nd and 4th weeks). Sue Kimmel and Robin Wicker will be teaching along with a few assistant teachers. It will be a fun, interactive time for children to learn bible stories and songs.

NEWS FROM THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Our glorious summer continues, although autumn is fast approaching in the North Woods. Allergies have been kicking in due to the increase in fall flowers. Happily, the smoke from Canadian fires seems to have dissipated.

It has been fun having the vocal choir sing at least once a month this summer. Many thanks to Sheryl for leading our small but dedicated group. If you are a singer, please consider joining us. Who knows, perhaps we could have a full-time choir next summer.

And many thanks to those who step up to be the song leader. I feel it's a pleasure to have different voices leading the congregation.

We are in for a treat on September 14. On that Sunday, Mimi Carlson and Kathleen Millberg will be playing for the worship service. I hope you can be present at the service, but if not, be sure to watch the recording on the internet.

As you can plainly see, music has been on my mind lately. You all know I love to sing and enjoy sharing this gift. I also have a fondness for the bells. Our church has a lovely set of bells originally gifted to us through memorials. I have been thinking about getting the bell choir going again, so if you are interested in this form of music, please let me know. It would be nice to play once in a while. This invitation goes out to men as well as women - some of the lower bells are large and quite heavy.

Should you have any comments, suggestions, thoughts, or ideas you'd like to share with the Worship Ministry Team concerning the worship experience, please feel free to contact any one of us. And we would be happy to have new members to our ministry team. Please let us know if this is a volunteer position which would interest you.

Team Members:

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



BENEFIT MEAL



Wednesday, September 17th, 5:00 - 6:00 pm
Friendship Hall

Join us for a dinner of meatloaf, mashed potatoes
 salad, and dessert.

Free will offering to support the
Hackensack Food Shelf.

ADULT LEARNING – by Linnea Dietrich

Spirits and Spirituality: Collage Making for the Soul.

Wednesday, August 27, seventeen of us from UCC and the surrounding community gathered for our "Spirits and Spirituality" retreat, creating collages expressing our ideas for our individual sacred space or sanctuary. We were invited to use our finished collages as prayer prompts or as visual reminders to us of the love the Holy Spirit has for each of us. One participant said, "It was two hours of joyful discovery, expression and sharing as a group of seventeen delightful people." Another commented, "The retreat was a great way to get people to interact and reach for something deeper than we often do in our Christian walk." We finished the retreat by gathering in a circle and sharing what our collages meant to each of us. As always, Laura Baum-Parr did a great job in leading us through the steps. And we give thanks to Don and Heidi for sharing the bounty of their wine with the group. We served flavored fizzy water, appetizers, and a variety of cheeses from the coop. P.S. Don did a great job of creating and sharing!

The Adult Learning Ministry is working on developing additional retreats for the coming year.

Adult Learning is sponsoring a Bible study called Bible and Beer at Rendezvous on Monday nights starting September 15th at 4 PM. Check out Pastor Torri's "notes" at the front of this newsletter where you will find the details. Hope to see you there!

Lectio Divina continues on Wednesday's 4-5 PM. Questions?
Please reach out to Linnea Dietrich, 612-810-3407.



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Men's Fellowship will meet on the second Monday of each month at 9:00 AM. We will plan our next meeting(s) and have that information in the email updates from the church and in the newsletter. Our meeting on September 8 will be breakfast and meeting at the Corner Store in Backus. Some of us will meet at Union at 8:45 AM so we can carpool to Backus if you are interested.

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 is sent out to remind you. If you are not receiving emails from Men's Fellowship but want to be updated, please contact Don Hoppe.

BIBLE AND BEER

Weekly Bible Study

**Mondays at 4:00 PM,
Beginning September 15th**

Rendezvous Brewing
112 1st St S
Hackensack, MN 56452

Bring your curiosity

Bring your questions

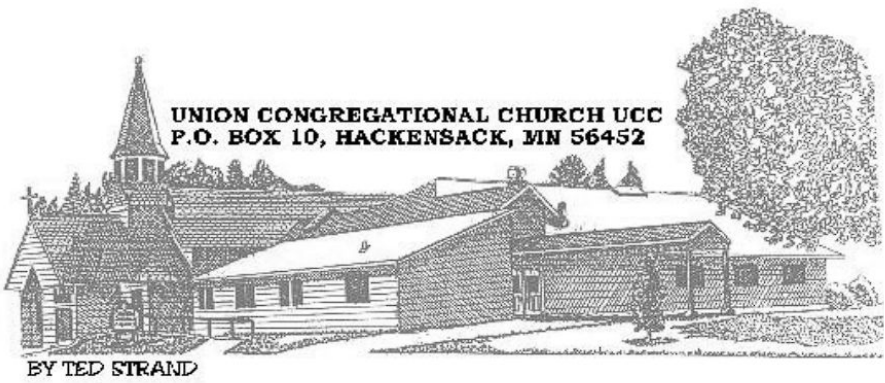
Bring your doubts

Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN

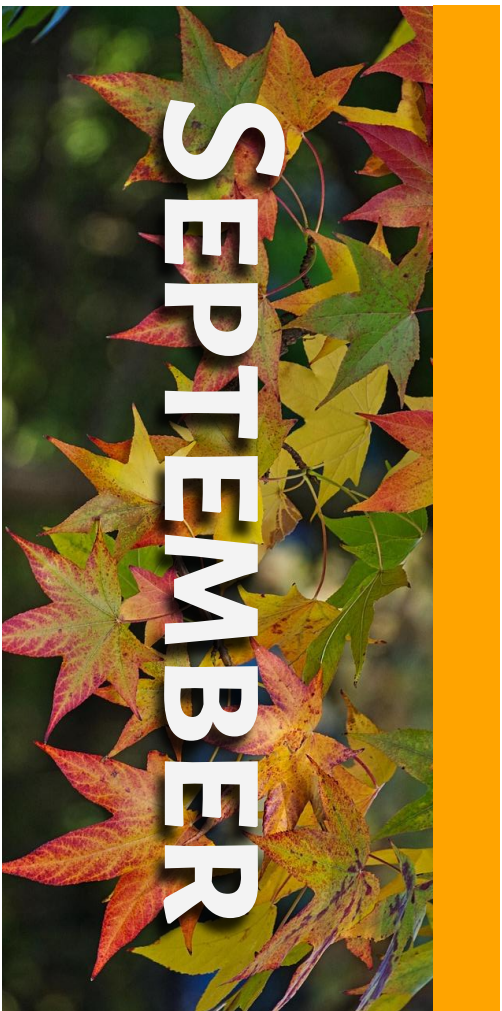
SEPTEMBER 2025

* Community event

SUNDAY	1 MONDAY	2 TUESDAY	3 WEDNESDAY	4 THURSDAY	6 FRIDAY	2 SATURDAY
	1 <i>Labor Day</i> <i>Office Closed</i> 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	2 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	3 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	4 10:00am-12:00pm Dream Group 7:30 pm JMT Meeting	6 <i>Office Closed</i> 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	
7 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	8 9:00-10:30 am Men's Fellowship 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	9 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting 10:00 am Executive Board Meeting 5:00 pm Northwoods Acoustic Jam	10 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	11 1:00 - 2:30 pm Women's Fellowship - Happy Hour Booklet and Wine Tasting	12 <i>Office Closed</i> 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	13
14 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	15 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 4:00 pm Bible & Beer at Rendezvous 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	16 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	17 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina 5:00 pm Benefit Meal	18 10:00am-12:00pm Dream Group 1:00-3:00 pm Council Meeting	19 <i>Office Closed</i> 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	20
21 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church 4:00 pm Unity Day Celebration in Onigum*	22 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 4:00 pm Bible & Beer at Rendezvous 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	23 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	24 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	25 8-5 - Setup for FIA Booya Dinner* 10:00am-12:00pm Dream Group 1:00-3:00 pm Fiber Arts*	26 <i>Office Closed</i> 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 5-6:30 FIA Booya Dinner	27
28 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	29 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 4:00 pm Bible & Beer at Rendezvous 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	30 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting				



FORWARD SERVICE REQUESTED



2025

**Join us for a yummy meal
September 17th @ 5:00 PM!**



THE UNION NEWS