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NOVEMBER 2025

Notes from Rev. Torri Vande Zande Under Our Roof!

It seems like there is always something happening under the roof of Union Congregational United Church of Christ. Every Sunday we gather under its rafters to worship with one another. We work hard to create a safe place for everyone to worship. We say it every Sunday, "No matter who you are, or where you are in life's journey, you are welcome here," and we mean it.

Under our roof, we have organized and led countless funerals, weddings, and other celebrations to honor people and relationships. Our ministry teams gather together to read scripture, study a book, learn a new skill, or just simply have coffee together. It is a place of refuge and community.

Under our roof, we have impacted the Hackensack community by doing monthly benefit meals for non-profit organizations such as The Hackensack Food Shelf, The Hackensack Lending Library, Paws and Claws, The Kid's Fishing Contest, and The Family Safety Network. The benefit meals also help raise money for the Men's Fellowship group so they can purchase meat for the holiday baskets that the local food shelf distributes to families who need a little extra help putting food on the table during Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. This all happens under our roof!

Continues on page 2

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor	Rev. Torri Vande Zande
Office Administrator	Linda Ottman
Secretary / Tech	Sabbastian Wilson-Webb
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

Linnea Dietrich
TBD
Marilyn McKnight
Heidi Hoppe
Joni Kumpula
Mike Schmitt
Cindy Gulbrandson
Mike Schmitt
Tammy Lindberg

BOARDS

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



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

November 5 Caryl Allan

November 7 Jan Bontrager

November 14 David Holle

November 21 Marilyn McKnight Erickson

Kiki Carter Webb

November 23 Barb Mann

November 30 Richard Vanden-Eykel

Bob Iversen

Happy Birthday!



Continued from Page 1

Under our roof, Faith in Action uses our kitchen and amazing Friendship Hall for two of their fundraisers called, "An Evening in Tuscany" (spaghetti dinner) and "Booya" dinner so they can continue to do their mission in the greater Cass County to connect local volunteers and resources to meet the community's needs.

Under our roof are two exercise groups. Bone Builders meets every Monday and Friday at 1:30 p.m., and Fit2Move meets Wednesdays and Fridays at 10:00 a.m. They meet to move their bodies and stay on top of their health.

Every August, the Northwoods Arts Council's Book and Art Festival uses our roof (and church) to promote over 60 authors and artists. Hundreds of people come in, walk our halls, and check out our sanctuary. It is an amazing venue to promote artists and community work. And they choose to do this under our roof!

Under our roof, people gather for an open AA meeting at 6:00 p.m. every Monday night. We give a safe place for them to meet,



encourage one another, and support their sobriety. It is an incredible organization. And they meet here... **under our roof.**

Under our roof, there is a child care center called Great Start. We rent out that portion of our building so parents can have a place to take their children that is close to where they live. It has made a difference in our community by supporting young local families.

So why do I tell you this? Because Union Church's roof is in need. It has done a great job over the past few decades to protect us all, but now, it is time to make it stronger so it can continue to do its job. We will be starting to raise money soon to put new shingles on and do some repairs so this church can continue to house worship services, community activities, and child care. This church is important to the community, and we will continue to serve it by loving God, loving people, and sharing space **under our roof!**

Peace,

Pastor Torri

The Outreach Team Update

By Tammy Lindberg

We have some changes coming up after the first of the year! Our Benefit Meals will be moving to the first Wednesday of each month with the same hours, 5PM to 6PM. The November 19th meal will be Tater Tot Hotdish, Buns, Salad, and of course a yummy dessert! The recipients of the November fundraiser will be the UCC Men's Fellowship so they can purchase the meat, and help put together the Holiday Baskets for those in our community who need some extra help with food through the holiday season.

Blessings to all from the Outreach Team.



COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

OCTOBER 16, 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, Kerry Swenson, Mary Parrish, Marilyn McKnight, and Judy Hoopman

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

No change to the agenda. Motion to accept agenda by Tammy and seconded by Heidi, approved.

Last month's (September) minutes were reviewed electronically by the Council and have been approved by email. An official copy was submitted for the October newsletter.

Old business:

Child Care Center – The Executive Committee and Connie state the lease has been given to Ashley for review and to sign. Connie recommended a sign and lock be added to the outdoor child play area so the public cannot use it as this presents potential liability issues for the Church should an accident occur.

New Business

Izaak Walton League: Fundraising spaghetti dinner will be November 13 and is sponsored by the Justice Ministry Team. It will include a speaker from the University of Wisconsin. The topic will be water quality. Don recommends that UCC not charge the League for use of the Fellowship Hall. The Council agreed that the usage is like Faith in Action, a non-profit fundraiser meal. Motion to accept this was made by Mike B., seconded by Caryl and approved.

Raise the Roof Campaign: Don stated there is no program yet. Discussion about possibly spraying the roof as an alternative to replacing the shingles which could last for about 5 years before the shingles would have to be replaced. This is a less expensive option but may have a limited guarantee on effectiveness. More information is needed about the spraying option, and Don has agreed to pursue a conversation with the company. Information will be presented at the November Council meeting.

AED, CPR, First Aid Training: Kerry Swenson will provide training in the Fellowship Hall on Saturday November 15 from 9 to 11. This will be a non certified training session open to our congregation, and it may be offered to the other community churches. A minimum of 10 participants is needed with a cap at 25. Training for certification may be offered in the spring.

2026 Budget: Don is in the process of working on the budget and still needs input from the Council and team leaders. Sheryl is helping with a cost projection with information through August 2025. Don recommends completion of the 2026 budget by mid-December.

Altar Remodeling: Connie states the altar in the sanctuary is in need of some updating to increase accessibility and appearance. She is open to suggestions and will work at developing a team to take this on and will keep Council informed of plans.

Policy & Procedures Manual: Connie has provided a handout for ministry teams about goals and various ministries, and this is due by November 15.

Serve And Safe Training: This was discussed as training for kitchen staff and volunteers. John and Tammy have had prior training, but the Council feels training for kitchen volunteers is necessary. Some ideas are to combine a training with St. Paul's Lutheran Church, check into the trainers from Brainerd coming to Hackensack, cost, etc. Kerry will gather more information on possible training options and present at the November meeting.

REPORTS

Pastor's Monthly Report:

Pastor Torri provided a written report and highlighted the following:

- Birchview Church has 9 participants. Volunteers to assist on Sundays are needed, and Pastor Torri will contact church members. Background checks will be needed since the population is considered as vulnerable adults.
- Beer and Bible study is going well with 14 participants at the last session.
- Pastor Torri participates monthly with a local clergy coffee, and The Lighthouse, St. Paul's, and UCC will share Advent services this December.

Board of Facilities

- Mike B. reported that the freezer is not working correctly, and there is a search for the warranty information from Costco. It needs repair, and he will find out if Costco handles repairs.
- Kitchen cracks are getting bigger and need attention/repair. No one has been available yet to come out and inspect the cracks to determine repair options.

• Carpet in Fellowship Hall is in need of replacement or at least a good cleaning. Council discussed taking the carpet out along the food service counter and part of the hallway and replacing it with tile or linoleum to make cleaning easier in the high traffic area. Item is tabled until next month so Kerry will look into cost options.

Board of Financial Stewardship:

- September income (\$10,011) was low, and expenses were very high (\$29,099) because quarterly payments and the annual payment to MN Conference for church mission projects were made.
- The 2026 Stewardship Campaign is continuing. 36 pledges have been received (\$81,637). The Church is hoping to receive 48 pledges with an anticipated total of \$120,000.
- Don handed out information to work on the 2026 budget to council members.

Board of Personnel

• Connie is looking at conducting the annual reviews soon.

Adult Learning:

- Linnea held a Men's Fellowship Lectio session this past week, and it was well received with 8 participants.
- Lectio continues each Wednesday with a strong core of participants.
- The bible study with Pastor Torri at Rendezvous continues and is going well.
- Steve Erickson will provide a presentation after church services on November 16 regarding his talk on Dietrich Bonhoeffer. A light lunch will be provided.
- A workshop on four types of compassion with Laura Baum-Parr is scheduled for Saturday, January 24 from 9 to noon.

Congregational Life:

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

Justice Ministry:

- JMT continues to follow the issues and conflict within Kitchigami Library involving inappropriate and toxic behaviors and culling of books.
- PRISM, the multiracial, multifaith, statewide community organizing for LGBTQ liberation hosted a gathering in Brainerd on October 6th. Marilyn suggested that JMT reach out to high schools in our area for support as well.
- JMT heard Ode Bellinger speak with 35 participants present.
- The book Who Stole My Bible? has been selected by JMT for the next read, and we will begin discussion on November 6th.

Men's Fellowship:

- Shift of leadership to Mike S. in November.
- Next meeting will be November 10 at the Corner Store Café in Backus for breakfast at 9:30.
- The November benefit meal donations will be given to the Men's Fellowship.
- Food boxes will be jointly prepared with the Food Shelf the Monday prior to Thanksgiving.

Outreach:

- The October community meal was held at UCC with free will donations going to Paws and Claws with earnings of \$800. Leftover food is being given to the Shelter in Laporte or in Akeley.
- John and Tammy will look into having Mark's Market or Super One donate food for each benefit meal to help defray costs, so the nonprofits would receive more financial support.
- Tammy is preparing a small stash of essential toiletry items to be kept in at least one bathroom for personal needs.

Tech Team:

- Systems are doing well.
- Mike will be heading up some tree cutting to increase the solar panels' receptivity.
- Tech Team has a surplus of TVs and computers that will be up for sale soon.

Women's Fellowship:

- The October trip to the Damsite in Pine River and nursery/flower shop was attended by 8, and all enjoyed the outing.
- November meeting will be election of officers and lots of fun!!

Worship:

- Laura Baum-Parr spoke on October 5th in Torri's absence.
- Attendance has declined slightly with the snowbirds heading for warmer climates.

Moderator's Moment:

Gunder acknowledges everyone's efforts and work.

Pastor Torri closed the meeting with a prayer/benediction.

November newsletter deadline is October 21, 2025

Next Council meeting is November 20, 2025

Team reports due November 17, 2025

No Council Meeting in December and no newsletter in January 2026.

Meeting was adjourned. Minutes written by Judy Hoopman

THROUGH KODA'S EYES

Hi! My name is Koda, and I am the Church Dog! First, I want to tell you that I am feeling great after my surgery and I am doing well. Thank you all for your kind thoughts and words to me. My tail wags because of you!

I have been listening to my human as she talks on the phone with people. It seems like there are a lot of people who are going through hard things. Some people are in the hospital for extended periods of time, some people are working through how to treat diseases and long term illnesses, and still others are going through physical therapy. So much going on with so many people! How do humans care for each other and yet care for themselves?

Well, it is a good thing that dogs know the answer to this! And it is a good thing I am a dog! So, from a dog's perspective, this is how to care for each other and care for yourself at the same time:



- 1. Take lots of naps Us dogs sleep between 12-14 hours a day! We believe naps are very important. It helps us stay rested so we can be present with friends when they come.
- 2. Get outside Outside is the best! There are so many smells to sniff and things to see. Dogs who live inside crave to be outside because outside gives us a chance to breathe, run and play, and chase and... well, you get the idea. And... It is so much more fun chasing squirrels with a friend!
- 3. Drink water Slurp up as much water as you can. Water is the best! I hear alcohol is something humans drink, but water is much better! It soaks your entire body on the inside. It helps all your organs function better, and it helps you feel better. Some humans say water makes them pee more... Yes! Of course it does! It is helping your body flush out bad stuff. It's okay to pee! Trust me! I am a professional pee(er).
- 4. Check in with one friend per day Just one! You can call them, send a text, or do my favorite thing... go visit! You do not have to stay long, but let them know you are there for them. Sometimes it might be good to bring them a treat!

So when life is hard, please remember to take care of yourself like a dog. 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

Income – September	\$ 10,011.00	Year to Date 2025 Giving	\$ 97,085.32
Other Income*- Sept	<u>\$ 3,427.52</u>	YTD Other Income*	\$ 18,146.33
Total Income	\$ 13,438.52	YTD Total Income	\$ 115,157.66
Expenses - September	\$ 29,099.95	Year to Date Expenses	\$ 136,778.02
Balance - September	\$-15,552.43	Balance - Year to Date	\$ - 21,620.36
		Prepaid & Carryover	\$ 14,738.00

^{*} Other income includes Treasure Sale, fundraisers, buildin **Firsal Balainus** and all other inc ne ne specified donations or grants not going into operating funds.

Checking available: \$ 17,621.36 Reserve Saving \$ 35,545.04 Total Assets \$ 379,967.92

Summary

Income for September was low, and expenses were very high. September expenses were high as quarterly payments were made and annual payment to MN Conference for church mission project were made.

The 2026 Stewardship Campaign is continuing and at this time we have received 36 pledges for a total of \$81,637. Our hope is to receive 48 pledges with a total of \$120,000.

Information to work on the 2026 budget will be distributed today to board and ministry team leaders.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

It's 12:30 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon. We pulled up to Birchview Gardens Assisted Living Center. We are here to have church with the residents. We sign in at the desk as "Union Church" and walk up a flight of stairs to the TV Room. On our way up, we greet the staff or maybe a resident or two who are sitting in the hallway. If Koda is with Pastor Torri, everyone says "hi" to Koda first.

Our first task is to knock on the doors of people who typically come every week. We remind them of church and ask if they need help getting there. Some need our help to wheel them, some need a worker's help to move them, and others are ready to go and say they will be there soon. This is the gathering time.

Residents slowly come to the TV room. A church volunteer has pulled up Youtube and has the church's morning service ready to play, but residents are not ready yet. They want to chat, say hello to the Church Dog, and ask questions of one another. It

Union Congregational United Church of Christ

No matter who you are or where

Land 1900 girl are in your life *****

The state of the s

takes several minutes to settle in. There are usually nine to twelve residents who gather.

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CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Continued from page 7

Church begins when a church volunteer greets everyone and welcomes the residents to "Birchview Church." There are usually two announcements: First, there is a Bible Study on Monday mornings at 10:00 led by Don (one of the residents) and second, Bingo will be happening at 2:30 p.m. after church (led by one of the residents). Then the button on the remote is pushed, and the service begins.

The beautiful thing about Birchview Church is that residents don't just watch the service, they worship. They will respond with the "Call to Worship," pray the "Community Prayer," do the "Passing of the Peace," and once a month we give them communion. One of the most powerful times is when we light candles. At church on Sunday mornings we sometimes light candles to express our prayer requests. At Birchview Church, we light candles too. The only difference is that they cannot have open flames, so we use electric candles.

After church we remind them of the announcements and that we will be back next week at the same time. Residents slowly make their way out. Some will want to talk for a bit and every time there is someone who says, "Thank you for coming." There are a few who ask to be taken back to their rooms, and we always give them rides.

This ministry has become an important part of Union Church. We serve such an important aspect of the spiritual life of Birchview. We are the only church that offers this. We are their pastors. We are their friends.

Why are we telling you this? We tell you this because we are looking for 3-5 more people to help once a month. We show up at 12:30 and we are done by 2:30 at the latest. It is such a blessing and honor to serve in this way. Please consider joining us. You will not regret it.

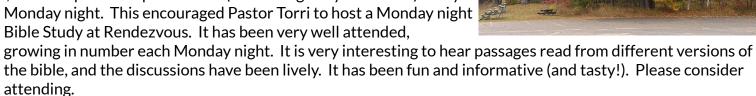
Pastor Torri and Caryl Allan

NEWS FROM THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Once again the woods are beautiful. Every day the drive to town is more and more spectacular. What a wonderful time of year! Temps are dropping, however, so we will soon be entering into the earth's quiet time. If only we humans could participate in the rest and rejuvenation offered by our world. But, no, we always seem to be busy doing something.

Many of our summer members and friends have headed south for the winter. As a consequence, the back of the sanctuary has been roped off. I know Pastor Torri prefers having us sit closer to the front, as it makes for a more intimate gathering. So please don't hesitate to move closer to the front of the sanctuary (any time of year).

Rendezvous Brewing has joined forces with Drake's Pizza to offer a \$15 small pizza and pint of beer (or beverage of your choice) every Bible Study at Rendezvous. It has been very well attended,



This month has 5 Sundays, so we will be having a singalong on the 30th. If you would like to vote for your favorite hymns/sacred songs and have not already done so, please contact Heidi or Linda to cast your vote. The August 31st service was beautiful, with many songs and readings.

ADULT LEARNING - by Linnea Dietrich

- Lectio Divina prayer practice continues at 4 PM Wednesdays in the library. All are welcome.
- The popular Bible and Beer (or your beverage of choice) study has continued at Rendezvous at 4 PM on Mondays. Pastor Torri is our teacher. Turnout has been very good. Join us when you can! Monday, November 17th will be the final session for 2025. If there is enough interest, we will continue this in 2026.
- On November 16th, Steve Erickson will present his talk on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who was executed by the Nazi Government in 1945 for allegedly participating in the plot to assassinate Hitler (although there was never any real evidence of his involvement as he was in Gestapo prison camps the last two years of his life).

As a young pastor in his 20's, Bonhoeffer began speaking out against the growing persecution of the Jews. Steve's talk will not only follow Bonhoeffer's life and his increasing resistance to the Nazi regime, he will also attempt to show the theological basis of Bonhoeffer's efforts to minister to the marginalized, the oppressed, and the persecuted. Steve calls it an examination of Bonhoeffer's "theology of resistance to Evil."

Bonhoeffer relied on the Sermon on the Mount as his guide. He believed the Sermon was there for the purpose of being done, not just contemplating it. He believed that "Only in doing can there be submission to the will of God." In today's climate of deep polarization, disharmony, and growing fear on many levels, Bonhoeffer's reliance on Jesus' teachings about judging others gives some guidance for today. Bonhoeffer wrote: "Judgment passed on another always presupposes disunion with that person; it is an obstacle to action. But the good of which Jesus speaks consists entirely of action and not in judgment. Judging the other person always means a break in one's own activity."

Steve will give his talk on **Sunday**, **November 16**th **in the Union Congregational Friendship Hall after morning services and a light brunch served by the Adult Learning Ministry Team**. Please mark your calendars for this special presentation. Come learn about how a German pastor of deep faith carried out his interpretation of what it means to follow Christ and do the will of God even in the most difficult of times.







STEWARDSHIP MOMENT - by Brian Wicker

Robin and I were drawn to Union Congregational, in part because of our dog, Ernie. We stayed for so much more.

For several years, we'd been looking for a cabin and a church. When we finally landed our place on Child Lake about three years ago, we knew little about Hackensack, other than Woman Lake Lodge made fantastic donuts. We did find out at some point, however, that Hackensack was creating a dog park. We sent a small donation to help their efforts, which became Ernie's "happy place" on trips Up North.

A dog park representative responded with a thank-you note and an offer to join us for a doggie play date at the park in the near future. That person was Linnea. When that date arrived and she and Buddy couldn't make it, she sent stand-ins. That person was Pastor Torri, with church dog, Koda. By that time, I knew Torri was the pastor at UCC, but my recollection from that first meeting is that we didn't talk religion while our dogs romped. But a ripple effect had begun.

Through Linnea and Pastor Torri, Robin and I met several people who were involved with community-improvement groups such as the Hackensack Game Changers, the Lions, and others who conducted fundraisers and served community meals. Many of them, we discovered, attended UCC. We decided we should check it out. This was no small decision for us.

Our previous church had been a comforting religious home for us for several years before our pastor and his family received another calling, and deeply-held beliefs over the issue of gay marriage surfaced and split the congregation apart. Many people left the church - including us - and there was a void in our lives.

When I heard the words at my first UCC service - "No matter who you are, or where you are on your life's journey, you are welcome here" - I cried. Inclusivity and a belief and commitment to helping others in our new little corner of the world was what we'd been looking for in a church. Better still, not only did the congregation speak those words on a weekly basis, they lived it all the days in between. We'd quickly found Community, with a capital C, in our new city and church.

And now, as of late August, we've become full-time residents of Hackensack, and we want to help more with our church and community. Robin is helping teach Sunday school, and I can use my shameless karaoke skills to occasionally fill in as song leader.

We've increased our pledge to UCC - remember to get those cards in, everybody! - not just with our wallets, but with our time and talents. We hope you can too. Union Congregational has a special spirit about it. Preserve it. Feed it. Expand it. We appreciate it so much more after having belonged to a church that had such a spirit - and lost it.

BENEFIT MEAL



Wednesday, November 19th, 5:00 - 6:00 pm Friendship Hall

Join us for a dinner of tater tot hotdish, buns, salad, and of course a yummy dessert!

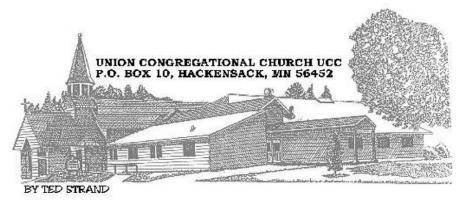
Free will offering to support Holiday Food Boxes.

Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN

NOVEMBER 2025

* Community event

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	1 SATURDAY
2 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	3 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 4:00 pm Bible & Beer at Rendezvous 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	4 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	6 7:30pm Justice Ministry Team Meeting	7 Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	ω
9 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	10 9:30-11:00 am Men's Fellowship 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 4:00 pm Bible & Beer at Rendezvous 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	9:00 am Tech Team Meeting 10:00 am Executive Board Meeting 5:00 pm Northwoods Acoustic Jam	12 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	13 1:00 - 2:30 pm Women's Fellowship - Gingerbread Houses	14 Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	15 9:00-11:00 am AED and CPR Training
16 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 11:30am-12:30pm Dietrich Bonhoeffer Talk by Steve Erickson 1:00 pm Birchview Church	1:30 pm Bone Builders* 4:00 pm Bible & Beer at Rendezvous 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	19 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina 5:00 pm Benefit Meal for Holiday Food Boxes	20 1:00-3:00 pm Council Meeting	21 Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	22 10:00am-1:00pm Tech Sale
9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church 30 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	25 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	26 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	77 Thanksgiving Day 5:00 pm Thanksgiving Meal for the community, members, and friends	28 Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	29



FORWARD SERVICE REQUESTED

Join us for a fall dinner November 19th @ 5:00 PM!



THE UNION NEWS

