

The Union News

Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
401 Lake Avenue East, PO Box 10, Hackensack, MN 56452-0010

"No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey—you are welcome here"

An "Open and Affirming" Congregation

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MARCH 2026

Notes from Rev. Torri Vande Zande

Lent Season - "Dark Spots"

We have entered into the Lenten Season. Lent is a time of self-reflection. It is a time when we slow down our lives, become more introspective, and maybe look deep into our hearts and look at what I call "dark spots." These areas of our heart are seldom seen by others. As humans, we hide them very well. Sometimes they are labeled as fear, unforgiveness, or grief. Sometimes we don't have labels and we only know them as feelings we have inside of us that we don't know what to do with.



Lent is a time to look at those areas. We see them, recognize them, maybe name them and bring them to light. Maybe we hold them up to God so God can help us navigate those dark spots and heal those areas that we so desperately try to ignore sometimes.

As we go through the Lenten Season, I encourage you to look in the corners of your heart to see what might be lurking in the dark spots of our lives and allow God to light up the darkness.

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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
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	TBD
Justice Ministry Team	Marilyn McKnight
Worship	Heidi Hoppe
Women's Fellowship	Sherry Toenjes
Men's Fellowship	Mike Gulbrandson
Online Sales	Cindy Gulbrandson
Tech Team	Mike Schmitt
Outreach	Tammy Lindberg

BOARDS

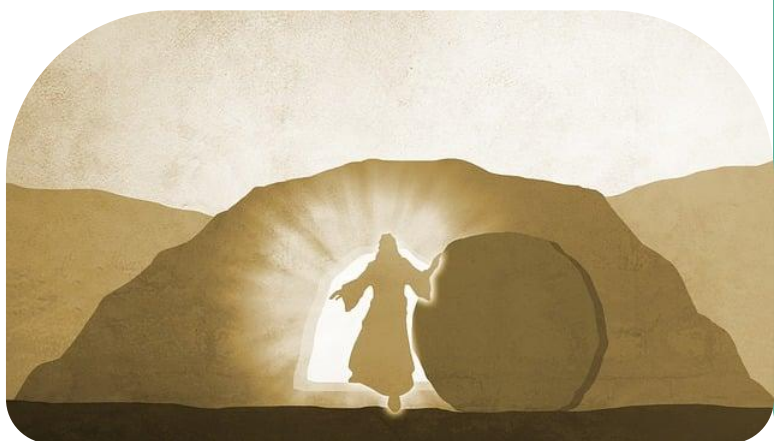
Financial Board	Don Hoppe, Sheryl Kaubisch, Caryl Allan
Facilities Board	Mike Bohanon, Kerry Swenson
Personnel	Connie Johnson-Schmitt

EASTER SUNDAY

APRIL 5TH, 9:30 AM

UNION UCC

ALL ARE WELCOME!



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- March 3 Heidi Hoppe
- March 4 Cathy Iversen
- March 7 Chris Swenson
- March 8 Scott Stenstrom
- March 9 Dennis Meyer
- March 13 Tim Hoppe
- March 14 Gunder Austin
- March 14 Sue Kimmel
- March 18 Marion Robbins
- March 25 Helen Mankenberg
- March 26 Sherry Toenjes
- March 27 Katy Hoover
- March 28 Katie (Kaubisch) Fasen

Happy Birthday!



Continued from Page 1

You may be surprised by what you find, or you may know exactly what you will find. It takes courage to look at ourselves and examine our actions, motives, and beliefs.

Our Community Lent Services on Wednesday nights will focus on dark spots in our lives. I am inviting you to join us either in person or online. The services start at 5:00 p.m. and you will be able to watch on Facebook, YouTube, or on our website.

So we enter into Lent knowing that God knows us. God knows every dark spot in our lives and is willing to sit with us, is ready to help us examine them, and is waiting for us to ask to be healed from the inside out.

Peace,
Pastor Torri

MARCH FOOD SHELF CAMPAIGN

March 2026

The Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign brings together organizations, businesses, faith communities, and individuals to help keep the 300 food shelves statewide stocked throughout the year. For forty-two years Minnesota FoodShare has campaigned for donations on behalf of our food shelves. 19% of Minnesotans experience food insecurities right now, and many of those are children or senior citizens. People living on a fixed income are having a tough time balancing their budgets with the cost of food, gas, heating fuel and housing. **TOGETHER, LET'S FIGHT HUNGER IN MINNESOTA!!**

I talked to the Hackensack Area Food Shelf a few days ago for an update. The Hackensack Food Shelf is open on the Second and Fourth Mondays, from 5 – 7 PM. Families that need food can come both of those days. Most food distributed is purchased through the Second Harvest Food Bank in Grand Rapids. They have noticed that the variety of food is good, with more plant-based protein options available. The Hackensack Community Garden and other gardeners dropped off produce for the Food Shelf last summer. The Hackensack Food Shelf feels the Hackensack Community has supported the local food shelf very well. Let's keep up that good work!

If you would like to support the local food shelf during the March Campaign, please send a check to the church and indicate that the money is for the Food Shelf on the memo line. Donations received through April 6 will be counted toward the distribution of funds raised through the MN FOODSHARE Campaign. This year all the money collected will go to the Hackensack Area Food Shelf. An addressed envelope is included for your convenience .

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

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Torri Vande Zande and the Board of Financial Stewardship





COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

FEBRUARY 19, 2026

Present: Pastor Torri, Mike Schmitt, Connie Schmitt, John and Tammy Lindberg, Mike Bohanon, Linnea Dietrich, Mary Parrish

Call to Order by Vice-Moderator John Lindberg and Pastor Torri led us in prayer.

No change to the agenda. Motion to accept agenda by Linnea and seconded by Mike S., approved.

January 2026 minutes were reviewed electronically by the Council and have been approved by email. An official copy was submitted for the January newsletter.

Old business:

Training of Cooking Staff- No new information was given. Mike B. contacted Kerry, waiting to hear back from him.

Sponsorship of Benefit Meals – Tammy & John are working with Pastor on a flyer. Pastor reported that the management from Sun ‘n Fun are willing to order food at their cost instead of sponsoring a whole meal. Mike B suggested that Jeannette Dudley at FIA could do this as well. The team is still looking for a “sponsor” to cover the cost of a meal.

Annual Meeting Recap - While packets were out prior to the meeting, Linnea asked that packets be out the Sunday prior to meeting so folks have time to read it fully.

Childcare Update - contract has been signed.

New Business:

Team Reports - Linnea reported that Living Deeply, Dying Well class went fantastic. 6 completed and had their document witnessed that day. Linnea is looking to hold another and asked for open dates. Sometime in May was decided. Exact dates to be determined.

David Coleman (new Outdoor Ministry) and Mallory Everhart (new Conference Communications) are coming up on March 7th for a clergy fellowship and will be at UCC on March 8th with David preaching for us. Linnea and Pastor Torri will meet to discuss these meetings “Love-In” had 50+ attendees. Ed Oliver gave away several items he created with his woodburning tools with a theme of “Minnesota Strong.”

Pastor Torri thanked Linnea for her work and said that “God is doing something special through the Adult Learning group.”

Pastor asked about security cameras mentioned in the Tech Report. Mike S reported that new cameras were in place throughout the church. There is an app that can be downloaded for the cameras. He can share this with others. The system records and keeps footage for 14 days. The thermostats are tied into this new application as well. Doorbells will also be installed at both doors that can record and have audio functionality.

Connie asked for a motion to approve all the team reports received for the February meeting. Motion made by Linnea, seconded by Tammy and approved by all. Copies of the team reports will be printed and available for the congregation should they like a copy to read. These will be on the table in the narthex.

Board Reports:

Board of Facilities – Mike B. informed Council that Widseth had evaluated the issues with the building and we are waiting for the official report. Mike advised that once Kerry gets back and we have the report, a task force would be created to discuss options for each area.

Board of Personnel – Connie reported that all bonuses had been delivered to the staff. 2026 Call Letter had been delivered to Pastor Torri and she was reviewing. Hope to have this signed within the week.

Board of Financial Stewardship and Annual Meeting – Don was absent but had submitted a report. Connie reported that a gift of \$1,000.00 had been received from a member and had been added to the Raise the Roof campaign.

Policy & Procedure Manual – Connie acknowledged that the Executive Board had approved changes to 4 sections. She walked through the changes being requested to the meetings section of the constitution. Questions were raised on the constitution change and the by-laws verbiage update. These will go back to the Executive Board. Council members didn't fully read the Retention Policy and asked that it be moved to next month. Changes made to the Church Structure were approved.

Moderator Moment - John advised that he was learning a lot covering for Gunder and that it was fun and memorable.

Pastor Moment - Pastor thanked all. She was grateful to all for sharing their gifts, commitment, and faithfulness in all they did to help the church.

Benediction by Pastor Torri was received.

John adjourned the meeting at 1:58 pm.

Newsletter articles due February 24, 2026
March 19, 2026, is the next Council meeting.
Submitted by Connie Johnson

CELEBRATING THE PAST: Women of the Church

Myra Damm, Historian

The most records I have of the past church history would be Women's Fellowship or in the beginning it was called "Ladies Aid." It was noted that women were not called by anything but their husbands' names, referred to as "Mrs," not by their first name.

The church was organized in 1907, and a new church building was built in 1917.

The men of the church sort of hinted that it would help to have a women's organization, so on January 17, 1917 the women of the church held a meeting and organized the

Ladies Aid. In the beginning meetings were held in the homes on the second and fourth Thursday of the month. The dues were 10 cents a meeting. When each woman took her turn to entertain she would serve more like a luncheon, maybe meat, baked beans, Jell-O, sandwiches, dessert, and coffee. Once in a while some kind soul would throw in a dollar which was much appreciated. It does not say in the records how many women were the first members, but in 1951 there were 28 members.

The first report of their work was given in 1925, when they volunteered to add \$1,000.00 to the insurance on the church and contents. They also paid \$20 per month on the minister's salary and purchased hymnals.

In 1955 the name of Ladies Aid was changed to the Women's Fellowship. That name still stands today. Women's Fellowship meets the second Thursday of the month at 1 p.m.

THROUGH KODA'S EYES

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

I want to update everyone on what is happening with me lately. This Friday, February 27th I will be having my last surgery to take out two small cancerous tumors. One is on my neck and one is on my shoulder.

This will be my last surgery. This surgery is not going to cure me from cancer. I will most likely have more bumps as time goes on, and they will be treated with medicine. I will eventually die from this disease.

My human and I talked about how I want to live the rest of my life. I do not want to keep having surgeries. I get scared, I have to take a lot of medicine that makes me sleepy, and I do not feel good after surgery. I want to run, play, and chase squirrels. I want to tease Bandit (the cat) and visit my friends at Birchview. I want to take naps in the sun and stare out the window to see who is walking on MY trail. (My human calls it the Paul Bunyan Trail... but I never heard of that guy. So it is MY trail!) I want to live my best life!



So, that is the update on what is happening with me. Do not feel sad for me. I am happy, and I like my life. I like going to work with my human, and I like going to the big room on Sundays and watching all the humans howl at their God. I like napping under my human's desk and greeting everyone that walks in the church. I love my job as the Church Dog! And I will do it for as long as I can... and as best as I can!

That is how I see it through my eyes!
Have a barky day!

Koda (The Church Dog)



TREASURE SALE

by Cindy Gulbrandson

Our popular Treasure Sale is back this year! It will be held on Wednesday, June 10th, from 8 AM to 6 PM, one day only. This date coincides with the big Flea Market in town. This year we will not be accepting clothes, large furniture, or exercise equipment. Feel free to bring in your donated items any time the church is open. Please call Cindy at 612-232-2760 or Heidi at 218-831-3927 with any questions.

BOARD OF FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Operating Income and Expenses

Income –	January	\$15,585.00	Year to Date 2026 Giving	\$ 15,585.00
Other Income*-	January	<u>\$ 1,341.65</u>	YTD Other Income*	\$ 1,341.65
Total Income -	January	\$16,926.65	YTD Total Income	\$ 16,926.65
Expenses -	January	\$ 9,570.35	Year to Date Expenses	\$ 9,570.35
Balance -	January	\$ 7,309.48	Balance - Year to Date	\$ 7,309.48
			Prepaid & Carryover	\$ 10,800.00
			Final Balance	\$ 18,109.48

* 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:	\$ 44,363
Reserve Saving	\$ 38,065
CD's	\$ 184,994
Investments	<u>\$ 197,523</u>
Total Assets	\$ 464,945

Summary - Income for January was good to high, and expenses were low. We do not have a carryover listed for 2025, but \$10,800 in prepaid 2026 pledges expand our positive operating budget balance at the end of January. We will be starting our Raise the Roof Capital Campaign. At this point, there is over \$4,200 in this fund. March is the Food Shelf Month, and a special donation will be collected to support the Hackensack Area Food Shelf.

Another reminder is that tax-free RMD or other donations from retirement funds can be used to support Union Church or the Roof Capital Fund. Planned gifts also create a legacy that will ensure the ministry and work of Union Church will continue for years to come. A planned gift is a way to leave assets through your will, beneficiary designations, or estate plan.

EMERGENCY GRANT PROGRAM

The Minnesota Conference UCC soon will launch an emergency grant program to respond to the needs reported by UCC clergy and leaders in the wake of the surge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Minnesota.

The grant program will support of churches, clergy, and communities in key ways:

- UCC leaders throughout the state have voiced a need to provide food, medicine, rent assistance, and other necessities for individuals and families in their congregations and surrounding communities who are afraid to leave their homes.
- UCC leaders are experiencing first and second-hand trauma as they are caught in ICE actions as observers. These leaders need immediate self-care activities and intermediate respite in the weeks to come to address their exhaustion and need for self-care and spiritual renewal in safe place.

These grants will be open to leaders throughout the the state, in rural areas, small towns, and urban settings. We are grateful for your support as we help our leaders and congregations navigate the tremendous challenges that ICE has brought to our state.

INDIVIDUALS: Donate via this link: <https://tinyurl.com/5xcesbu2>. Choose "Disaster Emergency Fund."

CHURCHES: Donate via this link: <https://tinyurl.com/mr3y9htr>.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

by Sherry Toenjes

Women's Fellowship 2026 Calendar of Events/Meetings

March 12 - Easter tabletop decoration craft, & discuss Spring Plant Sale

April 9 - Rug Hooking with Judy H

May 14 - Pizza Party at Kirin and Alan's home

June (2 meetings in June, and none in July) -

1) Treasure Sale on Wednesday 10th

Lunch - Cindy & Heidi

2) Fashion Show and Tea on Wednesday June 17th, featuring Sun 'N Fun's clothing. Time is to be determined

August 13 - Greens demonstration with Jen Gagliardi

September 10 - Leaf bowl craft, with Stacy and/or Laura

October 8 - Croatian Apple Strudel Baking with Nancy

November 12 - Lefse and/or other group baking project

December - Cookie Bake Sale (6th), and WF Congregational Thank You luncheon (10th)



Lent Services Schedule 2026

ALL SERVICES START AT 5:00 PM

Services held at listed church.

Lent Services

March 4 th	Lent Service @ St. Paul's	<i>with Soup after</i>
March 11 th	Lent Service @ The Lighthouse	<i>with Soup after</i>
March 18 th	Lent Service @ Union	<i>with Soup after</i>
March 25 th	Lent Service @ St. Paul's	<i>with Soup after</i>

ADULT LEARNING – by Linnea Dietrich

Adult Learning has been busy! In late January, Laura Baum-Parr led a wonderful retreat on compassion. We had 19 participants, and it was very well-received.

We co-sponsored the “Love-In” for peace and hope in mid February. A video of the event was shown during last Sunday’s service so you can get the idea. We were happy with the attendance of between 50 and 60 people. Very peaceful and love-filled.

Eleven of us completed the Living Deeply, Dying Well 3-session course on completing our health care directives. This course was taught by Laurel Riedel from Minneapolis. She taught us via Zoom while we gathered live in the council room together. The evaluations by the students were all very positive, and we are all very happy to have this task completed or nearly completed! We are planning another Living Deeply, Dying Well class! The dates are Tuesdays, June 2, 9, and 23 at 6 PM in the downstairs Council meeting room. Zoom presence is an option. The class maximum is 10 students, and we have 5 signed up already. If you are interested please reach out to Linda in the office. Linda also took the class and can answer questions you may have.

On Sunday, March 8th, David Coleman, the new ministry Chair for Outdoor Ministries at the UCC Conference, will be joining us along with Mallory who is the new ministry Chair of Communications. David heard about Hackensack Camino, was intrigued, and is coming to meet with Adult Learning to learn more about this event. David will also be preaching! Please join us and welcome both David and Mallory to UCC in Hackensack, a vibrant loving congregation!

NEWS FROM THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Spring seems far away this early in the year, but it’s wonderful to experience the lengthening days, knowing Spring will come, eventually.

Lenten services are in full swing. It is a joy to worship each Wednesday with our friends from St. Paul’s and The Lighthouse. The soup supper Tammy and friends prepared for the service last night was delicious, and I know every Lenten dinner will be the same. The theme this year is “Dark Spots”, and last evening Pastor Torri talked about things in our lives which keep us separated from God, those around us, and our own inner peace. Her example of racial prejudice was very timely.

On Sunday, March 8, we will host guest pastor David Coleman, from Minnesota Conference Outdoor Ministry. David is new to the Conference, so this will be a perfect chance for us to get to know him as well as Mallory Everhart (Conference Communications) who is also visiting the Hackensack area at the same time.

Yours in Christ’s Love. Heidi Hoppe, Chair; Sheryl Kaubisch, Caryl Allan, Gracee Rudkin, and Mary Parrish.



Seder

Thursday, April 2nd
5:00 pm
Union UCC
Friendship Hall



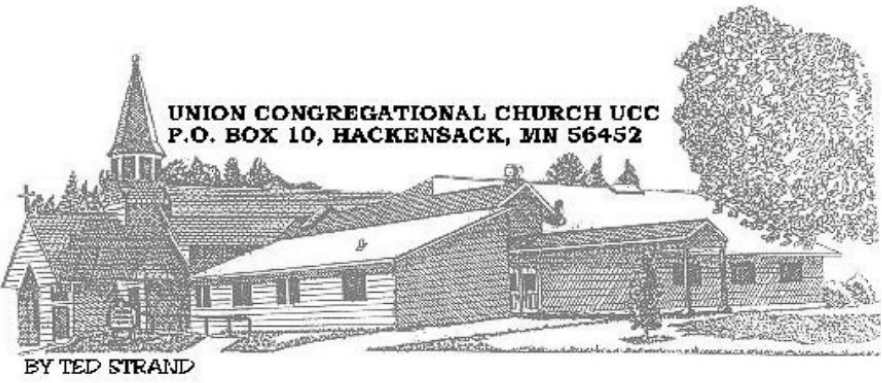
Please sign up on the sign-up sheet in hallway, or RSVP to Union UCC by emailing media.ucchackmn@gmail.com or calling 218-675-6300
Donations to cover cost of the meal will be accepted. Anything over cost will be donated to the Hackensack Food Shelf.

Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN

MARCH 2026

* Community event

1 SUNDAY	2 MONDAY	3 TUESDAY	4 WEDNESDAY	5 THURSDAY	6 FRIDAY	7 SATURDAY
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*	9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	10:00 am Fit2Move 3:45 pm Lectio Divina 5:00 pm Lent Service at St. Paul's Lutheran Church	7:30pm JMT Meeting	Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	
<u>Daylight Saving Time Starts</u> 9:30 am Worship Service 9:45 am Sunday School 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	9:00 am Men's Fellowship 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	9:00 am Tech Team Meeting 10:00 am Executive Committee Meeting 5:00 pm Acoustic Jam	10:00 am Fit2Move 3:45 pm Lectio Divina 5:00 pm Lent Service at The Lighthouse	1:00 pm Women's Fellowship	Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	14
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*	9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	10:00 am Fit2Move 3:45 pm Lectio Divina 5:00 pm Lent Service at Union UCC	1:00 pm Council Meeting	Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	21
9:30 am Worship Service 9:45 am Sunday School 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	10:00 am Fit2Move 3:45 pm Lectio Divina 5:00 pm Lent Service at St. Paul's Lutheran Church	1:00 pm Fiber Arts*	Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	28
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*	9:00 am Tech Team Meeting				



UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC
P.O. BOX 10, HACKENSACK, MN 56452

BY TED STRAND

FORWARD SERVICE REQUESTED



MARCH

2026

Join us for Seder Thursday,
April 2 @ 5:00 PM!
Sign-up in the hallway.



THE UNION NEWS