

# 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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# MAY 2026

## Notes from Rev. Torri Vande Zande

### GOD IS LOVE

We recently started a new sermon series called, "Jesus in Unexpected Places." We have been reading bible stories of Jesus being in places that surprised people. These include:

Jesus having a friendly conversation with a Pharisee

Jesus asking an enemy for a drink of water

Jesus getting someone kicked out of church

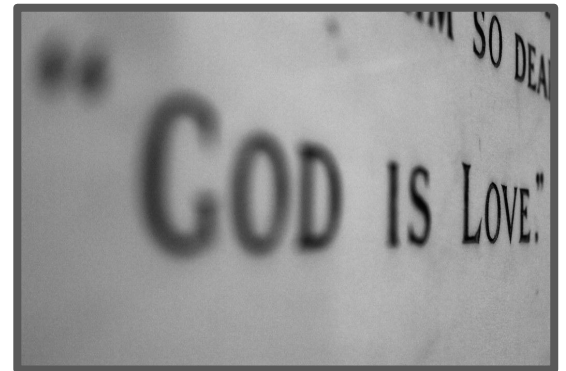
Jesus being killed for doing the right thing

Jesus takes up gardening

Jesus shows up alive after He is killed

One of the main points of my first sermon is that Jesus shows up in our questions. A number of years ago, I came to a point in my life where I questioned everything about my faith. Who is God? What was the point of Jesus dying? Is hell real? Was I born a sinful person?

I met Jesus in an unexpected place... in my questions.



*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
Bell Choir Director	Heidi Hoppe
Musicians	Sheryl Kaubisch Kathleen Millberg

## LEADERSHIP

Moderator	John Lindberg (Interim)
Vice Moderator	Stacy Hirschi (Interim)
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



## MAY BIRTHDAYS

- May 3 Judy Brown
- May 4 Robin Wicker
- May 6 Mary Parrish
- May 7 Tammy Lindberg
- May 15 Jennifer Stenstrom
- May 16 Dolly Olsen
- May 19 Barbara Lyall
- May 22 Mary Hertzman
- May 24 Marty Mann
- May 26 Wendy Cline

*Happy Birthday!*



Continued from Page 1

And while I was asking God questions, God came up with one question for me: “Torri, who do you believe Me to be?”

That question stunned me. My faith, my years of education, and my time of being in ministry were stripped down to one statement. I remember saying it outloud, “God, You are love.” “God is love.”

So I began rebuilding my theology and my beliefs about God from that simple statement. “God is love.”

What surprised me about rebuilding my theology, is that it has impacted every area of my life: My work, my friendships, the way I treat people who are different than me. It has impacted the way I speak, the way I think, and how I act toward people I disagree with.

God is love.

If God is love... then it should impact every part of our lives.

If God is love.... It should influence our decision making.

If God is love... It should help us navigate how we treat people. Not just friends, but even those who we might consider enemies. And not just those we know, but those who we have demonized because someone else told us they were our enemy. Even “those people” who we have developed little names for.

If God is love... how do we function as a society... as Christians... as Americans?

God is love... maybe we can start there? Yes, let’s start there and see where it leads us.

Peace,

Pastor Torri



## CELEBRATING THE PAST: Sunday School - The Early Years

Myra Damm, Historian

Sunday School was an important part of the church, and it was organized on July 28, 1899 by Rev. Morton of Brainerd. Mrs B. Peirson was the superintendent.

In 1904, classes were held in the dining room of the Otterson Hotel. Much credit was given to this department during this time in the 1920s. Our first superintendent was elected in 1923 and was later the Sunday School treasurer. Money was deposited in the Backus bank. We are not sure what the age group of the Sunday School was during this time.

The records show the highest enrollment was in 1939 with 95 attending, while attendance was typically about 85. An interesting note is that Sunday School also contributed its share by paying half the janitor’s salary.

Sunday School hasn’t always run smoothly as attendance is up and down. For periods of time we have not had enough children to offer Sunday School, but as attendance rises it will start up once more. Christian education is an important duty of the church, for these children today are disciples of tomorrow.



# COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 16, 2026

**Present:** Pastor Torri, John Lindberg, Connie Schmitt (by Zoom), Don Hoppe, Sherry Toenjes, Tammy Lindberg, Mike Schmitt, Heidi Hoppe, Stacy Hirschi, and Judy Hoopman.

Call to Order by Moderator John Lindberg, and Pastor Torri led us in prayer. Changes to the agenda: No changes.

**Approval of Agenda:** Heidi made a motion to accept agenda as discussed, seconded by Stacy and approved by all.

March minutes were reviewed electronically by the Council and have been approved by email. An official copy has been submitted for the April newsletter.

## Old Business

**Training of Cooking Staff** – Neither Mike B. nor Kerry was present for today's meeting so there is no new information.

**Capital Campaign** - Don agreed to a small donation box in the form of a church which Sherry's husband will make for donations that will be dedicated to reroofing the church. It will be located on the cabinet in the front entry along with a sign.

## New Business

**Child Care Update:** The Executive team met with a member of the Great Start Childcare Board to discuss filling the vacancy when Ashley Hunter leaves at the end of May. Union will only be involved as a lessor to the provider. A motion was made to the Board with approval for rent to remain at \$500 per month until the new person is licensed and has income from children attending. At that time rent will be increased to \$750 per month. This will include rent and internet, and a two-year contract signed between the provider and Union. Stacy/Don, motion passed.

**Board and Team Reports:** Prior to this meeting team leaders and board members provided updates of their current work in written form for the packet that was prepared prior to this meeting. A motion was made to approve reports by Don and seconded by Stacy. Torri advised that any of the reports can be shared in the May newsletter if submitted by April 21, 2026 when newsletter articles are due.

**Policy / Procedure Changes:** Connie guided the Council on changes that are recommended for the Ministry Teams for the Policy & Procedures Handbook. She prepared a paper packet explaining the changes for the Council to review. Motion was made to accept the changes by Don, seconded by Tammy and approved by all.

**Moderator Moment:** John shared that he is continuing to learn his new role as moderator.

**Pastor Moment:** Torri encouraged John in his new role and duties. April is a quiet month for Council after the intensity of Easter. Summer folks are returning, and Torri advised the Council to relax and get ready to gear up for a busy and exciting summer.

Benediction by Torri was received, and John adjourned the meeting at about 1:30. Newsletter articles due April 21, 2026.

Next Council Meeting is May 21, 2026

Submitted by Judy Hoopman



## WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

by Sherry Toenjes


We had another productive meeting with 12 ladies present! We had a fantastic presentation from Judy Hoopman on rug hooking! It was a lot of fun, and we even got to take a try at it ourselves. She brought many beautiful completed items and explained the art of primitive rug hooking. And a tasty fruit pizza was prepared by Sheryl Kaubisch for our treat. Thank you ladies!

We chose a date for our Spring Plant Sale which is Sunday, May 17th in the Fellowship Hall. More information to come on that, but please get it on your calendar and plan to bring and buy plants!

Our meeting next month will be a really fun get-together at the Christiansons' home for a build-your-own pizza party lunch! Toppings will be provided by Women's Fellowship and pizzas baked for us in their outdoor wood-fired oven. What a treat! Please join us for some fun and fellowship! Put May 14th on your calendar at 1:00.

Our upcoming Treasure Sale is scheduled for Wednesday, June 10th, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. More to come on that.

The wheels are well in motion for our Fashion Show on June 17th. That meeting will be on a Wednesday rather than the typical Thursday. This is due to both the Treasure Sale and the Fashion Show so close together. We have a planning committee led by Linnea Dietrich. They are getting all the details together for a very fun and exciting fashion show and beautiful lunch. Don't miss it!



## CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

One of the ministries of Congregational Life is something called, "**Called to Care.**" This is a small team of people who call, visit, and do hospital visits to people within our congregation. We are looking for a few more individuals who are willing to be part of this team. Below is an outline of what is expected.

1. First, **we do not have monthly meetings.**
2. Check with Pastor Torri or Linda to see who is on the "Called to Care" list and choose someone to visit or call.
3. Contact the individual you will be seeing. Call or go visit with that person or family. While visiting, ask them if they would like anything added to the prayer list for the church.
4. Pray with them. Encourage them. Listen to them.
5. Email or call the church office to make a short report (just a few sentences) about your call or visit. How are they doing? Is there anything we need to know? This is required so no one falls between the cracks and we can know for sure we are contacting those who need it. The information you share is **confidential** and will not be shared to the wider church.

If this is something you would like to do, but are hesitant to do it by yourself, you can join Pastor Torri on one of her visitations.

Please contact Pastor Torri at [pastor.ucchackmn@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.ucchackmn@gmail.com) or call 563-320-5360 if you would like to be part of this ministry.



## THROUGH KODA'S EYES

OH THE SMELLS!!!!!!

It is finally spring!!! Oh my gosh, I am so excited!

Hi!!! My name is Koda, and I am the Church Dog! I need to tell you about all the smells I have been smelling! Now that the ice is finally melting, I am smelling things I have not smelled in a long time! I never knew I would miss the smell of dirt!

I also love smelling tracks... all kinds of tracks! Just this week I smelled rabbit tracks, squirrel tracks, turkey tracks, deer tracks, and one other kind of track that I was not familiar with... My human said it was a raccoon or skunk, but all I knew was that it smelled a little weird and it made me sneeze!



One of my favorite things to do is go for a slow ride in the car. My human rolls down the window so I can stick my head out and take in all the smells at once! Oh how I love sniffing the air as we drive! One day, my human saw 12 deer, 2 bald eagles, and a porcupine climbing a tree! I smelled 16 deer, 1 porcupine, and 142 squirrels! It was amazing!

I hope that you take the time this spring to smell all the smells! Smells are such an important part of life! I think God gave us smells to remind us of how diverse creation can be. So I hope you take the time to not only smell flowers, but smell dirt, and rocks, and wood and water. Smell the air when you stand at the lake's edge. Breathe deep and remember your Creator!

That's how I see it through my eyes! Have a barky day! Koda



### The Outreach Team Update

By Tammy Lindberg

This summer's benefit meals are poised to launch into action on May 6th 2026, revving up our benefit meals for incredible causes. The "Family Safety Network" will be the first deserving beneficiary!!

June 3, 5:00-6:00 PM Join us for a benefit meal that will support the Children's Fishing Contest, an event not to be missed!

Where are all the avid readers? Mark your calendars! July 1st we will be serving a meal benefiting the historic and recently restored Hackensack Lending Library!

Save the date, August 5th, for a special celebratory meal with our furry friends from Paws and Claws!!

We are thrilled to be back serving our community and friends, with love, dedication, and yummy food.

All meals are served from 5:00 to 6:00 PM

# BOARD OF FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

### Operating Income and Expenses

Income –	March	\$15,869.25	Year to Date 2026 Giving	\$ 38,461.25
Other Income*-	March	<u>\$ 1,015.52</u>	YTD Other Income*	\$ 3,764.68
<b>Total Income -</b>	March	<b>\$16,884.77</b>	<b>YTD Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 42,225.93</b>
<b>Expenses -</b>	March	<b>\$14,166.08</b>	<b>Year to Date Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 35,277.08</b>
<b>Balance -</b>	March	<b>\$ 2,718.89</b>	<b>Balance - Year to Date</b>	<b>\$ 6,998.88</b>
			<b>Prepaid</b>	<b>\$ 10,800.00</b>
			<b>Carryover</b>	
			<b>Final Balance</b>	<b>\$ 17,798.88</b>

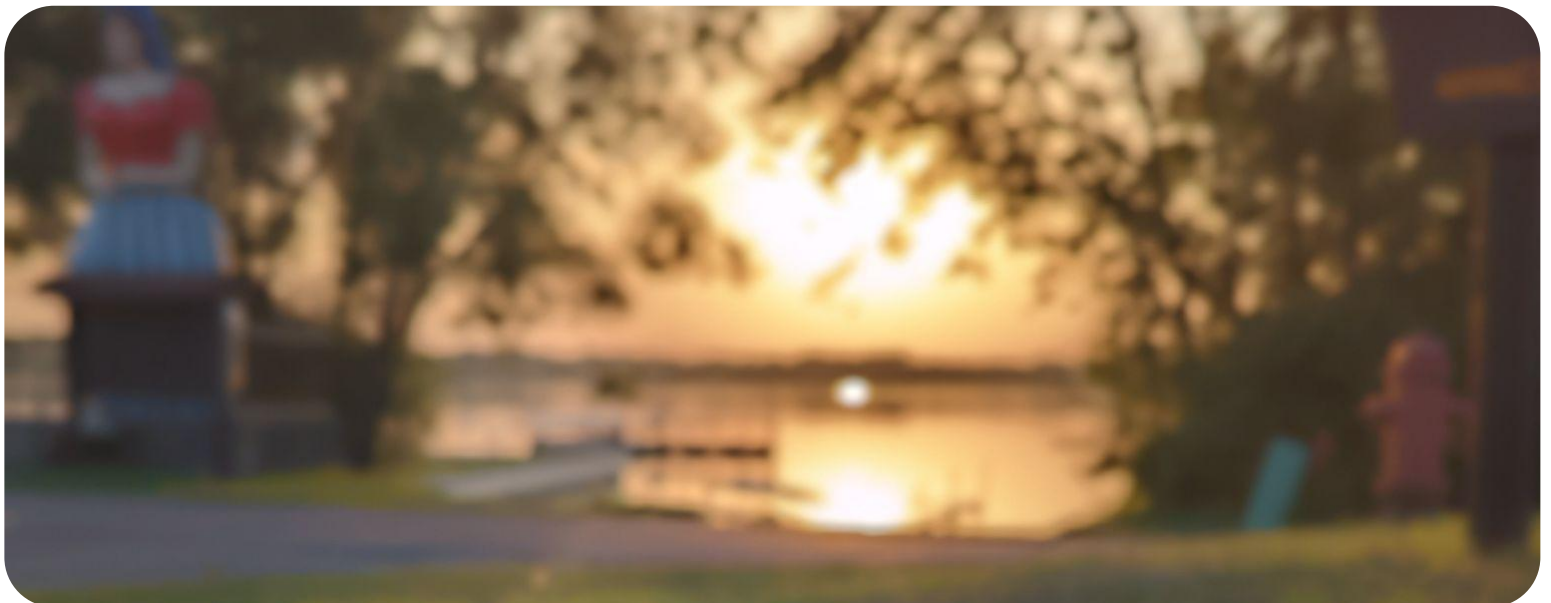
\* Other income includes Treasure Sale, fundraisers, building use, donations and all other income sources except interest and dividends generated from restricted funds and specified donations or grants not going into operating funds.

Checking available:	\$ 41,589
Reserve Saving	\$ 38,425
CD's	\$ 184,994
Investments	<u>\$ 191,713</u>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 456,721</b>

### Summary

Income for March was high, and expenses were average. 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. The 2025 year-end financial report has been rerun and there may be a carryover being shown in the future.

Raise the Roof Capital Campaign fund has \$5,437.48. A grant requested is being looked at for the roof project, but options are limited. The campaign documents will be sent out soon.



## ADULT LEARNING – by Linnea Dietrich

Need help, support, and accountability filling out your Healthcare Directive? Please join us for Living Deeply, Dying Well, a workshop guiding participants through the process of writing their healthcare directives while providing valuable information and support. Eleven of us took this class last February. We were all very happy with the info presented, questions answered, and conversation amongst the participants. We all agreed that the class was well worth our time!

The next class will be held on Tuesdays, June 2, 9, and 23rd from 6-7:30 PM in the council room at UCC. Laurel Riedel of Minneapolis leads the sessions via Zoom. We have found there is great value in taking the class in person as the discussions amongst participants add value. However there is a Zoom option for participants. The class is limited to ten participants, and we have eight signed up already. The cost is \$75 per person with partial scholarships available.

Contact Linda in the office. She has taken the class and will answer questions you may have.

If you enjoy nature, walking, people, fun, laughter, quiet, spirituality, and good food, Camino Hackensack may be for you. This is a spiritual walking retreat patterned after the Camino Frances in Spain which is 500 miles. The organizers have all walked the 500-mile Camino Frances and will bring a taste of that experience to you. The dates are Wednesday, October 6 to Sunday, October 11. We will walk 10 miles four days in a row with an option of 15 miles on day four. We are looking for fifteen pilgrims and already have four signed up. Call Linnea (612-810-3407) with questions. We will provide an easy training schedule.

Lectio Divina continues on Wednesday's from 4-5 pm in the church library.

## NEWS FROM THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Spring has come to the northland! It's wonderful to see the lakes opening up, hear the songs of the birds returning north for the summer, and see the garden flowers sticking their heads up out of the ground. We recently spotted the first White Throated Sparrow of the season!

We look forward to welcoming back our summer members and friends as they return to the area for another busy summer. Although I understand there will be some additional paving of side streets in Hackensack, the Flea Markets at Sacred Heart church will return this summer. In addition, we will hold our first annual one-day Treasure Sale on Wednesday, June 10. Items for the sale have been magically appearing in the basement storage room. Thanks to everyone who has and/or will be donating items to the sale. It will be held in the Friendship Hall from 8 am to 6 pm, and signup sheets for workers will be appearing soon.



There are 5 Sundays in May, which means that the final Sunday will be a Hymn Sing/ Lay Leader Sunday. If you would be willing to do a reading that day, please contact Pastor Torri or Heidi. It is a beautiful service of readings and songs. I hope you can be there.

One more thing. We are looking for a few additional members to our ministry team. If you feel called to this ministry and would like to help in planning and assisting with Sunday morning services, please do not hesitate to talk to Pastor Torri or one of our team members. We would welcome your participation!

See you soon.

Worship Ministry Team - Heidi Hoppe, Sheryl Kaubisch, and Caryl Allan

## **“What’s With All the Little Jesuses?”**

We added an interactive element to our new sermon series entitled, “Jesus in Unexpected Places.” How does it work? I’m glad you asked!

1. Little Jesuses are hidden all over the church’s main floor. Find one, put it in your pocket as a reminder that God is love. And because God is love, God sent Jesus (the Son) to remind us how to live our lives: Love God and love people.
2. Find a second Jesus and carry it in your pocket with your first Jesus. When an opportunity presents itself, give it to a friend who needs to be reminded of God’s love for them.
3. Find a third Jesus and place it somewhere unexpected. It could be somewhere around town so someone randomly finds it. It could be at a friend’s house. It could be in your house to surprise grandkids. Have fun with it. Let it be a reminder that God is love.



# ONGOING EVENTS



## Women's Fellowship

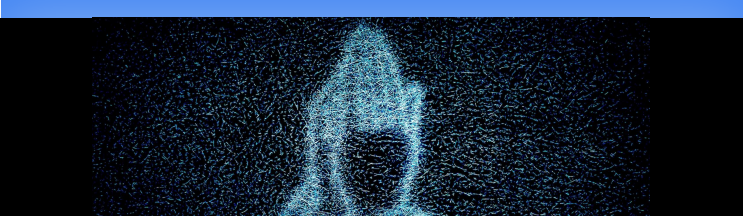
**Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm**

Build-your-own pizza party lunch at the Christiansons' home! All ingredients provided.



## 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.



## 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).

## BENEFIT MEAL



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

Join us for a taco bar with all the fixings, Spanish rice, and dessert!

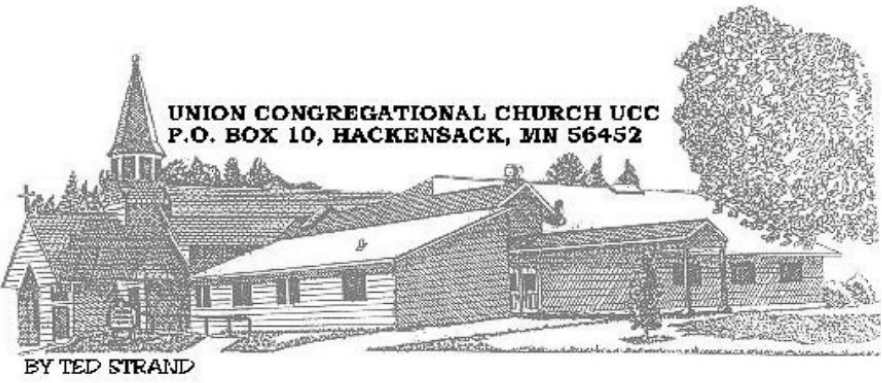
Free will offering to support the  
*Family Safety Network.*

# Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN

## MAY 2026

\* Community event

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	1 FRIDAY	2 SATURDAY
<b>3</b> 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	<b>4</b> 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	<b>5</b> Cinco de Mayo 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	<b>6</b> 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina 5:00 pm Benefit Meal	<b>7</b> 7:30 pm Justice Ministry Team Meeting via Zoom	<b>8</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	<b>9</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*
<b>10</b> Mother's Day 9:30 am Worship Service 9:45 am Sunday School 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	<b>11</b> 9:00 am Men's Fellowship 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	<b>12</b> 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting 10:00 am Executive Committee Meeting 12:00 pm Dream Group	<b>13</b> 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	<b>14</b> 1:00 pm Women's Fellowship - Pizza Party at Christiansons home. We will carpool.	<b>15</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	<b>16</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*
<b>17</b> 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	<b>18</b> 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	<b>19</b> 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	<b>20</b> 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	<b>21</b> 1:00 pm Council Meeting	<b>22</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	<b>23</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*
<b>24</b> 9:30 am Worship Service 9:45 am Sunday School 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	<b>25</b> 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	<b>26</b> 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting 12:00 pm Dream Group	<b>27</b> 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	<b>28</b> 1:00 pm Fiber Arts*	<b>29</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	<b>30</b> Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*
<b>31</b> 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church						



**FORWARD SERVICE REQUESTED**



**2026**

Join us for a Taco Bar meal  
Wednesday, May 6th at 5:00 PM!



**THE UNION NEWS**