

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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JUNE 2026

Notes from Rev. Torri Vande Zande

Monopoly vs. Dominoes

When I was a child, I enjoyed the initial phases of Monopoly—buying property, collecting \$200 for passing GO, and collecting rent. The game became tense, however, when my siblings began bartering properties. My brother, known for making shady deals, traded my Park Place card for a 'Get Out of



Jail Free' card, all the while assuring me what a great deal it was. He would gleefully build houses and hotels, notorious for developing one property to the maximum so that a single landing would result in immediate bankruptcy.

One day, he had built up a few 'gotcha' properties, and my anxiety spiked as I picked up the dice. I pleaded internally, 'Don't roll a 6... anything but a 6...' Of course, I rolled a 6. My brother shouted, 'Yes!' with a satisfied sneer, knowing I had fallen into his trap. 'You owe me \$2,400,' he announced. Since I didn't have it, I immediately pleaded, 'But I don't have it,' to which he replied, 'Then you lose.' As a 7-year-old, I felt a tantrum build inside me; my blood boiled, my face got hot, and I yelled, 'That's not fair!' I flipped the entire board over,

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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	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



JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- June 10 Sheila Hunter
- June 16 Luise Forseth
- June 16 Joni Kumpula
- June 18 Kirin Christianson
- June 27 Cindy Gulbrandson
- June 28 Don Olsen

Happy Birthday!



Continued from Page 1

lunged at my brother, and attempted to fight him. This was not a one-time occurrence; it became more habitual than I like to admit.

Thirty-three years later, I sat at a table in an assisted living center, playing dominoes with my aging parents. Growing up, my parents had been fiercely competitive; I would hear about who won, who lost, and who cheated every Wednesday after their Tuesday night card games.

Now in their early 80s, they seemed a little older, a little wiser. It was my dad's turn, and he needed a 3, 7, or 12, but had none. I thought, 'This is great! Now he has to draw one!'

Then, the unthinkable happened. My mother leaned over and asked, 'What do you need?' When my dad told her, she looked at her dominoes, picked one up, and handed it to him, saying, 'Here you go.'

I was furious. 'Wait! What are you doing? You can't do that! That's not fair!' I exclaimed.

My mother calmly looked at me and said, 'What? He needed a three; I gave him a three.' When I pressed, 'But what about winning?' she replied, 'Yeah, we don't really play that way anymore. We just help each other when we need it.'

Gritting my teeth, I asked, 'Then who wins?' She merely shrugged and said, 'I guess everyone wins.'

This year, we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States. As we all know, divisiveness has been a major theme within our country for the past several years. It has pitted friend against friend and neighbor against neighbor. It seems like we are playing Monopoly when we really should be playing my parents' version of dominoes. Due to this, I have had moments of sadness, anger, frustration, and hope. Yes, I said it—hope!

At the end of June, we will be kicking off a new sermon series called "The 250th: A Call to Radical Kindness." It is a series of hope and courage, and we will be using the illustration of Monopoly versus dominoes a lot!

Now, I am not quite sure how certain elements will look yet, but I have ideas. I am looking for one or two people who are willing to help me pull together some creative elements for this series. If you would like to help, please let me know.

Peace,

Pastor Torri

CELEBRATING THE PAST: Sunday School Mom's Morning Out Program - Myra Damm, Historian

There were many programs available to the youth in the past and this one is from the Mom's Morning Out program. This program was a shared ministry of Union Congregational Church and St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Morning Out endeavored to provide an outreach program to children and their families from both the churches and the community. This was a time for play for the children and a break for their primary caregivers. Children from infancy to age 5 were cared for.

The program had two paid staff, a coordinator and an assistant. Each session had 4 volunteers. One volunteer prepared snacks, the other three assisted with the children, clean-up and any other area where needed.

This program was presented to the UCC Council in May of 1993 by Rev. Sheila Hunter. It was offered on Wednesday mornings from 9 to 12 a.m. Volunteers came from both churches. The fall and winter program was held at Union Church. This program ran for years giving young mothers a break once a week to have a little free time while their children were well cared for.



COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MAY 21, 2026

Present: Pastor Torri, John Lindberg, Connie Schmitt, Don Hoppe, Sherry Toenjes (by Zoom), Tammy Lindberg, Mike Schmitt, Heidi Hoppe, Kerry Swenson, Stacy Hirschi (by Zoom), and Mary Parrish.

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

Changes/Approval of Agenda: No changes. Don made a motion to accept the agenda as discussed, seconded by Heidi 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: Kerry advised that the Salvation Army does not do the training any longer. He has reached out to the Red Cross and is awaiting a reply.

New Business

Child Care Update: Ashley's last day is May 31. Connie will be meeting with her to walk through the childcare facility. Ashley also offered the washer and dryer to Union. After discussing with the Executive team and speaking with the Childcare board, together we were about to meet her price of \$1000.00. The washer/dryer will be staying with the building.

Solar Update / Rebate Status: Mike S. has been working with MN Power on their reporting. He advised that a system will bank overages in the summer months to help reduce the winter spends. Since we turned on our unit at the end of the summer, we didn't get a chance to bank much so we didn't see the true savings on the unit just yet. Union did have a balanced month - October - where we generated what we used! Mike also reminded us that we did have some furnace issues last winter, and the heat pump on the furnace in the childcare did go out as well. Overall though the unit is generating what was expected.

Mike advised that he did get the solar rebate submitted to the IRS. There was an issue with the tax ID being used. Union has its own tax ID as well as being under the umbrella of the United Church of Christ. We discovered that our own tax ID had become inactive. Don is working to resolve this.

Improvement Project: Pastor brought up the fact that Union has no ADA accessibility to the lower level without going through the childcare area. Since the childcare is a private business and a private business renting space in the lower level, Pastor suggested the addition of using some of the childcare space to create a hallway providing access directly into the lower level. Connie made the motion: Pastor should create a team to research the possibility of adding this hallway and what the cost would be. The team could then present their findings at a later meeting. Stacy seconded the motion. All approved.

Semi-Annual Meeting: Connie advised that the semi-annual meeting was July 26th. All teams will need to submit a year-to-date report for any activity from August 2025 - July 2026. This will need to be submitted to Linda / Connie by July 15th so packets can be made and sent out to the congregation on July 19th for their review before the meeting.

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.

Don provided a financial update - April had higher expenses and lower income so we were in the negative. Year to date - while working in Quickbooks, Sheryl found an issue with how Quickbooks posted some funds.

The carryover from last year didn't show. So it was added back in, and the ledger now reflects the correct totals. Don advised that there is a team currently looking for a new application. The July Dinner & Show proceeds will go to the Raise the Roof campaign. Tammy and John brought a suggestion forward - to offer the opportunity for someone to "sponsor" a bundle of shingles. Don will take the suggestion to his team. Kerry advised that all furnace filters had been changed out.

Heidi advised she takes attendance by name for each service. She asked if anyone used this information or just looked at the total numbers of attendees. No one uses the information by name - she will discontinue gathering attendance this way. A motion was made to approve reports by Heidi and seconded by Tammy. Reports were approved.

Policy / Procedure Changes: Don reviewed changes made to the Board of Financial Stewardship section of the policy manual. He also advised that he updated the entire Memorial Gifts and Bequest & Special Gifts sections. Motion made to accept the changes by John, seconded by Kerry, and approved of by all.

Moderator Moment: John shared he has been working with AI on running a meeting. He continues to learn new things

Pastor Moment: Pastor advised that Ryan Christianson is going to be married in a small, private ceremony in August. Since Kirin and Alan consider the church as their family, they would like to hold a reception during Fellowship on August 9th and introduce Ryan and Gillian. Pastor Torri asked the question to all - What are you excited about in your ministry?

Heidi - seeing familiar faces.

Sherry - Fashion Show - multiple churches invited / participating, donations of flowers from local greenhouses.

Don - UCC state conference - Pastor Torri is chairperson, and several of the teams are helping out or doing presentations. Tech - setting up a new system for streaming / Zoom / band. Adult Ed doing a seminar. Discussion on the Hackensack Camino.

Stacy - excited to see so much happening with Union. We are very active in the community and with the conference. We may be small but we are mighty!!

Benediction by Torri was received, and John adjourned the meeting at about 2:00 pm

Newsletter articles due May 26, 2026.

Next Council Meeting is June 18, 2026

Team Reports due June 12

Submitted by Connie Schmitt

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE by Pastor Torri

Birchview Gardens Assisted Living Center is next door to our church. For the past four years Union Church has been leading a service there at 1:00 p.m. every Sunday. We have a dedicated team of volunteers, wonderful residents who worship with us, and even another local pastor who has found it important to join us on that day. They call themselves, "Birchview Church."

This past year, another opportunity opened up for us to minister to the residents at Birchview. When someone passes away, the residents have asked our church to help them find closure by leading "Celebration of Life" services. So far we have done three. All of them have been on Sundays at 1:00 p.m. We cancel church and take some time to remember their friends. It is a powerful and intimate time that brings healing to their community. It has been such an honor to be a part of these services.

THROUGH KODA'S EYES

A Roof Conversation

Koda: "Bandit, Bandit! I have big news! My human says we are raising money for a new 'roof!'"

Bandit (the cat): "A new roof, Koda?"

Koda: "Yes! And my new "roof" is very important! It's so the church knows that I am the church dog. I like my "roof" now, but if they can raise money to help my "roof" become louder or stronger... that would be great!"

Bandit (the cat): "Koda! A new "roof" is not about your barking! The building needs new shingles to keep the water out. It's about maintenance so the church can continue to do ministry to the community."

Koda: "Wait, I thought it was about my roof! I've been practicing my barks! Big, loud, important barks for God! I was going to stand right up in the big room on Sunday and just roof, roof, ROOF! I thought the people were raising money to make my bark even louder and better!"

Bandit (the cat): (Sighs dramatically) "You think they are spending thousands of dollars to improve your ability to annoy me?"

The 'Raise the Roof' Capital Campaign is for the shingles on the building, Koda. It protects the Friendship Hall, the sanctuary, and the Child Care Center."

Koda: "Aww, no louder bark-roof? That's okay! Protecting the place is good too! Especially the Friendship Hall—that's where the snack crumbs are!"

Bandit (the cat): "Just tell your humans to donate. I am going to take a nap in a sunspot."

Koda: "Deal! I'll tell everyone to help the church continue to serve the community by loving God, loving people, and sharing space under our roof—even if it's not my bark-roof! Good luck with your sunspot nap, Bandit!"

And 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 –	April	\$ 6,578.00	Year to Date 2026 Giving	\$ 45,039.25
Other Income*-	April	<u>\$ 1,015.52</u>	YTD Other Income*	\$ 5,404.96
Total Income -	April	\$ 8,218.26	YTD Total Income	\$ 50,444.21
Expenses -	April	\$20,716.85	Year to Date Expenses	\$ 55,956.85
Balance -	April	\$-12,498.59	Balance - Year to Date	\$ -5,512.64
			Prepaid	\$ 10,800.00
			Carryover	\$ 18,262.58
			Final Balance	\$ 23,749.94

* 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:	\$ 25,886
Reserve Saving	\$ 38,860
CD's	\$ 186,826
Investments	\$ 201,743
Total Assets	\$ 453,315

Summary

Income for April was very low, and expenses were very high. We now do have a funds carryover listed for 2025, and with \$10,800 in prepaid 2026 pledges, that expands our positive operating budget balance.

Raise the Roof Capital Campaign fund has \$5,437.48. A grant requested is still being worked on for the roof project. The campaign fund documents will be sent soon.

The Fundraising Work Group will be organizing a dinner/show event during Sweetheart Days, on July 13.

The Outreach Team Update

We here at UCC want to extend our sincere gratitude to all who attended our first benefit meal, whether as diners or volunteers. The event was a success, and it was heartwarming to witness the return of so many community members eager to support their neighbors.

June 3, 5:00-6:00 PM: Join us for a benefit meal that will contribute to the Children's Fishing Contest. This event promises to be an unforgettable experience.

July 1st: Mark your calendars for a meal benefiting our historic and recently restored Hackensack Lending Library. This is a cause we are passionate about supporting.

August 5th: Hackensack Food Shelf Please make every effort to assist our neighbors in need by supporting the local food shelf. Your support is needed and greatly appreciated

We are delighted to continue serving our community and friends!!

All meals will be served from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM. All are welcome!

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

by Sherry Toenjes

Women's Fellowship had great success for our May meeting with 15 present for a pizza party and sundaes at the Christiansons'. We had wood-fired pizzas cooked to perfection by Linnea. Thank you to all for making it a success and to Kirin for opening up her home for this event!

The plant sale on May 17th was also successful! Women's Fellowship made over \$190! Thank you to all who brought and bought plants! Also a big thank you to Cindy and Joni for all their hard work making it happen!

Our next event is the Treasure Sale on Wednesday, June 10 at the church, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Bring in your treasures to sell. Please sign up to help out as we have 3 shifts to cover. Cindy and Heidi will be providing a lunch!

Also in June, on the 17th, is our "Styled to Shine" Fashion Show and Luncheon at noon. Mark your calendars as this will also be an event that you won't want to miss! We'll have local vendors and models along with a very special luncheon and desserts. And it's all free!

NEWS FROM THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Greetings to all our returning summer members and friends. It is always great to welcome you back to the beautiful North Woods. The trees are leafing out, the birds are returning from their winter sojourn, the days are slowly getting warmer, and the lakes are inviting. Almost paradise! We visited the Cities in early May, and their trees were already leafed out. It's refreshing to see our trees catching up. Here's a photo of a red maple in flower. Awe inspiring!

Lots going on in June at Union Church. To name a few: Benefit Meal, Treasure Sale, Style Show, Bone Builders, Fit2Move exercise, AA, Fiber Arts, Dream Group, Lectio... So many things to choose from! There's something for everyone at Union, because No matter who you are or where you are on your life's journey, you are welcome here!

In addition to all the activities at Union, the Minnesota Conference Annual Meeting will be held June 11-13. Pastor Torri and several Council members will be attending, and Mike Schmitt will be leading a workshop on streaming technology again this year. Pastor Torri is the chair of the committee putting the meeting together this year - a very big job - and since she won't return until Saturday night, we have invited Truett Lawson to speak on Sunday, June 14th. Torri will lead the service, but has been relieved of the added responsibility of preparing a sermon.

I will be stepping down as the chair of the Worship Ministry Team at the Semi Annual meeting. It has been my pleasure to serve the church for the past years (don't remember how many!). We are in need of some additional members on the team, so if you are interested, please contact me to discuss our duties. It's a pleasure to assist Pastor Torri every Sunday.

Enjoy your summer! See you at church and around town.

The Worship Ministry Team: Heidi Hoppe, Chair, Sheryl Kaubisch, Caryl Allan



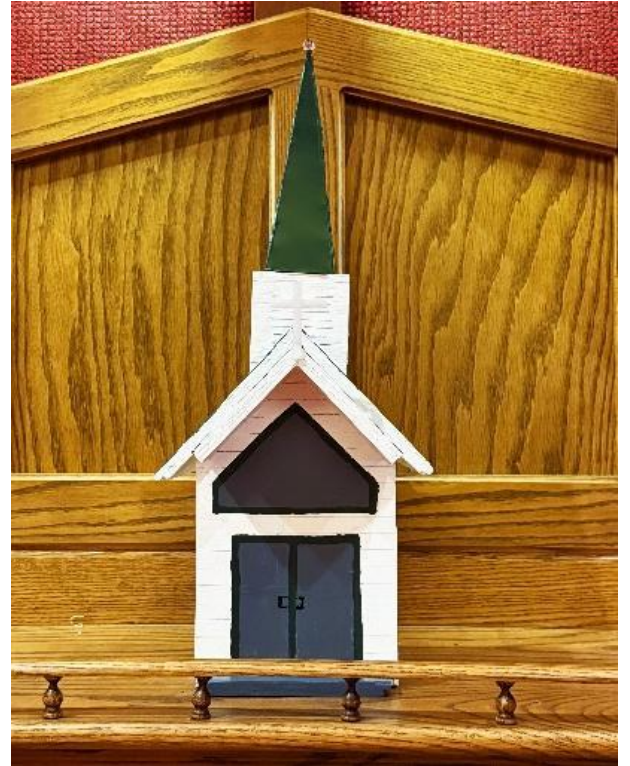
Raise the Roof

Union Church — Capital Campaign

Union Church needs to have a new roof. It's been over 25 years since the last addition was built, and the roof needs to have new shingles and some possible repairs. We have received various quotes, and the shingling will be about \$115,000 and we are adding another \$35,000 for any repair work needed as the shingles come off.

\$150,000 is a lot of money, but this work needs to be done. We have about \$5,500 given towards the work at this time. The Fundraising Work Group of the Board of Financial Stewardship has a dinner/show event scheduled for July 13 during Sweetheart Days in Hackensack. Pledging and donation information for the capital campaign will be sent to you soon. Please think and pray about how you can help with this campaign.

The Church in the photo above was made by Neil Toenjes. It is out by the north door as a reminder of what is needed. The Bell Tower hinges, and a donation can always be added!





Styled to Shine!

***Style show and luncheon
Wednesday, June 17, 12:00-2:00 PM***

***Featuring fashion from
Sun and Fun Boutique***

Free event! All are welcome!

RSVP appreciated.

***Union Church in Hackensack
401 Lake Ave • 218-675-6300***

***Sponsored by
UCC Women's Fellowship***

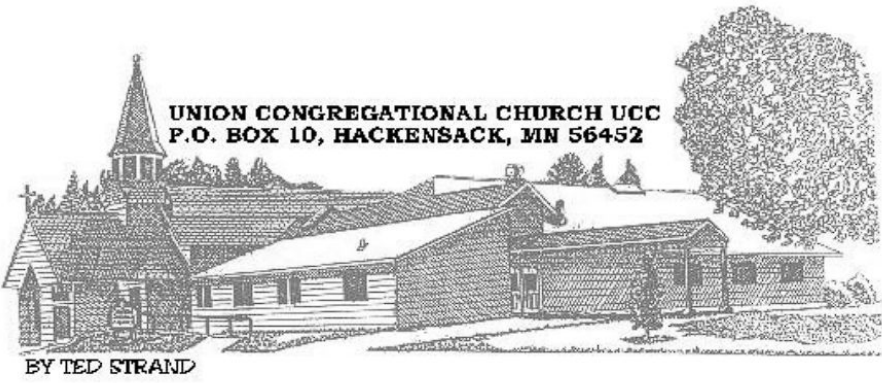


Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN

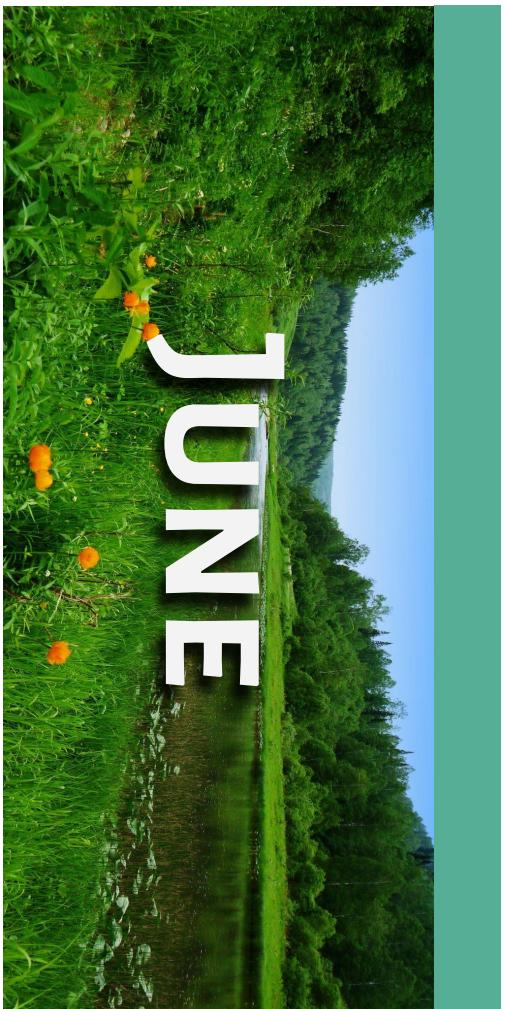
JUNE 2026

* Community event

SUNDAY	1 MONDAY	2 TUESDAY	3 WEDNESDAY	4 THURSDAY	5 FRIDAY	6 SATURDAY
7 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	8 9:00 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 Committee Meeting 12:00 pm Dream Group 6:00 pm Living Deeply, Dying Well	10 8:00 am - 6:00 pm Treasure Sale 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	11	12 Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	13
14 9:30 am Worship Service 9:45 am Sunday School 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	15 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	16 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	17 10:00 am Fit2Move 12:00 pm Styled to Shine - Women's Fellowship Style Show 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	18 1:00 pm Council Meeting	19 Office Closed 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	22 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	23 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting 12:00 pm Dream Group 6:00 pm Living Deeply, Dying Well	24 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina	25 1:00 pm Fiber Arts*	26 Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	27
28 9:30 am Worship Service 9:45 am Sunday School 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	29 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	30 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting				



FORWARD SERVICE REQUESTED



2026

Don't miss out!
Treasure Sale ONE DAY ONLY
June 10TH 8:00 AM - 6:00 PM



THE UNION NEWS