



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

<http://www.unioncchackensack.com>
Email: unionucc401@gmail.com

Toll Free: (888) 887-4820
Emergency Phone: (218) 507-1905



DECEMBER 2020

Notes from
Rev. Torri Vande Zande

Advent: Waiting in Our Mess

The day after Thanksgiving was the time when my family put up our Christmas tree. Our tree was artificial, so we needed to drag down from the second-floor storage room. It was crammed into a huge box that slid nicely down the staircase and pushed to the middle of the living room. We also had two or three large boxes of ornaments, garland, tinsel and lights that we stacked in a corner until the tree was up.

My family put up the tree like a well-oiled machine. My mom would organize the branches and I would put them in the long wooden trunk of the fake pine. Once all the branches were in... well, not all the branches because one was missing... we moved on to filtering through the ornaments and deciding which ones we wanted on the tree that year. Meanwhile, my brother wrestled with untangling the lights and made sure all the bulbs worked. In the midst of the mess we would always manage to break one or two ornaments, throw out at least a half a dozen lightbulbs and fight over whether or not we wanted the tree to "blink" or not. Maybe "a well-oiled machine" isn't the right words to describe us.



In the end, empty boxes that once held all the decorations were littered throughout the house and countless ornament hooks were lost in the carpet. It was a lot of work to get ready for Christmas! But in all the mess... we were ready!

I remember one year looking at my mom and asking, "Okay, what's next? What do we do now?" My mom said,



"Now we wait."

"Wait! Wait for what?" I asked.

"Christmas!" she replied.

I remember thinking, we have to wait? We did all this work and now we have to wait? I hate waiting! But that is what we needed to do. So every year we waited.

We are entering the season of Advent... the season of waiting. We take this time to prepare our hearts and minds to find the rhythm of God's heart. This year is a little different from other years. We are going through this Advent season and preparing for Christmas during a pandemic. It is a messy time, but in that messiness, God is there. God continues to be in our mess. God chooses to be in our mess.

Sunday Worship at 9:30 A.M.

Communion: First Sunday each Month

Church Staff

Pastor.....Rev. Torri Vande Zande
 Church Secretary.....Sabbastian Wilson-Webb
 Financial Secretary.....Don Hoppe
 Treasurer.....Sheryl Kaubisch
 Bell Choir Director.....Heidi Hoppe
 Organists.....Sheryl Kaubisch
 Pianist.....Kathleen Millberg, Barb Nish
 Custodian.....Sue Johnson

Church Council

Moderator.....Joni Kumpula
 Vice-Moderator.....Tom Cox
 Clerk.....Karen Holle
 Board of Financial Stewardship.....Don Hoppe

 Ministry Teams:
 Christian Learning.....Jo Horak
 Congregational Life.....Margaret Zieffler
 Facilities.....Mike Bohanon and Ron Merritt
 Personnel.....Church Council
 Worship.....Heidi Hoppe
 Men's Fellowship.....Ron Merritt
 Women's Fellowship.....Linda Merritt

Advent is a time where we anticipate the long-awaited Messiah. We reflect on a hope for a better future, a peace that transcends all understanding, an unexplainable joy that fills our souls and an unconditional love that envelopes our lives when we put our trust in God. In our mess... we wait for God to enter our story. May this season of Advent find you pondering the meaning of hope, peace, joy and love in your lives.

In Christ Alone,

Pastor Torri Vande Zande

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- December 5 Kris Kayser
- December 10 Grace Noonan
Sandy Tauber
Nathan Kalli
- December 12 Michael Small
- December 14 Charles Green
- December 15 Verlee Cline
- December 16 Kathy Adams
- December 17 Angie Danielson
- December 21 Lois Bohanon
- December 22 Sandra Kutscher
- December 23 Dick Anderson
- December 27 Gordon Ford
- December 28 Kathy Green
- December 30 Bev Patterson
- December 31 Mike Gulbrandson

Christmas Eve Service

5:00 P.M. (ONLINE ONLY)

We will be streaming our Christmas Eve service this year though our regular mediums of Facebook, YouTube and our website. We will not be doing an in-person service, but want everyone to stay safe through the holiday season.

Our Christmas Eve Service will look very different this year. We are still conceptualizing what it will be like. But there will be music! Lots of music!



MODERATOR'S NOTES

December greetings and Merry Christmas! Wow what a year it's been. It will certainly be a big spot in the history books; But we made it this far and there is light at the end of the tunnel. I pray that you are all healthy and taking the precautions necessary. Union is chugging along pretty well. Our streaming worship service is constantly improving thanks to the hard work of Torri, Heide, Don, and the rest of the video crew. A huge thank you to them! We are looking forward to the Wednesday night Advent services with St. Paul's and Union together. I love that tradition!

Sue and Mike have been doing a great job with the community dinners. They are looking forward to the big holiday dinner on the sixteenth. A big thanks to both of them and their crew. Our November Council meeting was entirely on zoom, and it went very well. We are taking no chances just in case we are mostly old. Oops, I didn't mean that...

I have done some holiday decorating and I'm hearing that the big Friendship hall tree is now a tradition and should be up, so do stop in and take a peek, I do have fun decorating! Do take time to enjoy the season even though you see fewer friends and relatives. Each day is truly a blessing from God in this wonderful home we call Earth. We are so fortunate to live in this beautiful area called Hackensack. We are blessed!

Till next time in 2021 Joni!

CELEBRATING THE PAST – Myra Damm, Historian

Holidays—2020

By the time this Newsletter comes out Thanksgiving will be over, and we will be planning all things Christmas. I looked through the files for written history about Thanksgiving but found nothing mentioned.

Back in the day, families lived closer together, not scattered all over the country. So visits to the parents or grandparents were a tradition of the holidays. A short trip to Grampa and Grandma didn't involve flying across the country, or making lengthy car trips to get there.

This year has changed everything and will probably make us all rethink many things we have done in the past.

As historian, I get to look back in the files and relive for a moment all the "good ole days", and there are many in our church as we have moved forward to the future.

We were, and still are, a church family; missing the ones we haven't seen, planning things to do as a church family, and finding ways to work around the pandemic to be together either by Zoom, or livestream. (These words haven't shown up in our history until now!) And I might add, they are working to keep us connected in a new way.

God is with us, and next year I will be writing about 2020 as another part of our history.

WORSHIP NEWS

December is usually such a busy time of year, with shopping, visiting, and partying. 2020, however, will be different. How can we keep up our spirits during these worrisome times? Staying active and connected even when we cannot be together with family and friends is important. Some suggestions are: call a friend or family member to chat, throw out a bit of food for our feathered (and furry) friends, or perhaps take a walk in the crisp air.

Another way to stay connected with our church and community is to tune in to our Advent services on Wednesday evenings at 5:30. These services are being streamed for members of both Union Congregational and St. Paul's Lutheran and will be available on Facebook Live, YouTube, and each church's website. They will include scripture, carols, a message from Pastor Bob or Pastor Torri, and the Holden Evening Prayer, which we have done during Advent for quite a few years.

Also, please plan to tune in to Union church on Sunday, December 13, for our Family Christmas Program. We're planning a special service, with members and friends taking part in the streamed program.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all. Stay warm, stay healthy, stay safe, stay connected!

Worship Ministry Team: Heidi Hoppe, Gracee Rudkin, Caryl Alan, and Sheryl Kaubisch



COUNCIL MINUTES – NOVEMBER 19, 2020

PRESENT: by Zoom: Pastor Torri, Karen Holle, Joni Kumpula, Tom Cox, Don Hoppe, Heidi Hoppe, Ron Merritt, Linda Merritt, Mike Bohanon, Sabbastian Wilson-Webb.

Joni called the meeting to order. Pastor Torri offered a convening prayer. The agenda was approved as written. The minutes of the last meeting were approved with one correction.

Joys and Concerns: Council members discussed a few church members they have concerns about. Joni mentioned that the small funeral service Pastor Torri officiated for Barb Payne's family was very special.

Pastor's monthly report: Pastor Torri mentioned that Bud Lienes' son, Ted had called the church after the All Saint's Day service to say how meaningful that service had been for him and his siblings. Torri also mentioned that she has not been feeling well and has been tested for covid. Results next week. In the meantime, Torri will preach from her home on Sunday and will not be present in the sanctuary.

Because of increasing cases of Covid in our area, Bone Builders will not be meeting to exercise. The Executive Committee meeting December 14 will be by zoom only. There will not be a Council meeting in December.

Financial Board: Don reported that November income at this time is about the same as the total for November for last year. He hopes that all pledges will be completed soon and that non-pledge donors will continue to give. He also hopes for a good "special giving" at the end of the year.

Forty one pledges have been received for a total of \$93,984. Don's team will be working on the 2021 budget soon and all committees and boards are encouraged to get their budgets in as soon as possible.

Facilities: Ron reported that the church needs two furnaces to replace the ones that heat the fellowship hall. He wants that cost in the 2021 budget and estimates it will be about \$18,000. Sand has been delivered near the basketball court to be used to fill bottles for use on slippery surfaces. Ron has heard from RREAL Solar recently and has learned that our solar power project will not be tackled until next year.

Personnel: It is time to begin thinking about raises for staff at Union Church for 2021. This will be part of our 2021 budget process. Several of our members are ready to "retire" after many years of service to the church. We will consciously begin to talk to others about taking a leadership role at Union. Pastor Torri reminded us that we need to have good job descriptions of our current positions if we want to be replaced next year so people know what is expected of them if they agree to a church job.

Clerk's Report/Outreach/ Newsletter Deadline: Karen will write an article for the newsletter on The Christmas Fund. The newsletter deadline is next Tuesday, Nov. 24. Please get your articles into Sabbastian.

Ministry Team Reports: Congregational Life: The team continues to check on people in the congregation. Christmas cards will be sent out in December to spread holiday cheer. Please call friends and church members to wish them a good holiday season in these difficult times.

Worship: Heidi reviewed some of the plans for Advent this year. The services will be held on Wednesday nights in December at 5:30. They will be virtual services that include the Holden Evening Prayer. Heidi and Pastor Bob from St. Paul's Lutheran will perform the music and Pastor Torri will read scripture. This will be very uplifting for members of both St. Paul's Lutheran Church and Union Congregational Church.

Pastor Torri, Jo and Heidi are working on the special Family Christmas Service which will be on December 13. The families will dress up and tell the Christmas story through photographs while Torri reads the scripture. Charlie and Becca will provide music for the prelude and the postlude this day.

Members of the Congregation are being encouraged to video (with their smartphones) a 5 – 10 second greeting to church members wishing everyone Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Send the video to the church and Sabbastian will incorporate the messages into December church services. The deadline for getting your video in to the

church is December 1.

Women's Fellowship: No physical meeting will be held in December, but individuals will help with the Christmas card project. If you would like to write out some Christmas cards call Karen Holle for more info.

Men's Fellowship: Ron reported that the men are purchasing chickens for the Thanksgiving food baskets. Share and Care will provide the rest of the food for the baskets and will arrange delivery to recipients. The men will also provide meat for December food baskets.

The men's fellowship will have a zoom meeting on December 1. Details to follow.

Christian Learning: Jo was not able to attend this meeting. The traditional Holiday Meal will be available for pick-up on December 16. After this meal, the Family Table folks will be taking a two week break before the Wednesday meals start up again in January.

Moderator Moment: Joni encouraged us to call people who may be lonely and to ponder our blessings. This is a time when kindness and patience will go a long way toward making life easier and more fulfilling. We hold those people who are struggling during this holiday season in our hearts and prayers.

New Business: The Semi-annual meeting will be January 24, 2021.

Next Council meeting is January 14, 2021 at 1:00. No meeting in December and the January meeting is one week early to get ready for the semi-annual meeting. Executive Committee meets December 14. Meeting adjourned. Clerk: Karen Holle

Self-Care During the Holidays

I am writing this article two days before Thanksgiving. I am at my kitchen table looking out the window as snow gently falls from the sky. So far, the winter has been mild, but I know in the back of my mind it will get worse. I have done my best to prepare for it. I stacked wood in the shed for my fireplace, my lawn is cleaned up and I budgeted for the heating cost. I got the space heaters out, cleaned the humidifier and made soup and salsa to put in the freezer for times when I am snowed in. I feel prepared, but I know this winter will be different.

The realization of a different winter hit me last week when I was tested for COVID. My test came back negative, thankfully... but it triggered me to think about what I am doing to take care of myself. It was easier in the summer. I could go out for long walks with Caesar or I could talk with friends outside sitting in my lawn chair. Now, my walks are shorter and sitting in a lawn chair will only give me frostbite. I realized that I needed to make some decisions to take care of myself this winter... deliberate and calculated decisions.

I am wired as an introvert, so alone time is meaningful to me, however if my alone time does not have some loose structure, I can become very lonely. There are several needs I have as a human being, and I am guessing you have these needs too:

1. **Community** – I need people. I have not been doing well keeping in touch with friends lately and I realize that. A few days ago, I picked up the phone and called a friend I have not spoken to in months. It was like drinking a large glass of ice water on a hot humid day! We talked for about an hour. When I hung up, I felt refreshed!
2. **Rest** – Many of you know that I covet my Sunday afternoon naps. It is my time to reset for the week. Lately, I have not been taking naps and I miss them. Many times, my brain doesn't turn off when I get home and I end up doing laundry or cleaning the kitchen. I need to realize that those things can wait. I must rest and take time to unplug from life.

CAESAR'S TALES — Hope!

Hi! My name is Caesar and I am the Union Congregational Church Dog! The weather outside is changing and snow is falling to the ground. This means my human will be putting the twinkly lights on the tree and I will get to wear deer antlers on my head. I do not know what this season is called, but it is fun!

It is also the time of year where my human and I go for walks in town on the trail rather than on the trails outside of town. That is okay with me because I get to see more people sometimes! And I love people!

I need to tell you about my new friend! I met her on the trail. Well, I do not know if she knows I am her friend yet (I only met her twice). But she is my new friend and I love her!



The day I met my new friend, I was sniffing the big rock in the park. A lady came by on the trail and asked my human a question. I did not understand all her words, but I did understand ONE word: Treat! My human looked at me and smiled. The next thing I know, this lady offers me a treat! I was so surprised! And it was SO good!

A few weeks later, I was walking my human again in the park by the big rock. This same nice lady met us on the trail again and asked my human the same question. And again, the next thing I know, I am getting a treat!

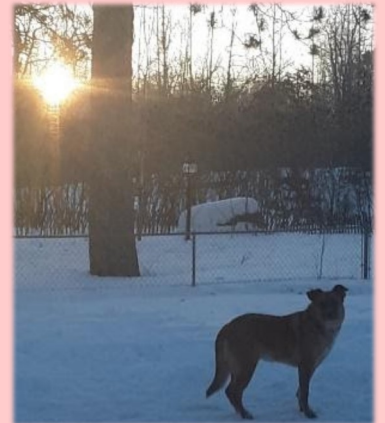
This lady (who is now my new friend), walked away and I have not seen her since. But I am not sad! Now, every time I take my human for a walk in the park, I slow down by the big rock just in case my new friend shows up with another treat for me. I wait with hope in knowing she will show up again and have something good for me.

I wonder if humans ever do that? I wonder if humans wait for things? I wonder if they hope for things? I wonder if they slow down during certain times in their life to experience hope?

I do not know, but I hope they get what they hope for. And I hope it is good!

Have a barky day!

Caesar (the Church Dog)



Zoom Book Discussion Group Starting in January

“The Great Spiritual Migration”

by Brian McLaren

Choice of two meeting times: 2:00pm and 7:00pm

Every other Tuesday starting January 20th

Email the church at unionucc401@gmail.com or call Pastor Torri at (563) 320-5360 to sign up.

MORE INFO ON PAGE 10

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3. **Creative Outlet** – I am a creative person. Years ago, I use to draw and write poetry. As winter sets in, I have this need to create. I decided that I am going to take up a hobby! I want to paint! But there is a problem. I haven't painted in years and I don't want to spend a ton of money on supplies that I will never use. So, I decided to start with a "paint by numbers" kit. I know that might sound silly, but these are two of the paintings I ordered. I think they are pretty cool. And I am very excited about it. The bear painting comes today!



4. **Intellectual Stimulation** – I like to be challenged in my thinking. I have enjoyed the book discussion groups we have had over the past several months. I like to hear other people's thoughts and perspectives that might be different than my own. I am also looking forward to the book discussion we are starting in January. We are discussing Brian McLaren's book, "The Great Spiritual Migration". I am also personally going to read a book Pastor Judy gave me before she left called, "If Grace Is True" by Philip Gulley and James Mulholland. I even created a reading spot in my home!



5. **Physical Activity** – When COVID first started I was doing pretty well physically. I was actually losing weight! But as it began to get colder my body has become frumpy and squishy. And with the frumpy and squishiness comes feeling tired and lethargic. So, I decided to join a gym. I have not been a gym member in 15 years, but I need a place to go and focus on my physical health. I am only in my second month, but hopefully I will be less frumpy and squishy soon.

6. **Spiritual Connection** – I love Sunday morning church! It is part of my routine. And I love being a pastor! I love being YOUR pastor! And over this past year many things have changed, but I still preach every Sunday morning. I love preparing messages through reading and prayer. I do my best to connect with God and listen to what God is speaking. Many times, I am preaching to myself more than you, but that seems to work out just fine.

One of the most positive changes that has happened over the past year is the unexpected transition churches needed to make by learning to do online streaming. In some ways this has helped my spiritual life. I can now tune in to other churches and listen to my friends preach. This gives me the ability to feed on others teaching rather than always being in the mode of feeding others. I am grateful for that.

The challenge I have for you during this winter season is to assess your needs. What do you need this winter in order to not only survive, but to thrive! One of the biggest adjustments I made was to create a "self-care" space in my house. It is a place designated for just me. I have filled it with items that fulfill my need for community, rest, creativity, intellectual stimulation, physical activity and spiritual connection. Below are some pictures. My hope is that it may inspire you to create your own space and continue to do self-care well.

In Christ Alone,

Pastor Torri



CHRISTIAN LEARNING

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

In December of each year many of us look back on the year just ending and make plans for the coming year. This past year has been one we won't soon forget! For many of us our lives changed dramatically because of something called Covid-19. This has been true for the Christian Learning Team as well. Activities we had planned to do were put on hold or eliminated. However, Hope is in the air! New discoveries are providing us not only with Hope but Love, Joy, Peace, and especially Faith. All things we talk about during the Season of Advent are going out to each and everyone of you. Here is the latest:

Monday Morning Bible Study

This hardy group found a way to keep meeting in Spring and Summer by gathering outside on decks, patios, driveways, outbuildings, and parks to share stories of Faith and Hope. With colder weather we moved inside to a cozy retreat in the Lower Level of Union Church where we gather from 10:00 - 11:30 AM on Mondays for support and prayer. Until the end of the year we will not meet officially but this area will be used as a meditation/prayer center for the group during those hours. Please feel free to let Bonnie or Jo know if you plan to visit. We have had some amazing answers to prayers of this group! Just sharing stories and laughter helps too!

Community Meals Update

We have a very active Community Meals Team who have served about 300 meals each month since March. Food is prepared in Union Church Kitchen each week and offered for curbside pick-up or by delivery. Efforts are made to provide for any food allergies with advance notice. Menus are varied but always contain a hot, healthy entree with sides, and dessert. Menus are announced weekly so please contact Sue or Jo to request a meal. Meal service occurs between 4:00-5:30 PM at West Upper Level doors. Just drive up and we will greet you and feed you! Can't beat that! We took a break during Thanksgiving week but hope to return after that. The big Holiday Meal of turkey and all the fixings will be December 16th. Reservations for this meal need to be made by the week before so all may be fed. All meals are free but donations are gratefully accepted. This is a mission work of Union Church and we are proud to do it. The Team of Sue, Mike, Jo, Don, Mary, Caryl, Rosie, and Pastor Torri appreciate all the support of this program. We do request extra help for set-up and clean-up for Wednesday, December 16. Please contact Sue or Jo if you can offer a hand (or two)!

A Special Family Christmas December 13

In these challenging times Pastor Torri, the Worship Team, and the Christian Learning Team are hoping to offer a special service on Sunday, December 13, during regular worship. It will be a blend of live and virtual message and music for Advent and Christmas. Sabbastian will have a critical role in putting it together so thank him, please! Best wishes go to all who may be far from family and friends but still can share the spirit of the holidays in Faith, Hope, Peace, and Joy. We are in this together!

Treasure Sale Work Continues

New items are still coming in and are very appreciated. Please contact Cindy or Heidi if you have things to deliver or pick-up. We always welcome unique (and regular) items as they may be just what someone is looking for! Consider giving 'holy holiday' gifts this year! Bet you won't get two of a kind! June Treasure Sale is coming!

Spring and Summer Plans Review

Remember warm weather and outdoor gatherings? After the first of the year the Christian Learning Team will be discussing new plans. Love to hear ideas for Forums, Activities, and Studies for young and old. Watch your newsletter, Facebook, and Email for discussion dates. Meanwhile, enjoy time with your family, friends, furry ones, feathered ones, and all other life forms that matter to you. God loves them all!

The Christian Learning Team

The Memorial Scholarship Team

This group will soon begin our 'busy' season with the coming holidays. The two students for the 2020 scholarships - Gabe Lohr and Rachel Pitt - were selected last Spring but under the guidelines of the scholarship, funds are not awarded until after completion of a semester/quarter/other time measure of study with a 2.00 grade. Students at all levels of learning have had many challenges this year but especially college students where one day they are on campus in student housing and the next day they are basically on the street due to Covid shut down. Please say prayers for these fine young people and their families. The \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to these students either at virtual or in-person ceremony. Praise the Lord, the check is on the way! Thanks to all who have contributed to this fund over the years to make it possible to give our young people a future. God smiles!

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

We hope you had a good and grateful Thanksgiving and will have a blessed and joyous Christmas. Winter is here, but not yet with it's full force. Small lakes have frozen over, but the large or deep ones are still open. We currently only have a small dusting of snow on the ground.

We sincerely thank everyone who has pledged for our 2021 Stewardship Campaign. If you haven't yet made a pledge, please do so, as it is very helpful in planning for 2021. If you need a pledge card or more information, please call Don Hoppe or email the Financial Secretary at finsec.ucc@gmail.com. Please prayerfully consider making a pledge to support our church and community, and be as generous as possible.

As of the writing of this report, we have received 43 pledges for a total of \$98,064.

October revenue was a little lower than last year, but not significantly. November revenue looks good at this time, and we hope to be able to finish the year well and enter 2021 with a carryover. Strong giving by non-pledging units and completion of pledges by pledging units by year end will be essential to our ability to meet our revenue projections for this year and have that carryover

Union Church is having in-church worship with safety protocols, and it is good to see others in worship. We continue to broadcast our worship services on Facebook Live, YouTube, and on the Union Church website.

How can you donate to Union Church, without being physically at Union Church? There are numerous of ways to do this.

1. Write a check and mail it to Union Congregational Church, UCC; Attn. Financial Secretary; PO Box 10; Hackensack MN 56452
2. Set up a scheduled electronic funds transfer payment of pledge or donation amount through you bank or credit union. Talk to them and fill out an ACH form and get it signed by the church.
3. Talk to your bank or credit union about Check Free or Bill Pay services that they may offer.
4. Make payment of pledge, donations, or gifts from your IRA, 401(K) or other retirement saving plans. These donations may be tax free; check with your financial advisor.

Please consider establishing a legacy gift to Union Church. If you are interested in planned giving and wish to discuss options open to you, please contact us for more information.

We look forward to the time when we can return to being closer together.

Christ's Love and Peace to You,

Don Hoppe, Caryl Allan, Sheryl Kaubisch - Board of Financial Stewardship

Men's Fellowship December 1st 9:00AM

Men's Fellowship will get together the 1st Tuesday each month visit face-to-face in the Friendship Hall or Zoom in on our conversation. Contact Don Hoppe if you would like to come.

Merry Christmas from your friends at Kokoro Center for Music and the Performing Arts!



THE CHRISTMAS FUND

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

Over the past nine months, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the emergency financial needs of many who serve the church have increased dramatically.

In such a time as this, the need for the Christmas Fund is more urgent than ever.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!

A Testimonial: From Rev. Cathy Barker

“My father, a UCC minister, died of cancer at age 54, just after Thanksgiving. I was fourteen; my brother and sister were grown and had to go back to their homes. Mom and I were lonely, confused about the future, and our financial picture was very shaky. Further, we faced a bleak Christmas . . . we didn’t even want to think about that.

“Then came a check from the Christmas Fund. We were both deeply touched that our national Church somehow knew that we were in need and gave us this gift. It didn’t solve all our troubles, but it made it possible for us to have Christmas. We felt the love behind the gift, and that was transformative.

“Throughout my mother’s long life, she gave faithfully and gratefully to the Christmas Fund, and I have done the same through the churches I have served as pastor. I’ve often told our story, because I want people to know how important it is to reach out in this way.

“When the pandemic caused such upheaval, and an appeal came from the Pension Boards telling about the increased need for emergency funds, I sat right down and wrote a check. My husband and I are glad we could help.”

If you would like to donate to The Christmas Fund, you can send a check to the church with “Christmas Fund” in the memo line. Or, you can donate at the United Church of Christ website. Thank you!

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“The Christian story, from Genesis until now, is fundamentally about people on the move—outgrowing old, broken religious systems and embracing new, more redemptive ways of life. It’s time to move again.”

The drop-in church attendance has many people worried that the Christian faith is dying. Christian faith is not dying, but it is embarking on a once-in-an-era spiritual shift. For many, the journey has already begun.

In *The Great Spiritual Migration*, McLaren explores three shifts that define this change:

1. Spiritually, growing numbers of Christians are moving away from defining themselves by lists of beliefs and toward a way of life defined by love.
2. Theologically, believers are increasingly rejecting the image of God as a violent Supreme Being and embracing the image of God as the renewing Spirit at work in our world for the common good.
3. Missionally, the faithful are identifying less with organized religion and more with organizing religion—spiritual activists dedicated to healing the planet, building peace, overcoming poverty and injustice, and collaborating with other faiths to ensure a better future for all of us.

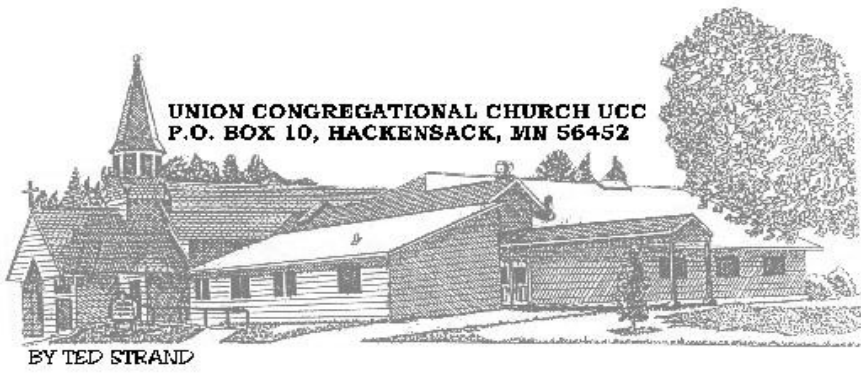
McLaren invites readers to seize the moment and set out on the most significant spiritual pilgrimage of our time: To help Christianity become more Christian.

(Taken and revised from the book’s summary page)

Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN
DECEMBER 2020

* = Community Event held at the church

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 9:00am Men's Group 7:00pm Worship Ministry Team Meeting	2 4:00pm-5:30pm Community Meal 5:30pm Advent Service (Online Only)	3	4	5
6 Worship 9:30am	7 10:30am—12:00pm Bible Study 6:00pm AA Meeting*	8 5:30pm Financial Team Meet- ing (Zoom)	9 4:00pm-5:30pm Community Meal 5:30pm Advent Service (Online Only)	10	11	12
13 Worship 9:30am	14 10:30am—12:00pm Bible Study 1:00pm Executive Committee Meeting (Zoom) 6:00pm AA Meeting*	15	16 4:00pm-5:30pm Community Meal 5:30pm Advent Service (Online Only)	17	18	19 2pm Drum Circle*
20 Worship 9:30am	21 10:30am—12:00pm Bible Study 6:00pm AA Meeting*	22	23 5:30pm Advent Service (Online Only)	24 Christmas Eve 1:00pm Fiber Arts	25 Christmas Day	26
27 Worship 9:30am	28 10:30am—12:00pm Bible Study 6:00pm AA Meeting*	29	30	31		



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Christmas Eve Service info—Page 2

NEW Book Group starting in January!

