



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

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

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



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Ash Wednesday is March 2nd

More details to follow.

FEBRUARY 2022

Notes from Rev. Torri Vande Zande

Last week I received a package in the mail from the "Stillspeaking Writers' Group" that is supported by the United Church of Christ. It was a little booklet called, "What If? A Pocket Portion of Post-Pandemic Ponderments." My first thought was, "What a weird title." But when I opened it, it was filled with thought-provoking questions which helped me change my perspective on life a little bit.

This group of poets and thinkers describe themselves as being known for, "its whimsical piety, providing honest inspiration and progressive theological reflection for Christians who strive to be literate but not literal in nurturing their faith." I would like to share a few of their thoughtful questions with you.

- What if your longing for each other when you were apart revealed how much God misses you when you wander?
- What if... God is transforming your pandemic pains into something new: faithful creativity, radical flexibility, hospitable fearlessness?
- What if closing the physical doors for a time and opening the digital ones actually brings more people to your church, not fewer as some people feared?
- What if you regularly gave the earth and yourself intentional time to breathe and rest?
- What if the time you spent worshiping in your bathrobes and sweats widened your former standards about how to show up to church?

(Continued on page 2)

Sunday Worship at 9:30 AM

Communion: First Sunday each month

ADULT LEARNING REPORT — by Pastor Torri

Weekly Bible Study – Wednesdays at Noon in the Library

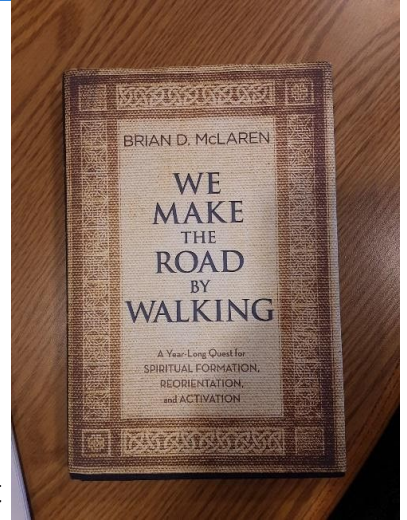
“What do you do during Wednesday Bible Study?” I was asked that question a few weeks ago by a curious church member. “Well,” I said, “During the week we read 2 chapters from a book called We Make the Road by Walking by Brian McLaren. The chapters are short and easy to understand. And then we read the bible verses that go with those chapters. On Wednesday, we come to the church library and discuss what we read.”

“That sounds pretty simple,” the church member replied.

“Yes” I said. “And it’s amazing how much we talk and learn from each other.”

I walked away from that short conversation realizing how blessed I am to be part of this group. We all come from different backgrounds with different ideas about God. We interpret scripture differently, we see Jesus in different ways, but all of us want to learn and grow to have a better connection with God.

If you would like to join us, we have a few books available in the library.



Book Discussion – Us Versus Us by Andrew Marin

The first time I heard Andrew Marin speak, it was at a Youth Specialties Convention in Nashville in the early 2000’s. He was one of the “big stage” speakers, and his topic was very controversial because he spoke about the LGBTQ community. He told his story of how 3 of his best friends came out to him in the same year. He was brought up as a conservative Christian, but he loved his friends. So, he decided to immerse himself in the culture and learn all he could. His story intrigued me so much that I went to his smaller breakout session in one of the hotel conference rooms next door.

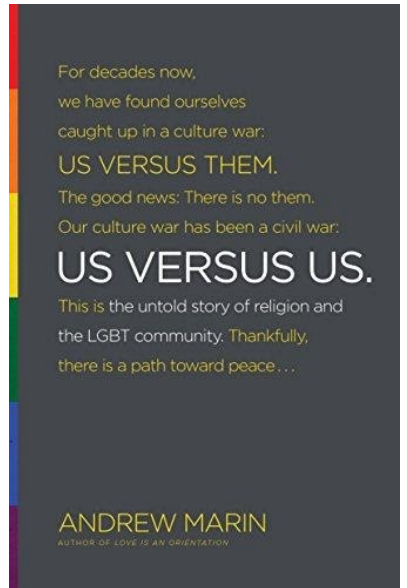
He was halfway through his talk when he stopped and said, “Oops, sorry... I went outside of my boundary” and returned to the center of the room. Everyone was confused, so he had to explain that the conference leaders decided to put security guards on him because of his message about the gay community. They did not want Andrew to get hurt because someone became angry about his message.

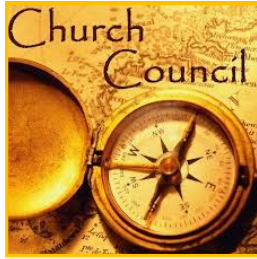
I was dumbfounded by that. It was a Christian Youth Leaders’ Conference! After my bewilderment settled, my anger kicked in.... and I bought his book, Love is an Orientation. And guess what? It made sense to me.

Now, years later, Andrew Marin has another book called Us Versus Us, and I am inviting anyone who wants to join this book discussion to do so. He is a statistician and a storyteller. This book tells the history of the LGBTQ community and their experiences with the religious community.

86 percent of LGBTQ people spent their childhood in church. More than half of them left those religious communities as adults. Three out of four would be happy to come back. My question is... how can Union Congregational help make that happen?

If you would like to join our discussion, it’s not too late. Get the book and join us every Wednesday at 7:00pm over Zoom. Email Torri (torrivz@gmail.com) to have the Zoom link sent to you.





COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

January 20, 2022

PRESENT: Heidi Hoppe, Don Hoppe, Stan Kumpula, Joni Kumpula, Mike Bohanon, Marilyn Erickson, Steve Erickson, Linda Ottman, Karen Holle, Pastor Torri, Caryl Allan

This meeting was conducted via zoom.

Mike called the meeting to order. Pastor Torri offered a convening prayer.

The agenda was approved as written. Ron/Stan The minutes were approved as written. Marilyn/Don

Pastor's Monthly Report: Torri reviewed her report for December and January. The report covers many topics including a review of Advent and Christmas Eve services and the activities that have kept Torri busy for the past 8 weeks. We had four people join the church in December, and we have two others who want to join soon!

Executive Committee Report: This group met January 12 to discuss the 2022 proposed budget

Financial Stewardship Board: Don reviewed the end of year financial report with us.

Don reviewed the 2022 Revenue Projection report: With carryover from 2021 of \$17,075, and projected giving and by using \$10,000 of non-designated reserve funds, Don projects an income of \$173,075 for 2022. The 2022 budget presented equals \$173,050 giving us a projected overage of \$25.

Discussion: We need more income than just giving. We need to improve our fundraising and the use of our building by other groups. We will be receiving money from the sale of the Woock-Ness property. The conservation easement with the Minnesota Land Trust has not been completed. We expect by the 2nd quarter of 2022 to have this project finished and to have received a sizeable sum of money for the sale of this property.

Pastor Torri is eligible for a sabbatical in November 2023, which is the 5-year anniversary of her hiring date. We need to budget for a replacement for her for the 3 months she will be gone. There are also additional facility expenses on the horizon.

We discussed giving bonuses to our employees at the end of 2022 if we are in a position to do that financially.

Motion to accept the budget as presented by the Board of Financial Stewardship. Caryl/Marilyn. Passed. This budget will be presented to the Congregation at the semi-annual meeting on February 20th.

Facilities: Ron reported that the main issue with Facilities right now is the church elevator which needs extensive repairs to its braking system to remain operational. The cost of these repairs is projected to be \$10,000. The cost of maintaining the elevator is \$160 per month currently, and we have had many issues with it that have required expensive fixes.

Discussion to remove elevator instead of repairing it: After some discussion we decided that we need Ron to give us an estimate of costs over the next 5 years if we decide to keep the elevator. We also need to spend more time thinking of how the elevator is being used currently and what problems will be caused by removing it. We also need to know if we are in compliance with the ADA, American Disability Act, if we take the elevator out. We have an access on the lower level that is wheelchair accessible, but the opening to the lower level is not wide enough for some motorized chairs.

Other building projects: Mike indicated that he has walked around the building and has noticed some places where the siding is bad, and that the bell tower needs painting. We need more money in our MRI fund for maintenance of the church. Additionally, the replacement of two furnaces supplying the Friendship Hall has been deferred awaiting funding.

At this point we elected Steve Erickson to be in charge of fundraising activities for the church! Joni/Marilyn, passed.

Personnel Board: Marilyn Erickson has just taken over this board. No report today.

Ministry Team Reports: Congregational Life: Joni talked a little about the amount of Covid there is in our area and how we are reaching out to people in the congregation with phone calls. Torri mentioned that Linda Ottman has been calling people in her extra time this week.

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Worship: Heidi reported that the Christmas Eve service was great and was also well attended. It was decided that because both Don and Heidi are isolating for the next week and Caryl is suffering from a bad knee, the worship team is too sparse to handle a service this Sunday and could really use a day off. The same team has been organizing services for the church for the two years we have been in an epidemic without missing a week.

Motion to cancel this Sunday's worship service. Mike/Heidi/ passed. Torri will organize an email to go out to parishioners so everyone knows what is going on.

Women's Fellowship: Joni reported that there is no women's fellowship meeting in January.

Men's Fellowship: Stan reported that only 5 men attended the January men's fellowship meeting. He will cancel February's gathering and will meet again in March.

Community Meal Program: Torri helped last night with the Community Meal Program. Besides handing out food to folks who drove up looking for meals, the conversation in the kitchen was great. Two people from the SDA church in Hackensack helped with the meal and were great to get to know!

Justice Ministry Team: Tom Cox has turned the leadership of the JMT over to Sue Kimmel. Sue was approved as the chair of this group by Council. Mike/Marilyn. Sue reported that the team members have spent the last couple of months sharing their personal stories and talking about their passions and interests. Sue spoke about the IDI, an intercultural development inventory tool that most of the JMT will be taking in the next few months to help each person understand their level of intercultural competence.

Outreach: The February Mission of the Month is the Community Meal Program. Karen will write an article about the program for the newsletter.

Old Business: Constitution and By-laws update. Karen reported that work has started and will continue. The goal is to get this work completed this winter.

New Business: Discussion of the current Covid situation. Torri shared a recommendation from the Minnesota Conference that churches consider shutting down for the next few weeks due to the spike in positive Covid cases. Many of our usual activities are canceled this week and next: exercise, in-person meetings, bible study. The Community Meal Program will keep going on a pick-up basis only, and AA will continue to meet in the lower level of the church. There will be no church this Sunday, but next Sunday we are back in business.

Semi-annual meeting: The semi-annual meeting will be moved from January 30th to February 20th, to allow for us to be more prepared for it. There will be a zoom option for this meeting.

Benediction by Torri. Next meeting Feb. 17, 2022. Notes by Karen Holle

MISSION OF THE MONTH

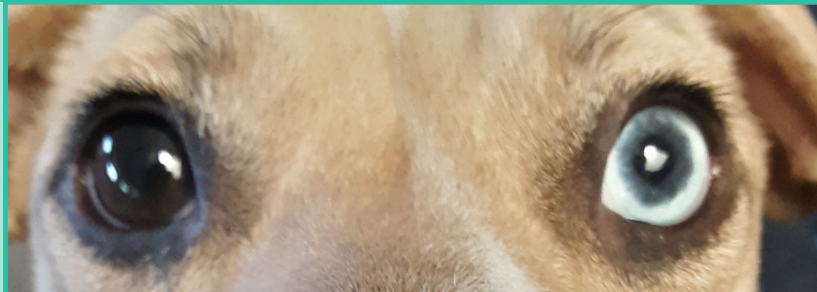
COMMUNITY MEAL PROGRAM by Jo Horak and Karen Holle



Many years ago Union Church began serving an evening meal in the lower level of the church called Family Table. The church provided the entree – usually prepared by Sue, and other people brought in side dishes and desserts. After a prayer and time of Joys and Concerns, the delicious food was enjoyed by all. When Union Church suspended in-person meal activities due to Covid-19 concerns almost two years ago, Family Table ceased to exist. At this time the meal preparation moved upstairs to the commercial kitchen, and meals were provided on a drive-up basis. Guidelines were put into place to ensure health and safety practices were observed. Most meals are picked up by individuals and families who wanted them, with a few meals being delivered each week to folks who have trouble getting out.

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THROUGH KODA'S EYES



Hi, my name is Koda, and I am "The Church Dog" (in training). I want to introduce you to my new friend, Knight. He is a "Service Dog" to his human, Richard. They have been coming to church for the past few months. Knight is always with Richard to help him. I have never met a service dog before, so I asked Knight if I could talk with him and ask him questions. He said yes, but could not be apart from his human very long.

Here is what we talked about:

Koda: Knight, I never met a service dog before. What is a service dog?

Knight: Thank you for asking, Koda. A service dog is specially trained to help their human with whatever they need. Some service dogs help with physical tasks, some warn their human of low blood sugar or seizures, and other service dogs help their human with anxiety and emotional support. We are there... just for them.

Koda: That is different from a "Therapy Dog," is it not?

Knight: Yes, very different. A therapy dog is a dog for everyone. For example, I have heard of some therapy dogs trained to visit hospitals, schools, hospice patients, and nursing homes. They are there for other people. I am trained to be there for one person... my human, Richard.

Koda: Oh! So, am I a therapy dog?

Knight: Sort of, but not really. Both therapy and service dogs are specially trained and receive certification. You have not been officially trained to be a therapy dog. You are just a good dog.

Koda: Thank you!

Knight: My training was intense and specialized. I am not a normal dog when I have my vest on.

Koda: What do you mean?

Knight: Well, there are rules humans need to follow when I have my vest on. If I do not have my vest on, I am a normal dog that loves to play, run, and have fun. When I have my vest on, I am working.

Koda: Oh! So we cannot play together if you have your vest on.

Knight: Correct.

Koda: What other rules do humans and dogs need to follow when you are working?

Knight: Here is what you need to know:

1. Do not pet me while I am working. It is distracting and I need to focus on my human. I love peo-

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ple, but my job is to make sure my human is okay. So, if I have my vest on, please do not pet me or talk to me.

2. Ask permission from my human if you can greet me or pet me. Sometimes he says “yes,” but other times he says, “no.” And it is okay when he says no. My human is not trying to be mean, but when he says no, that means he needs me to focus on him, and people (and dogs) need to respectfully obey.

3. I **never** eat human food! Humans should never feed me unless it is a dog treat and my human says it’s okay. So please ask my human if it is okay to give me a treat. Again, he may say no... and that is okay. He is protecting me.

4. Please let my human direct me or discipline me. I take my direction from him and Gunder only.

Koda: Wow, Knight! I am so glad we talked! Thank you for telling me all this. This is helpful to me when I am at church. I will do my best to follow the rules.

Knight: Thanks, Koda. I need to get back to my human now. It was nice talking to you!

And that was my conversation with Knight, “The Service Dog”. He has a very important job! And that is how I see it through my eyes!

Barks and Wiggles,

Koda “The Church Dog” (in training)



(Continued from page 5)

In December 2021 we had our first inside/outside holiday meal with 125 people served buffet style. What a joy to see so many people at once! Many people received their delicious meal of turkey, gravy, potatoes, green beans, stuffing and cranberry sauce at the drive-up door. Others came into the church to be served a meal and to sit at a socially distanced table in small groups. Unfortunately, during our two weeks off between Christmas and New Year’s the new Covid virus variant surged again and we are back to drive-up meals only.

We very much appreciate the Community Meal Team who make this happen every week. Our core group includes Sue Johnson, Mike Bohanon, Jo Horak, Don Hoppe, Mary Parrish, and recently Roy, Mary’s grandson. Pastor Torri is always willing to fill in as her schedule permits.

Comments about the program from some of the “team” members: Don Hoppe says, “Community Meals is a great ministry of Union Church. Sue does an excellent job of purchasing food at a good price and making a delicious meal. There are always good vibes in the kitchen and people are very thankful for the food. This program helps keep our church visible to the community.”

Sue Johnson’s comments are, “People come from quite a distance to pick up meals, not only because they are stretching their budget, but because they want to connect with people. Many people live

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NOTES FROM THE BOARD OF FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Giving Income December	\$11,571.00	Year to Date Giving	\$129,101.30
Other Income	\$ 1,303.91	YTD Other Income	\$ 59,664.00
Income Total	\$12,874.91	YTD Income	\$188,765.30
Budget Expenses December	\$17,352.58	Year to Date Expenses	\$171,363.58
Balance	-\$ 4,477.87	YTD Total	\$17,401.72

Other income include 2020 carryover, prepaid giving, unrestricted funds and all other income sources.

Checking available: \$18,073.75

Total Assets \$287,791.82

Pledge income for 2021 was not met by year-end, and non-pledge income for 2021 is down significantly from the 2021 budget projection and the traditional non-pledge giving.

2022 Pledges

We have received 44 pledges for a total of \$100,675. We hope to receive a few more pledges coming in during early 2022.

2022 Budget

The 2022 Budget was first looked at by the Church Council and modified at their November meeting. It was then looked at by the Board of Financial Stewardship and the Executive Committee, and further modifications were made to both the budget and the Revenue Projections for 2022. The final budget was presented to the Church Council at their January meeting, and the budget that was proposed by the Executive Committee was approved by the Church Council to be presented to the congregation at the Semi-Annual Meeting.

NEWS FROM THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Dear friends: Not much to report this month, as things are pretty slow in the winter. I hope this newsletter finds you well and staying healthy. Wind chill warnings have been issued for our area tonight. It's going to be a cold one! And, of course, we're all treading very carefully because of the Omicron variation. Several church members have been infected, so the Council voted to cancel activities in our building, close the church office, and cancel a Sunday service in January, hoping to inhibit the spread of this infection. Time will tell; our fingers are crossed.

Stay warm and stay safe!

Heidi Hoppe, Team Leader



CELEBRATING THE PAST

Myra Damm, Historian

Little Known Facts about the Church Building

I mentioned that the original church has been added onto, but is still visible in the back of the Sanctuary, but did you know that the wall going into the Sanctuary was very crooked because lumber was contributed by various members, so not all the boards were the same thickness. When it was time to remodel, the wall was so crooked that a new wall had to be built over it, covering windows and whatever needed to be done to make it even. It made the wall so thick that furnace ducts and other things could not be run through, so changes had to be made.

- Did you know: there are nine furnaces in our church? Various remodels required heat sources other than what was available or had to be added to accommodate the new additions.
- Did you know: we have two kitchens, the one in the Friendship Hall, and another in the lower level that has all that is needed to serve large groups.
- Did you know: there are seven bathrooms in the building, along with a shower in the lower level.
- Did you know: that the old choir loft stairway is still there with the loft being converted into a smaller area with was used as storage.
- Did you know: that the large cross above theater in the Sanctuary was made and given to the church by Pastor Arden Johnson as a gift for the new Sanctuary.



JUSTICE MINISTRY TEAM — by Sue Kimmel

Union Congregational United Church of Christ in Hackensack has a long history of Justice Ministry. We believe in reaching out to others with compassionate care through personal relationships. Though Covid-19 has been a challenge, the Justice Ministry Team has stayed socially connected by sharing personal stories through Zoom. When we share stories, we feel less isolated and more heard and respected. Richard Wagamese, Ojibwe author and journalist stated, “When we take the time to share stories with others, we get bigger inside. We see each other. We recognize our kinship, and we change the world, one story at a time.”

The Justice Ministry Team is working toward community connectedness through group actions. Beginning in February, Justice Ministry members will be completing the Intercultural Development Inventory under the guidance of Paul Ernst, Consultant in Organizational Development. The inventory is a starting point in creating a bridge between our own culture and cultures of others. As we understand learned differences and recognize cultural commonalities and with increased understanding, we can work and act in ways that are more culturally appropriate.

Union Congregational UCC provides a safe and affirming place for our local LGBTQ community. To increase our understanding of religion and the LGBTQ community, we have chosen Us Versus Us by Andrew Marin for our February book study. Marin’s scientific findings offer clear direction and hope as culturally different sides discover the things they have in common and the hope found in Christ alone.

The Justice Ministry Team is a growing group of people who affirm and celebrate that sacred love is inclusive for all creation and all people. If you would like to join our mission, contact us at:

unionucc401@gmail.com

GATHERING OF POETS

The Gathering of Poets meets the first Monday of every month on Zoom from 7 -8pm. Whether you're just starting out or a seasoned poet, you are welcome to join. Email Grace Steward at kokoropoets@gmail.com for the Zoom link.



The Poetry Safari is a fun new feature of this year's Northwoods Art & Book Festival held on Saturday, August 13, 2022 from 9am - 3pm on Lake Street in Hackensack. The Poetry Safari is a joint project of the Northwoods Arts Council and Kokoro.

Eleven displayed poems will be scattered throughout the festival on freestanding displays. Poetry Hunters pick up their clue sheet and checklist from the Poetry Safari welcome table at the main entrance to the festival. Find the eleven poems and return to Safari Headquarters for your prize!

If you write poetry and want to submit your poem for the Poetry Safari, here are some guidelines:

- You may submit up to three poems for consideration. We will format & print them.
- Please include your name as you would like it to appear, the titles of your poems, and your email address and phone so we can get in touch with you.
- Poetry should be easy to read at 8-1/2" x 11". Haiku and poetry of eight lines or less would be especially readable at this size. No worries if your poem is a little longer.
- Focus of poems can be centered on people, places, and activities in the Minnesota Northwoods.

Poetry submissions may be sent to kokoropoets@gmail.com no later than June 15, 2022. We will notify poets of selected poems by July 15, 2022. For more information about the Poetry Safari, please contact Kiki at (218) 270-5648 or email kokoropoets@gmail.com.

Hope everyone is doing well!

Kiki



(Continued from page 7)

alone and don't cook much for themselves. For the people that can't give money to cover their meals, we help them out." Sue also mentioned that last year she was able to get food from pop-up pantries at a lower cost than she can obtain food this year.

Jo's comments - "I believe this mission follows the two greatest commandments of Jesus: Love your God and Love your neighbor as yourself. Hearing stories of people receiving good meals each week brings a sense of purpose to God's Plan for them and for us. Thanks be to God!"

If you would like to donate to the Community Meal Program please send or drop off a check at the church with Union Church as payee and Community Meal in the memo line.

Thank you.

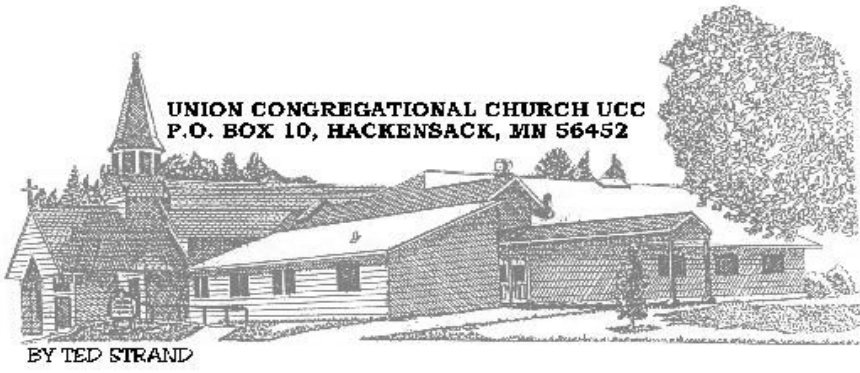


Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN

FEBRUARY 2022

* = Community Event held at the church

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
9:30am Worship & Communion 10:30am Coffee Hour			10:00am Exercise in Friendship Hall* 12:00pm Bible Study 4:00pm Community Meal		1:30- Bone Builders *	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9:30am Worship & Communion 10:30am Coffee Hour	1:30 Bone Builders* 6:00pm AA Meeting*		10:00am Exercise in Friendship Hall* 12:00pm Bible Study 4:00pm Community Meal	1:00pm Women's Fellowship	1:30- Bone Builders *	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
9:30am Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour	1:30 Bone Builders* 6:00pm AA Meeting*	5:30pm Financial Board Meeting	10:00am Exercise in Friendship Hall* 12:00pm Bible Study 4:00pm Community Meal 6:00pm Dick's Acoustic Jam*	1:00pm Church Council (Zoom)	1:30 Bone Builders *	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
9:30am Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour	1:30 Bone Builders* 6:00pm AA Meeting*		10:00 am Exercise in Friendship 12:00pm Bible Study 4:00pm Community Meal	1:00pm Fiber Arts*	1:30 Bone Builders *	
27	28					
9:30am Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour	1:30 Bone Builders* 6:00pm AA Meeting*					



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2022

**Semi-Annual Meeting
February 20th**

THE UNION NEWS