

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
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FEBRUARY 2023

Notes from Rev. Torri Vande Zande

"Once upon a time..."

This is a phrase we often hear at the beginning of a story. We tell stories for many different reasons:

We tell stories:

1. To share our past in a memorable way.
2. To pass on information and values to the next generation.
3. To make sense of the world around us.
4. To help us feel like we are not alone.
5. To build community and connection to others.

Storytelling is part of being human.

We have started a new series on Sunday mornings called "Origin Stories." The first eleven chapters of Genesis tell several ancient tales from both Christian and Jewish faith. These include:

1. The Creation Stories
2. Adam and Eve
3. Cain and Abel
4. Noah and the Ark
5. The Tower of Babel



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
Financial Secretary	Don Hoppe
Treasurer	Sheryl Kaubisch
Bell Choir Director	Heidi Hoppe
Musicians	Sheryl Kaubisch Kathleen Millberg Barb Nish Dick Kimmel

CHURCH COUNCIL

Moderators	Marilyn McKnight & Steve Erickson
Clerk	Karen Holle
Board of Financial Stewardship	Don Hoppe
Ministry Teams:	
Congregational Life	Joni Kumpula
Facilities	Mike Bohanon & Kerry Swenson
Personnel	Marilyn McKnight
Worship	Heidi Hoppe
Men's Fellowship	Stan Kumpula
Women's Fellowship	Joni Kumpula
Adult Learning	Linnea Dietrich
Tech Team	Mike Schmitt
Treasure Sale	Cindy Gulbrandson
Justice Ministry Team	Sue Kimmel

CELEBRATING THE PAST

Myra Damm, Historian

The liturgical paraments in the front of the church decorating the pulpit/lectern and altar runner were placed in the sanctuary in 1991. Pat Coon volunteered to do the the paraments in Hardanger, a Scandinavian form of needlework, done on an even weave cotton.

This project was sponsored by the Women's Fellowship and approved by the Church Council. Later in the year a new hardanger communion cloth was made by Pat Coon that matches the altar cloths. The liners for the cloths were made by Betty Nye. Blue, a new liturgical color, has been added with these cloths and will be used during the Advent season. Pat was very talented and the paraments are so well done. Pat and her husband moved back to Iowa some years ago, but her handiwork is a legacy we can enjoy each Sunday.

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

February 1	Terrence Larkin
February 10	Dave Bauer
February 12	Helen Howe
February 14	Tim Clover
February 15	Beverly Peterson
February 18	Mary Martin
February 21	Dick Kimmel
February 22	Linnea Dietrich
February 24	Jane Odell
February 25	Elsa McNelis
February 26	Jim Allan
February 28	Stan Kumpula

Happy Birthday



Karen Holle, Linda Ottman, and Sabbastian Wilson-Webb, Editors

Continued from Page 1

As we journey through these stories, we need to recognize that these stories were not written for us in modern times. They were written to Israelites for Israelites. They were retelling their story in a way that could be passed down from generation to generation. They were reminding those who came after them,

1. Remember God is a loving Creator
2. Here is how we have learned to love God
3. Here is how we have learned to love People
4. We have made mistakes and suffered greatly for them
5. Do not make the same mistakes we did

I am inviting you to join us on Sunday mornings as we learn together. Even though these ancient stories were meant for a different group of people, we can still learn from them. Below is our schedule if you want to go back and watch other services.



- January 15th — Genesis 1 (Creation)
- January 22nd — Genesis 2-3 (Adam and Eve)
- January 29th — Genesis 4 (Cain and Abel)
- February 5th — Genesis 6-9 (Noah, The Ark, and the Flood)
- February 12th — Genesis 11:1-9 (The Tower of Babel)

Peace, Pastor Torri

BOARD OF FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Giving Income-Dec 2022	\$22,523.79	Year to Date Giving	\$138,748.79
Other Income	\$ 242.00	YTD Other Income	\$17,765.29
Total Income	\$22,765.79	YTD Total Income	\$156,514.08
Expenses- December	\$21,044.86	Year to Date Expenses	\$168,875.68
Current Month Balance	\$ 1,722.26	YTD Balance	-\$ 12,361.60
		Other Funds toward 2022 Budget	
		Unrestricted Funds	\$10,000.00
		Other Reserve Funds	\$6,008.24
		Carryover	\$14,709.51
		Prepaid from 2021	\$1,150.00
Monthly Net Income	\$1,722.26	YTD Net Income	\$19,506.15

Other income includes Treasure Sale, Community Meal, fundraisers, building use, 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: \$ 29,417.50
 Total Assets \$272,514.13

Summary

December giving was very high, but expenses were also very high. Other income had no significant events and was lower than normal.

For 2023 we have received 47 pledges: 8 new pledging units and 39 previous pledging units. Total pledged at this point is \$110,067 which includes a 7.8% increase in the pledged amount from the returning pledging units. You can find information on the 2023 proposed budget on Page 9 of this newsletter.



COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

January 19, 2023

PRESENT: Sue Kimmel, Mike Bohanon, Karen Holle, Pastor Torri, Heidi Hoppe, Don Hoppe, Joni Kumpula, Stan Kumpula, Mary Parrish, Linnea Dietrich, Marilyn McKnight,, Steve Erickson

The agenda was approved as written. The minutes were approved as written. Mary/Heidi

Pastor's Monthly Report: Pastor Torri reviewed the Advent collaboration with Pastor Leif and the good attendance at the Christmas Eve service. This is the first year that a Christmas meal and get-together was offered at church. Pastor Torri said that 14 people participated in that event and that it was a lot of fun. She talked about several members of the congregation that she has been spending time with due to health concerns.

Financial Stewardship Board: Don did a great job of explaining the budget his team put together for 2023. The total of budget is \$184,631 and contains a good raise for our pastor and more money in the facility budget for propane and our new cleaning service. Don also presented his revenue projection for 2023 which totals \$175,057, which means we do not expect to have as much income as we have expenses, despite more pledges this year and an 8% overall increase in the size of the pledges. We have money in our Bequests and Special Gifts Fund that could be tapped for the shortfall, but that would require congregational approval. At this point Don told us that he had received a special gift from a person (no name given) of \$31,982 to be used by the church as needed!! The gift was received today and felt very much like a gift from God. This gift will help us greatly over the next few years to balance our budget.

Facilities Board: Discussed a need to re-order some of our cleaning supplies: bathroom paper towels, garbage bags, bathroom toilet paper, etc. Linda Ottman has just placed an order for these items and will order in the future for the church. Discussed the elevator at church: We have a new contract with MEI, the elevator company, to keep the elevator inspected and lubricated for \$800 per year, for a three-year term. If repairs or upgrades are required to keep the elevator running, that will be an extra cost to the church.

Personnel Board: Marilyn reported that the Personnel Board had reviewed the Minnesota Conference Guidelines before rewriting Pastor Torri's employment contract. Torri's total compensation package has increased 8.8% to bring her in-line with UCC churches similar in size to our church. Don reminded us that when Torri was hired 4 years ago, her starting salary was below the conference guidelines because we did not feel we could match the guidelines. The Personnel Board also recommended an increase in hourly salary for the Office Administrator and one additional hour weekly to address additional tasks. Personnel also recommended increasing the pianist/accompanist salary to \$50 per service. Council is in agreement with these changes, and they will be brought to the congregation at the Semi-Annual Meeting. Once the 2023 budget is approved at the Semi-Annual Meeting on Jan. 29, 2023, raises will be retroactive.

Congregational Life: Vera Keep died in December, and the church hosted a wonderful service and luncheon for her family. We are seeing many new people at church which is very exciting.

Worship: Heidi reported that we have had 35 people on average at church for the last 8 weeks. There are also 9 people regularly watching the service online each week. Other people watch the service during the week when it is convenient for them. The bell choir is starting up again. Talk to Heidi if you are interested in this. A liturgist group is being formed. Let Heidi know if you are interested in helping out in this way.

Adult Learning: Linnea talked about the Lectio Divina prayer group she is leading. About 10 people are participating in that on Wednesdays from 3:30 to 4:30. This group will continue until Easter and is open to anyone.

Three retreats are being planned for this summer:

- In June – Praying in Nature
- In July or August – Labyrinth at Linnea's
- September 13 – The Enneagram

Women's Fellowship: Joni reported that Women's Fellowship raised \$283 between the Christmas dinner and the Christmas cookie sale. The meeting in February will be at the Charhouse and will begin at noon. Having fun will be prioritized!!

Men's Fellowship: Stan reported that at the last Men's Fellowship meeting the men took the Christmas trees down. The February meeting will focus on fellowship. Easter food boxes are being planned. Thank you, men, for all you do!!

Justice Ministry Team: Sue talked about a spring clean-up project that will involve the Hackensack community and will focus on helping people dispose of large items that need to be hauled to the dump, yard raking, and general rubbish removal. The goal of this project is to improve the general impression the town makes on visitors.

On January 24, the Leech Lake Culture Alliance will meet to follow up on the Juliet Rudie talk about human victimization.

Council approved a small amount of work on the upstairs bathrooms to add locks on the inside of two doors and to improve signage. Heidi/Mary/passed

A book study will begin February 6 on a book entitled The Home Place. More information will be forthcoming.

Fundraising: Steve presented Council with two reports: one covering a recent meeting of church members and friends and their ideas of fundraising projects we might consider. The second report discusses efforts to explore the possibility of establishing a childcare center at our church. Council voted to continue to explore the possibility of using the church as a childcare center. Don/Linnea/passed

Tech Team: Don reported that the Tech team wants to improve the lighting of the front of the church for better quality videos of the church services. The team requested up to \$1,000 for equipment to be taken out of memorial funds. Don/Heidi/passed

It was mentioned at this time that many people would like to have the Sanctuary be quiet before the services so people can enjoy music and can center themselves. We will be asked to "Please don't enter the Sanctuary until you are ready to worship."

Moderator Moment: Steve spoke about how much he and Marilyn are enjoying being part of this church. They also would like us to find a Vice Moderator who could run Council meetings when they are out of town and who could begin to learn how Council works.

New Business: Semi-Annual Meeting – The meeting will be held after worship, January 29.

Pastor Torri offered a closing prayer. Next meeting: February 16, 1:00. Clerk, Karen Holle

THROUGH KODA'S EYES

Hi! My name is Koda, and I am the “Church Dog”! As many of you know... I am from Texas! I was not used to the cold when I first came up here. And well, to be honest... I am still not used to the cold!

Most of the time I find a heater and sit right in front of it! But my human has told me that I need to find some activities to keep me busy and active when it is below zero. Sitting in front of the heater all the time is not good for me. On warmer days (above 10 degrees), I like to go for short walks.

There are so many smells in the winter!

My nose is usually in a snowbank.



I also like to walk inside of the church. My human has a path she likes to follow, but I like to take shortcuts. I have learned that if I do not follow her, she puts my leash on so I have to walk with her. I do not understand why she cannot walk by herself. I have my own paths!

One of the things I have noticed is that my human is staring at the inside of books lately. She sits in my chair, puts on her glasses and stares at a book. She says she is “reading,” but I do not know what that means. All I see is her staring at this thing. So, when she stares, I go sit in front of the heater!

I did not know where she was getting all these books to “read.” But then I noticed a room in the church full of books! I believe you all call it the Library! I never knew the books could leave the Library! My human said we have some good ones and that “reading” is a good thing to do on very cold days. So I thought that I would tell everyone to go check out the Library if you want to “read” or stare at the inside of a book this winter.

My human put some books out on a table in the Friendship Hall. It is just a sample of what we have. My human also told me that you do not have to tell others or sign a paper to check it out... just take it and bring it back when you are done. So I hope on really cold days you can pick up a book to stare at!

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

Koda (The Church Dog)



TECH TEAM COMMUNICATIONS

The Tech Ministry Team is responsible for the technology equipment and operations at Union Church. This includes the office computers, servers, software and security for the network, wifi and internet. Also the projectors and audio equipment in the sanctuary and Friendship Hall, the equipment for virtual meetings, as well as some other less obvious items.

Most visible is the presentation of media and slides on the screen in the sanctuary and the streaming of worship services to Facebook, YouTube, and the Union Church website.

The “official” Team is fairly new, actually established after COVID changed how Union Church had to operate and reach out to our faith community. We are constantly striving to improve the performance of our equipment and technology. This includes how our computers work, efficiency of communication, collaboration tools and quality of our visual and audio equipment, how our worship service appears to those participating online, and the ease to which everyone utilizes the technology. We don’t want just “geeks” to feel comfortable using our technology!

The current TechTeam is Stan Kumpula, Mike Schmitt, Don Hoppe, and John Lindberg, with Pastor Torri joining us whenever possible. We meet every Tuesday morning at 9 AM, except when Men’s Fellowship meets.

We are looking for people to join the team. We are especially interested in people to help with streaming our worship service on Sunday mornings. Two people are needed each Sunday – a Director to operate the cameras and sound, and a media person to control the slides on the screen. Mike Schmitt is making the camera and streaming tools much easier for that portion of the process. It is just learning the process – you don’t have to know anything about what makes it work. If you are interested or just want to learn more, contact Mike Schmitt or Don Hoppe. We need you!

NEWS FROM THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Greetings, friends. We have had several weeks of mild temperatures here in the Northwoods, for which we are grateful. There was a heavy, wet snowfall prior to Christmas, and miraculously, the trees still retain some of their flocking. Last Sunday the humidity was 99% and there was no wind, so it was a winter wonderland as we drove to church. It has been a beautiful winter. The other noticeable change is that the days are getting longer which means that Spring is on the way.



The hustle and bustle of the Christmas Season has passed, and we have returned to our normal busy-ness, hosting Bone Builders, AA, the exercise group, the Community Meals, Mens and Womens Fellowships, Game Nights, to name just a few activities. Oh, and we are planning a Soup-er Bowl Party on the 12th as well. We are an active and important part of our community!

CO-MODERATORS' MOMENT

From Marilyn and Steve

We decided to look at the United Church of Christ's website, where the Mission Statement says: "United in Spirit, and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all." Its Vision Statement continues: "Striving to imitate the life of Christ, the transformative United Church of Christ will encourage authentic connection and compassion between individuals, local communities and the world using creative, agile technologies and partnerships."

Thinking about where Union Congregational has come since being in the throes of Covid three years ago, it is heartening to reflect on how far we have traveled in the effort to become a community striving to imitate the life of Christ.

Just last week, it was amazing how so many reached out to help our youngest member of Union in his bout with serious infection and hospitalization. Certainly, those intense prayers helped not only him, but I know for a fact they helped us weather our serious hospitalizations in 2021. The tech team has given us "agile and creative technologies" to stay connected with those who cannot worship in person every Sunday, and we now have game nights, trivia nights, AA meetings, Adult Learning groups, and community meals; where before, we were afraid to venture out into the pandemic. New members are regularly joining, the Justice Ministry Team seems to be always breaking new ground in its effort to "boldly and actively endeavor to bring justice to all," and the Church Council last week approved the new budget which will be presented to the congregation on Sunday, January 29th. Most importantly, the generosity of our members and supporters has assured us that we will meet our budget needs and continue to be a "transformative force in our community and in the lives of those who strive to imitate the life of Christ."

We are indeed back on track. But there is still so much to do. It takes the cooperative effort of many people to carry out the mission of Union Congregational where much of the community and world that we live in is still in need of the Christ-like love we have come to experience and know at Union Congregational.

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You may have noticed many new faces during our Sunday morning service. When we first began streaming, there were 5 team members, and Caryl Allan was Pastor Torri's assistant on screen. Now that we're back to meeting in person, Pastor Torri asked us to set up a list of rotating liturgists. Many thanks to Caryl for her devoted service in the past (and in the future!) and to all those who are willing to read on a Sunday morning. If you would consider reading every once in a while, please let me know.

Pastor Torri is taking us through the book of Genesis with her usual interesting, informative, and thought-provoking sermons. We are so blessed to have her with us! I hope you are able to attend or can watch the services online..

We move into the season of Lent this month, and we will be worshipping with our sisters and brothers from St. Paul's Lutheran Church again this year. The final schedule of services has not been finalized but will be available on our website calendar and in our Sunday bulletins.

Stay warm and safe and healthy. We look forward to seeing everyone later this year.

Heidi Hoppe, Team Leader, Sheryl Kaubisch, Caryl Allan, Mary Parrish, and Gracee Rudkin

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ME THAT UNION IS OPEN AND AFFIRMING?

I have three reasons:

by Luise Forseth

1. When I was looking for a Welcoming and Affirming church in Hackensack, on my first search, I found Union. I don't remember if it was the flag or a conversation. I was thrilled.
2. As a mother of a gay son, I desperately wanted Union to "Walk their Talk." I have been unencumbered talking about my son over twenty years. I have never had an uncomfortable moment.
3. My son lives in Chicago and is married to an African-American man. But the first time the couple came to the cabin alone, I had some anxieties over safety relating both to race and to sexual orientation/expression. I called Pastor Torri and explained my anxieties. She suggested they have her phone number, and the guys were welcome to come to any church activity.

Union is my safety-net. It also serves as my adult son and his husband's safety net. That's priceless.

JUSTICE MINISTRY TEAM — FEBRUARY BOOK STUDY

Please join the Justice Ministry Team for a book study in February.

The book is, *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature* by J. Drew Lanham

This lyrical book synthesizes J. Drew Lanham's own family history, geography, and race into a powerful story of nature. Lanham is a birder, naturalist, and an Alumni Distinguished Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Master teacher at Clemson University. J. Drew Lanham gives a compelling argument for conservation and resilience, recognizing the ties between race and the environment.

The February book study will meet via Zoom at 2:00 PM on February 6, 13, 20, and 27th.

Contact the church office media.ucchackmn@gmail.com to sign up.

2023 PROPOSED REVENUE PROJECTION AND BUDGET

As approved by the Church Council for presentation to the Semi-annual Church Meeting

Revenue Projection

Pledges	\$110,067
Donations and pledge completion	\$ 21,600
Plate Cash	\$ 2,500
Building Use	\$ 3,000
Fetzer Institute	\$ 7,000
Above pledge giving	\$ 4,000
Other Giving	\$ 14,000
Treasure Sale	\$ 8,000
Community Meal	\$ 500
Other Fundraising	\$ 3,000
	\$173,667
Carryover from 2022	\$ 11,000
Total	\$184,667

Proposed Budget

Council & Admin Expenses	\$ 8,900
Pastor Comp & Expenses	\$ 87,133
Staff Expenses	\$ 24,243
Facilities	\$ 50,000
Youth & Family	\$ 300
Treasure Sale	\$ 200
Adult Learning	\$ 200
Congregational Life & Communications	\$ 1,100
Financial Stewardship	\$ 1,050
Outreach	\$ 5,320
Worship	\$ 2,050
Justice Ministry Team	\$ 300
Tech & Streaming	\$ 3,750
Arts & Interiors	\$ 75
Total	\$184,631

Thank you to everyone for the generous monetary Christmas gift. It was a surprise to me, and I very much appreciate it. I have felt blessed in many ways to be your pastor.

Thank you all for your friendship and love for myself, Koda (The Church Dog), and even Bandit (the cat).

Pastor Torri

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Greetings! Hope you had a wonderful holiday and calm relaxing January. After the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season it was nice to have January off. Now let's get ready for 2023!

How about a kick-off lunch at the Char House! Twelve o'clock on Thursday the 9th, our normal meeting day. We can have fun and decide what our goals are for the coming year. We do need reservations. There will be a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board or call the church.

Come and enjoy the fellowship of Union Church. We always have fun, and we may need it in cold February!!!

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Here we are in February already, and I thought I would review what Men's Fellowship is all about:

It's fellowship with each other, discussion or sharing about almost anything over coffee and treats.

It's physical service to the church such as putting up and taking down the Christmas trees, doing spring cleaning of the church grounds, helping the Facilities Board with maintenance items, etc.

It's presenting interesting programs to the group such as the MN DNR wild turkey program by Dick Kimmel, birding by Don Hoppe, tour of the Chamber of Commerce, Rendezvous Brewery, and others.

Our group usually meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 9:00 am. This is sometimes difficult for you that are still working, but we hope you can find a way to meet with the rest of us. We want the men to join as members for an annual donation of \$25. This helps to cover any expenses that we might incur for some of the things we do or pay for a presentation.

We will meet on February 7th at 9 am in the Friendship Hall just for fellowship with treats and to hear planning underway for some of the group members on the Easter food boxes.

Please come and join us to have a good time in sharing the topics that may come up!

Stan Kumpula



SUPER BOWL PARTY

Sunday, February 12



Come watch the game on the BIG screen in the Friendship Hall. The doors open at 4:30 and the kickoff is at 5:30 so come early to get settled. Bring your friends, your favorite snack(s), a comfortable chair, handwork (if you're not a football fan), and wear your team's colors.

KOKORO CORNER

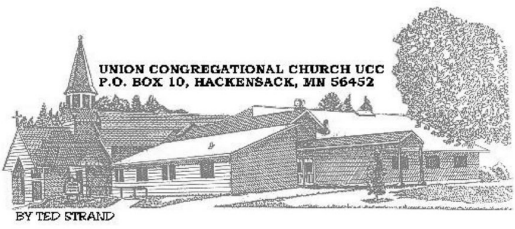
The Kokoro School of Music and Fine Arts located in Union is looking for a few good board members! They meet quarterly and are active in our Hackensack and surrounding communities. If you are interested call 218-682-2026 for more information.

Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN

FEBRUARY 2023

* Community event held at the church

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	1 WEDNESDAY	2 THURSDAY	3 FRIDAY	4 SATURDAY
5 9:30am Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour 5:30 Game Night	6 1:30pm Bone Builders* 2:00pm JMT Book Study 6:00pm AA Open Meeting*	7 9:00am Tech Team Meeting	8 10:00am Exercise in Friendship Hall* 10:00am Financial Stewardship Board Meeting 3:30pm Lectio Divina 4:30pm Community Meal	9 12:00pm Women's Fellowship Lunch at Birchwood Charthouse	10 1:30pm Bone Builders*	11
12 9:30am Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour 4:30pm Super Bowl Party/ Game Night	13 1:30pm Bone Builders* 2:00pm JMT Book Study 6:00pm AA Open Meeting*	14 Valentine's Day 9:00am Men's Fellowship	15 10:00am Exercise in Friendship Hall* 3:30pm Lectio Divina 6:00pm Dick's Acoustic Jam*	16 1:00pm Council Meeting	17 1:30pm Bone Builders*	18
19 9:30am Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour 5pm Game Night at Happy Pizza	20 President's Day 1:30pm Bone Builders* 2:00pm JMT Book Study 6:00pm AA Open Meeting*	21 9:00am Tech Team Meeting	22 10:00am Exercise in Friendship Hall* 3:30pm Lectio Divina 4:30 pm Community Meal	23 1:00pm Fiber Arts*	24 1:30pm Bone Builders*	25
26 9:30am Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour	27 1:30pm Bone Builders* 2:00pm JMT Book Study 6:00pm AA Open Meeting*	28 9:00am Tech Team Meeting				



NONPROFIT ORG.
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HACKENSACK, MN
PERMIT NO 5

FORWARD SERVICE REQUESTED

February

2023

Super Bowl Party
February 12th!



THE UNION NEWS