

The Union News

Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
401 Lake Avenue East, PO Box 10, Hackensack, MN 56452-0010

"No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey—you are welcome here"

An "Open and Affirming" Congregation

Church Office: (218) 675-6300
Pastor: Rev. Torri Vande Zande

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MARCH 2025

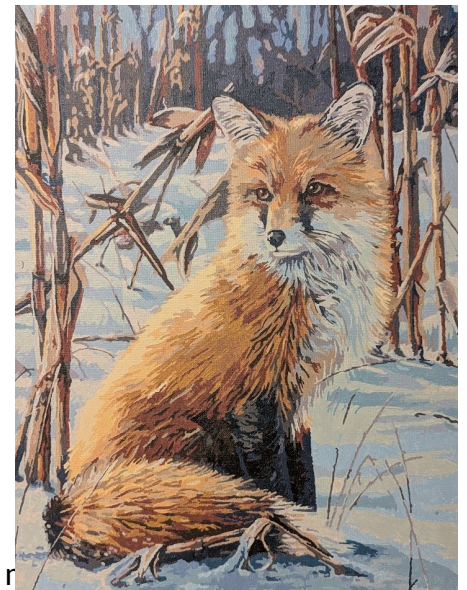
Notes from Pastor Torri Vande Zande

Fox in a Box

I received a Christmas gift 3 years ago from some friends. It is a paint-by-numbers picture of a fox in a cornfield. When I first opened the gift, I was so tickled by the fact that they knew me so well. I love foxes and I love painting! But then I saw how tiny the numbers were on the canvas... and how small the brushes were that came in the box. The feeling of inadequacy swept over me. I said to myself, "I can't do this!"

The fox stayed in its box for about a week before I had the courage to take it out and attempt to paint it. I decided to start with the background. I thought, "If I noticed too much." So I sat down, picked up the brush, dipped it into a color, and I began to paint.

I quickly realized the numbers were too small. I couldn't see them. My brush glided outside of the lines on every stroke. In frustration, I put



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

BOARDS

Financial Board	Don Hoppe, Sheryl Kaubisch, Caryl Allan
Facilities Board	Mike Bohanon, Kerry Swenson
Personnel	Connie Schmitt, Chris Swenson

LEADERSHIP

Moderators	Marilyn McKnight & Steve Erickson
Vice Moderator	Gunder Austin
Clerk	—
Board of Financial Stewardship	Don Hoppe

MINISTRY TEAMS

Adult Learning	Linnea Dietrich
Congregational Life	Caryl Allan
Justice Ministry Team	Sue Kimmel
Worship	Heidi Hoppe
Women's Fellowship	Joni Kumpula
Men's Fellowship	Stan Kumpula
Online Sales	Cindy Gulbrandson
Tech Team	Mike Schmitt

LENT SERVICES SCHEDULE

ALL SERVICES START AT 5:00 PM

Joint services with St. Paul's Lutheran Church.
Services held at listed church.

Ash Wednesday
March 5th at Union (No Meal)

Lent Services

March	12	St. Paul's
March	19	Union
March	26	St. Paul's
April	2	Union
April	9	St. Paul's

The Seder

(Traditional Passover Meal and Ritual)

April	17	Union
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Good Friday Service

(No Meal)

April	18	St. Paul's
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Soup and Sandwich Meal to follow all services except where listed.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

March 3	Heidi Hoppe
March 4	Cathy Iversen
March 7	Chris Swenson
March 8	Scott Stenstrom
March 9	Dennis Meyer
March 13	Tim Hoppe
March 14	Gunder Austin
March 14	Sue Kimmel
March 17	Kristi Bodahl
March 26	Sherry Toenjes
March 27	Katy Hoover
March 28	Katie (Kaubisch) Fasen

Happy Birthday!



Continued from Page 1

the fox back in the box and it was stored under my bed for almost a year.

As winter set in that first year, I decided to take the fox out again. I knew the numbers were small, so I began to brainstorm what I needed to do in order to see more clearly. I went into my bedroom and grabbed the lamp off my nightstand. Then I went to the store and bought a pair of stronger reading glasses. I cleared the table, set up the lamp, put my glasses on, and guess what? I could see the tiny numbers embedded in the canvas! And I started painting. Three winters later... I am finished!

Sometimes in life there are situations that come up that seem impossible to deal with. Feelings of inadequacy, fear, and frustration often accompany those situations, and we say to ourselves, "I can't do this!"

But let me remind you of a few things:

1. I needed light to see the numbers on the canvas. Even though I may have been in a lighted room, I needed more light to shine down on a certain place for me to see what I needed to do. Jesus came into the world to be a Light in the world and to the world (John 1). When things get crazy and impossible... It is Jesus that gives us hope. He sheds light in the darkest places so we can see better in difficult situations.
2. I needed clarity to discern what numbers were represented on the canvas. I needed to purchase glasses that could help me clear up the fuzziness that lit up the numbers so I knew where to drop the paint. This is similar to the Holy Spirit working in our lives. The Spirit moves and brings us into clarity to discern what we need to do in different situations. The Spirit clears up the fuzziness!

My hope this Lenten season is that you bring light (Jesus Christ) and clarity (The Holy Spirit) into difficult situations that you face. And may you, Christ, and the Holy Spirit create beautiful pictures that tell your life-story.

Peace,

Pastor Torri

NEWS FROM THE WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Spring seems to be on its way. The temps here in Hackensack are in the mid 40s today, and the snow is disappearing rapidly. The birds, squirrels, and even a chipmunk are digging through the detritus left from a winter of feeding, hoping to find a seed that was left behind.

We will soon be moving into the season of Lent, worshiping with our friends from St. Paul's. Happily, we will be having a joint choir this year, which will be a nice addition to the service.

Our fundraising meals have been very successful. I'm happy to report that the community raised over four thousand dollars for Heather Peterson and her family at the meal on February 19th. Another fundraiser is scheduled for Saturday, March 15, this one to benefit Union Church. The menu will be a St. Patrick's Day boiled corned beef and cabbage dinner.

Many activities are planned for the summer. Stay tuned, and stay in touch. We look forward to the return of our summer residents and visitors.

Worship Ministry Team: Heidi Hoppe, chair, Sheryl Kaubisch, Mary Parrish, Caryl Allan, and Gracee Rudkin.





COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

FEBRUARY 20, 2025

Present: Pastor Torri, Heidi and Don Hoppe, Caryl Allan, Joni and Stan Kumpula, Linnea Dietrich, Mike and Connie Schmitt, Mike Bohanon and Sue Kimmel (by zoom), Gunder Austin, Mary Parrish, and Judy Hoopman

Gunder Austin, acting as Moderator in Steve and Marilyn Erickson's absence, called the meeting to order. Torri offered a short prayer.

Motion to accept last month's minutes was made with modification to include Mary Parrish as present by Linnea and seconded by Heidi. Approved.

The agenda was approved with order of business changed to allow the Hoppe's to present their information first due to leaving early. Motion by Joni and seconded by Linnea, approved.

Board of Financial Stewardship: Don reported a recap of the financial report he submitted. January income is positive – total income \$12,172.00, expenses were less - \$8,219.08. Church finances are positive. The Investment Advisory group recommends postponing equity investments and buying a 7 month CD for \$50,000. The Board of Financial Stewardship agrees. The Investment Advisory group is reviewing current investments and planning for upcoming renewals. The Investment Group is also studying a Solar Array project as an investment opportunity.

Worship: Heidi provided a graph comparison of the Sunday services for 2023 and 2024. This included numbers for online attendance and Birchview services. Summer months definitely have the strongest attendance. Heidi noted attendance did not change much while Pastor Torri was on sabbatical. Heidi complimented both Linda as secretary and the Tech Team in their efforts to track and manage attendance. Connie made a motion to provide both Linda Ottman and Sabbastian Wilson-Webb with a \$200 "spot bonus" for their extra efforts while Torri was on sabbatical. Motion to accept made by Linnea and seconded by Joni, approved.

Pastor's Monthly Report: Pastor Torri submitted a written report of her activities over the past month. She spoke about the joint planning for a Maundy Thursday Seder (meal) that is occurring with Pastor Michael and Walker's Community Church. Both churches' Women's Fellowship groups want to assist with the event. St. Paul Lutheran Church will be sharing the Lent Services with UCC again and will be invited to the Seder as well. Pastor Torri also mentioned that she is involved in the planning for the Minnesota Conference Annual Meeting that will occur in June. She is encouraging interested people to contact her about attending. Pastor Torri stated that there are several individuals and couples interested in joining our congregation, and she is working on meeting with each of them.

Board of Facilities: Mike reported concerns about the wall in the Fellowship Hall moving more, and attention will need to be given to it this spring. He also mentioned the importance of getting all reports out ahead of the monthly Council meeting especially for those attending by Zoom so there is time to read and review the information.

Personnel Board: Connie states that Tammy is doing a good job as custodian in cleaning the church, and Connie invited the Council members to give her feedback on what they observe.

Adult Learning: Linnea informed the Council that the weekly bible study Pastor Torri is providing is going very well. In-person attendance is low but individuals can access the sessions online on the church's website. The previous week's sessions are uploaded each following Monday. Linnea stated planning for the September Hackensack Camino is underway with the subcommittee.

Congregational Life: Caryl gave a brief update on Burton Woock's funeral. UCC received a nice thank you note from the family. Caryl reports communication is good with those she is in contact with.

Women's Fellowship: Joni shared that Women's Fellowship met last week and developed a tentative agenda for this year's meetings and activities. She provided information about the March 13th event that will include Men's Fellowship. The plan is to tour Rendezvous, the local brewery in town. Cost is \$10 per person for anyone wanting to sample the brews. Other joint events include a presentation from the Gulbrandsons in May about their cruise around Australia.

Men's Fellowship: Stan reported on the plans being made for the Easter food boxes which will be put together the Monday prior to Easter. The men continue to enjoy meeting over breakfast at the Corner Store café.

Justice Ministry: Sue stated that a movie and brunch is scheduled for March 9th. The movie is "Americans with No Address" about homelessness. There is a cost to rent it which provides access to advertising the event to create awareness of homelessness in Cass County. A forum about Cass County's homelessness is planned in June with Public Health. Neighbors Helping Neighbors, the community clean-up, is scheduled for May 17th with the focus on helping the retired and disabled populations who experience difficulties in doing yard work.

Fundraising/ Outreach: Reviewed the recent fundraising meal for the Peterson family, which was very successful and provided the family with about \$4,800. Heather and her three children made a surprise appearance. The Lions and other local folks helped with contributions of food and time to make this truly a community event. There will be a community meal on March 15th with the theme of "Help Union Help Others," and the proceeds will go to UCC's general fund and operating budget which supports future community meals. Discussion of who to support in May – Family Safety Network and in June - the Hackensack Kids Fishing Contest. The intention continues to be to support nonprofit agencies.

Tech Team: Mike reported that the council meeting room's technology is upgraded and complete. Cindy Gulbrandson is now assisting with technology for Sunday services. The Tech Team will partner with the planned August Treasure Sale and will be selling used tech items.

Moderator's Moment: In Steve and Marilyn's absence, Gunder provided some thoughts on how well the bible study is going and his support and enthusiasm for our congregation.

Old business: No new information regarding the Child Care facility. Cindy Gulbrandson will be contacted to provide an update of the number of children served and general operations. The clerk position has not been filled. The Executive Committee is discussing potential people who may be interested in filling this position.

New Business: Mary Parrish suggested that UCC consider hosting a Teen Challenge event again. The Worship Team will look into this and come up with a potential date.

The March newsletter deadline is Tuesday, February 25th.

Pastor Torri provided a benediction.

Meeting was adjourned.

Minutes written by Judy Hoopman

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Greetings and happy March! Wow, time is really flying by, and we have made lots of wonderful plans for the year. We will be very busy with lots of learning and comradery.

March brings us to a tour of the Rendezvous Brewery. There we will have a short meeting and taste some of their specialty beers. We are inviting our men to join us, and the cost is \$10 per person unless you choose not to taste the beer. We'll have the back room to ourselves, and their tour is wonderful! Let's hope for a big turnout.

In April, we will be working on the final plans for the Seder Ceremonial Dinner. If you wish to see the year's plan, check the bulletin board in the narthex.

Remember, everyone is invited to participate in Women's Fellowship. We truly hope you all have the second Thursday of the month at 1:00 on your calendar.

See you at church, Joni, Sherry, Cindy and Sarah

THROUGH KODA'S EYES

Hi! My name is Koda and I am the "Church Dog"! I have been having a very deep thought lately. Do you want to hear it? Okay... here it is: "How would my life be different if I never met my human?" That is a great question is it not?

Where would I be? Where would I sleep at night? What kind of food would I eat? Would I still be on the streets of Texas running from everything and thinking all humans are out to hurt me?

Sometimes I dream about being back out on the street. My human tells me that I growl and kick my legs when I dream. Can you blame me? In my dreams I am either running after something or running from something.

My human made a promise to me when she adopted me. She promised to care for me, feed me, keep me out of danger, and love me so much that I would never think for one minute that I was abandoned by her. She made that promise to Bandit (the cat) too. Although he is a bit harder to love, my human looks past his flaws and sees a great cat... if there is such a thing. My human is pretty amazing to love a cat!



But here is a deeper question. Do humans ever ask these questions? I am sure some do. There are some people who do not have homes to live in, or know where their next meal is coming from, or even feel safe! I know this because I saw it in Texas! They live like I used to live... on the streets, wondering who they can trust.

There is a group of people at church who call themselves "The Justice Team." They will be showing a movie on Sunday, March 9th after church called, "Americans With No Address." They will be serving brunch too! You better believe I will be there!

I would like you all to come! We (including me) live a very privileged life. Maybe by watching this, we may find some type of action we can do to help make the world a better and safer place for others. Consider yourself invited!



That's how I see it through my eyes!

Have a barky day!

Koda (the Church Dog)

P.S. Petey says "Hi"! He is doing great!



PASTOR-PARISH BOARD

We are pleased to announce a new board within UCC. The Pastor-Parish Board is a committee from the congregation, with the purpose of supporting a healthy relationship between the pastor and the congregants to enhance the effectiveness of the church's ministry. We serve in two primary ways:

- As an advisory group to the pastor: sharing ideas, dreams, expectations, and concerns of the congregation with the pastor.
- As a support group for the pastor's leadership: interpreting roles, functions boundaries, opportunities, and needs of the pastor to the congregation.

Our goal is to be a resource for the relationship between pastors and congregations. The committee works in a context of confidentiality, support, care, and honesty with the pastor as well as to the congregation. We are the appropriate and confidential place to share concerns, hopes and goals as well as providing the framework for dealing with any conflicts creatively and confidentially.

The committee consists of Gunder Austin, Alan Christianson, and Connie Schmitt. We look forward to working with Pastor and you all.

THE SEDER

The Seder is the traditional Passover meal that includes reading, telling stories, eating special foods, drinking wine (or juice), singing, and other Passover traditions. The Seder is traditionally held after nightfall on the first night of Passover, the anniversary of Israel's exodus from Egyptian slavery more than 3,000 years ago. Our Jewish friends will celebrate the Seder April 22nd, but Union is hosting a Seder on Maundy Thursday, April 17th. St. Paul's Lutheran Church and Walker Community Church will be joining us that evening.

This is not only a meal, it is a worship service. At the Seder, every person should feel as if he or she were going out of Egypt. The story tells of the biblical patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And the story gives a recount of how the Jewish people became slaves to Egypt.

This story recalls their suffering and persecution as slaves. It is also a story of God's provision and deliverance. We will recall the 10 plagues God brought to Egypt and follow along as the Israelites leave Egypt and follow the calling of God into the wilderness.

Through storytelling, reading, and eating we will experience the Old Testament story Jesus and his disciples told the evening He was betrayed by Judas, prayed in the garden, arrested by temple guards, and put on trial to be crucified. As we retell this sacred story, we may find a little bit of our story in it too.

Join us, Maundy Thursday, April 17th at 5:00 p.m. at Union UCC's Friendship Hall for a worship service and meal.

RSVP is required by April 10th to make sure we have enough food. Please send email to Linda at media.ucchackmn@gmail.com or call 218-675-6300 to RSVP.

Donations will be accepted to cover the cost of the food. All money given above cost will be donated to the Hackensack Food Pantry.

For more information on the Seder, go to:

https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/1751/jewish/What-Is-a-Seder-Passover-Meal.htm

FOOD SHELF CAMPAIGN

The Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign brings together organizations, businesses, faith communities, and individuals to help keep the 300 food shelves statewide stocked throughout the year. For over forty years Minnesota FoodShare has campaigned for donations on behalf of our food shelves. One in eleven Minnesotans experience food insecurities right now, and many of those are children or senior citizens. TOGETHER, LET'S FIGHT HUNGER IN MINNESOTA!!

At least 25 families a week come through the Hackensack Area Food Shelf. People come from all over our area with different life stories. Sometimes monthly income just doesn't cover the monthly bills. Sometimes people have to leave abusive homes and need help getting stabilized. Sometimes people become ill and can't work enough to cover their bills.

If you would like to support the local food shelf in the month of March please send a check to the church and indicate that the money is for the food shelf. This year all money collected will go to the Hackensack Area Food Shelf. Thank you for your generosity.

If we work together, not one person in our community will go hungry. WE CAN AND DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!

Sincerely,

Torri Vande Zande, Pastor

BOARD OF FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Operating Income and Expenses

Giving Income - Jan	\$ 11,584.00	Year to Date 2025 Giving	\$ 11,584.00
Other Income* - Jan	<u>\$ 588.00</u>	YTD Other Income*	\$ 588.00
Total Income	\$ 12,172.00	YTD Total Income	\$ 12,172.00
Expenses - January	\$ 8,219.08	Year to Date Expenses	\$ 8,219.08
Balance - January	\$ 3,952.92	Balance - Year to Date	\$ 3,952.92
		Prepaid & Carryover	\$ 14,738.00
		Final Balance	\$ 18,690.92

* Other income includes, building use, donations, Treasure Sale, Community Meal, fundraisers, 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: \$ 111,043.67

Summary

Income was good and expenses were low for January.

In early February, the Investment Advisory group recommended postponing equity investments and buying a 7-month CD for \$50,000. The Board of Financial Stewardship agrees. There is a Memorial Scholarship CD that is maturing at the end of February, and it will be reinvested. A \$50,000, 7-month CD from unrestricted funds will also be purchased.

The Investment Advisory group is studying a Solar Array project as an investment opportunity.

ADULT LEARNING – by Linnea Dietrich

I am sharing some information inviting you to further your Bible knowledge and deepen your spirituality. As you likely know, Pastor Torri is offering an 11-week overview of the Bible which has been terrific, both for beginners and for those of us who are interested in an overview of biblical themes. We meet Thursday mornings at 10 AM in the library. Pastor Torri records her lectures after our live sessions. The sessions online contain the same information and are fairly quick to watch. In person however, we chew on what she is teaching us making it fun and interesting. Feel free to jump in any Thursday. No previous study necessary. The last session is April 10.

The Taize service from January 22nd is online for viewing. Feel free to google Taize service to get more information about what this is about. It was a warm, deeply touching service of music, singing, silence and a short Bible reading. We each lit a candle with a prayer intention. Really beautiful. Likely we will schedule another Taize service in the coming months.

To watch both the Bible study and Taize service, go to “unioncchackensack.com” and click on Media. Scroll down past the Sunday services and you will see both the Bible classes and the Taize service available for viewing.

Watch for a couple of upcoming retreats we are in the process of scheduling and also information on Hackensack Camino in September! We are thrilled to offer this walking guided spiritual retreat again September 17-21 so get walking and join us!



JUSTICE MINISTRY TEAM UPDATE – by Linda Ottman

Our Justice Ministry Team will be hosting a brunch and movie on Sunday, March 9th, at 10:45, after the worship service. The movie is “Americans with No Address,” which focuses on homelessness in this country. It is a “vital and illuminating” movie that showcases the harsh realities of our country’s homelessness crisis. The cost to rent this movie provides access to advertising to create awareness of homelessness in Cass County. “Americans With No Address” is a clarion call for action and awareness, offering a platform for dialogue about a hopeful vision for addressing homelessness across the United States. A forum about Cass County’s homelessness is also planned in June with Public Health.

Also, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, the community clean-up, will be a one-day event this year and is scheduled for Saturday, May 17th with the focus on helping the retired and disabled populations in Hackensack who experience difficulties in doing yard work. More information will be forthcoming soon.

ONGOING EVENTS



Women's Fellowship

Thursday, March 13th, 1:00 pm

Tour of Rendezvous Brewery
Men are invited too!

Any questions, please call the office at 218-675-6300
or email the church at media.ucchackmn@gmail.com.

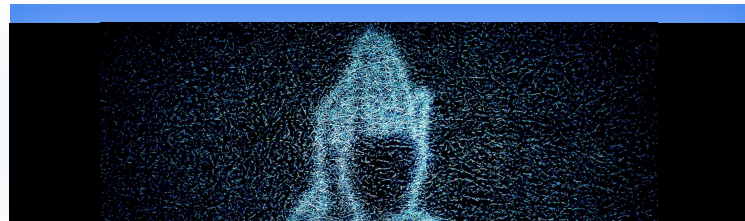


Northwoods Acoustic Jam

Wednesday, March 19th at 5:30 pm

In the Friendship Hall

Any questions, please call the office at 218-675-6300
or email the church at media.ucchackmn@gmail.com.



Lectio Divina

Every Wednesday at 4:00 pm

In the Church Library

Meaning "divine reading," Lectio Divina is a meditation and prayer practice intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's word.



Fit2Move Exercise Group

Every Wednesday & Friday at

10:00 am

In the Friendship Hall

Any questions, please call the office at 218-675-6300
or email the church at media.ucchackmn@gmail.com.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY DINNER



Saturday, March 15th, 5:00 - 6:30 pm Friendship Hall

"Help Union Help Others"



Join us for a dinner of corned beef and cabbage! Come and share with us as we welcome Spring just around the corner.

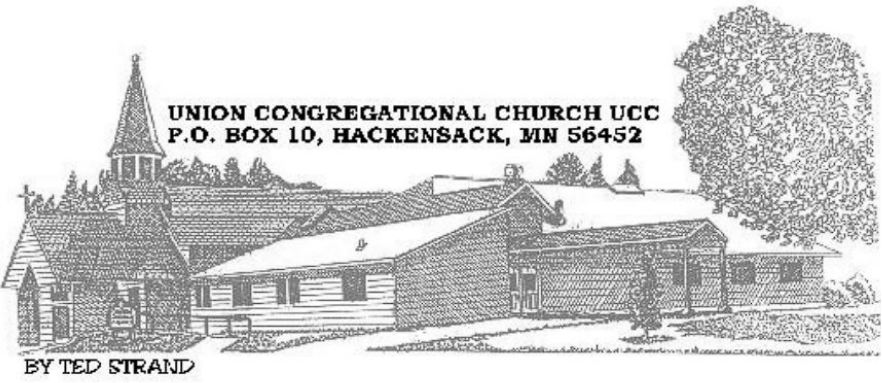
Free will offering to help Union carry out its mission of service to the community.

Union Congregational Church, UCC, Hackensack MN

March 2025

* Community event

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	3 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	4 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	5 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina 5:00 pm Ash Wednesday - UCC	6 10:00 am Bible Study 101 7:30 pm Justice Ministry Team Zoom Meeting	7 Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	8
9 Daylight Saving Time Starts 9:30 am Worship Service 10:45 am JMT Brunch & Movie 1:00 pm Birchview Church	10 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	11 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	12 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina 5:00pm Lenten Service - SPLC	13 10:00 am Bible Study 101 1:00 pm Women's Fellowship	14 Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	15 5:00pm St. Patrick's Day Dinner
16 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	17 St. Patrick's Day 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	18 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	19 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina 5:00 pm Lenten Service - UCC 5:30-7:00 pm Northwoods Acoustic Jam	20 10:00 am Bible Study 101 1:00-3:00 pm Council Meeting	21 Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	22
23 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	24 1:30 pm Bone Builders* 6:00 pm AA Open Meeting*	25 9:00 am Tech Team Meeting	26 10:00 am Fit2Move 4:00 pm Lectio Divina 5:00 pm Lenten Service - SPLC	27 9:00 am Congregational Life Meeting 10:00 am Bible Study 101 1:00-3:00 pm Fiber Arts*	28 Office Closed 10:00 am Fit2Move 1:30 pm Bone Builders*	29
30 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Hour 1:00 pm Birchview Church	31					



FORWARD SERVICE REQUESTED



**St. Patrick's Day Dinner
March 15th at 5:00 PM!**



THE UNION NEWS