



**ANNUAL  
LIFE OF THE CHURCH REPORT  
2020-2021  
UNION CONG. CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**



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## **AGENDA**

1. Opening Prayer
2. January 2021 Congregational Meeting Minutes
3. Personnel Update
4. Financial update
5. Nominations for Ministry Teams
6. Proposed Bylaw Changes
7. Closing Prayer

## **MODERATOR'S REPORT**

Friends,

I am flabbergasted as I re-read my note to all of you from June 2020. Who knew the pandemic would be so long-lasting or what toll the isolation would have on all of us? At the time of this writing, many have escaped COVID all together, some have had it and recovered, many are now vaccinated against it, and a few are missing from our midst. I, for one, must focus on the good I have seen throughout the past year. I have witnessed many of our members acting as the hands and feet of Jesus with phone calls, notes of encouragement, nourishment for the sick and ongoing action for social justice in our world. We can calm our own fears and heal our own brokenness by focusing on service to others and keeping our eyes on God.

Our theme this year was Rooted in Love. I think our Council and Ministry Teams demonstrated their deep roots and commitment to our Union community and beyond with their willingness to “do things differently” to keep the Church going. Our Congregation as well responded with virtual participation and continued giving despite the challenges we faced with being unable to meet in person. I look forward to being able to once more embrace each other not just virtually, but physically when we can.

May we all feel God's presence and grace in the year to come,

Patti Kubicka

## **PASTOR'S REPORT**

### 2021 Pastor's Report

One year ago we successfully planned and offered our first ever Virtual Annual Meeting. In this complicated, and very long year of Covid restrictions, of maintaining physical distance, and transforming our entire church ministry into a virtual format, we have learned many things.

I am so grateful for the patience and perseverance and faithfulness of so many of you. If you were one of those who were initially intimidated about using technology for everything, and decided to wait out the restrictions, and then realized they weren't going to end anytime soon, so you asked family or friends or church staff to help you figure out how you could get online and remain connected to your church worship and your church family, I am so pleased and proud of you. If you were one who week after week, attended virtual worship, weighing in with a cheerful greeting, lifted up your prayers in chat or comment, and sent supportive messages back to staff working hard to make it all work – thank you. If you figured out how to gather your ministry teams virtually through Google Meet or ZOOM and not only stayed connected, but figured out new ways to reimagine what and how our church mission could function – thank you. If you attended any of the special events dreamed up by our staff and mission teams to provide some sense of normalcy and connection – events like our Drive-Through Stewardship Dedication or our Ash Wednesday Soup crawl, or virtual Christmas caroling, mini concerts, the virtual Faith Formation scavenger hunt, pet parade and hunger calendar, Amanda Gorman Poetry of Lent study, Bible study, and Pastor in the Parking Lot - thank you. If you sent notes of encouragement and support to church staff during this time when we felt overwhelmed and completely out of our comfort zone – thank you. If you continued to support one another through phone calls, cards, emails, ZOOM or texts – thank you.

It has not been an easy year. You would think that our jobs would have been easier since there was so much we could not do – and yet, exactly the opposite. As pastor, almost nothing I needed to learn and do to reimagine church in the time of a Pandemic was covered in any of my seminary training or continuing education. I am grateful for the support and resources offered by the Mn. Conference UCC staff, particularly Conference Minister Shari Prestemon and Interim Assoc. Conf. Minister Sheresa Simpson-Rice.

I am proud of our church for continuing to be the vital, worshiping body of Christ in this world during this year. I look forward to our first in-person worship service in over a year. I also know how much we've learned about the value of offering virtual formats for worship and meetings. We will continue to offer a regular weekly Facebook Live

Virtual worship service as well as special services. The fact that we began offering a virtual service almost two years before the Covid shutdown has helped us transition more smoothly.

We are much better at it now though, due to learnings and new technological equipment thanks to a Mn. Conference UCC technology grant. We anticipate that it will continue to allow many of those unable to attend in-person worship to worship with us. We will also continue to use some of the virtual meeting knowledge we've gained in this time to create opportunity for more people to attend events and meetings in the future.

During this Covid year, we have also had to learn how to navigate staff transitions even when we cannot meet in person. We accepted the resignation of our wonderful office administrator, Diane Narr and have hired Rylie Anderson as our new Office Admin. We also recently accepted the resignation of Gigi Nauer as Director of Faith Formation and Chorister Director and are currently in the midst of a Discernment process to determine how we will fill these positions. We are delighted that Gigi will continue as our Handbell choir director.

We've also learned how much we miss one another. We miss seeing face to face our church family and friends. We missed singing together, praying together, hearing the word together, laughing together, and sharing food together. And that is a good reminder of how important the live community is for all of us.

We have also learned that even when we cannot physically be together, there is so much we can do to remain connected with one another. It isn't easy. It isn't the first choice for most of us and it isn't the same. But we have learned and reinforced the learning that the church is not closed just because the building is. The church as we learned long ago, "is not the building. The church is not the steeple. The church is not the resting place. The church is the people!"

# MINUTES FROM JANUARY 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021 ANNUAL FINANCIAL MTG

January 10<sup>th</sup> 2021  
Annual Financial Meeting of the Church.  
Minutes

Patti K. called meeting to order

Robin R. led us in prayer.

**Joan:** Instruction slides on how to ask questions and how to vote

## **Attendance:**

Jackie Schuelein	Joan Stevens	Josh Kannegieter	Kathy Hess-Stevens
Keith Rosdahl	Kim Rosdahl	Laurie Lang	Linda Fenton
Marce Ediger	Marietta Saxon	Marilyn Olson	John Olson
Nancy Hassett	<a href="#">Robin Raudabaugh</a>	Gigi Nauer	Roger Rogni
Jackie Rogni	Ron Benfer	Paula Benfer	Ruth Johnson
Sandy Stroebel	Shelley Petters	Su Arnold	<a href="#">Patti Kubicka</a>
Will Frater	Marion Marcott	Dave Halgren	Ann Klockeman
Arlo Schultz	Bev Putnam	Cheryl Sill	Deb Kopperud
Diane Narr	Frank Scouten	Darla Scouten	Mary Wilson
Jen Narr-Rodrigues	Karen Sherper Rohs	Tony Rohs	Joyce Reiss
Cesar Rodrigues	Don Putnam	Al Fisher	Sara Frater

## **Patti - 2020 Review**

- a. Memorial review
- b. Centennial Review

## **Will Frater - 2020 Review**

- a. Income was on budget
- b. Spending was tight to budget
- c. Cash in bank \$52,840 (as of 12/31/20) and \$12,000 is dedicated to the kitchen loan
- d. Annuity for Pastor is caught up (fully paid off)

### Joan Stevens 2021

- a. The kitchen project is now in the general fund
- b. 70 People renewed their pledges
- c. 1 New pledge
- d. 6 Projected pledges
- e. Reduced the non-pledge giving category
- f. Rental income will continue from the Montessori
- g. 77 Pledging Units - 68% if the congregation

### **Will Frater - 2021 Budget**

- a. No wage increases
- b. Property - some items for repair are up for consideration so the budget line remains the same
- c. Continue of donations of time
- d. Spring - Gigi will continue to Choiristers Role and it will go back to normal in the Fall
- e. Worship budget has increased
- f. Ministerial Leadership and Admin - Pension is caught up, health insurance has been added in (waiting to see the official numbers - based on a 5% increase)
- g. Kitchen payment is \$1,200 per month
- h. PPP Loan - Repayment is delayed until Oct 2021. We are waiting for the approval for forgiveness
- i. The deficit for 2021 is \$19,973 \*\*if the Cares Act Loan is forgiven then it will take care of the deficit

### Josh Kannegieter -

- j. Proposing a "Leap of Faith" budget this year

### **Patti - Asked for a motion**

- a. Dave Halgren made a motion
- b. Cheryl Sill seconded the motion

### Joan Stevens

- a. Put a link for voting



Commented voting outside of link vote:

- a. Su Arnold - yes
- b. Bev and Don - yes
- c. Dave Halgren - yes
- d. Joyce Reiss - yes
- e. Al and Linda Fisher - yes
- f. Ron and Paula Benfer - yes
- g. Deb Kopperud - yes

**All approved**

**Robin - Prayer**

# New Ministry Team Nominations

## Officers

**Moderator:** Patti Kubicka ('21-'23)

**Treasurer:** Will Frater ('20-'22)

**Financial Secretary:** Joan Stevens ('21-'23)

**Property Manager:** OPEN

**Clerk:** Jennifer Narr ('21-'23)

**Historian:** Bonnie Rule ('21-'23)

## **At Large Members:**

Darla Scouten ('21-'23)

## **Delegates:**

Marce Ediger ('21-'23)

Nancy Hassett ('21-'23)

OPEN

## Liturgical Arts

Ruth Johnson ('20-'22)

Sandy Stroebel ('20-'22)

Deb Hyk ('20-'22)

Marilyn Schroeder ('20-'22)

OPEN

## Trustees

Tony Rohs ('20-'22)

Frank Scouten ('20-'22)

Josh Kannegieter ('21-'23)

OPEN

## Personnel

Su Arnold ('21-'23)

Marietta Saxon ('20-'22)

Judy Halgren ('21-'23)

## Diaconate

Lisa Cawthra ('21-'23)

Cheryl Sill ('21-'23)

Dave Foley ('20-'22)

Marce Ediger ('20-'22)

Kevin Dillworth ('21-'23)

OPEN

## Faith Formation

Laurie Lang ('21-'23)

OPEN

## Pastoral Relations

Dave Foley ('21-'23)

Joyce Hodge ('21-'23)

## Memorial

Janelle Johnson ('21-'23)

Aleta Hill-Olson ('21-'23)

Joan Axen ('21-'23)

Deb Kopperud ('21-'23)

OPEN

## Congregational Life

Mary Wilson ('20-'22)

Shelley Petters ('20-'22)

Ann Klockeman ('21-'23)

Katie Francis ('21-'23)

Gigi Nauer ('21-'23)

OPEN

## Outreach & Justice

Nancy Hassett ('20-'22)

Don Britt ('21-'23)

Frank Scouten ('20-'22)

OPEN

# LITURGICAL ARTS

## Purpose

The Liturgical Arts Ministry Team mission is to care for and display the banners, paraments and other items in the sanctuary and throughout the church facility in coordination with the liturgical seasons. Our areas of responsibility include the chancel and altar, vestry, bell tower, narthex and fellowship hall.

## Members

- Ruth Johnson (2018-2020)<sup>1</sup>
- Sandy Stroebe (2018-2020)<sup>1</sup>
- Marilyn Schroeder (2018-2020)<sup>1</sup>
- Deb Hyk (2021-2023)<sup>2</sup>

## 2020-2021 Highlights

- The theme for the church year 2020 was "Rooted In Love." Our team decorated the altar area to portray the theme.
- We purchased fall wreaths for the chancel.
- During Advent and Christmas, we decorated the chancel and altar for the season.
- In February, we created a small historical display for the 145th Anniversary along with using the historical paraments.
- A Lenten display was created as well as the Upper Room for Maundy Thursday.
- Easter flowers, purchased by members, adorned the chancel once again. Thank you!
- This year the members of our team delivered Easter flowers to some of our members on the prayer list. All were so grateful, and we enjoyed wonderful visits and conversations.

## 2020-2021 Goals

- Create a new banner
- Review bylaws
- Update our procedures (hold over from last year)

# TRUSTEES

## Purpose

The Board of Trustees shall oversee and maintain the church property and manage the financial resources of the church. The board shall study the church's financial needs and resources, consulting with other boards and committees, to draft an annual budget for presentation to the congregation. The trustees shall undertake financial reviews of all cash accrual accounts on an annual basis, the depth and date of which shall be left to the discretion of the trustees and/or church council. There will be a \$400 limit on all work done without a bid or quote. All financial records for any account of the church shall be retained for seven (7) years. The Board of Trustees shall be responsible for publicizing the endowment fund, educating membership regarding the stewardship of assets through planned giving, oversee investments in accordance with guidelines established and approved by the congregation, and approve disbursement of funds in coordination with the church council. In addition, and in coordination with the minister, the trustees shall establish a stewardship committee to plan and conduct an annual pledge campaign to encourage responsible giving. The trustees shall follow the document retention policy established for the church to maintain contracts for personnel and vendors

## TRUSTEES

Financial Secretary	Joan Stevens
Treasurer	Will Frater
Property Manager	Keith Stevens
Personnel	Su Arnold
At Large	Joshua Kannegieter, Dave Bowman, Eric Ostmoe, Tony Rohs, Frank Scouten
<u>Ex officio</u>	
Minister	Rev Robin Raudabaugh
Moderator	Patti Kubicka (2019-2021) <sup>2</sup>

The Trustees' would like to thank the following members who have stepped down from the committee this year: David Halgren, Jackie Schuelein, Mary Schuldt. We would also like to thank Keith Stevens, Dave Bowman, and Eric Ostmoe whose terms will be expiring.

## FINANCIAL

- The financial figures at the end of 2020 were just under budget and our income to expenditures were very close.

	2020 Budget	2020 Actual
Operating Income	\$239,226	\$239, 223
Operating Expenses	\$240, 206	\$239, 757
	(\$980)	(\$534)

- The Trustees started planning for the 2021 budget earlier this past year knowing the kitchen loan would be transferred to the general budget in 2021. When pledges appeared to fall short of the anticipated budget an informational meeting was held to provide information to the congregation and to seek input on how to proceed.
- The budget was finalized for 2021 with a projected shortfall.

	2021 Budget
Operating Income – Budgeted	\$233,994
Operating Expenses - Budgeted	\$253,967

- The budget was approved by the congregation with the Trustees’ assurance that we would carefully monitor the situation and provide quarterly updates to the congregation. This “leap of faith” budget was proposed in part due to the previously applied for and obtained \$35,300 that was obtained from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief & Economic (CARES) Act Grant. This money was still held in our accounts pending notification of the loan’s forgiveness. Documentation has now been received that the totality of the loan was forgiven.
- At the end of the first quarter of 2021 the Trustees provided an update to the congregation on the financial health of the church. At that end of the first quarter we were on budget and our income [\$88,279] exceeded expenses [\$66,496]. \$62,871 was unencumbered and held in the church accounts.
- During the past year money owed to repayment of the minister’s pension was brought up-to-date and the balance on our line of credit (excluding the kitchen) is \$0.

## **PROPERTY**

- The most significant concern related to the property this past year has been with regard to the boiler. Several pipes in the boiler froze and needed to be replaced this winter. Those repairs occurred over 2 days. We are still waiting on the bill from Twin City Boiler. Additionally, there is a gauge in need of replacement. Due to the age of our boiler, the part is no longer manufactured. Twin City Boiler is looking for a used part that may work.
- The Trustees' have established a subcommittee to further research our options with regard to the boiler and heating the church. We hope to have answers this summer and have a plan in place headed into fall.
- The Trustees continue to monitor the property for needed maintenance and have identified two primary projects that need to be addressed: the parking lot and the painting of the parsonage. The Trustees continue to obtain quotes but have deferred any decision on these matters until more is known about the situation with the boiler and what those expenses will look like.
- The Trustees had previously established a subcommittee to look into security concerns at the church. Due to COVID-19, this has been on hold.
- The Trustees were previously negotiating a lease with a Seven Day Adventist Congregation from Zimmerman for Saturday use of our church facility. Due to COVID-19, this has been on hold.

## Stewardship Report

The stewardship campaign went very well this past year. To help the trustees the date to start the campaign was moved back to October to allow for more time to work on the budget based on the contributions. We will continue to do this going forward.

In addition, the stewardship committee worked with Congregational Life (Shelley Petters, Ann Klockeman, Katie Francis, Mary Wilson) to plan and coordinate the events related to the campaign. It was wonderful to work with them on this since they brought many new ideas forward on how to have events while still social distancing. We were still able to provide a meal per tradition at the end of the campaign by hosting a drive thru bag lunch. Thank you to everyone that helped bring us together for this and the participation of the congregation. The dates have already been laid out for the 2022 Stewardship Campaign and the smaller committee continues to meet periodically.

Respectfully submitted,

Stewardship Committee

Rev. [Robin Raudabaugh](#), [Gigi Nauer](#), [Joan Stevens](#), [Patti Kubicka](#)

## **PERSONNEL**

### Purpose

The Personnel Committee supports and evaluates paid staff of Union Church, performing annual job performance reviews, helping to hire staff, and offering exit interviews. We will meet with staff members as requested by the minister, the staff member or members of the congregation. There are three members of the committee, each with terms of two years which can be renewed at the completion of the term. A member of the Personnel Committee attends monthly meetings of the Board of Trustees.

### Members

- Su Arnold (2019-2021)<sup>2</sup>
- Marietta Saxon (2018-2021) – term extended by one year
- Judy Halgren (2019-2021)<sup>1</sup>

### 2020 Highlights

Due to Covid19, 2020 was an unusual year. In February, because of budget difficulties as well as the decreasing number of children in the nursery, the position of Nursery Care Provider was discontinued as of January 31, 2020. In August of 2020, Sam Eckberg resigned as Chorister Director. Gigi Nauer was hired to take his place in a one-year position. As Gigi's hours were subtracted from her position as Faith Formation Director, her salary for Choristers did not impact the church budget.

Due to the coronavirus, the committee decided to conduct annual reviews virtually. Both of our custodians, Ken Stueve and Stacy Stueve, were contacted via email and text in September. Also in September we held a review for Diane Narr, Office Administrator as well as for Pastor Robin Raudabaugh. Covid19 has made face-to-face interaction difficult, something both Robin and Diane miss. In November the church learned that Diane had lung cancer and Jennifer Narr agreed to step in as Office Administrator. Staff reviews continue into the spring of 2021.

Respectfully submitted by Su Arnold on behalf of the committee (Marietta Saxon, Judy Halgren and Su Arnold)



## **DIACONATE**

### Purpose

The Diaconate makes sure that the basics are in place for each worship service. Every Sunday, a Deacon of the Day performs a list of duties to help the pastor before, during, and after worship services. On the first Sunday of each month and at special services throughout the year, we set up the communion table, prepare the bread and juice, and assist the pastor in serving communion. When our pastor is absent, we help find ministers to fill the pulpit.

We check the comments and compliments box regularly, and care for the communion table linens, goblets, and silver service. We are also responsible for coordinating the sound system volunteers and maintaining the system. Starting in 2020, Deacons began coordinating and scheduling the ushers.

### Members

We are still functioning with a smaller membership this year. We have five active Deacons: Lisa Cawthra, Cheryl Sill, Marce Ediger, Kevin Dillworth, and, thankfully, we were able to welcome Dave Foley back! We are seeking 3 to 4 new Deacons.

### 2020-2021 Highlights

Lisa Cawthra coordinated the Deacons for the fifth year. Marce Ediger attends all council meetings on our behalf.

Because we have been holding online only services during the pandemic, Deacons have not had as many duties. We staffed the Pastor in the Parking Lot services when the weather was good and kept communion supplies stocked. We continued to meet monthly online.

The Diaconate is joyfully planning to resume in person services soon. There will be limited attendance to start. Deacons will take on the duties of the Greeters and Ushers in the short term.

Every fall we celebrate World Communion Sunday, a day that commemorates unity among many Christian faiths. We decorate the worship space with a harvest theme in honor of the extravagant welcome of Christ's community. Hopefully, we will be fully open and able to have an impressive celebration by the first Sunday in October.

Because we could not have candlelight services on Christmas Eve, we made luminary bags to give to church members. They contained a luminary bag, sand, a tea light candle, and 2 vigil candle holders with candles. We gave out about 30 bags.

Normally, the highlights of our year come at the open and close of the Lenten season with two special celebrations. Every Ash Wednesday, we host a soup supper before the evening service. This year we had a curbside soup supper. Diaconate members (plus Laurie Lang) made 5 kinds of soup. We distributed individual bowls of soup with rolls, cheese, and chocolate candies. Cheryl stayed at church all afternoon on Ash Wednesday distributing soup. The service was held online.

Once again, the Covid-19 stay at home orders precluded our usual Maundy Thursday observance with its candle-lit table and small group communion. The service was held online instead but was still beautiful and meaningful.

Our committee, though still smaller than we would like, is made up of dedicated members who love to serve. We are able to fulfill our obligations with harmony and humor and we always back each other up.

### 2020-2021 Goals

Our goals for the coming year are the same as last year before the pandemic changed all our lives:

1. We will recruit three to four more members in the coming year.
2. We will improve our communication with each other and the rest of the church by
  - a. Getting our agenda out one week before the meeting starting in August;
  - b. Posting and sharing our meeting notes (we have been doing this)
  - c. Having a fall group bonding event. (fingers crossed)
3. We will continue scheduling the ushers and sound volunteers, once in person services are in full swing. We will review their duties, making a point to check in with them each Sunday before the service. We will address the issues with the hearing assistance devices.
4. We will coordinate an annual speaker or learning event to honor Jerry Miller.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Cawthra

## **OUTREACH & JUSTICE**

### Purpose

The Outreach and Justice Ministry Team will be responsible for local and global outreach, addressing issues of justice through; education, activities, actions, events, mission trips, service projects, special offerings and more.

### Members

Nancy Hassett, Don Britt, and Frank Scouten

### 2020-2021 Highlights

Like so many others, Outreach and Justice had a challenging time functioning in a COVID world this past year. Our ranks were down to three members, and only two of the three were able to attend virtual meetings.

In the spring of 2021, O&J started meeting the second Thursday of each month. For the first time in over a year, the ministry team met in person in May of 2021.

### **OUTREACH**

- With the closure of Great River Family promise in Elk River, we are now partnering with Family Promise In Anoka County. Our role will be to bring meals, gift card bags and snacks. Union has a team of six people supporting Family Promise.
- Started a project to make canvas covers with new messages to put over existing social justice yard signs.
- Arranged for virtual music by Carson during MLK weekend and by Carson and Karen during the Easter season.
- Started virtual coffee fellowship following the virtual weekly Sunday service.

### **JUSTICE**

- Continued to support Sanctuary and Resistance to Injustice to draw attention to the partnership Sherburne County has with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

### **ENVIRONMENT**

- Organized 2021 Spring Clean-up Day of Union Grounds

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Hassett

Chair

## **CONGREGATIONAL LIFE**

### Purpose

The Congregational Life team promotes intergenerational activities and events for the congregation. Our goal is to connect this community of faith in fun and joyful ways.

### Members

Mary Wilson (2018-2020)<sup>1</sup>

Shelley Petters (2018-2020)<sup>1</sup>

Ann Klockeman (2019-2021)<sup>1</sup>

Katie Francis (2019-2021)<sup>1</sup>

Gigi Nauer (2019-2021)<sup>1</sup>

### 2020-2021 Highlights

- During the fall, Congregational Life collaborated with the Stewardship Committee to help create activities during the stewardship campaign. Sidewalk chalk drawings celebrated the theme of Rooted in Love. We sent out postcards with the theme and additional greetings from volunteers.
- Three of the Congregational Life team members agreed to be witnessing stewards during the Stewardship Sundays on Facebook Live. Thanks to Shelley, Katie and Mary for that.
- Patti and Shelley organized the food for lunches and the drive-through stewardship dedication day was held on Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>. There was a collection box for pledges, assisted by Libby K. and Katie P., a car-side prayer and blessing from Robin, and bag lunches delivered to each car by Katie F. and her daughter Olivia.
- The last combined meeting with the Stewardship Committee and Congregational Life was held on November 9<sup>th</sup> to debrief the stewardship campaign. Everyone thought that the collaboration of both committees around stewardship was a good idea and worked very well.

- The ongoing ministries of the congregational life team include the prayer shawl and prayer square ministry, sending cards to those who lift up prayers of concern or joy, and delivering bulletins and sermons to those who can't attend worship virtually.
- Normally, the shawls and squares are available in the sanctuary. Those who offer a prayer concern are invited to take one if they would like to. During Covid, the shawls/squares were delivered directly to homes. Thanks to Mary and Shelley for helping that ministry to continue. The cards continue to be sent out weekly by Sandy Stroebel and Ann Klockeman, and Mary picks up and delivers the sermons and bulletins each week, averaging about 20 copies per week.
- In addition, Congregational Life added name-tag maintenance to their list of tasks and Ann Klockeman started that task in collaboration with Rylie, the church office administrative assistant.
- The intergenerational event for June will be a trip to the Sherburne County Refuge with lunch and hiking. The next event will be a chili and pie potluck in the parking lot.
- The Congregational Life Ministry team welcomes ideas and participation in helping connect this community of faith in fun and joyful ways.

Respectfully submitted by Gigi Nauer

## **Faith Formation: Director of Faith Formation**

Faith formation is at the core of what we do as church. We experience it primarily through worship, and from that starting point, carry it into our lives as a faith community, as families, youth, children and individuals. Throughout 2020, the challenge of Covid and social distancing demanded a new way of thinking. Our worship life continued with a virtual format through Facebook helping our Union family stay connected. With no safe way to gather face to face, the other parts of our faith lives needed to be reinvented or postponed. Consideration had to be made about how best to support their faith formation in a way that did not add stress to their current situations of extensive computer screen time for families.

The hope, as it had been in the past, was that Faith Formation continue to integrate children, youth and families into the whole life of the church in a way that was accessible to all.

### **2020-2021 Highlights**

In September, we celebrated the blessing of the backpacks, even as school looked completely different for everyone. We invited the families to send photos of their students in their current school settings. Some were sitting at laptops in their living rooms. Some were wearing their backpacks filled with their home-school supplies and still others sent photos from the most recent first-day-of-school. A power-point slide show was assembled, set to music and presented during worship for everyone to enjoy from home.

Our first virtual music moment involved the kids singing from their homes. The song, "I'm going to live so God can use me" was recorded by each household and sent to church. The verses were divided up so that all the singers would be seen on the video. It was very well received when shown during our virtual worship service.

When the Choristers sang, they came to church and the song was recorded in the sanctuary. They also sang "live" during one of the virtual worship service.

We tried to find ways for families and individuals in our congregation to have a church-like experience at home between worship services. A list of suggestions for candle-lighting rituals, prayer-rituals and others were promoted via email and the church e-news.

The candle-lighting ritual provided daily suggestions for sharing a moment, lighting a candle, and responding to a suggestion such as sharing different words for God, saying one thing you are grateful for, sharing a word of appreciation for each other, etc.

The prayer-rituals were ways to help move past the uncomfortable part of praying together and instead, use ideas to make it easier. The five-finger prayer, coloring prayer, and a fill-in-the-blank prayer are just some of the examples suggested.

Starting in December, we promoted an Advent Minute to Moment – which was a month-long list of daily activities that would only take a moment to do. The idea was to help remind everyone of each day passing during the waiting time up to Christmas. Some blanks were left in the calendar for participants to create their own Advent Minute to Moments.

For our annual intergenerational Christmas Pageant, we decided to try a virtual one. Families were provided with a part of the Christmas Story to tell in any way they wanted to. Many acted it out, some sent in a tableau of their scene and some shared a modern take on their particular part of the story. All of the contributions were delightful. The video-recorded contributions were sent to church and assembled into one Virtual Pageant with a Suess-style narration tying it all together. The Virtual Pageant was shown during worship and received many compliments in the comment section of our Facebook live streaming.

Our next event was the Hunger Calendar, an activity to build awareness around the issue of hunger. Participants were encouraged to count something in their house or neighborhood each day. The Hunger Calendar had suggestions like counting forks or plates, counting closets or warm hats, all in an attempt to become aware of items of comfort that some may not have. For each item to counted, some money was placed in a bowl so that along with raising awareness, we also raised funds to fill some of those needs. On the final day of the month, participants were invited to drive by the front of the church where some of our youth were waiting to collect the funds. It was a brief moment of face to face that lifted the spirits of everyone who came by. We collected approximately \$1100 which was divided between Open Doors for Youth, a day center for youth struggling with homelessness, and CAER, our local food shelf.

For our most recent Union UCC anniversary, we promoted a History Quiz with questions about our church as well as our denomination, the United Church of Christ. Multiple choice quiz questions were emailed each day with the answers provided on the following day. The quiz was sent out through Flocknote, the church email system, which allowed those who wished, to reply with their answers. Many did and others played along at home. Pictures accompanied the answers. We learned a great deal during the quiz days, including Robin's middle name, the year our church was built, who our UCC National Staff and Minnesota Conference leaders are, how many libraries we have and much much more. The quiz ran from late February up until Easter and it was great fun to watch everyone play along.

The Virtual Youth and Sunday's Cool Scavenger Hunt gave the kids a chance to see each other face to face virtually through our church Google Meet application. A scavenger hunt list of items that could be found at home was read aloud and the kids disappeared from their screens while they scrambled around their homes to find that item. The goal was to find as many items as possible. An anonymous donor contributed one dollar for each item the kids found and the money was added to the Hunger Calendar fundraiser.

We also held a Virtual Pet Parade – a chance to see each other and meet the different pets and stuffed animal toys in our lives.

During Covid, job tasks for staff often fell under the category of “duties as apparent or assigned”. Everyone involved in the work of the church managed different tasks than they had originally been called/hired to do. I am so thankful for all who stepped forward with a willing heart and growing faith. It brings new possibilities to the future of our staying connected and also reminds us of how important it is, that seeing God in one another sometimes requires new eyes.

Respectfully submitted by

Gigi Nauer Director of Faith Formation



**The Faith Formation areas of oversight include:**

Sunday's Cool, Youth Group, Children & Youth participation in worship, Interfaith Events, Adult Forum, Parent Groups and Intergenerational Events along with Congregational Life.

Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday were celebrated virtually due to Covid 19 restrictions.

Respectfully submitted,

Gigi Nauer, Director of Faith Formation.

## **CONFIRMATION**

### Confirmation 2020-2021

With the restrictions of Covid, Confirmation class ended abruptly in 2020 with a postponement of end of the year planning for another exciting Confirmation Sunday.

In August, 2020 we confirmed Logan Peterson and Dylan Schuster on a Sunday afternoon in social distanced, masked service at the Pastor in the Parking Lot service. It was a gorgeous sunny day and a moving service hearing Dylan and Logan's statements of Faith and promises as they were confirmed and joined this church.

We did not offer distance or on-line Confirmation classes throughout the school year of 2020. We will be offering four Confirmation classes in May and June this year to re-connect our confirmands and determine what is next. Regular weekly Confirmation class will resume this Fall.

# **MEMORIAL**

## **PURPOSE**

The Memorial Team receives, acknowledges, and disburses the gifts given in memory or honor of loved ones. We hope to make the congregation aware of ways to add to the beauty and nurture of our faith community through donations to various funds. These funds are available as resources by request from church committees. Currently we have available funds in the following categories:

Church School, Furnishings, Music, Hospitality, Living Gifts, Lay Ministry, Kitchen Renovation, Youth Trip, Worship and Arts, Membership Care, Media, and Undesignated.

## **Members**

- Aleta Hill-Olson (2019-2021)<sup>2</sup>
- Janelle Johnson (2019-2021)<sup>2</sup>
- Joan Axen (2019-2021)<sup>2</sup>
- Deb Kopperud (2019-2021)<sup>1</sup>

<b>Memorial Committee Annual Report</b>	<b>As Of May 5, 2021</b>	
<b>Checking</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3,914.57</b>
<b>Savings</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>11,037.30</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>14,951.87</b>
<b>Beginning balance - prior year report</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>13,279.40</b>
<b>Memorials received</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,665.00</b>
<b>Interest on Savings</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>12.47</b>
<b>TOTAL DEPOSITS</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,677.47</b>
<b>Memorial fund expenses, postage</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>110.00</b>
<b>Trustees - Kitchen Account</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>820.00</b>
<b>SARI - Social Justice for Tulio</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>75.00</b>
<b>TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,005.00</b>
<b>Ending balance - current report</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>14,951.87</b>
<b>Undesignated</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>6,892.34</b>
<b>Faith Formation</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>396.12</b>
<b>Liturgical Arts</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>133.51</b>
<b>Congregational Life</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,540.43</b>
<b>Music**</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>5,239.47</b>
<b>Befrienders</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>445.00</b>
<b>Kitchen</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>50.00</b>

<b>Youth Trip</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>10.00</b>
<b>SARI</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Media &amp; Little Free Library</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>245.00</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>14,951.87</b>

<b>Concerts</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>50.00</b>
<b>Choristers</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>876.01</b>
<b>Handbells</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>10.00</b>
<b>Senior Choir</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,003.98</b>
<b>Music (general)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,299.48</b>
<b>Total Music **</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>5,239.47</b>

<b>Media</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Little Free Library</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>145.00</b>
<b>Total Media *</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>245.00</b>

Memorials received for:

- Dick Elliott
- Gar Johnson
- Fred Stroebel
- Lois Potter
- Jerry Schroeder
- Don Radke
- Martha Travis

## **PASTORAL RELATIONS**

### **PURPOSE**

The Pastoral Relations Committee shall serve as a support and advisory group: to maintain an open and healthy relationship between called minister and members of the congregation. They shall listen to and articulate and discuss with the minister the congregation's expectations and concerns.

### **Members**

- Marylyn Bowman
- Kevin Dillworth
- Shelley Petters
- Bev Putnam
- Darla Scouten

This year, Pastoral Relations met every other month on the fourth Tuesday.

Our agenda each meeting asked the questions: What does the pastor feel is going well? What concerns does the pastor have? And What does the committed feel is going well? What concerns need to be addressed. This confidential team provided a great sounding board for the pastor and also brought issues and concerns from the congregation to be discussed and direction determined.

I am so grateful for the thoughtful, discerning conversation of these persons. I especially thank Bev and Shelley who will be going off this team this year.

## **CENTENNIAL**

### PURPOSE

This organization of ladies started in this church in January 1876 with the purpose of fellowship with each other and support of the church.

No report was made for the year 2020-2021

## **Family Promise**

The Family Promise Team for 2020: Darla and Frank Scouten, Shelley Petters, Gigi Nauer and Pastor Robin Raudabaugh. In 2021, Rylie Anderson and Amanda Hooper joined the team.

We hosted Great River Family Promise one time in December of 2019. We had two families stay a week at our church. We provided a room, meals and activities for two moms with children during this time with approximately twenty volunteers offering help from donating supplies and food to in person hosting.

When Covid restrictions happened in early 2020, all Great River FP hosting opportunities ceased, and soon after GRFP closed its doors for good. Our Union UCC Family Promise team also took a hiatus during this time. In the Spring of 2021 we began seeking another opportunity to offer help to families experiencing homelessness. We found Family Promise Anoka to be receptive to having us join their work. We first hosted FPA in February. Hosting at this time does not include in person housing at the church, instead we provide one meal for each family as well as a hospitality bag of additional food and household items and a grocery gift card. We also added games and toys for children to our bags. The items are delivered to the day center in Ramsey which then are delivered to the families currently being housed in a motel. We had thirteen people volunteer food and supplies. At the time of this report we are for our second hosting the week of May 23.

Our FP team has decided to meet monthly and desires to expand our outreach to include other needs of homelessness in our community and wider community. We currently meet the third Wednesday at 5 pm.

## **CAER (Community Aid Elk River)**

Union Church has been a supporter of CAER (Community Aid Elk River) from the beginning of its existence, with people serving in several capacities at different times. Currently, this work usually takes the form of packing groceries or assisting shoppers who come to the facility. Groups of five people are scheduled for a three-hour shift either morning or afternoon on a Monday, Wednesday or Friday each month. It can be a busy time, but there is always time for friendly chatter and a bit of fun. Most volunteers work one time each month, others sometimes work more shifts. People that have volunteered during the past year include Marvin Andersen, Mike Arnold, Sue Arnold, Marylyn Bowman, Steph Brown, Linda Fisher, Dave Foley, Judy Halgren, Bill Heck, Mary Heck, Joyce Hodge, Janelle Johnson, LaVonne Kirshbaum, Deb Kopperud, Lori McLaren, John Olson, Cyndy Patton, Shelly Petters, Joyce Riess, Marietta Saxon, Mary Schuldt, Karen Sherper Rohs and Gloria Stricker. Thanks to all of these people for their time and commitment. We have recently moved to using "Sign-Up Genius" to fill the volunteer opportunities.

Due to COVID-19, the operations at CAER have changed and the clients are not able to come in and "shop" therefore, our volunteer opportunities have been put on-hold. We look forward to the time when we can be helping our brothers and sisters again.

Respectfully Submitted,

Diane Narr

## **MEALS ON WHEELS**

Union Church volunteers continue to deliver meals to the Elk River community for the Meals on Wheels Program through Catholic Charities. Meals are picked up at the Guardian Angels Elk River Dining Site at 350 Evans Ave. Union takes responsibility for the Blue route in the months of January, April, July, and October. This program serves the community by assuring many home bound seniors and others in need due to injury or illness are able to meet their nutritional needs.

Thank you to all the volunteers who served over the past year!!!

Due to COVID-19, the delivery of meals has changed, and rotating volunteers are not able to be used at this time. We look forward to the time when we can help again.

Respectfully Submitted,

Diane Narr



## **MUSIC: Handbell Choir**

### **History**

The Union Handbell Choir has been playing since February of 1997. Under the direction of Marilyn Olson, the Handbell Choir began playing regularly for Union worship services beginning in December of that year. The choir performs on handbells and hand chimes, with mallets and other aids.

### **Members**

Su Arnold, Deb Kopperud, Jan Wick, and Marilyn Olson have been members of the choir since the first rehearsal. Marylyn and Hesther Bowman play regularly and some of their extended family fills in when needed. Also included are Marce Ediger, Patti Kubicka, Karen Sherper-Rohs and Jen Narr.

In addition, our church accompanist and Senior Choir director have occasionally joined in. It has been a delight to see Sam Eckberg and Carson Schnieder playing along with us.

### **2020/2021**

Our previous season ended with Bellfest on March 4<sup>th</sup>. This annual event sponsored by Bells of the Lakes is an opportunity for bell choirs from many places to play together and perform. Right after the 2020 Bellfest, the first Covid restrictions were put into place and the Union Handbell Choir was unable to gather again for a long time.

Since the music of handbells did not require singing, the group was asked if they'd be willing to play under the Covid guidelines. To compensate, we added more tables to our set-up, rehearsed in the larger space of the fellowship hall, wore masks and gloves and handled only our own bells. We had enough ringers to give it a try. We played live during some worship services, and prerecorded pieces for special services around Christmas and Easter. Currently, every Handbell Choir member has been vaccinated. We've removed the extra tables and played together, two to a table, still masked, and very glad to be all together.

We were invited to provide virtual music for the Minnesota Conference Annual Meeting. We prerecorded two pieces, a prelude and a postlude. We will also be playing over the summer as circumstances allow.

Respectfully submitted,

Gigi Nauer, Handbell Choir Director

## **LITURGISTS GROUP**

Our liturgists group meets every Tuesday evening for about an hour of Bible Study. We discuss the lectionary text that Pastor Robin will be preaching on for the upcoming Sunday. While Bible Study is not reserved for liturgists even though they regularly attend, anyone can and is invited to participate in Bible Study.

Our liturgists not only study the Sunday scriptures, they prepare an introduction to the scripture to be read. They also select a peace prayer appropriate to the theme of the Sunday or the concerns of the world.

Throughout Covid we continued to meet weekly, moving our Bible Study to virtual format. Liturgists also took on an increased role in worship leadership as in addition to reading scripture and providing the Peace Prayer, they also served as the leader for all Congregational Responses in our Sunday worship services.

We have a wonderful and dedicated group of regular liturgists: Su Arnold, Marylyn Bowman, Marce Ediger, Cheryl Sill, Laurie Lange, Diane Narr and John Olson.

## **FIBER ARTS GROUP**

The Fiber Arts has not met 2020-2021



## **HISTORIAN REPORT**

I am mindful, that the 150th Anniversary of The Union Church will be in '25. The official anniversary would be on the first Sunday of February '25. In the past, other big celebrations have been held when the weather is more favorable. The time is coming near when a committee should be formed to plan this event.

With that in mind, many do not know of how I became the Union Church Historian. In 1989-90, and at the beginning of Trish Greeves' pastorate, I volunteered and followed Ruth Johnson who picked up the position from Helen Gray who was, at that time, the Church history expert. I volunteered with one goal in mind. After Richard Scheerer left in '89, a beautiful portrait was taken of him by Tony Mikols, and determined that my goal was to have a portrait of every pastor who served the church. My second goal was to determine how the pastor's family's involvement influenced what factors came into light with a new evolution within the congregation. In many respects with the new pastors and their families, I have been successful. In other more frustrating families, not so much.

Through the years, I have learned much through research, but more importantly from the members Marilyn Schroeder and I spoke with who were recorded on tape. Or just other conversations in general.

I do not consider myself an "expert" in any way, but realize I currently know more of The Union Church history than any one through attrition with so many of those voices now gone.

The 145th Anniversary Celebration was a wonderful event that, perhaps, awakened some to the dedication of this church to the community way over one hundred years. The next, the 147th. was led by a small and dedicated committee who were promised that this would be a one time deal. It was also a wonderful event with Dave Foley, Frank & Darla Scouten, Kevin Dillworth, Jane Houlton, and Marilyn Schroeder, Centennial members, Youth members, and others all on board.

Every year deserves the recognition of one more year in celebration of another milestone. With that in mind, I believe that it is time for someone or a small committee to step up, to learn the history of The Union Church and continue to perpetuate the value of this congregation within the Elk River community that has always been so since as early as 1866.

Over these years, we have been involved with many celebrations within our church: The Reverend Bill Huntley's 50th Anniversary of Ordination, a Mother's Day display. Our 125th Anniversary of Organization, a tribute to former organist, Donald Ellingson, upon his retirement after 50 years of service, a tribute display of events in November over the years including the installation of Dana Mann as our new pastor, a celebration of our church structure built in 1881, the celebration of the Centennial Society's 120th anniversary in 1997, a Seminars Sunday reunion, two Welcome Home Sunday reunions welcoming former members and families to their home church, and, perhaps, many others all intended to call attention to the relevance of acknowledging Union Church history always in celebration.

At the beginning of my term(s), I was supported and advised by my friend and associate, Marilyn Schroeder. Our first big event was the Sherburne County Century Church designation celebrated in November 1992. Well before and including the many following events, I want to acknowledge Marilyn's constant presence. Thank you Marilyn Schroeder.

While I do not expect anyone to take on my now 30+ years as some kind of "career" decision, I am hopeful that there are those within our congregation who will learn and teach new members of this church's valued history and mission within and beyond the Elk River community.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Rule  
Historian