United Church Council
March 22, 2026

Present (Officers & Delegates): Jerry Bertelson, Sarah Woltzen, Brad Schroeder, Jacey Richardson, Karyn Montgomery, Josh Popkes Sr., Amy Tieszen, Joey Latsha, Nicole Perry and Bo DeKramer

Absent, if committee not represented (Officers & Delegates): Cody Church, KC DeVos, Morgan Gerken, Carol Woltzen and Katie Ortman

Was Quorum present: yes

Call Meeting to Order (time): 7:02 by Sarah Woltzen, Council Vice Chairperson

Opening Devotion & Prayer: Nicole Perry, Worship and Membership delegate

Discuss/Amend/Vote on Agenda
- Motion: Josh Popkes Sr.
- Second: Amy Tieszen
- Approve: yes

Discuss/Vote on Previous Meeting Minutes
- Motion: Bo DeKramer
- Second: Josh Popkes Sr.
- Approve: yes

Visitor(s) Sharing: N/A
(visitors are invited to share for up to three-minutes)

Pastor Report *(see below)*

Chairperson Report *(see below)*

Financial Report
(Committee & Treasurer)

Committee Reports
(see reports below- if any action items are on committee reports, they will be moved down to "Action Items" below)

Vote on accepting Pastor, Committees, Financial, & Officer Reports
- Motion: Brad Schroeder
- Second: Amy Tieszen
- Approve: yes

Previous Discussion Items Needing Action:

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Discussion Items

- LaGrange, GA Mission Trip to Canistota: coming up on May 24th. We still need host homes available also need Lunch and supper provided also
- Building Committee update: The parking lot will start after Easter
- Fundraising Committee discussion / Gala Event: its moving right along

New Action Items

- Brad Schroeder and Cody Church have been credentialed by the Presbytery of South Dakota to preside at The Lord's Table. This is a vote to acknowledge and accept it.

Josh Popkes Sr. made a motion to accept Brad Schroeder and Cody Church's credentialing by the Presbytery of South Dakota to preside at The Lord's Table. Amy Tieszen seconded and the motion was approved.

Deaths, Births, Baptisms, Confirmations, Weddings

Church council comments / announcements / upcoming events

(Any council members are invited to share comments or announcements related to United Church of Canistota or our community. No action taken on comments.)

- Confirmation Banquet – April 19 at 5 pm
- Fundraiser Gala – April 25 at 6 pm
- Confirmation Sunday – April 26 at 9:30 am
- Graduation Sunday – May 17 at 9:30 am

Continued Prayers & Closing Prayer

- Building Project, Dawn Nebelsick (upcoming surgery on May 15th)
- Additional joys or concerns

Adjournment (time): 7:44 pm

Motion: Amy Tieszen
Second: Josh Popkes Sr.
Approve: yes

Next meeting date:

- ✓ Next meeting is Sunday, April 26, 2026 at 7:00 pm
- ✓ Next meeting's opening devotion and prayer: PPR Committee

Closing Prayer: Jerry Bertelson

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Reports Listed Below

Pastor Report

March 2026 Pastor's Report
Rev. Jerry Bertelson

April Fools' Day, observed on April 1, has a curious history that brushes up against Christianity. One explanation of the origins of April Fool's Day traces it to the shifting of the New Year in parts of Europe during the 1500s. When the calendar moved the start of the year from late March/early April to January 1, those who continued celebrating the old date were sometimes mocked as "April fools." Today it is often celebrated with playful jokes and other fun activities, yet the idea of being a "fool" is something the New Testament picks up. It mentions how faith itself can appear foolish to the world. The apostle Paul writes, "We are fools for Christ's sake" (1 Corinthians 4:10). What the world dismisses as foolishness, virtues such as humility, forgiveness, sacrificial love, can often turn out to be the wisdom of God. April Fools' Day can serve as a small reminder that following Christ may sometimes look foolish in the eyes of others, but in following God's ways we discover the truest wisdom.

Ministry Highlights:

- Held two communion services at Good Samaritan Canistota on March 8 & 24.
- Made six in-person visits in March.
- Offered pastoral care through phone calls, texts, and spiritual direction.
- Zero benevolent fund requests.
- Met with confirmation students three times in March.
- Submitted two pastoral columns to *The Special* newspaper.
- Met with ministry coach, Richard Blackburn once in March.
- Maintained an active pastoral presence in the wider community through service on local boards, committees, and emergency rescue services.
- Hosted two video discussion gatherings on the series The Chosen.
- Continued a new Lenten sermon series called *Unplugged: Lent in a Noisy World*.
- Continued focus in early 2026 will include confirmation ministry, pastoral care, community engagement, updating communication strategies, and planning for upcoming seasonal worship and programs. Additionally, would like to plan a Council retreat.
- A special thank you to Cody Church for filling in for me while I was on vacation on March 15th.
- Due to scheduling conflicts, a proposed pastoral sabbatical for summer 2027 will be pushed back one year to summer 2028.

Upcoming Note:

- The youth will be starting a pizza fundraiser in on March 25th. Funds will be used for youth activities, including a trip to the Black Hills with the LaGrange, GA youth.
- Upcoming Date on May 3 at 2 pm– Robert Beringer, Ed.S., will be giving a presentation to anyone interested on the topic of *"Beyond the Behaviors: Understanding ADHD and Building Supportive Systems"*

With gratitude,
Pastor Jerry

Chairperson Report

Trustees

"But all things should be done decently and in order."
- 1 Corinthians 14:40

The trustees report for the period of February and March 2026

Meeting:
The trustees committee had our meeting postponed from 3/15/26 to 3/22/26, right after church so I don't have minutes to convey in this report, I will pass out minutes at council that night.
The trustees will be voting on three improvements to the church.
#1. Electric Hand Dryers in the bathrooms
#2. WiFi Access points in the building to provide consistent wireless internet
#3. Demolition and re-installation of the bell tower and front access sidewalks in concert with the building project starting right after Easter.
Services:
None to report for the time period.
Cemetery:
Talked with Cemetery committee, they wanted to remove the fence and get bids to install two pillars at the entrance to the cemetery.
Farmland:
Haven't been updated on any changes or needs
Parsonage:
Haven't been updated on any changes or needs during the period

Yours in Christ,
Joshua Popkes
Chairman
UCC Trustees

Building Committee

"Let us rise up and build"

-Nehemiah 2:18

The Building Committee report for the period of February and March 2026

Meeting:
Held a building committee meeting on 3/8.
We discussed the actual funding and when to release letters of intent to who, when.
Joey has released letters of intent to the following subs, Excavation, Concrete, building package and framing.
We discussed initial schedule which needs some more hammering out, but we are looking to start the project the week AFTER Easter services, so we have full asphalt parking for Easter. After which we will fence off (volunteer work) and begin excavation and parking lot expansion.

There were conversations about what is extra that we should be trying to prioritize as an opportunity-cost saving solution. Mainly, interior concrete, it was discussed about cost to pour with no building as opposed to cost of interior concrete after building is constructed.
We appreciate everything the congregation and council have put into bringing this project into fruition and with God's grace we will be able to get it over the hump.
Yours in Christ,
Joshua Popkes
Chairman
UCC Building Committee

Building Committee met 3/8. Attendees: Joey Latsha, Josh Popkes, KC DeVos, Nicole Perry, Amy Tieszen. Reviewed subcontractor bids, confirmed list of subs. Sent out letters of intent for subcontractors that are involved with the exterior shell of the building. Will wait to hire subs on the finish side until money is raised and we decide what the church will self-perform. Discussed schedule, starting with adding to the parking lot. We are pushing to start construction before the Gala to help build support with physical activity onsite.
Submitted by Joey Latsha

Stewardship & Finance

The Finance Committee reports that we plan to meet the week of March 23 to complete the church audit. We also look forward to meeting in the second half of April to review first quarter financial numbers. We want to extend our thanks to Doreen Fry for her dedicated service to the church. We're pleased to welcome Jacey Richardson, who will be taking on the finance committee role full time going forward.

Submitted by Eric Tieszen

Christian Education

Worship & Membership

Pastoral Relations

World Outreach

United Women's Society (UWS)

Member-At-Large

Elders Team

Commissioner to the Presbytery of South Dakota

Lay Member to Annual Conference (UMC)

Fundraising Committee