



Dear Friends and Members of Union Presbyterian Church,

It's been an odd month. At three different gatherings I've found myself in discussions with fellow Christians where out of nowhere the issue of Biblical inerrancy became central to the conversation. The last time I was speaking with another pastor and friend regarding a particular Scripture passage. His closing comment was that none of our differences of opinion mattered that much anyway since, "You can interpret any verse in the Bible to mean just about anything." I was so shocked to hear him say this that I have to admit that my response was slightly less than elegant. I think I said something like, "Nuh-uh."

Some argue that the greatest divisions in the Western Christian Church in the last 50 year have been over Biblical inerrancy. While it is fine to say that you believe that the Bible is completely true, in reality no one believes and follows EVERYTHING in the Bible literally. We all know that the Bible is full of poetry and symbolism (which is not supposed to be taken at face value). Because Jesus came to fulfill the Old Covenant and bring about a new one, some of what is in the New Testament supersedes what is in the Old. There are even moments in the Bible when God gave rules for his people that didn't line up with his true wishes to help his people be successful (check out what Jesus says about divorce in Matthew 19:1-12). While it is easy to claim that you believe that the Bible is without error, it is much more challenging to determine the "how much" and the "which parts" and the "what counts" with Biblical inerrancy. And as a result, over the years many Christians have tried to use inerrancy as a way to decide who was really part of the true church and who was not.

In the book, "7 Things I Wish Christians Knew About the Bible," Michael F. Bird wonders if the American church has maybe placed too much emphasis on inerrancy. Bird is a Bible professor in Australia and argues that the international church does not talk much about inerrancy. He wonders if all of us should think less about inerrancy and more about whether we believe Scripture is normative or negotiable. Bird writes that believing that Scripture is negotiable (that we can choose which parts of the Bible God really speaks through) is something that Christians have always struggled with. For example, in early church history, Marcion removed overly "Jewish" parts of the Bible, Thomas Jefferson removed Jesus' miracles from his version, and today some conservative and liberal seminaries essentially do the same thing to better match the Bible to their political beliefs. Bird writes:

Those of us who live outside the canopy of North American evangelicalism really cannot be bothered with the tribal debates of "I'm more inerrantist than thou" when we find the real threat to be churches and leaders who think the Bible is some kind of religious cadaver... [that can have parts]... surgically removed from its body.

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**September Elders**

Jennifer Nelson  
 Carol Beasley  
 Claire Cabral

**Session**

September 19

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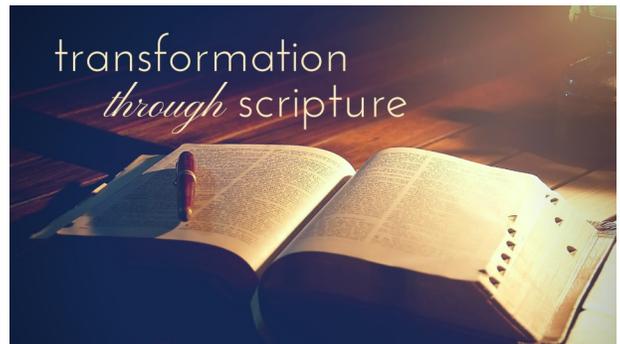
Bird continues,

I'm not remotely worried that someone prefers "soft" inerrancy over "hard" inerrancy; I'm more anxious about my church and students being seduced by a view of scripture that implies that God only speaks in the bits of scripture that agree with a particular political ideology, whether that is the identity politics of the radical left or the syncretistic mix of nationalism and civil religion of the religious right.

Bird believes that one of the biggest challenges of the church today is not inerrancy but whether we believe that the Bible has any authority at all. Are we approaching the Bible as if it is negotiable (we can pick the parts we like)? Or is it normative (do we submit ourselves to what God has to tell us through it)?

I wonder if what Bird is really concerned about is the result of too many of us "followers of Christ" being a little too lazy sometimes. It's really easy to come to a challenging passage of Scripture and to just take it at face value. We might say to ourselves, "I knew it! Look what it says in this passage! Everything I used to think that Scripture said about this topic is different now! This verse changes everything!" Or we might come across something that we read and don't like and say, "Wow, that does not work with what I want to believe about God and following him, so this verse must not be for me. It must be for someone else." We make Scripture negotiable.

Instead, when we come across a challenging piece verse in the Bible, it should spur us to begin a Holy Spirit led Scriptural Scavenger Hunt! How would that passage be read by its original audience? What do other passages of Scripture say about this subject? Did Jesus weigh in on this in the Gospels? Does the Old Testament and New Testament say something similar or different about this? Is this passage describing how God wants a certain people to deal with a certain messed-up situation in a broken, cruel, and chaotic world, or does it describe God's hope and will for us all? Each challenging part of Scripture should send us on a trail that draws us deeply into Scripture and ultimately closer to God.



I've seen the fruit of what it looks like when people do this. Nancy Newman, our Administrative Assistant, and I come from very different Christian backgrounds. I grew up in the church; Nancy became a Christian as a young adult. I've been a Presbyterian a long time; Nancy has a Pentecostal background. Nancy and I read the prophetic books of the Old Testament very differently. Even the words we use to describe the important aspects of faith are very different from one another. And yet I think that one of both of our favorite things, is when one of us comes to the other and asks, "What do you think about this passage of Scripture?" There is always a lively conversation. And we usually approach that Scripture from very different places. Our concerns and questions are usually very different from one another. But it almost always turns out that our interpretation of that passage is not hugely different from one another. Why? Because, for as different as we are, Nancy and I both believe that Scripture is normative. We don't change it; it changes us. We don't just pick the parts we like; we let God's Word pick apart the parts of us we shouldn't like. The Bible isn't about us; it's about God.

I wish I could have that conversation with my friend who believed you could interpret a verse to mean just about anything over again. Instead of just saying "nuh-uh," I would want to agree with him. All of us CAN interpret a verse to mean just about anything. But that's not what we are called to do. We aren't called to transform a verse into our liking, we are called to wrestle with Scripture and to be transformed by the Holy Spirit in the process. May we all find ourselves in deep Scriptural dives with the Holy Spirit this month!!

Sincerely in Christ,  
Pastor James

## Worship for September

Figuring out God's will for us can sometimes be challenging. During the month of September we invite you to join us as we explore what it means to be "called" by God. Also, please note that our next celebration of the Lord's Supper will be on World Communion Sunday, October 3.

### *New Sermon Series: Called by Christ*

September 5: John 21: 15-19, "Called by Christ... Feeding Sheep"  
-Labor Day Weekend

September 12: Mark 10:46-52, "Called by Christ... Is this a Collect Call?"

September 19: Acts 6: 1-7, "Called by Christ... The First Deacons"

September 26: Ecclesiastes 3:1-11, "Called by Christ... Called to Care"

### *New Lectionary Series: Hebrews- Jesus is Greater*

October 3: Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12, "Jesus is Greater... Seeing Sovereignty"

-World Communion Sunday; Celebration of the Lord's Supper

## Fall Sunday School Starts September 5!

We are excited to announce that we will be returning to a full Sunday School program on **September 5**. There will be 3 adult classes available as well as a children's and a youth class. So come out and join us at **9 AM** for a blessed time of looking deeper into the Word of God.

### Ongoing Adult Classes

1. Class One will be using the David Cook Curriculum and meeting in the Old Potter's Clay Classroom.
2. Class Two will be studying Galatians using the Reformed Expository Series and will meet in the old David Glenn Classroom
3. Class Three will be finalizing their curriculum choice this Sunday and will be meeting in the prayer room next to the old Young Disciple Classroom.

We hope that you will check out a class this Sunday!

### Elementary Kids

Our elementary kids are beginning a new series starting September 5, called "This Train is bound for Glory" It is an opportunity for the youth to explore what the different components of Christian living look like! Just like a train has many cars that are designed for different parts, following God is also made up of many parts!

### Older Youth

The Older Youth will be finishing out the summer series for the next couple weeks on the 7 Deadly Sins! Then they too will be starting a brand new exciting curriculum for the Fall!



# SERVING THE LORD WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART



## Our Local Schools Thank You!

A big thank you to everyone who participating in this year's school tool collection! This year Union brought in over 2535 school items (more than double last year)! A special shout out needs to go to those involved in this year's Vacation Bible School. They collected money for school supplies as their service project for the week so a HUGE part of our increase is thanks to them!



The numbers of items brought in for the other area Presbyterian churches have also been reported! New Hope Presbyterian Church brought in 852 items, Olney collected 341, and Robinson collected 1,870. This means that together our south-end Presbyterian churches brought in over 5,598 items! Although, we didn't include Olney in our calculations last year, this is an increase of over 1,500 items!!!

Isn't that Awesome!?! Let us keep all of our schools and particularly Beam, Robinson, Bess, New Hope, and Forestview in our prayers this Fall!



## Winter Clothing Collection

It's that time of year! Are you in hunting for a new jacket? Maybe you've been cleaning out your closet! During September and October our red barrel will be out in the Rotunda to collect coats, jackets, hats, gloves, (new and/or lightly used). The barrel will be out starting **September 5**. If you need someone to come pickup of items, please call Tammy Biddix or a member of the Witness and Service Committee. Thank you and let us provide the gift of warmth to someone in need this Winter!

## Christmas Boxes for Samaritan's Purse

If you would like to make some child's Christmas special, the Christmas boxes are available at the main entrance along with a list of items suggest on the table beside the boxes. These boxes are due by the end of **September** so that that they might be distributed by Samaritan's Purse by Christmas.





### Ladies Groups

The ladies groups will begin meeting on **Monday, 9/13**, the **Golden Girls** at **1 PM** and the **Soul Sisters** at **7 PM**. These meetings will be at the church, pending any Covid updates that would prevent these social events. Invite someone to come and join the fun and study! Our study this year is: **Things Your Grandmother Taught You**. Stay tuned for other events in the making! All women are welcome!

### Pastor's Day Off

In **September**, Pastor James will be returning to Fridays as his day off. He remains available for emergencies every day by his cell phone-.

### Nomination of Class of 2024 Elders for Session

The Nominating Committee would like your suggestions of persons of faith whom you feel should be considered as part of the Session Elder Class of 2024. Enclosed in this newsletter is a form that goes over the Biblical qualifications and constitutional requirements. The Nominating Committee will be receiving these name suggestions through Sunday, September 12 at 12:30 PM. You may drop them into the locked box attached outside of the Children's Wing entrance or in the designated box in the Rotunda area. Thank you for your prayerful consideration and suggestions.

### Bench Building & Trail Clean Up Day

All hands on deck! Since the weather out there is getting cooler, it's time to build those 7 benches for Union's Walking Trail. We invite you to join us at the church on **Saturday, September 28, at 9 AM**, to help assemble the benches. The materials for the benches will already be prepared so all that is needed are the hands to put them together! Feel free to bring a power drill if you have one, but folks of all ages are encouraged to show up and help!

We will also use this date as a work day to get our current trails ready for use by cutting back shrubs/roots, spraying poison ivy, figure out what to do with a fallen fence, and maybe even begin scoping out where the trail to Stephen's Stump might end up going in.



Please plan on joining us **Saturday, September 28th, at 9 AM** if you are able and let's get the Union Walking Trails open and ready for use to honor the Lord and to bless our community. See you there!!

### Mask Policy

Please note that due to the high number of Covid-19 cases in our area, we are currently asking people to wear masks while they are in the church building. Session is keeping an eye on Covid numbers to discern whether we need to begin offering an outdoor Sunday worship option this Fall.



	<u>July</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Revenue	\$14,805	\$153,670
Expenses	<u>15,891</u>	<u>156,085</u>
	-1,086	-2,415

**Monthly Budget Requirements                      \$18,958**

If you have any questions regarding the financial information of the Church, please feel free to contact Martha Simmons, Disbursing Treasurer, or any member of the Finance Committee. Martha is responsible for disbursements only. Questions regarding your financial giving to the Church should be directed to Jason Morrison, Treasurer.



**September 5**

Dallas First  
412 West Trade Street  
Dallas, NC 28034  
[ncgreene@bellsouth.net](mailto:ncgreene@bellsouth.net)

**September 19**

Dorland Memorial  
P.O. Box 307  
Hot Springs, NC 28743

**September 12**

Dixon  
602 Dixon School Road  
Kings Mountain, NC 28086  
[rearrollp@yahoo.com](mailto:rearrollp@yahoo.com)

**September 26**

Dulatown  
P.O. Box 982  
Lenoir, NC 28645  
[dulatownpchurch@att.net](mailto:dulatownpchurch@att.net)

**Presbytery Prayer Calendar**





SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2 6 PM C & T	3	4
5 9 AM New Sunday School Program begins	6 	7 10 AM Bible Study  6 PM B & G	8	9	10	11
12 12 PM W & C 2:30 PM W & S	13 1 PM Golden Girls  7 PM Soul Sisters	14 10 AM Bible Study	15	16	17	18 9 AM Bench Building and Trail Day!
19 2:30 PM Session	20	21 10 AM Bible Study	22	23	24	25
26	27	28 10 AM Bible Study	29	30	<u>Each Sunday</u> 9AM Sunday School  10 AM Worship Service	

**Union Presbyterian Church**

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**Return Service Requested**

Reverend James Holeman  
Pastor

Nancy Newman  
Administrative Assistant

Church Hours  
9:00 AM—1:00 PM  
Tuesday—Friday  
Office Closed Monday and Saturday

**SAVE THE DATES**

Bench Building and Trail Clean up Day- September 25, 9 AM  
World Communion Sunday- October 3  
Service Sunday- October 10