

Union News



UNION NEWS

DECEMBER
2024

Dear Members and Friends of Union Presbyterian Church,

Have you heard the new holiday duet, "Broken Dreams," by Steven Curtis Chapman and Hillary Scott? It's sung from the prospective of Joseph and Mary and reminds us how God's plans don't always line up with our hopes or expectations. You can listen to the song at YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EKM2_d5lvs. If you are reading the newsletter from our webpage, you can link directly to the song from where you opened the newsletter. The lyrics are below:

Joseph: I had a dream of how my life was gonna be
A man of honor with a stellar reputation

Mary: And I had a dream that he'd come sweep me off my feet
The vow, the kiss, the dance, the celebration

Both: And I really can't explain it and I know it makes no sense
How my broken dreams have turned
into a miracle like this

Up in the sky tonight there is a new star
shining
Listen and you will hear a new song in
the wind
And here we are down on our knees
In breathless amazement of how this
could be
Oh, the beauty that can only come
When God breathes life into our broken
dreams

Mary: We had a dream

Joseph: We had a dream

Both: He would be a mighty king, our
rescuer, our warrior, Messiah
Now our hopes are being shattered as
they nail his hands and feet
As they roll the stone in place we thought death had the victory

BUT up from the grave the Savior of the world has risen
Listen and you will hear him sayin' "It is done"
And here we are down our knees
In breathless amazement of how this could be
Oh, the beauty that can only come
When God breathes life into our broken dreams

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December Elders

Jan Meek
Sally McGinnis
Eric Nelson

Communion

December 1

Stated Session

December 15

continued from front page

Up in the sky tonight we see the same star shining
The babe, Emmanuel, God with us then and now
We lift our hands to our Savior and King
In breathless amazement of how this could be
Oh, the beauty that can only come
When God breathes life into our broken dreams

Lord, help us remember all the beauty that can only come
When You breathe life into our broken dreams

All of us have broken dreams don't we? There are ways life has not ended up the way we imagined it would be once upon a time. This Advent, let us remember that even though we don't follow a "Disney" god who promises to "make all our dreams come true," we do follow a God who out of his great love and grace sent his Son to breathe new life into our sinful hurting lives and broken messed up world.

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

Advent Sermon Series: Looking for Life in the Right Places

December 1- John 1: 1-5, 16-18; Psalm 33: 1-14; "Looking for Life... Heaven-made"

-First Sunday of Advent; Celebration of the Lord's Supper; Thanksgiving Weekend

December 8- John 1: 6-8; Mark 1: 1-15; "Looking for Life... Staring Directly at the Son"

-Second Sunday of Advent

December 15- John 1: 11-12; Philippians 3: 1-14; "Looking for Life... What Direction are we Marching?"

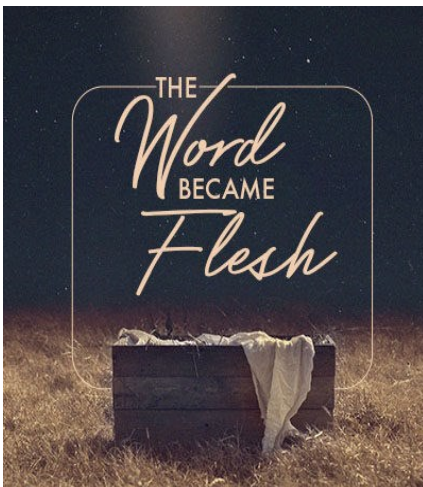
-Third Sunday of Advent

December 22- John 1: 14-16; Hebrews 7: 23-28; "Looking for Life... Transferable Grace"

-Fourth Sunday of Advent

New Year Sermon Series

December 29- Jeremiah 29: 11-14; "Hopes and Fears of All the Years"



PRAYER AFTER WORSHIP

Join with others in the **Prayer Room** on the **4th Sunday of the December** (right after the 10 AM service) for **Prayer After Worship, December 22**. This month will be a special prayer time looking toward 2025 and praying for God's special presence, guidance, and help in the new year.



SPECIAL SERVICES



CANDLES & CAROLS

Our evening Christmas Concert program is back this year! Join us in the Sanctuary on **Sunday, December 15 at 7 PM** for a great evening to help us prepare for the joy of Christ's coming. There will be congregational carols, special anthems from the Union Ensemble, children, and youth, Christmas readings, and even some handbells rung! Following the service there will be a time of fellowship with goodies to share. Please bring your favorite batch of Christmas Cookie to share.

CHRISTMAS BREAKFAST & CHILDREN'S PLAY

Join us for our **Children's Christmas play** on **December 22**. Breakfast will begin at **8:30 AM** followed by a play from our older and younger youth. We hope you will join us as we celebrate this Christmas season and learn about the true meaning of Christmas "God's Gift to Us."

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

On **December 24th at 8 PM**, we invite you to attend our traditional **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**. There will be a special time with the children to show how the Christmas Tree points us to Christ and the cross. And like each year we will hear the story of Jesus' birth from Luke and end by singing Silent Night and Joy to the World by candlelight.



ADVENT DEVOTION

ADVENT DEVOTION FOR 2024

Worship & Commitment and Witness & Service Committees have partnered to bring you this year's Advent Devotional. The Devotion has been provided for free by "Frontier Fellowship." It is entitled "Grace to Come." You can grab it at any of entrances of the Sanctuary. You could also go to Frontier Fellowship's webpage to get one sent to your email each day at: <https://frontierfellowship.com/media/advent-devotional-2024/>

The word "Grace" in Greek literally means "Gift." The introduction to Frontier Fellowship's devotion explains that "long before the baby Jesus was laid in the manger, God had already laid out his plan for redemption. The saving grace (or gift) of Jesus is woven into every page of the Bible." Jesus offers "us and millions around the world who still need to hear Christ's story- GRACE anticipated, GRACE among us, and even greater GRACE to come."

The "Grace to Come" Devotion combines, Scripture, Biblical reflections, and stories from places in the world where the Gospel is being shared among the least reached for Christ to help remind us of the incredible gift that can be found in Jesus. We hope this devotion will open your eyes wider to God's incredible grace this Advent Season.



CHRISTMAS SPECIAL EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES



CAROLING & MCADENVILLE LIGHTS

All the congregation is invited to help sing **Christmas Carols** to some of our church members and friends that could use a little holiday cheer on **December 8**. We will gather in the church parking lot at **2:30 PM**. For those who wish, after we will have a quick dinner and head out to McAdenville to see the Christmas lights together!

HAPPY YEARS CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Happy Years will be meeting on **Wednesday, December 11 at 11:30 AM** at **Villa Roma** for a special holiday celebration. Everyone will be responsible for their own meal. Come and enjoy the great food and fellowship!

MEN'S CHRISTMAS DINNER @ JACKSONS

The Men's Annual Christmas Dinner will be on **Tuesday, December 17th at Captains Cap at 6 PM**. It will be a time for fellowship and for voting for the 2024 Man of the Year. All the men of the church are invited to come join in the celebration.

MEN'S CHRISTMAS BASKETS

The Men's Ministry will be making and delivering Christmas Baskets on Saturday December 14th. During the **Men's Meeting on Sunday, December 8, at 8 AM**, the list for who will receive deliveries and what will be going into the basket will be finalized. Then on **December 14**, we will meet at **Bojangles** (corner of Betty and New Hope) at **8AM** for breakfast then head to the Fellowship Hall to put together the baskets and then deliver them. We hope all the Men of Union will be able to help out.



WOMEN'S BAKE SALE

The WOC are hosting a bake sale from **8 am– 12 PM on 12/7**. Come out and get cakes, pies, Christmas pick ups, etc. All women and men are invited to donate items to be sold for this fundraiser. We will set up 12/6 so all items should be dropped off that day! Thank you for supporting this ministry.

ALTERNATIVE GIFT GIVING

Are you having trouble figuring out the perfect gift for someone special in your life? You might want to consider donating using the World Renew or Frontier Fellowship Christmas Catalogs on behalf of your loved one. You might give a goat to someone in need or support new churches being started in India. Just follow either of these links to find out more:

-World Renew Gift Catalog: worldrenew.net/gifts

-Frontier Fellowship Christmas Catalog: frontierfellowship.com/christmas

CONGREGATION CHRISTMAS CARDS

Want to save on stamps! Feel free to use our own church mailboxes to send Christmas Cards to Union friends and members this season. Just drop your card(s) under the letter with the appropriate last name and don't forget to check and see if you've got mail. Updated phone directories are available at each entrance to make sure you spell all those card names right! The Christmas mail box is in the middle of the Children's ministry hallway!

CHURCH UPDATES & GOINGS ON



BOOK CHICKS

Join us monthly during our Book Chicks book club meetings for some food, fun, and fellowship! For more information or to find out what book we are reading, please reach out to Kim Morrison. Our next meeting is **Monday, December 16th, at 6:30 PM.**

UNION ENSEMBLE

During the month of December the **Union Ensemble** will meet on **December 1** and **December 15** right after worship to put the finishing touches on music for this month's Candles and Carols service in the **15th**. On December 1, the Ensemble will be meeting in the choir room.



5 CENT A MEAL

This month, our 5 Cent a meal special offering will be used to support **Gastonia Street Ministry**. If you are able, we invite you bring a little extra to give on **December 1**.



BINGO

Join us for BINGO at Terrace Ridge on **Thursday, November 21st at 3 PM.** You are sure to receive many blessings from this outreach event!

YOUTH HANDBELL CHOIR

Our youth handbell choir is for youth K-6th grade. If you have a child who would like to play the handbells, please have them attend the remainder of the practices. We will practice after church on **12/1, & 12/8**. Our program will be on **12/15 @ 7 PM.**



CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Because of the holiday season, this January, **The Lord's Supper** will be celebrated during worship on the **second Sunday** of the month, **January 12**, instead of the first Sunday.

THANK YOU

"Bear one another's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2

Church family: you certainly have shared our burdens during the past weeks. Your loving support through prayers, calls, cards and/or visits were certainly felt, carried us and so very appreciated. Our journey continues and we welcome your prayers as God directs our path.

Words cannot express our love for you! Martha & Bobby Simmons



FINANCIAL NEWS November, 2024

FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF
October 31, 2024

	<u>September</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Revenue	\$15,668	\$159,694
Expenses	17,367	183,280
	-\$1,699	-\$23,586

Our deficit to date is \$23,586.

Comparison to the same period in 2023, our deficit was
\$15,680 – a difference of \$7906.

Don't forget to ask yourself: **What Would Jesus
Have Me Do??**

Where God Guides, He provides.
-Isaiah 58:11

Martha Simmons – Disbursing Treasurer
Jason Morrison – Receiving Treasurer

PRAYERS CLOSE-BY & BEYOND

Close-by...

- Prayers for those alone or missing someone this Christmas. Particularly pray for this who have lost someone dear to them recently.
- Prayers for those in the church dealing with critical illnesses
- Prayers for those caring for loved ones.
- Prayers for these families in these neighborhood of Nolen Farms. Do you know how many houses are in this neighborhood? While looking at light displays this month, take a moment to drive through this neighborhood. Maybe stop and say a prayer for the families of each street.
- Prayers for the churches on Union Road: Open Doors Ministries, Union, Sandy Plains, Christ Church, Robinson Memorial, Providence Presbyterian, First Baptist, Legacy Church, UR Church, Firestone. May these church all be faithful witnesses to Christ this Christmas season.

... & Beyond

- Prayers for the work of Least of These in North Carolina and beyond. Prayers for all children in Foster Care, for Foster parents, and Social Workers.
- Prayers for the work of Gastonia Street Ministry and the homeless in Gastonia and beyond as the weather gets colder.
- Prayers for those who don't get visited in Assisted Living (particularly during the holidays). Prayers specifically at Terrace Ridge
- Prayers for the work of Frontier Fellowship: (1) The Tavriski Christian Institute was badly damaged during the war in Ukraine. Their team is working to purchase land and restore the facilities. (2) The Synod of the Nile established two new churches in Egypt and is working to establish a third. There is a huge need (it includes a large population of refugees). (3) In India last October, online videos about Jesus were viewed more than 8 million times. This month nearly 100 people agreed to meet with a Christian field worker to learn more about God and His Word.



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 Sundays 9AM Sunday School	2 11 AM Golden Girls 6 PM YTF 7PM Soul Sisters	3 10 AM Bible Study	4	5 6 PM Women's Council	6	7 WOC Bake Sale
8 8 AM MOC 2:30 PM W&S Caroling & McAdenville	9 7 PM Men's Bible Study	10 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM Men's Dinner	11	12	13	14 8:30 AM Men Fruit Baskets
15 2:30 PM Session Meeting 7 PM Candles & Carols	16 6:30 PM Book Chicks 7 PM Men's Bible Study	17 10 AM Bible Study	18 11:30 AM Happy Years	19 3 PM Bingo 8 PM FF Prayer Zoom call	20 5 PM Dress Re- hearsal for Christmas Play	21
22 8:30 AM Breakfast & Play 11 AM Prayer after Worship	23 7 PM Men's Bible Study	24 8 PM Christmas Eve Service	25	26	27	28 New Year's Youth Lock-In
29	30 7 PM Men's Bible Study	31 10 AM Bible Study				

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Reverend James Holeman
Pastor

Tammy Biddix
Administrative Assistant

Jennifer Nelson
Communications Director

Jieeun Ha
Accompanist

Church Hours
3:00 PM—6 PM
Tuesday and Thursday



December 8	Christmas Caroling & McAdenville
December 15	Candles & Carols
December 22	Breakfast & Children's Christmas Play
December 24	Candlelight Christmas Eve Service