

The tax collector would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Luke 18:13 (as part of Luke 18: 9-14)

Dear Members and Friends and Union Presbyterian Church,

There are two related traits out that I wanted to write about this month... pride & humility. And I have a confession to make about these two traits. I'm actually the best at one of them and I'm pretty sure that if I ever tried doing the other one that I would be the best at it too... hee hee!

To be honest. I have spent many years trying to cultivate more of the virtue of humility in my life. For a long time, I attempted this by trying to ignore my pride/ huge ego and then just trying to be a better servant to others. This technique makes some sense doesn't it? Why would you focus on your self (even if it is to work at getting rid of some of your oversized amounts of pride) if your whole point is to try to be someone who focused less on themselves? In "Mere Christianity," C.S. Lewis writes that the truly humble person, is not thinking about humility, because "he will not be thinking of himself at all."

But over the years I have come to wonder if Lewis is actually describing what someone looks like after they have worked with God for many years at becoming more humble rather than what they look like when they are just starting the process. Because, when I simply tried to ignore my pride and be a better servant, I would usually just end up having something else to be proud of. I could pat myself on the back and tell myself what a good servant of Christ I was that day! For me pride has always been sort of like mildew. If I left it alone, it just kept growing. It needed to be scrubbed away with something like bleach.



I have read that the word humility comes from the latin, meaning "grounded" or "from the earth." Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, in the section on humility of her book, "Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us," writes that we live in a culture where "people scramble to have others realize how gifted, qualified, valuable and productive they are." We "...want to be appreciated, valued and recognized for our potential." Calhoun argues that humility is not about denying our giftedness or value. It is simply about individuals having "an honest understanding of who [they] are." It requires us coming back down to earth and being honest about ourselves. From dust we came and to dust we will return. All the gifts and talents and blessings we have come from God not us. We may have been created in the image of God, but compared to God we are nothing to write home about. For me, the first successful steps I took toward having a little less pride was taking a long look at myself to let a little hot air out of my inflated head and come back to earth.

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Insert: Backyard Fun	

May Elders
Jennifer Nelson
Claire Cabral
Junior Thompson

Communion
May 7

**Congregation
Information Meetings**
May 7 & May 12

Stated Session
May 28

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Isn't that what we also see in the parable Jesus told of the praying Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18? The tax collector's prayer was, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." And while it might be true that the Pharisee did have more things to thank God for in the temple than the tax collector did, before our holy omnipotent God, the Pharisee's prayer should have been exactly the same as the tax collector's prayer, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

What I find so compelling about humility, is not that it could somehow make one better or holier than others. (that would be a very pride-filled way of looking at humility). When I've run into people who truly seem humble, what I find most compelling about them is how "strong" and "free" they seem. In the "Spiritual Disciplines Handbook," Calhoun writes that the humble person is "deeply at home in God and in [their] own skin." They view their "identity as a gift and feel no need to justify [their] existence. The mirror of public response doesn't matter. He or she isn't out to prove something or sell him- or herself. Awards, accolades and notoriety are not the center of [their] identity. Regardless of how little or how much people "know" who he or she is, the humble person is truly free. And because the humble are free, they don't think less of themselves, they think of themselves less."

Doesn't there seem to be a strength to humility... a peace to it? I know that I have a long way to go in conquering my own pride but it seems like a task worth pursuing. And with humility, I wonder what the Church would look like if more in it had more of it.

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

WORSHIP IN MAY

During the month of May we will be continuing to explore the early chapters of Acts and how the early church was able to spread the Good News of Christ throughout the known world. In fact, the early church faced some of the same problems that those of us in the Western church face today.... Both are in cultures that heavily emphasized religious pluralism and cultural tolerance. And like the early church never had, Christianity has a declining political and cultural sway.

So what secrets did the early church have? What lessons could we learn at Union from these chapters of Acts?

*Continued Lectionary Sermon Series: "Acts...
Sent to Infinity and Beyond"*

May 7: Acts 7: 44-60, "Putting Four Walls Around God"

-Celebration of the Lord's Supper

May 14: Acts 17: 22-31, "Making the Unknown Known"

-Mother's Day

May 21: Acts 1: 1-11, "Witnesses to the Ends of the Earth"

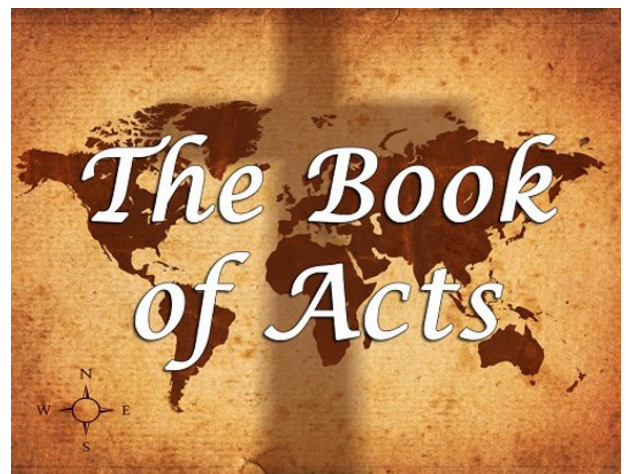
-Ascension of the Lord Sunday

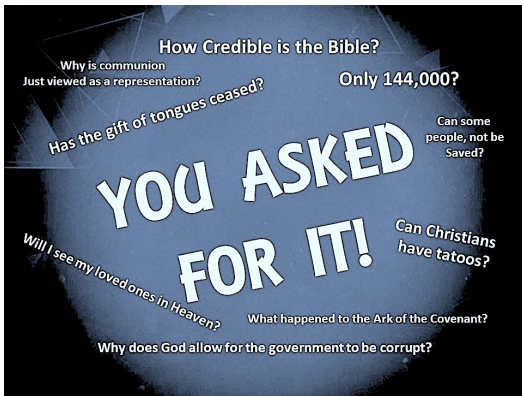
May 28: Acts 2: 1-21, "The Lasting Last Days"

-Pentecost; Memorial Day Weekend

June 4: Acts 20: 17-35, "More Blessed to Give than to Receive"

-Trinity Sunday; Celebration of the Lord's Supper





YOU ASKED FOR IT

Is there a story in the Bible that has never quite made sense to you? Maybe there is a moment in church history, an aspect of faith, or a big theological word that you've never really understood. Or maybe you just want to get Pastor James' take on a part of faith on which there is a lot of debate. For 3 Sundays in June, Pastor James will be tackling your questions in a sermon series called, "You Asked For It." During May we invite you to email your questions to Pastor James or drop them anonymously in the offering plate or main office.

TIME TO GET OUT THE RED!

Towards the end of May, we begin 3 often overlooked special days on the church calendar. May 21 is "Ascension of the Lord Sunday" (where we remember Christ's Ascension), May 28 is "Pentecost Sunday" (remembering the incredible gift to the Church of the Holy Spirit), and June 4 is "Trinity Sunday" (when we remember the triune nature of God).



Historically, on Pentecost Sunday the church often gets decked out in red banners and church members come dressed in red. Because fire is often associated with the Holy Spirit and it is often thought of as red, Pentecost ends up being the only day of the entire year when we use this liturgical color. But did you know that in Scripture we read that Jesus ascended in part so that the Holy Spirit could descend? And in many churches the Holy Spirit is the part of the Trinity that many think least about. An argument could be made that red is good color to use for all 3 Sundays not just the 1!

So get out those red ties and shirts! Iron those red blouses! Maybe get a couple red ribbons for your hair or a new pair of red earrings or red socks! We invite you this year to come to church ready to paint the town red on May 21, May 28, AND June 4.

NEWS FROM THE SESSION



The Session of Union Church wants to thank all of those who showed up for the first informational meeting regarding some concerns Session has about the direction of our denomination. If you were unable to make it to the meeting but would like the information that was presented, please let an elder or the main office know.

The Session will be hosting 2 more meetings to share additional information on this topic. We hope that you will be able to make it to both.

-Informational Meeting 2: "If Union Disassociated with the Denomination Where Would it Go?," May 7, after church, lunch provided by Session. A presentation about the similarities and differences between our denomination, the

PCUSA, and ECO (A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians). You can find out more about ECO on your own from their website: <https://eco-pres.org>.

-Informational Meeting 3: "What to Expect if Union left PCUSA," May 12, 6 PM. Ice Cream provided by Session. This meeting will explore what Union could expect if it were to choose to begin an official discernment process with our Presbytery to explore leaving the denomination.

REVISED OFFICE HOURS IN MAY

This month Nancy Newman, our office administrator, will be gone from **May 12-May 29** for some well deserved R&R. This means that the office will be opened on a reduced capacity.

- During the week of **May 7th-**
The office will be closed **May 12**
- During the week of **May 14th-**
The office will be open **Tuesday, May 16** and **Thursday, May 18** from **9:00 AM-12:00 PM.**
- During the week of **May 21st-**
The office will be open **Tuesday, May 23** and **Thursday, May 25** from **9:00 AM- 12:00 PM.**
- During the week of **May 28th-**
The office will be open like normal starting **Tuesday, May 30th** from **9:00AM- 1:00 PM.**

During this time, if you have any special needs from the office, you can always get in touch with Pastor James, Sally McGinnis, or Claire Cabral.

Also, during the month of May please send your June Newsletter articles to Sally McGinnis-
sallykmcginnis@gmail.com

LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN & WOMEN!

We are on the look out for some volunteers who can **step in while Nancy is away on vacation this month. If you are willing to “man the office desk” on May 16, 18, 23, or 25** please let Pastor James or Sally McGinnis know. We are also looking for someone to put together the **Powerpoint slides** for the worship services on **May 21 and May 28.**



GOOD NEWS RISING

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Good News Rising Special Offering last month. The current **total raised is \$1436** to help World Renew Disaster Response Service, the Medical Benevolence Foundation's work at Nkhoma Mission Hospital in Malawi and Frontier Fellowship's work in Pakistan and India.

LOAVES & FISHES

Beginning in May we will have 4 Sunday's to collect food for Crisis Assistance Ministry. Our Loaves and Fishes Grocery Store will be open on Sunday's after worship. The Youth will be your personal shopper and we look forward to your ongoing support.



TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

The Tuesday Morning Bible Study is beginning a new book of the Bible this May! Join us as we study the book of Titus. The Tuesday Morning Bible Study meets in the Session room each **Tuesday at 10:00 AM.**

SPRING FLING BACKYARD FUN! GET OUT & PLAY!!

Come to Spring Fling and join us for some great backyard games, a hotdog dinner and some great fun! We will have a variety of activities for all ages every hour leading up to **5:00 PM Dinner.** Join us **Saturday, May 6, from 2:00 PM- 6:00 PM.** Make sure to bring a lawn chair and some snacks/drinks to share! A flyer is included in the newsletter to help you spread the word!



COMMUNION

Come join us as we celebrate the Lord's Supper on **May 7**.

NEW CONGREGATIONAL BIBLE STUDY

We began in February inviting you to take more time to study Scripture and providing Bible study introductions from the BibleProject. This month we will be studying the first 1/2 of the book of Genesis and have copies at each entrance into the Sanctuary for you to use in your own individual study. If you are unable to get a paper copy you can go online to get the same resources and even more:

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/john/>.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

The Women's Council have changed their meeting time to first Thursdays of the month, **May 4 at 6:30 PM**. The Ladies Circles will meet on **Monday, May 8**. Ladies, if you are not involved in one of our circles, please come and enjoy good fellowship and Bible study. We have both a morning and evening circle for your convenience:

- The Golden Girls Circle will meet at **11 AM** in the Fellowship Hall. Please bring a salad or desert to share..
- The Soul Sisters will meet at **7 PM** in the Fellowship Hall.

On **Saturday, May 20** beginning at **11 AM** will be **Game Day** for all Women of the Church. We will share pizza for lunch. Please bring a pickup to share for snack. Also bring an inexpensive gift (wrapped) to be used for our Chinese Auction. We encourage all women to come out for fellowship and great time of fun together!

HAPPY YEARS FELLOWSHIP

Happy Years will meet on **Wednesday, May 17** at **noon** for lunch. The meal will be chicken pot pie, salad, bread, desserts, and drinks. Please join us for good food and fun fellowship no matter what age you are.

BINGO AT TERRACE RIDGE

We will play Bingo with the residents of Terrace Ridge on **Thursday, May 18** from **3:30 - 4:30 PM**. Volunteers are needed so we invite you to come out if you are able and help us bless these residents.

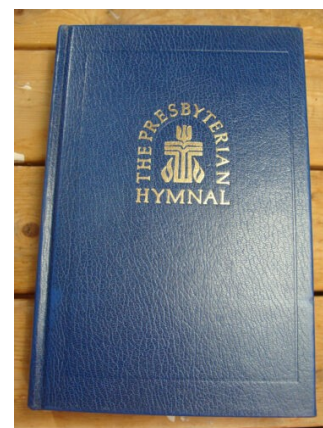
BUILDING & GROUNDS NEWS

Want an Old Church Hymnal?

If you would like to have one of the old Presbyterian Hymnals, they are available to you for **FREE**. They are on a table in the church library (the back room in the Education Wing) and we invite you to help yourself!

Contribution of Physical Items to the Church

Because of the limited space we have here at Union, we would ask you to contact B&G (George Ratchford or Eddie Moton) if you have physical items that you would like to donate to the congregation.





FINANCIAL NEWS March 2023

	<u>March</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Revenue	\$16,334	\$42,565
Expenses	<u>16,536</u>	<u>48,340</u>
	-202	- 5,775

Good News Rising offering total :
\$1436.

February: Ice machine & installation supplies
Cost: \$555

Please pray for our Church, Pastor James and our leaders as we work through the day to day operations of maintaining God's House.

Jason Morrison - Receiving Treasurer

Martha Simmons - Disbursing Treasurer

PRESBYTERY PRAYER CALENDAR & CONCERNS

Belmont First
P.O. Box 1
Belmont, NC 28012

Bessemer City First
P.O. Box 365
Bessemer City, NC 28016

Black Mountain
P.O. Box 39
Black Mountain, NC 28711

Brevard-Davidson River
249 East Main Street
Brevard, NC 28712



- Susan Ward, Clerk of Session at Union Mills Presbyterian Church, went back on Monday, March 27th for a recheck with her surgeon following emergency surgery for a ruptured colon. She has a little more healing before the abscess will be completely healed and closed, but does have a date for the reversal of the colostomy on 4/25/23. She sends her thanks to everyone for the prayers and asks for continued prayers for this upcoming surgery, that all will go well, and that she will have complete healing without any complications. She gives God the Glory for healing her and being able to go back to work part-time recently.
- Pastor Will Gaines shared that prayers have been solicited for a brother of a minister member of Presbytery who is having great difficulty going through detox. He is under the care of his parents. Let us remember the entire family.
- Melissa Upchurch, Pastor of Marshall Presbyterian Church, requests that you please pray for the people of Canton and Canton Presbyterian Church. The town's major employer—a paper mill—announced it is closing and it will put a lot of people out of work. This news took everyone by surprise.
- Corise Gambrell requests prayers for her husband, Bob Gambrell. Bob had surgery to repair ruptured tendons in both knees, due to a fall. He is now at Givens Highland Farms, where he expects to have an extensive rehab period.



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Sunday 9AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship	1	2 10 AM Bible Study 7 PM B & G	3	4 6:30 PM Women's Council	5 3 - 7 PM BBQ Boston Butt Fundraiser	6 2 - 6 PM Spring Fling Backyard Fun!
7 Communion 11 AM MOC Lunch & Congregation Information Meeting 2:30 PM SOC	8 11AM Golden Girls 7 PM Soul Sisters	9 10 AM Bible Study	10	11 6:30 PM C & T Zoom	12 6 PM Ice Cream Congregation Information Meeting NANCY - VACATION	13
14 1 PM W & S	15	16 10 AM Bible Study	17 12 PM Happy Years	18 3:30 PM Bingo at Terrace Ridge	19	20 11 AM Women of The Church Game Day
NANCY - VACATION						
21 Graduation Sunday 11 AM WOC Birthday Luncheon 2:30 PM Stated Session	22	23 10 AM Bible Study	24	25	26	27
NANCY - VACATION						
28 1 PM W & C	29 	30 10 AM Bible Study	31	Sunday 4 PM Kids of the Kingdom & Youth		

Union Presbyterian Church

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Non-Profit Organization
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Reverend James Holeman
Pastor

Nancy Newman
Administrative Assistant

Jieeun Ha
Accompanist

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

SAVE THE DATES

May 6	Spring Fling
May 7	Congregation Information Meeting
May 12	Congregation Information Meeting
May 20	WOC Game Day
May 21	WOC Birthday Luncheon