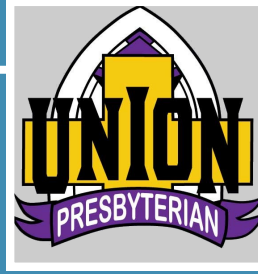


UNION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Union News



UNION NEWS
 JANUARY
 2024

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Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."
 Hebrews 12: 28-29

Dear Members and Friends of Union Presbyterian Church,
 Often at this time of the year, people consider "New Year's Resolutions." Although these resolutions are often not directly religious (nowhere in the Bible is the term New Year Resolutions used), they are often indirectly mentioned in Scripture. In the Bible it's called idolatry. When we resolve to lose a few pounds or exercise a little more, read instead of watching so much TV... or whatever, behind that resolution is usually something (like food, or TV, or spending time on our cell phone) that has become a little "too important" for our lives: an idol.

In church we talk about modern-day idols all the time: food and stuff, money, success, human relationships, and power. But I wonder if there is one "idol" that sort of takes the cake: The Idol of Me. I think it's pretty easy sometimes to find ourselves worshiping ourselves without even realizing that we started doing it. And the culture around us doesn't help. Some common slogans in culture today, "Just follow your heart," "all your dreams can come true," or "just find your passion" all sound great. But they all rely on relying on our own hearts to make them a reality. And our hearts are not that reliable. I wrote down this quote from a webpage the other day (I can't figure out where I found it now), but I think encapsulates the main problem of trusting our own hearts.

Why would I ever want to trust my own heart? My heart is often boring; I want the same things over and over again. Why not trust our mysterious creator instead? My heart is always jumping from one feeling to another; happy one minute, then sad, then lonely, then worried, then angry, then happy again. Why not trust the Rock instead? My heart is not loyal: I fall in and out of love with things at an alarming rate. Why not trust God's love which does not change? My heart sins and then lies to me; convincing my brain that I am doing great just the way I am. Why not trust the One who sees us at our worst yet came to redeem us anyway instead? Why would I ever want to trust my own heart?

In his book, "The Awe of God: The Astounding Way A Healthy Fear of God Transforms Your Life," John Bevere writes about another quote that is pretty dangerous for the follower of Christ. It was popularized by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

(continued on next page)

December Elders
 Junior Thompson
 Tammy Biddix
 George Ratchford

Communion
 January 7

Stated Session
 January 17

(continued from previous page)



When you really think about it, isn't the only thing that can really stop us from "following our heart," is fear? Get rid of fear and we are golden right? While Bevere admits that there are some fears out there that are destructive and keep us from being the kind of disciples God wants us to be, there is one sort of fear that is not only good but is vitally important to combat the "love of self." And that is the fear of God. In Hebrews 12: 28-29, the author of Hebrews writes that the way we should enter God's kingdom is with the thankfulness that comes from reverence and awe... He's talking about Godly fear. In the 1828 edition of Webster's dictionary "awe" is defined as, "fear, dread inspired by something great and terrific; to strike with fear and reverence. To influence by fear, terror, or respect."

Bevere writes that when we fear the Lord, it leads us to worship. He writes that when we fear the Lord, it causes us to walk humbly before God. He writes that when we fear God, it causes us to submit to God's leading. Fear of the Lord is the antidote to the poison of the idol of self-love.

So how do we cultivate the fear of Lord? Our fear of the Lord grows the more we come to comprehend the Glory of God. When we look at the stars or the ocean and remind ourselves that God is way bigger than any of those things, we come to have a little more awe of God. When we understand a little better how God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and complete, we come to have a little more awe of God. When we come to understand how big God's grace is and how he loves people that we couldn't imagine loving the same way, we come to have a little more awe of God. When we understand God's plan of coming into the world as a baby, dying in our stead, and returning to life in order to defeat sin and death in a way only he could, we come to have a little more awe of God.

Maybe this New Year, all of us could resolve to look around at creation, pray, and read Scripture with the main purpose of growing in awe of the Lord... Would doing so help each of us with that problem of "self-love?"

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

WORSHIP IN JANUARY

During the month of January we invite you to join us in worship as we explore two themes in Scripture. Perhaps you have heard it said that Jesus is every part of the Bible. While this may be true, sometimes it is harder to "see" Jesus when we read the Old Testament. Join us early in the month as we explore how Christ is even present in the Psalms! Then towards the end of the month we will begin a 3-week sermon series that looks closely at 3 encounters of Jesus that demonstrates some of the ways an encounter with Christ can be completely lifechanging.

Lectionary Sermon Series: Christ in the Psalms

January 7- Genesis 1: 1-5; Psalm 29, "What's the Real 'Voice from the Mountain?'"

-Epiphany Sunday; Celebration of the Lord's Supper

January 14- Psalm 139, "'Where Do You Go' with No Mercy?"

-MLK Weekend

January 21- Psalm 62, 5-12, "On what 'Stone' is your Home?"

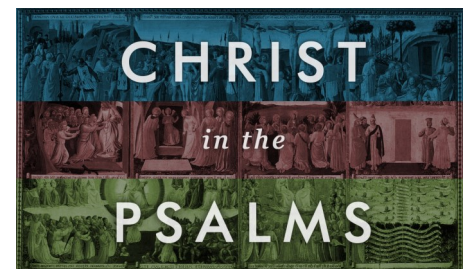
Sermon Series: Encounters to Remember

January 28- John 11: 1-7, 127-44, "Mary of Bethany"

February 4- Luke 7: 36-50, "The Adulterous Woman"

-Celebration of the Lord's Supper

February 11- Luke 8: 42-49, "The Woman who touched Jesus"



“DIGGING IN DEEP WITH THE FEEDING OF THE 5000” WORKSHOP

How would you rate your Bible Studying skills? Do you know the difference between doing a Bible Study and using a Bible devotion? What tools would you use to help you really dig into Scripture? If you don't really know where you would start with doing a personal Bible Study or maybe have allowed your Bible Study skills to get a little rusty, we invite you to join us for this 6-week workshop, beginning January 7, that will walk through several tools anyone can use to improve their study of the Bible. Each week we will explore a couple new tools and then break up into groups to practice using those tools! This workshop will be meeting in Gathering Area of the Church each Sunday at 9 AM. Hope to see you there!



ENSEMBLE PRACTICE Happy New Year!! This new year, you might want to consider joining the Union Ensemble! It is tons of fun and NO experience is required!! We meet a couple times right after worship to practice each month and sing 1 or 2 times each month during worship. Our practices in **January** will be on the **7** and **28**. Consider giving Ensemble a whirl!!



TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY On **Tuesday, January 9, 10 AM**, the **Tuesday Morning Bible Study** will be starting a study on a new book of the Bible: **Genesis**! Some argue that outside of the Gospels, Genesis is the MOST important book of the Bible. It shows us where we came from, who God is, and how we fall short of God's call, all while pointing toward Christ over and over again! We hope that you can join us for this study.

NEW BIBLE STUDY. There will be a new **Men's Bible Study starting at Union**. A kickoff will be in the beginning of February. We will be meeting weekly for 1 hour, at **7 PM**. The goal is to have a couple of meetings in the coming weeks discussing the evening we will meet, as well as explain the study format. For more information, please contact Tom Wollenberg @ 704-519-8946 or email @ thewollyngroup@gmail.com

BOOK CHICKS BOOK CLUB Meets on the **3rd Monday** of each month, at **6:30PM**. If you would like to join the book club, please see Kimberly Morrison or Tammy Biddix.

PRAYER WALK Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2023 Prayer Walk. Our next walk is **1/18**, at **6:30PM**. There are plans to start a 2nd group, in 2024, with more information coming soon.

MISSION MONEY FOR 2023

2023 brought many changes for Union. One of those changes was our mission money. In 2023 the money was held and sent out in December, instead of monthly. Four checks in the amount of \$1438, a piece was sent to three local agencies. They were the **Cathy Mabry Center** (battered women's shelter), **Least of These** and the **Gastonia Street Ministry**. The global ministry was Frontier Fellowship.

FRONTIER FELLOWSHIP Jim Truesdale with **Frontier Fellowship** will visit with us **Sunday, 1/21**. Jim will be sharing information about Frontier Fellowship and their global mission work. Lunch and a short talk will be held in the fellowship hall after worship services. Come and join us and hear all the exciting news!

GOLDEN GIRLS CIRCLE Twilah Jordan will be our hostess on **January 8** at **11:00AM** in the Fellowship Hall. Lyn Wollenberg will teach Chapters 5 and 6 of *Having a Mary Spirit*. Martha will have our devotion.

CHURCH BLESSINGS

Dear Union,

As you all know, God works in mysterious and wonderful ways. As the receiving treasurer I have witnessed Him working through some of His people at Union. We recently received some wonderful blessings from some members of Union and the Henderson Trust Fund totaling nearly \$72,000. I feel God is preparing us for something big here at Union and I pray that we all will give Him thanks and praise and seek the direction for which He is taking us. Praise God from whom all blessing flow!

Sincerely,

Jason Morrison

Receiving Treasurer

THANK YOU!! I would like to thank the congregation for the generous holiday gift that was given to me. I am enjoying my new role at church and appreciate the opportunity to serve our church and the Lord in a new way!! Happy New Year! Love, Jennifer

Thank you so much for thinking of me and allowing me to share my gift and love of piano with the church. Hope to do more great things together to praise God in the next year.

Jieeun Ha

Thank You Union Presbyterian Church! I would like to thank you for the Christmas gift and most of all the patience and kindness you have shown, in the challenges and changes, at Union, this year. Thanks again, Tammy Biddix

To Union Church,

My family and I would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest thanks for the well wishes and gift from the church this Christmas Season. You are all so kind and generous. We feel loved and supported! In Christ, Pastor James and Family



UNION CHURCH CALENDAR

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Sunday 9AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship	1	2 7 PM Building & Grounds	3	4	5	6 1:30 PM Tubing Trip
Pastor James Vacation						
7 Communion 5 Cents a Meal 2:30 PM SOC	8 11 AM Golden Girls 7 PM Soul Sisters	9 10 AM Bible Study	10	11 8 AM HOME Co-Op 6 PM Women's Council	12	13
14 8 AM MOC	15	16 10 AM Bible Study	17 11 AM Happy Year's 5:30 PM W & S	18 8 AM HOME Co-Op 3 PM Bingo 6:30 PM Prayer Walk	19	20
21 11 AM Lunch with Frontier Fellowship 2:30 PM Session	22	23 10 AM Bible Study	24	25 8 AM HOME Co-Op	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Union Presbyterian Church

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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



January 6
January 7
January 21

Tubing Trip
5 Cents of Meal & Communion
Lunch & Meeting with Frontier Fellowship