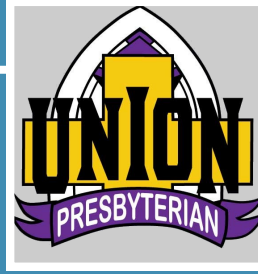


UNION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Union News



UNION NEWS
NOVEMBER
2023

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November Elders

Frank Suggs
George Ratchford
Eddie Moten

Communion

October 1

Stated Session

November 19

Dear Members and Friends of Union Presbyterian Church,

Last month, Union finished up a study on the book, "Autopsy of a Deceased Church," by Thom Rainer. In the book, Rainer, a church consultant, writes about some of the common traits that he often sees present in churches that ultimately close their doors for good. Rainer focuses on 12 of these negative characteristics. Some of the traits include: a church being too inwardly focused, a church doing things the way they've always done it, or the church having a low degree of outreach, evangelism, or prayer. I wish to thank everyone who read the book and for those who took the time to join the discussion we had on it!

After reading a book like this, a good first question to ask ourselves is where we personally fit into the critique. How are you and I each guilty of keeping our church from flourishing? It's a challenging question.

I think one way each of us could do a little self-examination on this is by exploring how we react to new ministry opportunities. For example, let's look at one new ministry here at Union: the neighborhood prayer walk. Once a month, some members of Union have been going out into nearby neighborhoods, praying for each home in the neighborhood, and leaving a flyer on how home owners could contact the church with specific prayer requests. This new ministry has had a very modest attendance. It's been held on different days of the week (so the day shouldn't be the problem for most). It's always been held early so it isn't dark yet (although nothing should stop someone from getting a ride if they didn't drive at night). Groups don't even have to leave their cars to pray (so it isn't a mobility issue). So why is the program so sparsely attended?

I don't bring all this up because I want to drum up more support for the neighborhood prayer walk (although you could make the case that this program is one of the most important ministries Union is currently a part of). The reason I bring it up, is that I believe it might provide some insight on what each of our individual hang-up(s) might be when it comes to trying to faithfully follow Christ with all of who we are. I've personally attended each of the prayer walks and I think that they are important. BUT I'll be honest, every time I get ready to go, there are parts of the event that make me feel a little uncomfortable.... that stretch me a bit... that, frankly, make me want to stay home. So think about it. What might make you feel a little uncomfortable about going into a neighborhood to pray for the people there?

Does the prayer walk make you feel a little uncomfortable because you're kind of out of practice with prayer? You wouldn't know what to say? Is it because you don't like praying out loud in front of others? Does it make you feel uncomfortable to get out in the community, past the walls of the church, in order to get to know the neighborhoods around Union better? Maybe you're not used to "wearing" your faith in Christ on your sleeve.

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so visibly? Do you not believe that we need to prioritize helping others know Christ better or that the people of Gaston County need to grow closer to God (like we all do)? Maybe you can't put your finger on just one thing? Maybe the prayer walk is just something you "don't feel like" doing or feels uncomfortable because you've never done it before?

I wonder if the way each of us answer the questions above could help us determine where God is challenging you and I to grow in our faith. What would it look like if we all stepped just a little further out of our comfort zones as we took some new steps to follow Christ more closely this year!

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James



WORSHIP IN NOVEMBER

During the month of November, we will be exploring some of the majorly important messages from a couple of the minor prophets of the Old Testament. Join us, as we listen to what Malachi, Joel, Micah, Amos, and Zephaniah have to tell the church today! Then starting in December, we will walk through some of the names of Jesus as we prepare for Christ's Coming during Advent!

Mostly Lectionary Sermon Series: In a Minor Key

October 29: Malachi 3: 1-7, "Malachi"

November 5: Joel 2: 10-14, "Joel"

-All Saint's Day Sunday; Celebration of the Lord's Supper;
Daylight's Saving End

November 12: Micah 3: 5-12, "Micah"

-Veteran's Day Weekend

November 19: Amos 5: 18-24, "Amos"

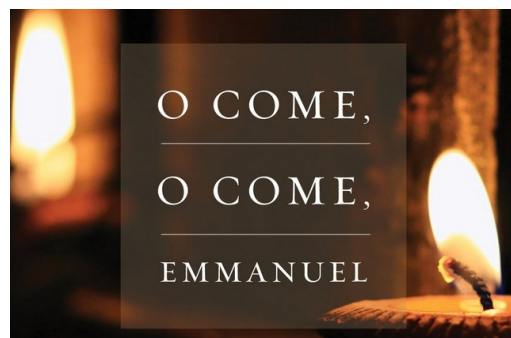
November 26: Zephaniah 1: 7-18, "Zephaniah"

-Christ the King Sunday; Thanksgiving Day Weekend

Advent/Christmas Sermon Series: "O Come, Emmanuel"

December 3: Luke 1:57-79, "O Come, Emmanuel... Come, Dayspring of Hope"

-Celebration of Lord's Supper; First Sunday of Advent



THANKSGIVING SERVICE

We hope that you will join us as Sandy Plains and Union come together for worship on **November 19, at 5 PM**. This year, the **Joint Thanksgiving service** will be held at Sandy Plains.



HELP US DECORATE FOR ADVENT

You are invited to help decorate the church and get ready for the Advent Season! All members, young and old are encouraged to help! There will be a pizza party Friday to enjoy our Christmas labor of love. We will meet **Friday, November 24 beginning at 4 PM**. If necessary, we will plan to come back Saturday, **November 25th at 9 AM** only as needed. Please see Melody Caldwell for more details.



COME JOIN US FOR A “NATIVITEA”

The Women of the Church are hosting a tea and inviting all members of the congregation to join and invite a friend to join us on **Saturday, December 2nd at 11AM**. If you have a special nativity that we could use as decoration, please label it with your name and get it to Tammy Biddix or Lisa Lawson. We would love for you to share with us at the event why it is so special. There will be several delicious Christmas teas served as well as finger sandwiches and cookies! We hope that you will come and start your Christmas Season at our Nativitea.

CHRISTMAS DEVOTIONS

This year, we will have 2 devotions available for the Advent Season. We invite you to grab one or both!

-“Go + Tell,” by Frontier Fellowship

-“The Gifts of Christmas,” based on “The God of Amazing Gifts,” by Lizzie Laferton and “The Message of Christmas,” by Eugene Peterson

“Go + Tell,” is provided by Frontier Fellowship, an organization that partners churches in the United States with local missionary groups in places of the world where Christianity is the minority faith. Frontier Fellowship is committed to inviting, educating, inspiring, gathering and equipping followers of Jesus in Western Churches to embrace their role in making Christ’s name known among every nation, tribe, people, and language. In their advent devotion this year, Frontier Fellowship will highlight some of the songs from around the world that celebrate Christ’s birth and wait with hope for Jesus’ second coming. Some of the songs will be familiar, others may be brand new. But hopefully they will inspire you to better see how God is at work in your life and discover glimpses of God’s work on the frontier with the world’s least reached people.

“The Gifts of Christmas,” will explore six of the gifts that we receive through the first Advent (or coming) of Christ. This devotion will include family friendly questions, additional Scriptures that can be studied, and activities that you could do during the Advent season. This Christmas we are invited to “re-claim” the gifts that we receive from Christ’s coming, death, and resurrection and to pass those gifts on.



CHRISTMAS CAROLING

Come join us on **Sunday, December 10 at 2:00 PM** as we go Christmas Caroling around town to visit some of our shut ins!

CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS PLAY

Save the date on **Sunday, December 17th and 9 AM** and make plans to join us for breakfast and our Children’s Christmas play! We hope to see you there, you won’t be disappointed!



CHRISTMAS EVE

Because Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year, the Worship & Commitment Committee plans to do things a little differently this year. We will have a slightly longer, family friendly, full **Christmas Eve Service** in the morning, at **10 AM**.

Then in the evening we will gather at the church at **4 PM** for “**Carols & Cocoa: A Christmas Evening of Praise.**” First, we will head out to a nearby neighborhood to sing some Christmas Carols. Then be back at the church at **5:15 PM** to sing some more carols together, hear the Christmas story in Luke, have a special Christmas prayer, sing Silent Night by Candlelight, and drink hot cocoa.

We hope that you can join us for the worship, songs, and fellowship this Christmas Eve.

NEWS & EVENTS

YOU ARE INVITED

The Holeman Family wish to invite you to join them for a party at Union Church from **2-5 PM** on **November 18**. This is an **“It’s O-FISH-AL Party”** to celebrate the adoption of Chance and Isaiah. Pick-ups will be provided! Come ready to party hearty! If you wish to come bearing gifts, the Holemans invite you to reach out and support the “Least of these, Carolinas” (<https://lotcarolinas.com/>), a Christian organization that supports families providing Foster Care.



UNION ENSEMBLE

Join us for rehearsals this month right after church at **11 AM** on **November 19th** and **November 26**.

ALL SAINTS DAY

We will have a celebration of those who have gone on before us and had a powerful impact on our lives. This year the W&C committee is planning to display memorabilia from these saints in the Gathering Area on **Sunday, November 5**. Please bring any pictures or items you would to display to the Prayer Room on **Sunday October 29** to be received and tagged, or bring them the day of!



BINGO AT TERRACE RIDGE

Make plans to join us for Bingo at Terrace Ridge on the third Thursday of each month at **3PM**. This month we will meet on **November 16th**. Please join us if you are able, you are sure to be blessed

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

Stewardship Dedication Sunday will be **November 26** during our Worship service. Letters and pledge cards have been mailed to the congregation. Please be in prayer as you listen to the ways God is calling you to share your time, talents and resources in His ministry at Union. How will you “pop you bubble” in 2024, and move out of your comfort zone? Let’s get excited about the possibilities of 2024!!

THANK YOU(S) & IMPORTANT CALENDAR NOTES

Thank You Union Presbyterian Church! My family and I would like to thank you deeply for all the prayers, warm wishes, and gifts this October. We were overwhelmed by the appreciation! Believe it or not, days after we received the monetary gift from the church, our freezer stopped working. It is amazing how God can provide! With sincere thanks in Christ, Pastor James

To the Congregation! Many thanks to everyone for their participation in our Service Sunday activities on October 22! What a beautiful day we had serving the Lord in our community!

Happy Years & Bible Study: Please note that there will be no Happy Years during the month of November. Additionally, there will be no Bible Study on November 7th while Pastor James is on Study Leave.

Flower Calendar: A new calendar has been placed on the bulletin board located in the hall outside the sanctuary. WOC would love for flowers to be placed in our sanctuary on many Sundays. Please place your name on the flower calendar and note if they are given in memory or in honor of someone. This information will then be placed in the bulletin.





WE WANT YOU!!

Are you looking for somewhere to get involved here at Union? **The Witness & Service Committee** is looking for some new and old members to join us! We meet the **third Wednesday** of each month at **5:30 PM**. Now is a great time to join us with the new year ahead of us. This committee offers exciting opportunities to support local and global mission! A few of the opportunities are: The Blessing Box, CAM Food Drive, Prayer Walk, and Bingo at Terrace Ridge. Zoom call is available if you cannot make it to the church for meeting. Please be in prayer about where God is leading you to help!

HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE

With the holidays just around the corner, we would like to stack the Blessing Box with holiday food items. Below are the food items we are requesting:

- November 5th: Green beans, Corn, or Cranberry Sauce
- November 12th: Stuffing, Gravy, Instant Potatoes
- November 19th: Mac and Cheese Cake Mixes & Icing

If you have something special for your holiday and would like to purchase that instead, please do so! As you purchase the items, we challenge you to take a quick moment and pray for the group or family that may receive this food this holiday season. Thank you for your support.



PCUSA DISCERNMENT PROCESS UPDATE

The Session of Union Presbyterian Church strongly desires to keep the congregation informed about where the church is in the process with the Presbytery of Western North Carolina (as they work through discernment steps with the denomination). On September 17th, Union's Session met with a "Listening Team" that was appointed from the Presbytery of Western North Carolina, to voice their concerns about the Presbytery and denomination. It was a cordial and fruitful meeting.

The next 2 steps of the discernment process with the Presbytery is for (1) an Administrative Commission to be formed by the Presbytery and (2) for the first of two Congregational Hearings to be held at Union Church. The Administrative Commission will be made up of members of the Presbytery and will work on behalf of the Presbytery during the rest of the discernment process with Union. The first congregational hearing will be an opportunity for any member of the congregation to voice their thoughts or concerns about whether Union should seek to be dismissed from the PCUSA denomination. This first hearing is NOT where the congregation votes whether Union should stay in the denomination or not.

On Wednesday, October 11, the General Council of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina approved the formation of an Administrative Commission for Union Presbyterian Church. After this Administrative Commission is fully filled, the commission will organize the first congregational hearing for Union.

If you have any questions about where Union is at in this process, please contact one of our elders on Session. And please keep our church in your prayers. It is normal for the process of discernment (with even just the possibility of dismissal from a denomination) to include feelings of sadness, hurt, and stress no matter what one's position is on this issue. The process itself highlights how broken our world is... a brokenness that extends even to God's church. Let us all remain diligent in prayer.



FINANCIAL NEWS NOVEMBER 2023

	<u>September</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Revenue	\$16,600	\$141,938
Expenses	<u>16,200</u>	<u>155,037</u>
	400	-13,099

As you can see from our year to date number, the Church currently has a \$13,000 deficit. Let's all work together and give up something for God to reduce this number. Thank you!

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

August: Work on HVAC systems
Cost: \$1002

September: Repairs to alarm monitoring
Cost: \$1062

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

PRESBYTERY PRAYER CALENDAR & PRAYER CONCERNS

Fletcher
P.O. Box 493
Newland, NC 28657
fairviewpresby@bellsouth.net

Forest City First
P.O. Box 181
Forest City, NC 28043
firstpresch.fc@fpc-franklin.org

Franklin First
26 Church Street
Franklin, NC 28734
churchoffice@fpc-franklin.org

Gastonia First
1621 East Garrison Boulevard
Gastonia, NC 28054
jchilders@fpcgastonia.org

Glen Alpine
101 Horse Shoe Lane
Morganton, NC 28065

- We offer prayers for healing and strength for **John Auten** of Shelby Presbyterian as he battles cancer.
- Prayers for **Dick Ray** of Montreat Presbyterian who is in the hospital.
- We also pray for **Elizabeth Littlejohn** of Third Street Presbyterian who is also in the hospital.
- We pray for **Marian Murchison Magee** who is starting another round of chemotherapy.
- The **Rev. Janet DeWater** of First Presbyterian of Mount Holly, is recovering from hip surgery earlier this week.





UNION CHURCH CALENDAR

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Sunday 9AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship		10 AM Bible Study	1	2 8 AM HOME Co-Op 6 PM Youth Team Meeting	3	4 5:30 PM Chicken and Dumplings Meal
5 All Saint's Sunday Communion 5 Cents a Meal 2:30 PM SOC	6 11 AM Golden Girls 7 PM Soul Sisters	7 7 PM Building & Grounds	8 Pastor James Study Leave	9 8 AM HOME Co-Op 6 PM Women's Council	10 6 PM Lifespan Event in Fellowship Hall	11
12 Veteran's Day Sunday	13	14 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM C & T	15 5:30 PM W & S	16 8 AM HOME Co-Op 3 PM Bingo 6:30 PM Prayer Walk	17 6 PM Older Youth Friendsgiving	18 2-4 PM Holeman Adoption Party
19 11 AM Ensemble Practice 2:30 PM Session	20	21 10 AM Bible Study	22	23	24 Decorate for Advent	25 Advent Social
26 Stewardship Dedication Sunday 11 AM Ensemble Practice	27	28 10 AM Bible Study	29 6 PM Frontier Fellowship Meeting	30 8 AM HOME Co-Op		

Union Presbyterian Church

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www.unionpresbyterianchurch.com

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 8
Return Service Requested

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



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|-------------|------------------------------------|
| November 4 | MOC Chicken & Dumplings Fundraiser |
| November 5 | 5 Cents of Meal & Communion |
| November 12 | Veterans Day Sunday |
| November 16 | Prayer Walk |
| November 19 | 5 PM Thanksgiving Service |
| November 26 | Stewardship Dedication Sunday |