

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.”
 -Matthew 5:13

Dear Members and Friends of Union Presbyterian Church,

Do you know how much chocolate is purchased in the United States around Valentines day? Apparently in 2020, 58 million pounds of chocolate was purchased in the 7 days leading up to the holiday. The National Retail Foundation estimates that approximately 2.4 billion dollars is spent in the U.S. on candy for this special day. And it’s not just people buying Valentine gifts for others. Surveys also show that 43% of Americans buy candy for themselves too!



In many ways, we might argue that February could be described as a month dedicated to chocolate and sugar. For as long as I can remember, I’ve gotten each member of my family a box of chocolates for Valentines Day. It’s part of our family’s tradition. Valentines Day in our house wouldn’t be quite the same without these sugary treats. But as followers of Christ, I wonder sometimes if we need to make this month (as well as the others), less about sugar and more about salt.

In “God of All Things: Rediscovering the Sacred in an Everyday World,” Andrew Wilson writes about 30 normal things that get used everyday but that are also used in Scripture to point to God. Wilson explains that he wants readers to see how all of creation, even the ordinary stuff, can draw us back to the Lord. He writes that in “Letters to Malcolm,” C.S. explains that “following the sunbeams back to the sun [can help us] enjoy not just the object of goodness but the source of good.”

In his chapter on “Salt,” Wilson explains how salt might be one of the most ordinary things there is. It is something we need survive, it’s in and used to make all sorts of products we use, it’s on the table of nearly every restaurant in the world, and is in the oceans that cover 70% of the surface of our planet. “Salt is everywhere.” Isn’t it interesting then that Jesus used this ordinary thing to describe what a follower of God should look like? What does it even mean to be “the salt of the earth?” Also, since salt doesn’t actually lose its flavor, why does Jesus even say that salt can?

Wilson argues that in the ancient world salt had several main uses: flavoring, preserving, destroying, and fertilizing. But for Israel, flavoring was not the main purpose for salt. Salt was primarily used in preserving meat and fish (in a world before refrigeration).

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February Elders

Tammy Biddix
 Sue Lewis
 Charlie Nelson

Souper Bowl Offering

February 13

Valentine’s Luncheon

February 20

Session Meeting

February 20

(continued from previous page)

Wilson writes that it was so valuable that often Roman soldiers were paid in salt and that the word “salt” is actually the origin for the word we have today for “salary.” Because of its value and preserving quality in Leviticus 2:13, we read that salt was even supposed to be including in offerings made to God.

Salt was also used for destroying in Jesus’s day. Salt would often be sown during war to make land unproductive. Because of this it was often connected to judgement in Scripture. For example in Psalm 107:34, the psalmist describes God as turning, “a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitation.”



Finally, the same salt that could be used to make land unproductive was also used (with the right amounts) as a fertilizer too. Wilson writes that salt could help soil retain water, protect crops from disease, and stimulate growth. Could this be why Jesus says in Matthew 5:13 that those who follow God are the salt **of the earth**?

In February we are all reminded by Valentines Day to try and be sweet to one another, but Christ tells us that maybe we should be salty instead. We are called to **preserve** the faith, to remind people that Christ saves (just like salt saves meat). With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are called to seek out and **destroy** all sinful desires of our hearts, and to help point out where evil is at work in the world. And we are called to go out into the places where life is challenging and hard and people are barren and broken, and to share Christ as a **fertilizer**, so that “the wilderness and the dry land shall be glad and the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus” (Isa. 35.1).

I don’t know about you... but I’d rather be salty than sweet this February!

In Christ,
Pastor James

Worship in February

During February after we finish of series exploring the story of Noah, join us for a 2 week series from the lectionary that will focus on the Transfiguration of Christ.

Continued Series: Noah- Favor, Flood, Faithfulness, & Foolishness

February 6: Genesis 8: 13-17, 9: 8-17, “Noah: Favor, Flood, Faithfulness, & Foolishness”

-Celebration of the Lord’s Supper

February 13: Genesis 9: 18- 27, “Noah: Favor, Flood, Faithfulness, & Foolishness”

Lectionary Sermon Series: Transfiguration- Up, Up, & Away!

February 20: 1 Corinthians 15: 35-50, “Up, Up, & Away...From Dusty Earth to the Splendor of Heaven “

February 27: 2 Corinthians 3: 12-4:2, “Up, Up, & Away... “From Fleishy Faces to Unveiled Glory”
-Transfiguration Sunday

New Sermon Series for Lent: Flashes of God’s Glory

March 6: Genesis 28: 10-22, “Flashes of God’s Glory... A Tall Ladder”

-Celebration of the Lord’s Supper; First Sunday of Lent



TAKING PART IN THE AMAZING JOURNEY

It begins with You !!!

Here at Union we have regularly participated in Operation Christ Child over the years. This year, we will be doing something different, but something we believe will be even more affective! Every other month, we will be collecting different items to pack into these shoeboxes. This month we are collecting **toothbrushes, combs, brushes and wash cloths**. There will be baskets in the Rotunda area for the collection of these items

Here is some history on Operation Christmas Child: In the summer of 1993, Samaritan's Purse President Franklin Graham received a call from a man in England asking if he'd be willing to fill shoeboxes with gifts for children in war-torn Bosnia. Franklin agreed, but figured Christmas was months away. He forgot about the promise until he received a call back around Thanksgiving asking about the gifts.

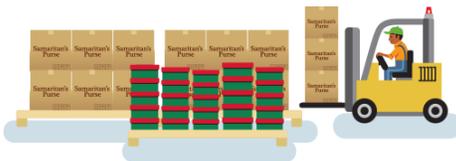
Franklin asked his friend, the late Pastor Ross Rhoads of Calvary Church of Charlotte to see if he could help with the need. A Sunday shortly afterward, Pastor Rhoads demonstrated for his congregation how to fill a shoebox with simple gifts and encouraged them to include a letter to the child as well. Within weeks, the church had 11,000 shoeboxes lining their hallways.

Due to their generosity and additional gifts from Canada, Samaritan's Purse sent 28,000 shoebox gifts to children in the Balkans that Christmas. Through these gifts, we they communicated to children and their families what the angel said to the shepherds about Jesus' birth: "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10, ESV).

Every year since, Samaritan's Purse has collected shoebox gifts filled with toys, school supplies, and hygiene items for children around the world. Since 1993, more than 188 million children in more than 170 countries and territories have received an Operation Christmas Child shoebox. The project delivers not only the joy of what, for many kids, is their first gift ever, but also gives them a tangible expression of God's love.

Tens of thousands of volunteers from local churches around the world partner together to be the hand of God extended to these children who can experience God's love for them through these shoeboxes.. The items are collected by the churches,

PACKED



SHIPPED



Long before shoeboxes arrive in more than 100 countries, volunteer National Leadership Teams train pastors and community leaders who want to share the message of the Gospel and bless children. The leaders learn how to host child-friendly outreach events, and how to implement a follow-up discipleship program.

Pastors around the world host outreach events in places where people may not know Christ and invite them to follow Him. Other churches use the boxes as resources for outreach in orphanages and other at-risk areas. In many places, they also offer The Greatest Gift, a Gospel story booklet Samaritan's Purse developed for shoebox recipients, and invite children to participate in The Greatest Journey discipleship program.

Join us to be a part of this amazing journey of God's love

UNION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CONGREGATION SURVEY

It has been uppermost in our minds to provide the best possible worship service experience for you in the safest possible way over the last two years during the Covid-19 epidemic. In the interest of returning back to "normalcy", however, Pastor James, Session and the Worship and Commitment Committee would like to have your input on the following questions:

1. How are you currently worshipping? In Person Online
2. What time do you prefer in-person worship service in the Sanctuary to begin?
 9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM Other _____
3. If your preference is online worship attendance, what time would you prefer the worship service to be posted online? Live feed (service watched from home as it is happening).
 Anytime during the day on Sunday. Other _____
4. Do you prefer: Optional mask wearing Mandatory mask wearing
 Optional when the coronavirus count is low, mandatory when the coronavirus count is high
 Other _____
5. How do you feel about the mandatory social distancing policy at Union and taping the pews in the Sanctuary to accomplish it? Prefer it. Don't like it. Other _____
6. How would you prefer that we serve Communion?
 Continue as we are currently doing utilizing the prefilled Communion cups that we pick up at the entryways on our way into worship.
 Return to the old method of Communion, EXCEPT return to using the small squares of bread and juice that would be put into individual cups and picked up by congregation members.
 Return to the old method of Communion, EXCEPT return to using the small squares of bread and juice that would be handed to the congregation members by Elders wearing gloves.
 Other _____
7. How do you feel about our use of the television screens in the Sanctuary during worship service?
 I like it. I like it, but...(comment in the space)
 I don't like it because... (comment in space) Other _____
8. How do you feel about Pastor James videotaping the Scripture reading and sermon when and if he becomes ill or, otherwise, unavailable at the last minutes, while the remainder of the worship service is provided by members of the Worship and Commitment Committee and/or congregation members? It's fine with me
 I don't like it at all. We need to hire an outside pastor to preach in person.
 I don't mind it as long as it's not every Sunday.
 Other _____
9. Other issues you would like to bring to our attention: _____

Thank you for taking the time to provide your ideas, recommendations and concerns. It is important to us that we understand how you are feeling and that we strive to implement these ideas and recommendations, and to address your concerns to the best of our ability. You may tear out this survey and drop it in a basket at each entrance to the Sanctuary, drop them in the black mail box at the Children's Wing Entrance or mail them to us at Union Presbyterian Church, 5615 Union Road, Gastonia, NC 28056.



Quilt Raffle

In February we will be selling \$10 raffle tickets for a beautiful quilt. Tickets will be available before and after worship each Sunday in the Gathering Room. If anyone wants to get tickets to sell outside the church they can get them from Faye Harrell. All money received will go to fund the purchase of food for the Blessing Boxes in order to help those in our community who are in need.

Souper Bowl Offering

The Souper Bowl offering, sponsored by the Older Youth, will be received on **Sunday, February 13** and is dedicated to help fund the Blessing Box. This offering will be received by the Youth after the worship service.

Super Bowl Party

The Older Youth are hosting a Super Bowl party in the Fellowship Hall on **Sunday, February 13**. Everyone of all ages are invited to come. See you at the game!

Worship Survey

We are enclosing in the newsletter a worship survey in which we hope you will participate. The leadership of Union wants the best worship service experience with the safety of all kept in mind. Please let us know your input on the questions in the survey. You can mail it to us, drop it in the black drop box at the Children's Wing entrance or drop it by the church office. Please make sure you only fill out one! Thank you for your input!

Celebrating the Lord's Supper

Come join us on **Sunday, February 6** as we take the sacrament of Communion, remembering the price our Lord paid to redeem us.

Women's Ministry

The Women's Council Brunch will be **Saturday, February 12 at 10 AM**

On **Monday, February 7**, the Golden Girls will meet at **11 AM** and the Soul Sisters Circle will meet at **7 PM**, Both circles meeting in the Fellowship Hall.

Happy Years

Come join us for some great fellowship and really good food. We will meet on **February 16, 2022 at 12 PM**. The meal will be provided, which will be chicken pot pie, fixings, dessert, and drinks. Donations for the meal will be accepted. Please join us for good food and fun fellowship no matter what age you are. After the meal, a video of Larry and Janice (Currence) Meek's wedding will be shown. Also please contact Kathy Kytle if you plan to attend, so we will know how much food to prepare.

Valentine's Luncheon

Please join us on **Sunday, February 20** after the worship service for a Youth sponsored luncheon. Enjoy a great meal while supporting the young people of the church.

Thank you, Union Presbyterian Church, for all the encouragement through the calls, cards and acts of kindness that you have shown to us. It is so good to have such a loving and caring church family. It is so wonderful to have your strength and support to call upon in times of trouble.
Love, Diane, Dana & Marty

Thank you, Women of the Church, for the wonderful meal you prepared for the Glenn family. Thank you to all the loving hands that prepared it. It was such a fitting blessing for such an hour.
God bless you all, Diane, Dana & Marty

Thank you, Men of the Church, for the delicious BBQ meal you brought our family during our sadness. It was most appropriate. God bless you for all the good work you do at Union. Love, Diane, Dana & Marty



FINANCIAL NEWS January, 2022

Check out some of the great special offerings this last year!

In January, 67 Coats & Jackets were collected for the Salvation Army.

In 2021:

\$208 to "5 Cents A Meal"

\$2000.02 to Malawi

\$4800 to Vital Churches

\$344 to Christmas Joy Offering

\$1,135 to One Great Hour of Sharing

\$156.50 (Thanksgiving Offering) was given to Black Mountain Home for Children

\$135 to Pentecost Offering

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.

PRESYTERY PRAYER CALENDAR & CONCERNS

We Believe In The Power Of Prayer



February 6

Vians Valley
P.O. Box 202
Bakersville, NC 28705

February 20

Walnut
254 Barnard Road,
Marshall, NC 28753

February 13

Waldensian
109 Main Street East
Valdese, NC 28690

February 27

Walnut Grove
403 Old Three Mile Road
Newland, NC 28657

Please pray for the children of Guatemala as they begin their new school year this month. Most private and public schools are moving forward with a hybrid schedule with two days of in-person and two days of online learning. Many children struggle to connect due to a lack of access to technology. Prayer for student safety and continued learning!

Please pray for the pastors in both of our sister presbyteries in Guatemala. They have been providing pastoral care throughout the pandemic, most have fallen ill at some point with COVID. Currently, Pastors Humberto Beten and Pastor Julio Perez can use some extra prayer for healing.



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 10 AM Bible Study	2	3 6 PM C & T (Zoom)	4	5
6 After worship MOC 2:30 PM SOC	7 11 AM Golden Girls 7 PM Soul Sisters	8 10 AM Bible Study 7 PM B & G	9	10	11	12 10 AM Women's Council Brunch
13 Souper Bowl Offering After worship W & C 2:30 PM W & S Super Bowl Party	14	15 10 AM Bible Study	16 12 PM Happy Years	17	18	19
20 (after service) Valentine Luncheon 2:30 PM Session	21	22 10 AM Bible Study	23	24	25	26
27	28				<u>Each</u> <u>Sunday</u> 9AM Sunday School	<u>Each</u> <u>Sunday</u> 10 AM Worship

Union Presbyterian Church

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Non-Profit Organization
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Permit No. 8
Return Service Requested

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

February 20	Valentine's Luncheon
March 2	Ash Wednesday
April 10	Palm Sunday
April 16	Easter Egg Hunt
April 17	Easter
April 30	Youth Yard Sale