



The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

Psalm 145: 17-19

Dear Union Presbyterian Church Friends and Members,

I went to seminary with a secret. It's a secret that I had not told anyone. Mostly, I didn't tell anyone because it wasn't something I even liked to admit to myself. But truth be told... I went to seminary knowing that I was terrible at prayer. My personal prayer life was a mess for as long as I could remember.

It's easy to be terrible and to stay terrible at personal prayer. Since personal prayer is done privately and silently, the only people who ever need to know that you are bad at it is you and God. For the five years or so before seminary I had been a church youth director. I knew what personal prayer with God was supposed to look like. I knew how to pray out loud in church services, youth meetings, and even one on one with youth. I was just no good at personal prayer with God. I was so bad in fact that I had long given up doing it with any sort of regularity. But since I was a youth director getting ready to seminary, I felt like it would be a very bad thing to admit to anyone else that I was struggling with it.

I was the king of falling asleep while trying to pray. My personal prayer time never felt like God and I were bonding. It usually just felt like I was talking to myself. When I would pray, I always went into it with the best intentions. But sometimes even seconds after I started praying, I would start thinking about something else. Maybe I would start thinking about how the thing a just prayed related to something someone told me earlier that day. Which would get me thinking about someone else I'd been thinking about and then something else that I'd done that day. This might get me thinking about a TV show I had recently seen, which would get me thinking about how hungry I was. As soon as I realized I was off track, I would always stop my train wreck of a prayer in order to spend some time berating myself. Then I would try praying again... asking for forgiveness and promising God that I would do better this time (only to have my mind immediately start wandering again). I was always so secretly envious of others who described themselves as having rich and intimate times with God through prayer.

In the book, "Where Prayer Becomes Real: How Honesty with God Transforms Your Soul," authors Kyle Strobel & John Coe describe a very similar situation in their opening chapters. Particularly Strobel, admits to really wrestling with a wandering mind during prayer. Strobel and Coe argue that ultimately there are these 4 fundamental aspects of prayer, that are necessary to have a more transformative time of with God.

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July Elders

Faye Harrell

Kim Lee

Frank Suggs

Session

July 18

Vacation Bible School

July 26 - July 30

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They write that we must come to understand that:

“Prayer is not a place to be good, it is a place to be honest. Prayer is not a place to perform, It is a place to be present. Prayer is not a place to be right, it is a place to be known. (And) (p)ayer is not a place to prove your worth, it is a place to receive worth and offer yourself in truth.”

Reading their list, it makes sense now why my prayer life was such a mess. The only part of prayer I had down pat at this time of my life were “performance prayers;” prayers I would do out loud and in front of others where I was more concerned with how I sounded than anything else. In my personal prayers, I often was trying to prove to God (and myself) that I was good enough to be talking to him, I rarely was honest with God about my doubts and concerns, and I beat myself up over whether or not I was praying the “right” way.

During Seminary, it was learning about the Ignatius practice of prayer called “Examen” that saved my prayer life. The idea behind this prayer practice is simple. You simply walk through your day with God. You can think, “When was I thankful? What might God have been calling me to do in particular situations?” You could look for sins you may have committed during the day. You could explore all your interactions with others to see how God may have used those people to teach you something, how God may have blessed you with certain interaction, or even ponder how you might interact with that person differently in the future. But it’s more than just thinking about your day. It’s walking through it with God. Thanking him when it makes it sense to, repenting when you should, and asking for help when it is evident that it is needed. The “Examen” made my crazy wandering prayers not the “problem” with my prayer life but the point of it. And I found that when I prayed this way regularly, my other personal prayers wouldn’t be so chaotic anymore. Also, it allowed me to do something else that Strobel and Coe write about in “Where Prayer Becomes Real.” It helped me stop berating myself when my mind wandered, and instead ask God, “God, my mind just started to thinking about this random thing... why do you think this jumped in my head? Is it important? Or is it just a way my sinful heart is keeping me from you?” Regardless of why my mind wandered, answering that question with God would often draw me closer to Him.



I still catch myself periodically falling into personal prayer slumps. And practicing the “Examen” with God is still the prayer practice that helps me out of those slumps. What about you? What keeps your prayers to God honest? What keeps you “present” with God in prayer? How do you keep from getting too bogged down by trying to do prayer the “right” way instead of focusing on just making yourself known to God? My prayer is that this Summer, each of us might come to have a more honest closeness to God through our prayers.

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

Worship for July

July 4; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10, “Overcoming All With God-Given Strength”
-Independence Day

New Lectionary Series: Mark 6 at Cross Purposes

July 11; Mark 6:1-13, “Cross Purposes... Break Out of the Ordinary”
-Welcome Back Sunday

July 18; Mark 6:14-29, “Cross Purposes... Two For Me- None for You”

July 25; Mark 6:30-34, 53-56, “Cross Purposes... Gimme A Break”

New Sermon Series: 1 Peter- Exiles Filled With Hope

August 1; 1 Peter: 1:13-25, “Exiles Filled With Hope... Grace- Empowered Holiness”
-Celebration of the Lord’s Supper

Worship News

SUMMER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

A big thank you needs to go out to everyone who participated in our Worship Survey the last few months. Using it's results, Session was able to make some important decisions about worship moving forward. For the remainder of the Summer we will be giving new worship hours a try! We hope that you will check it out and let an Elder know what you think. In August Session will consider adopting this new time permanently:

****Our Summer Hours****
9 AM Sunday School
10 AM One Indoor Worship Service

Please note that there will be no Sunday School this next Sunday, July 4th, due to the holiday weekend. But we will be trying the new hours! Come worship with us on the fourth... inside at 10 AM!!!

Please note, that during the month of July, Session has decided that we will continue to require masks during worship. Session realizes that there are many different views on the usefulness and need of masks in our congregation (there's lots of different views about it among Session members too). Session simply wants to help those coming inside for the first time in many months to feel welcome and comfortable. We hope you do too.

WELCOME BACK SUNDAY

We hope that you will mark your calendars for **July 11th!** This will be a special "Welcome Back Sunday!" Sunday School for all ages will begin at 9 AM and our worship service will be at 10 AM. This service will feature a special children's message, we will sing some of our congregation's favorite hymns, and it will include a special prayer of praise for the opportunity to finally all be back together again!



Union's Walking Trails

A big thank you to those who have submitted 4 trail names and/or names for the 7 rest stops along the trails. If you want to submit your own ideas, you are not out of time! We are still taking submissions during the month of July. Get your name in and it might be what suggest that people will be reading it as they walk the trails for years to come! Simply submit your ideas to the church office or drop it in the offering plate during church!

Early in August we are planning to have a special "trail day" at church.... where we clean up the trail a little bit and make some plans for some of the last things that need to be done before we can use the trails regularly! Our hope is to have the trails up and running for when it cools down this fall.

This month, we are also looking for some easy ideas on how to make 7 benches for the trails. It would be kind of cool if we could make these benches ourselves as a church. Do you have an easy design? Please let the church office or the Witness & Service Committee

from Sherry Maples



Union Presbyterian Church Family,

I am not sure how many people in this world ever get to know how they have impacted a place and seen the love reflected back at them....I have been able to witness this here at Union.

To my church family: I say "Thank You" for your support, trust, love and prayers over these many years. It has been an honor to worship with all of you and hopefully, to bring you closer to God through the music ministry.

To Pastor James: Thank you for being a friend and pastor. I have worked with many pastors over the years and am most appreciative of the support and encouragement you have always shown to me and the music program. It is indeed rare to find someone to be totally in sync with and we have had a great time coming up with different ideas! You have added to the choir immensely and being a musician/singer/pastor was an extra bonus.

To the Worship & Commitment Committee Members: Thank you so much for the wonderful Retirement Party at Martha Rivers Park and the gift card. I truly appreciate all the planning, decorations, BBQ, cakes and HOMEMADE ICE CREAM!!!! You always go above and beyond and I am grateful to not only be the recipient of such a terrific gathering, but glad to see our church family all together in a celebration again!!!!

To the "Wild Bunch": There are simply no words that are adequate to express my love for all of you. You have been my inspiration from the very beginning. I always knew that if the music touched you, you would be able to "Sing it, like you mean it" and you most certainly did! I have been blessed to call each and everyone of you "Mine". For all your love, dedication and loyalty to me and this church, I will forever be grateful. You have stood unwavering every Sunday, ventured out to other churches and nursing homes all to share your love of Jesus Christ. We have shared something truly unique over the past years and I will forever hold these memories close in my heart. There never has been, nor will there ever be, a group such as you. It has been my honor & privilege to call you not only "My Wild Bunch", but my FAMILY as well. You are all "#1 Rays" and I pray that your lights continue to shine.

17 1/2 years ago, I took a leap of faith and what I found was so much better than anything I could have imagined. I am taking another leap now and can't wait to see what God has in store for me and Union Presbyterian Church. We are all tied together in this wonderful family and I think the best is yet to come!

Thank you all again, from the bottom of my heart. You are simply the "Best of the Best."
All my love, Sherry



LET'S ROAR...VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

VBS will begin on **July 26 - 30, 6 PM - 8:30 PM**, so mark your calendars! You may register at <https://forms.gle/oq4h5isJm17n4X36A>. Please let us know you are coming. Come enjoy free dinner, a Bible lesson, crafts, music and so much more! If you need help registering please contact us at unionpc5615@gmail.com or call the church office at 704-864-7681. Please feel free to use the VBS insert in this newsletter to invite others.

PASTOR IS ON VACATION

Pastor James will be on vacation **Friday, July 2 through Wednesday, July 7**. Rev. Chris Vogado from New Hope Presbyterian Church will be our emergency pastoral contact. If you have need of his phone number, please contact one of the elders or the church office.

CELEBRATION OF LORD'S SUPPER

The next time we will be having Communion together is next month! We hope that you will join us on **August 1**. For the near future, we will also be continuing to use the specially sealed bread/juice containers.

TEMPORARY ACCOMPANIST

Laura Beatty has been the accompanist in our worship services and will be with us through July. She not only plays piano, but also the ukulele, guitar and recorder. She directs choir at Holbrook Middle School for the 6,7 and 8 grades. Take a few minutes to say "hi" to Laura and make her feel welcome.

MUSIC DIRECTOR

We are presently searching for a Music Director/Accompanist. The job description is posted at <https://www.unionpresbyterianchurch.com/new-job-position>. If you know of anyone who might be interested, please pass this information along. Thank you!

WELCOME BAGS

C&T is hoping to get the Welcome Bags created this month for distribution. We want to bless those new to our community and we will need your help to get the bags out!

REPLACEMENT CAR MAGNETS

We have Union car magnets available at each entrance to the Sanctuary. Please help yourself!

CHRISTMAS BOXES FOR SAMARITAN'S

Christmas boxes are now available at the main entrance for collection of items for boys and girls. These boxes are due in **September** and you will find a list of items suggested on the table beside the boxes

BLESSING BOX

We are looking for a couple more individuals interested in helping fill the blessing box during the week. Currently, the box is being emptied nearly everyday. Are you able to volunteer to take food from the church to the blessing box one day during the week (or every other week)? If so, we encourage you to talk to Faye Harrel, Sue Lewis, Pastor James, or contact the church office!

Happy Birthday !



FINANCIAL NEWS

LOAVES & FISHES

We were able to deliver much food and mail a check to Crisis Assistance Ministry in the amount of **\$929.46**. Thank you to all who made this possible!

THE BLESSING BOX FUNDRAISER

The quilt sale raised **\$1240** to help keep the Blessing Box stocked for those in need. Thank you to all who participated!

Happy Anniversary



We Believe In The Power Of Prayer
Presbytery of Western North Carolina Prayer Concerns



- Please pray for Marcia and John Mount Shoop as they continue to navigate John's rare cancer and unknowns that are ahead. Marcia is the Senior Pastor at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Asheville.
- Prayers are appreciated for Jose Palacios, husband of PWNC Guatemala Coordinator Marie Palacios, as he seeks answers and treatment to the cause of his excruciating pain following a recent surgery for his acromegaly.
- Our prayers are with Marla Patchel, Commissioned Pastor of Green Street Presbyterian Church, as she is home recovering from double by-pass surgery on 6/7 and anticipates beginning cardiac rehab soon.
- We celebrate with Ronnie Puckett as he recently completed his chemo and radiation treatments! Ronnie is the husband of PWNC staff member Marcia Puckett. He was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma (back of the tongue and three lymph nodes). Continue to remember him as he prepares for doctors' appointments the next couple of weeks.
- Please be in prayer for Deanna Parks, daughter of PWNC staff member Robbin Buchanan, as she recovers from surgery on her broken ankle. Also remember Robbin's mother, Anne, as she recovers from a fall.
- Lift Bert and Eva Sigmon in prayer as Bert's dementia progresses. Bert is the former Stated Clerk of PWNC and previously served the Duncan's Creek Presbyterian Church as their Commissioned Pastor.



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Each Sunday 9AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship Service				1 7 PM Deacon Meeting	2	3
				Pastor on Vacation		
4 	5	6	7	8 6 PM C & T	9	10
Pastor on Vacation						
11 12 PM W & C 2:30 PM W & S	12	13 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM B & G 7 PM SOC	14	15	16	17
18 2:30 PM Session	19	20 10 AM Bible Study	21	22	23	24
25	26 	27 	28 	29 	30 	31
VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL				6:00 PM - 8:30 PM		

Union Presbyterian Church

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

Reverend James Holeman
Pastor

Sherry Maples
Music Director/Accompanist

Nancy Newman
Administrative Assistant

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

SAVE THE DATES

July 26-30
August 21

Vacation Bible School
Rally Day/Picnic