

Dear Members and Friends of Union Presbyterian Church,

Do you know where the phrase “wear your heart on your sleeve” comes from? No one knows for sure, but 2 leading theories on the origin fit right in with February and Valentines Day! Both stories hail from the Middle Ages. One is about a time when single noble men would draw a name each year to determine who would be their “valentine” for that next year. They would pin the noblewoman’s name to their sleeve during a special feast, literally wearing their heart on their sleeve. The other possible origin for the phrase comes from jousting tournaments. Often a knight would dedicate their match to a woman of the court. Sometimes the knight would tie a ribbon, handkerchief, or other item from that woman around his arm to let everyone at the joust know who’s heart was on his sleeve.

It’s funny how a saying like “wearing one’s heart on your sleeve,” once likely tied to a romantic gesture, is more often used today very differently. Today it’s more often used to describe someone who wants to joyfully share the things they are most passionate about with the world. It is in that vein that I want to share with all of you something that I am very passionate about. I don’t usually talk about it much but I would like to start wearing this thing on my sleeve. And like the phrase this thing I love is something that also has a long history. The thing I love... well...I love church confessions of faith. I really do. I love them A WHOLE LOT.

It helps to be part of a denomination that has 12 different creeds, catechisms, declarations, and confessions in its Book of Confessions. But my love for church confessions goes way beyond our own denomination. I just counted and it looks like I have about a dozen books about the histories of different confessions from various church denominations. I love to read about what was going on with these churches when the confessions were created, to learn the history behind them, and to try to understand how the church in different times has linked their struggles to Scripture. I find it all incredibly fascinating. It is something that merges my love of history, my love of the church, and my love of theology together into one thing.

A couple weeks back I was floored while reading the book, “The Need For Creeds Today: Confessional Faith in a Faithless Age,” by J.V. Fesko. In the opening chapters of the book, Fesko argues that creeds are not only still important for the universal church today, but that they also have a Scriptural basis. I had never thought about that before; could the Bible itself demonstrate the importance of confessions?

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**FEBRUARY ELDERS**

Tammy Biddix  
Faye Harrell  
George Ratchford

**COMMUNION**

February 5

**CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

February 19

**STATED SESSION**

February 19

*(continued from previous page)*

I particularly liked what Fresko wrote about “Paul’s trustworthy sayings.” Five times in Paul’s Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy 1: 15; 3:1; 4:7-9; 2 Timothy 2: 11-13; and Titus 3: 4-8), Paul gives Timothy or Titus some advice by saying, “this is a trustworthy saying.” Fresko argues that these five trustworthy sayings cover a wide range of topics and while they indirectly tie to things Christ taught or to ethical standards described in the Old Testament, none of them come directly from Scripture. This means that Christians were already creating for themselves common sayings and confessions about what it means to believe in Christ and follow him. In the same way in Deuteronomy 6 where the people of Israel were told to take the story of how God had saved them from Egypt and to teach it to their children, bind it to their hands and heads, and write it on their doorposts and gates, the early church was taking what they knew about Christ and putting it into their own words. Isn’t that what a church confession is?

A few months back, our Session put together its own “confessional document.” Basically it is a document that expressed what Session hoped we at Union “believed” in terms of who Christ is and how we are called to serve him. We live in a country that increasingly invites individuals to believe whatever they want for themselves and where overall church attendance continues to decline. One result of this is that more and more people in this country have never been to church and only understand what Christianity is about by what they’ve seen the church do in the news or in books and movies. Today, it just might be more important than ever that we wear what we believe about Christ on our sleeves. More than ever we need our sleeves to joyfully proclaim God’s love and grace and what Christ has done for us. More than ever we need to demonstrate who Christ is in all we say and do. May we all more and more often wear our hearts, Jesus Christ, on our sleeves!

Sincerely in Christ,  
Pastor James

## **WORSHIP IN FEBRUARY**

What does it look like to grow in faith? On the one hand, growing in faith seems pretty straight forward. But doesn’t it often seem like it’s too easy for our faith to grow stagnant? Join us for a 3 week series at the beginning of February that explores some of what God describes in Scripture to be essentials in order to grow in faith.

Then starting February 26, we invite you to join us for a sermon series during Lent that focuses on the importance of having “times in wilderness” with God. Rather than being bewildered by these challenging or dry times of faith, maybe we seek out more opportunities to be-wildered?

### **Sermon Series: Growing in Grace**

- February 5: Luke 8: 1-8, “The Joy of Burying God’s Word in Our Heart”  
-Celebration of the Lord’s Supper
- February 12: Luke 10: 1-4, 17-24, “The Joy When We Step Up in Faith”
- February 19: Colossians 1: 1-14, “Joy From the Air We Breathe”  
-Transfiguration of the Lord Sunday

### **Lenten Sermon Series: Provision when Be-Wildered**

- February 26: Matthew 4: 1-11, “Go Where You DON’T Wanna Go”  
-1st Sunday of Lent
- March 5: Exodus 16: 1-11, “Grumbling Leads To Stumbling”  
-2nd Sunday of Lent; Celebration of the Lord’s Supper

# GROWNING IN GRACE



## PRAY WITH US

During worship, for the first part of February, we will be exploring some of what it looks like to grow in faith. Helping one another grow in faith is what “church” should be all about. So we invite you to take time each day during these 3 weeks to pray for your faith, the faith of your loved ones, and for Union Church. Sometimes it is hard to “remember” each week to pray for something specific like this. Sometimes we decide to replace our regular prayer time to do these kind of “special prayer” requests. This February, you might consider picking a new/different part of your day each day to stop what you are doing and pray for the requests below.

### Week 1, February 5-11, Plant a Seed

This Week Consider Praying For How God is Planting Seeds:

- Through the work of Union’s Strengthening of the Church Committee
- For Union’s Children and Adult Sunday School Programs and it’s teachers; and our Sunday Afternoon Youth Programs and leaders
- For Union’s Tuesday Morning Bible Study and our Women Circles’ studies
- For the curriculum our church uses in classes & those who publish it
- For more of our loved ones to become actively engaged in personal Bible Study
- For hearts to be changed through the reading of God’s Word
- For Parents/Grandparents/Caregivers trying to raise up children in Christ

### Week 2, February 12-18, Step Out

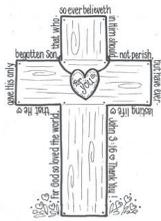
This Week Consider Praying For God to help us Step/Reach Out:

- Through the work of Union’s Witness and Service Committee
- For the outreach ministries Union is involved in (like the Blessing Box, Backpack Program, CAM, Salvation Army, Gaston Street Ministry, The Cathy Mabry Cloninger Center, Black Mountain Home for Boys, Nkhoma Mission Hospital & Ebenezer Institute for Learning in Malawi, and more)
- For those stepping into churches for the first time or the first time in many years. And for those stepping up to serve in the church in new ways.
- For the Holy Spirit to speak to each of our hearts to help us reach out more in faith, share our faith, and serve God in new ways.
- For helping each us show more Christian love and hospitality
- For the lonely and hurting to experience God’s love

### Week 3, February 19-25, The Air We Breathe

This Week Consider Praying For Us to Experience God’s Daily Presence:

- Through the work of Union’s Worship & Commitment Committee
- That Union’s worship services might draw us all closer to God
- That God might speak afresh through “Our Daily Bread” and our other prayer focused literature.
- That individuals might draw closer to God through Union’s outdoor trail and website’s daily devotion links.
- For more regular participation in “quiet times” of prayer with God
- That the time we and our loved ones spend with God in prayer is both fulfilling and fully filling by the Holy Spirit.



# UNION NEWS

## LENT SEASON BEGINS

On **February 22, Ash Wednesday**, there will be two (2) unique opportunities for you to start off the season of Lent right. Join us and maybe even invite a friend a two with the flyer inserted in the newsletter.

You may stop by that morning from **7:15 - 8:15 AM** for “**Ashes On The Go.**” As a service to the community, Pastor James will be at Stephens Stump next to Forestview High School to offer brief prayers and dispense ashes for folks on their way to school and work. That evening we invite you to join us for a special Ash Wednesday service starting at **6:00 PM** in the Sanctuary. The service will be a time of reflection and prayer and culminate in the disposition of ashes.

## BIBLE STUDY INTRODUCTIONS AVAILABLE

How much of your week is devoted to prayer and devotion to God? How much of it is devoted to Bible Study? Devotions like “Our Daily Bread” are good and important tools that can help us draw closer to God each day, but they are not the same thing as Bible Study.

Starting this February we invite you to take more time each week to really study Scripture. Each month we will have an introduction to a book of the Bible available from the BibleProject for people to use in their own individual study. This month we invite you to begin looking at the first 1/2 of the Gospel of John. 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/>.

We hope that 2023 might be a year where each of us grow closer to God through studying Scripture.

## TOUCHING LIVES IN MALAWI

At the very end of 2022, Union wired money to Malawi to support 2 students at Ebenezer Institute for Learning with year long scholarships. We have copies of Ebenezer School’s quarterly newsletter at the entrances to the Sanctuary and in our main office. We invite you to pick one up and find out more about what God is doing in Malawi!



Please notice the information kiosk that Larry Meek made for the church at the main entrance into the Sanctuary. Thank you, Larry, for making us a place to put our material for visitors.

Dear Union Presbyterian Friends, on behalf of Cramerton Middle School families, we would like to thank you for your generous gift donations for our students. Donors like you help ensure our students and their siblings have a joyful Christmas. We wish you a wonderful holiday and a healthy 2023. Sincerely, CMS Student Staff Support





## FINANCIAL NEWS December 31, 2022

	December	Year to Date
Revenue	\$49,592	\$237,844
Expenses	20,088	213,391
	\$29,504	\$ 24,453

**YES, you are reading this report correctly! God's blessings were flowing for Union in December. We are thankful for His love and guidance for 2022.**

Following are unexpected expenditures that impact our financial picture.

- January: repair exterior leak in the Sanctuary  
Cost: \$6285
- April: digital music machine for Sanctuary  
Cost: \$2854  
fire & safety inspection  
Cost: \$857
- July: Church computer for Martha  
Cost: \$642

Thank you for your prayers and support for 2022. Please continue to pray for your leaders as we begin 2023.

Jason Morrison - Receiving Treasurer  
Martha Simmons - Disbursing Treasurer

## PRESBYTERY PRAYER LIST & PRAYER CONCERNS

Unity  
8210 Unity Church Road  
Denver, NC 28037

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

Waldensian  
109 Main Street East  
Valdese, NC 28690

Walnut  
254 Barnard Road,  
Marshall, NC 28753

- Remember honorably retired pastor Patrick Hardy as he deals with some health issues. Reverend Hardy serves the Walnut congregation in Marshall, NC.
- Third Street Presbyterian Church requests prayer for Elder Charlie Strohman, who fell and cracked his spinal cord. Following successful surgery, Charlie is in good spirits and is now in intensive therapy. He's able to move some, but the process is slow. Please continue to pray for his recovery and rehabilitation.
- Presbytery minister member Christina Tutterow asks for continued prayers for her husband, Robin, as he recovers from valve replacement surgery.
- Prayers are appreciated for Daniel Tipton, minister member of Presbytery and Grief Services Director for Four Seasons Compassion for Life, as he awaits news about a potential heart transplant.



# February

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>Sunday</b> 9AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship	<b>Sunday</b> 4 PM Kids of the Kingdom & Youth		1 Pastor on Study Leave	2	3 Youth 180 Weekend	4
<b>5 Communion</b> 11 AM WOC & MOC 2:30 PM SOC	<b>6</b> 11AM Golden Girls  7 PM Soul Sisters	<b>7</b> 10 AM Bible Study  6 PM B & G	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b> Souper Bowl Offering 11 AM W & C 2:30 PM W & S Super Bowl Party	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 10 AM Bible Study	<b>15</b> 12 PM Happy Years	<b>16</b> 3:30 PM Bingo at Terrace Ridge	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b> Congregational Meeting Valentine's Day Luncheon (hosted by the Youth) 2:30 PM Session	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> 10 AM Bible Study	<b>22 Ash                      Wednesday</b> 7:15 -8:15 AM Ashes on the Go (Stephens Stump)  6 PM Worship Service	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 10 AM Bible Study				

## Union Presbyterian Church

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**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 19	Congregational Meeting Valentine's Luncheon
February 22	Ash Wednesday Service
March 5	Celebrating the Lord's Supper
March 15	Happy Years hosted by WOC
March 17	Men's Pancake Supper