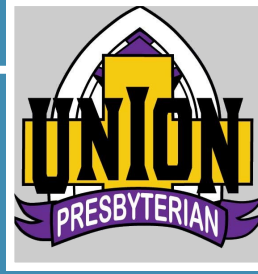


UNION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Union News



UNION NEWS
APRIL 2024

Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: [Christ] appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, and was taken up in glory.

1 Timothy 3: 16

Dear Friends and Members of Union Presbyterian Church,
The Tuesday morning Bible Study just started looking at the book of Genesis. Genesis 4 includes the story of the Cain and Able. Surprisingly, after Cain kills Able, God ends up marking Cain in order to protect him as he lives out his curse to wander the world. So why did God help Cain? We read in Deuteronomy and Leviticus that God’s punishment for murder is death. So why wouldn’t God destroy Cain for what he did to his brother? The answer is paradox or mystery. It is good that God is righteous. No one would want to follow God if he wasn’t good, just, and righteous (and demand that of others). But God isn’t JUST righteous, he is ALSO gracious. From the very beginning of Genesis we see a God who punishes Adam and Eve and then Cain... but ALSO takes care of them as well.

In the book, “Surprised by Paradox: The Promise of AND in an Either-Or World,” Jen Pollock Michel writes about the importance of mystery in the Scripture. She argues that this mystery isn’t something we should try to ignore, but should embrace. Mystery is both a way to deepen our faith and to make sure that we have the right posture before God. Take the incarnation. Was Jesus a man? Yes. But wasn’t he God? Yes. What is the percentage breakdown... 50/50? No, Jesus was 100% man AND 100% God. How does that work? Who knows... but isn’t that what makes Jesus worth following above anyone else!?! Further, Michel writes that focusing on the mystery of God is what allows us to have the right posture before God. The posture we are called to before God is one of realizing that God is way bigger than we are. “As soon as we think we have God figured out, we will have ceased to worship him as he [actually] is.”

Lately, I’ve been reflecting of the bigness of God’s grace. It’s another of those “mysteries” of God. There is no way to reflect on the work of Jesus on earth without thinking about God’s grace. Michel argues that Paul uses the word “mystery” over and over again to try to describe what Christ has done for humanity (Romans 11: 25, 1 Corinthians 15: 51, Ephesians 3: 6, Colossians 1:27, and 1 Timothy 3: 16). So, what is the great mystery of grace?

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APRIL Elders
Sally McGinnis
Janice Meek
Eric Nelson

Communion
April 7

Stated Session
April 21

Continued from page 1

In Genesis, we see how God responded to Adam and Eve and then Cain with grace. A sort of grace that showed forgiveness, help, love, and care. God clothed Adam and Eve even after they broke the only rule God gave them. God protected Cain even after Cain broke the main job of humanity (caring for God's creation). Grace is at the center of who God is. And nothing shows us how magnificent and mysterious that grace is more than the cross. The cross first and foremost reminds us that God is righteous and just. Sin is a big deal. Michel reminds us in "Surprised by Paradox" that the cross shows us that God's grace isn't just "leniency." We wouldn't need the cross if God just patted us on the back and reassured us kindly that, "It's no big deal" every time we break his rules. The cross shows us that sin is a cosmically big deal.

So where is God's grace with the cross? Grace is God's decision that "[we] are not strung up for failure but God himself is. For all the mistakes and moral failings of humanity, he is the one betrayed and beaten. He is the one crucified and pierced. It is his breath, not [ours], that expires- his body, not [ours] that is entombed. We deserve ignominy [shame and public disgrace] and get his innocence instead." That's grace. In the New Testament, the cross of Jesus is lifted up. The cross, which in the first century was the most shameful death sentence, is lifted up. Why lift up the cross? Because on that shameful cross, Christ took away our shame.

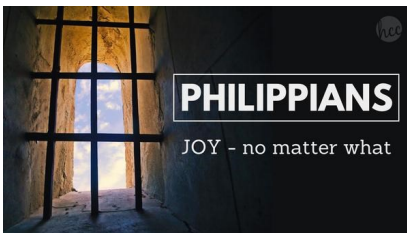


Just as the words in the hymn, "Lift High the Cross," proclaim, let us celebrate the incredible mystery of the bigness of God's grace.

All newborn servants of the Crucified
bear on their brow the seal of Christ who died.
Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred name.

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

WORSHIP IN APRIL



Chapter 2 of Philippians is an incredible chapter! Paul explains the challenges of living for Christ in a world that worships all sorts of other things, provides an amazing explanation for what was accomplished by Christ through the incarnation, and gives examples of how you and I could have a heart similar to Jesus. Altogether, Philippians 2 shows how a Christian can "whistle in the dark," (joyfully giving glory of God even when the world around us looks bleak)! We hope that you can join us this April as we explore these themes in more detail!

Lectionary Sermon Series: Getting into the Eastertide

April 7- John 20: 19-31, "Nail-sized Holes"
-Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Sermon Series: Philippians 2- Whistling in the Dark

April 14- Philippians 2: 1-4, "Inside Out & Upside Down"
April 21- Philippians 2: 5-11, "Go the Distance"
April 28- Philippians 2: 12-18, "Practicing make Perfect"
May 5- Philippians 2, 19-30, "Which Comes First"
-Celebration of the Lord's Supper



DISCIPLESHIP w/DESSERT WORKSHOP

Maybe you've heard a little about Session's deep dive exploration of discipleship this last year from a friend. Maybe you've read a little about it in a newsletter article or two or even from this year's annual report. Maybe you've heard Pastor James mention it in the announcements or even during a sermon or two. Well, now is your opportunity to find out more about it for yourself!

During the month of April, there will be a **4-week workshop** that will dive deep into Christian discipleship! The workshop will explore how Jesus discipled the 12, how Christian discipleship looks different from Christian education, and how growing closer to Jesus isn't rocket science! The workshop will draw from material from the first 3 chapters of the book **"Simple Discipleship: Grow Your Faith, Transform Your Community,"** by Dana Allin, and from the program he led during the 2024 ECO Gathering in Greenville, SC. By the end of the 4 meetings, you'll be able to take some new steps following Christ yourself!

We can't think of anything that pairs better with discipleship than dessert (they both start with "d" after all). So, we plan to have a little of that good stuff on **Tuesdays at 6 PM on April 9, 16, 23, and 30** as well. Now that it is staying lighter a little later, nothing should be holding you back! Come join us for some great fellowship and yummy treats! You might end up surprised at how "challengingly simple" growing in Christ can be!

POP YOUR "BUBBLE"

Get out of your comfort zone!

That was the stewardship challenge the Finance Committee issued to Union's congregation 5 months ago. Have you forgotten all about it? Maybe made excuses for not doing it? Started and then stopped? Or have you made a conscious effort to listen to God to discern how He might be leading you to "pop your bubble"? If you are willing to share your story, please contact Pam Moton. The Finance Committee would love to hear how God has led you to get out of your comfort zone. You just may be an inspiration to someone else to "pop their bubble".





UPDATE FROM SESSION:

We are currently awaiting a final date to have our first meeting with the Administrative Committee from Presbytery. We will continue to share information and updates as we receive them. Please continue to pray for our session and our church as we go through this process.

Dear Father, thank you for Your continual renewal, refreshing, and restoration. I pray that this season will be one of growth in my life. Grow me just as You grow the flowers, vegetables and fruits of this season. In Jesus' Holy name I pray, Amen.

PRAY FOR EVERYTHING





BOOK CHICKS

Do you enjoy reading a good book? How about snacks and socializing? Join us monthly during our Book Chicks book club meetings for some food, fun, and fellowship! For more information or to find out what book we are reading, please reach out to Kim Morrison. Our next meeting is **Monday, April 15th at 6:30 PM.**

PRAYER WALK

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



BINGO

Join us for BINGO at Terrace Ridge on **Thursday, April 18th at 3 PM.** You are sure to receive many blessings from this outreach event!

WOMENS CIRCLE

The Golden Girls will meet on **Monday, April 1st at 11 AM** for their monthly meeting. The Soul Sisters will meet **Monday, April 8th at 7PM** for their monthly meeting.

5 CENTS A MEAL

Our next 5 Cents a meal offering will be on **Sunday, April 7th during worship.** The money collected will go to support Crisis Assistance Ministry



HAPPY YEARS

Happy Years will be on **February 20th at 12 PM.** The Women of the Church will be hosting this month. We will be having Ham, Mac and Cheese, green beans, pineapple casserole, slaw, bread, desserts, and drinks. All ages welcomed and invite a friend.

MEN OF THE CHURCH MARCH MEETING

The next Men of the Church Planning meeting will be at **8 AM** on **April 14th!** Come learn about and help plan future events for the Men of the Church!

MEN OF THE CHURCH BBQ & BUTT SALE

The Men of the Church are hosting their ANNUAL BBQ AND BUTT Sale on **Friday, May 3rd from 3 PM– 7PM.** Butts will be \$40 or you can purchase it by the pound for \$10/pound! Please be on the lookout for order forms. If you have any questions, please reach out to **Eric Nelson at (704) 860-3781.**



UNION ENSEMBLE PRACTICE

The Union Ensemble will be starting new music for the Spring this month! It is a great time to join us! Practices for the Ensemble in **April** will be right after church on **April 14 and 28!**



4- Billy Wilson

10 – Leslie Kendrick Harris

11 –Jack Holeman

12 –Jan McAbee (Painter),
Tom Wollenberg

13 – Katherine Harrison Morris

15 – Lily Cabe, Jason Cabe

16 – Ivye Rose Brooks

22 –Emily Sparrow Tsuikes,
Steven Sparrow

23 – Amanda Viola

28 – Lisa Lawson

30 – Trey Harris



25 – Kim & Don Chilton



FINANCIAL NEWS April, 2024

FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF FEBRUARY 29, 2024

	January	Year to Date
Revenue	\$15,701	\$30,532
Expenses	<u>15,886</u>	<u>31,437</u>
	- 185	- 905

Martha Simmons – Disbursing Treasurer
Jason Morrison – Treasurer



PRESBYTERY PRAYER CALENDAR & PRAYER CONCERNS

West Avenue
P.O. Box 12662
Gastonia, NC 28052
wapc@charlotte.twcbe.com

Westminster
15 Overbrook Place
Asheville, NC 28805
westminsterpc@bellsouth.net

Arbor Dale
P. O. Box 235
Banner Elk, NC 28604
arbordale@skybest.com

Asheville First
40 Church Street
Asheville NC 28801
office@fpcashevilled.org

- We continue prayers for the Rev. Beth Newman, pastor of Byson City Presbyterian. Beth was back in the hospital dealing with a number of complications. A Caring Bridge website is available for communication and updates. You can reach it by clicking here.
- We ask for your prayers for safety of our latest Mission Team in Guatemala as they return to North Carolina on Thursday.
- Prayers for Presbytery Associate Rev. George Thompson who broke his foot and awaiting treatment decisions.
- Hold Ronnie Puckett, husband of former PWNC staff member Marcia Puckett, in prayer as he continues immunotherapy every six weeks for his cancer.





SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Sunday 9AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship	1 11 AM Golden Girls 7 PM Men's Bible Study	2 10 AM Bible Study 7 PM B & G	3	4 8 AM HOME Co-Op 6 PM Women's Council	5	6
7 5 Cents a Meal 2:30 PM SOC	8 7 PM Soul Sisters 7 PM Men's Bible Study	9 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM Discipleship & Dessert	10	11 8 AM HOME Co-Op	12	13
14 8 AM MOC 11 AM Ensemble Practice	15 6:30 PM Book Chicks 7 PM Men's Bible Study	16 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM Discipleship & Dessert	17 12 PM Happy Years 5:30 PM W & S	18 8 AM HOME Co-Op 3 PM Bingo 6:30 PM Prayer Walk	19	20
21 11 AM Worship & Commitment 2:30 PM Session	22 7 PM Men's Bible Study	23 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM Discipleship & Dessert	24 4 PM HOME Co-Op Sanctuary	25 8 AM HOME Co-Op 6 PM HOME Co-Op Fellowship Hall	26	27
28 11 AM Ensemble Practice	29 7 PM Men's Bible Study	30 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM Discipleship & Dessert	May 1	2 8 AM HOME Co-Op	3 MOC BBQ SALE 3-7	4

Union Presbyterian Church

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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



April 7 Communion & 5 Cents of Meal
April 17 Happy Years
May 3 MOC BBQ & Butt Sale