



Dear Friends and Members of Union Presbyterian Church,

During the season of Advent, I love to find a picture, poem, song, or story that helps me take a moment to stop what I am doing and think about what Immanuel, God with us, really entails. This year the picture that has struck me is “Christ in the House of His Parents,” by John Everett Millais in 1849-50. It is a beautiful painting that shows Jesus as a young boy in his father Joseph’s workshop.

The painting takes foreshadowing to the next level. Jesus is in the center of the picture with a cut in the middle of his hand (cut from a nail) and some blood dripping to his foot to foreshadow his crucifixion. John, his cousin (wearing a fur loincloth), approaches with a bowl of water to clean him up, foreshadowing Jesus’ baptism. A dove representing the Holy Spirit sits on a ladder in the back. The project in the workshop that day is a door, reminding us how Christ serves as the doorway for us into the Kingdom of God. To top it off, there’s a bunch of sheep peering in just outside the workshop, waiting for their shepherd.

It’s a little over the top. And yet I keep finding myself staring at the picture this Advent, imagining what it would have been REALLY like to grow up with Jesus; to see him as a child, still growing into the God-Man he would one day be. How different would Jesus be from the other boys growing up in his town?

The only example we have in Scripture of Jesus as a child, is the story of Jesus’ family Passover visit to Jerusalem when Jesus was 12 (Luke 2:41-52). If you remember the story, Jesus’ parents accidentally leave Jesus behind in the city after the festival. They return to find Jesus sitting with the religious teachers in the temple courts. Jesus seems surprised that his parents couldn’t find him more quickly. Didn’t they know that he would be in his Father’s house?

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Christmas Flyer

Elders for December

Carol Beasley
Jason Morrison
Eric Nelson

Stated Session

December 15

Joy Gift Program

December 15

Children’s Christmas Program

December 22

Faith & Healing Service

December 22

Christmas Eve Service

December 24

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Although it is a short story, I think it tells us a lot about what Jesus may have been like as a boy. First, it is obvious that Jesus is a special child. The fact that the teachers in the temple were impressed by Jesus' questions and statements (rather than annoyed or simply humoring Jesus) speaks volumes. The teachers recognized that they were in the presence of a spiritually gifted individual.

But this story shows us even more. For example, we can see that Jesus is being reared in a very religious home. Joseph and Mary seem to be taking the responsibility of raising the Messiah very seriously. They are even trying to faithfully follow God's instructions about attending religious festivals. Also, the fact that Mary and Joseph just assumed that Jesus was with other family members as they left Jerusalem indicates just how much Jesus must have earned his parent's confidence and trust. As a quick comparison, in the Holeman household, you can be sure that there is always a head count before we come back from a camping trip!

Finally, when Mary and Joseph track down Jesus, it is interesting how the parents just calmly ask why Jesus did what he did, (rather than immediately scold or punish Jesus). I could imagine this story ending very differently, with Mary pulling Jesus out of the temple courts by his ear. But that isn't her response. Her words show a mother unaccustomed to an irresponsible or disobedient child. Mary just seems to want an honest explanation for why Jesus did what he did. And she expects Jesus to be able to have a good reason for his actions.

In Luke 2:52, we read that Jesus continued to increase in wisdom and stature as he grew up, but even as a child it sounds like Jesus was responsible, obedient, and faithful. That he may have been on the sensitive side, curious, and at least at times incredibly profound. What would it have been like to be around this child as he was still growing, still learning, still making mistakes, but never sinning? Meeting Jesus as a child would certainly be interesting. But I wonder if it would also be an informative example on what Christian discipleship could look like. Could imagining how Jesus grew up help us all better understand what maturing in faith and growing closer to God looks like without all that sin obscuring the process? I wonder? Happy Advent everyone!!

Sincerely in Christ,

Pastor James

WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER

In worship during the season of Advent we will be exploring several of the "names" that Isaiah used to describe the coming Messiah and how those names help us better understand who Jesus is and how he relates to us!

Then in January we will be starting a new series exploring the some of the "firsts" of Jesus' ministry. What did Jesus' first miracle, his first sermon, and other firsts look like? What do they tell us about faithfulness today?

New 4 Week Advent Lectionary Series: Isaiah's Names

December 1- Isaiah 2:1-5- Isaiah's Mountain

First Sunday of Advent; Celebration of Lord's Supper

December 8- Isaiah 11:1-10-Isaiah's Branch

Second Sunday of Advent

December 15- Isaiah 35:1-10-Isaiah's Desert

Third Sunday of Advent

December 22- Isaiah 7:10-16-Isaiah's Sign

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24- Luke 2:1-20; Isaiah 9:2-7- Isaiah's Baby

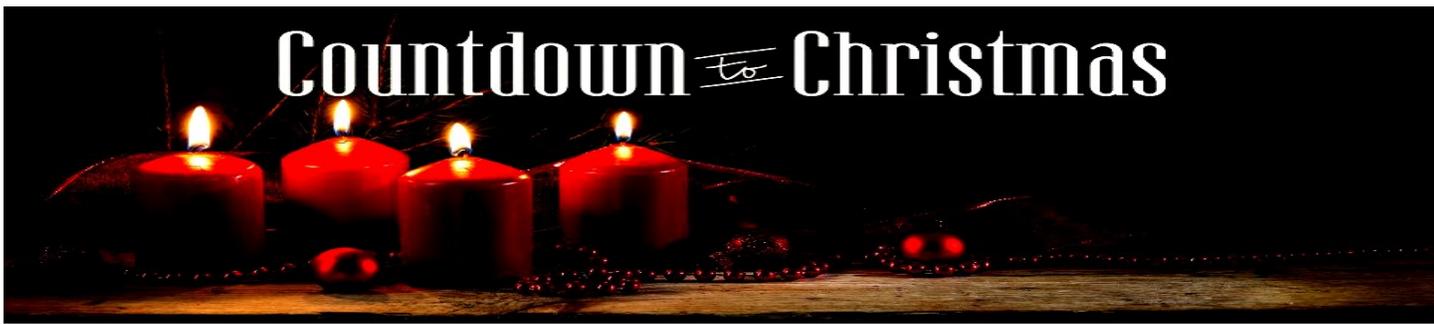
Christmas Eve; Celebration of Lord's Supper

December 29- Guest Preacher- Pastor James is on vacation

New 4 Week Series: First's for the First of the Year

January 5- John 2:1-11- "His First Miracle"

Celebration of the Lord's Supper



Countdown to Christmas

All Advent Season

In worship this Advent Season, we will be exploring some of the names of Jesus used by the prophet Isaiah. During worship our children will be hanging new ornaments that represent these names on our Christmas Tree as they light the advent candles each week. Also available to you this Advent season is a devotion that reflects on 12 different names for Jesus that are found in Scripture. Additional copies of these devotions are found at each of the entrances to the Sanctuary.

Sunday, December 15 at 6:00 PM Adult Choir Christmas Cantata

Enjoy the music and readings from the adult choir as they perform the cantata, "Behold the Savior," followed by a time of food and fellowship.

Sunday, December 22 at 9:00 AM Breakfast & Children's Christmas Program

Like previous years, on **Sunday, December 22** we will be showcasing our children and youth's acting and musical ability in a special Christmas Program before worship. Join us at **9 AM** for a free breakfast and then get ready to sit back and enjoy what the children and youth of our church have prepared for us!

Sunday, December 22 at 2:30 PM Christmas Caroling

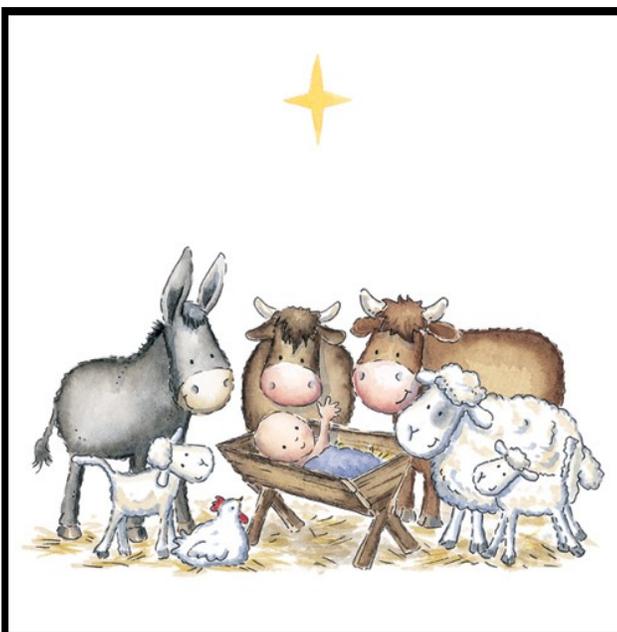
All ages are invited to join us as we spread Christ's joy across Gaston County. Let's bring some Christmas joy to our nearby assisted living facilities and church shut-ins!

Tuesday, December 24 at 8:00 PM Christmas Eve Service

Please note our special Christmas Eve service this year will be at **8 PM** on **Tuesday, December 24**. We will have a family friendly Christmas Eve service with candles, communion, and more. Please come and join us as we worship the Christ of Christmas.

Invite a Friend this Christmas

Included inside this newsletter, is a flyer with many of these events included! We encourage you to find a friend to share it with this holiday season!

	CHILDREN'S MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS		
	DATE	NURSERY	CHILDREN'S CHURCH
	December 1	Tammy Biddix Mickie Nelson	Leslie Harris Sally McGinnis
	December 8	Sue Lewis Amanda Viola	Jenny Cabe Mickie Nelson
	December 15	Mickie Nelson Patricia Wilson	Kimberly Morrison Amanda Viola
	December 22	Sara Elliott Amanda Viola	Leslie Harris Sally McGinnis
	December 29	Melody Caldwell Shelly Grigg	Pam Moton Eddie Moton



Faith & Healing Service

Sunday, December 22 following the worship service, there will be an opportunity to receive prayers of healing or strength for difficult situations for you or someone you are concerned for. Oil will be available for anointing if you so desire.

Prayer Blankets Available

Do you have a friend, co-worker, or neighbor who is hurting (physically, emotionally, or spiritually)? Maybe they need a reminder of God's presence or promises? If this is the case, feel free to get them a prayer blanket from our prayer room. This is a ministry intended for all our loved ones (members of the church and those in the community). There is a clipboard with the blankets to write down who you are getting the blanket for (just to make sure church members in need aren't inundated with blankets). Please note that all the blankets in the prayer room have been prayed over during a Faith & Healing Service. We hope you will allow God to use you in a special way in the months to come by giving a blanket and reminding someone you care about of the hope and comfort found in Christ.



Christmas Church Office Hours

The church office will be closed Christmas Week, **Monday, December 23—Friday, December 27**. It will also be closed **January 1** on New Year's Day! Have a wonderful Christmas!! If you have articles that you would like to submit for the January newsletter, please have them in by December 20.

Happy Years

Happy Years will not meet in December due to the holidays but will resume **January 15 at 12 PM**. Have a wonderful holiday season!

Children's Christmas Play Practice

Each Sunday, during the Children's Church time, Jennifer Nelson and Jenny Cabe will be practicing with the children for the Christmas play from now until the play is presented on **Sunday, December 22**.

The Santa's Mailbox

Do you wish you could send Christmas greetings to your church family but paying for all those stamps seems a little much? You may want to "mail" your Christmas cards to friends here at Union through our internal "Mailbox." The Santa Mailbox is located in the hall beside the Nursery. Also you might consider placing some of the money you would have used on stamps in the container on top of the mailbox (which will be added to our church's Christmas Joy Offering this year).

Angel Tree

Angel Tree gifts are due on **Sunday, December 15** and will be delivered to Cramer-ton Middle School on **Monday, December 16**. Please make sure you attach every Angel Tree Tag to the bagged gift(s). Thank you for willing to be a blessing this season!





Pardon the Mess this January!?! Sanctuary Painting

Painting of the Sanctuary is currently scheduled to begin **January 6, 2020** and to continue through **January 17**. We are anticipating a bit of a mess during this time and the painting will affect Sunday worship on **January 12**. We plan to hold that Worship service in the Fellowship Hall. Should the painting take longer or should the timing change as we get closer to January, other services may be affected.

In connection with the painting of the Sanctuary, there will also be some updating of our Sanctuary visual and sound equipment. The most noticeable change will be some necessary construction tied to the installation of two Session approved monitors to replace the currently unused left and right speakers in the front of the Sanctuary. These are not being installed to drastically change how we do worship at Union but mostly to improve the visibility for what is already being projected during services.

Please pardon the inconvenience for a little while. We believe the outcome will be well worth it!

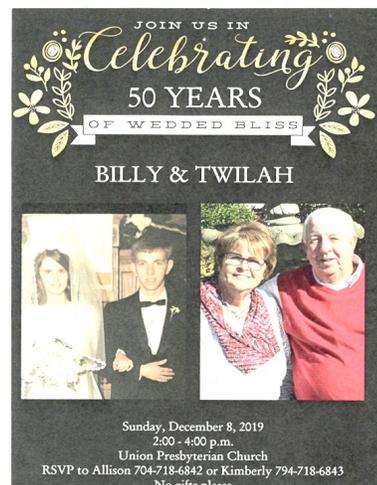
Candy Cane Handout

Witness & Service will host a Candy Cane and devotion handout to the students of Forestview on **Wednesday, December 18** from **7 AM—7:45 AM**. Please join us if you want to take part!

YOU ARE INVITED!!!

Join us in celebrating the 50th wedding anniversary of Twilah & Billy Jordan on Sunday, December 8 from 2 PM—4 PM here in our Fellowship Hall.

Please RSVP to Allison (704-718-6842) or Kimberly (704-718-6843)



News from the Men & Women...



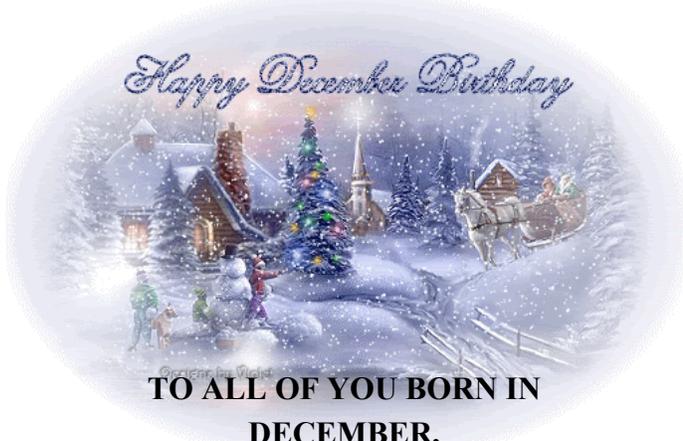
Spread Joy

On **Saturday, December 21** at **11:30 AM**, SOS (Sister of Strength-Women of the Church) will host a Christmas Event—Spread Joy. We will meet at the church at **11:30 AM**, for our lunch reservations at **12**. After lunch, we will leave to share \$25 Walmart cards in the community (visiting grocery stores, laundry mats, Walmart, bus stops, etc.) We will have plenty of gift cards ready to share, however, if you wish to purchase some to give out, please do so! We will be returning to the church around **2:30** or **3 PM** for desserts, drinks and sharing!. If you are interested in going to lunch, please let Tammy or Lisa know by **Sunday, December 8, 2019**.

Men of the Church Christmas Party!

Calling all men! You are invited to the party! The Men of the Church Christmas Party will be **Tuesday, December 10** at **6:30 PM** at Jackson's Cafeteria. This is not an event to miss, so we hope you will be there ready for great food and fellowship!





**TO ALL OF YOU BORN IN
DECEMBER,
WE WISH YOU
A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**



**FINANCIAL REPORT
October 31, 2019**

	<u>October</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Revenue	\$18,999	\$163,271
Expenses	<u>16,256</u>	<u>169,462</u>
	2,743	- 6,191

Monthly Budget Requirements \$18,601

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 Billy Wilson, Treasurer.



**HAPPY WEDDING ANNIVERSARY
TO ALL OF YOU
MARRIED IN THE MONTH OF DECEMBER!**



December 1
Good Hope
P.O. Box 784
Kings Mountain, NC 28086
goodhopepresbyterian@yahoo.com

December 8
Grace Covenant
789 Merrimon Avenue
Asheville, NC 28804
office@gcpcusa.org

December 15
Grassy Creek
167 Greenlee Lane
Spruce Pine, NC 28777

December 22
Green Mountain
P.O. Box 36
Green Mountain, NC
28740

December 29
Tryon
430 Harmon Field Road
Tryon, NC 28782





SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 9 AM SOS Council Communion 2:30 PM SOC	2 1 PM Golden Girls Fellowship 7 PM Soul Sisters Fellowship	3 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM C & T 7 PM B & G	4 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	5	6	7
8 9 AM W & C 2 PM—4 PM Celebration Billy & Twilah Jordan's 50th Anniversary	9	10 10 AM Bible Study 6:30 PM MOC Christmas Party (Jacksons)	11 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	12	13	14
15 2:30 PM Session 6 PM Joy Gift Program	16	17 10 AM Bible Study	18 STEPHENS STUMP Candy Cane Handout 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	19 4 PM Bingo	20	21 11:30 AM Spread Joy (SOS)
22 8:30AM MOC 9 AM Breakfast & Children's Program Faith & Healing Service 2:30—5 PM Christmas Caroling	23	24	25	26	27	28
Church Office Closed for the Holidays						
		8 PM Christmas Eve Service		Pastor James—Vacation		
29	30	31	HAPPY NEW YEAR (Church Office Closed)	Each Sunday 9:45 AM Sunday School 11 AM Worship	Each Sunday 4 PM Kids of the Kingdom & Union Youth	
Pastor James—Vacation						

Union Presbyterian Church

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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

December 15	The Joy Gift Program
December 22	Children's Christmas Program
December 24	Christmas Eve Service
December 23-27	Church Office Closed
January 1, 2020	Church Office Closed
January 6	Painting of Sanctuary begins