



Dear Members and Friends of Union Presbyterian Church,

If you are like me you say it all the time, “The season of advent goes by too quickly.” There is too much to do. There is not enough time. It can feel like Christmas is upon us before we even blink yet alone have time to stop long enough to experience some of the hope, love, joy, or peace in Christ that is supposed to be associated with the season. J.B. Phillips, renown British Bible translated puts it well in an advent devotion he wrote:

The particular danger which faces us as Christmas approaches is unlikely to be contempt for the sacred season, but our familiarity with it may easily produce in us a kind of indifference. The true wonder and mystery [of the incarnation of Christ- God with us] may leave us unmoved, familiarity may easily blind us to the shining fact that lies at the heart of Christmastide. We are all aware of the commercialization of Christmas, we can hardly help being involved in the frantic business of buying and sending gifts and cards. We shall all without a doubt enjoy the carols, the decorations, the feasting, and jollification, the presents, the parties, the dancing and the general atmosphere of goodwill that almost magically permeates the days of Christmas. But we may not always see clearly through all the decoration and celebration that has been heaped on the festival to the historic fact upon which all the rejoicing is founded. [The reason for Christmas] has been almost smothered out of existence.

It’s crazy to even imagine. The reason for celebrating Christmas is to celebrate how God came to earth through Christ and to look forward in hope to when Christ will come again. And yet with all the busyness it is so easy during a holiday that celebrates God being with us to miss out on experiencing God being with us. In the book *Invitation to Retreat: The Gift and Necessity of Time Away with God*, Ruth Haley Barton argues just how important it is for us to take moments to stop in life and spend time with God. She claims that whether it is a couple hours one evening, or a weekend away, or even a more formal Christian retreat, that we all need to occasionally retreat with God beyond just a quick daily devotional or prayer.

Barton argues that one of the primary ways we show value and love to those in our lives is by giving them some of our time. She goes on to explain what stopping to find time for God is all about. If we want to show God his value in our lives we need to give him our time. That really is what a retreat (intentional time spent just with God) is all about. It is a way to “cultivate our love for God and keep our relationship with God primary.” It allows us to “...live what we often forget- that we belong to God.”

If you are like me your response to Barton might be something like, “Okay, time with God is important. I’ll get right on that in January or February... right after this busy season.” But Barton would disagree. She argues that tiredness generally falls into two different categories: good tiredness and dangerous tiredness.

(continued on page 2)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Worship in December **2**
Children’s Ministry

Christmas Corner **3**

Church News **4**

News from Session **5**

Church Finances **6**

Celebrations

Prayer Calendar

Church Calendar **7**

Insert:

Christmas Calendar

Elders for December

Claire Cabral
David Lawson
Frank Suggs

The Lion, the Witch, the Wardrobe

December 2

McAdenville Hayride

December 9

Adult Choir

December 16

Stated Session Meeting

December 16

Children’s Christmas

December 23

(continued from page 1)

Good tiredness is the feeling we get after a difficult job well done. A good night's sleep or weekend off makes all the difference. But there is also a dangerous sort of tired. This sort of tired accumulates after pushing yourself too hard for too long or doing a lot of things outside of what you are best at and it leads us to "...be unable to be our best selves." It is this kind of tired that Phillips' claim makes us miss out on God in the day to day. And I think it is this kind of tiredness that can keep us from enjoying what we are invited to celebrate at Christmas time.

Although it seems counterintuitive (because it goes against many of our work ethics), Barton argues that the time we need to retreat most is when there is absolutely no time to do it. The times we are "too busy" are exactly the times we need to stop, uncluttered our calendar and spend some serious time praying and listening to God.


I am a big fan of two for one deals (especially at Christmas time). I'll be honest that sometimes I am even tempted to buy one thing the I don't really want simply because there is a promise to get something else I don't really need either. Stopping in the midst of a busy schedule and spending extra time with God just might be the ultimate two for one deal. Some prolonged time with God, lets us signal to him that we value him and want to grow closer to him. And a good chunk of time with him actually gives us some of the rest and perspective on life from him that we desperately need.

This Advent, where do you need to structure in some additional rest? To find some extra time alone and in the quiet to spend with God? To be able to take a breather from "Christmas" in order to not miss the wonder, mystery, and celebration of God being with us? My prayers is that you will find such a time this month!

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

Sunday Worship in December

- *December 2—Isaiah 2:1-5, "The Lion, the Witch, & the Wardrobe: Walk in the Light"
Celebration of the Lord's Supper; First Sunday of Advent- Hope
- *December 9—Isaiah 55:1-12, "The Lion, the Witch, & the Wardrobe: A Feast with a Name"
Second Sunday of Advent- Love
- *December 16—Isaiah 35, "The Lion, the Witch, & the Wardrobe: Spring Thaw"
Third Sunday of Advent- Joy
- *December 23—Isaiah 9:1-7, "The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe: Aslan's Name"
Fourth Sunday of Advent- Peace
- *December 30—Guest Preacher
- *January 6—John 6:25-40, "Pictures of Jesus: Bread of Life"
Celebration of the Lord's Supper

MERRY CHRISTMAS!	DATE	NURSERY
	December 2	Tammy Biddix & Kimberly Morrison
	December 9	Melody Caldwell & Sue Lewis
	December 16	Vicky Holeman & Martha Simmons
	December 23	Shelly Grigg & Allison Jones
	December 30	Sara Elliott & Jan Painter



UNION'S CHRISTMAS CORNER

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).

The Advent Season

In worship this Advent Season, we will be exploring some of the promises fulfilled by Christ from the book of Isaiah and how they tie to C. S. Lewis' story, "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe." During worship our Children's messages will include a retelling of parts of this story and after each worship service ushers will have a small "gift" for everyone that connects the C.S. Lewis' story to our Scripture in Isaiah.

Children's Christmas Nativity Program

Like previous years, on Sunday December 23 we will be showcasing our children and youth's acting and musical ability in a special Children Christmas Program before worship. The musical rehearsals for the children will be from 9:45-10:00 am during Sunday School music time. Please make sure your elementary children 3rd through 5th grades come out for the month of December to learn the music. During Children's Church each Sunday the children will be rehearsing the drama portion of the play. Then join us at 9 AM on Sunday, December 23 for breakfast and a great Children's Nativity program.

Lingerfeldt Wrapping

On Thursday, December 13th, beginning at 8 AM, Lingerfeldt School will be wrapping presents. Volunteers are needed to help wrap Christmas gifts (provided by St. Michaels) for children to give to their parents. Please come and help if you can! There is no special training or school approval necessary! Please sign up in the Rotunda by Sunday, December 9.

Adult Cantata

Join us at 6 PM on Sunday, December 16 for our Adult Choir Christmas cantata, "The Greatest Story Ever Told." If possible, please bring a pick-up for food and fellowship for after the cantata. Come and join us as we worship.

Christmas Caroling

We will go caroling on Sunday, December 23rd. Please meet here at the church at 2:30 PM if you would like to participate. Let's bring some Christmas joy for some of our nearby assisted living facilities and church shut-ins!

Christmas Eve Service

Please note our special Christmas Eve service at 8 PM on Monday, December 24th. 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.





Golden Girls

The Golden Girls Circle will meet on Thursday, December 6 at 11:30 AM at Amber Jacks. Please join us for a great time of fellowship and some really good food.

Men of the Church

On Wednesday, December 5 at 7 PM, the Men of the Church will have a Council meeting. They will also be packing for the Back Pack Food Program during this time.

On Saturday, December 15, the men will be meeting at the church at 8:30 AM and taking the bus to breakfast and then distributing Christmas baskets.

The Men of the Church Christmas dinner will be held on Tuesday, December 18 at 6 PM. The men will be voting in new officers for the 2019 year and voting for the Man of the Year award. Bus transportation will be provided from the church and pick-ups and drop-offs at folks homes as requested.

Happy Years

On Wednesday, December 12 at 12 PM, Happy Years will meet for lunch and some great fellowship. Please bring some of your favorite party foods like sausage balls, chips, sandwiches, fruit, fudge, cookies, etc., to share. Come join us no matter what age you are. Contact Kathy Kytle if you have any questions.

Sunday School

During the Advent Season our regular Sunday School program will be interrupted on December 2 for the making of the Advent wreath and December 23 for our Children's program. Sunday School will run as usual the other Sundays of December.

Church Office Closed

The Church office will be closed from Monday, December 24 through Tuesday, January 1 for the holidays and vacations.

Presbytery of WNC Delegation to Malawi

There are two possible date: May 17 - May 31, 2019 & June 14 - June 28, 2019. These trip offer a two week service opportunity as those involved work alongside our friends at Nkhoma Hospital, Ebenezer School and the Nkoma Synod. Applications can be downloaded at presbyterywnc.org, and the deadline for submission is December 31, 2018.

FFF Taco Bell

Thank you for all who came to the C & T Committee's Taco Bell lunch. Over \$200 was raised and the bell is now working. Our next Faithful Fellowship with Food takes place on December 23 as the SOC provides breakfast at 9 AM before the Children's Nativity play. Please join us!



FROM THE SESSION



November 28, 2018

Dear Union Presbyterian Church family,

For many years, Union Presbyterian Church has maintained a lengthy and fruitful relationship with Montreat Youth Conference. On July 21-28, 2018, thirteen of our middle and high school youth, and three youth leaders, along with our Pastor (who was present for part of the week) headed to the conference filled with excitement and anticipation. Unfortunately, the week did not meet the expectations that they had anticipated.

On Wednesday, July 25th, a sermon was presented on Matthew 15:21-28, the story of Jesus' interaction with the Canaanite woman. This is a challenging scripture to teach, but during the sermon, the conference Pastor stated that before Jesus came across the woman, he was tired, and perhaps due to this fact, he was in the wrong by being verbally offensive and insulting to the woman (sinful). She then extolled the virtue of the Canaanite woman. This view on Jesus directly contradicts eight of our twelve Confessions from our Book of Confessions which specifically express the theological significance that although Jesus was human, He did not sin.

The Montreat Youth Conference's Goal Statement claims to "strive to be an inclusive place where each voice can be heard and where each heart can be molded; where change is invited, challenge is expected, and where all are embraced." In the interest of "inclusivity where all are embraced," there seemed to be only one perspective in evidence during the conference; a "progressive perspective." We do not believe a youth conference is the place to mold the attendees into a particular political belief system, but to bring people closer to Christ and in line with Christ's teachings.

Other elements presented by conference speakers during that week seemed to amplify the importance of humanity, while at the same time Jesus seemed to be largely "missing in action" within the context of the messages. Needless to say, our Pastor, youth leaders and youth returned to Gastonia disappointed, disheartened, confused and angry.

As a result, Pastor James and the members of Session, have initiated a number of written and verbal communications to the Montreat Youth Conference leadership, the Presbytery of Western North Carolina leadership, and the National Capital Presbytery leadership (the Presbytery from which the Pastor who presented the July 25th sermon came). Within these communications, we stated that because of the numerous disheartening events that transpired during the 2018 Montreat Youth Conference, we have unanimously agreed that we must discontinue our support of our youth's attendance at future Montreat Youth Conferences unless/until certain conditions are met.

Copies of those letters will be posted on the sanctuary bulletin board for your review. If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with Pastor James and/or a member of Session.

Sincerely

Claire Cabral on behalf of Session



Financial Report October 31, 2018

	<u>October</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Revenue	\$18,264	\$173,079
Expenses	<u>15,072</u>	<u>189,725</u>
	3,192	- 16,646

Monthly Budget Requirements \$18,478

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.

PRESBYTERY PRAYER CALENDAR

December 2 Good Hope
P. O. Box 784
Kings Mountain, NC 28086
goodhopepresbyterian@yahoo.com

December 9 Grace Covenant
789 Merrimon Avenue
Asheville, NC 28804
office@gcpcusa.org

December 16 Grassy Creek
167 Greenlee Lane
Spruce Pine, NC 28777

December 23 Green Mountain
P. O. Box 36
Green Mountain, NC 28740
elwe8@aol.com

December 30 Tryon
430 Harmon Field Road
Tryon, NC 28782
tpreschurch@windstream.net



May your *Home* be warm,
your *Holidays* grand,
& may your *Heart* be
held gently in the Lord's hands.





SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 11 AM Holiday Party & Auction
2 8:30 AM MOC 9 AM WOC COMMUNION 2:30 PM SOC 4 PM Lion, Witch, Wardrobe	3 7 PM Betty Kendrick Circle	4 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM C&T 7 PM B&G	5 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	6 11:30 AM Golden Girls Amber Jacks	7	8
9 9 AM W & C 2:30 PM W & S McAdenville Hayride	10 5:30 PM Finance Committee	11 10 AM Bible Study	12 12 PM Happy Years 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	13 8 AM Gift Wrapping Lingerfeldt	14	15 9 AM Men of the Church Christmas Care Basket
16 2:30 PM Session 6 PM Christmas Cantata	17	18 10 AM Bible Study 6:30 PM Men of the Church	19 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	20 4 PM Bingo at Terrace Ridge	21	22
23 9 AM Breakfast & Children's Play 2:30 PM Caroling	24 8 PM Service 	25 	26	27	28 Union Youth Christmas Party	29
CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED FOR HOLIDAYS & VACATIONS						
30 PASTOR ON VACATION	31				<u>Each Sunday</u> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11 AM Worship	<u>Each Sunday</u> 4 PM Youth

Union Presbyterian Church

5615 Union Road
Gastonia, NC 28056
Phone: 704-864-7681

E-mail:

unionpc5615@gmail.com

www.unionpresbyterianchurch.com

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



Non-Profit Organization

U.S. Postage Paid

Permit No. 8

Return Service Requested

SAVE THE DATES

December 2

Advent Wreath Workshop

December 9

The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe

December 16

McAdenville Hayride

December 23

Joy Gift Cantata

December 24

Children's Program

Christmas Eve Service