



“As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
 -1 Peter 2:4-5

Dear Members and Friends of Union Presbyterian Church,

One phrase that was central during the Protestant Reformation was the idea of the “priesthood of all believers.” I wonder if sometimes today, this phrase does not hold the same importance to us that it once did to the Protestant Church. When you think of fellow followers of Christ, is the first thing that comes to your mind... “priest?” I’ll be honest, the first thing that comes to my mind when I hear the word is a catholic priest wearing that special white collar. If I’m thinking about the priests of the Old Testament, usually my mind imagines a group of individuals in the temple sacrificing animals on behalf of the Israelites to make them clean before God. With the word “priest,” I also sometimes find myself thinking about Hebrews 4-5, & 8-9, which describes Jesus as our high priest who made the ultimate sacrifice for us all.

If these examples are all we think about when we imagine the “priesthood,” then it would make sense why we don’t often think of ourselves or our fellow believers as “priests” or “priestesses” very often. If I don’t wear a collar, if all the priests of the Old Testament did was sacrifice animals in temples, and if the temple is now in us and Jesus is all the sacrifice we need, why is being part of the “priesthood” of God even important?

In the book “Created to Draw Near: Our Life as God’s Royal Priests,” Edward T. Welch argues that the first place we should look in Scripture that talks about the priesthood is not the priests of the Temple, but Adam and Eve in the Garden. Welch explains how Eden was like the first temple and Adam and Eve were called to work in that Garden like the priests were called to work in the temple. But most importantly, just like priests were set apart to work beside God in his presence, Adam and Eve walked with and enjoyed the presence of God.

After sin entered the world, God eventually established the tabernacle and the priesthood from Aaron and the tribe of Levi, to work on behalf of all Israel. The priests participated in special purification rites so that they would be holy and able to eat, work, and serve God so close to “The Most Holy Place” in the Temple where God himself dwelled. The temple was not just thought of as “the place to sacrifice and worship” but as God’s house. The role of the priest (particularly before the time of Israel’s kings) were not only about helping those in Israel who were unclean to become clean, but also to care for the weak, the orphaned, the widow, and the poor, and to be stewards of the gifts given to God.

[continued on next page]

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Worship in May	2
Honoring Sherry Maples Sunday School	3
Inquiring Minds Cemetery News Thank You’s	4
Church News	5
Church Finances Celebrations Presbytery Prayer Calendars	6
Calendar	7
Insert: Invitation Presbytery Corner	

May Elders
Inside

Faye Harrell
Kim Lee
Frank Suggs

Opening & Closing

Jason Cabe
Jennifer Nelson

Session
May 16

Day of Pentecost
May 23

[continued from previous page]

Is it any different for us today? By faith we have come to understand that we are made holy because of the work of Christ. Our bodies themselves are the temple (the dwelling place of God, the Holy Spirit). And we have the same call as the priests of the Old Testament: to praise God and enjoy being in his presence, to invite others to draw closer to him, and to bless the needy in our midst. You and I **ARE** part of the priesthood of all believers. I think that there is something exciting about thinking of ourselves as priests and priestesses. There is a challenge in that role too, isn't there!?! Let each of us live unto our call as part of the priesthood of the Lord this Spring!

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

Worship During May

During the month of May we encourage you to join us for one new sermon series and then start another new one! First, we will explore Scriptures that tie together in a series we are calling, "*Coming Together & Leaving.*" On the church calendar Ascension Sunday (when we remember Jesus triumphant return to heaven) and Pentecost Sunday (when we remember the coming of the Holy Spirit), are always near one another. It makes sense, Christ himself said that he needed to leave so that the gift of the Holy Spirit could come. Join us as we explore more closely how these 2 events are closely linked together and can help us envision what life in Christ should look like.

Then on May 30, we will begin a new series which looks at how God invites us into relationship with him. "*The Invitation is in the Mail,*" so we hope that you will join us!

New Sermon Series: Coming Together & Leaving- Ascension & Pentecost

May 2; Genesis 11: 1-9, "Shaken not Stirred"

-Celebration of the Lord's Supper

May 9; John 17: 6-26, "Family Reunion"

-Mother's Day

May 16; Psalm 2, "Coronation Day"

-Ascension Sunday

May 23; Joel 2:25-32, "Rush, Rush"

-Pentecost Sunday

New Sermon Series: The Invitation is in the Mail

May 30; Luke 14:12-24, "The Invitation is in the Mail...

Who's on the Return Address?"

-Trinity Sunday; Memorial Day Weekend



With Sadness & Joy- Honoring Sherry Maples' Service at Union

For those who have not heard, at the April 18th Session meeting a letter of resignation from Sherry Maples was presented to Session. Sherry Maples' last Sunday as Director of Music for Union Church will be **May 30th**. On the one hand, this is incredibly sad news for us. Sherry has served faithfully at Union for over 17 years. She has led worship, directed our adult choir, and worked with our children (some of whom are now adults)! She is a valuable part of the church family and has been with us for so many of our ups and downs over the years. But most of all, she has become such a good friend to so many of us.

But its hard to also not be filled with joy at this news as well. Sherry is leaving in part because she is blessed that her other job is so successful (and taking up more of her time than it used to). She is looking forward to have more time to be Grandma and to be able to do a bit more with her parents and family. Although it is hard that Sherry will be stepping away as music director, it's wonderful to hear that she's planning to continue to make Union her church home. Besides, you can't help but look back on Sherry's many years of service here and what she's helped lead at the church without being filled with joy! What is your favorite Children's Christmas program? What is your favorite VBS song, adult Cantata, or choir anthem? What is your favorite new song that you learned during Sherry's tenure here at Union? Sherry's resignation is sad but it's hard to not also feel joy thinking about what she has been a part of here and for what she is resigning to be able to spend more time doing!



On Sherry's last **Sunday, May 30th**, we are going to spend part of our service honoring her work. At both the **9AM** and **11AM** service the choir will be performing two of their favorite numbers. The choir will be hard at work at **7PM, May 12, 19, and 26**, preparing those songs and spending some time singing other favorites with Sherry. We encourage both past and present choir members to come and be a part of these rehearsals. We are hoping that May 30th will be a wonderful tribute Sunday!

Also, we hope that you will mark your calendars for a special celebration that we are planning for Sherry. A special "**Thank You Banquet**" for Sherry will be held on **Sunday, June 6**, at Martha Rivers Park (Pavilion 1) starting at **5PM**. We hope it will be a wonderful time of food and fellowship. As well as a way to celebrate Sherry's work... especially in a situation when mere words can't say thank you well enough!

Let us keep Sherry in our prayers and wish her well this month as she prepares for the next chapter of her walk with Christ, and keep Union's Search Committee in our prayers as they begin the search for a new music director for the church.

Children, Youth, & Adult Sunday School Return to Union

Sunday School is coming back to Union! Starting **Sunday, May 2**, we will have **1 class for children, 1 class for youth, and 1 class for adults**. All 3 classes will meet at **10 AM** (between our outdoor and indoor services). The youth class will be in the youth building. But because we are still trying to remain socially distant, the children and adult class will meet inside our main building in a room based on the number who attend. Children will likely be in the larger adult classroom downstairs. Adults may end up meeting in the gathering area, the other adult classroom, or the fellowship hall (again based on numbers). Please be patient with us as we figure out these first few weeks which classrooms will work best!

Throughout the month of May, we will have both inside Sunday School during the **10 AM** hour for all ages, and will continue the Westminster class for all at **4:30 PM** (with children and youth arriving at **4:00 PM**). We hope that you will join us for both!!



Inquiring Minds Want to Know!

During the month of May, we invite you to be on the lookout for a questionnaire about Sunday Worship as Session ponders the pros, cons, and timing to moving back to 1 indoor service. Worship & Commitment wants input from you! For example, for those who continue to participate in the outdoor services, we want to hear what keeps you at this time and place and what would make you more comfortable moving inside again. Over the last year, we've had worship at 9AM, 10AM, and 11AM. W&C wants to hear your thoughts about what you think might be the best time for worship moving forward. Also, we wonder if there are some parts of worship that we used to do that you have missed during the Pandemic. Have there been aspects of worship that we have done differently this last year that you have enjoyed and wish we would carry on periodically? We hope that you will take time to fill out this survey when it is sent out in a few weeks!

Cemetery News

The columbarium for our church cemetery is scheduled to be delivered and set up in August. It will be located near the "old cemetery" area where it will be visible from our parking lot and Union Road. It will have 48 niches on each side (east and west) for a total of 96 niches. A niche is a display vault in a wall or structure specifically designed to hold cremation urns. Each of these niches will be able to contain two urns. The Cemetery Committee is currently deciding on standards, rules, and prices for the columbarium niches plus a review of cemetery lots and prices. There will be more information in the June newsletter. If you have questions, please contact any of the Cemetery Committee members; Billy Jones, Kathy Kytte, Glenn Sparrow, Brice Thompson Jr., and Billy Wilson

Thank You

Dear Church Family,

Thank you so much for your prayers, calls, cards and kind words expressed to our family after the passing of my dad. We are so very blessed to have such a wonderful, loving and caring church family. You all mean so much to us. Special thank you to the Men of the Church for the delicious meal brought to us after the funeral. Thank you again. We love you all!! Love, Billy & Allison Jones

To the Men & Women of Union Presbyterian,

Thank you all for your prayers, comforting calls, cards and kind thoughts. Thank you for providing 2 meals and the use of the extra chairs and a table. The food was delicious. Thanks to those who mowed the yard prior to Jim's (Dotson) return home from the hospital and the group who repaired the fascia board a few months ago. May God bless you all! Lorene Ward (Jim's Sister)

Dear Friends at Union

Thank you for the delicious meal you provided our family in memory of our mother, Margaret Ratchford. We have many fond memories of Union Church as did our mother. Serving Christ, Libby Ratchford Reese



Baby Bottle Blessings!

Some babies never have the chance to celebrate Mother's Day with their Mom! Some Mothers struggle to provide their babies with basic necessities. Crisis Pregnancy Center of Gaston County exists to: 1) give every baby the opportunity to live! 2) give every Mom help providing basic supplies for their baby. The "Baby Bottle Blessings" Campaign helps fund both of these! If you would like to join the Women of the Church in assisting this ministry, beginning **Mother's Day, May 9**, baby bottles will be available at both outside and inside services as well as in the red barrel at the main entrance to the church. If you would rather simply make a donation, please mark your donation for **Baby Bottle Blessings**. The bottles will need to be turned in to the church on **Father's Day, June 20**.

Pardon Our Mess

Session approved at last month's meeting for the Worship & Commitment and Communication & Technology Committees to move the sound system to the back of the Sanctuary in the place of the last pew. This move gets the sound equipment out of the choir loft and allows for the streaming of the worship services. The remainder of the area where the pew was sitting will have chairs reserved for those with back pain or mobility issues. This transition will take some time, so please be patient with us. If you have any questions, please speak with Tim Grigg or Kim Lee.

Loaves & Fishes

The Loaves & Fishes Store will be open throughout the month of May. We will be offering a variety of goods to support our local Crisis Assistance Ministry. The Loaves & Fishes store will be open immediately after the 9 AM outdoor worship and again after the 11 AM indoor worship service. If you have any questions, please see Mickie Nelson or Rita Jumper.



Quilt Fundraiser

We will have a quilt fundraiser with all proceeds going to the **Blessing Box** at Stephen's Stump. See the beautiful quilt hanging in the Gathering area. There will be 200 tickets available and each ticket is available for the cost of \$10. Please feel free to buy as many tickets as you like to give you an opportunity to win this beautiful quilt!



**FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF
MARCH 2021**

	<u>March</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Revenue	\$17,866	\$84,087
Expenses	<u>21,734</u>	<u>88,788</u>
	-3,868	-4,701

Monthly Budget Requirements \$18,958

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 Jason Morrison, Treasurer.



Presbytery Prayer Calendar

Together We Pray



- May 2 Banner Elk, P.O. Box 158, Banner Elk, NC 28604, BePresChurch@skybest.com
- May 9 Belmont First, P.O. Box 1, Belmont, NC 28012, ssmith@fpc-belmont.org
- May 16 Bessemer City First, P.O. Box 365, Bessemer City, NC 28016
- May 23 Black Mountain, P.O. Box 39, Black Mountain, NC 28711,
info@bdrpcdenise@citcom.org
- May 30 Brevard-Davidson River, 249 East Main Street, Brevard, NC 28712,
bdrpcdenise@citcom.net



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2 10 AM Sunday School 12 AM W & C 2:30 PM SOC 4 PM W & S 4 PM Children & Youth 4:30 PM Westminster Class All Ages	3	4 10 AM Bible Study	5	6 6 PM C & T NO Choir Rehearsal	7	8
9 10 AM Sunday School 4 PM Children & Youth 4:30 PM Westminster Class All Ages	10	11 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM B & G	12 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	13	14	15
16 10 AM Sunday School 2:30 PM Session 4 PM Children & Youth 4:30 PM Westminster Class All Ages	17	18 10 AM Bible Study	19 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	20	21	22
23 10 AM Sunday School 4 PM Children & Youth 4:30 PM Westminster Class All Ages	24	25 10 AM Bible Study	26 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	27	28	29
30 10 AM Sunday School 4 PM Children & Youth 4:30 PM Westminster Class All Ages	31					

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

June 6
July 26-30

Celebration-Martha Rivers Park
Vacation Bible School