



Dear Members and Friends of Union Presbyterian Church,

Having just come back from a trip to Washington State to visit family over the holidays there is one thing I can say with all certainty: getting ready to leave is the pits! You have to pack, make sure that the children have packed, check the weight limits of the bags, and make sure you don't have any of the restricted items in anyone's carry on. Because it was the holidays I had to also make sure that I had all the gifts I needed to bring for family, and wrapping paper to wrap those gifts. The whole time there's this running list in the back of my head of all the things I can't forget: don't forget to preregister for the plane tickets, double check when the plane leaves and if it's on time, and make sure you have your driver's license, ask if the kids remembered their bathroom bag and if Jack has his toothbrush and if Fiona has her favorite stuffed animal, and sometimes you need to remember to lock the doors, change the home thermostat, and put a hold on the newspaper and mail... It's enough to drive anyone crazy! Departing is no fun!!!

Getting ready to come home isn't any easier. As we were frantically running around trying to get ready to return to North Carolina early New Year's Day, my dad put down his paper as he sat on his recliner and just started laughing. He said, "You guys are hilarious! I'm just going to watch you run around. You are more entertaining than anything in this paper or on TV." Thanks dad.

Departing is no fun. It is work. It is hard. But we do it and we don't complain... well at least not too much... because the place we are going is worth it. It's worth it to see family far away, or to get some time for vacation, or to go on that business trip (in order to keep getting paid by your work). It's worth it to meet new people or see new places or even to return to special places you haven't been to in years. Departing may be the pits but arriving makes it all worth it.

The same is true when it comes to our walk with Christ. Taking that next step of faith with Christ is hard, but finding yourself a little closer to God is totally worth it. It is so easy for our relationships with God to begin feeling a little stagnant, stale, or stuck. Our connection with God can begin to feel a bit adrift and our prayer life can get stuck in a rut. Usually the biggest problem for faith is inertia. Our Christian life is always a journey. It always requires us to take new steps of faith: to love someone new who is challenging, to trust God when life suddenly takes a curve, to bring the gospel to someone that God puts in our path for a time, to help out in that new ministry that is suddenly in front of us, to discover new ways to serve God as we age and can no longer serve him like we used to. And every single time those first steps of departure from where we are currently at are hard, but they are worth it and necessary for us to continue to have a vibrant faith and growing relationship with God.

In the first chapter of his book, "Letters to the Church", Francis Chan writes all about what it looks like to leave while walking with Christ.

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#### **Elders for January**

Jason Cabe  
Don Chilton  
Junior Thompson

#### **Faithful Fellowship with Food**

Sunday, January 13

#### **GAP Meeting at Union**

January 14

#### **Prayer & Healing Mini Service**

January 20

#### **Presbytery Meeting in Gastonia**

January 26

#### **Session Retreat**

January 27

(continued from page 1)

Years after starting up a new church that became a successful megachurch, Chan and his family suddenly felt like they weren't doing what God wanted for them and weren't doing church as God desired, so they left to do church work in Asia. Chan now finds himself back in the States, leading church in a very different way than he did before. The book, *Letters to the Church*, is really all about what "departure" looks like. Chan writes that making these kind of changes in our lives, in our relationships with God, and in our churches can often seem overwhelming, stressful, and like an "insurmountable burden." But Chan argues that we don't have to feel this way. These kind of changes are exactly what God wants. He continues.

[God] is not placing an insurmountable burden on your shoulders. He is asking you to fellowship with Him and join Him in what He is doing. We should be filled with faith and anticipation, remembering what He did at the Red Sea and the empty tomb. Take a deep breath. Lay all your stress at His feet.

During 2018, a small group from our church became involved in a program called PneuMatrix. PneuMatrix is just a fancy made up word that connects "the way we are doing things," to something "new," done in the "Spirit." Faye Harrell, Billy Jordan, Eric Nelson, Kathy Kytle, Larry Meek, David Lawson, Ron Sawyer, and myself have been meeting monthly with a Christian consultant to explore what new directions the Holy Spirit may be blowing Union Church toward (while not losing the essentials of what makes Union special). The program is nearing its end and in the next few months there will be many opportunities for you to read and hear about what has been discussed. But all of us should know right from the get go, that whatever ideas have been prayerfully considered, even if they are really amazing ideas, will be hard. Not because the ideas are impossible or insurmountable. But because they will be a departure or step in a new direction. Inertia is always easy. The next step of faith is always harder than standing still. But that next step is necessary for a vibrant faith and growing relationship with God.

In the book, *The Way of the Wolf*, Martin Bell writes a poem about the challenges facing the church in it's quest to follow God. In a very tongue-in-cheek way, Bell wonders if God is getting tired with all the work he has to put in trying to wrangle all of his followers. If God was more like us and less like him, I'm pretty sure he would be exhausted! Anytime I think about what it means to take steps of faith, Bell's poem comes to mind. I hope you enjoy it on the following page.

Sincerely in Christ,

Pastor James

## **Worship for January**

How do you picture Jesus? When you think of him, what are some of the images that come to mind? Join us for worship during the month of January and part of February, as we explore some of the images Scripture uses to show us what Jesus is like.

January 6- John 6:25-40, "Pictures of Jesus: Bread of Life," *Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

January 13- Matthew 2:13-21, "Pictures of Jesus: King"

January 20- Ezekiel 34: 1-10, "Pictures of Jesus: Shepherd," *MLK Weekend*

January 27- John 2:1-11, "Pictures of Jesus: Miracle Worker"

February 3- John 1:29-39, "Pictures of Jesus: Lamb," *Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

February 10- John 13:1-17, "Pictures of Jesus: Footwasher"

## GOD'S RAG-TAG ARMY

by Martin Bell (poem from the book, *The Way of the Wolf*)

I think God must be very old and very tired. Maybe he used to look splendid and fine in his general's uniform, but no more. He's been on the march a long time, you know. And look at his rag-tag little army! All he has for soldiers are you and me. Dumb little army. Listen! The drum beat isn't even regular. Everyone is out of step. And there! You see? God keeps stopping along the way to pick up one of his tinier soldiers who decided to wander off and play with a frog, or run in a field, or whose foot got tangled in the underbrush. He'll never get anywhere that way. And yet, the march goes on.

Do you see how the marchers have broken up into little groups? Look at that group up near the front. Now, there's a snappy outfit. They all look pretty much alike-at least they're in step with each other. That's something! Only they're not wearing their shoes. They're carrying them in their hands. Silly little band. They won't get far before God will have to stop again.

Or how about that other group over there? They're all holding hands as they march. The only trouble with this is the people at each end of the line. Pretty soon they realize that one of their hands isn't holding onto anything-one hand is reaching, empty, alone. And so they hold hands with each other, and everybody marches around in circles. The more people holding hands, the bigger the circle. And, of course, a bigger circle is deceptive because as we march along it looks like we're going someplace, but were not. And so God must stop again.

You see what I mean? He'll never get anywhere that way! If God were more sensible he'd take his little army and shape them up. Why, whoever heard of a soldier stopping to romp in a field? It's ridiculous. But even more absurd is a general who will stop the march of eternity to go and bring the soldier back. But that's God for you. His is no endless, empty marching. He is going somewhere. His steps are deliberate and purposeful. He may be old and he may be tired, but he knows where he's going. And he means to take every last one of his tiny soldiers with him. Only there aren't going to be any forced marches. And, after all, there are frogs and flowers, and thorns and underbrush along the way. And even though our foreheads have been singed with the sign of the cross, we are only human. And most of us are afraid and lonely and would like to hold hands or cry or run away. And we don't know where we are going, and we can't seem to trust God- especially when it's dark out and we can't see him! And he won't go on without us. And that's why it's taking so long.

Listen! The drum beat isn't even regular. Everyone is out of step. And there! You see? God keeps stopping along the way to pick up one of his tinier soldiers who decided to wander off and play with a frog, or run in a field, or whose foot got tangled in the underbrush. He'll never get anywhere that way! And yet, the march goes on...



DATE	NURSERY	CHILDREN'S CHURCH
January 6	Twilah Jordan & Kimberly Morrison	Shelly Grigg & Amanda Viola
January 13	Vicky Holeman & Mickie Nelson	Faye Harrell & Kimberly Morrison
January 20	Sue Lewis & Martha Simmons	Jennifer & Eric Nelson
January 27	Shelly Grigg & Allison Jones	Kim Chilton & Vicky Holeman

# NEWS

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## *From Our Church*

### January's FFF

Sunday, January 13, immediately after worship service, the Building & Grounds Committee will present an Faithful Fellowship with Food luncheon. Please join us for good food and some pretty great fellowship.



### GAP Meeting at Union

On Monday, January 14, we will be hosting a GAP meeting.

You are invited to join us for this meeting and some light refreshments after.

### Happy Years

We invite you to join us on Wednesday, January 16 at 12:00 PM for the Happy Years luncheon and fellowship. Last month we had to cancel because of bad weather. This meeting, we invite you to 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.

### Bingo at Terrace Ridge

Please join us for the ministry of Bingo at Terrace Ridge on Thursday, January 17 at 4 PM. Volunteers are needed and you will receive more blessing than you can give. Please contact Nancy Gardner if you have any questions.

### Prayer & Healing Service

Following worship on January 20, we invite you to join us for our Faith & Healing Service. We will gather in the prayer room (across the hall from the Sanctuary) 5 minutes or so after worship (just long enough for parents to pick up children or choir members to return their robes). The service will be 10-15 minutes long and will be an opportunity to pray for our world, our community, and our friends, family, and neighbors. For those who desire, there will be an opportunity to receive personal prayers of help or healing, and for those who wish the chance to be anointed with oil. If the group of those of us joining together in prayer is too large, we will move into the Sanctuary. We hope to see you there.

### Presbytery Meeting

The first Presbytery of Western North Carolina meeting of 2019 will be held on Saturday, January 26 at First Presbyterian Church, 1621 E Garrison Blvd, Gastonia, NC 28054. This meeting is close! You may want to check it out.

### Kirkin of the Tartan

Our celebration and luncheon are planned for Sunday, February 24. If you are interested in displaying your family tartan but don't currently have one, or the one you have is in disrepair, now is the time to order a new one and/or repair the old one.



God has so blessed me with being part of the staff at Union Presbyterian and for making all of you "church family" to me. Thank you so very much for the Christmas bonus, the flowers, the cards and gifts you have bestowed upon me. You are truly my Brothers & Sisters in Christ. Love, Nancy

I feel blessed to be a part of this church family. Thank you, Sherry

Thank you for all behind the scenes help keeping things clean, your patience, and the wonderful bonus this Christmas. Jason Morrison

It has been a wonderful Christmas season! Thank you so much for your kindness and prayers. Your gifts, cards, and well wishes have truly been a blessing during a busy time of the year! May you all be blessed in your walk with Christ and as you serve him in his grace and care. Love, Pastor James and Family



## Thank You Letters from Lingerfeldt Angel Tree

Thank You So much for helping  
bring joy to our children this  
Christmas. It is appreciated from the  
bottom of our Hearts.

Thank You

Merry  
Christmas

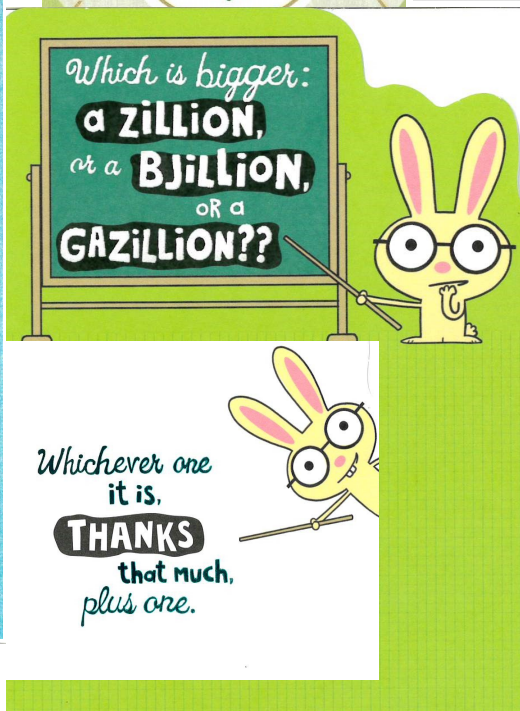
#100

Some people  
have a gift  
for bringing  
happiness  
to others.

...straight from my heart.

Words can't explain  
how thankful we are  
for your blessing.

Thanks  
Sarah S.



Pablo Marcos  
grasias por esta Navidad  
y por los regalos y  
Feliz Navidad y Prospero  
año nuevo. ♥

Thank you for  
the Christmas  
Gifts. I wish you  
a happy Christmas  
and a good new  
year.

♥

Can't thank you enough.

Sending you heartfelt wishes  
for a wonderful holiday season  
and a happy new year!

Our little family is so  
happy that you are helping us  
this holiday season I cannot  
expressed how truly grateful  
I am for the chance to have  
someone so kindhearted help  
with Christmas. May you be  
blessed for all your days and  
I pray nothing more than for  
your happiness. Thank you so  
much ♥







## Financial Report November 30, 2018

	<u>November</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Revenue	\$21,816	\$194,895
Expenses	<u>17,905</u>	<u>207,630</u>
	3,911	- 12,735

**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.



- January 6      **Union**  
5615 Union Road  
Gastonia, NC 28056  
unionpc5615@gmail.com
- January 13    **Union Mill**  
2378 Centennial Road  
Union Mills, NC 28167  
ksward@blueridge.net
- January 20    **United**  
P. O. Box 1495  
Lenior, NC 28645  
office@unitedpclenior.net
- January 27    **Unity**  
8210 Unity Church Road  
Denver, NC 28037  
unity@unitypres.org



# JANUARY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		<b>1</b> Church Office Closed 	<b>2</b>  7 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b> 8:30 AM MOC 9 AM WOC COMMUNION 2:30 PM SOC	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> 10 AM Bible Study  6 PM C & T 7 PM B & G	<b>9</b>  7 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b> 9 AM W & C 2:30 W & S B & G 	<b>14</b>  7 PM GAP Meeting At Union	<b>15</b> 10 AM Bible Study	<b>16</b> 12 PM Happy Years 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>17</b>  4 PM Bingo at Terrace Ridge	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b> Prayer & Healing Mini Service  Session Retreat	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>  10 AM Bible Study	<b>23</b>  7 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>  10 AM Bible Study	<b>30</b>  7 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>31</b>	<u>Each Sunday</u> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11 AM Worship	<u>Each Sunday</u> 4 PM Youth

**Union Presbyterian Church**

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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

February 24  
March 10

Kirkin "O" the Tartans  
Daylight Savings Time Begins