



“When it comes to life the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude.”

“You say grace before meals. All right. But I say grace before the concert and the opera, and grace before the play and pantomime, and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing, and grace before I dip the pen in the ink.”

—G.K. Chesterton (various works)

Dear Friends and Members of Union Presbyterian Church,

Most nights, my family’s dinner time prayer is a song. We sometimes sing the Doxology, we might sing the Johnny Appleseed song, and we know a great version of “God is Great” sung in a 50’s rock style. Recently, we’ve learned a couple new ones. We now often pray “God is Great” to the theme of Jaws, with our folded hands looking suspiciously like sharks’ fins. On other nights we spread our arms like superheroes flying and sing “Thank You God For Giving Us Food” to the theme of the old Christopher Reeve Superman movie.

When Vicky and I started allowing these sorts of prayers at the dinner table, I have to admit that there was a part of me deep inside that reacted against it. A prayer should be quiet. A prayer should be holy. A prayer should be respectable to God. Does God want to hear a prayer sung to the tune of Superman?

One of my favorite verses of Scripture is Romans 15:13. The verse reads, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” This verse is packed with a ton of the most important ingredients of our faith: hope, joy, peace, trust in God, and the power of the Holy Spirit. It’s a great list! In my mind, the only ingredient missing is love!

But I have to admit that sometimes I am guilty of making “joy” the lesser of all these great words of faith. I think to myself— if I trust in God’s love, if I continue to hope in God, and if I live into the peace that God gives, THEN maybe I will experience more of that joy the Bible talks about. I rarely ask God for joy. I simply hope that joy will be a byproduct of a life of faith. I wonder if a lot of us go through life like that.

During seminary, one of my professors once wondered out loud if we really should call our “Prayers of Thanksgiving” or “Prayers of Praise” those names if we pray them without smiling or use that holy monotone prayer voice so many like. Is it really a prayer of praise if we aren’t filled with joy when we pray it? And that’s the real danger isn’t it? On the one hand we want to make sure our prayers are relevant. We want to make sure that our prayers are proclaiming truths about God. But shouldn’t we also want to make sure that our prayers also express the hope, the peace, the love, the trust, and even the joy we actually have in the Lord.

My family may be waving our arms while we pray/sing, “Thank you, God, for giving us food.” But in that prayer we are also acknowledging that it is God who ultimately gives us what we have, we are thanking him for both the food we eat and the people he has put in our lives. That’s makes it a pretty good prayer doesn’t it?

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November Elders

Sally McGinnis
Tim Grigg
Glenn Sparrow

Membership Meeting

November 15
Rain Date November 22

Stewardship Dedication

November 15 & 22

Stated Session

November 15

(continued from page 1)

And even more important, when it comes to dinner prayer time, our kids are all itching to be the one able to pick the prayer and lead it. At dinner time we've gone from asking (telling) someone to lead the prayer, to asking for volunteers, to having too many volunteers, to assigning the kids different days when they get to lead the prayer (and they are legitimately bummed when they miss their day). They are excited to pray.

Even though there is still a little part of me that cringes every time we "sing" a dinner prayer, it is a price I am willing to pay in order to help my kids connect the importance of prayer, showing gratitude to God, and having the joy of the Lord fill their hearts. And maybe.... just maybe, some of what I included from G.K. Chesterton at the beginning of these article might take more root in both in my kids' hearts and in my own heart. I want to have a joy-filled gratitude toward God that is expressed all day long. To truly give thanks from the very bottom of my heart before I eat, before I open a book, even before I get in the car—to experience true joy in the Lord all day long. What an incredible notion!!



Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

Worship in November

During the month of November, we will be exploring three themes during worship. First, in connection with All Saints Day and Veterans Day, we will be looking at lectionary passages from the book of Joshua. Let's find out what Joshua can teach us about God and how we might serve him with our whole heart. Then we will move to a short series that explores what it is about the Good News of the Gospel that is so good. We believe in a God who speaks to us... but what is God saying? Does God's message change? How can we get better at hearing it? Join us to explore these exciting questions!! Then on November 29, we will find ourselves in Advent with Christmas just around the corner. This year during Advent, we will be spending some time with the angels of Christmas and what those angels tell us about Christ and our relationship with God.

New Lectionary Series: Joshua and Those Who Have Gone Before Us

November 1; Joshua 3:7-17, "For Those Who Have Gotten Their Feet Wet"

-All Saints Day

November 8; Joshua 24: 1-3; 14-25, "For Those Who have Served"

-Veterans Day Sunday

New Sermon Series: God Speaks

November 15; Isaiah 53:1-12, Luke 24: 13-27, "The Message Doesn't Ever Change"

November 22; Acts 6:1-7, "So Let's Give Them Something to Talk About!"

-Christ the King Sunday

New Advent Series: Watching for Christmas Angels

November 29; Luke 1:5-25, "The Christmas Angels... Who Shake Us Up"



Westminster Catechism Class

Please note that on the Sunday of the Thanksgiving Service with Sandy Plains, **November 15** (or 22nd in case of rain), there will be **no Westminster Catechism Class**. We invite you to come join us for a truly unique worship experience with Sandy Plains!



Worship During the Pandemic

During November, Union plans to continue to have 3 different ways for you to worship with us. You can join us online using our interactive bulletin, worship with us outside at 9:00 AM, or come inside the Sanctuary at 11:00 AM (as long as Covid-19 cases do not get alarmingly high in our region). However, starting November our 9:00 AM outside service is going to look a little different.

First, because it is staying darker longer and our weather is getting more variable, our **9:00 AM service** will be held **in the parking lot this month** rather than behind the church. This will make set up easier, keep people from having to lug their chairs so far, and hopefully give everyone a slightly dryer spot to set up.

Secondly, as we move into Advent (and our weather becomes more winter-like), on **November 29 the length of our outdoor service will also shorten**. The service will begin to look more like an informal outdoor chapel service- with just a few songs led by guitar, a time of prayer, and a shortened message. The location of where we will meet outside and details of this service are still be worked out by the W&C committee and Session. If you have ideas about how you would like this service to look moving forward... please talk to Pastor James or Carol Beasley and Billy Jordan of the W&C Committee.

Joint Thanksgiving Service with Sandy Plains: Adoration In Verse

We are excited to announce that our combined Thanksgiving service with Sandy Plains has been scheduled. Each year this is such a fabulous opportunity for us to gather together, to remember our church's shared history, to connect with old friends, and to take some time out to remember some of all that we are thankful for.

Due to Covid-19, this year our Thanksgiving Service is going to need to look a little different. The service will be **outside at 3:00 PM** here at **Union on November 15**. The service will be **in front of the youth building** and like with our other outdoor services, you will need to bring a chair! In case of rain, the service will be held the following week on November 22. Pastor David of Sandy Plains and Pastor James will be sharing the pulpit as they explore some of the ways we can express our thankfulness to God that we may not think about very often! Join us for a wonderful afternoon of song, Scripture, prayer, celebration, and most importantly thankfulness to God!





Christmas Corner



Angels Among Us?



During Advent this year, our worship series will be focused on the angels of the Christmas story. The series is entitled “Watching for Christmas Angels.” As part of our worship services (online, outside, and inside), we would like to include something from your home in worship. Does your family have a special “Angel” Christmas decoration? Maybe you have an angel on top of your Christmas tree, maybe there is one that is part of a nativity scene, or you might even have a special angel that you display all year round.

W&C committee would like to be able to “show off” one of your special angel decorations this Christmas Season. We would like to take pictures of it for our online bulletin and show it on the screens during indoor worship. And if it your angel isn’t too “fragile” we would also love to be able to carefully borrow it one Sunday to display during one outside and inside service. Please contact Pastor James, Nancy in the front office, or Carol Beasley with the W&C Committee if you have an angel that you would be willing to share with us one Sunday. We will need at least one angel for November 29, December 6, December 13, & December 20.

Outdoor Nativity

Work has already begun to have an Outdoor Christmas Nativity at Union December 13 at 6:00 PM. The event will be held in the upper parking lot and you are invited to join us that evening in lawn chairs or even from your car! Our church choir will lead us in Christmas Carols, our children will act out the Nativity story, and even all of the those in attendance will be invited to bring a “bell” to ring at certain times during the evening. In case of rain this event will be held the following Sunday (December 20). Come join us for a wonderful evening as we experience the story of Christ’s coming in a unique way!

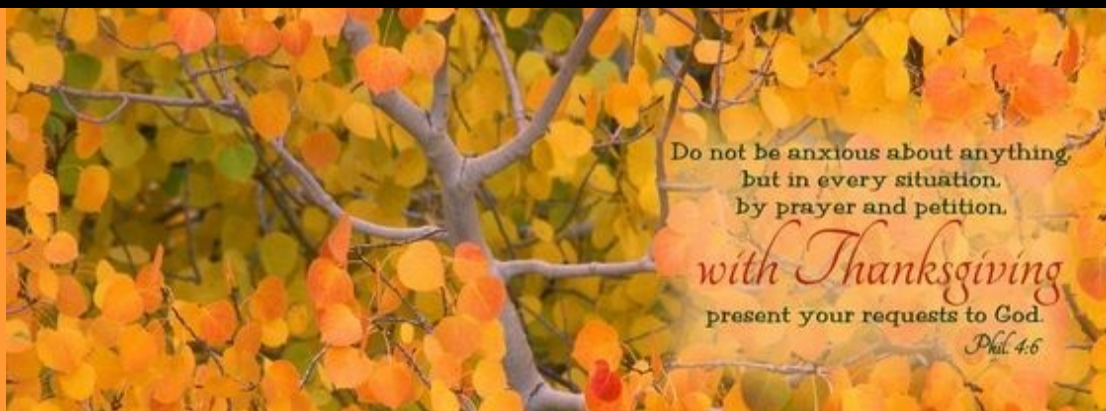


ADVENT DEVOTIONS

The Advent Season begins on Sunday, November 29th and this year the theme for Union’s Advent Devotional is *“A Season of Hope.”* Never has there been any greater need for HOPE in a society. In the midst of the global pandemic, the shut down of businesses and loss of jobs, civil unrest, fires and tropical storms and hurricanes, God’s Word has been steadfast and sure to remind us that we have HOPE regardless of the circumstances around us. God promised HOPE and He sent HOPE to the world in the form of Baby Jesus .

Advent presents us with a wonderful time to remember what the real reason is that we celebrate Christmas. It is a time to meditate on God’s Word to us and to share the HOPE that Jesus brought to mankind with others who so desperately need HOPE. This year Union’s Advent Devotional will not be in printed form but will be shared online at our webpage www.unionpresbyterianchurch.com, and on our Facebook page. Each Sunday we will share the main theme for the week and on each day of the week there will be a different reminder posted to enhance that theme. There will be pictures, songs, coloring pages and puzzles for children, videos, mission project (opportunities for us to share the HOPE), and prayers or poems. Let’s make this Christmas *“A Season of Hope,”* filled with the HOPE that Baby Jesus brought for us when He grew up, revealed His Father to us and died on a cross for our sins.

UNION CHURCH NEWS



CHOIR REHEARSAL

In preparation for Sunday's anthems and the Christmas season, the choir will rehearse every two weeks at 7 PM in the Fellowship Hall. Next rehearsal is November 11th.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

There will be a Congregation meeting on Sunday, November 15 at 10AM outside. If it rains, the Congregational meeting will be held on Sunday, November 22 outside. The purpose of this meeting is to elect new church officers.

VACATIONS & STUDY LEAVE

Pastor James will be a study leave from Monday, November 9 through Friday, November 13 and on vacation on Friday, November 27. Nancy Newman will be on vacation for the week of Thanksgiving, November 23-27.

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

The church office will be closed Monday through Friday, November 22 through November 27 in celebration of Thanksgiving and for vacation. May your Thanksgiving be filled with peace and joy!

BLESSING BOX

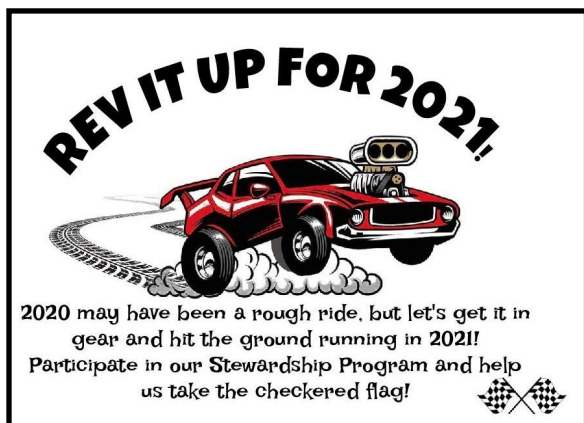
Thank you to all who have so graciously given to the Community Blessing Box. We will have continual need for items and they may be brought and put in the red barrel at the mail entrance of the church.

THE KINDNESS CHALLENGE

The Kindness Challenge for the next two week is beginning November 1 through November 14 will be to "Pay It Forward." You might pay for someone's food that is in line at a fast food restaurant or in the grocery line or drop some change off at a laundry mat for someone to use. Or you could do an ordinary chore for someone like rake leaves. So "Pay It Forward" and show the love of Christ in our community!

HELP!

We have received only a few articles for Union's Pandemic Project. Please email them to the church or bring them by and let's be a blessing to future generations by telling them how God sustained us during difficult times.



STEWARDSHIP DEDICATION SUNDAYS

This year we will have two opportunities for our Stewardship Dedication, Sunday, November 15 and Sunday, November 22. You should receive your letter and pledge card in the mail sometime during the first week of November. Mail has been a little slow so if you do not receive one, please call the church office and we will provide you with one. Please prayerfully consider what the Lord would have you do in your giving of time, talents and finances.



FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

	<u>September</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Revenue	\$21,732	\$159,512
Expenses	<u>17,421</u>	<u>155,808</u>
	4,311	3,704

Monthly Budget Requirements \$19,124

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.



November 1

Fletcher
P.O. Box 493
Newland, NC 28657
fairviewpresby@bellsouth.net

November 8

Forest City First
P.O. Box 181
Forest City, NC 28043
firstpresch.fc@fpc-franklin.org

November 15

Franklin First
26 Church Street
Franklin, NC 28734
churchoffice@fpc-franklin.org

November 22

Gastonia First
1621 East Garrison Blvd
Gastonia, NC 28054
jchilders@fpcgastonia.org

November 29

Glen Alpine
101 Horse Shoe Lane
Morganton, NC 280655

There is power in
persistent prayer.

Micah 7:7

PRESBYTERY PRAYER CALENDAR



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 All Saints' Day 4:30 PM Westminster	2	3 10 AM Bible Study Resumes	4	5	6	7
8 W & C Immediately after 9 AM-service 2:30 PM W & S 4:30 PM WC4E	9	10 6 PM C & T (Zoom) 6 PM B & G	11 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	12 3 PM Finance	13	14
	PASTOR ON STUDY LEAVE					
15  STEWARDSHIP DEDICATION CONGREGATIONAL MEETING 2:30 PM Session 4:30 PM WC4E	16	17 10 AM Bible Study	18	19	20	21
22  STEWARDSHIP DEDICATION Raindate/Cong. Mts 4:30 PM WC4E	23	24	25	26	27	28
	CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED					
		NANCY ON VACATION				
29 First Sunday of Advent	30				Each Sunday 9 AM Worship 4 PM Youth & Kids	Each Sunday 4:30 PM Westminster Catechism 4 Everyone

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

November 15	Congregational Meeting
November 15 & 22	Stewardship Dedication
November 15	Joint Thanksgiving Service
December 13	Outdoor Nativity
December 24	Christmas Eve Service