

# Union News



UNION NEWS  
MARCH/APRIL  
2025

“In all your ways submit to the Lord, and he will make your paths straight”

-Proverbs 3: 6

Dear members and friends of Union Presbyterian Church,

There are many out there who believe that the United States is facing a loneliness epidemic. Even before the COVID, over ½ of all Americans in a national survey by the CDC reported experiencing long stretches of intense loneliness. What are some of the leading causes to this loneliness? That same survey said that the 6 leading causes in the United States are:

- (1) Technology- 73% believe current uses of technology contribute to loneliness
- (2) Not spending enough time with family- 66%
- (3) Being too busy or tired- 62%
- (4) Mental health challenges that hurt relationships- 60%
- (5) Society being too individualistic- 58%
- (6) A lack of religious or spiritual life- 50%



One of the main speakers at the ECO (Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians) National Gathering this last month, Faith Eury Cho, spoke about what it feels like to experience the desert places of life. These are times when we feel like we are walking through difficulties alone. When we feel like this we often want Jesus to give us answers, quick fixes, some happy distractions, or even a ride back to the comfortable and safe living “of the closest town.” But sometimes “the pursuit of Jesus in the wilderness only gives you Jesus.” Cho argues that in this broken lonely world we live, the presence of Jesus is actually all we REALLY need.

In her book, “Experiencing Friendship with God: How the Wilderness Draws Us to His Presence,” Cho explains how technology has not fixed the problem of wilderness times of faith. We have more “online resources” for helping us grow in Christ than any Christian has ever had before us. With a click of a button we can listen to a preacher, pick a Bible study, do some Christian dating, get help hearing God’s call, or even select a Christian Conference to attend. Yet despite these countless resources, “there has [still] been a significant decline in the number of practicing Christians and church attendees in the past two decades.” Christian information does not guarantee a growing relationship with God.

What’s the most important thing for a growing relationship with God? Cho argues that it is God’s presence. Cho writes about this one time, the first week into her marriage, when she and her husband were eating take-out (while still in the process unpacking for a future life together).

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### March Elders

Carol Beasley  
Claire Cabral  
Jan Meek  
Jason Morrison

### April Elders

Allison Jones  
George Ratchford  
Glenn Sparrow  
Frank Suggs

### Communion

March 2 & April 6

### Stated Session

March 16

*continued from front page*

Cho saw that the restaurant didn't provide utensils, so she went to the kitchen to get herself a fork. She came back with one just for herself. It's only when she got back that she realized that she could have gotten one for her new husband too. She just wasn't used to living with a partner and housemate.

Does something similar happen when we get disconnected from God? Sometimes do we feel lonely or apart from God, simply because we are living our "own" lives most of the time? It is so easy to get in the habit of "doing things for ourselves," to shrink prayer to mostly grumbling about things we want for ourselves and others, to limit our worship and faith life to Sunday mornings or devotion times. Then we feel alone... apart from God... the rest of the time. Sometimes could it be because we are literally trying to do most of our lives alone and apart from God?

The season of Lent begins this March. Lent is a time in the church calendar that we try to work on our relationship with God so that our hearts are ready to fully experience the joy of Easter. Lent can be a time of repentance, fasting, prayer, acts of service, and seeking God. Maybe we could all use a little more of the "seeking of God" this Lent. In "Experiencing Friendship with God" Cho argues that some of the best ways to get better at recognizing God's presence is to:

**Acknowledge His Presence More Often.** When we wake up we could say "Good morning Jesus" even before we grab our phones to look at the news headlines. When we get into the car we could say, "I'm grateful to be with you, Lord." Before we stick anything in our mouth we could say "It's good that You are here with me, Father."

**Adoration-** We could set aside a couple times during the day when we stop what we are doing and say a quick prayer of adoration. Simply name a couple characteristics of God that make him great.

**Inclusion-** We could include Jesus in all the ordinary stuff we do that day. Share with Jesus your frustration when trying to find the right item at the store, admit your fears about messing it up while working on your taxes, share with him your delight while doing your favorite hobby, give him a nod while you are cooking. Include Jesus throughout your day.

**Dedication-** Anything from our day can be dedicated to God. We could dedicate the gas we put into our car to God's glory. Putting on our clothes could become a righteous work with God in mind. The more of our lives we dedicate to God, the more Christlike we will become, and the more Christ will be with us throughout the day.

So this Lent, how can you and I make sure that our God's presence becomes more ever-present in our lives? How can we keep ourselves from getting "lonely" from God as we prepare to celebrate Easter?

Sincerely in Christ,

Pastor James

## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

### CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Union will have its main yearly **congregational meeting** on **March 9**, right after worship. The purpose of this meeting will be to adopt the 2025 budget, allow for questions regarding the 2024 annual report and 2025 ECO conference, and allow for a brief meeting of Union's Corporations.

In the week's leading up to March 9, we invite you to pick up an annual report on the way out of worship. The annual report will include information about the ministries from all our committees during 2024 and the figures for the 2025 budget.



## WORSHIP IN MARCH & APRIL

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#### Sermon Series: Good Grief (Lamentations 3: 19-22)

March 2- Psalm 137; “Good Grief... Fear”

-Celebration of the Lord’s Supper

#### Lent Sermon Series: Picture of a Servant

March 9- Luke 4: 1-15; “Picture of a Servant... Stomach”

-1st Sunday of Lent; Daylight Savings Time Begins

March 16- Luke 13:31-35; “Picture of a Servant... Feet”

-2nd Sunday of Lent

March 23- Luke 13: 1-9; “Picture of a Servant... Heart”

-3rd Sunday of Lent

March 30- Luke 15: 1-10; “Picture of a Servant... Shoulders”

-4th Sunday of Lent

April 6- John 12: 1-8; “Picture of a Servant... Hair”

-5th Sunday of Lent; Celebration of the Lord’s Supper

April 13- Luke 19: “Picture of a Servant... Eyes”

-Palm Sunday; 6th Sunday of Lent

April 20- Acts 10: 34-43; “Really Really Really Good News”

-Easter

#### Sermon Series on Jude: Called & Kept

April 27- Jude 1-4; “Called & Kept... What are You Contending For?”

May 4- Jude 5-16; “Called & Kept... 3 Truths & a Lie”

-Celebration of the Lord’s Supper

## PRAYER AFTER WORSHIP

### PRAYER AFTER WORSHIP

“Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Jeremiah 29: 12-13

One can get in a rut when it comes to prayer. It is easy for us get in a pattern where our prayers aren’t much more than just praying for the struggles that our loved ones are going through and thanking God for his help in challenging situations. None of us want our conversation with God to be reduced to “vending machine” prayers. A rich prayer life is like nothing else! It could regularly include things like adoration, lament, confession, petition, guidance, consecration, and even more! **Every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday**, right after **10 AM service**, join us for **Prayer After Worship**. An opportunity each month, to take a little time to put into practice more of the many ways we can reach out to God!





# HOLY WEEK WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*\*Sunday, April 13* *Palm Sunday Service: 10 am* *\**

A heartwarming worship service commemorating the triumphant return of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem prior to his crucifixion.

*\*Thursday, April 17* *Maundy Thursday Service: 6 pm* *\**

Seder Meal—A meaningful reminder of the Last Supper which Jesus had with his disciples. On the eve of his arrest, Jesus used the Jewish Feast of the Passover to explain to his disciples what his coming sacrifice was all about. Come experience this Seder meal/ Last Supper remembrance and then, enjoy dinner and fellowship with new and old friends. Dinner WILL be provided in addition to the Seder meal.

*\*Friday, April 18* *Good Friday Service: 6pm* *\**

Join New Hope & Robinson Memorial Presbyterian Church for a solemn observance commemorating the events of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The service will be held at New Hope Presbyterian Church (4357 New Hope Road Gastonia, NC, 28056 ).

*\*Saturday, April 19* *Easter Egg Hunt: 10 am* *\**

Bring your children, grandchildren, or child's friends to a great time of fellowship and egg hunting.

*Easter Sunday* *Sunrise Service 6:45 am w/ breakfast 7:30 am*

*\*April 20* *Easter Service 10 am* *\**

Join us in the cemetery beside the church building to remember the joy experienced by the women who discovered Jesus' empty tomb. We will sing songs of praise from 6:45- 7am as the sun rises. The Sunrise Service will begin at 7am. Breakfast will follow. At 10 am, join us for a celebration of the resurrection of our Lord in the Sanctuary!

**Union Presbyterian Church, 5615 Union Road, Gastonia, NC 28056**

**For more information: phone: 704.864.7681 or email: [unionpc5615@gmail.com](mailto:unionpc5615@gmail.com)**

## GOOD NEWS RISING OFFERING

On **Easter Sunday**, we will once again have our **Good News Rising Special Offering**.

Please remember that this offering is **DIFFERENT** from the PCUSA special offering, "One Great Hour of Sharing." None of the money received will go towards the Presbytery Mission Agency or is channeled through the PCUSA denomination.

At each of our sanctuary entrances, we have plastic fish banks available, so that our children and youth can collect money for this offering as well. We want all ages of the church to be able to be involved!

The offering is called "Good News Rising" because on Easter Jesus rose and in him, we can find new life. The 3 places that this offering is going towards are ways we can bring the Good News of Christ and new life to people throughout the world!! Unlike our 5 Cent a Meal offerings, Good News Rising is not focused on local programs, but national and global Mission.

This year, The Good News Offering will be used to support Mission Work of World Renew, a Christian Missionary, and the Spread of the Gospel Worldwide.

- 1/3 of the offering this year will go to World Renew— using World Renew's Gift Catalog helping families around the world to achieve sustainable, healthy lives. Our children and youth will help pick out what items we will purchase!
- 1/3 will go to Frontier Fellowship to support local ministries to unreached people groups in South Asia (largely Pakistan and India)
- 1/3 will go to "C," a missionary connected to our church who is currently serving in South Asia.



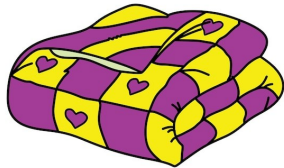
## EASTER LILIES

Easter lilies will be on sale March 23-April 6th. Please be on the lookout for the order form in the bulletins and be sure to have your orders to Kim Morrison or Allison Jones no later than April 6th.

## Other Special Events in the Next 2 Months

### ALL YOU CAN EAT PANCAKE SUPPER

The Men of the Church are hosting an **All You Can Eat Pancake Supper** on **Saturday, March 15, from 4:30-6PM**. All donations will go to support Men's Ministries. Come Ready to chow down! The Men will meet on **March 12 at 6PM** to go over details.



### POOR MAN'S SUPPER/QUILT RAFFLE

The Women of the Church will hold a **Poor Man's Supper and Quilt Raffle** on **Saturday, March 29 from 4:30-6PM**. Proceeds will go toward the purchase of a new church sign.

### IT'S ALMOST BBQ TIME

Keep your eye out for flyers so you don't miss out on ordering some **BBQ** this year. BBQ orders will be due by **Tuesday, April 22nd** and pickup will be **April 25th from 2-6PM**. Chopped BBQ will be \$12/lb and whole butts will be \$40. Proceeds will go toward the Bess school Pack-a-sack program.



## Kid's of the Kingdom Update



## KIDS OF THE KINGDOM

HOPE TO  
*see you*  
THERE

### REGULAR MEETINGS

February 23	4-5:30
March 23	3:30-5:00
April 6	3:30-5:00
April 27	3:30-5:00
May 11	3:30-5:00

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Kate's Skating	March 9, 3:30-5:00
Easter Party	April 13, 3:30-5:00

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

KOK End of Year Celebration

**Weekend of June 6. Stay tuned for more details to come!**

## Church Updates & Going On's

### LOCAL MISSION GIVING



Last November, the Session approved giving “local mission” money from our general budget to 3 local missions: Least of These, Crisis Assistance Ministry, and The Cathy Mabry Cloninger Center. Each ministry received \$665. Each month this year, The Witness and Service Committee has highlighted one of these ministries. The last ministry to highlight (but not of the “least”) is Least of These Carolinas.

Least of These Carolinas was started right here in Gaston County by 2 seasoned foster parents: Michelle Buchanan and Susanna Kavanaugh. The 2 began selling homemade cinnamon rolls on Facebook to buy PJ's for children in foster care. The organization now supports over 14,000 foster children in over 65 counties of North and South Carolina with the help of over 3,000 volunteers. Least of These provides individually requested **Christmas gifts** to foster kids (getting donations from churches like Union's Angel Tree last year). It gives out **Bags of Hope** (duffle bags with needed items when children enter foster care), **Life Boxes** for children who are transitioning to independent living after high school, **scholarships** so kids can attend summer camps, music lessons, and school sports, **school supplies/shoes** for those in need, and all sorts of other **miscellaneous requests!** Last year the cost of this support would have been over \$480,000. Least of These also provides an opportunity for small groups to “adopt” and encourage a Foster Care Social Worker. You can find out more about all these things at <https://lotcarolinas.com>.



### BOOK CHICKS

Join us monthly during our Book Chicks book club meetings for some food, fun, and fellowship! For more information or to find out what book we are reading, please reach out to Kim Morrison. Our next meeting is **Monday, March 17th and Monday, April 21st at 6:30 PM.**

### UNION ENSEMBLE

This month the **Union Ensemble** will meet on **March 2, 16, 30, and April 6** right after worship! Join us and learn some great music for Easter!



### 5 CENT A MEAL

For the month of March our **5 Cents a Meal offering** will go to **Gastonia Street Ministry**. For the month of **April** it will be given to **CAM**. Thank you for prayerfully supporting these outreach opportunities.



### BINGO

Join us for BINGO at Terrace Ridge on **Thursday, March 20th at 3 PM**. You are sure to receive many blessings from this outreach event! Then because of Maundy Thursday, Bingo will be on **4th Thursday, the 24th in April**.

### CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Please don't forget that The Lord's Supper will be celebrated during worship on the first Sunday of each month, **Sunday, March 2nd and Sunday, April 6th**. We will also celebrate the Lord's Supper in connection to our **Maundy Thursday Service on Thursday, March 17th**.



### WOMEN'S CIRCLE

Join us this month! The Golden Girls will meet **Monday, March 3rd and Monday, April 7th at 11 AM** and the Soul Sisters will meet **Monday, March 3rd and Monday, April 7th at 7 PM**. We hope you will join us for one of these meetings!

### HAPPY YEAR'S

The WOC will host this month on **Wednesday, March 19th at 12 PM**. We hope to see you there!

## What is Lent?

### WHAT IS LENT?

Have you ever wondered what people are talking about when they say they're giving something up for Lent? Lent is the 40 days (not including Sundays) from Ash Wednesday to the Saturday before Easter. Lent is often described as a time of preparation and an opportunity to go deeper with God. This means that it's a time for personal reflection that prepares people's hearts and minds for Good Friday and Easter.

There are 3 main things people tend to focus on during Lent: **prayer**, **fasting** (abstaining from something to reduce distractions and focus more on God), and discovering new ways to **give** of themselves as they seek to follow God's call. Intentionally spending time doing these things during Lent can make Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection even more meaningful!

Each Sunday during Lent, our bulletin will include a prayer prompt, a challenge of something that you could fast from that week, and some questions to help reflect on how we might give more of ourselves to Christ and follow his call. We hope that this season can be truly meaningful for you!



## Prayer for Lent

The Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem has been prayed by the Christian church since it was first written in the 4th Century.



**Original Prayer:** O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. Yea, Lord and King! Grant me to see my own errors and not to judge my brother, for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

**Modern Adaptation:** O Lord and Redeemer of my Life, take from me the spirit of laziness, despair, lust, gossip, and pride. God, replace each one with a spirit of humility, patience, purity, self-denial, and with a love of what you love and a burden for what burdens you. My Lord and Savior, help me to confront my own transgressions and not to condemn my brothers and sisters. For you alone are just and holy, now and forever. Amen.





## THANK YOU

Dear friends!

As I attempt to write this, it's so hard to believe that my Bobby met Jesus face to face on February 17. After 58 years, reminders are everywhere.

My family and I are so, so grateful for you. We have and will continue to feel your love.

Pastor James (Preacher Man as Bobby would say), you are the best. You loved Bobby, comforted him in his hours of greatest need, held his hand and let him feel the Holy Spirit moving.

Precious Church family: you covered us with your prayers, lavished us with your love and fed our human bodies throughout the past months.

And the Greatest of these is love!  
 Martha & Family





SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2 11 AM Ensemble 2:30 PM SOC	3 11 AM Golden Girls 7 PM Soul Sisters 7 PM Men's Bible Study	4 10 AM Bible Study 7 PM B & G	5 7 AM Ashes on the Go 7 PM Ash Wednesday	6	7	8
9 11 AM Congregational Meeting 2:30 PM W & S	10 7 PM Men's Bible Study	11 10 AM Bible Study	12 6 PM Men's Meeting	13 6 PM Youth Task Force Meeting	14	15 4:30 PM MOC Pancake Supper
16 11 AM Ensemble 2:30 PM Session	17 6:30 PM Book Chicks 7 PM Men's Bible Study	18 10 AM Bible Study	19 12 PM Happy Years	20 3 PM Bingo 8 PM FF Prayer Zoom call	21	22
23 11 AM Prayer after Worship	24 7 PM Men's Bible Study	25 10 AM Bible Study	6	27 6 PM WOC Council Meeting	28	29 4:30 PM Poor Man's Dinner & Quilt Raffle
30 11 AM Ensemble 3 PM Caroline Cabe Bridal Shower	31 7 PM Men's Bible Study					



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><b>Sundays</b> 9AM Sunday School</p>		<p><b>1</b> 10 AM Bible Study 7 PM B &amp; G</p>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>6</b> 11 AM Ensemble 2:30 PM SOC</p>	<p><b>7</b> 11 AM Golden Girls 7PM Soul Sisters 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p><b>8</b> 10 AM Bible Study</p>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<p><b>13</b> 10 AM Palm Sunday 2:30 PM W &amp; S</p>	<p><b>14</b> 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p><b>15</b> 10 AM Bible Study</p>	<p><b>16</b> 12 PM Happy Years</p>	<p><b>17</b> 6 PM Sedar Meal</p>	<p><b>18</b> 6 PM Good Friday Tenebrae Worship Service Older Youth Set up Egg Hunt</p>	<p><b>19</b> 10 AM Easter Egg Hunt</p>
<p><b>20</b> 6:45 AM Sunrise Service/ Breakfast 10 AM Worship</p>	<p><b>21</b> 6:30 PM Book Chicks 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p><b>22</b> 10 AM Bible Study</p>	<b>23</b>	<p><b>24</b> 3 PM Bingo 6 PM WOC Council</p>	<p><b>25</b> 2-6 PM MOC BBQ BUTT Sale</p>	<b>26</b>
<p><b>27</b> 11 AM Prayer after Worship 2:30 PM Cayman Tsiukes Bridal Shower</p>	<p><b>28</b> 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p><b>29</b> 10 AM Bible Study</p>	<b>30</b>			

**Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Permit No. 8  
Return Service Requested**

Reverend James Holeman  
Pastor

Tammy Biddix  
Administrative Assistant

Jennifer Nelson  
Communications Director

Jieeun Ha  
Accompanist

Church Hours  
3:00 PM—6 PM  
Tuesday and Thursday



*Save the Date*



March 15	Pancake Supper
March 29	Poor Man's Supper & Quilt Raffle
April 13	Palm Sunday Service
April 17	Sedar Meal- Maundy Thursday
April 18	Good Friday Tenebrae Service
April 19	Easter Egg Hunt
April 20	Sunrise Service & Easter Service
April 25	MOC Boston Butt Sale