

# Union News

## February 2026



Dear Friends and Covenant Partners of Union Community Church,

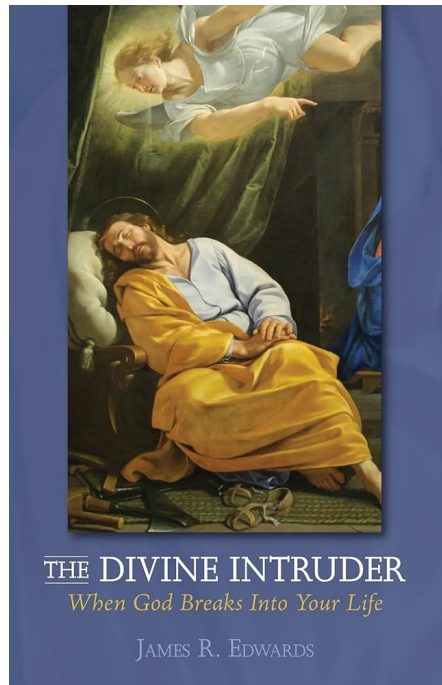
In his book, “The Divine Intruder: When God Breaks Into Your Life,” James Edwards focuses on the stories of 8 biblical characters, and how their lives illustrate some of the main ways God intrudes into our lives and helps us become the kind people the wants us to be. One of favorite chapters in the book is the one on Jonah. Here are some of the take aways Edwards includes:

(1) Jonah is not the only person in Scripture who was uncomfortable following God’s plan for him. Many called by God protest when they learn the details of what they are being called to. However, the normal pattern is a lively conversation with God, ending with the “wearied soul” eventually giving in and collapsing into the holy arms of the God they originally were fighting to trust. Not Jonah! Jonah does not start by trying to reason to God... he just runs away!

(2) Jonah is actually upset about how GOOD God is! It isn’t so much that Jonah is refusing to serve God. Jonah does not like the Assyrians (long standing enemies of Isreal) and worries that God, because he is a God of grace, might forgive the Assyrians through what God is calling Jonah to do.

(3) God is not necessarily “nice.” Edward’s writes that we like to imagine God as someone “who champions our ‘rights’ and exists for our self-fulfillment and prosperity.” But in reality, God’s love and grace is SO BIG that our “happiness” is not usually God’s primary concern. Jonah’s feelings about the Assyrians were definitely not God’s main concern.

(4) On the boat nothing is as it should be. The unrighteous sailors pray while “righteous” Jonah sleeps. Jonah desires death while the sailors try to save his life, seek Yahweh, and ask’s God for forgiveness for what they must do. It makes one question... who was righteous on that boat? Could Jonah be wrong in believing that his enemies in Nineveh are not deserving of God’s grace (how different are they from the sailors)? What does that mean for our enemies?



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<b>Opening Letter Worship in February</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Flourishing Corner</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Church News</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>Church Finances Celebrations Prayers Near &amp; Far</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Church Calendar</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Save the Date</b>	<b>8</b>

### February Elders

Carol Beasley  
Claire Cabral  
Gary McGinnis

### Communion

February 1

### Stated Session

February 15

*Continued on next page*

*Continued from front page*

(5) Edwards writes, “What Jonah detests in Nineveh is present in himself. If only Jonah could see that his heart was as contrary to God as the heart of Nineveh: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one’ (Romans 3:10). If only Jonah could see that the grace extended to the Ninevites is the same grace extended to him.”

How often has God needed to intrude into your life because you were fleeing from his grace or fleeing from God’s call for you to show his grace to others?

The writer of the book, “The Divine Intruder,” James Edwards, is a native of Colorado Springs, served as department head of the Religion and Philosophy department at Jamestown, was on faculty at Whitworth and serves as a Theology Professor at Bruner-Welch. He is also one of the 4 main speakers at the 2026 ECO National Gathering in Atlanta, February 2-5.

He will be joined at the National Gathering by Esau McCaulley, author and professor at Wheaton College, Mandy Smith, pastor, author, and speaker from Australia, and Toni Collier founder of the women’s organization, “Broken Crayons Still Color.” The theme of the National Gathering this year is “Called,” using the verse from Esther 4: 14:

*“And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”*

To find out more about the 2026 National Gathering, as well as watch videos from previous years, you can check out the website <https://www.econationalgathering.org>. You can also talk to Sally and Gary McGinnis, Frank and Debbie Suggs, and myself who all plan to be in attendance this year.

Sincerely in Christ,  
Pastor James

## WORSHIP FOR FEBRUARY

### **Sermon Series: Praying like Daniel**

February 1- Daniel 9: 1-19, “Praying like Daniel... Prayer Demonstrates Our Faith”  
-Celebration of Lord’s Supper

### **Flourishing Discipleship Event**

February 8- Revelation 4 and 5, “Worship... Glorifying the Glorious”

### **Transfiguration Sunday Sermon**

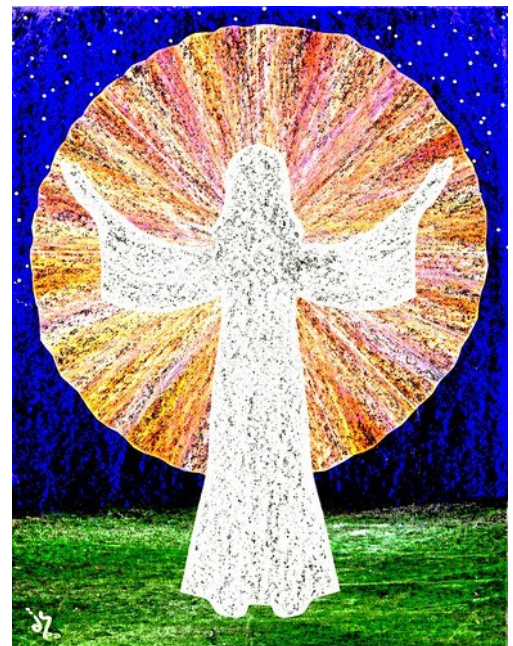
February 15- 2 Peter 1: 16-21, Matthew 17: 1-9  
-Transfiguration Sunday/ President’s Day Weekend

### **Lent Series: Aliens on the Way Home**

February 22- Luke 4: 1-13, “Aliens on the Way Home... Remembering the Way”

March 1- Philippians 3: 17-4:1, “Aliens on the Way Home... Help Along the Way”

-Celebration of the Lord’s Supper



# Flourishing Corner

## WINTER DISCIPLESHIP EVENT: WORSHIP

As part of our flourishing work- 4 times a year, the CFC Team and Session hope to have a special discipleship event for the whole church! On February 8<sup>th</sup> our regular worship service will be a special worship event! Have you ever taken time to think about why we worship the way we do each Sunday at Union?

- What's the most important part of the service?
- Why do we pass a plate during the offering (we could just have buckets at the doors)?
- Why use the Apostles Creed?
- What's up with all that responsive reading?

On February 8<sup>th</sup> we hope that the service is not only an opportunity to worship God together, but an opportunity to reflect on WHY we are worship the way we do. We hope that you can join us!!



## FEBRUARY DISCIPLESHIP CHALLENGE: SLOWING



When we drive, we sometimes need signs to remind us to slow for children at play... but as Christians aren't we all children of God? We need to slow down to be doing that playing ourselves!! Slowing is a way we counter our culture's mandate to tend to the bottom line, to move it or lose it, or to constantly be on the go. It is a way we honor our limits and not get distracted from the fact that God is found in the present moment. Whether we are busy with work or family or living the retired life... ANYTHING can direct us away from God's presence and serving God in the now!

We invite you to try 1 of the 3 practices below to try each day. Then write about what you are trying and how it is going in the comment section of this challenge on our webpage to help encourage others: [www.union-communitychurch.com/discipleshipchallenge](http://www.union-communitychurch.com/discipleshipchallenge)

### PRACTICES:

(1) *SLOW DOWN*- Think thru your day's schedule then do something intentionally slower: drive in the slow lane, choose the longest line at the grocery store, sit longer over your meal, Intentionally chew your food, take a longer shower. Relish the time and make God a part of it. Be in the presence of God. What rises to the surface of your mind? What does this tell you about yourself?

(2) *GIVE OVER*- People who are rushed often feel anxious. As part of a morning prayer, offer God three concerns of the day. Ask him to take care for those things for you. When those worries creep in, return to the moment you handed God your concerns.

(3) *TAKE A MOMENT*- Insert moments of rest and relaxation into your day. Remembering that it is better to be unavailable than inattentive: make sure you have no back-to-back appointments, take some deep breaths before you pick up the phone, ask God to make you present in the moment, or you might even put into practice breath prayers throughout your day.

## FAITH SHARING SNOWFLAKES

A big thank you to everyone who has put up a snowflake already! This month we challenge you to continue putting up snowflakes to encourage one another with the ways you have come along side someone else as a mentor. Anytime we teach someone something we've learned, give advice from our own experiences, share how we are growing or struggling with growing in Christ, or share our faith with an unbeliever, we are doing Kingdom work. It is God who gives us all our talents, gifts, and time. When we share it... we are sharing our faith! There are countless ways to "share our faith!" We invite you to include the ways you are sharing yours in the Gathering Area!







## ASH WEDNESDAY

This year, Ash Wednesday falls on **February 18<sup>th</sup>**. We will have an **Ash Wednesday Service** at the church at **7PM**. However, if your evening is busy (or getting out at night is a problem), there are 2 other ways you can participate in Ash Wednesday.



- (1) First, you can come to **Happy Years** at **12PM** on **February 18<sup>th</sup>**. Enjoy the meal and fellowship. We will end with a short informal Ash Wednesday Service.
- (2) Or stop by the **Sanctuary** from **1-1:30PM** for “**Ashes on the Go!**” an opportunity to receive a short prayer and ashes in the afternoon!

## ORDINATION/INSTALLATION SUNDAY

The **Ordination and Installation** of our new class of elders will be held on **Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>** during our 10AM Worship Service. Hope you can attend!



## UNION ENSEMBLE PRACTICES

The Union Ensemble will practice right after worship this month on **February 8** and **22**. This is a wonderful time to join the Ensemble. We are practicing music for Easter!

## 5 CENT A MEAL– CAM

On the first Sunday in February, we have a special offering at Union to support various local missions. Our **5 Cent a Meal Offering** this month will benefit Crisis Assistance Ministry or CAM. This month's special offering will go directly to Crisis Assistance Ministry, an organization dedicated to helping local families facing financial emergencies. Your generosity provides essentials like rent and utility assistance, clothing, and household items—offering stability and hope when it's needed most. Thank you for giving compassionately and strengthening the safety net for our neighbors.



## 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, February 16th, at 6:30 PM**.

## WOMEN'S SMALL GROUP

The **Women's Small Group** will meet on **Monday, February 2** at **5:30 PM**. Come and enjoy a fun evening of Bible study, refreshments, and fellowship. If you don't already attend, we would love to have you join us.

## GOLDEN GIRLS CIRCLE

We will meet on **Monday, February 2** at **11 AM** in the Fellowship Hall. We welcome all women to attend.

## BINGO

Our next event is **February 19** at **3 PM**. This monthly outreach touches the lives of many at **Terrace Ridge Assisted Living**. We always need people able to help those in the residence who have limitations with their eyesight, hearing loss, or fine motor issues! Consider joining the ministry this year!



## THANK YOU FROM “C” GLOBAL MISSIONARY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In December, Session sent \$500 from the church’s Global Missionary General Budget Line Item to “C” in Southeast Asia. Below is some of her response back to us (edited for anonymity)!



“Your gift was beyond generous. I have been blown away by the way Union has supported me and my team these last several years. Because I am going back for only a short time, I have placed the funds in our team budget, so it is now accessible to each of our team members for upcoming projects and needs this year. It will likely go toward helping fund new interns on our team - all local guys who are growing deeply in the Lord! - or toward the business we are associated with. The running of this business is vital in keeping us all here (provides our VISA’s) but it also allows us daily contact with the seemingly countless young, unbelieving students in our city.

Again, I cannot thank you and Union enough for your support, in prayer and in such a generous gift.

Sincerely- ‘C’”

## 2025 HOLIDAY SPECIAL OFFERINGS REPORT

We collected two special holiday offerings in 2025. The Thanksgiving service at Sandy Plains Baptist special offering total was \$ 436.00 which we received half of at \$ 218.00. This money was added to the Blessing Box to help supply food to the community. Sandy Plains generously donated their half to the Blessing Box as well, so, we added a total of \$436.00 to the line item.

The Christmas Special Love Offering collected \$ 449.00 which was added to our church Community Care Fund. This fund is for use in our community to assist those who need a little extra financial help with life challenges. Thank you for your generous giving for these two offerings.

## UNION BLESSING BOX VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

The Witness and Service Committee is looking for someone who has a passion for helping our community and would like to volunteer as the Coordinator for the Union Blessing Box. The Blessing Box is a ministry program at Union to help address hunger in the community. Volunteers fill the box each day and two folks buy the food monthly.

The Coordinator will be solely responsible for following and working with the filler people and the buyers to make sure the project runs smoothly. You would have a free hand to run it as you see fit. Membership on the Witness and Service committee is not a requirement. We do ask for a short report before our monthly meeting stating the status of the project. The Blessing Box has a line item in the Church budget and the Coordinator would be responsible for overseeing expenditures and maintaining the budgeted amount,

Matthew 25:35 NIV – *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.* Please help us with this ministry.

Please see Frank Suggs to find out more, or to volunteer for the Coordinator spot.

## SOUPER BOWL OFFERING


The Youth will be collecting a special “Souper” Bowl offering on Sunday, February 8th at the end of worship service. Please consider supporting this offering

## MEN OF THE CHURCH

The next **Men’s Meeting** is **Tuesday, February 17**. All men are invited to join for dinner, fellowship, and a devotion at **6PM**. A short Men of the Church Business meeting will follow (you are invited to stay for that part too in you want)!







Love is patient, love is kind.  
It does not envy, it does not boast,  
it is not proud. It does not dishonor  
others, it is not self-seeking,  
it is not easily angered,  
it keeps no record of wrongs.

**1 Corinthians 13:4-5**

DailyVerses.net

## PRAYERS NEAR AND FAR

### Global Mission:

Things are shifting in the ways Union supports Global Mission efforts. As many of you may know, Jim Truesdell has been our main connection with Frontier Fellowship and the home church movement in Pakistan. Recently, Jim has stepped away from Frontier Fellowship to take a call as a church pastor. Likewise, we have supported missionary “C” for a number of years. But her time in Southeast Asia is coming to an end. Please be in prayer for Jim and “C” and the transitions they are facing. But also keep our Witness & Service Committee and Session in your prayers as they discern how God might be calling Union to partner with his work globally in the future. And pray that those heading to the ECO National Gathering, that they can come back with lots of new Global Mission ideas!

### ECO Churches:

**(1) Waypoint Community Church** (in Chalotte)- Pray for those coming back from a mission trip in Peru at the end of January. In the middle of the month please pray for the Church’s Winter Student Retreat!

**(2) Westminster Presbyterian Church** (in Charlotte)- Is involved in a bunch of Mission programs. They are supporting a church plant in Scotland, Lois and Keith Betsch who are missionaries with Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the Hebron Home which is reaching out in Nigeria (among many others). You could also be in prayer about their work with “I AM 24/7,” a program that reaches out to male youth in Charlotte.

**(3) Abemarle Road Presbyterian Church** (in Charlotte)- Please keep in prayer this church’s preschool program, their Wednesday “Room in the Inn” program to Minister to the homeless, and Hopechest which reaches out to kids in Guatamala.





SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>Sundays</b> 9AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship						
<b>1 5 Cents a Meal</b>  11AM Ensemble  2:30 PM SOC	<b>2 11 AM</b> Golden Girls <b>5:30 PM</b> Women's Small Group <b>7 PM</b> Men's Bible Study	<b>3 NO Bible Study</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
	ECO NATIONAL GATHERING				180 Weekend	
<b>8 2:30 PM</b> W&S Meeting	<b>9 7 PM</b> Men's Bible Study	<b>10 10 AM</b> Bible Study	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>  
<b>15 2:30 PM</b> Session Meeting	<b>16 6:30 PM</b> Book Chicks <b>7 PM</b> Men's Bible Study	<b>17 10 AM</b> Bible Study <b>6PM</b> Men's Meet- ing	<b>18 12 PM</b> Happy Year's <b>7PM</b> Ash Wed. Service	<b>19 3 PM</b> Bingo	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22 11AM</b> Ensemble <b>11:45 W&amp;C</b>	<b>23 7 PM</b> Men's Bible Study	<b>24 10 AM</b> Bible Study	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>

## Union Community Church

5615 Union Road  
Gastonia, NC 28056  
Phone: 704-864-7681  
E-mail:  
unionpc5615@gmail.com  
www.union-  
communitychurch.com

**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



February 1  
February 8

5 Cents a Meal & Communion  
Ordination & Installation  
Souper Bowl Offering