

Union News

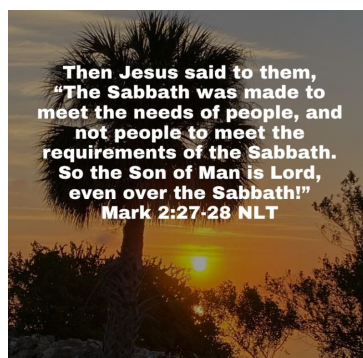
March 2026



Dear Friends and Covenant Partners of Union Community Church,

Have you given much thought about the Sabbath recently? I have to be honest that for most of my life, I have thought of the Sabbath mostly as a rule to keep. But while thinking of the Sabbath primarily from the perspective of being obedient to God has allowed me to reflect on a bunch of good questions... it may have kept me from focusing the most important ones.

I've spent a lot of time reflecting on questions like: What day should you do the Sabbath (Saturday or Sunday)? What counts as rest? Should I mow my lawn on the Sabbath? Should I mow my neighbor's lawn? Should I go out to eat with my family (if we go out to eat we are making someone else work on the Sabbath)? Can I go to the grocery store? Does taking a nap count as rest or do I need to be resting in Christ the whole time?



It's even harder for a pastor! What I'm doing on Sunday is my job! Does that "work" count as the Sabbath? Do I need to "do" the Sabbath on a different day? If so, which one? How do I make sure my resting in Christ isn't cheating (doing "work" preparing for future Bible Studies or Worship Services)?

At the ECO National Gathering last month, one of the breakout sessions I participated in was about the Sabbath. In 2023, the Synod's Theological Task Force put together a book, "Lord of Time: Living in the Rest and Reign of God." The breakout I attended discussed how this book had affected people/churches in the 3 years since it's creation.

The breakout was amazing! It made me think about Sabbath in a way I hadn't taken the time to consider. Let me just share 3 things that I had never thought about the Sabbath until now!

- (1) The Sabbath is first mentioned in the story of creation (Genesis 1 and 2). We read that God created the world in 6 days, he created humanity on the 6th day, and then on the 7th day God rested and declared that day holy. Why did God rest? I'll be honest I had always just sort of assumed that God wanted a break after he did all that creating. I never connected Genesis to Mark 2: 27. We read there that God did not make the Sabbath a day of rest for himself, he did it for humanity. God is omnipotent. He didn't need a rest after all that creation. In fact, in Hebrew the word used in Genesis 2 for "rest" is just a word that means "to cease" or "stop." God just stopped creating on the 7th day. He didn't need a nap.

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March Elders

Leslie Harris
Tim Grigg
Junior Thompson
Lynn Wollenberg

Communion

March 1

Stated Session

March 15

Continued from front page

(2) I had always sort of assumed that since God worked and then rested at the end of creation, that's why we are supposed to follow suite. But that's not actually what happens in Genesis 1 and 2. For God, the Sabbath was on the 7th day (right after creation). For humanity (just created) it was actually the 1st full day. Think about it! Men and women were created. Then God told them what their work as stewards of creation was going to be (Day 6 of creation). And then on their first full day working at their new jobs they were told to take a break and rest with God. Human beings were not asked to celebrate the Sabbath with God after a week of work. They are asked to spend time with God first.

(3) Adam and Eve had a unique experience of Sabbath with God before sin entered the picture. God could dwell with Adam and Eve (even walk with them). Sabbath is primarily about building relationship with God and putting him first. Sin has messed all that up. And it is for that reason that in Mark 2: 28, Jesus called himself the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was culminated in person of Jesus. On Earth, Jesus was able to rest in God in the way humanity was supposed to all along. Jesus restored the Sabbath rest for humanity by eliminating the barrier between God and humanity. The cross and resurrection restore our ability to be in God's presence by faith.

What if the Sabbath is not primarily about the day or the time or the particular activities we do? What if it is less about following a set a rules and more about shaping our lives to live more Sabbath-like everyday? What if the Sabbath is really more about living out Jesus' words in Matthew 11: 28-30 when he says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

WORSHIP FOR MARCH

Did you know that followers of Christ are called strangers, exiles, and aliens more than they are called Christians in the New Testament? To be "alien" is to be rootless, to not belong. An alien is an often a temporary resident who is "on the way" to somewhere else. To be "alienated" is to be separated and estranged, to be a person in need of reconciliation.

In the New Testament, the church is expected to act as aliens and strangers in this world (1 Peter 2: 11), so that we will be "fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Ephesians 2:19). During the season of Lent, we invite you to join us as we explore what it looks like as Christians to be "Alien's on the Way Home."

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

March 8- 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, "Aliens on the Way Home... Warnings Along the Way"

March 15- Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32, "Aliens on the Way Home... True Cost of the Way"

March 22- Philippians 3: 8-14, "Aliens on the Way Home... Our Cost for the Way"

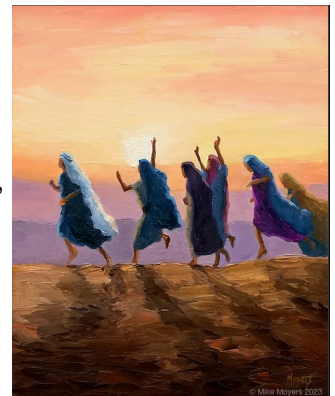
March 29- Luke 19: 28-40, Philippians 3: 8-14, "Aliens on the Way Home... King of the Way"

-Palm Sunday

Easter Service

April 5- Matthew 28: 1-20, "Refusing to Stay Dead"

-Resurrection Sunday, Celebration of the Lord's Supper



Flourishing Corner

MARCH DISCIPLESHIP CHALLENGE: MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE

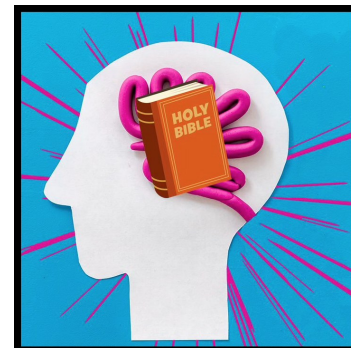
Choose a piece of Scripture and continually remember its words, internalizing them and making them a part of your daily life. Then help encourage others in this practice. You might even write about how it's going in the comment section of this challenge on our webpage.

(www.union-communitychurch.com/discipleshipchallenge)

THE PRACTICE:

(A) The practice begins with choosing a short, meaningful verse. For example, you could focus on 2 Corinthians 5:7: "We walk by faith, not by sight." If you have trouble memorizing you might want to:

- 1) Break it down into manageable pieces, especially if it is a longer verse.
- 2) Write it on an index card and carry it with you for those moments when you are having to wait (ie. Dr. appointment, waiting in school pick up lines etc.).
- 3) Place your verse where you will see it daily. For example, your bath room mirror, the refrigerator or the dash of your vehicle.
- 4) As you recite it, visualize its meaning, creating a mental image of what your scripture is referring to.



(B) Some people are better at memorizing than others. Challenge yourself to memorize as many scriptures as you can in a week. But don't be discouraged if your number is one a week.

(C) Keep a list of the Scriptures you've learned. Take some time with God to explore why those verses you have chosen are important and how knowing them can help you. Also, you can periodically check in to see if you still remember them!

WHEN & WHY?

This practice is not just a mental exercise; it is a discipline that shapes our character, strengthens our faith, and guides our daily decisions. We need to look no further than Jesus' own temptation in the desert (Matt. 4:1-11). How did Jesus resist those temptations? Scripture. If you were put in some sort of solitary confinement without a Bible, how would God's word still nourish you?

A NEW COMMITTEE!

Our Flourishing Team and Session are trying to form a brand-new Committee!! The Committee is called the **Mentorship & Care Committee or M&C**. It's goal: to improve the congregation's ongoing care of one another, striving to help everyone in the church get more plugged in to the church, to God, and to one another.

There are a bunch of directions the M&C Committee can go, but to start with they will try to support our church visitor team as it gets up and running, they will connect with other ministry areas of the church to see how they can support how the church cares for shut-ins and those dealing with loss, and will help grow our church shepherding program!

Is Congregational Care important to you? Do you think that here at Union we could do a better job connecting to one another? If so, this might be the perfect committee for you!! The first meeting of the M&C Committee is **Sunday, March 29, at 2:30PM**. Hope you can make it!



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Please join us **after worship** on **March 8** for a **Congregational Meeting**. The purpose of the meeting is to review the 2025 Annual Report and the 2026 Budget. There will also be a brief meeting of the church corporations. The Church Annual Report and Budget will be available to peruse on March 1.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING



UNION ENSEMBLE PRACTICES

The Union Ensemble will practice right on **March 8** right after the Congregational Meeting and **March 22** right after worship. We will be finishing up touches on music for Holy Week and Easter!

5 CENT A MEAL— CAM

On the first Sunday in March, we have a special offering at Union to support various local missions. Our **5 Cent a Meal Offering** this month will benefit Least of These. This group helps create positive memories for children and families affected by foster care. Please consider supporting this special offering.

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 16th, at 6:30 PM.**

WOMEN'S SMALL GROUP

The **Women's Small Group** will meet on **Monday, March 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, March 2 at 11 AM** in the Fellowship Hall. We welcome all women to attend.

BINGO

Our next event is **March 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!



MARCH HAPPY YEARS

Our next event is Wednesday, **March 18th at 12 PM.** We will have BBQ, baked beans, slaw, chips, buns and desserts. Also come prepared for a fun time and entertainment.

THE MOC AND VIA HEALTH PARTNERS COMMUNITY PROGRAM

They MOC are partnering with VIA Health Partners to sponsor a community program titled "The Umbrella of Dementia." On **Thursday, April 16th at 6 PM** we will have a special guest speaker Natalie Springle. We encourage you to take a flyer and invite your neighbors and friends.

GOOD NEWS RISING OFFERING

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

Be on the look out, This month we will have special metal banks available that our children and youth can decorate and collect money in 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 2 places this offering is going toward are places we can help bring the Good News of Christ to and new life to people throughout the world!!

This year 1/2 of the offering will go thru our Presbytery of North Carolina to the Pastoral, Outreach and Missions Council (POMC) of Egypt of the Nile. The money will be used to start new church plants in Egypt or to train and send missionaries from Egypt to evangelize nearby middle east countries.

The other ½ will go thru Frontier Fellowship to help educate and support Christian leaders working in the underground church of Iran and Iranian church refugees.

DESSERTS IN THE DESERT

Although no hard numbers are available, it is estimated that only 5-15% of the population in Egypt is Christian. Although the current Islam leadership in Egypt is more accepting of Christians in the country today, that has not always been the case in the past. Churches in Egypt are using this lull in persecution to create a vibrant church planting network and to train up missionaries for the region.

Sue Black, pastor of Second Presbyterian Church in Kannapolis, will be joining us on **Sunday, March 15 at 6PM** to eat some incredible deserts and talk to us a little about the work of the Synod of the Nile in Egypt, her church’s partnership with a church in Egypt, and her recent visit to that partner church. This is not an event to miss!!

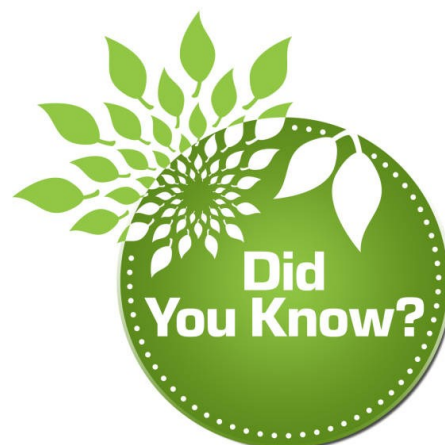


LENT DEVOTIONS

During the Season of Lent, on the final page of bulletin you will find a series of Series of Scriptures and activities that you can use each week. The devotions tie into Lent and our sermon series.

MEN OF THE CHURCH PANCAKE SUPPER

Mark your calendars for our annual pancake dinner on **Saturday, March 21st** from **5 –7 PM**. Invite a friend, neighbor, or relative and come enjoy some yummy pancakes and fellowship!





PRAYERS NEAR AND FAR

GOOD NEWS RISING OFFERING RECIPIENTS

Please keep in prayer for the growing church of Synod of the Nile in Egypt. Pray that the church will continue to experience an ok relationship with the government to allow new church plants to be created, their community programs to flourish, and the Gospel to be preached. Also, please keep the underground Iranian Church in your prayers. That they might find safe ways to worship God, share the Gospel, and provide a refuge in this unstable time in their country.

EASTER HERE IN GASTONIA, LAKE WILEY, & CLOVER

Pray that this Easter Season be a time that challenges our community to draw closer to Christ.

ECO CHURCHES

(1) **Badin Presbyterian Church**, Albermarle. Please pray for their Holy Week and Easter programs.

(2) **Bethel Presbyterian Church**, Cornelius. Pray for their special Community Night Program on March 14 and Community Easter Egg Hunt on March 28. Also keep in prayer Bethel's mission work combating sex trafficking through Present Age Ministries, and their global partnerships in Haiti, Guatemala,

(3) **First Presbyterian Church**, Mooresville. Pray for Holy Week and Easter Programs. Mooresville's work in FEED NC, Habitat for Humanity, and work In Tanzania.





SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><u>Sundays</u> 9AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship</p>						
<p>1 5 Cents a Meal 11AM Ensemble 2:30 PM SOC</p>	<p>2 11 AM Golden Girls 5:30 PM Women's Small Group 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>3 10 AM Bible Study</p>	4	5	6	7
<p>8 2:30 PM W&S Meeting</p>	<p>9 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>10 10 AM Bible Study</p>	11	12	13	14
<p>15 2:30 PM Session Meeting 6 PM Egypt Mission Program</p>	<p>16 6:30 PM Book Chicks 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>17 10 AM Bible Study</p>	<p>18 12 PM Happy Year's</p>	<p>19 3 PM Bingo</p>	20	<p>21 5-7 PM Men's Pancake Supper</p>
<p>22 11AM Ensemble 11:45 W&C</p>	<p>23 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>24 10 AM Bible Study</p>	25	26	27	28
<p>29 PALM SUNDAY 2:30 PM Mentoring & Care Meeting</p>	<p>30 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>31 10 AM Bible Study</p>				

Union Community Church

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Non-Profit Organization
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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 1
March 21

5 Cents a Meal & Communion
Men of the Church Pancake Dinner