UNION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Union News

UNION NEWS

JUNE 2025

Dear Members and Friends of Union Church,

I am an avid reader. My wife reads too. But we read differently. At night right before bed, Vicky reads until she gets sleepy (on busy days sometimes it feels like it only takes her 5 minutes until she wants to turn off the lights). But when I read, I always want to get to "a good stopping point." Over the years, she and I have had many discussions over whether or not I should turn off my bedside light, about whether I had gotten to "a good stopping point" yet, or if I was "cheating" by reading past that next good place to stop.

Often the next best stopping place is at the end of the chapter. Most authors put chapters in for a reason after all. Chapters often mark the break of one set of ideas for another (even in a fiction book). But my favorite authors, the one's I like the best, tend to end a chapter with a question or something unresolved; something that makes the reader want to read just a little bit further to see what will happen next. I am convinced that often in the best books the end of the chapter is not the best stopping point.

Last month, Union Church unanimously voted to leave the PCUSA denomination. There is an article from the Session on page 3 of this month's newsletter about some of what the church can expect to happen next. Leaving the denomination for a handful will be joyful, for another handful it will be heartbreaking. For many it will be thought of as necessary and needed but also sad. And for others, there will be no deep feelings one way or the other.

But there is one feeling I hope that no one comes away from this vote with. I hope that no one thinks that Union has reached a stopping point. I hope that no one thinks, "I don't like what Union decided here, so I'm going to STOP going to any church." I hope that no one believes, "Well, now that we are out of the PCUSA everything will be fine. We can STOP trying to share the gospel in the community in new ways. Soon our church pews will be full." Because even though Union church may be finishing one chapter in the PCUSA denomination, I believe that we have not reached "a good stopping point."

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June Elders
Carol Beasley
Claire Cabral
Jan Meek
Jason Morrison

Communion
June 1

Stated Session
June 22

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Union Church is still in the middle of its story. Although it is starting a new chapter as part of a new denomination, the same people are in the pews, the church is still Presbyterian, and the community around the church in need of hearing the Good News of Christ this month is the same community that was here last month. Union will still sing the same hymns, still have Sunday morning classes, and will still have many of the same programs this next year that it had last year. Union is not at a good stopping point.

But there will be some new exciting opportunities ahead for the church as well. There will be new churches to partner with, ideas from a new denomination on how to reach out into the community, and a new way to focus on discipleship and evangelism to add to what we do. There will be an opportunity to try some new programs with new enthusiasm. Union is not at a good stopping point.

This month on the church calendar is Pentecost. As Union begins to embark on a new chapter of its life, let us not miss how the Holy Spirit is breathing new life into his church here at Union!! It is definitely not time to turn off those bedside lamps!

Sincerely in Christ,

Pastor James

WORSHIP IN JUNE

Ascension Sunday, Pentecost, and Trinity Sunday are important parts of the church calendar. Together these special Sundays put a spotlight on what it means to be part of the body of Christ today. Christians can be assured of their relationship with God because of God's "Triune" work. We are only able to have a relationship with God because the Holy Spirit clues us into our need to rely on the Son who the Father sent to die for our sins. Jesus ascended to Heaven to allow the Holy Spirit to permanently reside in our hearts. At the right had of God the Father, Christ can continually intercede for us before God. And here on the earth the Holy Spirit directs and empowers us, and enables us to connect to God in prayer.

On June 1, we will be wrapping up a sermon series exploring what a true gift it is to have Jesus Christ serving as our King in Heaven. Then for the rest of the month of June we will be will check out Scriptures from the Old Testament to see how the Holy Spirit's actions there connect to how the Spirit works in our hearts today!

Sermon Series: Coronation of a King

June 1-Genesis 11: 1-9, Acts 1: 1-9; "Coronation of a King… Deep and Wide"

-Ascension Sunday; Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Echoes of the Holy Spirit

June 8- Exodus 31: 1-13; "Echoes… Staying in the Flow"

-Pentecost

June 15- Judges 6: 33-7:8'; "Echoes… They are Weak but He is Strong"

-Trinity Sunday; Father's Day

June 22- Ezekiel 36: 16-32; "Echoes… Marked Fresh"

June 29- Pastor on Vacation/ guest preacher

FROM THE SESSION

For those who missed Union's hearing with the Presbytery last month, on **May 4**, **Union Presbyterian Church** voted unanimously to leave the **PCUSA denomination.** You may wonder what's next for the church. 2 specific steps are still necessary for Union to be officially "let go" from the PCUSA denomination and enter ECO.

First, the Presbytery of Western North Carolina must officially vote to approve Union's departure. This will likely happen at the next Presbytery meeting on **July 26**. The meeting is scheduled to be held virtually by Zoom. Union's Communication and Technology Committee is currently working to make sure that anyone who wishes to be a part of that meeting can do so together at the church on that day.

However, the PCUSA Book of Order does not allow a church to be released from the denomination until that church is a part of another reformed body. This means that Union will need to be made a part of ECO before PCUSA can officially release them. If everything lines up right, Union could be made a part of ECO as early as the October North Carolina ECO Presbytery meeting.

There will be other changes along the way. Most notably, Union's name will need to change. Shortly after the vote of dismissal by the Presbytery of Western North Carolina, Union's name will change on our street sign, website, Facebook, and letterhead. Union's new name will be, **"Union Community Church."** This does not mean that the church has suddenly stopped being Presbyterian (ECO is a Presbyterian denomination after all). The name change represents our continued desire to partner with and care for the community the church is a part of. It also expresses the hope of Session that Union will explore new ways to share Christ in the neighborhoods, business, and service agencies around the church for years to come. But at the same time, we wish to honor the long, long history of this church being known as Union.

If you have any questions about what any of these next steps might look like, please contact Pastor James or one of our Session elders. If you would like to learn more about the ECO denomination (**A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians**), check out their website at https://eco-pres.org.

PENTECOST SPECIAL OFFERING

The Witness and Service Committee helps Union Church with doing 3 areas of ministry. First, it organizes and leads Union in programs that serve the local community (particularly with people and groups in need). Second, it provides programs for Union to help individuals get better at sharing their faith and supports local evangelism efforts. And third, it helps the church support mission organizations throughout the world.

In recent years, Union has had two mission related special offerings. At Christmas, we have the Joy Gift Offering, where we raise money to help those in the community who fall on tough times. Then at Easter, we have the Good News Rising Offering, to support Global Missions. But Union has not had a special offering to support the "third part" of W&S's areas of focus: more localized evangelism efforts.

This year, W&S wishes to add a third yearly special offering at Pentecost to support the work of evangelism here in the United States. In the Polity section of the ECO Constitution it states that ECO continues "to order our lives by the 'Great Commission' in ECO by planting new Churches," and that "ECO churches may support church plants and church planters in a variety of ways and each ECO church is encouraged to create its own policy of how it will do so." By giving toward church planting movements, Union can support the work of individuals who are sharing their faith and bringing new believers into the church.

Our **Pentecost Special Offering** on **June 8** this year will go to **support ECO church planting** efforts in the United States. We hope you will consider giving generously to this new special offering.

BIG EVENTS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

CELEBRATING 175 YEARS OF UNION

175 years? What a momentous milestone! We hope to celebrate in some big ways. Are you willing to help organize this once in church lifetime event?

A committee is being formed to make plans for Union's 175th Anniversary Celebration which will be held on Sunday November 9. The first planning meeting will be on Sunday June 1st immediately following morning worship. If you would like to be a part of this important Committee, please contact Jan Meek as soon as possible If you have any church related historical items or pictures that you can share.

GOOD NEWS RISING OFFERING UPDATE

Last month we noted that this year's Easter Mission Offering brought in $1,164 to be divided 3 ways to support the World Renew Gift Catalog, Frontier Fellowship's work in Pakistan, and to "C" (a missionary connected to our church in Southeast Asia).

But because of your generosity in supporting the children and youth's Spring Basket Raffle, World Renew will be receiving a bit more. $783 dollars will be donated toward the World Renew Gift Catalog. The children and youth met and decided to donate 3 rabbits, 1 duck, 1 first 1000 day kit, 1 farm team, 1 chicken coop, 5 chickens, 1 batch of medicine for children, 1 herd, and 1 pond for raising fish to those in need.

Thanks for all of your support!

HELP WITH THE UNION BLESSING BOX

The Witness and Service Committee is looking for someone who would like to volunteer twice a month to shop for and purchase food for the Union Blessing Box. The Blessing Box is a program to help address hunger in the community. Come be a part of this ministry.

You buy the food out of your pocket and bring it to the church to store for use in the Blessing Box. Reimbursement from the W&S budget is done through the normal process of submitting a form with the receipt. The amount varies up to about $ 150.00, or so, twice a month.

Also, we are looking for a couple folks who want to volunteer for a set day of the week to check the box and get the food from storage to put in the box.

Please see Glenn Sparrow or Janice Meek to volunteer.

CONGRATULATION GRADUATES

Congrats 2025 Graduates!! Please keep our church's graduates in your prayers!

-High School Graduates: Lily Cabe & Jack Holeman

-College Graduates: Hannah Grigg, Kennedy Morrison, & Amanda Viola

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." — Eleanor Roosevelt

CHURCH NEWS & GOING'S ON

CELEBRATIONS COMING SOON!!

-Well Wishes On-the-Go: June 1 for Jack & Jazmin– Swing by the Gathering Area right after worship to wish them well!

-Emily Sparrow's Baby Shower: June 1, 2:30-4PM– Come to the Fellowship Hall and celebrate the joyous occasion!

-Graduation Party for Amanda Viola June 8, 11:30AM-2PM– Hurray Amanda! Come and celebrate her achievement!

PASTOR JAMES VACATION

Pastor James will be on vacation **June 26 to July 2**. If you have need for emergency pastoral care during that time, we encourage you to contact one of our elders currently serving on Session.

THANK YOU, our amazing Church Family, for your outreach and support of our "C" in SE Asia. Your prayers and monetary support mean so much to us as her family and to her as she spreads the good news of Jesus. Good News Rising is a very good name for this offering because she is sharing the good news of our Savior and His love and saving grace.

Please continue to pray for her health and safety as she goes where God guides.

WEAR RED

Have you ironed that red dress in the back of your closest, bought yourself a new pair of red socks, or found that old favorite red tie in the bottom of your dresser? Maybe you have a nice red scarf or red pair of earrings! The first 3 Sundays of June are Ascension Sunday, Pentecost, and Trinity Sunday. To celebrate, we hope you to come to worship wearing at least a little red!

CONNECTIONS CLASS

On **June 1**, the Connections Class will be having its final "regularly programing" of the school year. But have no fear, the Connection Class will be continuing to meet over the Summer. Our teachers will not be "preparing a class" over the summer months, but that's because we will be using the **Deep Connections curriculum**, exploring many of the miracles and parables of Jesus. Each week, those who attend will pop in that week's video lesson and use the provided discussion guide to talk about what the miracles and parables of Jesus can teach us about who God is and how we can follow Christ more closely! Hope you can join us!!

BibleJourney

BOOK CHICKS

Do you enjoy reading a good book? For more information or to find out what book we are reading, please reach out to Kim Morrison. Our next meeting is **Monday, June 16th at 6:30 PM.**

BINGO

This May, we wrapped up Bingo at Terrace Ridge for the school year. Bingo will start up again on the third Thursday of September. A big thank you to everyone who helped out with Bingo this last year. It truly made a difference in the lives of some grateful residence at Terrace Ridge!

WOMENS CIRCLE

The Golden Girls and Soul Sisters Circles will take a summer break and beginning meeting again in Septem-ber!

5 CENT A MEAL

Our next 5 Cent A Meal offering will be on **Sunday, June 1st during worship**. The money collected will go to support Gastonia Street Ministry.

HAPPY YEARS

Happy Years will be on **Wednesday, June 18th at 12 PM**. All ages welcomed and invite a friend.

MEN OF THE CHURCH JUNE MEETING

The next Men of the Church meeting will be **June 18 at 6 PM**. Because it is summer, the business of the Men of the Church will be light, but that does not mean that it is an evening to skip. Billy Wilson will provide an amazing meal, and Tom and Pastor James are putting together a program that you DO NOT want to miss!! Jesus says that all we need to have is faith the size of a mustard seed to move mountains. But what does that mean? How can God use each of us in powerful ways? We hope that you will join us on June 18 and get ready to be challenged and reenergized in your walk with Christ.

UNION ENSEMBLE

The final meeting of the Union Ensemble for the school year will be **June 15 at 11 AM**. The Ensemble will take a short Summer Break and then start up again in August. Thanks for everyone who was a part of this ministry this year and we can't wait to see you again next Fall!!

BABY BOTTLE BLESSINGS

The Women of the Church are sponsoring their annual "Baby Bottle Blessings" campaign. We will be collecting donations for Crisis Pregnancy Center. Baby bot-tles may be picked up any time at the church entrances beginning on **Mother's Day, May 11** and returned on **Father's Day, June 15** . We hope you will consider sup-porting this special event!

CRISIS PREGNANCY CENTER
OF GASTON COUNTY, INC.

PRAYER FOR THE COMMUNITY & WORLD

PRAYER FOR PENTECOST SUNDAY

O Holy Spirit, Love of God, pour out your grace,
and descend plentifully into my heart.
Enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling,
And scatter there your cheerful beams.

Dwell in that soul that longs to be your temple.
Water that barren soil, overrun with weeds and briars, and lost for lack of cultivating,
and make it fruitful with your dew from heaven.
Come, refreshment of those who languish and faint.

Come, Star and Guide of those who sail in the tempestuous sea of the world.
You are the only Haven of the tossed and shipwrecked.
Come, Glory and Crown of the living, and only Safeguard of the dying.
Come, Holy Spirit, in your great mercy, and make me fit to receive you. Amen.

-Source: Augustine of Hippo, Fourth Century

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Sunday **9AM** **Sunday School** **10 AM** **Worship**						
1 **5 Cents a Meal** **2:30 PM** SOC Meeting	**2** **7 PM** Men's Bible Study	**3** **10 AM** Bible Study **7 PM** B&G Meeting	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
8 **2:30 PM** W&S	**9** **7 PM** Men's Bible Study	**10** **10 AM** Bible Study	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**
15 **FATHER'S DAY**	**16** **6:30 PM** Book Chicks **7 PM** Men's Bible Study	**17** **10 AM** Bible Study	**18** **12 PM** Happy Years **6 PM** MOC Dinner	**19**	**20**	**21**
22 **11 AM** Prayer After Worship **2:30 PM** Session Meeting	**23**	**24** **10 AM** Bible Study	**25**	**26** **James on Vacation June 26-July 2**	**27**	**28**
29	**30** **James on Vacation June 26-July 2**					

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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

June 1	Communion & 5 Cents of Meal
June 22	Session Meeting