

UNION COMMUNITY CHURCH

Union News
July 2026



“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he designated apostles...”

Luke 6: 12-13

Dear friends and covenant partners of Union Community Church,

During the month of June, our discipleship challenge was “accountability.” I’ve been impressed by all the stories I’ve heard of people having surprising experiences with this challenge. I believe accountability is a VITAL and NECESSARY part of true discipleship. Now, you may wonder why I believe that I can say this. Isn’t discipleship different for everyone? How can I say that one part of discipleship is necessary for every single person?



Well, when we talk about discipleship in the church we are talking about discipleship of Jesus. And the Gospels paint a pretty clear picture of what being a disciple of Christ looked like. It’s just not the picture that I think many of us imagine. Most of us think of discipleship as the thing that happened at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus walking around asking people to drop their nets and follow him, they were drawn to Christ, and so they followed. Over time, some of the disciples just gravitated closer to Jesus than others.

But that’s not how the twelve disciples were actually chosen. The Gospels do focus on the initial callings of the twelve, but only because they were the ones who eventually become the 12. Jesus must have called a bunch of other people to follow him too... because in Luke 6, we read how Jesus stayed up all night praying and then chose from all his discipleship 12 who would have a special place with him. We don’t hear about how disciples “Steve” and “Tommy” were called by Christ at the beginning of the Gospels because they didn’t end up as one of the Apostles. That doesn’t mean that “Steve” didn’t keep following Christ. In Luke 10 we read how Jesus sent out 72 of his followers. “Steve” could have been part of that group.

So, why would Jesus hand select a dozen of his followers to be in an inner circle with him. I think it’s because that’s how discipleship actually works. In his book, “Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time,” Greg Ogden argues that Christian discipleship is fundamentally a relational process. Jesus wanted to be right there to help redirect his inner circle when they fought over which one of them was the greatest. After Jesus taught the crowds, he wanted to be able to take his inner circle aside and give more instruction. He wanted to be able to challenge this group to follow him in specialized ways and allow them to grow in a way that takes personal investment and time. Ogden writes that Jesus never wrote any of teachings down. He didn’t need to. Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit and his disciples to carry his mission forward,

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July Elders
Allison Jones
Frank Suggs
Pam Moten

Communion
July 12

Stated Session
July 19

Nursery Helpers
July 5– Kim & Allison
July 12– Pam & Twilah
July 19–Melody & Shelly
July 26– Maddie & Jordan

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Ogden wonders, based on Jesus' example, why most churches today focus on sermons and programs (like Bible classes) to make disciples. Sure, Jesus taught crowds of people. But it seems like "Jesus ministered to the crowds in order to call people out of them... Preaching is a solitary [process]. The worshiper tends to be an isolated, passive recipient of the preached word." And programs try to teach others about Jesus without paying the price of the personal investment that discipleship requires. "By putting people through programs, we foolishly hope that we can mass-produce disciples."

What does discipleship actually need? Ogden writes that Jesus' method of discipleship requires a very small group of people who trust each other to meet regularly, have the truth of God's Word discussed, have opportunities to engage in God's mission together, and most importantly allow life-changing accountability to occur. That's what Christian discipleship looks like! And accountability is both a vital and necessary part of it!

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

WORSHIP FOR JULY

I think many books and Bible Studies on the Fruit of the Spirit might get an important part of what they teach wrong. It makes it out like the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5 are some sort of "to-do" list. If I want to be a better Christian I need to work at being more peaceful or kinder or another "fruit of the Spirit-er." But Paul calls these characteristics FRUIT not the Stuff WE Have to do. Galatians 5 does not give us a check-list but a promise. If we live by the Spirit we WILL bear good fruit. This fruitfulness comes by abiding in Christ, like a branch to a grapevine, which in turns allows us to experience the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

Starting this July we will take time to explore how we might orient ourselves to God in such a way that the fruit of the Spirit might flourish in us! Come join us!!

Lectionary Series: "When in Rome..."

July 5- Romans 7: 15-25, "When in Rome... Liberty and Union: Freedom Through Christ"

July 12- Romans 8:12-27, "When in Rome... Howling Wind"
-Celebration of the Lord's Supper\

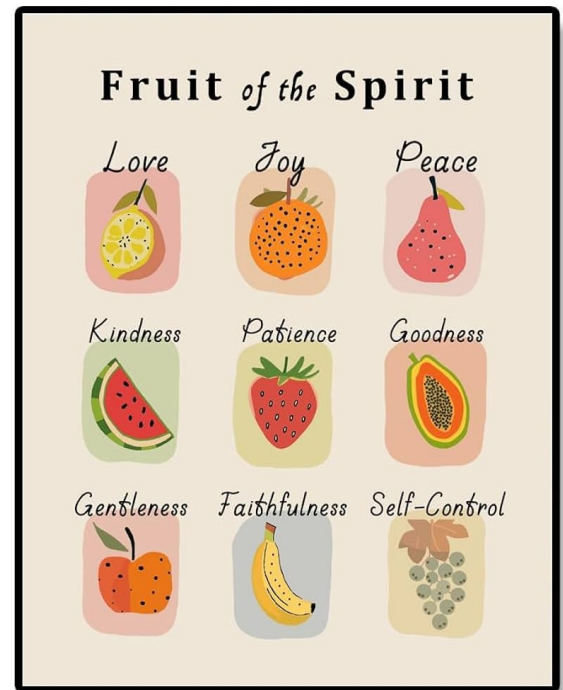
"Growing Good Fruit by Abiding in the Spirit"

July 19- Luke 10:25-37, "Abiding in the Spirit... The Greatest is Love"

July 26- John 16: 16-24, "Abiding in the Spirit... Joy that Sneaks Up on You"

August 2- James 3: 13-18, "Abiding in the Spirit... The Why of Peace"

-Celebration of the Lord's Supper



HYMNS & MORE FOR JUNE, JULY, AND AUGUST

Thanks for everyone who submitted song requests for June, July, and August! Join us for worship each week this summer as we listen to and sing our congregation's favorite worship songs and hymns!

Flourishing Team News

JULY DISCIPLESHIP CHALLENGE: PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Praying Scripture is a way of entering deeply into the Bible with a heart alert to a unique and personal word from God. Words and verses that catch our attention become invitations to be with God in prayer. When our prayers seem to be more about maintaining control and offering God our agenda for his stamp of approval, praying Scripture can return us to a simpler state of openness and attentiveness to God. We lay aside our own agendas and open ourselves to the prayers given to us in the Bible.



The book of Psalms is a wonderfully human prayer book. Here we find prayers that voice people's needs, fears, joys, sorrows, anger, loneliness, dryness and joy. The Bible also contains wonderful prayers by people like Jesus, Paul, Daniel, Mary, Moses, and Hannah. Try a few of these practices this month:



- (1) **Use a Psalm to Pray to God.** Place your name in the Psalm and change the words slightly to make it relate a little bit more to your own circumstances.
- (2) **Meditate on a Scripture passage.** Reflecting on how God revealed himself in the story. Listen for the Lord in that Bible. Then use what you learned in your prayer.
- (3) **Read a Gospel story.** Listen for the questions Jesus puts to the disciples or teaches the crowds as if they were questions he is putting to you. How would you respond in prayer?
- (4) **Adopt a Scriptural Prayer** of Daniel, Paul, Mary, Moses, Jabez, or Jesus. Personalize the prayer.

Look for the fruits of Praying Scripture as you adopt the challenge this month. As Richard Rohr states, "For Jesus, prayer seems to be a matter of waiting in love. Returning to love. Trusting that love is the bottom stream of reality."



Sat, Jul 18 | Union Community Church

ECO Women's Retreat

Join us for a day of fellowship, inspiration, and spiritual renewal as ECO women of Christ come together in faith, get to know each other, and share resources.

Registration deadline: July 13, 2026

Ladies of all ages are encouraged to attend! Visit our church website to register for this event!



5 CENT A MEAL– CAM

On the **first Sunday in July**, we have a special offering at Union to support various local missions. Our **5 Cent a Meal Offering** this month will benefit Union’s Blessing Box. Please give as you are able!



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, July 20th, at 6:30 PM.**

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING??

Looking for Older Youth Leader

— for Union Community Church —

For middle school and high school kids

Meets each Sunday

Leader duties include:

- Planning lessons
- Organizing fundraisers & mission trips
- Helping our youth grow closer to Christ

Make a difference. Build faith. Change lives.

YOU CAN HELP SHAPE THE NEXT GENERATION!

If you feel called to serve our church in this capacity, please see Allison Jones or Pastor James

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: SCHOOL TOOLS COLLECTION

SPIKE
NEEDS YOUR HELP
to
STOCK
W.A. BESS
CLASSROOMS!

MOST NEEDED ITEMS:

- GLUE STICKS
- CARD STOCK
- COLOR COPY PAPER
- CONSTRUCTION PAPER (12x18)
- POST IT NOTES (ALL SIZES)
- HOT GLUE STICKS
- SENTENCE STRIPS
- SHEET PROTECTORS
- BIRTHDAY PENCILS

Click [this link](#) or scan the QR Code to see & purchase our teachers' specific needs.

Every donation makes a difference for our students and teachers!

THANK YOU
FOR SUPPORTING OUR SCHOOL!

THANK YOU

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our church family, friends, and loved ones for the cards, meals, prayers, and phone calls shared with us during this difficult time. Your love, support, and compassion have been a great comfort to our family and we are deeply grateful for each expression of sympathy and encouragement. Love, Tammy & Family

PENTECOST OFFERING THANK YOU

Thanks to everyone who helped with our Pentecost offering this year. Your donations helped us raise \$399.00. This money will go toward church planting work of the ECO denomination. The Witness & Service Committee will let you know which church plant that money went to later in this year!

INDEPENDENCE DAY MEAL & PROGRAM

On **Sunday, July 5**, Gary McGinnis will share a brief presentation at a luncheon directly following worship on his newly published book, *Liberty and Union: Faith, Freedom, and the Struggle for the American Church*. Drawing on church records, historical documents, and personal stories, the book chronicles the history of Union Church from its nineteenth-century beginnings to the present day, while exploring the broader challenges and triumphs that have shaped the American church. Complimentary copies of the book will be distributed to those in attendance while supplies last. We hope you will join us for this special celebration of our church's past, present, and future.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Thank you to all of our VBS volunteers and participants for making this year's VBS so special. We are so grateful for the time, energy, love, and faith you shared. Thank you for helping grow our youth closer to God!



**TASTE AND SEE THAT
THE LORD IS GOOD.
BLESSED IS THE
PERSON WHO GOES
TO HIM FOR SAFETY.
PSALM 34:8 (NIRV)**

PRAYER FOR OUR COMMUNITY & WORLD

The Flourish team is hard at work putting together a set of future outreach strategies into the community (to present to Session and the Congregation). Please keep the Flourish team in prayer as they seek to discern where God might be leading us. The Possible Plans:

- (1) LIBRARY FAMILY HELPING HANDS
- (2) PARTNERS WITH YOUNG LIFE @ FORESTVIEW
- (3) BIBLE CLUB LEADERS @ BESS
- (4) FORESTVIEW SPORT TEAM PARTNERS



Also, keep in prayer our men's ministry, as they are prayerfully considering how the money raised from their Chicken and Dumpling Event might minister to the community. And keep in prayer our women as they prepare to host a community women's event for the ECO churches nearby!

Please also keep in prayer churches within ECO-

Lenoir Presbyterian Church in Lenoir- Please pray for the church's search for a new pastor. Lenoir is in the middle of a pastor search. Please pray that they find the right fit! LPC also is when of Flourish team partners (they started the Flourish program with ECO the same time we did). Pray for discernment as they move forward with their goals!

Marshville Presbyterian Church in Marshville- Pray for Marshville's pastor and other leaders. Fill them with wisdom, discernment, and courage. Pray for their congregation and that they would be filled with unity, truth, fellowship, and with hands eager to serve.

New Gilead Reformed Church in Concord- Please keep in prayer New Gilead's small group ministries (Young at Heart Friends and Thursday Night Friends). Keep in prayer their pastor, Kevin Davis (who has been with them just a little over a year). And keep in prayer their ongoing Meals on Wheels ministry.



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><u>Sundays</u> 9AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship</p>			1	2	3	4
<p>5 5 Cents a Meal CAM 2:30 PM SOC Meeting</p>	<p>6 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>7 No Bible Study</p>	8	9	10	11
<p>12 1 PM Infrastructure 2:30 PM W&S Meeting</p>	<p>13 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>14 No Bible Study</p>	15	16	17	<p>18 8 AM WOMEN'S ECO GATHERING</p>
<p>19 2:30 PM Session</p>	<p>20 6:30 PM Book Chicks 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>21 10 AM Bible Study</p>	22	23	24	25
<p>26 11:45AM W&C Meeting 2:00 PM M&C Meeting</p>	<p>27 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>28 10 AM Bible Study</p>	29	30	31	

Union Community Church

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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



July 5 5 Cents a Meal
Independence Day Celebration
July 12 Communion
July 19 Stated Session Meeting