



October 2026

Union Community Church

UNION NEWS

Dear Friends and Covenant Partners of Union,

One of my favorite worship songs is “Above All,” by LeBlanc and Baloché. But the song is not without problems. It ends with the words “You [Christ] took the fall [on the cross]/ and thought of me/ above all.” Really? On the cross, Jesus was only thinking about me, James Holeman? What about saving all of humanity? What about glorifying God with his actions? From his own last words, we know that he was also thinking about a thief, his mom, the crowds, and whether or not he would drink some wine. Other songs and hymns have problems as well. Take the song “Blessed Assurance,” by Crosby and Palmer. The second and third verses use the phrase, “perfect submission,” to describe our relationship with God. This side of heaven, can you say that you PERFECTLY submit to God? None of us are perfect!

Amy Gannett, in her book, “Fix Your Eyes,” writes that theology (the pursuit of learning more about God) and worship (the way that relationship with God forms our behaviors and lives) go hand in hand. Gannett argues that EVERYONE is a theologian, because everyone believes something about God. Our understandings of God can be formed from Scripture, our families, our church, our friends, the books we read, the movies we watch, the songs we sing, and the stuff we think about. The question is not if we are theologians but whether we are good ones. Our worship (the way we live our lives), should come out of who Scripture says God is and what he wants from us, not anywhere else!

Even with messy lyrics, I still love the songs “Above All” and “Blessed Assurance.” When I get to the end of “Above All,” I always change the lyric in my head from “above all” to “above himself and sin.” It isn’t that Jesus thought only about me on the cross... but he did think about all humanity (including me) above himself and the trappings of this world. That’s even better than what the lyrics of the song actually say. When I sing “Blessed Assurance,” I always remember the words from the first verse about how this life is “a foretaste” of what is to come. We may not perfectly submit to God today... but we will one day. And in the meantime, we can get small tastes of it in this world. What Good News! May the way we live our lives always stem from whom Scripture explains God to be, not the other way around!

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James



Highlights in this Issue

Older Youth Fall 2026
Schedule

Special Events in October
& November
Fall Carnival & Auction

New Mission & Vision
Statement

Forestview Tailgate Event

October Elders

ALLISON JONES
PAM MOTEN
FRANK SUGGS

Nursery Helpers

OCT. 4- VICKY & FIONA
OCT. 11- KIM & MADDIE
OCT. 18- MELODY & SHELLY
OCT. 25- ALLISON & JORDAN

5615 Union Road, Gastonia, NC 28056
Office phone: 704.864.7681
Webpage: union-communitychurch.com

Office Hours 2 PM—5 PM
Tuesday and Thursday

Session Updates

NEW MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

Last month Session officially voted for our new Mission and Vision Statement:

Mission Statement: **“Go and Grow Disciples.”**

Vision Statement: **“Union Seeks to be Rooted in Christ, branching into the Community, and Flourishing Every Season.”**

This month, Session cleaned up our church’s current 3 year goals (connected to what the Flourish Team has been working with the Session on for the last year):

Mentorship: *Walking beside one another through care, connection, and shared faith.*

1. Create a Mentorship & Care Committee focused on congregational care and mentoring others.
2. Create a mentorship program that connects adults with children and youth to teach one another practical skills.
3. Create a mentor pathway that helps visitors connect with Union and take steps toward becoming covenant partners
4. Offer opportunities for people to learn more about and practice sharing their faith with others.

Outreach: *Building ongoing relationships and sharing Christ's love beyond our walls.*

1. Eliminate or modify our relationship with supported ministries that do not include an ongoing, hands-on element.
2. Develop ongoing relational ministries at Bess Elementary, Forestview High School, the Union Public Library, and new neighborhoods in a one-mile radius of Union Church. These relationships should create natural opportunities to share invitations to Union church and the Good News of Christ.
3. Examine Union Church’s current ministries to identify those that can best help new families connect within the church.

Discipleship: *Growing deeper with Christ through spiritual practice, worship, and accountability.*

1. Offer quarterly events at Union where the entire congregation can learn about and practice different spiritual practices together.
2. Offer monthly discipleship challenges for covenant partners and friends of the church to try.
3. Educate one another about how to develop growing spiritual rhythms in our walk with God.
4. Grow Union’s musical program to provide more individuals with opportunities to lead in worship and move toward hiring a music director.
5. Encourage established groups to add a small group accountability element.
6. Create a new small-group accountability ministry that encourages new members to participate.

Flourish Team News: Union Hosts a Tailgate Party for Forestview FCA and Young Life

On **Friday, October 23**, Union will host our first **Tailgate Party** for students from **Forestview** before the school's last home football game. We'll gather in the upper parking lot by **5:45 PM** and enjoy food and games from **6:00 until kickoff!**

We are partnering with two of Forestview's Christian student organizations to invite students: Young Life and Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). This endeavor is specifically designed to be welcoming to students who might participate in these Christian activities connected with school, but also might not have a home church.

How can you help? Bring your vehicle and park in the upper parking lot. Hand out food or drink items that you've brought for your "tailgate." These can be as simple as a cup of lemonade or as fancy as "walking tacos," or anything in between. You might bring outdoor games like cornhole or KanJam. Chat with the kids as they visit the tailgates and play games. Talk to them about Union. Pray for them as they head off to the football game!



the
BLESSING
BOX
FOOD PANTRY

Witness & Service Updates

5 Cent a Meal: On the first Sunday in October our special offering recipient will be our **Blessing Box**. In November, the recipient will be Crisis Assistance Ministry.

The Witness & Service Commitment would like to thank **Ann Dameron** for taking a leadership role with our Blessing Box, serving as the main Blessing Box contact, helping coordinate our restocking volunteers, and making sure we have enough food items.

Infrastructure Updates

Service Sunday

Our annual **Service Sunday** is **October 18**, beginning at **9 AM**. The project list will include both indoor and outdoor jobs. We will publish the list in time for you to choose the project and location that suits you best. Come join us in the Sanctuary at 9 AM to start the morning with worship!

Stewardship Campaign

The 2026 Stewardship campaign will start in mid-October with pledges turned in during Worship on **Dedication Sunday, November 22, 2026**. You will receive a letter and pledge card by mail. Additional pledge cards will be available at the Sanctuary entrances. As you prayerfully consider your pledge, reflect on the ways Union has flourished over the past year. Let us celebrate our ECO denomination, the friends we have made nationally, within our NC Presbytery and the friends we made at the NC ECO Women's Retreat, plus Threads, the new Sunday School class, that began in September. As we move into 2027 with gratitude and joy, let us continue to grow and deepen our personal discipleship. God has a mission and God's mission has a church. Go and grow disciples.

Strengthening of the Church Updates



Coed Volleyball

Begins September 28.

Come out, get active, have some fun, and enjoy fellowship with friends and church family!



Get Moving Exercise & Line Dance

Meets every Wednesday evening from 7:00–8:00 p.m. Come ready to move, laugh, and enjoy some great fellowship!



Book Chicks

Meets Monday, October 19. If you enjoy reading and good conversation, come join this wonderful group!



Happy Years

Meets Wednesday, October 21, at 12:00 NOON. We will be enjoying a Taco Bar! Please bring a side dish or dessert to share. Come hungry and ready for a great time together!

There's a Place for You!

As a committee, our goal is to provide opportunities for everyone to feel connected and involved in the life of Union Community Church. Whether you come to exercise, play a game, share a meal, read a book, participate in a children's activity, or simply enjoy fellowship with one another, *there is a place for you!*

We encourage everyone to invite a friend, neighbor, or family member to join us. Together, we can continue to build a stronger church family through

faith, fellowship, service, and love.



Game Club

Date and time TBA.

Stay tuned for more information. We look forward to getting together for some fun and fellowship!



Fall Carnival

Friday, October 30.

We are looking forward to a fun-filled evening for our church family and community. Be watching for more details as the date approaches!



Kids of the Kingdom

Regular meeting on Sunday, October 11.

We are excited to see our children continue to grow in faith, friendship, and their love for the Lord.



Pumpkin Party

Sunday, October 25.

We are looking forward to a fun and exciting time with our kids!



Older Youth

Meets each Sunday from 3:30–5:00 p.m.

More information will be announced soon.

Strengthening the Church Committee
Union Community Church

October Discipleship Challenge: Unity

Unity is defined as the mark that demonstrates to the world that the body of Christ is one organism, with one faith, one home, one baptism, one God, and one Father of all. Unity lives out the reality that Christ has already reconciled all things to himself. So in him we belong to one another. Psalm 133:1 says, “How very good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity.”

The When and Why

The purpose is to live in harmony with Christ’s desire for the church to be one; to be a bridge-builder and peacemaker in the body of Christ. Jesus’ longest recorded prayer is all about oneness with God and one another. Oneness with one another is different than simply knowing each other. Oneness is about participation in each other’s lives. Our unity doesn’t depend on the quality of our lives; we are one because we belong to and are one with Christ. Christians are to live the radical unity, a reality Jesus inaugurated. So let’s heed the Holy Spirit’s call to live as children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, and as a family of our Father who is in heaven. “As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18).

Try one of the following:

1. Continually pray for peace and unity within the church.
2. Plan to attend Union’s church service on Sunday, October 4th, for World Communion Sunday.
3. Study the “one anothers” found in Scripture and begin living out a different “one anothers” each week. (Several examples: Love one another, encourage one another, care for one another, live in harmony with one another, be hospitable to one another, forgive one another, and belong to one another).
4. Work with believers from other Christian traditions to achieve kingdom purposes.
5. As much as it depends on you, make peace with a fellow believer you are separated from. How does what you are doing reflect Jesus’ prayer in John 17? What is it like for you to make peace?



Worship & Commitment Updates

The Worship & Commitment Committee would like to remind everyone that the **first Sunday of October is World Communion.**

In September, we had Communion by Intinction. In October, we will have Communion by passing of the plate. The committee has decided to alternate every other month. It has been a while since we've done Intinction, and we are always open to suggestions on how it can go more smoothly! Thanks!



DON'T MISS OUT

A vibrant, cartoon-style banner for a Fall Festival. The top section features a wooden sign with the words "FALL FESTIVAL" in large, bold, yellow letters with a red outline. Below this, a smaller sign reads "UNION COMMUNITY CHURCH". A red banner with white text says "FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30". Below that, a black banner with white text says "6:00-7:30 PM". A wooden sign lists activities: "Games • Cake Walk • Hayrides • Hot Dogs • Nachos". The bottom section features a blue banner with white text saying "7:30-8:00 PM" and a large orange banner with black text saying "Trunk or Treat". The background is a colorful illustration of a fall festival scene with pumpkins, hay bales, a red and white striped tent, a green tractor, and a church in the distance. The entire banner is decorated with string lights and autumn leaves.



Please Keep this NEW ECO Church in your Prayers:

Thyatira Presbyterian Church at **Millbridge** in **Salisbury** is a new church that joined ECO and our Presbytery last month. Please pray for them as they seek to fulfill their mission to share God's love with joyful hearts, praising voices, open arms, and serving hands. You can get to know Thyatira at thyatirapresbyterian.org. You might pray specifically for their partnership with the Mwandi Mission in Zambia, Africa; their support to Meals on Wheels in Rowan; and their help with Carewear (a nationwide nonprofit that shows compassion through giving out handmade gifts to those in need).

Prayer for the World & Global Missionaries-

We invite you to be in prayer for some ECO Missionaries that Union church has begun following. **Chris and Kim Todd** have been ministering to **Syrian Refugees** in Lebanon since 2012. Due to the increased violence in Lebanon, they are in the process of moving into Syria itself (with many of the refugees).

Chris is a graduate of the Arab Baptists Theological Seminary, holds an MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from UWA, is a registered mental health counseling intern in the state of Florida, and is an ECO pastor. Chris and Kim provide training to local Christian mental health workers working with individuals suffering from PTSD. Since the outbreak of war, 65% of Syria's population have been displaced from their homes. Countless have witnessed horrors impossible to forget. Researchers estimate that 99% of Syrian's population experience at least one symptom of PTSD.

Chris and Kim teach a MESE Fast Therapy scripted treatment plan (similar to what is used for many U.S. soldiers suffering from PTSD). As part of their treatment, their program also shares the Good News of Jesus. Those who come to know Christ thru their work are connected to local churches. Please be in prayer for Chris and Kim and for the new headquarters/ training center they are establishing in Damascus.



Also, continue to be in prayer for the unreached people groups mentioned this last month in worship: **the Chhimba and Daroga of Pakistan, the Machhi Mitna, Mahratta, Kunbi, Mai, Tai Man, Malayekandi, and Tamboli of India, the Comorian of Comoros, the Ta Oi of Laos, and the Dai of Bangladesh.**

Worship For October

Lectionary Series: "Philippians... This is Living"

September 20- Philippians 1: 21-30, "This is Living... Suffering with Belief"
September 27- Philippians 2: 1-13, "This is Living... Emptying to be Filled"
October 4- Philippians 3:4b-14, "This is Living... Loss for Gain"
-World Communion Sunday; Celebration of the Lord's Supper
October 11- Philippians 4: 1-9, "This is Living... Practice for Peace"



October 18- Service Sunday

Sermon Series: "David A Man After God's Own Heart"

October 25-1 Samuel 16:1-13, "After God's Own Heart.... Bypass Surgery"
November 1- 1 Samuel 17:32-40, "After God's Own Heart.... Big Heart"
-Celebration of the Lord's Supper by Intinction



Finance Corner

FINANCIAL REPORT AS. OF AUGUST 30, 2026

	<u>June</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Revenue.	\$18,338	\$150,936
Expenses	19,960	141,978
	-1,622	+8,958

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Non-budgeted expenses FYI:

- Paid the second payment of \$3000 to Presbytery of WNC.*
- Received a receipt stating payment applied to Helene Relief*
- As with our home expenses, our utility bills are higher than normal for this period.*

*Thank you for your continued support! We are so blessed!!
Where God Guides, He provides. Isaiah 58:11*

*Martha Simmons – Disbursing Treasurer
Jason Morrison – Treasurer*

STICK ON YOUR FRIDGE YOUTH NEWS



The calendar is a colorful poster for Union Community Church's Older Youth. It features a header with the church name and 'OLDER YOUTH CALENDAR' in large, bold letters. The phrase 'Invite a friend!' is written in a script font. The calendar is divided into three sections for October, November, and December, each with a distinct background and decorative elements. October has a warm orange and yellow theme with autumn leaves. November has a cool blue theme with snow and evergreen trees. December has a green and white theme with snowflakes and a Christmas tree. Icons like a volleyball, a cross, a speech bubble, musical notes, sneakers, and a group of people are scattered around the top. A pumpkin is featured next to the Fall Carnival event. The bottom of the calendar includes a message about the holiday break and the resumption of youth activities in January.

UNION COMMUNITY CHURCH

OLDER YOUTH CALENDAR

Invite a friend!

OCTOBER

- OCT 2** **Friday Night Fun**
October 2, 7–9 PM
- OCT 11** **Sunday, October 11**
Regular Youth, 3:30–5 PM
- OCT 18** **Sunday, October 18**
Regular Youth, 3:30–5 PM
- OCT 23** **Friday Night Fun — October 23**
6 PM Football Tailgate
Haunted Trail 7–9 PM
- OCT 29** **Thursday, October 29**
Decorate Fellowship Hall, 7 PM
- OCT 30** **Friday, October 30**
Carnival, 5–9 PM

Fall Carnival

NOVEMBER

- NOV 8** **November 8**
Regular Youth, 3:30–5 PM
- NOV 15** **November 15**
Regular Youth, 3:30–5 PM
- NOV 20** **Friday Night Fun**
November 20, 7–9 PM

DECEMBER

- DEC 6** **December 6**
Christmas Event, details TBD

Break for the holidays • Older Youth resumes January 10