November 2026

Union Community Church

# UNION NEWS

Dear Friends and Covenant Partners of Union,

When November comes, prayer fills my mind. I think my brain always does this: November equals Thanksgiving, which equals being thankful, which equals prayer...

Recently, I have been taking time in my walk with God to explore the prayers in the book of Psalms more. And while reading the book "Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer," by Eugene Peterson, some of my previous thoughts about prayer have been challenged. Peterson writes in the first chapter, "God speaks to us; our answers are our prayers."

Do you believe that? I guess I have always imagined prayer as the thing we lift up to God. Then we wait for God to respond. He might respond to our prayers in Scripture, through the words of a friend, in a miracle, or a new sense of peace. But Peterson argues that if we think about prayer as primarily a private conversation that we initiate with God, our prayer could end up egocentric and isolated, sort of like talking to yourself on a phone. Because God is sovereign, he's already had a hand in everything that we might pray about. Every blessing comes from him. He's aware of every trial we face. Our prayers don't tell God anything new. Prayers are a response to how God has already entered and spoken into our lives.

What a prayer-altering idea! Prayer is not about us trying to initiate a conversation with a far-away God, then sitting around hoping he will respond. Prayer is about responding to a God who is already at work in and around our lives. Our prayers might lament what is happening, or desire for God to do things differently, or even thank him for a blessing he's given. But regardless, it is God who first spoke and is at work; our prayers are simply a response!

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

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

## Highlights in this Issue

Crossroads Kids Club Volunteer Opportunity

November Discipleship Challenge

Committee Updates

Upcoming Events

## November Elders

CAROL BEASLEY
CLAIRE CABRAL
GARY MCGINNIS

## Nursery Helpers

NOV 1- SALLY & KIM
NOV 8- PAM & TWILAH
NOV. 15-MELODY & SHELLY
NOV. 22- MADDIE & JORDAN
NOV. 29- ALLISON & KIM

Office Hours 2 PM—5 PM
Tuesday and Thursday

# Infrastructure Updates: Caring for Our Church Home

The Church Infrastructure Committee extends our heartfelt thanks to all of our members for your generous tithes and continued support. Your faithful giving helps keep our doors open, the lights on, and our building comfortable for weekly worship services, meetings, Bible studies, and other ministries.

As we prepare for the upcoming winter weather, we will be **inspecting all of our HVAC units this month** to ensure that our equipment is functioning properly and ready for the season.

We also encourage **everyone who uses our facilities to report any nonfunctioning lights, switches, or other electrical concerns.** Prompt reporting helps us address problems before they become larger or more costly repairs.

The electrical outlet serving the outdoor water fountain is currently under repair and will be winterized soon. The lower outlet is below grade, allowing water to seep into the socket and cause repeated short circuits. We are aware of the issue and are working to correct it.

Please also **check faucets, toilets, and other plumbing fixtures after use to ensure that water is not left running**. If you notice leaks, plumbing concerns, or any other repairs that need attention, please let us know.

Thank you for helping us care for Union Community Church and for your continued generosity and support.

# Service Sunday

Thank you to everyone who participated in **Service Sunday!** We are grateful for the time, energy, and care you shared. Your work made a difference at our church and throughout the community. It was wonderful to see everyone serving together. Through your kindness, you were the hands and feet of Jesus. Thank you for showing God's love to others!

# Witness & Service Updates

The Witness and Service Committee has some exciting news for November.
Our annual **Angel Tree** project buys Christmas gifts for children in foster care or family care through the Least of These organization. We are responsible for 25 children. Least of These provides a wish list from each child. You, or several of you as a team, can adopt a child and fulfill their wishes. The tree will be located in the Gathering area with lists and tags to hang on the tree. If you like, you can purchase individual items instead of the whole list. The gifts will go to Least of These on **November 21, 2026.**

The missionary Union Church has supported has returned home from the field for the next six months. We found another mission team to support. **Rev. Chris and Kim Todd live in Damascus, Syria,** where they work in home church planting, evangelism, and trauma therapy training focused mainly on the treatment of anxiety, depression, and PTSD in Syrians affected by war or other types of violence. Chris is an ordained ECO pastor. He is a graduate of Arab Baptist Theological Seminary with a Master of Religion, an MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from UWA, and an EdD in Traumatology from Liberty University. He is a Registered Mental Health Counselor in Florida. We look forward to sharing reports on his work in the coming year. This last month, Session approved sending $1000 to support this ministry.

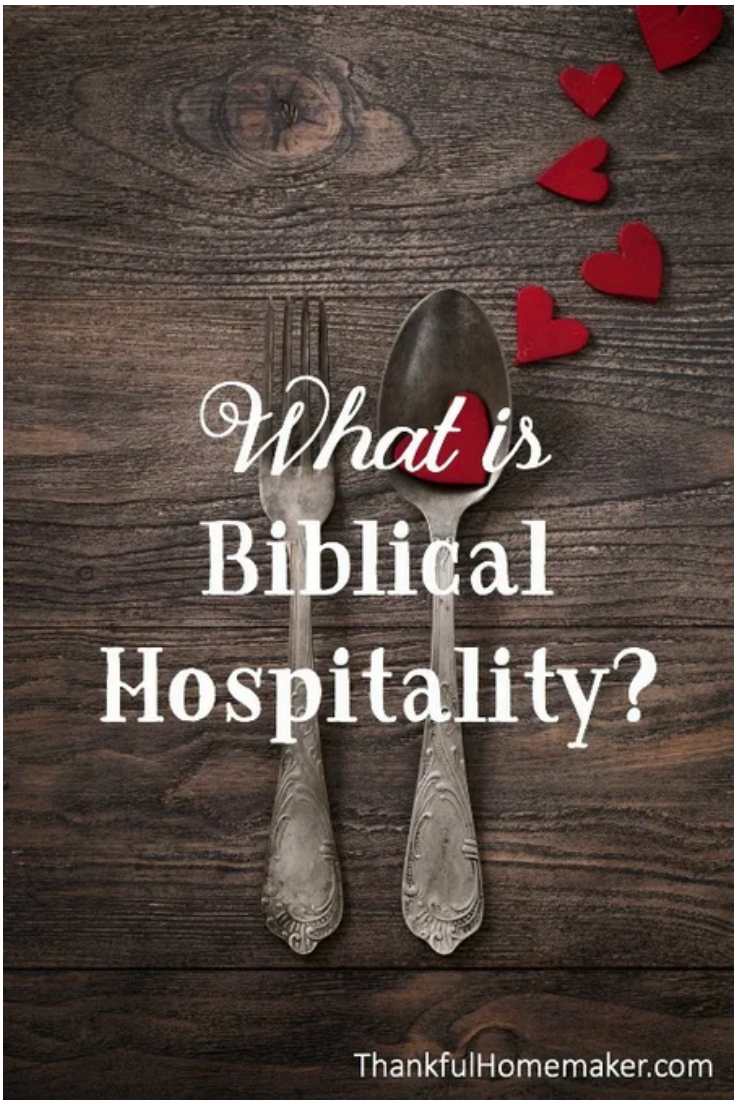
Your Witness and Service team has also been exploring a **partnership with a church in Egypt**. Through the NC Presbytery Global Engagement team and the Synod of the Nile, Egypt Pastoral, Outreach and Mission Council (POMC) we have a church that is a good match for us. **Shubra El-Sharqia Evangelical Church in Cairo, Egypt,** is a local congregation of 200 with a heart not only for worship and pastoral care, but also for reaching beyond the walls of the church with the transforming message of Jesus Christ. We look forward to the monthly communication with Shubra El-Sharqia Evangelical church to see how much we have in common and learn from each other. Our denomination, ECO, is a partner with the Synod of the Nile, Egypt. We will be one of four ECO churches in NC with an Egyptian partner church. We look forward to sharing updates with you.

# November Discipleship Challenge: Hospitality

This month, accept the challenge “Hospitality.” The world seems to become more dangerous every day. People feel vulnerable in their own homes and on guard in the presence of others. True welcome and nurture seem like a long-lost dream. But because we have been welcomed into the love of Christ and received as dearly loved children, we can offer the world a place of safety and healing. We can incarnate the welcoming heart of God for the world. God welcomes strangers, inviting them to share his home and get to know his family.

## The Practice: Try One of the Following

1. HOLIDAY HOSPITALITY- As you gather with friends and family for the holiday season, focus on hospitality with everyone you encounter. What would it look like to be more focused on offering Jesus’ welcome to any and all than on a perfectly decorated home, a perfectly worded retort to someone with an opposing opinion, or a perfectly planned meal?
2. PRAYERS OF BLESSING- Develop the practice of praying for the people you invite to your home. Pray for them as they arrive. Pray for them as they leave your driveway.
3. SPREAD THE LOVE- Help the children in your life grow in understanding God’s hospitable heart. Help them plan a gathering with their friends. Encourage them to think about what will make each one feel most welcome.
4. CHURCH HOSPITALITY- Come to the Sing For Your Supper event with the Forestview Concert Choir on Nov. 19 or the joint Thanksgiving service with Sandy Plains Baptist on Nov. 22. As you fellowship with people who don’t attend Union Church, focus on extending the welcoming heart of God for the world.



# Worship & Commitment Updates

**Share Your Musical Gifts in Worship!**

-From the Worship & Commitment Committee

Music is a beautiful way to praise God, share our faith, and enrich our worship services! The Music team, under the Worship & Commitment Committee, invites everyone to consider sharing their musical gifts with our church family.

Whether you enjoy singing in the choir, playing handbells, offering a solo or duet, participating in a small musical group, or sharing another musical talent, there is a place for you! All ages and experience levels are welcome.

You don't have to be a professional musician to make a meaningful contribution. Your willingness to share your gifts can inspire others and help make our worship services even more special.

-If you have a musical talent you'd like to share, or if you're interested in learning more about opportunities to participate, please reach out to the Music Team.

Let's lift our voices, share our talents, and make a joyful noise together!

# Mentorship & Care Committee:

Sometimes being the hands, feet, and heart of Jesus looks like something very simple - a friendly visit, a caring smile, and a small treat delivered to someone who can't easily leave home.

The Mentorship and Care Committee had a wonderful opportunity to bless our shut-ins by preparing and delivering a **Fall treat basket** to them in October as a tangible reminder that they are loved, remembered, and an important part of our church family. For those delivering the treats, it was an opportunity to experience the joy that comes from serving others.

## Please Keep these ECO Churches in your Prayers:

**Waxhaw Presbyterian Church**- Please keep in prayer the church's ministry in the community of Waxhaw, NC, and their Child Development Center.

**Waypoint Community Church**- Please keep Lead Pastor, Wes Barry, in your prayers. Also pray for their upcoming adult mission trip to Peru in January and their ministry support of the Barnabas Counseling Center and Charlotte Young Life.

**Westminster Presbyterian Church**- Please keep Senior Pastor, Owen Stepp, in your prayers. Also, please keep in prayer Westminster's upcoming Women's Retreat and Faith and Fatherhood Workshop this November.

## Prayer for Church Mission-

**Chris and Kim Todd:** Please keep Chris and Kim Todd in prayer as they minister in Damascus, Syria. Below is a recent message from Chris about the new ministry center they are starting in Damascus:

"This month our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will dwell in our ministry center here in Damascus and make it Holy Ground. We pray that each soul who enters our door will realize they have stepped into another Kingdom, one that is different than any they have known before. We pray that their encounter with the Kingdom of God will leave them forever changed and born again in the Kingdom of Jesus."

**Least of These:** Please keep Least of These in your prayers. Not only is this a busy time of the year for Least of These because of their Angel Tree and Foster Child Christmas Giveaway Events, but Least of These is also working to open up a several area Thrift Stores in the near future.

# KEEPING UNION CHURCH SAFE AND SECURE

The Union Community Church Safety Committee invites you to **lunch** and a **congregational safety discussion** on **Sunday, November 15, 2026,** immediately after worship in Fellowship Hall.

After a brief overview, we'll share concerns and ideas in small groups and discuss practical ways to prepare for emergencies while keeping our church safe and welcoming. No special experience is needed—every perspective matters. Lunch will be provided, and all are welcome.

Union Community Church Safety Committee

# Special Thanks

It was rough when I broke my heel and had to have surgery late September to fix it. But we are lucky to have help. Pastor James was kind enough to drive me over to Mercy Hospital in Charlotte, and he came back to pick me up and got me home. I'm grateful. Junior Thompson was generous enough to make sure we got to the pharmacy before my surgery so both of us had our medication. Kathy and Steve Kytle, who helped get Mom to the hospital and home, took me to pre-surgery doctor visits, grocery shopping, and so much more. The Care & Mentorship Committee has been incredibly thoughtful, especially with the Fall gift basket that cheered me up greatly. Meal assistance has been invaluable, too, taking a stress away and making my recovery start off right. Thank you to everyone who has been involved.
Kelly Digh

Dear Union Church,
My family and I would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest appreciation and thanks for the kindness you have shown us during Pastor Appreciation Month.

Your notes, kind words, gift cards, and generous gifts have touched our lives. But what touches me most is seeing the Christian witness you share through prayerful prayers, a deep desire to serve as God's hands and feet, and continued bold steps in personal discipleship.

My family thanks God for you and is privileged to serve alongside such a wonderful church community. May God continue to guide each of you.

In Christ's service,
Pastor James

# Worship For November

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

**November 1**- 1 Samuel 17:32–40, "After God's Own Heart…. Big Heart"
-Celebration of the Lord's Supper by Intinction
**November 8**- 1 Samuel 24:1–22, "After God's Own Heart… What's Done in the Shadows"
-Veterans Day Sunday
**November 15**- 2 Samuel 6:12–23 & Psalm 103, "After God's Own Heart… Fill 'er Up"
**November 22**- 2 Samuel 12:1–13 & Psalm 51, "After God's Own Heart… Broken Hearted"
-Christ the King Sunday

**Sermon Series: "The Carols of Christmas…. More Than Meets the Ear"**

**November 29**- John 4: 7-26, "More Than Meets the Ear… Come Thou Long Expected Jesus"
-The First Sunday of Advent
**December 6**- John 1: 1-14, "More Than Meets the Ear… What Child is This"
-The Second Sunday of Advent; Celebration of the Lord's Supper

# Finance Corner

**Financial Report as of September 30, 2026**

| | June | Year to Date |
|---|---|---|
| Revenue. | $16,830 | $167,766 |
| Expenses | 20,015 | 161,994 |
| | -3,185 | 5,772 |

***Major budgeted (B) and non-budgeted (NB) items to date:***

***Payment to Presbytery $3,000 (B)***
***HVAC Maintenance agreement 2,653 (NB)***
***Security Services 1,800 (NB)***

*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*

# Crossroads Kids Club

Your Flourishing Team has permission from Session to explore your interest in volunteering for an outreach program at Bess Elementary School. We have the opportunity to start a Crossroads Kids Club at Bess.

Started in 1998 as a church-based program, in the fall of 1999, Crossroads realized that Christian clubs could meet legally inside of schools, after school. Instead of bussing children off campus to a local church, the local church could go to the children.

The gospel came to the children instead of asking the children to come to the gospel. This simple shift became the foundation of the Crossroads model and reflects the heart of the Great Commission, which is the foundation of our Union mission statement: Go and Grow Disciples.

At every Crossroads Club, children journey through the Bible and discover what it means to follow Jesus. They experience the love of a caring community. They develop fruit-of-the-Spirit character. They connect with a local church family.

The Club would meet for about 90 minutes once a week after school at Bess. The program uses Bible stories and lessons to teach character development and life skills. Through engaging activities such as music, crafts, games, and storytelling, children explore values like love, kindness, patience, and self-control in a fun, supportive environment. The program is always free of charge to the kids and open to children from all backgrounds.

We would need a minimum of two adult mentors each week for each small group of five to eight kids. More if the program grows. We won't get the ball rolling until we know we can staff it.

**Do you feel called to serve??**
Please let Frank Suggs know if you're interested in helping to grow young disciples at fsuggs@triad.rr.com, text at 336-406-5190, or in person at church.
Crossroads Kids Club website:
https://www.crossroadskidsclub.com/

CROSS ROADS
KIDS • CLUB

# DON'T MISS OUT!!