

Merry Christmas

THE NEWSLETTER

December 2020

Christmas Blessing for every Member & Friend of Union

2020 has been a difficult year for everyone. But you and I are still alive. Nearly 300,000 Americans' are not. God gave me the greatest gift ever when he sent His Son to save me, give me a "calling" and put my girls and all of you into my life.

I'm sure you have a story of God's faithfulness also. We are alive! We can be certain that God still wants to use us for His Kingdom work. Each of us should count our blessings and ask God how we can say thank you with our time, talent and treasure.

At Christmas we received the greatest gift ever given! For God so loved you, that he sent His Son to the door of your heart and you invited Him in. God saved you for heaven, to be with Him forever, and that means something. It's personal! God made you, shaped you, gifted you, called you and saved you for His purpose.

Romans 6:30 (TLB) says, "Give yourselves to God – every part of you – for you are back from death and you want to be tools in the hands of God, to be used for His good purposes." We are our best when we are giving! We are most like God when we are giving. Made in God's image, I have a desire to make my life count!

We have received so many blessing and miracles from God, the greatest, eternal life! A group of believers came to me and have once again offered to match every dollar we give to "Union's Christmas Match Offering." I am asking you to count your blessings, pray what you can invest to Union's ministry and mission, and write a check as your "Thank You" to God. We have an opportunity to double our Christmas/End of the Year gifts to God's kingdom work here at Union.

Because of Covid our giving is dramatically down. I am believing God for a \$100,000 offering for God's mission here. Think about it ... a \$50 gift becomes \$100. \$100 becomes \$200. A \$500 gift becomes \$1,000. \$1,000 becomes \$2,000 and \$5,000 becomes \$10,000, etc. Remember every gift matters...this year more than ever. Please mark your donation "Christmas Match." Count your blessings and give from your heart!

God Bless You With A Grateful Heart

Pastor Bill Breylinger (Lead Pastor)



It just so happens that I am writing this article for our newsletter on the same day that my daughter turns 19 years old! Most of today will be spent reminiscing through those years and recalling so many great memories we have made together in our family. I also can't help but think in terms of the Creative Arts here at Union when it comes to looking back at 19 years and contemplating where we go from here.

Covid has changed our lives in so many ways and at times it seems almost impossible to see the light at the end of all this mess. This past year has brought much disappointment to Sydney as during her senior year, she wasn't able to do so many things that would normally occur for someone her age. And we see the struggle with Union as well. The Arts has struggled to keep going mainly because this is a ministry that is so involved in working together in groups. However, like Sydney...we have kept going and will continue in every way we can! Specials and Praise have continued to provide for worship and I thank all those who are involved. Before you know it, we will all look back and see that this was an interruption that probably will make us all better in the long run.

The Creative Arts will soon be running at full capacity and will be returning to those great events that made this ministry so unique and special. The Voices of Truth Choir will once again fill the stage with heart-felt inspiration through words and music. The worship orchestra will make our congregational singing complete. A drama club will be re-instated as well as speech and music classes for all ages. Productions on the same scale as past examples of GODSPELL, THE MUSIC OF ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER, GENERATIONS, ANNA, PORTRAITS OF CHRISTMAS and so much more will once again be presented!

I have dreams of returning to the busy rehearsals and creativity with new productions and events such as: AN EVENING WITH BILL AND JIM, EXPERIENCING GOD REVIVAL, THE ELEPHANT MAN STAGE PLAY, BREAKFAST WITH THE ARTS, DANCING WITH THE STAFF, JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT and THE LION KING IN CONCERT plus so much more.

2020 may end in a way that is not great...and even some of 2021 will be a struggle at times, but we will rebuild and re-imagine, and move ahead! We must!! Union has always been able to ride over the bumps of ministry and we always come out on top because simply...it is the will of God Almighty for us to minister and continue the gift of love!

Jim Lanier
Creative Arts Pastor



THE GIFT OF 20/20 VISION



When we reflect on the year 2020, as it pertains to our finances, we have a choice to make. We can look at it through the lens of our human eyes, which would naturally focus in on the incredible challenges we have faced this year and what we have lost as a result. Or we can look at things through the lens of our spiritual eyes, which help us to focus on God's promises, His supernatural provision, and the power we have within us to speak life and claim victory over our circumstances. When we choose the latter, we receive the gift of 20/20 vision.

This gift of 20/20 vision enables us to clearly see that in spite of our financial challenges, God enabled us to continue to carry out our Ministry and Mission of loving God and loving people. In doing so, we planted seeds of Faith and Prosperity.

***“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.”
~ Robert Louis Stevenson***

As we continue to unwrap our gift of 20/20 vision, we rejoice in the fact that we were able to eliminate \$100,500 from our remaining debt, which a portion of that was generously forgiven from our Member Loans. This gift that keeps on giving reveals that God has a pathway for Union to become debt free and reminds us that we have the authority and the power to speak to our mountains. We have walked around our mountain of debt long enough. It is now time for us as a church to speak to this mountain and command it to be removed.

As 2020 draws to a close and we prepare to begin a new year, I’m challenging us all to boldly stand on the promises in God’s word and declare that ALL of our debts will be PAID IN FULL, in the powerful name of JESUS! Let’s stand in agreement that the obstacle of debt will not stand in the way of bringing the vision for Union’s future to fruition. So, let’s thank God for the gift of 20/20 vision and thank Him in advance for the great things he has in store for us as we work together for the Kingdom.

For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. ~ Mark 11:23

**Giving thanks for you always and wishing you a Blessed Christmas & New Year!
Tracey Caraballo (Church Treasurer)**

Happy Holidays Union Church Family from The Base Ministry

I pray everyone had a happy, healthy and safe Thanksgiving. With Christmas upon us we are still doing our Star Ministry, with so many families in need of holiday cheer. Prayerfully, The Base Ministry will resume Wednesday evenings starting in January. Our first concern will be safety so we will be following the CDCs safety guidelines in order to keep both children and staff safe during this transition. The Nursery will still be closed until further notice. We look forward to trying to bring some sort of normalcy back into our program and in the lives of the kids especially during this time when God's presence is needed more than ever before. Be blessed in knowing that God promised us that he would always be with us. He will never leave or forsake us!



Merry Christmas With Love – Miss Fawn Waterman (Children’s Minister)



I have four kids that love to cook – one enjoys cooking dinner, one cooking breakfast, Skyler loves to bake, and Grace has to cook because she is in the military and lives on her own. I think they got this particular love of cooking from my mother.

As children they would come home and their noses would be met with the most amazing smells of roast beef and mashed potatoes, or homemade cakes and pies, or their favorite homemade sugar donuts.

Often my kids would wake up in the morning and go straight to Mawmaw's side and ask her to make them breakfast, but instead of just cooking or baking for them she taught them the secret to her recipes that her mother or grandmother passed down to her. One of my fondest memories is coming home one day and seeing Skyler with an apron on covered in flour from head to toe helping Mawmaw bake his first cake.

As they got older and began cooking for themselves, Mawmaw's was the only approval that they looked for. She passed away a couple of days before Christmas two years ago. To this day when I see my kids cooking or baking, it brings a smile to my face and warmth to my heart knowing she lives on through them. As I write this, with tears coming down my face, I realize that she passed down so much more than just cooking and baking. She passed along a passion to love others, a desire to serve others, and giving of herself.

I cannot help but think of this when I read Psalm 145:3-7, "Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty-And I will meditate on your wonderful works. They tell of the power of your awesome works-And I will proclaim your great deeds. They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness."

This is a beautiful picture; one generation commending the works of God to another, telling of the goodness and power of God and celebrating him in front of the next generation. Imagine and picture a multigenerational group of people speaking to one another about the goodness of God. This is what happens when all ages celebrate God's abundant goodness and joyfully sing his righteousness...as they stand together in church, pray together for a miracle, or work together to serve others who are in need. When we share our stories and our lives, we live on from one generation to the next. You see, the things that bind us together, the things of the Lord, are not dependent on our generational experience. They are dependent on God!

Our faith is passed not by a program, a church service, or a book that we read, but in relationship with one another. It's where we know each other's names and stories and we share the goodness of God with each other. It's not about programs or events or activities, although we may use those, it's about Jesus! So this Christmas season give the gift of passing on your faith through prayer, service to one another, and worship. I believe that if we want to see Psalms 145 be a reality in our churches, if we really want to see our church family grow together and our younger generations stay faithful to Jesus, we are going to have to find ways to be a church across generations.

From one generation to another pray for our Youth Ministry as we resume our Wednesday night youth services on January 13th and planning how to navigate and effectively do ministry during a pandemic in 2021.

***Merry Christmas & Happy New Year
Pastor Eddie Morrison (Youth Pastor)***





Church Secretary's Report

Church Membership

Total Full Time Membership:

525

Households Represented:

331

Total Associate Membership:

43

Households Represented:

24

Total Membership:

568

Total Households Represented:

356

(This report is as of November 30, 2020)

In Deepest Sympathy

Our condolences go out to the following family, friends and members:

† Jack Palmer

† Hugh Shanks

† Roy Winegard

Please direct any and all address changes, phone numbers changes, or any other changes to your contact info to the attention of Miss Chris Hess. Church #: 863-453-3345

*In His Service,
Chris Hess (Church Secretary)*

Recycle Cans for our Boy Scout Troop!

Recycling your cans helps under-privileged scouts buy their shirts. The collection bin is located behind the Scout House on Railroad Street (across from our Treasure Chest).

J  **Y**
to the world

Don't forget to stay connected with us through our church website: weareunion.org. Remember you can either worship with us in-person or by watching our sermons or videos on our church Facebook page:

UnionChurchAP

Make sure you Like, Share & Follow...or check us out on our YouTube Channel (make sure to subscribe and hit the bell icon to get notified when we go live or upload a video):

<https://m.youtube.com/c/UnionChurchAP/>

We are also making CD's for those who have no access to the Internet. If you would like CD's of the sermons please call the church office. If anyone needs technical help to get connected to our sites or setting things up call the church office or email me at mbernhard@weareunion.org

♥ Always – Byeeeeeeee

Miranda Bernhard (Production Manager)



Church Tech Ministry

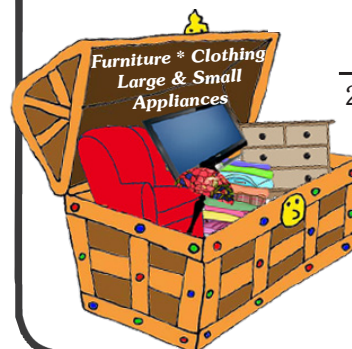
Treasure Chest/Hands For Homeless

**Friday & Saturday
8 a.m. - 2p.m.**

2 Locations in Avon Park:
**106 N. Railroad Ave.
7 Jim Rodgers Ave.**

To donate, call Elaine
863-257-0423

To volunteer, call Geri
724-456-7244





CHRISTMAS EVE
Candlelight Service

**Join us for Worship
in-person or online
at 7:30PM**

Purpose Statement

Loving God – Loving People

Vision Statement

Together we will create an atmosphere where people experience God's love.

Mission Statement

Motivated by God's love and fueled by His grace, whenever and wherever a hand reaches out for help, we want the hand of Jesus to be there. For this we are responsible.