



**UNION**  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
Disciples of Christ

December 2023



**December 3**

**Hanging of the Greens**

*Rerouted: On Mute*

Luke 1:5-24

**December 24**

*Rerouted: From Humdrum to Hurry*

Luke 2:1-18

**December 10**

*Rerouted: Angels, Babies, and Dreams*

Luke 1:26-45; Matthew 1:18-25

**December 24**

**Christmas Eve Service**

*O Holy Night*

Luke 2:1-18

**December 17**

**Special Music Sunday**

Luke 1:46-56

**December 31**

*Rerouted: God's GPS*

Matthew 2:1-12

**January 7**

*Rerouted: What's Next?*

Matthew 2:13-23



# The Prayerful Pause

By Pastor Heather Webb



December is finally here! It's hard to believe that 2023 is almost over. Before we blink, we will be ringing in 2024. But before we turn another page on the calendar, let me share some of the wonderful things taking place in worship during the Season of Advent!

**This year, Advent begins on Sunday, December 3. During Advent, we will eagerly prepare for Jesus' arrival, making rooming our hearts and in our lives for him. We also prepare our Sanctuary for Christmas each year as we celebrate the Hanging of the Greens on the First Sunday of Advent.** This year, we will have our Hanging of the Greens Service on Sunday morning. Before the service at 10:00 AM, we hope you will join us for a fellowship time with the Union Family in the Fellowship Hall and bring a snack to share. Spending time together in fellowship is a great way to kick off the Advent Season.

**During the four weeks of Advent, our theme in worship will be "Rerouted," and we will focus on the many ways that God directed and re-directed people in the Christmas story.** I am especially excited about this sermon series as it reminds us to keep our eyes, ears, hearts, and minds open to the new things God wants to do in our lives.

**On December 20 at 6:00 PM, we will hold our second annual Blue Christmas Service to reach out to those grieving in the church and the wider community.** You may not have heard of a Blue Christmas Service before, but it's a service that speaks especially to people grieving loss during this time of year. You may know a friend or neighbor who is grieving the loss of a loved one or who is grieving another type of loss, including a recent divorce or job transition. Our Blue Christmas service will acknowledge the heaviness that people often feel during this season while pointing to the hope that Jesus brings even as we grieve. Please pray that God will use our Blue Christmas service to comfort those feeling blue this season.

**Our music ministry will lead us in worship on Sunday, December 17, as the story of Christ is told through song and readings. We also look forward to our candlelight Christmas Eve service on Sunday, December 24, at 5:00 PM. Since Christmas Eve is also on Sunday this year, we will have a family-friendly service for all ages at 11:00 AM on Christmas Eve that morning, too.** There will be no Sunday School on Christmas Eve.

**I hope you will invite a friend or neighbor to visit Union for any of our services during December. It will be a rich and meaningful month of worship.** During December, there are also a host of fellowship and service opportunities for all age groups in the Union Family. You can find more information about these fellowship and service opportunities sprinkled throughout these pages. It will be a joyous month as we watch and wait for Christ. **May the joy of Jesus fill our hearts this December as we worship, serve, and fellowship together.**

## Christmas Holiday

The church office will be closed for Christmas and New Years from Monday, December 25—Monday January 1. We will reopen the office on Tuesday, January 2, 2023.







Find hope with the Union family as we acknowledge the heaviness often carried during this season by many people. We will worship together on Wednesday, December 20, beginning at 6:00 PM. All are welcome to come.



Union's spring GriefShare session will meet from February 29-May 23 on Thursdays, from 1:30—3:00 PM.



## Small Group Christmas Fellowships

We enjoyed our fellowship so much during our fall Bible studies that we are having a Christmas Fellowship for each of our Bible study groups! Bring a snack to share and join us!

- The Monday Women's Small Group will meet on December 4, at 6:00 PM. We will meet at Pastor Heather's home.
- The Wednesday Women's Small Group will meet on December 6, at 10:00 AM. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall.
- The Wednesday Men's Small Group will meet on December 6, at 5:30 PM. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall.

## Disciples Men

Men, join us for the November breakfast meeting of the Disciples Men at Strickland's (4723 Atlanta Highway, Athens) on Saturday, December 2, at 8 AM. We have a wonderful time, and we would love to have you come and fellowship with us.



## Elders' Meeting

Union's Elders will meet on Sunday,  
December 3, at 9:00 AM.

## Church Council

The Church Council will not meet in  
December. Enjoy time with your family;  
we look forward to our January meeting.

## Bible Book of the Month: John

Part 1 Overview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-2e9mMf7E8>

Part 2 Overview: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUfh\\_wOsauk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUfh_wOsauk)





## Courageous Youth & Cool Kids

Courageous Youth and Cool Kids, we have had a great fall, and December has just begun! Look for our spring schedule soon! Contact Holly Green if you have any questions or concerns.

### **Sunday, December 3**

No Meeting (Watkinsville Christmas Parade)

### **Sunday, December 10**

Regular Meeting

Cool Kids 4:00-5:15 PM • Courageous Youth 5:00 – 6:15 PM

### **Sunday, December 17**

Christmas Parties!

Cool Kids 4:00-5:00 PM • Courageous Youth 5:00 – 6:00 PM

### **Sunday, December 24 & 31**

No Meetings. Enjoy time with your family and friends.

CHRISTMAS  
PARTY

SUNDAY  
DECEMBER 17

COOL KIDS - JOIN US AT 4:00 PM  
COURAGEOUS YOUTH - JOIN US AT 5:00 PM

## YOUNG ADULT HANGOUT!



## Christmas Sweaters & Axe Throwing

Young adults, get into the Christmas spirit with your Union friends! On Tuesday, December 12, we will meet at LumberJaxe in Athens (510 N. Lumpkin Street) at 6:30 PM. Bring \$10, your favorite Christmas sweater, and a friend. We will continue to hone our axe throwing skills and spread Christmas cheer. Contact Pastor Heather if you would like more information or would like to be included in our text group.

# Columbarium Task Force Committee Update

## from the Church Council

Thank you for your participation in the recent Columbarium Survey. We received 50 responses.

The Columbarium survey data indicate the Union Christian Congregation is interested in moving forward with columbarium planning. Please see the graphs below for more information on the data.

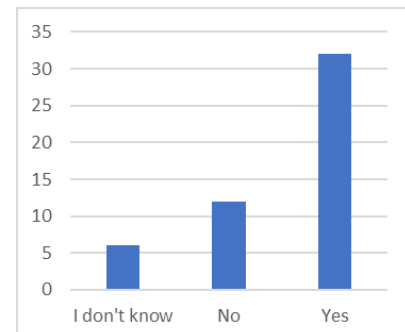
The survey results were presented to the Church Council for consideration at the November meeting. The Columbarium Task Force recommended that the Council appoint a Phase 2 Columbarium Committee to develop a concept design and cost estimate for a Union Church Columbarium, which upon development, will be presented to the Council and Congregation for consideration and approval. The Council approved this recommendation and the Council Chairperson will be working to recruit these committee members and present their names to the Council at the January meeting.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Patti Clark, Church Council, Chairperson.

### Columbarium Questions at a Glance

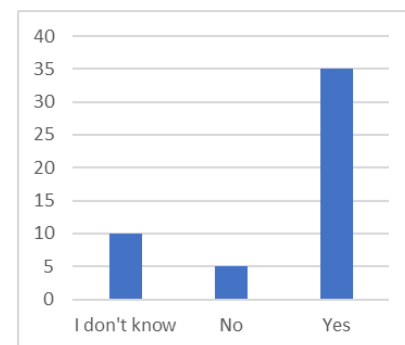
**Do you or your family members anticipate considering cremation as part of your final arrangements?**

I don't know: 6 (12%)  
No: 12 (24%)  
Yes: 32 (64%)



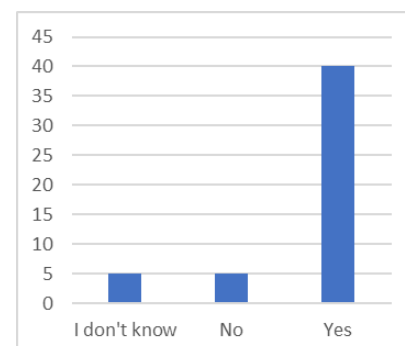
**Should Union Christian Church set aside a place in the cemetery for a columbarium?**

I don't know: 10 (20%)  
No: 5 (10%)  
Yes: 35 (70%)



**If the decision is made to build a columbarium at Union Christian Church, do you feel comfortable using the gains from the Cemetery Permanent Fund to finance it?**

I don't know: 5 (10%)  
No: 5 (10%)  
Yes: 40 (80%)



## Christmas Special Offering

The Christian Church in Georgia exists to grow, build, and equip faith communities by developing new churches, offering resources for transformation in established congregations, supporting churches in ministerial transition, developing leaders, supplying resources for clergy support and renewal, offering summer church camp, leading ministries for all ages, and so much more. Together, the ministry we share is changing lives.

The annual Disciples Christmas Offering is one way you can bless our region. All of the money donated during this offering stays in our region—Georgia. If you would like to bless our region through this special offering, giving envelopes are located in the Gathering Space. You can drop envelopes in the offering plate on Sunday mornings throughout December.



Pastor Heather and her family invite everyone to drop-in for a Christmas Open House on Saturday, December 16, from 3–5 PM. We look forward to celebrating the season with you!

MERRY AND BRIGHT

Christmas Open House

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

3:00-5:00 PM

THE WEBB HOUSE





## Christian Women's Fellowship

The CWF will meet on Thursday, December 14, at 10:00 AM in the Fellowship Hall. All of the ladies in the church are invited to attend.

Thank you to everyone who donated items for Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes; Union's children and youth packed 40 boxes. This month, we are partnering with Oconee Schools' Secret Santa project. You can pick up a "wish" in the Gathering Space. Purchase the gift on the wish, and then leave the unwrapped gift in the Gathering Space bins. Thank you for blessing our neighbors.

The CWF special persons for December are Jacqueline Thomason (3711 Hog Mountain Road; Watkinsville, GA 30677) and Gina Dillard (165 Beaverdam Drive, Winterville, GA 30683).

## Financial Report, November 2023

By Earl Elsner, Treasurer

	Contributions	YTD Contributions
October Contributions	\$ 18,768	\$108,577
	Expenses	YTD Expenses
October Expenses	\$ 20,431	\$ 85,104
Total 2023-2024 Budget	\$207,842	

### Cemetery

Cemetery Permanent Fund Balance: \$291,467

### Congregation Permanent Fund

Congregation Permanent Fund Balance: \$398,701



**Stewardship**  
*a way of life*

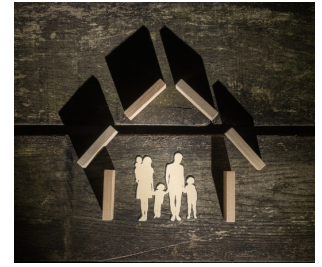
## December Serving Calendar

	December 3	December 10	December 17	December 24	December 31
<b>Worship Leader</b>	Alan Hickerson	Julia Beckwith	Patsy Orr	Jonathan Byrd	Annette Saul
<b>Elder</b>	Alan Hickerson	Evelyn Shelnut	Patsy Orr	Jonathan Byrd	Annette Saul
<b>Deacon</b>	<b>Kay Smith,</b> Lanier Orr, Lindy Lively, Earl Lively	<b>Ruth Cook,</b> Peter Cook, Lynn Chapman, Betsy Peck	<b>Sue Williams,</b> Mary Brookshire, Kay Smith, Phillip Maxey	<b>Lisa Vaughn,</b> Kay Smith, Lynn Chapman, TBA	TBA
<b>Children's Church</b>	Kids in Church			Kids in Church	Angie Eades
<b>Greeter</b>	Lynn Chapman	Kathy Peters	Mary Brookshire	Lynn Chapman	Kathy Peters
<b>Sanctuary Prep</b>	Jonathan Byrd	Ken Clark	Ken Clark	Jonathan Byrd	Larry Allen
<b>Safety Volunteer</b>	Lanier Orr	Phillip Maxey	Leonard Williams	Ken Clark	Larry Saul
<b>Children's Chat</b>	Hanging of the Greens	Heather Webb	Patsy Orr	Jonathan Byrd	Michael Brittain
	<b>December 5</b>	<b>December 12</b>	<b>December 19</b>	<b>December 26</b>	
<b>Meet/Greet Host</b>	Nan Deal	Evelyn Shelnut	Amy Pritchett	Julian Beckwith	



## Family Promise Update

Great news for Family Promise of Athens! They have recently received a \$400,000 grant from the Bezos Day 1 Families Fund. This is the largest private gift in FPA's history. FPA was one of 38 nonprofits across the United States to receive a grant. This round of giving from the Bezos Day 1 Families Fund totaled more than \$117 million. Since its inception in 2018, the Bezos Day 1 Families Fund has granted more than \$630 million to organizations helping families who are experiencing homelessness. FPA plans to use the funds in its diversion program that helps families with upfront barriers to housing such as security deposits, car repairs, or employment expenses. The funding will also help FPA double its shelter program capacity on Magnolia Terrace in Athens by the end of 2024.



You can learn more about the Bezos Day 1 Fund at [www.bezosdayonefund.org](http://www.bezosdayonefund.org).

Our last host week of 2023 is December 3-10. This will be our last hosting week at Milledge Avenue Baptist Church (MABC). We thank MABC for partnering with FPA the last two years as FPA moved to a static site hosting model. As mentioned in last month's newsletter, FPA is transitioning hosting models once again. As of this writing, we do not have our hosting calendar for 2024. Those dates and more final details of what hosting will look like will be forthcoming.

Thank you to all our faithful volunteers who served over this past year. We were able to step up and host 5 weeks rather than our usual 4 weeks per year. We appreciate the time you have given to FPA in preparing meals or spending time on site at MABC. Thanks to our congregation for financially supporting FPA and continuing to pray for this ministry serving our homeless neighbors. Please continue praying for a smooth transition into this next hosting model in 2024.

One last reminder: La Tablé is the biggest fundraiser of the year for FPA. The 2024 La Tablé fundraiser will be on **Tuesday, February 6, 2024**, at 11:00 AM. This year's event will be at a new location—1055 Barber, a new event space in Athens. Once again, Union is heading up the annual bake sale and clergy cook off. Union bakers, we will be in touch soon!

We are blessed to serve alongside you,

Kelly Hansford & Patti Clark

## Union at ACTS

Area Churches Together Serving (ACTS) provides food and clothing to our neighbors in need. Union not only donates regularly to ACTS, but we also staff the center every other month, on the fourth Friday of the month. Union will volunteer again on Friday, December 22. If you are interested in serving, you can join us at the center (130 East Thompson St., Bogart) at 9:00 AM. If you have any questions, contact Julian Beckwith.



# Coming Up at Union!

## **Disciples Men's Breakfast**

December 2, 8:00 AM

## **Family Promise Host Week**

December 3-10

## **Hanging of the Greens**

December 3, 11:00 AM

## **Monday Small Group Fellowship**

December 4, 6:00 PM

## **Wednesday Women's Fellowship**

December 6, 10:00 AM

## **Wednesday Men's Fellowship**

December 6, 5:30 PM

## **Young Adult Hangout**

December 12, 6:30 PM

## **Christian Women's Fellowship**

December 14, 10:00 AM

## **Webb Open House**

December 16, 3:00-5:00 PM

## **Special Music Worship Service**

December 17, 11:00 AM

## **Blue Christmas Service**

December 20, 6:00 PM

## **ACTS Volunteer Day**

December 22, 9:00 AM—1:00 PM

## **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**

December 24, 5:00 PM

## **Fifth Sunday Benevolence Offering**

December 31, 11:00 AM

## **Disciples Men's Breakfast**

January 6, 8:00 AM

## **Christian Women's Fellowship**

January 11, 10:00 AM

## **Winter Bible Studies Begin**

January 8 & 10

## **Regional Youth Assembly**

January 19-21

## **Intergenerational Chili Cook-Off**

January 28, 5:00 PM

## **Ash Wednesday**

February 14

## **Lenten Soup and Study**

February 21-March 20

## **GriefShare Spring Session**

February 29-May 23

## **Maundy Thursday**

March 28

## **Easter Egg Hunt**

March 30

## **Easter Sunday**

March 31

## **Spring Bible Studies Begin**

April 15 & 17

## **December Meetings**

### **Elders' Meeting**

December 3, 9:00 AM

### **Pastoral Relations Committee**

December 10, 12:00 PM

### **Staff Meeting**

December 11, 10:30 AM

# Prayers of the People

## Global Prayer:

Please pray for peace in the Middle East and for all those experiencing the horrors of terrorism and war.

## Community Prayer:

Oconee Schools Secret Santa Families

## Prayers for Health, Healing, and Care:

Sharon Abbott (Chemotherapy)  
Wendy Alligood (Hospice)  
Jean Anderson (Hospitalized)  
Ed Berry (High Shoals Rehab)  
Frank Baxter (Cancer)  
Mark Beach (Leukemia)  
Mimi Benkoski  
Myla Bennett (Pruitt Heritage)  
Betty Benton (Mother of Ron Deal)  
Autumn Bishop (Breast Cancer)  
Leon Boyce (Serious Car Accident)  
Mandie Boyce (Hospitalized)  
Renee Brown (Rehab)  
Bonnie Butler (Recovery)  
Jonathan Byrd  
Anabell Carter (Under Care for Seizures)  
Lynn Chapman  
Rainey Collis (2-Year-Old, Surgery Recovery, RSV)  
Zachary Cook (Grandson of Ruth Cook)  
Deb Cosgrove (Failing Health)  
Jen Crane (Gastroenteritis)  
Michael, Leah, Charlotte, and Juliette Crenshaw  
Zaleigh Crosby (5-Year-Old; Heart Surgery)  
Eric David (Broken Pelvis, 7 Years Old)  
Nan Deal  
Devin Driskell (Recovery from Accident)  
Holley Downs  
Carbie Epps (Health Issues)  
Vicky Grey (Health Issues)  
Brandy Harris (Health Concerns)  
Rick Hebert (Lung Cancer Treatments)  
Margaret Hogan (Cancer)  
Mahlon Holland (Transitioned to Assisted Living)  
Shelly House (Anxiety and Depression)  
Nancy Huff (Hospitalized)  
Heather Jacobson (Stroke)  
Jackson and Shirley Jones (Health Concerns)  
Howard Karloff (Terminal Illness)  
Terry Karloff (Addiction)  
Adam Karloff  
Sari Karloff  
John Leonard (Stomach Cancer)  
Michaelyn Loper (Stage 4 Breast Cancer)  
Ann Lord (Health Concerns)  
Brayden Lord (Stage 4 Hodgkin Lymphoma)  
Evelyn MacKenzie (Torn Rotator Cuff; Surgery)  
Angela Madaras (Declining Health)  
Sean Mahan (Advanced Pancreatic Cancer)  
Margo McClain (Broken Hip)  
Charlie (Hospice) and Pat McClure  
Elaine McTyre (Surgery Recovery)  
Maxine (Colon Cancer)  
Bailey Moore (Foster Family Needs)  
Rod Morgan  
Kaaren Mosley (Stroke, Cancer Treatment)  
Albert Munguia (Addiction Issues)

Larry N.  
David Nelson (Hospitalized)  
Annette Nesler (Awaiting Transplant)  
Jason Oliver (Heart Surgery Recovery)  
Gunner Patterson (3-Year-Old, Medical Issues)  
Greg Peck (Son of Betsy Peck)  
Johnny Pritchett (Encouragement)  
Margie Provost (Breast Cancer Surgery)  
Linda Rice (Lung Cancer)  
Lawson Saul  
Phil Shelton (Julia Beckwith's Father)  
David Simpson (Lung Cancer)  
Mary Short (Hospice)  
Billy Skinner (Cancer)  
Rae Skinner (Cancer)  
Eloise Slaton  
Chip and Debbie Smergian (Rehab)  
Kay Smith (Surgery Recovery)  
Zane Springer (Upcoming Procedures and Surgery)  
Ann Stephens  
Randall Tackett (Bone Cancer)  
Troy Tatum (ALS)  
Harry Tracy  
Sue Truluck (Surgery Recovery)  
David Vaughn  
Reese Waddell (Recovering at Home)  
Patti Wagner (Scleroderma)  
Gene Wengert (Pancreatic Cancer)  
Cathie Wettlaufer  
Catherine Wettlaufer (Recovering at Home)  
Lanier Whitehead (Cancer)  
Boyd Wiley (Cancer Treatments)  
Sue Williams (Surgery Recovery)  
Mike (Health Concerns) and Judy Zech (Caregiving)

## Prayers for Those Who Mourn:

The Family and Friends of Caiphas Thomason  
The Family and Friends of Jace Jachimski  
The Family and Friends of Leroy Holsclaw, Brother of  
Mary Brookshire  
The Family and Friends of Robert Lee

## Prayers for Our Military:

Harrison "Harry" Booth  
Tyler Brown  
Charlie Witkowski (Stationed in Poland)



# December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 8:00 AM Disciples Men 10:00 AM Prayer Call
3 9 AM Elders' Meeting 10 AM Fellowship 11 AM Hanging of the Greens Family Promise Host Week Begins  Debra Strickland	4 Family Promise Host Week 6:00 PM Women's Small Group Fellowship  Jackie Byrd	5 Family Promise Host Week 6:30 PM All-Church Meet & Greet	6 Family Promise Host Week 10:00 AM Women's Small Group Fellowship 5:30 PM Men's Small Group Fellowship 6:30 PM Praise Band 7:00 PM Choir	7 Family Promise Host Week  Mattie Strickland	8 Family Promise Host Week  Amelia Fitzgerald Sharon Tatum	9 Family Promise Host Week 10:00 AM Prayer Call
10 Family Promise Host Week Ends 10:00 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship 12:00 PM Pastoral Relations Committee Meeting 4:00 PM Youth & Kids	11 10:30 AM Staff Meeting	12 6:30 PM All-Church Meet & Greet 6:30 PM Young Adult Hangout	13 6:30 PM Praise Band 7:00 PM Choir  Jessica Butler	14 10:00 AM CWF Meeting	15	16 10:00 AM Prayer Call 1:00 PM Wreaths Across America (UCC Cemetery) 3:00—5:00 PM Webb Open House
17 10:00 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Musical Worship 4:00/5:00PM Kids & Youth Christmas Party	18	19 6:30 PM All-Church Meet & Greet  Mimi Benkoski	20 6:00 PM Blue Christmas Service 7:00 PM Choir	21	22 9:00 AM Union at ACTS	23 10:00 AM Prayer Call
24 11:00 AM Worship 5:00 PM Candle Light Christmas Eve Service  Marie Wall	25 Church Office Closed	26 Church Office Closed 6:30 PM All-Church Meet & Greet	27 Church Office Closed	28 Church Office Closed  Jane Vaughn	29  Drew Hunt	30  Emily Anne Hansford
31 11:00 AM Worship 12:00 PM Fifth Sunday Benev-olence Offering  Lance Jones						