

MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Friends,

Some of you may have read the daily devotion shared Monday on Facebook and the Unity website to introduce our Lenten journey of reading and praying Psalms 120-134, the Songs of Ascent. For those who missed it, I began:

The Season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which this year is March 5th. Lent is a season of prayer and preparation for the celebration of Easter, and, modeled on Jesus' fasting during his 40 days in the wilderness before he begins his public ministry, has often included fasting or "giving something up." For Lent this year, if you give something up, we hope it provides time and space so that you might embrace the ancient practice of praying the psalms and in particular the Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134). These psalms were used by pilgrims as they made their way to Jerusalem for festivals such as Passover. So, it is likely that Jesus would have prayed these psalms on his way to Jerusalem, knowing that arrest and death awaited him. As we journey with him toward the cross and resurrection that awaits, we join him in praying these psalms.

Whenever we read a psalm in worship, we often introduce it as coming from the "Songbook of Israel." And yet, perhaps it would be even more accurate to describe the psalms as the "Prayer book of Israel." The church has always prayed the psalms, not just as a way to speak to God, but as a way to learn about the character of God and how we might begin to answer. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once described it like this:

So we learn to speak to God because God has spoken to us and speaks to us. By means of the speech of the Father in heaven his children learn to speak with him. Repeating God's own words after him, we begin to pray to him. (*Psalms*, 11).

Unity's own Rev. Steve Simon, who has spent years praying, reading, and writing on the psalms puts it this way:

[The] psalms have become my daily prayers, and I've prayed many of them hundreds of times during the past several years. As I've done that, I've been learning the language of prayer in a deeper way than I've ever known before. As those psalms have sunk into my mind and then into my heart and soul, they've drawn me closer to the heart of God. (*Hohy Walks*, 7)

My friends, in this Lenten season ahead, as we journey toward Jerusalem, the cross, and the empty tomb; as we seek to answer God and respond with gratitude and generosity of time, talents, and treasures; I invite us to pray these psalms together and come to know, as if for the first time, God's great love for us and for the world.

See you Sunday! Matt



Since 1788... United in Christ's love, we glorify God through worship, nurture, and service to all people.

The <u>deadline to submit items</u> for the March 18th Newsletter is **Wednesday, March 12th.**

PRAYER CHAIN

Did you know that Unity has an email prayer chain? If you would like to receive prayer concerns or have a concern, please contact Dannie Vaughn at vaughndl@comporium.net.

WE WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS RECEIVED BY SESSION 2/24/2025

Andy & Mary Margaret Donato, with their children Henry & Ryan

Bill & Minnie Goodwin

John & Donna Maloney

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Closed on Fridays) 803.547.5543 www.UnityFortMill.org

LATE MARCH BIRTHDAYS

16 -- Ken Nunnery; Richie Sharpless

17 -- Dorothy Gambrell; Betsey Lambert; Gabby Oltmann; Hilda Swainey

18 -- Brian Dowd; Thomas Meacham

19 -- Mike Bartlett; Dave Grove; Rad David Hudson

21 -- Sharon Fulton; Haddie Morgan; Brandon Parise

22 -- Harper Benanti; Steve Brown; Beckett Carter; Hunter Hentschke; Dave Johnson; Leanne Mace; Jonathan Mikulsky

23 -- Vaughan Batchelor; Caitlin Hice; Madelyn Mikulsky

24 -- Alan Conley; Andrew Glenn; Karen Jones; John Ray Kimbrell; Laurie Pessier; Amelia Scott

26 -- Taran Beshers; Sara Meacham; John Pettus; Alexa Spratt

27 -- Donna Batchelor; Tyler Clarke; Carolyn Delaney; Erin Padgett; Chris Walker

28 -- Myra Annan; Susan Bates; Drew Walker

29 -- Joanne Mack; Owen Routh

30 -- J Haskell; Bobby Rogers

31 -- Elizabeth Bowers; Gail O'Shea

EASTER MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS

2025 EASTER MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS



Many members of our congregation have developed a tradition of giving a financial gift to Unity in memory or honor of loved ones at Easter. If you would like to make such an offering, please complete the form found in

the Pews/Narthex and return it to the church office. Please make your check payable to Unity and write "Easter Memorial/Honorarium" on the memo line. Donations can also be made through Unity's website at https://unityfortmill.org/give/easter-memorials-and-honorariums/. If you need additional assistance, contact Anissa Lee (alee@unityfortmill.org) in the church office. *The deadline for receipt of these gifts is March 30th.* They will be listed in a booklet which will be available in the Narthex on April 13th.

ASH WEDNESDAY - BEGINNING THE SEASON OF LENT

Make plans to join us on March 5th, Ash Wednesday this year, as we begin the season of Lent together. The season of Lent, forty days (not counting Sundays), is a season which helps us to prepare for Easter begins on Ash Wednesday. We will have self-directed prayer stations available in the Historic Sanctuary from 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM and gather for an Ash Wednesday Worship Service worship in the Sanctuary at 6:30 PM.



The service is a simple service of prayer, scripture, music, a short homily, and the opportunity to receive ashes on your forehead or hand. We begin the Season of Lent with ashes as a sign of our repentance, and yet those ashes are placed in the shape of a cross to remind us that our redemption is found in Christ alone.

If you are unable to attend either the prayer stations or the service and would like to receive ashes, please let Dr. Matt, Pastor Molly, or Dr. Mark know and they will make arrangements with you.

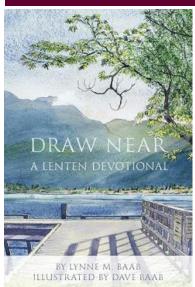
Our Lenten theme will be "Lift Up!" and connect with this year's Stewardship Campaign. We'll be reading and praying the Songs of Ascent (Psalm 120-134) which were used by the Israelites traveling as pilgrims to Jerusalem for festivals like Passover. Perhaps these were the hymns he sang and the prayers he prayed as Jesus made his way toward the city for the final week of his earthly life. As we travel and pray together, may we lift up our eyes, our hands, and our hearts in gratitude, commitment, and praise.

ASH WEDNESDAY SELF-GUIDED PRAYER STATIONS



Prayer Stations will be available on **Ash Wednesday, March 5th, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in the Historic Sanctuary** for people of all ages to reflect and prepare for the season of Lent. These simple and interactive self-guided activities will provide a quiet space for those who may not be able to attend the evening worship service and those who would like an opportunity to set an intention for Lent in an interactive and contemplative space. No registration is required. Drop in as you are able.

LENTEN DEVOTIONS ARE AVAILABLE NOW



Lent begins Wednesday, March 5th. Scratch-off prayer calendars are available for families with children. Pick up one in the Narthex today. If you have not purchased the *Draw Near: A Lenten Devotional* for adults, you may order a paperback or Kindle copy on Amazon. (\$8.95 for paperback, \$3.99 for Kindle). Each short devotion focuses on a different psalm each day and has two questions for reflection and a short prayer. Search Amazon for "*Draw Near: A Lenten Devotional* by Lynn Baab". Free *Upper Room* devotions for March and April are in the kiosks in the Narthex and are also a great option for a Lenten devotional.

WEEKLY PRAYER AND REFLECTION WILL BE OFFERED DURING LENT

Whether you are choosing to use the *Draw Near* Lenten Devotionals this year or not, you are invited to come when you can to a brief prayer and reflection service offered each week during Lent that will be guided by the Psalms in that week's Lenten devotions. Services will last no more than 30 minutes and be offered at three different times on Tuesdays so there is hopefully a time that suits everyone! Join us at 7:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. in the Historic Sanctuary for prayer and quiet



reflection on a Psalm each week. No registration is necessary.

HEALTH TIP



Daylight Saving Time begins this weekend. We will be "springing forward" by turning our clocks ahead one hour before going to sleep on Saturday evening. You will be losing an hour of sleep. The time change affects your circadian rhythm, and it can take several days to reset. To adjust to the change, try the following: Try going to bed 15 minutes earlier each day for several days (do not sleep later). Maintain a goal of getting 7-9 hours of sleep per night. Avoid napping late in the afternoon. Get exposure to sunlight early in the day, or at least during an afternoon walk. This will increase serotonin levels, which helps you to wake up naturally in the morning.



STEPHEN MINISTRY

Sometimes we can feel that everything is out of control or incredibly sad. We might need help to get ourselves out of the hole, out of the darkness. We might need someone to listen to us and remind us that God is there, loving us.

If you need help please consider learning more about Stephen Ministry by talking with one of one of our referral coordinators, Susan Mobley or Dave Johnson, via email at Stephenministryreferrals@unityf

ortmill.org or call a pastor at the church office - 803-547-5543

We are here, trained to help and listen.

STAY IN TOUCH

Whether you are looking for a specific activity or the latest news and information on children, youth, and adults, visit us at...

Website: www.UnityFortMill.org Instagram: @UnityFortMill Facebook: @UnityFortMill Be sure to "like" our page.

PRESBYTERIAN BEDROCK BELIEFS, A SUNDAY ELECTIVE,

will be offered on **Sunday**, **March 16th at 10:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall.** When it comes down to it, when you boil it down to its very essence, what exactly is it, in just a few words (or phrases) that we Presbyterians believe? Join Rev. Mark Verdery for this one session opportunity to explore what our essential beliefs are. No registration is necessary.

MONEY TALKS: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT MONEY, FAITH, LIFE, & THE STORIES WE TELL



Join Dr. Matt for "Money Talks," a small group where we'll talk about money, faith, life, and the stories we tell. The group will **meet on March 9th, 16th, 23rd, and 30th at 4:00 p.m. in M102.** Topics will include reflecting on what we've learned about money and faith from our parents and grandparents; our own motivations for giving of our time, talents, and resources; what scripture tells us about stewardship and money (it's a lot!); and the vision we have for

faithful use of our money and resources in the future. There's no doubt that "money talks," so come and see what yours might be saying.

MEN'S BREAKFAST

The Unity Men's Ministry will have its monthly breakfast meeting on **Tuesday, March 11th at 8:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall**. Plan to attend and enjoy breakfast, fellowship, and a devotion.

> For more information on **"What's Happening"** at Unity, please visit... <u>www.unityfortmill.org/</u> <u>whats-happening/</u>

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN A SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE INTERNATIONAL TRIP?

Thank you to all who came to hear Dr. Matt share about the "Footsteps of Paul" trip to Greece and Turkey that he and Sarah took in January. Based on such a big crowd, we are beginning to plan for a Spiritual Pilgrimage International Trip with members and friends of Unity. Visit this link (https://forms.gle/ oHLqP4pkYr59SwT89) or use the QR Code to express your interest in possible trips to Greece/Turkey; Italy; Egypt; Scotland; Germany/Switzerland, or more, plus to see a recording of Dr.



Matt's presentation and slides. With enough interest, we'll look toward traveling together in 2026 or early 2027.

NOMEN OF UNITY mother daughter sister friend Unncheon

REGISTER NOW FOR MDSF!

Women of Unity will host our annual Mother Daughter Sister Friend Luncheon on March 23rd, 2025. Our theme this year is "Learning to Share Our Stories" with Rev. Julie Hester. We are people formed by stories - the stories we've heard and lived through, the stories we tell ourselves, and the stories we tell together. Join us as we explore how the spiritual practice of writing can help us understand and share our stories as part of God's beloved community. We'll listen, learn, write, and share around our small group tables. No writing experience is needed,

and grammar and spelling don't count! Scan the QR code to



register. Registration deadline is March 12th, or until the event sells out. Please contact Event Co-Chairs Karen Compton Fuqua (<u>kfuqua@comporium.net</u>) and Stephanie Faherty with any questions!

SUNDAY MORNING FAITH FORMATION

Come grow in your faith



Vacation Bible School will be held Monday, June 9th -Thursday, June 12th from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. for children

in Rising 4K-4th grade. Mission Camp will be held concurrently for children currently in Rising 5th and 6th

grade. This year's theme is "Road Trip: On the Go With

God". Registration will open for Unity families,

grandchildren of Unity members, and Unity Preschool

families on March 10th. Sign up now to volunteer and

help us make this summer the best VBS ever!: https://

www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E4AA9AF22A4FE3-54606563-vbs2025.



VBS PLANNING IS UNDERWAY! SIGN UP NOW TO VOLUNTEER

CHILDREN

Birth-3 years - Rooms S103 & S104 4K/Kindergarten - Room M203 1st/2nd grade - Room M205 3rd - 5th grade - Room M208

YOUTH

6th & 7th grade - Room M106 Confirmation - Room M107 & Fellowship Hall High School - Room M108

ADULTS

As a Child - Room M312 Faith Connections - Historic Sanctuary Fellowship - Room M201 Gospel of Matthew - Room M210 Unity - Room M102

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR 2025 CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SUMMER CAMPS:

VBS & Mission Camp – June 9-12, ages 4 – Completed 3rd Grade (VBS), Completed 4th and 5th Grades (Mission Camp) – Registration opens March 10th

Grands Camp – July 23-25, Ages 4 -5th grade with a Grandparent or Surrogate Grandparent – Registration opens April 7th

YOUTH CHOIR

Youth, it's not too late to join us in youth choir! All youth grades 6-12 are invited to sing. We will rehearse in the choir room after 11:00 worship on the following Sundays: March 9th and March 23rd. We will be singing in worship on Sunday, March 30th at both services. Use the QR code to sign up. Contact Margaret Monroe at <u>mmonroe@UnityFortMill.org</u> with any questions or for more information.



RESERVE YOUR CATERPILLAR!



Reserve your caterpillar now via Sign Up Genius so you can be a part of Unity's Easter Sunday butterfly release: <u>https://</u> <u>www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E4AA9AF22A4FE3-55356885-raise#/</u>. Orders will be taken through March 17th. Caterpillar pick up date will be the week of March 24th and will be communicated to all who reserve one once the church order for caterpillars has been placed. For each caterpillar ordered, you'll be given a cup with your caterpillar and everything the caterpillar needs to eat and make its chrysalis. You will need to purchase or make a butterfly house for when the chrysalis opens and your butterfly appears as well as fruit slices to feed your butterfly for a few days until Easter Sunday when we will

bring them to church and release them at the end of the 8:45 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Easter worship services, weather permitting. Questions? Contact Kathryn McGregor at KMcGregor@UnityFortMill.org.

UNITY CHILDREN'S CHOIRS

The next session of children's choir will begin on March 23rd, with both choirs meeting together at 3:00 p.m. All children 4K-grade 5 are invited to participate. We will rehearse for three Sundays, and then finish the choir year by singing in worship on Palm Sunday, April 13th. Parents, please register any children singing for the first time this school year using the QR code (returning singers do not need to register again). Contact Margaret Monroe at <u>mmonroe@UnityFortMill.org</u> or 547-5543 with any questions.





UNITY YOUTH EXPLORE FAITH THROUGH COOKING AT FEASTING ON THE WORD!

We are so grateful to Chris Routh, who led two weeks of awesome cooking classes for our youth. We explored stories of Jesus sharing meals with his disciples, like the breakfast on the beach at the end of John's gospel and our Jesus' instructions to "feed my sheep!"

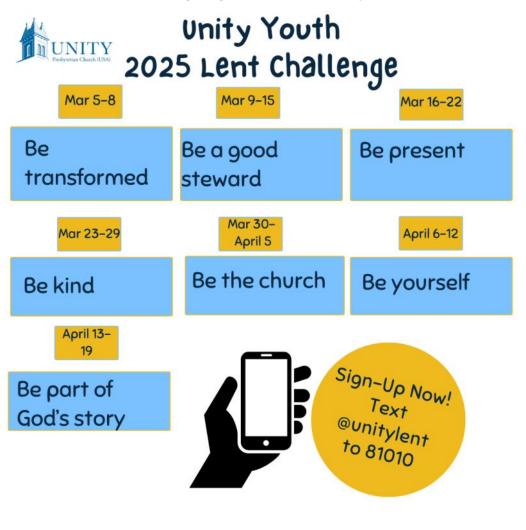
MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH JOIN IN CHRIST'S WORK OF COMPASSION AND JUSTICE IN ASHEVILLE!

11 middle schoolers & 4 adult leaders had an amazing weekend serving in Asheville and growing in faith and friendship. We spent the morning serving at the Haywood Street Congregation, a church that cares for Asheville's homeless population with dignity, love, and compassion. In the afternoon, we engaged in a Hurricane Helene awareness walk. The devastation was difficult to see and process, but we were reminded that there is hope. God is at work in Asheville, and we were grateful to be part of it!



JOIN THE UNITY YOUTH LENT CHALLENGE!

Sign up now to receive a daily text message during all 40 days of Lent with prompts designed to invite you into deeper relationship with God and others. Text "@unitylent" to the number 81010. Challenge begins on Ash Wednesday (March 5th).



THANKS FOR EVERYONE WHO JOINED FOR UNITY YOUTH TRIVIA NIGHT!

We are so grateful for an evening of laughter, connection, and fellowship. We also collected needed canned good items for our neighbors recovering from the hurricane in Western NC!



STEWARDSHIP 2025 - "LIFT UP"

"I lift up my eyes to the hills-from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." ~ Psalm 121:1-2

This year's Stewardship Emphasis and Campaign kicks off **Sunday, March 9th** and will continue through **Commitment Sunday on March 30th**. We invite you to make a pledge of your time, talents, and financial resources as together we LIFT UP all that God is doing at Unity Presbyterian Church. Here are some important notes:

- To save Unity's postage costs pick up your Stewardship Packet full of information, narrative budget, and pledge cards in the hallway off the Narthex between March 9 March 16.
- Listen for the Moments for Stewardship that will be shared by members of Unity in worship on March 9, 16, 23, and 30.
- Visit <u>https://unityfortmill.org/give/stewardship/</u> to review all stewardship information for your pledge of time, talent, and financial gifts.
- **Celebrate** on March 30th Stewardship Commitment Sunday with communion and your commitment to LIFT UP God's work through Unity.
- You can also communicate your choices online by logging into REALM. To indicate how you would like to serve, choose "Serving" and then browse "Opportunities". Click on items you are interested in and "Submit your Interest" directly to team leaders. You can also indicate your pledge through REALM by choosing "Giving" and then "Pledges" and clicking "+ Pledge".

LIFT UP: STEWARDSHIP 2025 - STEPHEN MINISTRY



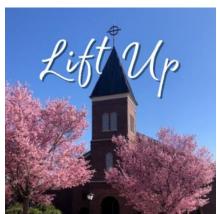
Stephen Ministry is a one-to-one Christian lay caregiving ministry. Since its inception at Unity in 2017, forty-three Stephen Ministers and twelve Stephen Leaders have been trained and commissioned. Stephen Minister initial training consists of 50 hours of classroom instruction in addition to supplemental reading and assignments. Stephen Leaders have extensive training as well.

Stephen Ministers focus on characteristics of being compassionate, full of faith, skilled, trustworthy, and Christ-centered. Stephen Ministers develop and hone skills such as effective listening, a process approach to caring, assertiveness, confidentiality, maintaining boundaries, and caring for those going through a difficult time. Our Stephen Ministers have commented this ministry is transformational for them. Our hope is that as this ministry grows, our congregation will grow to be more empathic and forbearing as well.

This ministry spans beyond the walls of Unity. Our Referrals Coordinator pairs a Stephen Minister with a care receiver based on specific criteria. Referrals come from various sources: a church member asking for him/herself, a pastor or friend making a suggestion, someone in the community contacts the church office, another church, or Stephen Ministry headquartered in St. Louis. Our Stephen Ministers serve both Unity members and others in our community.

The Stephen Leader team focuses on the nuts and bolts of administering the program to ensure St. Louis protocol is followed: scheduling and implementing initial training, identifying and creating continuing education opportunities, referrals, coordinating and providing support to the peer supervision groups. A peer supervision group consists of a trained facilitator (a Stephen Minister or Leader who has an additional 5 hours of specific training) and 5 - 7 Stephen Ministers. The goal of this group is to provide support, guidance and accountability to each other to ensure every Stephen Minister provides the best possible Christian care.

Stephen Ministers are the care givers; God is the cure giver. We rely on God to lead us in every endeavor. We hope you continue to join us in supporting this ministry by making or renewing your commitment of time, talents, and treasures on **Commitment Sunday, March 30th.**



PRAYER SQUARES AND LAP BLANKET/PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Are you aware that Unity has several talented women knitting or crocheting Prayer Squares? Each square is accompanied by a prayer for the individual who needs support. There are Prayer Squares in the Narthex and outside of the church office. Please take one for yourself, a friend, or family member that you think may need one.

If you know of a person who may need a Lap Blanket/Prayer Shawl, please contact the office and let one of the ministers know and they can arrange delivery.

We always welcome new members who can knit or crochet to continue this valuable service to our church and community. Patterns can be provided.



For more information contact Paula Jackson at 803-547-3463 or Ann Spitzer at 248-978-5324.

SECOND HARVEST FOOD DISTRIBUTION EVENT

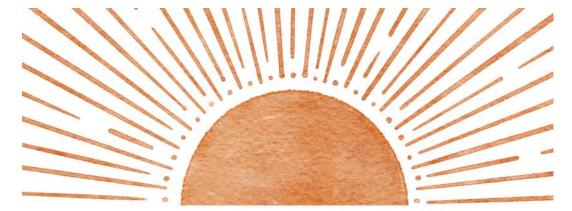


Team The Unity Outreach is sponsoring a Second Harvest Food Distribution event on Friday morning, March 14th, 2025 from 8:00 to 11:30 a.m. Please come and help distribute food by parceling and loading food into grocery carts and placing the food into our guest's cars. Bring any paper or plastic grocery bags that you have available. Volunteers to transport any remaining food to the Fort Mill Care Center are appreciated, and to help recycle cardboard and shipping pallets. Please call or text Jim Boyd if you have questions (803.984.2277).

CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT BENEFITING HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF YORK COUNTY



The ISACA Charlotte Chapter is hosting a charity golf tournament benefiting Habitat for Humanity of York County on **Monday, May 5th, 2025** at River Hills Country Club in Lake Wylie, SC. This Captain's Choice golf event is raising funds for affordable homeownership construction in York County. Cost is \$175/player or \$700/team. For more information and to register go to: https://yorkcountyhabitat.org/golftournament.





Saturday, March 29, 2025 from 8AM - 12 Noon

Register before March 16th!

You're invited to a day of service for the entire

congregation.





Registration is open for GO MAD (Go Make a Difference) Day, our intergenerational day of service to be held on Saturday, March 29th, from 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. GO MAD Day is for people 4-100 years old and offers small group service projects appropriate for families with children, teens, and adults of all ages. A nursery will be provided for children under age 4. We will be working with many of our local mission partners here in York County. See information on all projects and sign up for one today on realm using the QR code. Registration is open now through March 16th. If you have any questions, contact Molly Spangler at mspangler@unityfortmill.org for more information.

ECUMENICAL MISSION TRIP TO MEXICO

Ecumenical Mission Trip to Mexico May 24-30, 2025

The Providence Presbytery Mexico Border Ministry Neighborhood is excited to offer a trip for local disciples to travel to Frontera de Cristo in Agua Prieta, Mexico. This is where our missionaries, Mark Adams and Miriam Maldonado are serving. We will spend 7 days learning about the work that they and their Mexican partners are doing.

Some of the places we will visit are the Migrant Resource Center, CAME and the Lily of the Valley Presbyterian Church. We will also learn more about Café Justo when we visit Café Justo y Mas coffee shop. To learn more about the mission partners that Frontera de Cristo works with visit www.fronteradecristo.org.



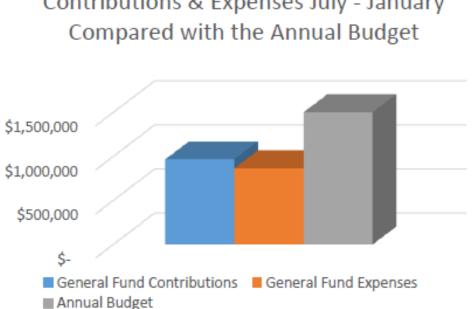
<u>Cost-</u>Each traveler will pay for their own air travel to Tucson. The Basic cost per person will be <u>\$800.</u>This will include dormitory style lodging, meals, and transportation from the airport and while we are in Agua Prieta. We have a detailed Mission Handbook which we give to anyone who is interested in the trip.

DID YOU KNOW?

Did You Know, like all entities, Unity pays fees for collecting certain donations?

- Cash & Checks are handled in-house and do not have fees associated with depositing them.
- Online giving initiated through your financial institution does not have fees associated with depositing them.
- Automatic Bank Draft where you provide Unity's financial office with your bank's routing and account number, and we pull the donation monthly or quarterly. There is a small batch fee that when spread over many donations is pennies for each donation.
- Online Giving initiated through Unity's Realm system carry both a transaction fee for each transaction and a processing fee as a percentage of the transaction.

2024-2025 BUDGET UPDATE



Contributions & Expenses July - January
Compared with the Annual Budget

		January 2025		ul 1, 2024 through n 31, 2025	% of Annual Budget	5-Year Average	
General Fund Contributions	\$	86,195	\$	965,400	59.0%	\$	918,401
General Fund Expenses		143,660		864,657	52.8%		792,851
Annual Budget			3	1,636,321	100.0%		1,519,243

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Current Status of the 2010 Sanctuary Building Debt

Balance, January 31, 2025	\$ 369,300
Projected Balloon Payment Due, 6/5/2027	\$ 205,000

Please remember Unity in your estate plan.

Unity Presbyterian Church 303 Tom Hall Street PO Box 1267 Fort Mill, SC 29716-1267

www.UnityFortMill.org

JOIN US SUNDAY

8:45 a.m. In-Person/Livestream Worship

11:00 a.m. In-Person/Livestream Worship

Share Your Tithes and Offerings Online



Return Service Requested

Thank you for supporting God's ministry through Unity Presbyterian Church.