

Life at Unity

February 03, 2026



MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Friends,

I have found myself at a distinct loss for words as the events unfolded in Minnesota over the last several weeks, including the death of Renee Good and Alex Pretti. When Sarah and I traveled to Greece and Turkey last year, the majority of those who traveled with us were pastors and spouses serving Lutheran churches in Minnesota. In my prayers I continue to lift them, their churches, members of law enforcement, community leaders, and the entire community up to the Lord. Many of these pastors, as well as other pastoral colleagues near and far, have eloquently shared words and lived out faithful actions witnessing to the gospel's call to peace, justice, lament, repentance, and hope.

I still am not sure what I am called to add to their witness. Watching the news or social media we find many who are quick to adopt the talking points of one political party or another. Accusations and falsehoods spread like wildfire, muddying any attempts to find the truth or work toward the common good. There is no doubt that these are trying times for our nation. They are not the first and they will not be the last.

As I have shared with you before, I believe my call as your pastor is always to seek and share what "only the church can say" in moments like these. Through my prayers and reflections, I have been drawn to frame my own responses with questions from Jesus' words in John 14:6 when he tells his disciples on the night of his arrest: "I am the way and the truth and the life." And so, I am led to ask:

- Who is practicing the "way" of Jesus: how he interacted with others; the words he offered; his commitment to healing and new life; and the means by which he engaged those with power and authority? How do we lift up this "way" in our own responses to the critical events of this moment?
- Who is telling the "truth" of Jesus - a truth that depends not merely on perception, spin, or sound bites; a truth that is personal because Christ is present in it; a truth that we need eyes to see and ears to hear; a truth that acknowledges sin and wrongdoing and yet moves toward repentance and reconciliation? How do we lift up this "truth" in our own responses to the critical events of this moment?
- Where do we see the "life" of Jesus - the community he creates; the belovedness of each child of God; the "sinners and tax collectors" he welcomed; the fullness of life Christ intends for all to share; the possibility of a future with hope? How do we participate in this "life" in the words we speak, the actions we take, what we share, and advocacy we do?

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus calls us as disciples to embrace his way, truth, and life. May we seek to be and become more and more like him in our own lives and as the church together.

See you Sunday!
Matt

For more information on
"What's Happening" at Unity,
please visit...
[www.unityfortmill.org/
whats-happening/](http://www.unityfortmill.org/whats-happening/)

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

The deadline to submit items for
the February 17th, 2026
Newsletter is Wednesday,
February 11th, 2026.

**Please Welcome New Members
Received by Session on
Thursday, 1/29/2026:**

John & Sara-Kate Hollis with their
children, Wesleigh, Kingsley and
Christian

Joey & Sarah Spinetto

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](https://www.instagram.com/UnityFortMill)

Facebook: [@UnityFortMill](https://www.facebook.com/UnityFortMill)

Be sure to "like" our page.

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 FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 16 -- Paulette Little
- 17 -- Kathy DesErmia; Adelaide Mari
- 18 -- Mary Bolettieri; Lisa Brown; Dehler Hart; Olivia Morgan; Archer Potts
- 19 -- Tucker Cameron; Diana Edwards; Vicki Hawkins; Jake Olinger; Ethan Smith
- 20 -- Donita Cooper; James Hubis; Mary Pearson; Erin Pratt; Hill Spinner; Mary Martin Spinner
- 21 -- Emory Carter; Susan Green-Grove; Christian Meyer
- 22 -- Ted Benfield; Jean Knox; Tom Mullen; Leslie Watkins; Aaron Wright
- 23 -- Ted Matthews; Morgan Reid
- 24 -- Catherine Barhorst; Beth Frattaroli; Samuel Mummey
- 25 -- Isabella Cardozo; Ella Gaither; Beth Reigel; Grant Smith
- 26 -- Justin Reaves; Sam Rich; Adam J. Smith; Scott Thorsell; Janis Yarde
- 27 -- Benjy Key; Smith Pope; Charlie Stempler; Sherry Tuttle
- 28 -- Matt Barhorst; Colleen Baxley; Jacob Couchenour; Michael Hill; Etta Routh

CELEBRATION OF REV. DR. MARK VERDERY'S MINISTRY AT UNITY

As Mark Verdery concludes his ministry as Parish Associate at Unity on **Sunday, February 15th**, we will take time to remember and celebrate all the many gifts that Mark has shared with us. From visits to more members that we can count (especially our senior members), faithful and moving sermons and prayers, gathering with caregivers and those who grieve, and a quick smile and laugh, Mark's ministry has shaped our life together over the last five years.



We hope that you will join us for worship on Sunday, February 15th for a time of recognition and that you'll take a moment to speak to Mark during the congregational breakfast at 10:00 a.m. that morning. If you'd like to send a note or card of appreciation, please send those to the church office (303 Tom Hall Street) and we'll present them to Mark at the congregational breakfast. Most of all our prayers surround Mark and his wife Franny for the days that are to come.

FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP!

Join us on **Sunday, February 15th** for a **Congregational Breakfast in the Fellowship Hall at 10:00 a.m.** We will gather for a delicious pancake breakfast before Lent begins and get to enjoy some fellowship with one another. We will also take time during breakfast to say thank you to Rev. Dr. Mark Verdery for his ministry with us these last several years. Everyone is invited to come have breakfast and visit with Mark on his last Sunday with us as Parish Associate. Save the date on your calendar, and no need to sign up, just plan to show up. We hope to see you there.

ASH WEDNESDAY - BEGINNING THE SEASON OF LENT

Make plans to **join us on February 18th, 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 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.** and gather for an **Ash Wednesday Worship Service worship in the Sanctuary at 6:30 p.m.** 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 or Pastor Molly know and they will make arrangements with you. Our Lenten theme will be "Transformed by Love" and connect with this year's Stewardship Campaign. We'll be following different individuals whose lives and faith were transformed by an encounter with God or the gospel. May our Lenten journey with them be an inspiration for our own lives of faith and generosity as we approach Easter on April 5th.

ASH WEDNESDAY PRAYER STATIONS ARE FOR ALL AGES

Self-Guided Prayer Stations will be available all day on **Ash Wednesday, February 18th, 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 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.



JOIN THE UNITY YOUTH 2026 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 LENT2026 to the number 84576 to join us. The challenge **begins on Ash Wednesday and is open to all!**

UNITY YOUTH
2026 LENT CHALLENGE

Sign-up 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
"LENT2026"
TO 84576

BEGINS ASH WEDNESDAY!

MUSIC CAMP VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



Unity is holding our first ever Music Camp in February! We need lots of hands to help our campers bring the musical *Called* to life. There are many ways you can be involved – with arts and crafts, with sets and costumes, and especially by just being with our campers and helping them get from activity to activity! There is a great need for shepherds – both adults and youth. **Music Camp is February 16-20, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.** Even if you can only be there for part of the week, that would be a great help! Please reach out to Margaret Monroe at mmonroe@UnityFortMill.org or 547-5543 if you can help.

YOUTH HANDBELLS

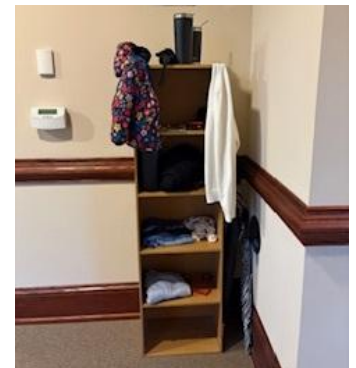
All Youth grades 6-12 are invited to participate in a handbell choir just for you! We will rehearse after 11:00 worship on the following Sundays: March 1st, March 8th, and March 15th. We will then play in worship on Sunday, March 22nd at both services. Come learn the art of ringing in a fun setting! Contact Margaret Monroe at mmonroe@UnityFortMill.org with any questions. Register on Realm here - <https://onrealm.org/unityfortmill/PublicRegistrations/Event?linkString=MzKxM2U0NzgtYTRkMC00NTRiLWEwYmMtYjNkYjAxNTk5OGYz>.



HEALTH TIP: SNACK SMART

If you have to snack, snack smart! Smart snacking is a strategic approach to nutrition that involves choosing nutrient dense whole foods to fuel the body between meals rather than relying on processed high calorie snacks. By focusing on combinations that include protein, fiber, or healthy fats (such as Greek Yogurt, berries, apple slices, and hummus with vegetables), smart snacks provide sustained energy. This prevents "hangry" blood sugar crashes and helps to control appetite. Effective snacking does involve planning ahead, practicing portion control, and eating mindfully. This turns snacking into a healthy, nutritious habit that fits into a balanced lifestyle.

OUR LOST & FOUND IS FILLING UP!



If you see an item you have lost or are missing a smaller item, pick it up from the Lost & Found before the middle of February. Items remaining will be donated to charity.

HONDURAS TRIP INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Join us in the Hospitality Room (M201) Sunday, February 8th, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. to learn about the summer mission trip to Honduras. Bring a friend!



UNITY
Presbyterian Church (USA)

GROWING CHRISTIANS (GCs)

Winter 2026
For all 4th & 5th graders

What is GCs?

GCs is a fellowship group for 4th and 5th graders. It meets seasonally on Sunday afternoons for games, fellowship, and devotions.

When do we meet?

Sundays from 4-5 pm



February 22
March 1
March 8
March 15



**GC's Cookout/
5th Grade Celebration**
April 26
5:00-6:30 pm

Where do we meet?

Room M208
Drop off in the Fellowship Hall parking lot beside the Courtyard.

Questions? Contact Kathryn McGregor 803-547-5543 kmcgregor@UnityFortMill.org

Worship crafted and led by the middle and high school youth of Unity Presbyterian Church!

Youth SUNDAY

February 8, 2026, 8:45 & 11am

MIDDLE SCHOOL CHARLESTON MISSION TRIP 2026!

22 middle school youth spent their MLK holiday weekend serving with Charleston Youth Mission! It was a weekend filled with meaningful mission projects, lots of laughter, new friends, Bible studies, worship, and TONS of fun. Our middle schoolers explored what it means to live according to God's values, which we identified as generosity, teamwork, advocacy, and compassion. We learned a lot, laughed a lot, and formed new relationships in the body of Christ. Thanks be to God for this group of young people and adult leaders!



SIGN-UP NOW TO COMPETE IN THE ALL-CHURCH CHILI COOKOFF HOSTED BY UNITY YOUTH!



UNITY Presbyterian Church (USA) **ALL-CHURCH**

CHILI COOK-OFF

HOSTED BY UNITY YOUTH

Sunday, March 1  Fellowship Hall
5 - 6:30pm

Join us for an evening of great food and fellowship! Come taste and vote on your favorite chili or enter your name as a contestant.

DONATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED TO SUPPORT THE MISSION OF UNITY YOUTH.

Sign-up to be a Chili Cookoff contestant



Unity Youth are hosting a Chili Cookoff on **Sunday, March 1st at 5:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall**. All are invited and we need YOUR help! Join in the fun by entering your name as a contestant. See more details and sign-up here: [https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0D49AEAD28ABFD0-61506379-unity#/.](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0D49AEAD28ABFD0-61506379-unity#/)

MONTREAT YOUTH CONFERENCE



Montreat Youth Conference

June 14-20, 2026

Who: Current 8th -12th graders
Cost: \$650
Where: Montreat Conference Center, Black Mountain, NC

Montreat Youth Conference affirms youth in their calling to be and shape the church of today and tomorrow. Through worship, keynote, recreation, and small groups, Montreat helps young people form deep, spiritual relationships with God and others.

Registration is open on Realm

Please note:
At Unity, we'd like everyone to be able to participate. For financial subsidies, please contact Liz Corsig (lcorsig@unityfortmill.org). The Youth Ministry Team has funds available for this purpose.

MASSANETTA SPRINGS MS CONFERENCE

Massanetta Springs Middle School Conference



Who: Current 5th-7th graders
When: July 14-17, 2026
Cost: \$415
Where: Massanetta Springs, VA

Registration is open on Realm

Come along for this transformational program that welcomes hundreds of middle schoolers and their leaders from all over the country.

Please note: At Unity, we'd like everyone to be able to participate. For financial subsidies, please contact Liz Corsig (lcorsig@unityfortmill.org). The Youth Ministry Team has funds available for this purpose.




MDSF LUNCHEON

Mother*Daughter*Sister*Friend Luncheon

Sunday, March 15, 2026
12pm to 1:30pm

Join us for warm fellowship, a delicious lunch, and our inspirational speaker, Sharon Collins, author of "Becoming His Masterpiece".




In her presentation "Becoming His Masterpiece: It's All About Saying Yes" Sharon will share with us the profound lessons God is teaching her as a new painter and writer. Woven through her message is her truth that spending time with God nourishes the soul and feeds one's journey.

We will also present our 2026 Honorary Life Membership Award.

Catered lunch from Flipside Cafe
\$20 for adults/\$10 for small plate
ADULT plate: Chicken salad; pasta salad; fruit cup
SMALL Plate: Ham and cheese pinwheel; fruit cup

How to make your reservation:
Via Realm or QR code beginning 2/1,
On sale in person 2/22 and 3/1 in the Narthex



PW HONORARY LIFE MEMBER AWARD 2026

DEADLINE TO RECEIVE NOMINATIONS FEBRUARY 8, 2026

Each year the Women of Unity nominate and select an extraordinary woman to receive the Presbyterian Women Honorary Life Membership Award. This is a national honor originating in 1912 from the Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). It recognizes women that are known for their commitment to Christ and the mission of the church. This award honors the woman who has given of herself over her lifetime in devoted service to her church and community. A woman who has impacted the lives of many with her love, generosity, and actions.



The following guidelines apply for this nomination:

- Any woman who has been active member of Unity Presbyterian Church for no less than 5 years.
- The nominee should be no younger than 30 years of age.
- The nominee may or may not be currently active in a Women of Unity Circle.
- Consider how this nominee has used her time and talents to service God, the church, her family and the community.

Questions? Contact Dorothy Gambrell at gambrelld@yahoo.com.

SECOND HARVEST EVENT—FEBRUARY 27TH



A Second Harvest Food Distribution event is planned for **Friday morning, February 27th, 2026 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.** All ages are welcome to come and help distribute food. The process is simple and very similar to grocery shopping. Based on what the truck delivers, we divide the content by 150 families (our historic average of participation) and place that portion of each grocery item into a rolling grocery cart. We then roll the cart and load the contents into our guests' cars. Bring any paper or plastic grocery bags that you have available. Volunteers to transport any remaining foods to the Fort Mill Care Center, and help recycling cardboard and shipping pallets is the most difficult and most appreciated for those having that type of ability. Call or text Jim Boyd if you have questions (803.984.2277).

2026 SANCTUARY FLOWERS SIGN UP

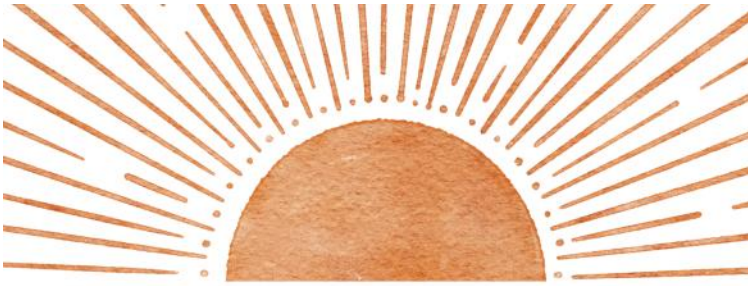


Would you like to honor a family member, friend, or a special group of people? Placing fresh flowers in the sanctuary to the glory of God is a perfect way to remember and celebrate a special person/s or occasion in your life.

Dates for 2026 have now been added to a sign-up genius for reserving a Sunday to place flowers in the sanctuary. You may visit <https://bit.ly/2026-Flower-Calendar> and complete the steps for selecting your choice of Sunday(s). All instructions are included. If you have questions, please contact Michaela Braswell at mbraswell@UnityFortMill.org or 803-547-5543 ext. 130).

Early sign-up is recommended to ensure the Sunday of your choice.

“We are all flowers in God’s Garden.”
- Karen Sweeney-Ryall



Go MAD Day

(Go Make-A-Difference Day)

Save the Date!

Saturday

April 18, 2026

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



"From something as simple as a blanket, amazing things can happen" - Church World Service bulletin

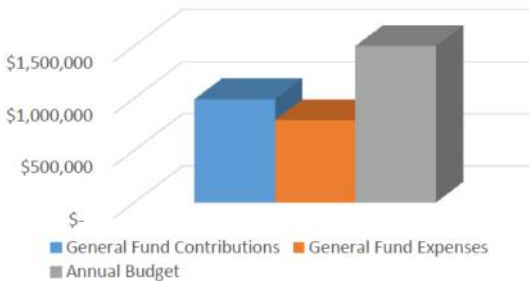
On **Sunday, February 15th**, Unity will accept donations to purchase blankets for CWS-Blanket Sunday. A donation of \$10 will purchase a blanket that will be distributed to those facing a difficult time. The blanket will remind them that they are not alone.

Through the CWS Blanket program, you can share compassion in a practical way with neighbors near and far facing hard times. Donation envelopes will be in pews.

"And don't forget to do good and share with those in need." - Hebrews 13:16

YEAR TO DATE 2025-2026 BUDGET

Year to Date Contributions & Expenses Compared with the Annual Budget



	December 2025	July 2025 through Dec 2025	% of Annual Budget	5-Year Average
General Fund Contributions	\$ 250,674	\$ 990,557	58.1%	\$ 868,891
General Fund Expenses	148,064	789,890	46.3%	699,343
Annual Budget		1,705,640	100.0%	1,569,561

As you contemplate your legacy, please consider including Unity in your estate planning.

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.