



10259 US Hwy 42
Union, KY 41091
(859) 384-3255
Reverend Lisa Stenner, Pastor

January 9, 2026

From the Pastor

The beginning of a new year can be a roller coaster time. For some of us, the celebration and anticipation of others rings hollow and unrealistic. For others of us, filling in a new calendar and wondering what will unfold in the blank spaces is exciting and energizing. Some of us set resolutions and create vision boards. Others discern intentions for the year while still others think such activities are ridiculous. To top it off, almost all of us are overwhelmed by the news of military actions, global instability, and violence in our own streets. Whew! It's a lot.

Last week we celebrated the Spirit's ongoing work in the world which calls us to grieve violence, to name injustice, to seek the image of the Divine in all of creation, and to do our part with what we have where we are to work for God's peace and justice. How do we do that? In addition to sharing our journeys of life and faith with honest vulnerability and seeking to discern together the Spirit's leading, we worship together. We play together. We share meals and fellowship together. We learn and grow together. We do that both as a faith family and as individual disciples.

I'd like to hear from you about where and how you nurture your faith and your spirit. Where do you experience the movement of the Spirit? How do you find some balance between acknowledging the pain in the world, working for justice, and marinating in the beauty and joy in the midst of a broken and hurting world. Please email me, text me, chat with me and share your resources. They could be helpful to others.

I'll kick off the sharing with what informs, inspires, challenges and comforts me. I try to surround myself with positivity as I seek to be informed. I cultivate reliable news sources that offer a balanced view in sharing facts while understanding all reporting comes with bias. Personally, I trust NPR, NBC Nightly News and The New York Times. I try to portion my news consumption and to avoid doom scrolling online. I'm a subscriber to Heather Cox Richardson's blog [Letters from an American](#). [When you click on the link, click "No thanks" when asked for your email address to be directed to the main page.] Dr. Richardson is a history professor at Boston College, and her reflections view current events through US history and the Constitution. I also subscribe to [Piloting Faith: An \(Almost\) Daily Meditation](#) [Click "No thanks" to be directed to main page] written by Rev. Cameron Trimble. Rev. Trimble offers a theological reflection on current events with an invitation to spend time in God's presence to discern the Spirit's leading with questions for personal consideration and a prayer. I have shared some of her work in worship. Finally,

I recently discovered the daily meditation from the [Center for Action and Contemplation](#) founded by theologian Richard Rohr. Their statement of purpose is "we believe that transformation begins with learning to see and love the world as it is. Through everyday Christian contemplative wisdom and practices, we support those seeking healing—within themselves and in the world around them. Founded by Richard Rohr in 1987, our work is rooted in a long tradition of Christian contemplation but presented in ways that meet people where they are today. Whether through teachings, practices, or community engagement, our goal is to help people live out this wisdom in practical ways—so that they become instruments of love, peacemaking, and positive change in the world." The daily meditation theme for 2026 is *Good News for a Fractured World*. I suspect I'm not the only person on the planet thirsting for just that. I also read thrillers, sing loudly to Spotify, do lots of brain games, am somewhat obsessed with amaryllis plants and animal videos, practice daily prayer, appreciate the Calm app, and have regular spiritual direction, therapy and massage. Please share what is feeding your spirit as we learn and grow together!

Worship this Sunday will challenge, comfort and inspire us as a faith family and as individual disciples as we celebrate Baptism of the Lord Sunday. We will experience Jesus' baptism through Matthew's account through the lens of the prophet Isaiah. In preparation for worship, I invite you to read and to pray about Isaiah 42:1-9. It is the first of four "servant songs" in Isaiah. Isaiah sings of Israel being God's servant and describing the servant life. Imagine you were hearing this song before Jesus. What are characteristics of a servant's lifestyle? How do you think those in Jesus' time understood this text in light of Jesus' being the ultimate servant? How might the Spirit be using this text to challenge and to comfort us as a faith family and individual disciples today?

Then, I invite you to read Matthew's account of Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:13-17. How does your reading and pondering the Isaiah text inform your reading and understanding of this text? How do you think it influenced those witnessing Jesus' baptism? I also invite you to "read around" the Matthew text. What comes before Jesus' baptism? What comes after Jesus' baptism? How does Isaiah's image of serving God inform Matthew's understanding of Jesus? How might the Spirit be using these two texts in conversation to inform our understanding of God, of Jesus, and of where we fit in the ongoing story as a faith family and as individual disciples?

In response to the Spirit's challenge and comfort in the text, worshipers will have the opportunity to consider what the baptized life means for them and to reaffirm their baptismal vows. The choir is singing a beautiful piece The Waters of Grace. Click [here](#) to listen in advance if you like. If you feel led, please sing along with the choir out loud or in your heart. (This song is another Spirit gift giving me life these days.)

Click [here](#) for the worship bulletin. Worship is streamed on the [UPC website](#) and [YouTube](#) channel.

Peace, Pastor Lisa

PS: Worshipers received star words during Epiphany worship last week. We have more star words in the narthex. Click here to contact me if you would like a digital star word or if you would like a physical star word mailed to you.



**We have 4 days remaining
in our HundredX fundraiser.
Let's finish strong!**

Sign up is easy!

<https://programs.hundredx.com/contributewithoutcash>
or text "CONTRIBUTE" TO 90412

Complete 90 second surveys on brands
you use every day and UPC will earn \$1.60 on each survey you
complete before January 13.

You may complete up to 75 surveys
and earn an easy \$120 for our congregation!
We can earn a max of \$10,000!

Complete on your phone or your computer

Your information will NOT be shared

*Forward this info to friends and family and invite them
to participate*

That's it! Questions, contact [Bev Johnson](#) for more details!

From Pastor Lisa:

As of 1/6, we had 39 participants with 6 participants maxing out their participation of 75 surveys. Sign up & complete surveys today. Share with friends.

UPSeniors Lunch @ El Asadero 11am Thursday, January 15

For more information about UPSeniors, click [here](#) to contact Elaine Johnson.

Ready. Set. Hike!
**It's time again for our
annual ~~competition~~ collection
for the SouperBowl of Caring
food drive!**



Each year, organizations across the US collect
canned goods and monetary gifts during the Super Bowl football game to
benefit local food pantries. At a time when Americans are known to
overindulge, we pause to recognize the hunger in our own communities.

In 2025 UPC and Abraham's Pantry collected 1,152 canned goods and
\$1,907! In true UPC fashion we will compete to see who can collect the most-
the men or (the reigning champs) the women.

This year we are collecting the following items:

- Hearty Soups
- Canned Pasta (spaghettios)
- Canned Fruit or Applesauce (regular-sized)
- Toothpaste (full size)

Canned goods can be stacked under the appropriate sign in the Narthex through Sunday, February 8th!



Congregational Meeting

Congregational Meeting & Lunch Sunday, January 18th

Our deacons are preparing lunch. No need to bring anything but yourself. This annual meeting is for the congregation to approve Pastor Lisa's 2026 terms of call, to elect the 2026 Officer Nominating Committee, and to answer any questions about the 2026 budget. In the PC-USA, the Session approves the budget and has already presented it to the congregation for information and held a question and answer session after worship on December 21st. The Session recommends the pastor's terms of call; however, the congregation calls the pastor and is the body that must annually approve the pastor's terms of call. Finally, the Session presents names for the Officer Nominating Committee with a representative from the Music Program, the UPSeniors group, the Session, the Deacons, and a member at large. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor provided that the person nominated has already agreed to serve. The 2026 Officer Nominating Committee will help our congregation discern who the Spirit is leading to serve as Deacons and Elders in the class of 2029.

Donations needed for Quarter Auction

The auction isn't until June, but you may have some extra holiday gifts that weren't distributed or gifts that you cannot use. Proceeds from the auction benefit UPC's ministries with children and youth. We need donations of 15-20 items such as cool jewelry items, bath goodies, supplies for a family game night or movie night, gift cards, etc. Auction items can be dropped off in the vestibule or church office. We'll store them until the auction.

From Andrea Vanzant:

Happy New Year!
Are you looking to become
more active in the worship service this year?
Good news!

Delivering the children's sermon is a great way to become more involved and get to know the younger UPC members. Pastor Lisa and I are happy to help

you prepare. The message is based on the scripture reading or important days to remember (World Wide Communion, MLK Day, for example). And the children would probably love to hear someone new!

If you are interested in this ministry, contact the [church office](#) or [me](#).

Schedule for This Week

Baptism of the Lord Sunday

Sunday, January 11th

9:30am Choir Warm-Up

10am Worship

After worship

Sunday School for K-2nd, 3rd-7th, and Adults

Middle School youth parent mtg.

Monday, January 12th

9am Yoga

6:45pm Finance Ministry

7pm Boy Scouts Troop 805

Tuesday, January 13th

6:30pm Cub Scouts Pack 3805

Wednesday, January 14th

9am Yoga

6:30pm Choir

8pm AA

Thursday, January 15th

11am UPSeniors Lunch

@ El Asadero

Friday, January 16th

9am Yoga

5:30pm Girl Scout Troop 2146

2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Sunday, January 18th

9:30am Choir Warm-Up

10am Worship

After worship

Congregational Mtg & Lunch



BIRTHDAYS

1/12 - George Kieffer

1/22 - Richard Sloan

1/25 - Sheila Wenstrup

1/26 - Iris Daniel

1/27 - Michael Frost,
Ray Merkel

1/29 - Brent Tolle

1/30 - Nancy Shupe

2/1 - Malcolm

Cuthbertson-Adams

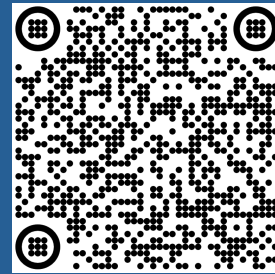
2/3 - Joanie Kenkel

2/5 - Martin Sabogal

2/7 - Heather Dern

2/10 - Dave Claar

2/11 - Ainsley & Braeden
Brown, Laney Tolle



Online Giving

You may give online or via text through the [UPC website](#). You can make a one time gift or set up a recurring gift. You may make a memorial or honorary gift and even pay for youth conferences. The online transaction processes the gift from your checking account, savings account, credit card or debit card and is secured through Global Payment Services which integrates with Servant Keeper, our membership program.

UPC does not receive the total amount of your gift due to processing fees. At the end of the transaction, you will be asked if you wish to donate an additional percentage to cover the processing costs.



ANNIVERSARIES

1/12 - Javier Sabogal &
Roxana Rosario

1/14 - Joe & Pat Knipper

1/31 - Jim & Sheila
Wenstrup

2/14 - Joe & Holly
VonLehman

Union Presbyterian Church

10259 US Hwy 42

Union KY 41091

Contact Us



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