The Spark



The Season of Unique Contrast

Fall 2026 edition

FIRST UNION CHURCH

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October is my favorite month of the year. This is not just because my birthday occurs at the end of this month, but because it is a time of unique contrast.

The days typically remain warm while the evenings become cool and crisp. The beauty of the colors that we see on the trees differ from day-to-day based on whether we have bright sunshine or cloudy skies. We know that it is pointing us to the coming of winter, but we also know that this is the process through which the trees shed the old leaves to prepare for the new leaves that will draw in carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. These things are all part of God's divine creation through which the Earth is continuously renewed.

Within our daily walk of faith, there are certain spiritual parallels to the seasons. We have points in our lives in which we feel very close to God, and we are growing in our knowledge of him. There are other times when the challenges of each day make it difficult to hear his voice and see his hand. These are the times when we need to remember the promises of God and cling to the blessings that he has given to us.

Think of the contrast of temperature. During the summertime, it is hot outside and so we need to cool the temperatures inside our homes. In the winter, the opposite is true and yet these things all seem to work together for good. These are rather imperfect analogies to describe the way that God's mighty hand is with us through all the days of our lives. During our highest points, as well as our lowest moments, we need to remember that He is always on his throne, and that His plan for our life is not defined by the outcome of political elections, but by his love and provision for his people.

He created a perfect world, but since Genesis chapter 3, that perfect world has been a fallen world. Still, he gave us his promise to send a redeemer, and then to one day restore all things to their original sinless perfection. Until that day, we carry on by trusting in him for all things, reminding one another of these truths and enjoying the blessings of the changing seasons as we complete 2026 and begin yet another year in his service.

Soli Deo Gloria ✝



Pastor Jim Huber

Young Adults-Youth Group-Anchor Club Updates Christy Cloud-O'Hare

Young Adults Highlight



This month, we're excited to feature Emma Bohn in our *Young Adults Highlight*! Emma grew up attending First Union Church with her family and is happy to be back in the Les Cheneaux area. Here's a little about what she's been up to and what makes this community special to her. **Where are you now, and what are you doing?** Emma attended First Union Church with her family until graduating from college, when she moved to Chicago. Over the past four years, she began building her career in business management. This summer, Emma returned to Cedarville and is now bringing her knowledge and experience back to help with the family restaurant business. **What is your fondest memory of First Union Church?** "Ooo, that is hard to pick just one specific thing—I had so many! Friday night fires with the youth group were always lots of fun. I also really enjoyed youth retreats at (then) Cedar Campus." **What is your favorite thing about the Les Cheneaux area?** "The community! It is really nice to have a community that really cares and makes you feel comfortable and safe. I moved back here for a reason. This community makes you feel a part of a larger family. It is really hard to find that anywhere else." **We're so glad Emma is back in the community and sharing her gifts and experience with her family's business.** Thank you, Emma, for sharing your memories and reminding us what makes the Les Cheneaux community such a special place to call home!

Anchor Club has returned this fall!

Anchor Club meets on Fridays, 3:15–5:00 p.m.
Fall Schedule:
• Friday, October 23 • Friday, October 30
• Friday, November 6 • Friday, November 20
• Friday, December 4 • Friday, December 11

We look forward to another wonderful season with our students in kindergarten-5th grade!

Sunday School at First Union Church

Please join us for Sunday School every Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. We offer classes for all ages, with a place for everyone to learn, grow in faith, and connect with others.
Class Locations
• Pre-K–5th Grade: Downstairs
• Middle School: Library
• High School: Beymer Room
• Adults: Fellowship Hall

Everyone is welcome! We look forward to seeing you on Sunday morning.

Youth Group at First Union Church

Our Youth Group welcomes students in the 7th–12th grades for fellowship, faith, and fun! We meet on Sunday evenings, 6:00–8:30 p.m. In addition to our weekly Sunday night gatherings, our youth will participate in these special events:
• ***It's All About Jesus* walk:** December 5-6
• **Operation Christmas Child:** Later in December, our youth will once again participate in this Missions opportunity to share God's love with children around the world.

We look forward to growing in faith, serving others, and building lasting friendships. All students in grades 7–12 are welcome to join us!



Anchor Club kids, from playing to learning!



Cusco, Peru / Salkantay Trek + Short Inca Trail

MaryEllen Walls

What is your first instinct when a friend contacts you to go on a trekking trip to Peru? Sounds like fun! Yet we knew better than to just jumping in headfirst. Trekking means "Going on a long, hard journey on foot through rough, remote or mountainous areas usually lasting several days or weeks." This trip was the "Salkantay Trek + Short Inca Trail, 6 days/5 nights."

Training started January 12, culminating with 420 miles walked by the time we left for Peru on April 29. Many of you may have seen us walking on Hill Island/Island 8 and the Cedarville area. Regardless of this effort, our low altitude and relatively flat land did not prepare us for the Andes Mountains.

Day one, the trek was over six miles to Humantay Lake (13,780 feet). Talk about tough, it was difficult to breath due to the elevation, so we had to stop every 30 feet or so on the steepest section which was about a mile long. That mile took an hour and a half. There we enjoyed a pristine lake glistening against the Humantay Glacier. Praise to God for his creation!

That night at dinner, our guide Javier (aka Jabebe) offered a horse ride for those who preferred not to hike the 4.32 miles up to the Salkantay Pass (15,190 feet). What a blessing! Bill and I signed up right away. Our children, Billy and Taylor, chose to trek up with our friend, Tania.

It was a wonderful ride with beautiful views. Sometimes the horse would stop, look over the side of the mountain and then turn back towards the path. Definitely nerve-wracking at times. In our defense, Bill and I still hiked over ten miles that day, mainly downhill. Challenging and difficult at times. Ultimately, I attribute this part of the trip to losing both of my big toenails.

By day three, the trip led us into the Amazon Jungle. We visited an organic coffee farm and enjoyed natural hot springs. This day felt like a reward for the previous two days' efforts.

The remaining three days were spent hiking towards Machu Picchu, sometimes on the Incan Trail, with our final day exploring Machu Picchu. I could write a book about our experience, but I'll save that for another day. Truly incredible!

The time spent in Cusco opened our eyes and hearts to a culture that values their faith, family, community and heritage. They were polite, kind, friendly, honest, trustworthy, helpful and welcoming. Multiple times, we had items returned to us because we either left or dropped them. Praise the Lord! (Otherwise, one of us would not have been able to go home.)

There was a sense of safety…young children walking home alone from school, dogs without leashes following their person, or young people practicing a dance or sport, always comfortable and relaxed. We didn't see any police cars or ambulances in action. However, there were occasional police officers stationed at an intersection or building.

The festival of "The Feast of the Cross" was on May 3 and was quite impressive. There were thousands of people celebrating in Plaza de Armas, their main square. People performed with many marches, dances, and music in many forms, including marching bands. We were unaware of what was happening at the time. It was wonderful to see it and be a part of it!

This is a trip we will never forget. We prepared, persevered, and when my heart became anxious about the next day's trek, I gave it to God. Glory be to God!





More Photos from Cusco, Peru – The Trek of a Lifetime

MaryEllen Walls



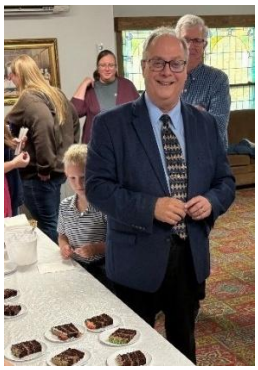






Pastor Appreciation Sunday

Our Coffee Hour Sunday, October 11, was in honor of Pastor Jim. Thank you, Pastor Jim, for being the shepherd of our flock and for always pointing us to the Good Shepherd, our Friend and Savior, Jesus. Claudia Brood baked the cake, and Laurel Jellison and Barb Smith hosted. We missed Terri.







Women's Association Update

Sherri Huff

Fall is upon us again, and it seems like summer flew by this year! The fall season means the Ladies are busy with church activities again.

The planters have been changed from their summer to fall attire, and soon a few large rocks will be added to the area.

We'll resume our Soup and Sandwich Luncheons on Thursday, October 22. The Luncheons are held once a month and are a great time of fellowship. While donations are accepted, there is no charge, so come and enjoy the delicious food! If you haven't attended one of these luncheons, we have numerous kinds of homemade soup and three types of sandwiches to choose from. I have a list of people I contact, but we are happy to expand the list of crockpot chefs and set-up/clean-up crews! Please contact Pastor Jim or me for more information if you'd like to volunteer. Future luncheon dates will be in the Sunday bulletin.

Some of our ladies will be getting together to work on their own Prayer Bibles this fall. Each person's Prayer Bible will be designed specifically for their needs for their prayer time. They'll choose references on certain topics of the Bible that apply to them personally, such as forgiveness, humility, God's attributes, wisdom, their spouse, children, et cetera. They will then tab and highlight those references and somewhat "decorate" their Bible how they see fit. This isn't a devotional or study Bible; this is strictly for each person's time in prayer. It is also a way to draw closer to the Lord by praying scripturally and being more serious and devoted to one's prayer time. We're looking forward to this new venture, and we welcome others who want to join in. We'll announce our gathering time soon. The sites for references on Prayer Bibles are on YouTube: The Sisterita Club, Chosen and Cherished, and Diana Kokku. There are a lot of videos to choose from.

There are many things the Ladies are involved in behind the scenes of First Union. Our weekly Coffee Hour always needs volunteers and soon we will be helping with the Men's Fall Dinner, caroling in December, and future Soup and Sandwich luncheons. Volunteers and new ladies to the group are always welcome!

Celebrate the strength and dignity of women, emphasizing their role in uplifting one another.
- Proverbs 31:25-29

Cooking with Confidence

Claudia Brood

I have been offering classes once a month to help educate and instruct people in cooking and baking skills. At each meeting, I open in prayer and give a short devotional. We spend a little time getting to know each other before getting to work.

The topic of the September and October meetings is *Simple Techniques for Cake Decorating*. At our September meeting there were 13 women present. I was so pleased to see how many were interested in learning how to decorate cakes in simple ways.

At our October meeting, participants will bring baked cakes to decorate which then will be displayed and served at Coffee Hour the next day, which is on Sunday, October 25. Each participant is asked to bring $3.00 to help cover the cost of frosting.

What began as a humble idea has really caught on and turned into a fun Saturday afternoon where interested women from our church can get to know each other better and learn new skills to use in the kitchen.







Treasurer's Report

Rick Wilson

First Union Church entered the 2027 budget year September 1. Additionally, we started a trial period in which there will be one collection taken on Missions Sundays, general and missions combined. The logic for doing this is first to streamline the church service, and secondly realization efforts
to track actual missions giving versus the missions budget is not necessary. Why? Because our church will fulfill missions obligations no matter what. Think of the missions obligation as a promise. The church budget shall be the driver. Shortfalls of giving, while not ideal, will be covered with funds from the general budget.

There is an exception. Should persons wish to dedicate funds specifically to missions, we will isolate those funds in a separate account tagged "Missions". You will need to clearly tag special gifts like this separately so that we know your wishes. Funds in this account will be spent as directed by the church Missions Committee. This is the same method we have in place for other dedicated donations, for example the kitchen remodel fund. On balance, this trial should prove easier for you, and easier for the church. Simply combine your missions and general offering into one and give or deliver it to the church. The church budget will allocate to the various missions what we have promised.

Circling back, a trial. I have explained the logic, now we must see how this works. Adopting a one-collection trial is based on faith that our congregation will support missions spending in a consolidated church budget. Remember, the base focus of the missions we support is spreading the Word of God and helping those in need. With this, we have local, national, and global reach. Bless all of you! Please talk to me should you have questions.

Following are highlights of the four main categories of the church budget: 1. General Budget Revenue – September as month #1 began the new fiscal year with a 16.3% giving shortage versus budgeted, or $3,240 less than budgeted. We note some level of giving is cyclical, such as RMD donations. We are hopeful additional months will bring "catch-up". 2. Missions monthly revenue – 14.3% revenue deficit in month 1, or
$338. Note as discussed above, this tracking will likely come to an end.
3. General Budget Expenses – 22% over, $4,373. One-time spending expenses included: Church stove and amp; Manse refrigerator repair, used zero-turn mower, new entrance doors, install materials, and the manse exterior paint project.
4. Missions expense accounts are active and on target at standard monthly rates.

Thank you to all for your faithful support of the general budget and missions.





The Manse has been painted beige, the new entrance doors to the church have been installed, fall décor graces the entrance, and the church bell tower light is synched with the flagpole. Other projects are underway.

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