The First Commandment

Well, I suppose you could argue that it isn't really a commandment, but the truth is, anyone who wants to know the abundant life has to treat it like a commandment. By that I mean, they have to understand that it requires commitment, devotion, or as Mary Oliver wrote, "loyalty like the kind water has to gravity."

I'll concede a bit and call it an "Invitation," because it definitely is that as well. It's an open-ended invitation to anyone anywhere – no matter who they are or where they've been, no matter what they've done, or left undone. But don't assume that as an invitation, it's simply an offer. Nope, this one demands a decision, an R.S.V.P.

It was stated by Jesus himself, and it is Jesus to whom the response has to be made. He said to the first disciples, as he says to any disciple: "Come, follow me."

That is the first thing, and the main thing Jesus asks of us – follow him, stay near to him, walk with him, listen to him, talk with him, - just be with him. Following Jesus means we have to adjust our pace to his, and more significantly, we have to go where he goes.

That's not easy for us who have been raised in a culture of "make your own choices." We're not used to submitting our opinions, our decisions, our reactions, or our judgments to anyone else. So when Jesus says, "Come, follow me," we typically pull back, and think, "I'll follow, but at a distance."

Amazingly, a lot of Christians expect to spend eternity with Jesus, but don't make the effort to spend much time with him here and now, other than showing up at church once a week. That's like a young man proposing marriage to a young lady, and saying, "I love you and want to spend eternity with you, but until then I'll just check in once a week."

We have so much to learn. And so much awaiting us. And we can't absorb it all at once. Thankfully, Jesus is patient and forgiving, and is always ready to welcome us to come alongside him and his motley crew of followers.

You already know the commandments that Jesus said are the most important: Love the Lord your God with everything you are and have, and love your neighbor as yourself. It's kind of hard to do either of those if you don't begin with his first commandment – Come, follow me. It's a gift, a daily commitment, a transforming walk of life. -SPT

Head's Up! Smile ready! Joy ready to share!

Just a gentle reminder that August is the month of settling in for a lot of people – settling into a school routine or simply a change from summer. And for some people, it will be a time for looking for a church home, especially if they have moved.

So, this is a great time to extend an invitation to a neighbor or friend, a schoolmate, or co-worker to come and worship with us at Union. Invite them to our Back-to-School events! Ask them to join you in your class or small group event.

Be on the watch for people who are new to you, and introduce yourself. Your warm welcome is a hundred times more important than a welcome by a pastor. Let's just simply love our guests the way we'd like to be loved and welcomed. Heads up, smile ready, we have joy in Christ to share!

- Blessings, Stephen



Alex & Courtney Vinson



Tami & Herbie Hames



Barb & Wally Dankmyer



Spring & Sam Slagle



Laurie Seel



Bill & Janelle Patterson

Welcome New Members!

We welcomed several new members into the Union family on May 21.

Be sure to introduce yourself to these wonderful people when you meet them in the hallways and offer them a warm welcome!

(All names are in order from left to right of those in the picture)



Gary Ferguson

Krishna Holston, Ma'kayla, Leander Holston, Ya'zmyn, Na'ryiah and Narvell



McRea, Hollis, Jay & Whitney and Bennett Delbridge









Bunco Night with the United Women in Faith

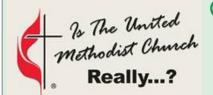
On June 28, our United Women in Faith sponsored a Bunco Night fundraiser in honor of Zack Reinhardt, an infant of one of our members in the NICU. Ladies young and old, enjoyed fellowship and fun, rolling dice and screaming "Bunco" while getting to know each other as they rotated tables and partners. Sara, Joe and Alex Reinhardt were there to give us an update on little Zack and to kick us off with prayer – and Sara stayed to join in the fun!

The circles all pitched in and provided food for the night with prizes for the winners (and losers!) donated by local business owners. Many thanks to Soled (Michelle Cochcroft), Phyllis Plyler, Luzianna Purchase, Westmore Land of Gifts, and Loveland Coffee for the wonderful prizes! All proceeds from this fun event will go directly to the Reinhardt family.









Questions about the United Methodist Church?

A lot of information and misinformation is being shared about the UMC's theology, doctrines, and practice.

If you hear something that you question, please feel free to contact one of our pastors.

Rev. Stephen at stephen@unionirmo.org

Rev. Faye at faye@unionirmo.org

Rev. David at david@unionirmo.org

You can also visit the Ask The UMC-FAQs website, which is published by the greater Uinted Methodist Church. There you can find answers to the most frequently asked questions and even a place to ask your own.

Ask The UMC-FAQs can be found here: https://www.umc.org/en/who-we-are/ask-the-umc-faqs





Columbarium Consecration

Union's Columbarium and Memorial Garden was consecrated on Saturday, May 20.

People gathered to consecrate or "set apart" this structure as a repository of cremains. We beseeched God to bless these efforts, that we may experience dignity and solace as we honor our loved ones and in our own lives as well. This was an excellent service of blessing and thanks.

Inurnments have begun and can be scheduled through the church office.









Welcome Day School Directors

Union UMC is excited to have these wonderful women leading our Union Day School this year!

Leslie Kulp (right) is our new Day School Director and she served as our Assistant Director prior to her selection as the new director. Leslie also served in several education roles in her career prior to joining Union Day School.

Jenny Gantt (left) is our Assistant Day School Director. She has served several years as a teacher at Union Day School in the one year old classes and has worked as an elementary teacher and math interventionist in Lexington-Richland District Five schools.

Welcome! We pray many blessings over this upcoming school year!

Day School Parent Night

If you have registered your child to attend our Day School, you are invited to attend our Parent Night on **August 29** from 6-8 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

You will have an opportunity to turn in forms, meet the teachers and check out the school all before the first day! If you have any questions, please reach out to Leslie Kulp at Ikulp@unionirmo.org.



First Day of School!

Union Day School is welcoming back students - full day and half day on **September 5**!

Join us in covering the teachers, students, and parents with prayer during this eventful time!











Ready, Set, Move! VBS in Review

Thank you Union!! We had a wonderful week at Vacation Bible School!! Our focus for the week was following Jesus here, there and everywhere. We also learned the scripture that we can take with us: "Let us keep looking to Jesus. He is the one who started this journey of faith. And he is the one who completes the journey of faith." Hebrews 12:2a.

Each day we experienced a new story that showed how we can follow Jesus by: Doing, Loving, Sharing and Believing what Jesus said and did. Our kids had a great time getting messy in crafts and playing games in recreation. Our small groups also had time to go through the bible stories with experiments and hands-on activities.

Thank you to all our many volunteers! Because of our volunteers we were able to impact 100 children! Thank you

Union for the many prayers! We can't wait to see what's in store for next year!!























Welcome to Bibleland!

We are so excited that Bibleland is now open! Thank you so much to Susan Johnson, Jan Buck, Barbara Hammet, Vic Caldwell and Coby Bowers for lending your artistic gifts to make the murals come alive. And thank you to Willis Griffin, Larry Blosser, and Tim Vinson for building this amazing space. We could not have made this happen without the support of the Endowment Committee and Trustees, thank you for believing in our story room.

If you have not had a chance to spend some time in the special space, please stop by. It is in the Education Building on the 2nd floor.

Contact Suzy Broadus if you have any questions or interested in knowing more about this amazing resource.









Sunday School Promotion -August 13

We have Sunday School classes for all ages from 3 years to 18 years old that meet in the Education



Building each Sunday, usually from 10-10:45 a.m.

On Sunday, **August 13**, Sunday school starts at 9:30 a.m. with one worship service at 10:30 a.m. On this special Sunday we will also move folks up to their next grade. Some of our grades meet together, so check with Suzy or Eleanor if you are unsure where your child or youth should go. Youth classes are downstairs in the Education Building and Children's classes are on the second floor. Join us as we start a new year in Sunday school!

BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

Sunday, August 13th at 5:30pm

Concert by the Union Praise Band followed by Food Trucks and games for the whole family We will be "Blessing the Backpacks" so make sure you bring yours!

Please bring items to donate to the D5 Snack Pack Program

Snack Pack Needs



Mac & Cheese packets
Oatmeal packets

Grits packets

Fruit cups

Applesauce cups

Fruit snacks

Ravioli or tuna cans

Juice boxes

Slim Jims

Cereal bars

Granola bars

Cracker packs

Ramen noodle packets

Rice Krispie Treats



Parents' Time Out



Save the Dates!

Aug. 12 - 11-2 p.m.

Sept. 9 - 3-6 p.m.

Oct. 7 - 11-2 p.m.

Nov. 11 - 3-6 p.m.

Dec. 9 - 11-2 p.m.

Each month our nursery team offers childcare for infants through 1st grade.

We ask for \$10 per child to cover the cost of a meal and some supplies for the 3 hours.

RVSP by the Wednesday before to andreamarie6368@gmail.com, and include any allergies when you sign up.

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3rd Grade Bibles

We are excited for this time of year again! We will give our rising 3rd graders their own personalized bibles on Sunday, **August 27**.

We don't want to miss anyone, so if you have not heard from Suzy, contact her with your 3rd graders name and which service you will attend on the 27th. You can contact her here: suzy@unionirmo.org or 803.781.3013

Bible Boot Camp

Giving our 3rd graders a bible is important, but helping them learn how to use it is the next step. Our rising 3rd graders and a parent are invited to join

us the afternoon of Sunday, **August 27**, at 1:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. We will discover what this big book is all about and how to use it.

SonZone

Hey parents of rising 4th and 5th graders, we are gearing up for SonZone to kick off this fall.

Mark your calendars, invite your friends, and let's have a great fall starting **September 17** at 5 p.m.!





Congratulations Graduates!

We celebrated our graduating seniors on June 4 during both services. All seniors were presented with a quilt handmade for them by our needlers group. This way they can take the quilt with them on their life journeys as a physical reminder that they are surrounded by love from their church family.

Many congratulations and blessings!







Youth Mission Trip to Atlanta

M25 Missions Atlanta was an incredible week of raw ministry as the hands and feet of Jesus. Our team was blessed to go under overpass bridges around the city to visit those living there. We were warmly welcomed into their "homes", where we shared a meal and good conversation with our brothers and sisters and prayed over them.

Our students got together and pooled resources to address the great need of feminine hygiene packs for those women who live on the streets. We assembled the hygiene packs and went out into the city to share them with our sisters and pray for them. Getting to meet people and hear their stories was truly incredible. We heard so many stories of abandonment - people who have no other people in their lives to share love and life with them. It was heartbreaking.

One of our team's work days included a day at Safe House, a faith-based shelter. After a training session, we walked a mile radius of the shelter meeting friends on the streets and inviting them to come have lunch with us at Safe House. After preparing and serving lunch to our guests, we had the absolute joy of sitting with them and sharing stories, laughing, playing games and enjoying each other's company.

In situations such as this, it's so easy to see that every human is desperate to be loved. Some people never experience this. It was our hope that by the time we left, they felt loved - both by us and by God.

There are countless individual stories we could share about this week of ministry - and we hope you'll ask us - but it's too much to write. Thank you for supporting this crucial mission that takes the love and light of Jesus into the very darkest places in the world. We were blessed to be the carriers of this light.

















UNION BASKETBALL

Registration will open August 10 and run through September 15 for 4th-12th GRADE students. This is a FIRM deadline to register!

Register here starting August 10: https://union.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1809521

Player evaluations will be held on Sunday, Sept. 17, from 2-4 p.m. and Sunday, Sept. 24, from 2-4 p.m. in the FMC Gym. Basketball practice will begin the week of Oct. 1. Players will be notified of their team/coach assignment after they have attended one of the two evaluation days.

*Note: Friends are welcome and there is no fee to register, but each player must attend at least two Union events per month beginning October 1st through the duration of basketball season.

Contact Eleanor Cannon for more information at Eleanor@unionirmo.org.

August 13th

ONE Service at 10:30 a.m. Promotion Sunday & Sunday School at 9:30 a.m.

BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

Sunday, August 13th at 5:30pm

Concert by the Union Praise Band followed by Food Trucks and games for the whole family We will be "Blessing the Backpacks" so make sure you bring yours!

Please bring items to donate to the D5 Snack Pack Program (grits, oatmeal, granola bars, juices boxes, etc...



UNION UMC

7582 Woodrow Street Irmo Sc 29063



Check out a list of Snack Pack Supplies we're collecting on pg. 5!

YOUTH PARENT WORSHIP NIGHT -

YOUTH PARENTS come out for our first "ministry" night to worship together with our students on **Sept. 17!** Students and parents are welcome to meet for dinner and games in the FMC Gym before we head over to the Chapel for worship & large group. Following worship, you'll go to your student's small group room to meet their leader and see what Youth of Union is all about!

Don't miss this fun night of worship and connection! All parents are strongly encouraged to attend! Friends are always welcome! Contact Eleanor with any questions at Eleanor@unionirmo.org.



CONFIRMATION

Class will be offered for students 6th grade & up beginning Sunday, **Sept. 10**, at 10 a.m. Classes will run weekly at 10a.m. on Sunday Mornings (during the Discipleship hour) through April. If you have not received an information packet and would be interested in enrolling a student in this class, please contact Eleanor Cannon at Eleanor@unionirmo.org.



YOUTH FALL RETREAT

All students are encouraged to register for Fall Retreat at Lookup Lodge for a weekend of spiritual uplifting and enrichment, fellowship and shenanigans!

Retreat weekend is **Sept. 29-Oct. 1**. Cost is \$160 and includes all activities and food. Be on the lookout for registration link! Registration will open August 10. Financial assistance is available, if needed. Contact Eleanor Cannon with questions at Eleanor@unionirmo.org.

7



August Bible Study

Join Rev. Faye for a 5-week bible study in August on "The Miracle-Working Messiah: The Miracles and Healings of Jesus in the book of Mark." On Thursday evenings, starting **August 3**, from 6:15-7:15 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Please let us know if you're planning to attend by signing up online or emailing Faye at faye@unionirmo.org.

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

Help and encouragement after the death of a spouse, child, family member, or friend

GriefShare is a special weekly seminar and support group designed to help you rebuild your life after losing a loved one. Our group is led by caring people who have experienced grief and want to help you through the difficult days ahead.

We know it hurts, and we want to help.

Contact Us Today

Wednesdays 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. August 9 - November 1, 2023 In the Library Union United Methodist Church 803.781.3013, www.UnionIrmo.org



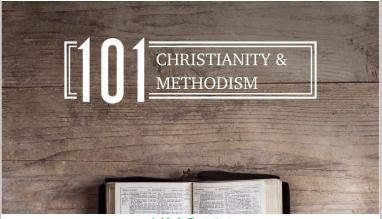


Let Your Voice Be Heard!

Love to sing?

Want to meet and connect with loving and dedicated people? Please consider joining the Chancel Choir at Union! The choir starts fall rehersals on Wednesday, **August 16** from 7:30-8:30 p.m. Come join a great group of musicians that love to sing and have fun.

The Chancel Choir provides music on Sundays during the 9 a.m. traditional worship service. Repertoire is varied throughout the liturgical year. There's no experience needed! To learn more about the music program-reach out to Frank Turner (Director of Music Ministries) via email: frank@unionirmo.org.



UMC 101

Join Rev. Taylor for an introductory class on the United Methodist Church. Perfect for new folk, those considering membership to Union, or as a refresher course.

Four Sundays beginning **August 20**, in the Pathfinders classroom, EB 211-213, 10:10-10:50 a.m.

Calendar Reminder -

Welcome back from summer!

As many of us gear up to start our meetings like Circles, Bible Study, Committees, etc., please be sure to communicate with



Susan, our Office Administrator, to get your event on our calendar. Email or call with the name of your group, dates and times of meeting, room desired and a contact number. Questions? Call or email Susan at susan@unionirmo.org.



Join us on Wednesday evenings for supper and fellowship starting Wednesday, **September 6**, at 5:15 p.m. in the FMC Gym and continuing through November 8, with the exception of October 11. We are still determining the menu so keep an eye out for more detials coming soon!

If you, your Sunday School class, women's group, men's group, or a group of neighbors would be willing to help serve the meal and clean up, we need the help! Please let Erin know what dates you are available by emailing her at Erin@unionirmo.org. Thank you!

Wednesday Night Bible Study

Rev. Taylor will be leading a bible study on Wednesday nights following dinner from 6:15-7:15 p.m., except for the first week when it will be 6:30-7:30 p.m. Plan to attend for a deep dive into the scriptures.

The Fourteenth Annual
Sharing God's Love
Benefit Golf Tournament

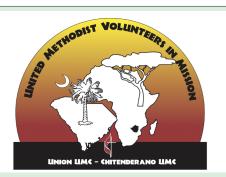
Love to golf?

Join us for the **Sharing God's Love Golf Tournament** on Monday, **September 11**!

All of the net proceeds will benefit your neighbors in need in the Dutch Fork, Irmo, St. Andrews, and Ballentine communities. Established in 1984, Sharing God's Love has faithfully provided thousands of families with food, clothing, personal hygiene items, and financial aid for utility, medical, and other emergency expenses.

During 2022, 2,322 families, totaling 6,958 people, including 464 new clients, received assistance valued at \$1,018,571, plus \$1,180,571, in assistance to other agencies.

Registration and sponsor forms can be found in the church office. Contact Jim Sharp at 803-727-7297 or Ron Feaster at 803-741-4846 if you would like to give, get involved, or with any questions.



Zimbabwe Bracelets

Join us on Wednesday, **September 6**, after supper from 6-6:30 p.m. as we make bracelets as a gift from our church to the people of Chidenderano in Zimbabwe. Our Zimbabwe mission team will take them when they leave for Chidenderano on September 13. They will be there through September 30.

We're welcoming new members at both services on Sunday, September 17

If you're thinking about joining the Union family, this would be a perfect opportunity! Please get in contact with Erin at Erin@unionirmo.org about your desire to join.

Blessing Box Urgent Needs!

Our backstock closet is empty! We need your help to continue to help our community.

Supplies Needed

- Dry Milk
- Cereal (11b. box)
- Cereal/Breakfast Bars
 - Instant Grits
 - Instant Oatmeal
 - Canned Chili
 - Canned Ravioli
 - Canned Tuna
- Canned Chunk Chicken
 - Jelly
 - Noodles & Sauce

- Soup (10.5oz or family size)
 - Peanut Butter (16oz, smooth)
 - Canned Fruit (15oz can)
- Canned Corn (15oz can)
- Canned Green Beans (15 oz)
 - Macaroni & Cheese (packets or cups)
 - Instant Mashed Potatoes
 - Prepared Rice Packets
 - Tang (instant drink mix)

Place your items in the box in the Narthex. Thank you!



Directories are available!

If you did not have your picture taken for the directory and signed up on the waiting list to get one, you may come by the church office and get one.

Answers

Our PEP! group took a trip to visit the **Ark Encounter** & **Creation Museum** July 17-20. These are a couple pictures of the group on this wonderful trip.

If you have a temporary, or longer term, need for transportation to and from medical appointments, or help picking up medication or groceries, then the Transportation Angel team members are ready to serve you! Please contact Gail Elfert at 803.466.2403 or celfert@aol.com, and let her know what kind and when you need assistance. The earlier you give us notice, the easier it is to get you matched with someone who is available at the time you need. If you have trouble reaching Gail you can contact Rev. David Anderson at the church at david@unionirmo.org or 803.781.3013.

The United Women in Faith

Are no longer collecting cancelled stamps and have decided to focus on different ministries, such as collecting pop or can tabs for Ronald McDonald House and quarters for Killingsworth Home for Women. Thank you for your continued support of our active ministries!





Many thanks to the handy hands who have helped serve one of our Union families make repairs to their home! Continue to be in prayer over this family as they continue to repair and rebuild. If you would like to help, please contact Wallace Steadman at wwsteadman@aol.com. Thank you!











Memorials - May 21st - July 23rd

Memorials received in memory of:

Butch Butler By: Jan and Brad Elliot, Melissa and Lee Witherow, and Elaine Strong **Cammy Wann (Fran Wann-Fulghum's daughter) By:** Judy Weston, Connie and Bob Warren, Jane and Bryan Graham, Jeanette Davis

Richard H. Dick Matthews By: The Aline Leitner Fellowship Sunday School class

We extend our sympathy to the following families at the loss of their loved one: IN MEMORIAM

Hazel Richardson in the loss of her great-granddaughter, and Rhonda Richardson in the loss of her granddaughter,

Hazel Grace Richardson

Stephen Chapman Sutusky April 7, 1982 - May 29, 2023

Charles Ayer in the loss of his brother, William "Billy" Lee Ayer

Scott Huebner in the loss of his mother,

Mariemma Huebner

Leola Burch in the loss of her sister,

Caroline Moorer Gaskin

Connie Parker in the loss of her sister, **Eleanor Pettit Brouwer**

We celebrate the brith of:

Vivian Fidelia Zamora was born May 20. She was born to Lyndsey Plyler and Anthony Zamora. Proud grandparents are Phyllis and Glenn Plyler.

Anderson Lee Conine was born May 25. He was born to Lindsay & Dusty Conine. Grandparents are Brenda & Phil Teague. Aunt and Uncle are Michelle & Jason Cochcroft.

Cousins are Levi & Etta Cochcroft.

Bellamy Lynne Nagel was born June 19. She was born to Lindsey and TJ Nagel. She has a brother, Fourth.

Grandparents are Lynne and Hank Riddick.

Henry David Skilton was born to Katelyn and David Skilton. Grandparents are Andrea and Trent Mattingly and the proud great grandmother is Jo Mooney.

The Church office will be closed September 4 for Labor Day.

The September Union Connection Deadline is August 16.

The Union Connection is a monthly publication of Union United Methodist Church.

Articles should be submitted to Amy via email (amy@unionirmo.org).

Our Ministry Team

Senior Minister
Rev. Stephen Taylor

Associate Minister Rev. Faye Jones

Minister of Visitation Rev. David Anderson

Church Administraor **Susan Vinson**

Administrative Assistant Erin Schoolmeester

Finance Barbara Tanner

Director of Communications and Promotions **Amy Gustafson**

Director of Ministries to Children & Families Suzy Broadus

Director of Youth and Leisure Ministries **Eleanor Cannon**

Assistant Director of Youth Ministries Thomas Walsh

Director of Music Ministries Frank Turner

Coordinator of Contemporary Worship Michelle Cochcroft

Day School Director Leslie Kulp

Assistant Day School Director Jenny Gantt

Facilities Manager Ned Calvert

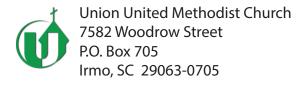
Assistant Facilities Manager Steve Ragan

Nursery Coordinator Andrea Williams

Production Manager **Jake Cosentino**

Organist

Joey Rothfuss



Visit us on the Web at www.UnionIrmo.org

If you would like your name removed from this newsletter mailing list, please contact the church office at 803-781-3013.

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Join us for ONE SERVICE August 13th!



Sunday School at 9:30 a.m.

ONE Service at 10:30 a.m.

Back to School Bash at 5:30 p.m.

Everyone is welcome to our Back to School Bash for a concert, food trucks & Blessing the Backpacks! See pg. 5 for more!

