



UNION Connection

Union United Methodist Church Irmo, South Carolina

Rev. Taylor's "State of the Church" Report to the 2024 Charge Conference

Union UMC is a growing, multi-celled servant church that is actively living out its mission to Know Christ, Share Faith and Show Grace. It is blessed with strong lay leadership and a congregation committed to servanthood, inclusion and diversity. We strive to be a safe place where all persons can grow in their discipleship to Jesus Christ. Our people put their faith into action again and again through their hospitality, service and outreach.

I wish to highlight two changes that are not limited to the calendar year, processes that began over the last couple of years and will continue, I believe, into the near future. They deal with leadership and identity.

Many of the strong ministries of Union, such as The Living Christmas Story, the UWF, Youth Counselors, along with various ministry teams, for example, have been undergoing a subtle but significant shift in generational leadership. New leaders are being mentored to ensure the continuation of classes, ministries, circles and small groups.

This process has required trust, or better, faith, as experienced leaders have had to make room for new leaders to bring new ideas to established traditions. This is a challenging evolution in a church's growth, and also is a sign of a healthy church.

Secondly, there is a growing awareness, mainly among the lay leadership but also throughout the congregation, of Union's distinct identity among the churches of our area. This is primarily a result of our public stance as a United Methodist church of inclusion. Our people inhabit the same cultural space as those in former UMC churches in Chapin and Lexington, as well as those in influential Baptist churches nearby. Our members encounter the false assumption that Union has "forsaken the Bible" since we do not interpret the scriptures in a fundamentalist fashion.

In some cases, this has caused hard feelings and even animosity from friends and extended family members in these other churches. We are learning how to claim our Wesleyan heritage with confidence, forsaking the need to push back or become defensive. Dealing with this criticism from others has become a real testing ground for us to grow in fulfilling Jesus' command to "love one another even as I have loved you."

Thankfully, Union has had a strong Bible study component for years. A significant portion of the congregation knows that a literal interpretation of scriptures is inadequate. We still have a lot to learn as we base our actions and our application of scripture on the life and teachings of Jesus, but I believe there is a growing confidence in our being distinctive in our centralist identity.

Finally, I wish to commend the talented and dedicated administrative and ministry staff of Union. We are blessed to have a team that works together well, laughs together, and prays together as it serves the body of Christ. Without hesitation, Union's employees go the extra mile in helping the church engage new people and fulfill its mission.

With all that our congregation has faced over the past couple of years – post Covid, post General Conference, and post general separation anxiety – we have a team planning for 2025 to be a Year of Healing and Hope. Worship and mission opportunities will be based on Jesus' announcement of his mission found in Luke chapter 4: *to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

We anticipate continuing in our growth - in membership, in diversity, in our calling and identity, in our mental wellness, and in our discipleship. The journey is not without difficulties and sacrifices, but the impact of changed lives, the realization of faith and hope, and the companionship of the Spirit gives abiding joy. Thanks be to God!

United Women in Faith Spotlight: Rosa Hook Circle

Rosa Hook Circle was formed in the late 1960's and named after one of Union Church's lifelong members. Our members' ages range from 50+ up. We meet monthly on the second Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Class. Refreshments are prepared by one or two of our members. Our programs are presented by some of our members or sometimes guest speakers talk to us about areas of interest. We actively support Killingsworth with quarters and also donations to the Blessing Box. Our main mission is Sister Care, which provides help to battered and abused women and their children. We would give a warm welcome to any women who would like to join our caring group of Christian women.



United Women in Faith Arty Party

Our UWF hosted their annual Arty Party on October 13th. We had 33 in attendance. We all enjoyed our pizza lunch before getting busy with our painting, bow making and diamond art.

Thank you to Judy Livingston, Linda Richardson, Toni Nance and Barbara Hammett for sharing their talents with everyone!

Endowment Fun Facts

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT CHARITABLE GIVING:

- The average charitable donor in the U.S. is 64 years old making two charitable donations a year.
- Foundation giving in 2023 increased to \$103.53 billion—a 1.7% increase from 2022.¹
- Giving by bequest in 2023 was \$42.68 billion—a 8.0% increase from 2022.¹
- In 2023, the majority of charitable dollars went to religion (24%), human services (14%), education (14%), grant-making foundations (13%) and public-society benefit (10%).
- The United Nations estimates that approximately \$2.7 trillion is donated to charitable causes globally each year.

WHY DO WE GIVE:

- When you give to others, your body releases endorphins that can lift your spirits.
- Generous people feel better about themselves. Studies have even linked generosity to improved physical health.
- It can decrease blood pressure and cortisol, a hormone directly correlated with stress levels. People who give of themselves in a balanced way also tend to be healthier and live longer.

Giving and/or leaving a donation to a cause you support makes you feel better. Charitable donations to such causes as the Union Endowment will allow your money to support the Church for many generations to come as the principal is not spent and only earnings are used to support the missions and outreach.



SonZone Pumpkin Carving

SonZone had a messy good time the other week! We carved our pumpkins and got ready for Halloween. Check out how creative our kids got with their pumpkin faces or even hands! Our SonZoners had the opportunity to select their pumpkin, design their carvings and then get to carving. Enjoy the pictures of their creativity!



Youth of Union Service Day

Sunday, October 21, was our biannual Youth Day of Service. We had 2 projects available for youth: a hurricane cleanup day in Augusta, GA and helping to pack Snack Packs here at Union. We had an incredible day of being the hands and feet of Jesus to those in both areas.

Augusta still has a lot of damage that is not being talked about, and we were able to help just one drop in a huge sea of destruction. We cleaned up debris, cut up and moved logs to the road, and helped one family get most of their back yard back to where it was. It was truly a blessing to be able to serve in love and action to our neighbors in need.





Save the Date!

November 23 - 11-2 p.m.

Do you need a break or need to get things done around the house and childcare is so expensive? Check out our Parent's Time Out this month.

We are offering 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. every other month for infants through 1st grade. We ask for \$10 per child to cover the cost of a snack and some supplies for the 3 hours.

RSVP by the Wednesday before to Andrea Williams at: andreamarie6368@gmail.com be sure to include any allergies when you sign up.

SonZone Christmas Party!

Save the Date -

December 15

Kids Night Out

Parents - Save the Date:

January 4th from 3-6pm

Hey Parents! I know it's crazy to think that the New Year is right around the corner. But we want to give you hope (and a break) during the school Christmas vacation.

January 4th from 3-6pm our Children's Team is hosting a Kid's Night Out at the church. This will be for our infants through 5th grade.

Since it's Epiphany weekend we will be celebrating the Wisemen that came from afar. There will be a movie, dinner and crafts and games. Meet us in the FMC gym. Kids can bring blankets, pillows and other comfy seating for the movie time. We will ask for sign ups as we get closer the time but mark your calendars now.



Trunk or Treat is happening right as this newsletter is going to print!

Be sure to check out our December newsletter for all kinds of pictures from several fall events that we didn't have room to publish this month!

(Day School Celebration, Youth Fall Retreat, and more!)

SonZone

We hope your 4th or 5th grader will join us on Sundays at 4pm for SonZone! We will meet each Sunday in November for games, lessons, snack and more fun. When we get into December we hope families will participate in The Living Christmas Story on December 6, 7, or 8. Be sure to sign up! We will wrap up 2024 with our Christmas Party on December 15th.

Check out our recent pumpkin carving fun on page 3! If you are not getting weekly emails from Suzy be sure to contact her (suzy@unionirmo.org) with your correct email.

Fall SonZone Calendar

Nov. 3 - 4-6pm	The Story of the Vine & Branches
Nov. 10 - 4-6pm	The Story of the Mean Servant
Nov. 17 - 4-6pm	The Story of the Wedding Feast
Nov. 24 - 4-5:30pm	Service Night: Sharing God's Love
Dec. 1	Happy Thanksgiving - No SonZone
Dec. 8	The Living Christmas Story - No SonZone
Dec. 15 - 4-6pm	SonZone Christmas Party



TOY DRIVE for Sharing God's Love Santa Shop

Kicks off Sunday, **November 3**,
and runs through November 24.

Youth of Union will be collecting NEW toys,
games, gift cards, wrapping paper, etc.
to take to Sharing God's Love to set up their
Toy Shop for Christmas!

Donation bins will be in the Narthex.
Contact Eleanor with any questions at
Eleanor@unionirmo.org.

VOLUNTEERS

NEEDED

Kitchen Sign-Ups

Parents: We need your help again in
the kitchen for the upcoming year to
help prep, serve, and clean up after
youth meals. We ask that each parent
sign up for at least 1 Sunday per year.
Sign up today!



Basketball Sign Up

Registration is open now! Sign up today
using the QR code below for 4th-12th grade
teams, both boys and girls.

Cost is \$25 per player, financial assistance
is available if needed. Contact Eleanor at
eleanor@unionirmo.org with
any questions or for financial
assistance if needed.

Practices will begin the week
of November 11.



Night of Worship

Join us on Sunday, **November 3**, from 5-6:30pm for
our monthly night of worship! We will meet in the
FMC gym at 5pm for dinner, and then head over
to the Chapel for worship together, as well as a
message from one of our own students. You do not
want to miss out, so be there and bring friends!



MERRY and BRIGHT

Save the Date

Christmas Party

December 15





Union BBQ Hoedown Dance Party for Hurricane Relief

Join us for a night of fun and fellowship Saturday, **November 9**, 5:30 – 8:30 pm, in Union’s FMC gym. Hudson’s BBQ will cater; Linda Caldwell will lead line dancing; DJ John will spin dance music; we’ll play Cornhole, take pix at the photo booth, and more! This event for ALL ages is sponsored by Leisure Ministries Team to get our Union family mingling and moving!

Tickets are \$15, or \$50 family max. **Purchase tickets by November 5** from the Leisure Team, or in the Narthex, or from Susan and Erin in the church office. Checks or exact cash only. Proceeds will be sent to UMCOR for Hurricane Relief. Please plan to join us!

Email questions to Eleanor@unionirmo.org.

Surviving the Holidays

The holidays present unique challenges for people who are grieving. Surviving the Holidays is designed to provide support, understanding and tools to navigate through this season.

November 17 at 6pm in the Commons Room



Thanksgiving Dinner

Nov. 28th, 12-2pm
In the MultiPurpose Room

If you don't have family plans, join your Union church family and make new friends too!

It's a Potluck!

We furnish the meat and ask you to bring your favorite side dish or two to share.

Wilson Circle Book Club

Our next meeting is on Tuesday, **November 12, 2024** at 1:10 pm in the Fellowship Hall. We will be discussing the book, *The Rocking Chair Prophet* by Matthew Kelly.

The next meeting date is **December 10** and we are discussing *The 13th Gift* by Joanne Huist Smith. Plans for the December meeting are TBD. All are welcome to join us.

If you have questions, please contact Harriet Simpson at 803-530-5060 or Becky Dixon at 803-361-5046.



November Book



December Book

PEP! - People Enjoying People!



Bingo & Board Games -

Wednesday, **November 13**, at 1p.m. in the Fellowship Hall! Come join us for fun, fellowship, BINGO prizes and board games!

November PEP! Event - November 21 at 6:30 p.m. Our guest speakers are Mark and Renee Fleming (who we met on our PEP! Niagara Falls trip) on God’s Will for Our Lives. Catered dinner by The Peanut Man will be served. Cost is \$15 per person. Sign up and payment will be in Sunday School classes and are due by Sunday, **November 17**.

If you have any questions about these events or to get involved, please contact Phyllis Plyler at phyllisplyler@gmail.com.

Love in Truth and Action Commitment Cards

Please remember to return your commitment cards for our 2025 Stewardship Campaign.

You can scan the QR code on the right and fill out your pledge card online!

Thank you for continuing to support Union and all its missions and ministries!



Safety & Security Tip of the Month:

Just a reminder, parking in fire lanes and along yellow, painted curbs are prohibited. Make every attempt possible not to park in an area that will block the view of other congregants. Everyone’s safety is our utmost priority, so please be courteous with your parking.



Last Call for Sign Ups!

Now is the time to sign up and pick your role! Shepherds, shopkeepers, soldiers, greeters, traffic, baby Jesus, and more! This opportunity is for everyone. Please scan the QR code on the right and complete the online form by **November 7**.

Roles will be assigned based upon the order your signup is received. So please sign up to participate as soon as possible! If you have any questions, please email UnionTLCS Casting@gmail.com.



Building Bethlehem - Set Construction Begins!

Many people will be needed to help construct our backyard Bethlehem. Construction will take place on all the weekends in November. Dates and times are listed below. We will need trucks, small trailers, and ladders if you have them. No special skills needed, just a willingness to help.

Sunday, November 3 - 1-5 p.m.

Many hands and trucks are needed to pull out sets and begin to stage. Spaghetti and Meatballs for dinner will be served with the youth at 5:30 p.m. in the FMC. Be prepared for TLCS trivia and opportunities to share your TLCS story.

Saturday, November 9 - 8 a.m.-12 p.m.

Breakfast and Bethlehem. Work day 2 begins for set builders and costumes. Hammer, ladders, and many hands will be needed as the sets begin to go up.

Sunday, November 17 - 1-5 p.m.

Bethlehem was not built in a day! The market will begin to emerge and transform the parking lot in preparation for us to share this story.

Sunday, November 24 - 1-5 p.m.

A light work day and weather make up day for set builders in Bethlehem. We will also be hosting Christmas cookie baking in the FMC kitchen from 1-5 p.m. Our goal is to make Christmas cookies and hot chocolate for community members driving through on the bus on the night of the performance. Bring one ingredient butter, sugar, or powder sugar and some Christmas cheer. Make a dozen for TLCS and take a dozen to share. All ages, mothers, daughters, and those who love to bake come fellowship, bake, and frost with us!

Sunday, December 1 - 1-5 p.m.

The "tech week" as they say in theater. All final details go out. Props, burlap, pine straw, and final building needs. Be on the look out for your casting assignments and final adjustments.

Costume Workdays!

Sunday, November 3 - 1-3 p.m.

Saturday, November 9 - 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Come help us pull out all our costumes, check everything over and get organized for our performances! Contact Betsey Petersen at 803-629-4729 or Betsey_petersen@msn.com to volunteer or if you have any questions.

The Living Christmas Story 2024 Performance Dates: December 6-8, 2024 6:30-9:00 p.m.

The Living Christmas Story Posters & Flyers

Posters and Flyers will be available starting the first couple weeks of November in the narthex. Please pick some up and distribute in your neighborhood and take to businesses, your offices, retirement homes and other places you can think of to be posted. We need your help to spread the word about this Christmas gift to our community.

Start planning now to join us for Advent Suppers!

We will have dinners and activities for families of all shapes and sizes.

December 11 & 18

Keep an eye out for signups and menu information coming soon!

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

Lawrence "Larry" Midkoff
January 19, 1937 - September 18, 2024

Memorials - September 22 - October 27

Memorials received in memory of:

Larry Midkiff (Lauren Mett's father) By: Senior Pink at The Dance Department

Marie and Wayne Starnes By: Judy Weston, Edie Hall, and Jane Graham

The December Union Connection Deadline is November 6.

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

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

The Church office will be closed
November 28 & 29 for Thanksgiving.



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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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CUNION Connection

Union United Methodist Church Irmo, South Carolina

Sunday worship times:
9 a.m. Traditional worship
11 a.m. Contemporary worship
Telephone: 803-781-3013
Fax: 803-781-3034

www.unionirmo.org

Ministers:
Rev. Stephen Taylor, Senior Minister
Rev. Faye Jones, Associate Minister

