



# UNION Connection

Union United Methodist Church Irmo, South Carolina

## Hopes and Dreams

When Union's *The Living Christmas Story* takes place, can Christmas itself be far behind? When I was a boy, the arrival of the Christmas season was signaled by the arrival of the Sears & Roebuck Christmas Catalogue. We siblings tussled over who got to go through it first. Rarely did any of us get the things we circled, but we spent considerable time dreaming and debating the merits of our selections. And considering the number of specialty catalogues that come to our house, purchase-dreaming is still a profitable enterprise.

That wasn't such a bad thing, to sit with a catalogue full of possibilities for dreams and hopes. You really don't even need the catalogue. Think of a young couple dreaming and hoping as a child grows in the womb. Think of semesters of study as the student dreams and hopes for their future. After a life-changing event, think of the necessary time of dreaming and hoping as a person carefully begins afresh.

Israel dreamed and hoped that one day an ancient promise would be fulfilled: *for a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call him Immanuel* (meaning "God is with us."), vs 7. What a powerful dream, that the very God who created all things intends to be with us. What a powerful hope, that in all situations we can meet the incarnate Word, Jesus, who has told us to abide in him as he abides in us. These are hopes and dreams that pack a punch: that make a way where there seems to be no way and that give us peace and joy in the journey.

Here at Union, we've had some people who have spent time dreaming and hoping for the coming year. Plans are in place for us to observe 2025 as A Year of Healing and Hope – a time to focus on God's Spirit bringing release from the past, giving us sight for the future, and providing what we need for personal and communal wholeness.

While the church will provide special opportunities and worship experiences for us to engage this theme, I strongly encourage you to do your own dreaming and hoping. What does God have next for you? Will 2025 be more of the old same old, or will your walk with Christ take you to new places of spiritual health and service? What do Healing and Hope look like for you?

A Personal Note: I will miss being with you at Christmas this year. The week before Christmas I will have some hand surgery and will be recovering through the New Year. I covet your prayers for all that to go well. I myself pray that you experience a blessed Christmas. May the Spirit of Christ our Lord fill you and bring you peace.

- Stephen

## Worship with us in December!

# Let Heaven and Nature Sing!



### December 1 - First Sunday in Advent

9 a.m. - Traditional worship

11 a.m. - Contemporary worship

Join us as we light the candle of Hope.

Advent Scripture: Psalm 96: 11-13

# Hope



# Peace

### December 8 - Second Sunday in Advent

9 a.m. - Lessons & Carols Choral Service

11 a.m. - Contemporary worship in the Chapel

Join us as we light the candle of Peace.

Advent Scripture: Jeremiah 33: 15-16

### December 15 - Third Sunday in Advent

9 a.m. - Traditional worship

11 a.m. - Contemporary worship

Join us as we light the candle of Joy.

Advent Scriptures: Isaiah 12: 3,6; Philippians 4: 4,5

# Joy



# Love

### December 22 - Fourth Sunday in Advent

9 a.m. - Traditional worship

11 a.m. - Contemporary worship

6 p.m. - **The Living Nativity**

Join us as we light the candle of Love.

Advent Scripture: Micah 5: 2-5a

### Christmas Eve Services - December 24

4 p.m. - Contemporary Candlelight worship

7 p.m. - Traditional Candlelight worship

Join us as we light the Christ-Child candle.

Advent Scriptures: Isaiah 9: 6; Luke 2: 1-20

# Christ



# December Special Events!

**31 YEARS OF  
TELLING  
THE STORY**

**THE LIVING  
CHRISTMAS STORY**  
A Drive-Thru Living Nativity  
**DECEMBER 6-8, 2024**  
**6:30-9:00 PM**



**FREE Admission!** - At Union UMC - 7582 Woodrow St. Irmo, SC 29063

## The Living Christmas Story

The big event is finally here! After months of preparation, Bethlehem is coming to life with your help! It takes more than 200 people each night to make this presentation of Christ's birth a success, and we thank you for your continued support and your willingness to make this 31<sup>st</sup> year, the best yet!

Come enjoy this event as you drive along a 1/3 mile route through the church's parking area, which has been transformed into the city of Bethlehem to re-enact the 'greatest story ever told.'

People from our Union church family, & the Irmo community, including live animals, bring the town of Bethlehem to life. Villagers, a blacksmith, the innkeeper, Herod's Court, the marketplace and many more scenes come alive as you drive through and experience the night Christ came to us.

*the* **Living Nativity**

**DECEMBER 22, 2024**  
**6:00 P.M.**

Union United Methodist Church  
Irmo, SC

[www.UnionIrmo.org](http://www.UnionIrmo.org)

## The Living Nativity

On Sunday, December 22, 2024 at **6 p.m.** the Living Nativity will be presented by the Union Praise Band in the Sanctuary. This is a service with songs and children participating in the story of Jesus' birth. We are looking for children ages 4-18 to participate. There are no speaking parts, you just need to be willing to take part.

If your child or youth is interested, please scan the QR code to the right and fill out the form on our website or by reaching out to Michelle at [mgcochcroft@gmail.com](mailto:mgcochcroft@gmail.com).



*Lessons & Carols*

*Sunday, December 8*  
*at 9 a.m. in the Sanctuary*

*Contemporary Worship will be held in the Chapel at 11 a.m.*

## Lessons & Carols Choral Service

On Sunday, December 8, 2024, our Chancel Choir will present a Lessons and Carols service at **9 a.m.**

During this service, we will have readings from the nine traditional, scriptural lessons followed by music selections (be prepared to share your voice with congregational singing!).

The choral repertoire being performed is sure to inspire and bless those in attendance.

The Chancel Choir will be joined by an orchestra to lead a dynamic service during Advent. We would love to have you and your family in attendance!



Join us for two Wednesday evenings for supper, fellowship, and an Advent activity on **December 11 & 18** from 5:15-6:15 p.m. in the FMC Gym.

Online sign up is open now! Be sure to mark if your family will stay after for the activity together so we can make sure to have enough supplies.

We know this is a busy time of year when families are pulled in all directions. Let's take an hour to just be together, as individual families and as a church family.

Scan the QR code on the right for dinner and the activities!



### December Menu -

**December 11** - Soup and Sandwiches  
**December 18** - Ham, green beans, mac and cheese

### Advent Supper Activities

**December 11** - Making cinnamon cookie ornaments  
**December 18** - Advent Bingo (with prizes!)



## Trunk or Treat Fun!

On Sunday, October 27, at 4:30pm Union welcomed the community for our annual Trunk or Treat! What a great night with 44 trunks and thousands of kids and their families. Check out just some of the pictures from that night.

Thank you to our volunteers for helping run games, serve popcorn, decorate pumpkins and hand out 400 bags with information about Union. Once again Kona Ice was a hit with all age kids. Thank you Union for all your support and bringing so much fun to Trunk or Treat!



## SonZone

### Christmas Party!

Join us as we wrap up the year with our Christmas party on Sunday, **December 15** from 4-6pm. *(note times)*.

Bring a wrapped ornament for our exchange. There will be games, crafts and definitely food!

### 2025 Kick Off!

Let's kick off the new year on **January 5!** All 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders are invited to our first SonZone of the year.

We'll meet from 4-5:15pm in our regular space. (Room 223)



**SONZONE**  
**CHRISTMAS PARTY!**  
**DECEMBER 15 - 4-6 PM**

Bring a wrapped ornament for our gift exchange!  
There will be snacks, crafts, and silly games!



**Kids Night Out!**

All Children infants thru 5th grade are invited for a night out at the church!

**JANUARY 4**

**3-6PM**

Let us know your children are attending by December 29 by emailing Suzy at [suzy@unionirmo.org](mailto:suzy@unionirmo.org)

It's Epiphany weekend so let's follow the star with the Wise Men through games, crafts, movie time and dinner.



*the* **Living Nativity**

DECEMBER 22, 2024  
6:00 P.M.

Union United Methodist Church  
Irmo, SC

[www.UnionIrmo.org](http://www.UnionIrmo.org)

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Sign up for the Living Nativity today!

## Fall Youth Retreat Recap

On September 13-15, we took 65 students to Look up Lodge for a "Light in the Darkness" themed retreat, based on John 1:5 (*The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness does not overcome it*).

We spent the weekend learning and discussing what it means to experience the light of Jesus, what it means to allow the light of Jesus to illuminate our world and the darkness of the world, and how we are responsible for carrying that light out into the darkness.

Students spent time in worship, prayer, discussion, groups, games, pranks, snacks, and lots of other fun things. We had a truly great weekend together! Check out some of the fun below!



## Upcoming Youth Schedule

With the upcoming holiday season, Sunday nights will look a little different in December, so check out all we have going on below!

### December 8: The Living Christmas Story –

Sign up to participate in this vital ministry of our church! We will be in Bethlehem in place of Youth on Dec. 8 and we need your help! Use the QR code on the right to sign up.



### December 15: Youth of Union Christmas Party –

Save the date for our annual Youth of Union Christmas Party! We will play games, eat food, have fun, and do our gift exchange!

### December 22: The Living Nativity –

Sign up to participate in another vital ministry we have in our church during the Advent season. Check out the QR code on page 3 to sign up!

### December 29: No Youth – New Year's

### January 5: Monthly Night of Worship –

Join us for our monthly night of worship! We will meet in the FMC gym at 5pm for dinner, and then head to the Chapel for Worship and a testimony of faith from one of our students. Come and worship together as we kick off the new year!



## Support Union Basketball!

We have 7 teams playing in the Christian Youth Basketball League this year, and we need your support to help cheer them on! We have both boys and girls teams from 4th-12th grade. See Eleanor Cannon for game schedules so you can come out and support our teams!



## Soup Cellar

We are headed back to the Washington Street UMC Soup Cellar on Friday, **December 27**. Join us as we head downtown to serve our brothers and sisters experiencing homelessness/food insecurity.

We will meet at the bus bay at Union at 9am and return by 2pm. This is a great opportunity to show the love of God to others and be the hands and feet of Jesus. Lookout for a signup soon!

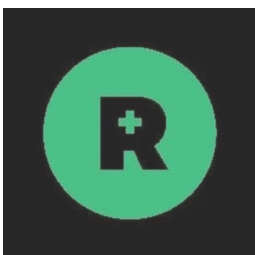
## High School Ski Trip

Join us for an amazing weekend of fun, fellowship, and skiing (if you choose) on **January 17-20, 2025!** We'll be staying at The Resort at Glade Springs (check it out at [www.gladesprings.com](http://www.gladesprings.com)), and skiing at Winterplace Ski Resort!



For those who don't wish to ski, Glade Springs offers indoor swimming, bowling, arcade, etc. There's something for everyone!

Limited spots are available for this trip! Financial assistance is available if needed. Register now using the QR code above.



## Revolution

Join us for Rev25 **January 24-26, 2025!** Our theme this year is Belong and calls on the passage from Ephesians 2:13.

We will lock in at Union for

the ENTIRE weekend and head downtown to the Township Auditorium for Worship sessions! The music this year will be led by the D.R.E.A.M. choir from Claflin University and Stephanie Hand will be bringing the word! You do NOT want to miss out on this incredible weekend!

Deadline to register with a t-shirt is **December 28!**

You can still register after this date, but a t-shirt will NOT be included. They will be available for purchase at the Township that weekend. Financial assistance is available if needed. Sign up today using the QR code on the right.





## Celebrating 50 Years of Union Day School!

What a wonderful way to kick off our 2024-2025 school year for Union Day School! On September 22, we celebrated the start of the 50<sup>th</sup> school year at Union!

We gathered with former and current directors, teachers, families and friends. It was a great day to reminisce and walk down memory lane through, pictures and memorabilia.

For fifty years children have come through the doors of Union Day school and been loved and cared for while learning every day. Thank you Union Church for 50 amazing years of our school ministry!





## It's Not Too Late to Become a Committed Supporter of Union

Union's stewardship season – *Love in Truth and Action* – is coming to a close this month. We've had many faithful responses from our people, giving us a good financial projection going into the new year. But if you haven't gotten around to making your commitment, please do so soon.

Your financial commitment to the ministry and missions of Union enables us to be in service to others and impact lives with the good news of Jesus Christ. Your commitment will also help you to grow as a disciple of Christ.

Estimate of Giving cards are available in the church office and at the Welcome desk in the narthex. And especially for those of you who worship with us online, you can also complete one online ([www.unionirmo.org](http://www.unionirmo.org)), and give online!



Current Stewardship Figures	Goal Stewardship Figures
Operating Budget - 238 pledges - \$1,225,821.00 Building Fund - 181 pledges - \$442,404.00	Operating Budget - \$1,600,000 Building Fund - \$402,000

For those completing their giving at the end of the year. All gifts received through December 31, will count toward 2024 contribution records. Thank you everyone for your gifts and support. Let's make our December giving strong and go into the new year *Loving in Truth and Action*.



Thanks  
giving Dinner

**Nov. 28th, 11:30-2pm**  
In the MultiPurpose Room

RSVP by November 25 at noon. Call Judy Keating at 803-917-2798 or Joy Bouknight at 803-413-1029.

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.

## The 2025 Church Altar Flower Chart

is available for sign-up in the Narthex. Two arrangements will be available each week throughout the year. NEW costs will be \$58 each, payable to the church office no later than the date selected. Arrangements may be dedicated in memory of or in honor of a group or loved one and may be picked up following the 9:00 worship service or they may be donated to Union's Homebound Ministry, You will be contacted a few weeks prior to the date you select requesting the dedication wording as you would like it to appear in the bulletin. Thank you for considering this ministry. If you have questions, please contact Connie Warren at 803-315-7512.

## Important 2024 Year End Giving Reminders

- All contributions for 2024 must be received by Tuesday, December 31 to be recorded on your 2024 giving statement. If you are mailing a year-end contribution, please be sure to mail it in time that we receive it prior to December 31st. Any contributions received after December 31, will be included on your 2025 giving statement.
- If you are considering a stock gift for 2024, please consider starting the process now. It can take a week or more for these transactions to be processed by the brokerages. If you are making a stock gift, please make sure you use our correct account at Fidelity to receive the gift. Laura in the finance office can provide this information to you. Also, please let Laura know that a gift is being sent so that we can be sure to credit it to the correct donor.
- If your address has changed during 2024, please make sure the church has your correct address as we prepare to mail your year-end giving statements.
- All expense reimbursements that relate to 2024 should be turned into the church office by December 31st. Any reimbursements requests related to 2024 received after December 31st may be applied to the 2025 budget rather than the 2024 budget.

## United Women in Faith Spotlight: Sarah Circle

The Sarah Circle meets on the third Tuesday of the month (except for the summer months) at 12:15pm in the Fellowship Hall on the first floor under the sanctuary. Two circle members take turns providing lunch each month, and the business meeting and program follow our meal. Our programs are usually led by circle members and are often either a Bible study series or special one-time topics led by one of our members or an outside speaker. Sarah Circle members are active leaders in all areas of UWF but also support one another in times of need and enjoy learning and “fellowshipping” together.

Our main mission areas are supporting Killingsworth, Epworth Children’s Home, the Nikki Circle, the Snack Pack Program, the Blessing Box, and Sharing God’s Love. We also annually sponsor “Jan’s Van” in memory of our circle member Jan Croft. This is a mobile mammogram unit at the church which is available for the community and offers “scholarships” for those without insurance to pay for their mammogram. We are a welcoming group and would be delighted to have visitors join us at any meeting. If you want any more information, call current president, Gail Elfert, at 803-466-2403.

## Wilson Circle Book Club

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, **December 10** at the Lakeview Retirement Home at 2134 N. Lake Drive, Columbia following the Wilson Circle’s luncheon at 11:30 a.m.



We will be discussing *The 13th Gift: A True Story of a Christmas Miracle* by Joanne Huist Smith. While this book is not on the UWF approved Reading List, it was chosen because of its Christmas theme. There are copies of the book at both the Lexington and Richland Public Libraries.

If you are attending the Book Club meeting, you are invited to attend the luncheon as well. The cost is \$12 cash to be paid upon arrival. Please contact Harriet Simpson at 803-530-5060 by Sunday, December 8, if you plan to attend the luncheon and the Book Club meeting. If you are not attending the luncheon, plan to join the group in the lobby about 12:45 p.m.

## Christmas Special Donations for “Stephen’s House” as part of Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry for 2024

Christmas “Memorial Donations” are being accepted thru **December 15**. The names will run in the December 22 bulletin. These donations can be dedicated “In honor of” and/or “In memory of” and can be any amount.

Please denote on your check and envelope: UUMC Christmas Special Donation. The recipient of these monies will be “Stephen’s House” as part of Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry, a ministry that provides Christian homes for special needs adults. Thank you for your loving gifts as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

- Traditional Worship Team

## Endowment Fun Facts

### **’TIS THE SEASON:**

For nonprofit organizations, it is. Below are 5 facts/statistics of charitable contributions:

- Many organizations raise 17-31% of their online revenue in December.
- Most nonprofits bring in 47% of their online revenue in the last week of December.
- This explains why 46.2% of nonprofits start their end-of-year marketing in November.
- 97% of donors state it’s the impact of their gift as the reason for giving. (not the tax deduction)
- Only 56% of donors see tax deductions as a motivator.

These donations come as a one-time gift as generosity increases during the Holiday Season. Most are by repeat donors as they are seeing a drop in new donors. Where most nonprofit organizations use these donations to cover their budget, some programs, like the Union Endowment, do not. The Union Endowment was set up to support facilities projects, outreach and missions of Union United Methodist Church outside the scope of the annual budget. In addition, donations to the Union Endowment supports the Church for many generations as the principal is not spent and only earnings are used for this support.

Sandlapper Singers Presents

# FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

## Fall Festival of Choirs

Friday, October 4, 2024 | 7:00pm  
 Union United Methodist Church; Irmo, SC  
 featuring the Irmo Middle School Choir, the South Carolina State University Concert Choir, and the Union United Methodist Chancel Choir

## Merry and Bright

Monday, December 9, 2024 | 7:00pm  
 Koger Center for the Arts, 2nd Floor Lobby; Columbia, SC

## Illuminare

Sunday, April 27, 2025 | 4:00pm  
 Eastminster Presbyterian Church; Columbia, SC

## Looking to get involved in Sunday School?

Come be part of The Village Class! This new class taught by Rev. Rett Haselden meets in The Wesley Center gym at 10:15am. We are currently studying scriptures from some familiar children's Bible stories. If you're a young adult, newly married, new parent, new to Union or simply new to trying Sunday school - come join us. Contact Lollie Haselden with questions or interest at LPHaselden@gmail.com.

## Christmas Meal Donations Needed

**\$10 - \$25 Grocery Gift Cards**  
 (for Hams & Pies)  
**Instant Mashed Potatoes**  
**Boxed or Packaged Stuffing**  
**Gravy - Bottled or Mix**  
**Canned Cranberry Sauce**  
**Canned Yams or Sweet Potatoes**  
**Canned Cream of Mushroom Soup**  
**Canned or Bag Fried Onions**  
**Cornbread Mix**  
**Tea**

**SHARING GOD'S LOVE**  
 147 FRIARSGATE BLVD  
 IRMO, SC 29063

## The January Union Connection Deadline is December 4.

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  
December 24, 25 & 26 for Christmas,  
as well as January 1 for New Years.**

## Our Ministry Team

Senior Minister  
**Rev. Stephen Taylor**

Associate Minister  
**Rev. Faye Jones**

Minister of Visitation  
**Rev. David Anderson**

Church Administrator  
**Susan Vinson**

Administrative Assistant  
**Erin Schoolmeester**

Finance Director  
**Laura Mars**

Director of Communications and Promotions  
**Amy Nedbalek**

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**

Assistant Day School Director  
**Paige Morgan**

Day School Finance Director  
**Stacie Vandervelde**

Facilities Manager  
**Ned Calvert**

Assistant Facilities Manager  
**Steve Ragan**

Nursery Coordinator  
**Andrea Williams**

Production Manager  
**Jake Cosentino**

Organist  
**Joey Rothfuss**



Union United Methodist Church  
 7582 Woodrow Street  
 P.O. Box 705  
 Irmo, SC 29063-0705

Visit us on the Web at [www.UnionIrmo.org](http://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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THE LIVING  
 CHRISTMAS STORY

A Drive-Thru Living Nativity

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Join us next  
 weekend for  
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 presentation  
 of *The Living  
 Christmas  
 Story!*

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

[www.unionirmo.org](http://www.unionirmo.org)

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

