



UNION Connection

Union United Methodist Church Irmo, South Carolina

Living into Hope and Healing - Relationships

It's hard to believe we have already gone through four months of our year of Living into Hope and Healing. Just think what wonderful experiences we've shared: from prayer walks to healing services to a Snack Pack immersion to our "Give Sight" mission to family mental health discussions, contemplative spirituality discussions, and a bunch more!

As we enter May, I want to set before you a challenge for a personal task in this journey. This month the focus will be on reconciliation. Quite appropriate, don't you think, since we've just celebrated Easter, which is God's great work of reconciling us in love to God's self.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Godself, not counting their wrongdoings against them, and God has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:19

Did you catch that – we now have the message of reconciliation. In other words, it falls on us to make reconciliation with others. As part of our journey to hope and healing, the challenge before each of us for May is to be an instigator of reconnection, forgiveness and reconciliation.

We begin by taking a relationship inventory. In a prayerful spirit, ask God to bring to mind anyone with whom you may have a broken relationship. Was there a misunderstanding never resolved? Has there been an occasion when "I'm sorry" should have been said, but it was awkward or embarrassing and then left undone? Are you harboring anger at anyone? How about outright forgiveness, have you withheld it and carried the hurt in your heart like a stone?

These broken circuits can add up and lead to malfunctions of the heart! But with God's grace and a bit of courage, we can address them and improve our mental health and spiritual wholeness. Here's how. Find a trusted friend, an accountability partner, and ask them to join you in praying for each person on your list. Then start with the easiest one. Make the reconciliation and note how it makes you feel. Then don't delay in moving to the next one.

And what if your efforts to reconnect are rejected? This is why preparatory prayer is so necessary. Remember, just because you have become ready to seek reconciliation, it doesn't mean the other person is at the same place. So, you just leave the offer on the table. If you make a truehearted, non-judgmental effort you can leave the outcome in God's care.

Remember what Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount? He stressed the importance of making the effort for reconciliation by teaching that if we come to worship God and remember a brother or sister has something against us, we are to go and seek reconciliation, and then come to worship. (Matthew 5:23-24) Making peace takes priority over worship of God! But that's not surprising, no parent wants their child praising them while the same child is fighting with a sibling!

Living into Hope and Healing, in our Relationships – sometimes seeking wholeness in this area of our life isn't easy, but it's what God desires for us. I pray that in this month of May we each can grow in God's Spirit by taking steps to be "messengers of reconciliation."

May God's Peace fill you, Stephen

Give Sight with Healing Guatemala Continued Stories & Impact

In the April edition of our newsletter, we shared pictures and stories from Celebration Sunday and a few quotes, but we couldn't fit all of the stories of this mission into one page, so this is part 2!

We would love to hear your story too! If you have a story to share about how Give Sight impacted you or your family, please email Amy at Amy@UnionIrmo.org. If you are looking for more information on this project, check out our website: UnionIrmo.org/Give_Sight.

Background - From February 2 to March 2, Union partnered with Dr. Luke Rhyee of Healing Guatemala to bring Sight to the Blind in a special "Give Sight" campaign. Bethesda Hospital holds several Cataract Camps, where doctors spend a week at the clinic performing as many as 80 cataract surgeries. Such surgeries are far beyond the financial abilities of the majority of people in the area. Healing Guatemala charges each person \$50, and depends on donations to cover the remaining \$250 of the cost of each surgery. Our goal was to raise funds to cover surgeries for 80 people in Guatemala. In just over a month, you, Union, raised funds to cover surgeries for 250 people! YOU are making an impact! **Thank you!**



"Joan and I hold tight to Union, because we believe it is a true reflection of Jesus' character. We remember that Galatians 5:14 tells us "for the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command, love your neighbor as yourself." Giving Sight is a way to love people that can't repay you."

- Tom and Joan Goff

Making Muffins to Give the Gift of Sight

"Hi, my name is Etta Price. I am 10 years old and I am in fourth grade at Irmo Elementary. I wanted to help the blind because I have Strabismus (I see double) and have to wear glasses to see. I also am so blessed that I have many colors of glasses to help me. The sad part is the people we are helping don't have enough money to buy the things they need, including their vision, which makes me really sad. So, when I heard about this project I knew I had help. I sent a flyer to family and friends to sell muffins and all of them said yes! I raised \$501 which was double my goal. So I asked my mom if I could give the extra too and she said yes, "You can help two people to see." I made a LOT of muffins and appreciate my family and friends helping me with the mission to give sight."

- Etta Price Cotchcroft



A Recent Report from from Healing Guatemala's April Cataract Camp

From Luke Rhyee - I am so happy to share the exciting news of our Cataract Camp, which was held on April 5th. In the Camp, we could successfully perform 78 surgeries for cataracts! It was an amazing moment when people rejoiced with big smiles, prayers, praises, and tears! I could see that heaven came down to those who are rejoicing!

One of the recipients of the Camp was Maria Gomez. A 26-year-old lady from a poor family in a small town named Huehue. Seven years ago, she suddenly lost her sight due to the cataracts in both eyes. Since her family could not afford her diagnosis and treatments, she lived in blindness for 7 years. However, the Lord brought her to Bethesda, and gave her a new vision. Hallelujah.

I could imagine the fear and despair she felt when she went blind out of the blue at the age of 19. She was a young lady, facing the world without sight. I believe that the moment when she regained her sight by the grace of the Lord is truly when she experienced the resurrection in her life. I pray that with her regained vision, she continues to see clearly in both the physical and spiritual matters.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to you and all the congregation members for pouring their hearts into these people! I believe the enacted love and faith of the congregation brought the moments of resurrection to these people who are the least among us. Thank you again. We will have the next Cataract Camp on July 13th, aiming at 100 surgeries.

(See a photo of Maria Gomez, and a photo of Hospital Bethesda's surgery center on page 3.)

Day School Sunday!

Were you here March 30th for worship? What a great morning celebrating all the wonderful things about our Day School. Check out the pictures see what our kids were up to that morning.

Thank you to Haley Tidwell for sharing her story and experience with her children in our school. I hope we can all answer that the doctor will hear Jesus in our hearts! Our Day School children did a wonderful job during the 11am service singing! Even the impromptu start of Baby Shark.

During children's church that morning we made lanterns to help remind us to let our light shine! Thank you for your prayers for our directors, teachers and students as the school wraps up for the 2024-2025 school year.



Maria Gomez



Surgery Center in Hospital
Bethesda



Did you know?

Union's efforts in our Give Sight mission project made the front page of the *Advocate*, the paper serving our South Carolina United Methodist Conference!

You can read the article by going to the link below, or scanning the QR code.



<https://advocatesc.org/articles/give-sight>

Easter Egg Hunt Fun!

What a happy hunting day we had! Thank you Union for packing our Easter Eggs full of goodness! Thank you to all our volunteers for showing up on April 12th to hide eggs and share games and crafts! We hosted over 90 children and their families that morning. Enjoy some of the highlights from that day in these pictures. We also had some families share their contact information with us and have been invited to worship and future events here at Union. Thank you Union church family for always welcoming our children and their families!!



SonZone

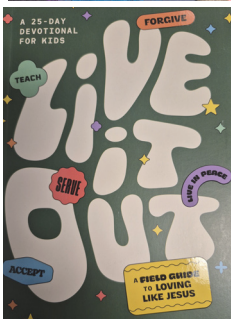
We hope all 4th and 5th graders will join us **May 4th** and **May 18th** for our end of the year SonZone fun.

May 4th is a regular night from 4-5:15pm with games, snacks and of course lesson.

May 18th is our end of the year party and will be held at Sharing God's Love (SGL). We will put together as many birthday kits as we can for SGL to give families. And since it's a birthday theme, let's celebrate with games and cupcakes and fun. Parents please check out our sign up genius and help us fill the birthday bags. If you need the link or information contact Suzy at suzy@unionirmo.org.



Check out some of the fun we had on game night, April 13, also Palm Sunday, in preparation for Holy Week!



Summer Family Devotional

Summer is coming and schedules get crazy, but stay on track with Sunday school for our children with this devotional. "Live It Out" is an interactive devotional for families with elementary and younger children to do together this summer. They will be available for

pick up in the Education Building at the Sunday School sign in table middle of May.



Vacation Bible School is coming! Are you ready to go on a Road Trip June 16th -19th?

If you are ready to **volunteer** use the QR Code (right) or email Suzy (suzy@unionirmo.org). We need volunteers in all areas from Registration, Crafts, Recreation and Small Group Leaders. Child care is available for our volunteers with children 3 years old and under.

Volunteer
Sign Up -



Volunteers please plan to attend one of the following times to receive materials, t-shirts and the big ideas for the week of VBS:

Tuesday, May 27th at 6:30pm in the Fellowship Hall
Sunday, June 1st at 10am in the Multipurpose Room

Parent
Sign Up -



Parents and Grandparents if you are already planning your summer fun, be sure to register your kids for VBS (left). Bible School is open for children turning 4 by Sept 1st thru finished 5th grade. If you have any questions be sure to contact Suzy.

Parents' Time Out! - Save the Date!

May 24 - 11-2 p.m.

August 9 - 11-2 p.m.

We are offering 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. break 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.

Prayer Request



Lift up our College Students as they go through Exam Time!



March Middle School Lock In

Our Middle School students gathered at the church for our annual Middle School Lock-In on March 15 - they had an eventful night full of games, snacks and fellowship time. Check out pictures of the fun!



Youth of Union Easter Egg Hunt

What is Easter without an egg hunt? This one was for our teenagers, so the eggs were spread far and wide and our youth had fun running all over campus trying to find them all. There was so much going on, we could only catch a few pictures of the chaos, but they had a blast!



Small Group Adventures!

Sunday, May 4th is our biannual small group adventures! Make sure to be on the lookout for more info. on what your small group is doing from your small group leaders.



Graduation Sunday is June 1, 2025

Join us on Sunday, **June 1**, at both 9 and 11am services as we celebrate our graduates for 2025!

Youth of Union Summer Schedule:

Check out our summer schedule below! These dates are tentative and subject to change, so just keep an eye out for any changes. We will send out updates if there are any. Signups will come out at a later date.

- **Open Gym:** Join us this summer on a few different dates for open gym time! We will meet each of the dates below from 10am-2pm in the FMC gym to hang out and fellowship, play 9 square, basketball, and just spend time together! Bring your own lunch.
June 26, July 3, July 24, July 31
- **Beach Day:** Sunday, **June 29th** - We are headed to Edisto Beach for a day of relaxation and fun in the sun!! We will meet at the church in the alleyway by the FMC gym at 8am and return by 5pm. Lunch will be provided, but please bring money for our ice cream stop on the way out!! As always, email eleanor@unionirmo.org or thomas@unionirmo.org with any questions!
- **Hiking Trip:** Wednesday, **July 9th** - Join us as we take a day trip for a hike! We will meet at the church at 8am to leave and arrive back by 5pm.
You will NEED to bring the following: Lunch/ Snacks, Water Bottle, and Backpack. Please wear sun-screen! This is going to be a great day, so we hope to see you there!
- **Flight Night:** Join us Saturday, **August 2nd** at Flight in Irmo for Flight Night! We will meet at Flight at 7pm and finish up at 9pm.

SUMMER MISSIONS TRIP

Join us as we head up to Western North Carolina to assist in Hurricane Helene disaster cleanup and rebuilding. We depart Saturday, **June 7**, and return Thursday, **June 12, 2025**.

Cost is \$500 per person. Deposit of \$50 holds your spot. Register by scanning the QR code on the right. **There is a hard registration deadline of May 5.**

This trip is for Middle School, High School and Adults! All adults are invited to join us, even if you don't typically work with Youth of Union ministries.

Please note: every adult 18 and over will be required to be Safe Sanctuaries compliant. Financial assistance is available, if needed. Contact Eleanor Cannon for more information or for financial assistance.



Salkehatchie Summer Service:

Join us as we head to Lake Murray Salkehatchie from **July 12-19**! You must be at least 14 by the first day of camp to participate. Register now at the link below (or QR code on the right). Cost is \$250 per person. Financial assistance is available – if needed, contact Eleanor Cannon at eleanor@unionirmo.org.

All adults are invited to join us, even if you don't typically work with Youth of Union ministries. **Please note:** every adult 18 and over will be required to be Safe Sanctuaries compliant.

Sign up here or with the QR code: <https://union.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2770964>



JOY CLASS SPRING GARAGE SALE

SATURDAY, May 10, 2025 TIME: 8AM - 1PM



Union members and friends, we need your unwanted treasures!

Including: clothes, shoes, toys, bicycles, furniture, crafts, housewares, linens, video and audio tapes, CDs, books, jewelry, sporting goods, hardware, hand tools, and baby items.

WORKING: Appliances, power tools, lawnmowers, tillers, blowers, chainsaws, outdoor items.

Please: No TVs, monitors, armoires, large office furniture, mattresses, box springs, high chairs, cribs, baby beds, car seats, swings, playpens, encyclopedias, magazines, non-working, soiled or damaged items.

Since our storage space is very limited, you are encouraged to hold items until the week of the garage sale.

Your dropping off items during garage sale week is very helpful and appreciated.



Donation pickups and drop offs begin Monday, May 5, through Thursday, May 8, from 9 am to 6 pm and Friday, May 9, 9 am to 12 noon.

If you need to schedule a pickup, please text (preferred), or call as soon as possible during the coming days.

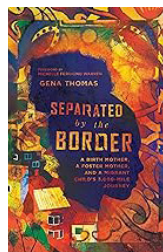
To schedule a pickup or if you have any questions, please contact **Charles Ayer at 803-447-0212.**

Thank you for your continued support.

Stephen Ministry Reunion!

Calling ALL Stephen Ministers and Leaders from Union and other churches! Join us on Monday, **May 5**, at 6:30pm in our Fellowship Hall as we gather together to support this much needed and effective ministry.

Wilson Circle Book Club



The next meeting of the Wilson Circle Book Club is on Tuesday, **May 13, 2025**, at Lakeview Retirement Community 2134 North Lake Drive following the Wilson Circle's luncheon at 11:30 a.m. We will be discussing the book, *Separated By The Border: A Birth Mother, A Foster Mother, and a Migrant Child's 3,000-Mile Journey*, by Gena Thomas. In 2017 five-year-old Julia was separated from her mother, Guadalupe, during their journey from Honduras to the United States. At the U.S. border, Julia came through as an unaccompanied minor after being separated from her stepfather who was deported. The author, Gena Thomas, a former Spanish-speaking missionary who became Julia's foster mother, shares her story and that of Guadalupe as they navigate the immigration and foster care systems.

There are three copies of this book in the UWF collection in the Church Library and a recorded book available through Hoopla. The book can also be purchased used through online book companies such as Thrift Books and Abe Books. All are welcome to join us. If you plan to attend the Book Club meeting but are not a member of Wilson Circle, you are invited to attend the luncheon as well. Please contact Harriet Simpson at 803-530-5060 to let her know to add you to the list by Sunday, May 11, 2025. The cost is \$12 cash to be paid on arrival. If you are not attending the luncheon, plan to join the group in the lobby of Lakeview Retirement Community at 12:45 p.m. If you have questions, please contact Harriet Simpson at 803-530-5060 or Becky Dixon at 803-361-5046. The Book Club does not meet during the summer and will reconvene on September 9, 2025.

PEP! - People Enjoying People!



Bingo & Board Games -

Wednesday, **May 14**, at 1p.m. in the Fellowship Hall! We would love to have you join us!

May Event! - Old Fashioned Gospel Hymn Sing

Thursday, **May 22**, at 6:30 p.m. in the FMC Gym with Frank Turner, our Choir Director. There will be a catered bbq dinner from Hudson's BBQ. Cost is \$15 per person. Sign ups and payment are due by Sunday, May 18. More information will be on the sign up sheets in Sunday School boxes.

Any questions about these events or to get involved, please contact Phyllis Plyler at phyllisplyler@gmail.com.

A New Day

Future casting is a tool used across several different disciplines. It helps businesses and organizations to plan strategies, goals, and actions. It helps crisis responders to do senario planning to plan for the unknown. It is modeled for us in the gospel of Luke as the scripture states to “proclaim a year of good favor.”

In mental health and wellbeing literature, future casting is embedded within skills of imagery and imagination. Tips and tricks are: to visualize yourself one year from now, imagine your peaceful place, or using “I” statements to motivate change and discuss feelings. For example, I feel hopeful when —; I can overcome this challenge by —. Furture casting is linked to feelings of positive well being when it is focused on hope. When our thoughts about the future are clouded with sadness or anxiety, it can lead to feeling stuck and catastrophizing. To remain emotionally agile we must be able to identify when we are stuck and also generate habits to see the future with hope.

New babies are a moment in life when this skill may be more difficult. Traditionally families have responded to these mixed feelings with baby showers. These events are planned for new mothers (and more recently couples) as a gift giving event. However, it is more than only gift giving. It provides connection, wisdom, tips, and hope for the new couple and for others that attend. It is one of the few multi-generational events that we traditionally participate in, which prompt us to connect with the community that surrounds us and to think about what the future will hold. A baby shower is a good way to reassure new mothers that the future is hopeful and many have gone before her (them).

Next month, we are trying something new! A Shower of Hope: A Community Resource Expo; a community baby shower. This event is designed to bring together local businesses, health and wellness organizations, non-profits, and community members to connect, share resources, and foster a stronger, more supportive community. We hope everyone will get a chance to volunteer, share a story, learn a new trick, or make a connection as we imagine what will be and proclaim a year of good favor.

Join us in supporting the new mothers and growing families in our community by donating materials for our “diaper bags,” handing out flyers and posters, contacting a local business (or two) that focuses on family care to become a vendor and join us at the expo, and most importantly, pray!



Shower of Hope

MAY 17, 2025
10AM-1PM

FREE GIVEAWAYS

FREE EVENT!

UNION UMC
FAMILY MINISTRY CENTER



For all families who are expecting, have children from infants to 4K, Kinship Care Families and more!

FAMILY ACTIVITIES!



HOSTED BY
UNITED WOMEN OF FAITH OF UNION UMC- IRMO

Help us collect diapers for this event!

Scan for our Amazon wishlist -



We're halfway to our goal!

Want to know more? Scan here!



Want to join us as a vendor? Register here!



Zaxby's Night for the Day School

Thank you Union for all your support of our school. Our first Spirit Night at the Zaxby's in Ballentine was a great success. We had parents, kids, teachers, directors and church members come out for a great night together. And the best part is we didn't have to cook a meal! Actually, the best part is because of you, we raised \$410 for our school. Here are some pictures of our dinner together at Zaxby's. Thank you Union for always supporting our Day School and the kids we serve!



Memorials - March 31 - April 27

Memorials received in memory of:

Jim LoCicero By: Joan and Tom Goff, Jane Graham, Naomi Bradey, Nancy Long, and Jackie and Bob Hall

Geraldine Mitchell Cesar By: Harriet and Ted Simpson

Iris Bouknight By: Judy Weston, Susan and Tim Vinson, Joan Bickley, and Mary Margaret Judd

Forrest Bouknight By: Susan and Tim Vinson

Llewellyn Hames By: Nancy Long, and Jane and Korbin Johnston

Cam Littlejohn By: Fran Littlejohn

Jim Lewis By: Jackie and Bob Hall

Jerry Washabau By: Jane and Korbin Johnston

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

Iris Bouknight
November 30, 1930 - March 21, 2025

Flora Kathryn Kennedy
June 14, 1943 - April 16, 2025

Journey Through the Bible Trip - January 2026

The Reverends Stephen and Cynthia Taylor, and several pilgrims, are planning for an 11-day Journey Through the Bible trip through the Holy Land departing January 14, 2026. If you would like information about this trip, please email stephen@unionirmo.org for additional details.



Wellmore of Lexington held their fourth annual Under the Stars Prom Signature Experience for their residents! Check out these fun pictures of Janet Zentz (left) and Mr. Louie (right).

Members met their family and friends for a photo shoot and a delicious dinner. After dinner, it was time for the most important part of the night: the crowning of our kings and queens. Each person received a crown, a sash, and a lovely bouquet. It was then time to dance the night away!

The Church office will be closed
May 26 for Memorial Day.

The June & July Union Connection
Deadline is May 14.

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 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
Tim Alewine

Assistant Facilities Manager
Steve Ragan

Nursery Coordinator
Andrea Williams

Production Manager
Jake Cosentino

Organist
Joey Rothfuss



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Union United Methodist Church Irmo, South Carolina

**Joy Class Spring Garage Sale -
May 10 - 8am - 1pm**

**Shower of Hope: Community Resource Expo -
May 17 - 10am - 1pm**

*Curious about these events?
Check out pages 8 and 9 for more information on both events!*

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

