



# UNION Connection

Union United Methodist Church Irmo, South Carolina

## The Significance of the Small

May I tell you a Christmas story? Fine, have a seat and indulge me for a few minutes.

In the summer of '61, my family moved from a small rental house into our new brick ranch house on our farm. There was room in the house, and plenty of room on the farm to roam. It would be a couple of years before my parents could afford furniture for the combo living/dining room across the front half of the house. All that was in there was Mom's upright piano, so I thought the open room made a great place to play.

That Christmas my three older siblings picked out a cedar for Dad to cut. They were absorbed with decorating it and the house and getting presents ready. Mom was busy with my baby brother, but I think she perhaps noticed I was getting left out of their merriment. She must have said something to my dad, because he did something quite unexpected. Two evenings before Christmas he took me, and just me, to the Benjamin's Five and Ten store on the square downtown.

My Dad gave me five dollar bills and told me I could shop for presents. That was a lot of money, and he gave me plenty of time to make my selections. Finally, I had my gifts for each of my siblings, and one for my mom. And, I got 43 cents back in change!

The next morning my oldest sister helped me wrap all but hers. She cut the wrapping paper and left me to finish up. I was feeling good as I took my presents and placed them under the tree. Then I saw something that made me feel bad. It was a present under the tree from my sister to our dad. I had forgotten to get Dad a present!

I tried to think of what I could do, but the afternoon was taken up with church and then supper at a relative's home. When I got home, I knew I had to get Dad something. So, I took my change and stacked the coins – the quarter, the nickel, the three pennies and finally the dime – and wrapped them with plain white paper. I wrote "Dad," and "love" and "Stephen" and went and placed it under the tree. I was giving him back his money, but it was all I had.

I was embarrassed the next morning when Dad was handed my gift, the smallest of presents under the tree. I tried to explain what I'd done, but he just smiled and gave me a hug and told me it was a great present and he was pleased.

My Father died in November of 2011. The following January I helped my Mom clean out his home office. In one of the desk drawers was a small box. I opened it, and there was the stack of coins, just like I'd wrapped them fifty Christmases before.

Throughout the rush of December don't overlook the small presents - small kindnesses, small remembrances, small moments of care and love - they might have life-long significance.

Cynthia and I wish you a Blessed Advent and Joyous Christmas! – Stephen

## Worship with us in December!

### November 30 - 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: Isaiah 11: 1-10

## Joy in our Hope



## Joy in our Diversity

### December 7 - Second Sunday in Advent

9 a.m. - Traditional worship

11 a.m. - Contemporary worship

Join us as we light the candle of Peace.

Advent Scripture: Isaiah 2: 2-5

### December 14 - Third 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 Joy.

Advent Scriptures: Isaiah 35: 1-10

## Joy in our Music



## Joy in New Life

### December 21 - 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: Isaiah 7: 10-15

### 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: 2-7; Luke 2: 1-20

## Joy to the World



## CHRISTMAS CONTINUED!

ONE SERVICE AT 10:30AM

### Sunday, December 28

One Worship Service at 10:30am

Join us for donuts, hot chocolate, coffee, fellowship with each other, and a simplified worship service.



## December Special Events!

### THE LIVING CHRISTMAS STORY

**December 5-7, 2025**  
**6:30-9pm**

**32<sup>nd</sup> Annual**

Drive-Thru Living Nativity



### The Living Christmas Story

Bethlehem comes to life **December 5-7**, from 6:30-9pm!

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 32<sup>nd</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.

There is still time to sign up! Scan the QR code on the right and join us for this awesome presentation to the Irmo community!



### HELP NEEDED!

We need YOU to sign up to help with THE LIVING CHRISTMAS STORY FOR THE DAY SCHOOL! It will be Friday morning, **December 5**. We need you at the church by 8:30am to get into costume. It will be until about 10:30am. Signup sheets are in your Sunday School boxes or by contacting Phyllis Plyler at [phyllisplyler@gmail.com](mailto:phyllisplyler@gmail.com).

### The Living Christmas Story Flyers & Posters are available!

Please stop by the narthex and grab a handful of posters to place and share everywhere you can think of. This is our 32<sup>nd</sup> year of bringing Bethlehem to Irmo, and we need your help to get the word out!

## Lessons & Carols Choral Service

**Sunday, December 14**  
**at 9am in the Sanctuary**

*Contemporary Worship will be held in the Chapel at 11am*

### Lessons & Carols Choral Service

On **Sunday, December 14, 2025**, 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!

## The Living Nativity

Join us for an evening of worship  
**Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>**  
**at 6pm**

as we celebrate the birth of our  
Savior through children & music

**We are looking for children ages 4-18**  
**to participate (no speaking parts)**



If your child or youth is  
interested, fill out the  
form on our website or  
contact Michelle at  
[mgcochcroft@gmail.com](mailto:mgcochcroft@gmail.com)





## Trunk or Treat Fun!

Thank you Union again and again for all the wonderful fun you brought to Trunk or Treat this year! By the numbers you showed up in 57 trunks! Welcomed over 500 children (and families)! Served over 600 cups of popcorn! Enjoyed almost 400 cups of Kona Ice! Put church information and fun bags in the hands of over 300 kids! And endless treats and joy were had. Thank you so much for all the support and always showing up to welcome our community!





## Please join the NIKKI CIRCLE

November 23

12:30-1:30 PM

PICNIC LUNCH & CRAFTS

Bring your own lunch and join us in the Wesley Center for holiday craft time.

Nikki Circle is for young ladies ages 4-11

Devotions, fellowship and fun

**Please RSVP to  
Carolyn Nicholson-  
704-502-8348**



## SonZone Update

Hey Families!

Check out our schedule as we wrap up 2025 with our SonZone. With Thanksgiving and Christmas fun things get off and on. Mark your calendars for our 4th and 5th graders to join the fun.

If you are not on our SonZone email list, contact Suzy (suzy@unionirmo.org) to keep up with the latest info.

### SonZone Schedule for November - January

November 23	<b>Thanksgiving with Friends!</b>
November 30	<i>No SonZone - Thanksgiving</i>
December 7	<i>No SonZone - TLCS</i>
December 14	<b>Let's Christmas Party!!</b>
December 21	<i>No SonZone - Merry Christmas!</i>
December 28	<i>No SonZone - Merry Christmas!</i>
January 4	Happy New Year Games



## Our Book Fair was a Huge Success!

Thank you for shopping our Scholastic Book Fair and supporting our Day School in the process! With your support, we raised \$1200 for Union Day School! It was truly a fantastic week with so many church members and day school families coming to shop. Thank you for your support!







## Confirmation Retreat Recap

We had an incredible weekend of fellowship, learning, and growth in our relationship with each other and God over our Confirmation Retreat. Check out some of the fun below!





**FIRST  
EVER**

## Union Basketball Pep Rally

**Sunday,  
November 23**

10am in the  
FMC Gym



Come meet and support our teams!  
Stickers for everyone!

Union Basketball Merch will be  
available for purchase as well!

### Union Basketball

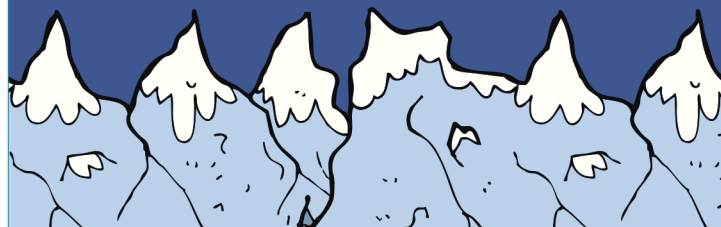
Thank you all so much for your incredible support for our Basketball program and the season is just now getting started! If you want to catch a game (or eight), please contact Thomas for game schedules. We appreciate your support!

## High School ONLY Retreat

JANUARY 16-19

COST: \$300

SEVIERVILLE, TN



### December & January Schedule -

With the Christmas season, our last meeting of the year will be on **December 14** for our Christmas party. We will still have Discipleship on Sunday morning over the break and will resume Sunday night youth on **January 4**. I hope and pray you all have a joy-filled Christmas and a time of rest and celebration with family and friends. – Thomas

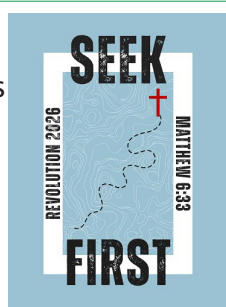
### Revolution

**January 30 - February 1** - This year's theme for Revolution is Seek First, based on Matthew 6:33. Join us for an incredible weekend of worship, fellowship, fun, and learning how we can seek God first in all things. We will crash at Union for the weekend and have an awesome time together!



Deadline to register with a tshirt is Monday, December 29! After that, you can still register up until the event, a tshirt is just not guaranteed. Cost is \$100.

Financial assistance is available - if needed, contact Thomas. Sign up today with the QR code!



## YOUTH OF UNION CHRISTMAS PARTY

**GAMES. FOOD. GIFT EXCHANGE**

**SUNDAY**

**14  
DEC**

**5-7:15PM**

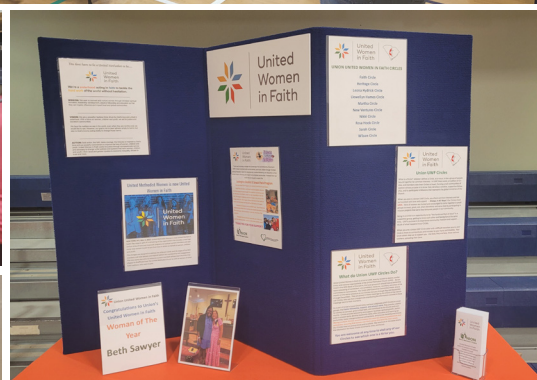
Bring a gift to exchange  
(\$10 or less)







Our United Women in Faith had an eventful evening of Bunco and Halloween fun on October 14, 2025. Check out some of the fun our ladies had!







Thanksgiving  
Dinner

**November 27 - 11:30-2pm**  
**In the FMC Gym**

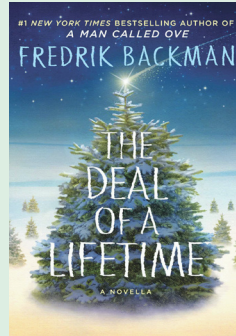
If you don't have family plans, join your Union church family and make new friends too!

*It's a Potluck!*

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

RSVP by November 24 at noon.  
Call Judy Keating at 803-917-2798.

## Wilson Circle Book Club



The Wilson Circle Book Club will meet Tuesday, **December 9** 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 Deal of a Lifetime* by Fredrik Backman. While this book is not on the UWF approved

Reading List, it was chosen because of its Christmas theme. There are 2 copies of the book in the UWF Collection in the Church Library. This is a short book; so, if you check it out, please return it to the library quickly so others can read it.

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 7, 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 2025

Christmas "Memorial Donations" are being accepted thru **December 14**. The names will run in the December 21 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



## Are you looking for a Caregiver Support Group or a Grief Support Group?

Leeza's Care Connection, located at 201 St. Andrews Rd, Columbia, SC, offers these services free to the community. For a list of all community resources available at Leeza's go to <https://leezas-careconnection.org/south-carolina-programs>

If you have any questions, or need help getting connected to Leeza's Care Connection, you can contact our church Administrative Assistant, Tiffany Braley, at [tiffany@unionirmo.org](mailto:tiffany@unionirmo.org) or call the church office and ask for Tiffany.



## Ways you can support Sharing God's Love throughout the Holiday Season!

### Thanksgiving Meal Donations Needed

**\$10 - \$25 Grocery Gift Cards**  
(for Turkeys & Pies)

Instant Mashed Potatoes  
Boxed or Packaged Stuffing  
Gravy - Bottled or Mix  
Macaroni & Cheese  
Rice or Rice Mix  
Canned Cranberry Sauce  
Canned Yams or Sweet Potatoes  
Canned Green Beans  
Canned Corn  
Canned Mixed Vegetables  
Canned Collard Greens  
Canned Cream of Mushroom Soup  
Canned or Bag Fried Onions  
Cornbread Mix  
Bisquick Mix  
Canned Pumpkin  
Tea  
Paper Towels

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

### 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

### Parking Reminder:

Kindly avoid parking on the sidewalks in front of the chapel and sanctuary. Let's be considerate of our neighbors and ensure the sidewalks remain clear for pedestrians. Thank you!

*Jan's Van*

### Save the date for Jan's Van!

**January 19 and January 20, 2026**

Registration will be in the narthex on the following Sundays:  
November 23, November 30,  
December 7 and December 14.

### Important 2025 Year End Giving Reminders

- All contributions for 2025 must be received by Wednesday, December 31 to be recorded on your 2025 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 2026 giving statement.
- If you are considering a stock gift for 2025, 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 2025, 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 2025 should be turned into the church office by December 31st. Any reimbursements requests related to 2025 received after December 31st may be applied to the 2026 budget rather than the 2025 budget.



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

**IN MEMORIAM**

Bill and Barry Lide in the loss of Bill's sister,  
**Lessie Detwiler.**

Joey and Libby Tucker in the loss of Joey's mother,  
**Marjorie Phipps Tucker.**

Roy and Margaret Jones in the loss of Roy's uncle,  
**George Cecil Parrish.**

**Preparing for the Harvest  
Commitment Cards**

Please remember to return your commitment cards for our Stewardship Campaign for Union's 2026 Budget.

Did you know you can fill out your pledge card online by scanning the QR code on the right?

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



Preparing for the Harvest



**Memorials - October 27 - November 16**

**Memorials received in memory of:**

**Dr. David Gatti By:** John and Sharon Hanson

**Llewellyn Hames By:** George and Patricia Lamp

**Honorariums - October 27 - November 16**

**Honorariums received in honor of:**

**David Anderson By:** Ann Windhorn

**The Church office will be closed for  
the following days:**

- November 27 & 28 for Thanksgiving
- December 24, 25, 26 for Christmas
- January 1 for New Years

**The January Union Connection  
Deadline is December 3.**

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**

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

**Thomas Walsh**

Administrative Assistant

**Tiffany Braley**

Director of Music Ministries

**Frank Turner**

Coordinator of Contemporary Worship

**Michelle Cochcroft**

Children's and Youth Music Director

**Jaime Dow**

Day School Director

**Leslie Kulp**

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**





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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Union United Methodist Church Irmo, South Carolina

## THE LIVING CHRISTMAS STORY

**December 5-7, 2025**  
**6:30-9pm**

**32<sup>nd</sup> Annual**  
Drive-Thru Living Nativity

**FREE ADMISSION!**

Union UMC - 7582 Woodrow Street, Irmo, SC 29063



***Join us  
December 5-7  
for Union's 32<sup>nd</sup>  
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

