



# UNION Connection

Union United Methodist Church Irmo, South Carolina

## Be Ye Not Offended

I don't know if you make resolutions when the New Year rolls around, but if you do, might I suggest this one: "I resolve not to take offense at what others do or say." It's as good a one to work on as any, and we probably need it more than the standard resolutions to get in good physical shape or to keep in touch with friends.

We live in a time when expressing our "offense" toward others, or because of others, is readily accepted, and sometimes encouraged. And "offenses" are harbored, kept in our hearts, ready to be called upon when we feel slighted or denied something we may feel is our right.

We have a long way to go to put into practice the teachings of Jesus. "Forgive others as God has forgiven you," he said (Matthew 6:14-15). And then again, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute or offend you." (Matthew 5:44) We can add to Jesus' words the beautiful description of true love that the Apostle Paul gives us in 1 Corinthians 13: "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things."

It would be difficult to carry an attitude of being offended while committing to live by those verses! Let the rest of the world huff and puff and whine and be angry. Christ has given us a better way, if we, with humility and trust, commit to not being offended.

I kept this story from a magazine in the early nineties. It's amazing what you find when cleaning out some files...

*Is there anything more powerful in the universe, outside of unconditional love, than an act of forgiveness? Take the incident at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. A group of monks from the monastery of the Dalai Lama worked for nearly a month at the creation of a six-foot-wide mandala made of colored sand and ground from gemstones. It was to be the centerpiece of an exhibit called "Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet." People from around San Francisco came each day to watch the monks work silently, bending over a low platform as they laid out the intricate patterns that were to symbolize the cosmos.*

*The day before the mandala was to be completed, a woman jumped across the barriers and began destroying the mandala, shuffling it to smithereens with her feet while shouting something about "Buddhist death squads." A month's work by a whole community of monks was wiped out in a moment of insanity.*

*The reaction of the monks? "We don't feel any anger," said one. "We don't know how to judge her motivations. We are praying for her, for love and compassion."*

*Gregg Levoy, who told this story in The Sun, added this comment: "The real teaching of the mandala turned out to be not in its execution, but in its demise, and its creators' response to its death. The monks reminded us that although to forgive is indeed divine, ordinary people can do it."*

Blessings for the New Year to each and all, Stephen

Stay tuned for my sermon series for the New Year: Unfinished Business: Committing to Completion, Change and Christlikeness.

## Worship with us throughout the rest of December!



### 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



### The Living Nativity

Sunday, December 21, 2025 - 6pm

Presented by Union's Praise Band

Join us for an evening of worship as we celebrate the birth of our Savior through children & music.

#### 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 10:30 a.m.

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

### The Living Christmas Story – Thank you!

The 32<sup>nd</sup> edition of TLCS started with everyone wondering if it would happen due to the weather forecast. Although the preschool walk through was canceled, all three evening performances were held. A total of **3,207** visitors drove through Bethlehem to become part of the story! The greeters each night let us know that there were quite a few first time visitors. While TLCS has come and gone, the blessings will continue.

With gratitude and love we put away our "Backyard Bethlehem" for another year, but not before thanking the many people who made it possible. This church-wide ministry involved people of all ages from newborns to our most senior members. We are grateful to all who helped. Volunteers prepared, repaired, and washed hundreds of costumes, laid miles of electrical wiring, placed lights, directed traffic, fed the cast and crew, assigned cast members, helped publicize the presentations, and did many other jobs, large and small, that were necessary for Union's presentation of the story of our Savior's birth. This was truly a church-wide ministry. And judging from all the comments of appreciation from people who traveled through our "Backyard Bethlehem" it was worth every hour spent in our labor of love!



**Our Martha's Women's Circle** hosted a Friday Night Lights event on Friday, November 21, 2025. Pastor Antionette Gaboton-Moss from Northeast UMC led forty-eight women in taking time to step away from the chaos and into a space of peace and restoration with each other, our sisters in Christ. Check out some of the fun our ladies had!



## 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.



## SonZone Christmas Fun!

Merry Christmas from SonZone!! We had a great time on Sunday, December 14, during our Christmas celebration! We decorated our own Nativity sets, enjoyed snacks of course, and competed to see who could come up with the most words from 'Christmas.' We found 65 words, how many words can you come up with? Check out the pictures to see just some of the ornaments we exchanged too! SonZone will be back in action on Sunday, January 11. Enjoy your Christmas and New Year's!





## Kids Library Update!

Kids Library has added new books for our kids to enjoy! Check out the Kids Library on the 2nd Floor of the Education Building. From the Day School Book Fair and other stops we have found some great additions to our shelves. See which ones you want to bring home and read with the family.



## SonZone Happenings!

There have been crazy games, fun snacks and lots of learning about Jesus' Promises. Whether we are inside trying to flip a towel while standing on it or rolling can goods across the front lawn, SonZone is the place for 4th and 5th graders.





## Fall Retreat Recap

We had an incredible time on our Fall Retreat discussing how we can better love God, others, and ourselves. Check out some of the fun below!



## Sharing God's Love Christmas Drive

THANK YOU Union for always being so supportive in all we do, but specifically in our annual drive for Sharing God's Love Christmas Shop. We took an entire bus-load of items over and helped with some projects while we were there. We cannot do this without you, so thank you!





## Union Basketball

Thank you all so much for your incredible support of our teams so far! The Pep Rally was a huge success, and all 8 of our teams are in the full swing of games. Game schedules are available at the Welcome Desk in the Narthex, or on the church website.



## Summer 2026 Mission Trip

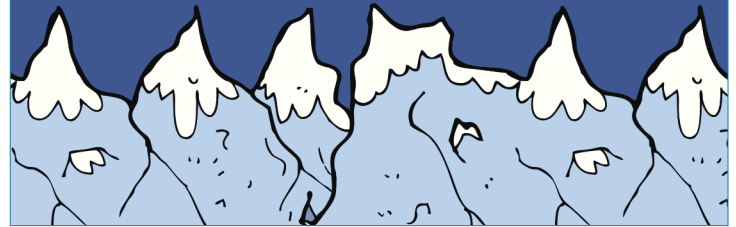
**June 14-20, 2026** - This summer we will head to serve with the Appalachia Service Project. We will work through direct service on some home rehab

projects along with regional education and cultural immersion for the community we are serving in. This trip is open to the whole church as we need adult leaders who have construction skills to lead our teams on the sites. For youth, you must have completed 6<sup>th</sup> grade to attend. **HARD DEADLINE OF 2/23 TO REGISTER.** Cost is \$425. Financial assistance is available - if needed, contact Thomas at [thomas@unionirmo.org](mailto:thomas@unionirmo.org). Sign up today with the QR code!



## High School ONLY Retreat

JANUARY 16-19  
COST: \$300  
SEVIERVILLE, TN



## High School Retreat

**January 16-19, 2026** - For our High School ONLY winter retreat, we will head up to Sevierville, TN for a weekend of fellowship, fun, and relaxation! We will spend time together cooking, playing games, watching movies, and exploring the Pigeon Forge/Gatlinburg areas. Cost is \$300 and includes all meals and activities that we will do. Sign up today with the QR code above!

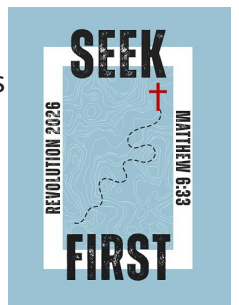
## Revolution

**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!



## Middle School Lock-in -

Save the date for our Middle School Lock-In on **March 21!** We will eat dinner, ice cream, head over to Stars and Strikes for a night of fun and then crash at the church for the night. We'll wrap up Sunday morning with worship and Discipleship together. Registration is open now! Sign up today for a night of fun, food, and fellowship together.



# NEW YEAR PRAYER WALK



Sunday, January 4 @ 3pm

Gather at Columbia UMC, 1830 Main Street  
Walk to the State House steps

Christians come together downtown to lift up collaboration, connection, and community! We will pray for our capitol city, the state of South Carolina, and all our churches to be neighbors and grow together in the new year!

Wear white and/or yellow!



*Bring the Light!*



## LIGHTS | CAMERA | ACTION

SOUTH CAROLINA UMC  
Lay Leadership  
Convocation

January 9-10, 2026  
Journey UMC-Columbia



### WHO IS INVITED?

Anyone serving in one or more of the following lay leadership positions in their local church - Church Council Chair, Lay Leader, Lay Member to AC, SPRC Chair, Finance Chair, Trustees Chair, Church Treasurer, UMM President, UWF President, Young Adult Rep., Youth Ministry Rep, Nominations Chair.

There is no limit on the number of attendees from all local churches, so register now before all of the seats are gone! Learn more about this learning opportunity and to register, scan the QR code on the right!



## The Endowment Fund

has some great news to share during this season of giving thanks! Our fund has done well so far this year, thanks to steady earnings growth and congregational donations. We are pleased to announce that we anticipate having funds available for 2026 projects and missions. Thanks to your continued support, we will be able to invest in programs that make a difference to our church and our community. The official announcement and exact funding amount will be made in early 2026. Applications are now being accepted for consideration in advance of the announcement. Happy Holidays from the Endowment Committee!

## Save the Date! Rise Against Hunger Packing Night - February 25, 2026

Rise Against Hunger is an international humanitarian organization and it is growing a global movement to end hunger by nourishing lives, empowering communities and responding to emergencies. They have facilitated volunteer packaging of more than 600 million meals to be distributed to countries around the world. More information and sign up coming soon!

## Wilson Circle Book Club



The next meeting of the Wilson Circle Book Club will be held Tuesday, **January 13, 2026** at 1:30.p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. We will be discussing *The Women* by Kristin Hannah. This celebrated novel is the story of one woman gone to war, but it shines a light on all women who put themselves in harm's way and whose

sacrifice and commitment to their country have too often been forgotten. When her brother ships out to serve in Vietnam, Frances "Frankie" McGrath joins the Army Nurse Corps and follows his path. A #1 New York Times, USA Today, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times best-seller, *The Women* is a richly drawn story with a memorable heroine whose idealism and courage under fire will come to define an era.

There is 1 copy of the book in the UWF collection on the Church Library and LOTS of large print, regular print, and ebooks at both the Lexington and Richland Libraries. All are welcome to join us. If you have questions, please contact Harriet Simpson at 803-530-5060 or Becky Dixon 803-361-5046.



*Christmas “Special Donations” for “Stephen’s House”  
as part of Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry - 2025*

*In Honor of:*

- From Joan Bickley
- My children, Sherry Carroll and Scott Brown from Kay Brown
- To the glory of God and in honor of Lewis and Arlene Milligan by your children and grandchildren, from Lisa Milligan
- Vickie Williams for her leadership and dedication, from the Living Faith Sunday School Class
- Margie Mitchell and Stacie Vandervelde for their patience and love, by Laura Mars
- From Bob and Connie Warren
- From Pete and Debbie Martin
- To the glory of God and in honor of our fabulous Heritage Circle chairwomen, Linda Richardson and Libby Allen. Thanks for your outstanding leadership and organizational skills, by the Heritage Circle
- To the glory of God and in honor and appreciation of our creative program chairperson, Joyce Stokely, for our meaningful programs and the precious gifts that represent them, by the Heritage Circle
- To the glory of God and in honor of our children and grandchildren, from John and Ann May
- Terry Mooney, from David and Debby Bruner
- Paul Jeter, from David and Debby Bruner
- Our children, their spouses, and our grandchildren, by Lewis and Arlene Milligan
- Tom and Cindy White, by Reva and Jim Miller
- The Reverends Burton and Mary White, by Reva and Jim Miller
- Cathy Miller, by Jim and Reva Miller
- John and Judy Vitters, Mary Ruth Negro, Frank and Mary Sue Bouxsein, and Elaine Bouxsein, by Jim and Reva Miller
- Jean Eng, and Betty and Charlie Lorick, by Jim and Reva Miller
- My “God given Sister,” Jane Graham, by Judy Weston
- From Rob and Penny Thompson
- Stephen Taylor, Faye Jones, and David Anderson, by Jim and Lisa O’Donnell
- From the John Wesley Sunday School Class
- From Felicia Furgison
- In honor of our family, by Bill and Judy Blitch
- To the glory of God and in honor of Bryant Shelley, a resident of the Stephen’s House in Irmo, by John and Mary White
- From Bruce and Pat McDade

## *Christmas "Special Donations" for "Stephen's House" as part of Aldersgate Special Needs Ministry - 2025*

### *In Memory of:*

- To the glory of God and in memory of my sister, Alice Milligan, by Lisa Milligan, Anna-Stu, and Hudson
- To the glory of God and in memory of all our loved ones, from John and Ann May
- Our daughter Elizabeth, from David and Debby Bruner
- Our daughter, Alice, by Lewis and Arlene Milligan
- "Tinkie" White, by Reva and Jim Miller
- Robbie Miller, by Jim and Reva Miller
- Jim Negro, by Jim and Reva Miller
- In loving memory of Tom and Glenna Ackerman. Love, Joe, Glenna Dean, and Sarah Wildt
- To the glory of God and in loving memory of my husband, Paul, by Jeannie Jeter
- In loving memory of Marion Folk Jr., by Judy Folk
- Mike Unrue, by Jarrod and Caitlin Stokes
- Joseph Hancock, by Tony and Pamela Chapman

### 2026 Calendar Note

Room reservations do not automatically roll over to 2026. Please contact Susan in the church office to ensure that your group (Circle, Bible Study, Committee meetings, etc) are scheduled into the new year. (susan@unionirmo.org) Thank you!

### 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 - November 17 - December 14

### Memorials received in memory of:

**Jim LoCicero By:** Sandra Longshore

**Donzelle Davis By:** Fay Davis

**Bill McElveen By:** Connie and Bob Warren, David and Anne Elam, Arlene and Lewis Milligan, Connie Parker, The John Rowland Sunday School Class, and David and Deborah Bruner

**Jeanette Coulter By:** Connie and Bob Warren, Chip and Ginger Huggins, David and Anne Elam, William and Helen Wallace, Arlene and Lewis Milligan, Charles and Lisa Moseley, the Moseley Family- Bob, Lisa, Scott and Melinda, Sam White, Connie Parker, The John Rowland Sunday School Class, and David and Deborah Bruner

**Lessie Detwiler, Bill Lide's sister By:** Connie and Bob Warren

**Shirley Owens, Beth Sawyer's mother By:** Donald and Elizabeth Allen

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

**IN MEMORIAM**

**Charles Edward Smith**  
**May 2, 1956 - November 21, 2025**

**William "Bill" Lewis McElveen**  
**September 7, 1940 - November 26, 2025**

**Jeanette McGee Coulter**  
**August 8, 1940 - November 25, 2025**

Beth and Mac Sawyer in the loss of  
Beth's mother, **Shirley Owens**.

**ROSEBUD**

**(in celebration of the birth of)**

**Mary Collins Fuller** was born November 10.  
She was born to Skylar Gauthier and  
Noah Fuller. Mary's proud grandparents are  
Lisa and Jim O'Donnell.

**Carolyn Ruth Turner** was born November 21.  
She was born to Tania and Frank Turner.  
Carolyn's proud big brother is Winston. Frank is  
Union's Director of Music Ministries.

**The 2026 altar flower calendar is out!**

Sign up for flowers and recognize a special Sunday in  
your life by stopping by the table in the Narthex. The  
cost is \$58.00 per vase.

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

- December 24, 25, 26 for Christmas**
- January 1 for New Years**
- January 19 for Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

**The February Union Connection  
Deadline is January 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**

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 Connection

Union United Methodist Church Irmo, South Carolina

**CHRISTMAS EVE  
SERVICES**

**JOY  
to the  
WORLD**

**4 p.m.** - Contemporary  
Candlelight Worship

**7 p.m.** - Traditional  
Candlelight Worship

***We wish you a  
Merry Christmas  
and a wonderful  
New Year!***

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

