UNION Connection
Union United Methodist Church · Irmo, South Carolina

Called to Listen, Called to Care

Many Hands, One Body, Sowing Bountifully

Our theme this giving season, "Many Hands, One Body, Sowing Bountifully," reminds us that God brings together many people, with different gifts, to share in one ministry of love. Today, I invite you to consider one meaningful way your hands and heart might serve: offering another person the powerful gift of a caring, listening presence.

Stephen Ministry is a one-to-one Christian caregiving ministry. It equips members of the congregation to walk alongside people facing difficult seasons – grief, illness, loneliness, job loss, family changes, or other personal challenges. Each Stephen Minister is one set of caring hands, yet all serve as part of the one body of Christ.

A Stephen Minister is not a counselor and does not come with easy answers. Instead, a Stephen Minister listens, encourages, prays, keeps confidence, and offers steady Christian care. Through training, supervision, and support, Stephen Ministers learn how to be present with wisdom, compassion, and healthy boundaries.

Christ caring for people through people
STEPHEN MINISTRY

This ministry reflects the love of Christ in a deeply personal way. The Apostle Paul teaches that we are one body with many members, and every member has a vital part to play. A Stephen Minister's role may be quiet and unseen, but a listening ear, a faithful prayer, and a steady presence can become seeds of hope. Often, healing begins not with perfect words, but with someone willing to show up, listen without judgment, and remain faithful through the journey.

You may be wondering whether you have what it takes. You do not need to be a theologian, an expert, or someone who always knows what to say. Stephen Ministers are ordinary people who are willing to learn, serve, and allow God to work through their presence.

Perhaps God has given you a compassionate heart, patience, dependability, or a desire to help others feel seen and supported. Perhaps you have walked through hardship yourself and now feel called to accompany someone else. When these gifts are offered through the hands of many, the whole body is strengthened – and the seeds of God's care are sown bountifully.

So I ask you: please do not dismiss this invitation too quickly. Take it with you. Pray about it. Ask God whether your hands are among the many being called to serve this one body, and whether your gifts, experiences, and faith might sow hope in the life of another person.

You might pray: ***"Lord, is this where you are calling me to serve? Can you use my listening, my compassion, and my time to bring hope to someone who is hurting?"*** Then be open to the answer.

We presently have 15 Stephen Ministers and 7 Stephen Leaders who are working with care receivers on a weekly basis, so the need for additional Stephen Ministers is great. We would like to start a new training class in January 2027. If you feel called to consider this ministry, please contact Stephen Leader Mellisa White at melwhite623@yahoo.com or by calling the church office at 803-781-3013. She will be able to answer any questions you might have and provide additional information. Asking questions does not obligate you; it simply gives you room to discern faithfully.

Our congregation needs many hands willing to care, one person at a time. Together, as one body, we can sow bountifully – planting seeds of compassion, encouragement, and hope in the lives of people who are hurting. Someone in our community may one day need the very compassion God has placed in you.

Many Hands. One Body. Sowing Bountifully. Please prayerfully consider becoming a Stephen Minister.

Blessings,
Rev. Stephen Taylor



UUMC Golf Tournament

Congratulations to the winners of Union's 2026 Golf Tournament: Jon Rychener, Randall Stansell, Gene Springfield, and Sam Strait!

Many thanks to Northwoods Golf Course for hosting and to Scott Conley for coordinating this event. The Recreation Ministry Team truly appreciates the 30 golfers who participated in the tournament and raised over $1300 for Union's Snack Pack Program. These funds will assist in making sure 151 kids at Harbison West Elementary and CrossRoads Middle School have food each weekend.













A Note of Thanks

Thank you Union Church family! The Joy Class Garage Sale was a little wet, but very successful. We raised over $19,000 dollars and donated several thousand dollars more of our treasures, to deserving programs in our area.
With your continued caring and sharing we are making a difference with programs and families throughout our community. We are grateful for God's continued blessings and your continued support.



Many Hands, One Body, Sowing Bountifully Commitment Cards

Please remember to return your commitment cards for our Stewardship Campaign for Union's 2027 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!



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.

There are Surviving the Holiday books that will be available at the meeting for $10. Please let us know you'll be attending Surviving the Holidays by calling the church office or on the GriefShare website.

Tuesday, **November 17**, 6-7:30pm
in LL 11 (beneath the Sanctuary)





PEP! - People Enjoying People! Fall Events

Join us for **Bingo & Board Games** on Wednesday, **November 11**, at 1pm in the Fellowship Hall. Whether you love a little friendly competition or just enjoy good conversation and laughter, there's a seat at the table for you. Come as you are, bring a friend, and enjoy a relaxed afternoon together - we'd love to see you there!

Christmas Carol Sing-Along - Join us Thursday, **November 19**, at 6:30pm in the FMC Gym for a festive evening of Christmas carols led by Candice Conder! Enjoy singing your favorite Christmas songs together, along with a catered meal and wonderful fellowship. Dinner is $15 per person. Please sign up in your Sunday School class. Sign-ups and payment are due by Sunday, November 15. For questions, contact Phyllis Plyler at Phyllisplyler@gmail.com. We hope you'll join us for a joyful evening of Christmas music, good food, and fellowship as we celebrate the season together!

Presenting TLCS to our Union Day School - Join us on **December 4** at 8:30am. Sign ups are coming soon, or contact Phyllis Plyler to claim your spot. It is a wonderful, moving experience with our littlest ones! Join us!






Pumpkin Carving!

SonZone had a messy good time this fall. Check out our masterpiece pumpkins carved by our kids! We are looking forward to more as we wrap up 2026 in December. But we have so much more fun until then, from Bad days that turned out good, to Snack Packing for kids in our community to celebrating Christmas!

We hope your 4th or 5th grader will join us on Sundays from 4-5:15pm. If you want to be on our email list to get the latest updates contact Suzy: Suzy@unionirmo.org.









SonZone Schedule for November 2026 - January 2027

Nov. 1	The Disciple's Bad Day
Nov. 8	Lazarus's Bad Day
Nov. 15	Jesus' Bad Day
Nov. 22	Service Night: Snack Pack
Nov. 29	No SonZone - Happy Thanksgiving!
Dec. 6	TLCS - No SonZone
Dec. 13	Christmas Celebration

Dec. 20	No SonZone - Living Nativity on 21st!
Dec. 27	Family Movie Night - 4pm
Jan. 3	No SonZone - Happy New Year!
Jan. 10	The Woman's Bad Day
Jan. 17	Stephen's Bad Day
Jan. 24	Saul's Bad Day
Jan. 31	A Jailer's Bad Day





Grandparents Day

Grandparents Day at Union Day School was such a special, joy-filled day! We were blessed with an amazing turnout as grandparents and special loved ones joined us to make the best memories with our students. Having all the grandparents here was such a beautiful reminder of the role they play in these children's lives, family is such a blessing. We are so thankful for the opportunity to celebrate these wonderful people and for the love they pour into our children each day!







Coming to a gym near you…

Family Movie Night sponsored by our Family Ministry Committee. We hope you will join us Sunday, **December 27**, at 4pm in the FMC Gym for a showing of "The Star" bring your folding chairs, blankets, pillows etc… We will have light refreshments while you and your family enjoy this Christmas tale.



Day School Art Show & Spaghetti Dinner -

Friday, **November 13** - Come join our Day School families as they enjoy a night of seeing all the artwork the children have done so far this year, shop at the Book Fair, and then enjoy a spaghetti dinner.

Art show is 5:30-6pm; then Spaghetti Dinner in the FMC Gym from 6-7pm.

Tickets are pre-sale only - $8 per person or $35 per family. To go plates are available. Purchase your tickets from the Day School office until Thursday, November 5.

Please join the
NIKKI CIRCLE

November 15 - 12-2 PM
in F222 (Children's Church Room)

Bring your own lunch and join us in the Children's Church room for holiday crafts.

Nikki Circle is for young ladies ages 4-11
Devotions, fellowship and fun
Please RSVP to Carolyn Nicholson - 704-502-8348

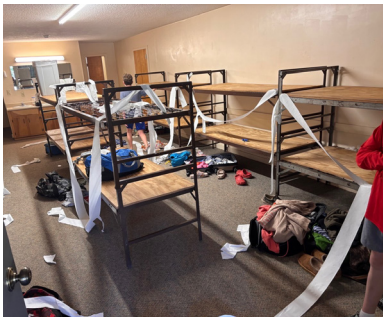





Fall Retreat Fun!

Our Fall Retreat at Awanita on September 25-27, was one to remember! We are so thankful for a weekend filled with fellowship, faith, and making memories together. We left feeling refreshed and grateful for the time spent growing closer to God and one another!









Packing Care Packages for Our Older Youth

The Bridge at Union will gather for Care Packaging on Sunday, **November 22**, after the 11am worship service, in Room F222. Join us as we send love and prayers to our church's post-high-school young adults.

If you would like to stay informed about the ministry, please scan the QR code on the right to join our Band App. Or, if you prefer, contact Annah Hiers at annah.hiers@gmail.com or 803-730-6638. We always welcome volunteers to help us handwrite notes & cards as well!

Stay up to date on The Bridge Ministry on the Band App!

Virginia Wingard UMC Food Pantry

Registration is now open for our **November 3** volunteer opportunity at the Virginia Wingard UMC Food Pantry! Join us as we come together to serve our community and make a positive impact. Sign up today - we'd love to have you there!

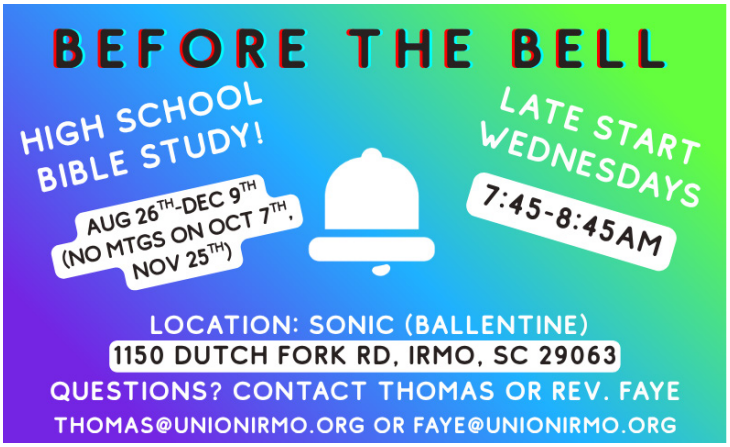
Big Creek Mission Trip Info Meeting!

Join us Sunday, **November 15**, at 4pm in the Underground to learn more about our Big Creek Mission Trip, July 25-31, 2027. This mission trip is open to anyone who is interested. Since you will be working with youth, you must be Safe Sanctuary trained before we leave for the trip in July 2027. If you have any questions, email Thomas Walsh at thomas@unionirmo.org.



Basketball Pep Rally

Join Youth of Union for an exciting Basketball Pep Rally on Sunday, **November 22**, at 10am in the FMC Gym! Come out and show your support for our basketball teams as we get ready for an amazing season filled with spirit, teamwork, and fun. Bring your energy, cheer on our players, and help make this event unforgettable. Plus, there will be stickers for everyone! We look forward to seeing you there as we come together to celebrate and support our teams.





Youth of Union is excited to support the Christmas Shop at Sharing God's Love for another year!

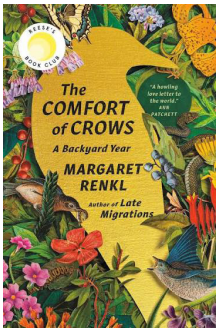
Starting October 11, help us fill the shelves by donating new, unwrapped toys, gifts, or gift cards for children and youth from infants through 18 years old. Donations can be placed in the collection box in the Narthex or dropped off by the office. Collection will run through Sunday, November 15. Thank you for helping us in this special ministry of our community.



Band App

Reminder that we have a new spot for all things Youth of Union: The Band App! This is your one-stop shop for everything: communication, events (registrations still on church center), photos, etc.

Everyone needs to create an account and join via the QR code if you have not already. If you have any questions or need help, please let Thomas or Archkela know (thomas@unionirmo.org and archkela@unionirmo.org).



The Wilson Circle Book Club

is meeting on Tuesday, **November 10, 2026** at 1:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. We will be discussing the book, *The Comfort of Crows: A Backyard Year*, by Margaret Renkl. Starting with the first week in winter, Renkl tracks the plants, animals, and changing rhythms in her Nashville, TN backyard over twelve months. She shares her joy in the pleasures of nature as well as grief over diminishing songbird populations along with personal reflections on changes in family and human life. The book, which was named a Reese's Book Club Pick, a USA Today bestseller, and a New York Times bestseller, also features fifty-two original color illustrations by the author's brother, Billy Renkl.

There are 3 copies of the book in the UWF collection in the Church Library, 4 regular print copies and an ebook in the Lexington Public Library, and 5 regular print copies and an ebook in the Richland Public Library. The Richland Public Library also has access to the book through Hoopla. You do not need to be a member of the Wilson Circle to participate in the Book Club. All are welcome to join us. If you have questions, please contact Harriet Simpson or Becky Dixon, or contact the church office.





The Living Christmas Story 2026: What if we find Joy?

By Marjorie Rehlander

This year will be the 33rd production of The Living Christmas Story (TLCS). This mission began in our parking lot to share the story of Jesus with the Irmo community. This mission has continued with the same purpose throughout the years, delivering joy to many.

The joy of TLCS comes not only from the story of Jesus, but also from our Union community. This past year, I was promoted to a greeter during the performance for the first time, where I discovered a whole world of different perspectives.

One mother drove through, coming to remember her son who had passed, but who had always taken time to volunteer with TLCS. Others came for the first time. Some came because their family member had helped to make the signs in front of the sets many years ago. Others drove through multiple times so children could switch who rode in the front seat to see everything.

TLCS has gone through many changes throughout the years, as new members and volunteers develop curiosity and share their creativity. Baby Jesus has been played by many who are still members today, but the first Baby Jesus was a baby doll. At one time, Roman soldiers wandered the streets on horseback. Bethlehem has had many unexpected and eventful nights, including runaway goats and sheep.

Curiosity and hope are the forces that drive the continued success of TLCS in overcoming obstacles that could otherwise steal our joy. These allow us to try something new and experience the wonder and joy that our community brings. Curiosity and hope are an undercurrent of what-ifs that fight to discover light and joy, instead of woe and anxiety.

(continued on next page)

TLCS: What if we find Joy? continued...

TLCS will never be the same production because we are growing and new. Our lives will always be filled with many anxieties, responsibilities, and commitments, but also with Joy and Curiosity.

I encourage you this season to find your Joy by joining in service with the TLCS committee while we build Bethlehem and bring it to life on December 4-6th. We hope that you stop by for an hour or two, or more. Take a break to be curious with us about what can change and grow. Wonder with us if Baby Jesus will be a Baby Doll or one of our newest members? Lastly, be awed by how you see God at work in the People of Union UMC.

"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." - Luke 2:10



THE LIVING CHRISTMAS STORY

DECEMBER 4-6, 2026

6:30-9PM

Sign Up today!

TLCS is ready to serve the Irmo community for our 33rd Christmas Season. This Union UMC tradition shares the Good News of Jesus with thousands of people in the Midlands.

Will you sign up to help share the greatest story ever told?



SIGN-UP FOR TLCS HERE

Questions? Email UnionTLCSCasting@gmail.com

Bringing Bethlehem to life in Irmo, South Carolina!

- Trucks and Treasures of Bethlehem -

Sunday, **November 8**, 1-5pm - Join us as we pull Bethlehem out of the shed. We need many hands and a few trucks to start our journey. For those who want to join in exploring the treasures of Bethlehem, the FMC MultiPurpose room will be open for crafts.

- TLCS Breakfast and Bethlehem!

Saturday, **November 14**, 8am-12pm - We will host a drop in Breakfast in the FMC for all our volunteers and workers. Mission volunteers will work on building markets or sorting and hanging costumes. We will gather at 12pm for a community prayer.

There are multiple time slots for costume prep on November 14, 9-10:30am and 10:30am-12pm.

- Whistle While You Work -

Saturday, **November 21**, 8am-12pm - Workday in the Market with Christmas music.

- Cookies and Construction!

Sunday, **November 29**, 1-5pm - This is our last day of building before the Living Christmas Story comes to life. We will finish up outside with our afternoon workout of spreading pinestraw, hanging burlap, and finishing construction details.

(Nov. 29 continued) Inside, we will be making Christmas cookies for families riding through Bethlehem on the bus. Many hands are needed to bring Bethlehem to Irmo!

- Wednesday Night Supper: *(New this year!)*

Wednesday, **December 2**, 5-8pm: We will begin with a new cast orientation, break bread together with dinner, and then set up the gym, set props, and other final details. Hope to see you there! (RSVP coming soon).

Menu: Beef and Noodles, Mashed Potatoes, and Green Beans.

- Telling The Living Christmas Story!

December 4-6, 6:30-9pm, performance days!

You can be a part of the Cast or part of the Backstage Crew. If you are wondering what role is made for you, our casting team will help you find the perfect spot!

Scan here to bring Bethlehem to life in Irmo!



Looking ahead at the Advent & Christmas Season

December 4-6 - Union presents **The Living Christmas Story** to our community.
See pages 8-9 for more information on this event.

December 13 - **Lessons & Carols** Service at 9am
Contemporary worship will be in the Chapel at 11am.

December 21 - **The Living Nativity** at 6pm

December 24 - **Contemporary Worship** at 4pm
Traditional Worship at 7pm

December 27 - **ONE Worship** service at 10:30am
Sunday School will start at 9:30am on December 27



Calendars for 2027

The new year will soon be here, and Union UMC will be busy, busy, busy! Circle chairs, Bible study leaders, Committee leaders, and any others that use the church facilities, please contact Susan in the church office (susan@unioniro.org) to make sure your meetings are scheduled on the church calendar for 2027.

Did you know that the church calendar is online and updated continuously? Please go to unionirmo.org and click on the calendar tab. You can always check the status of when and where meetings are being held on the church campus.

Current List of Needs for Sharing God's Love:





Memorials - September 28 - October 26

Memorials received in memory of:

Jane Jeffcoat By: David and Deborah Bruner, the John Rowland Sunday School Class, Connie Parker, and Jim and Ann Martin
Bob Friendly By: Mark Friendly
Bettye Newton Stine, sister of Marie Frick, **By:** Bob and Connie Warren
Ken Beale By: Jim and Ann Martin
Janice Messinger Mozeleski, sister of Joan Goff, **By:** Bob and Connie Warren

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

IN MEMORIAM

Robert "Bob" Friendly
April 14, 1939 - September 29, 2026

Joey and Libby Tucker in the loss of Joey's father,
Joseph Engrim Tucker, Jr.

Roy and Margaret Jones in the loss of Roy's mother,
Ramona Parrish McLellan.

Jane Fleming Jeffcoat
October 14, 1944 - October 3, 2026

Allan "Al" Marshall Quick
September 28, 1941 - October 3, 2026

Marie and Ken Frick in the loss of Marie's sister,
Bettye Newton Stine.

Joan and Tom Goff in the loss of Joan's sister,
Janice Messinger Mozeleski.

Celebrating the birth of:

Simmons Lindley Ohaus was born on September 19, 2026. She was born to Lauryn and Josh Ohaus. Her proud grandparents are Donna and Bob Wolff.

Church Hours for Thanksgiving week:

Wednesday, November 25: 9am - 12pm
Thursday, November 26: office closed
Friday, November 27: office closed

The December Union Connection Deadline is November 4.

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

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

Looking ahead at Newsletter Deadlines:
For January 2027 issue - December 9
For February 2027 issue - January 13

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 Recreation Ministries
Thomas Walsh

Assistant Director of Youth & Recreation Ministries
Archkela Lane

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
Julie Beale

Day School Finance Director
Stacie Vandervelde

Day School Administrative Assistant
Emily Brown

Facilities Manager
Brian Wisnewski

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

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