

Life at Unity

April 21, 2026



MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Friends,

Unity's Spiritual Pilgrimage to Scotland is April 17-25. Kathryn McGregor and I are leading a group of 42 Unity members and friends on this journey that encourages us to be more than tourists. We will be intentionally engaging with what we see and do in holy places, with people we are bound to in this community of faith, while also learning about the faith of those who have gone before us. On the day this newsletter is published we'll be traveling from the Highlands to the Isles, and just might catch a glimpse of Nessie as we pass by Loch Ness!

Retreat, renewal and pilgrimage have long been spiritual practices at the heart of Christian community. Author Christine Valters Paintner suggests that there are 8 practices of a good pilgrimage (<https://usatholic.org/articles/201806/8-practices-of-a-good-pilgrimage/>).

- 1) **Hearing the call** - whether it was an expected or unexpected call, when we respond and say yes to the journey, it takes us on, and then we become pilgrims.
- 2) **Pack lightly** - travel is easier with light bags. We ask ourselves: What do we want to leave behind and what do we want to carry forward?
- 3) **Cross a threshold** - Thresholds are sacred places in the Celtic imagination where the veil between heaven and earth is considered thin. When we open ourselves to the liminal and stop grasping at the way things were, we may discover a variety of unseen presences supporting us along the way.
- 4) **Put one foot in front of the other** - embarking on pilgrimage may tempt us to seek the well-worn path, but the essence of the true inner journey is finding our own way forward. This demands a great deal of trust and listening for the whispers of the divine along the way.
- 5) **Risk being uncomfortable** - the Latin root of the word *pilgrim* is *peregrini*, which means "stranger." We go on pilgrimage to become strangers to all that is familiar, to break out of our routine vision of the world and discover something new.
- 6) **Always begin again** - along the way we will encounter our own limitations again and again. When we stray too far from our own deep desires of the heart, we are issued an invitation to begin again.
- 7) **Embrace mystery** - walk into unknowing, relinquish our grasp on certainty and control. In that process we allow ourselves to be broken open to receive gifts far bigger than our own limited imaginations could ponder.
- 8) **Calls us back home again** - we return home with renewed awareness. We discover that home is a deep, abiding presence within us and see the familiar in new ways. We return with the gifts that we were offered along the path.

Wherever you might be traveling this week, even if it is just around your neighborhood, I pray that you might know the gifts of pilgrimage. For God has promised to be with us wherever we go, and we just might discover a wonderful new beginning along the way.

God bless,
Matt

Since 1788... United in Christ's love, we glorify God through worship, nurture, and service to all people.

The deadline to submit items for the May 5th Newsletter is Wednesday, April 29th, 2026.

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Thursday
8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
(Closed on Fridays)
803.547.5543
www.UnityFortMill.org

For more information on "What's Happening" at Unity, please visit...
www.unityfortmill.org/whats-happening/

STAY IN TOUCH

Whether you are looking for a specific activity or the latest news and information on children, youth, and adults, visit us at . . .
Website: www.UnityFortMill.org

Instagram: @UnityFortMill

Facebook: @UnityFortMill

Be sure to "like" our page.

EARLY MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 1 -- Cecil Hinton
- 2 -- Andrew Burrell; Margaret Collom; Philip Mace
- 3 -- Samuel Pecarro; Ben Weaver
- 4 -- LeAnne Morse
- 5 -- Ryan Bunge; Matt Dorosh; Elaine Evans; Tom McElmoyle; Jessica Shamble; Max Windham
- 6 -- RJ Bates; Cynthia Crump
- 7 -- Braelynn Benanti; Laura Hulbert; Madelyn Jennings; Anna Mace; Mark Verdery
- 8 -- Evelyn Creech; Amy Gamble; Eric Hansen; Brenda Joyner; Kate Pilley; Barbie Wynings
- 9 -- Carolyn Blair; Brian Fish; Jan Konkus; Jolie Palmer; Ken Sheets; Sarah Spinetto; Maggie Zerkus
- 10 -- Joyce Gammon; Ann Neel
- 11 -- Matthew Anderson; Greyson Hunt
- 12 -- Layla Brindisi; Brad Fox; Katherine Liebert; Jennifer Smith; Molly Spangler; Jessi Young
- 13 -- Michael Benanti; Lauren Cole; Kieran McCormack; Nancy Nutter; Nicole Swainey; Beth Windell
- 14 -- Justin Bossert; Courtney Channell; Lauren Mobley
- 15 -- Noah Fike; Caroline Hoffman; Dawson McKinney

SUGGESTIONS FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS

Unity's Nominating Committee was elected on March 29th and will soon begin prayerfully considering those who might be called to serve as deacons and elders beginning in January 2027 for a three-year term, and a youth deacon and youth elder to each serve a one-year term. The committee requests that you prayerfully submit names for consideration to serve as deacons and elders. These officers will serve as loving ministers and spiritual leaders for our congregation. In addition to their names, please describe the spiritual gifts and other characteristics that led you to nominate these individuals to serve. Names for consideration can be shared with Krista Renken, chair or sent by email to Nominations@UnityFortMill.org and will be **received until Thursday, April 30th**.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING - MAY 3RD

The Session has called a Congregational Meeting to be held on **Sunday, May 3rd after both worship services** for the purpose of hearing a report from the Session to call Liz Corsig as Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults and to approve her Terms of Call. Liz has served as Director of Youth Ministry at Unity since August 2024 and will be graduating from Union Presbyterian Seminary in June. She has been approved by Charlotte Presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry as "certified ready to receive a call" and has been examined and approved by Providence Presbytery's Committee on Ministry for ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament. That's lots of hoops to jump through! Most importantly, Liz's faith, leadership, contagious joy, organization, hospitality, and commitment to the faith of each and every young person are already an outstanding gift to Unity Presbyterian Church and Fort Mill. We rejoice in this opportunity for Liz to grow in her ministry at Unity as an associate pastor!

MOLLY SPANGLER'S NEW HOURS

Thank you to the entire congregation for approving my adjusted terms of call at the congregational meeting on March 29th. I am grateful that with the Spirit's help I am able to continue this call to ministry here with you all, as well as my call to my family at home. I will begin May 1st at $\frac{3}{4}$ time, meaning instead of 40 hours a week, I will be working closer to 30 hours a week. Sundays will be much the same for my time, but during the week I will leave the office closer to 2:00 p.m. each day. Thank you all for supporting me in making these adjustments. I look forward to this next season of ministry with you all.

JOIN OUR MINISTRY TEAM - COORDINATOR OF CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND ENGAGEMENT

Do you love Unity Presbyterian Church? Do you enjoy helping others find places to learn, grow, delight, and serve? Are you organized and dedicated? Is God calling you or someone you know to join our ministry team? In response to our growing congregation and new Strategic Mission Pathway to "Cultivate Belonging and Commitment," Unity Presbyterian Church is seeking a **Coordinator for Congregational Life and Engagement**. This will be a part-time, 20 hour per week position. In collaboration with the Hospitality and Evangelism Ministry Team, the Fellowship Ministry Team, and the Health Ministry Team, the Coordinator will oversee Unity Presbyterian Church's ministries of helping those seeking a church home become new members and faithful followers of Jesus Christ; congregational fellowship and joy; nurturing health and wholeness in body and spirit; and other ways to deepen relationships and connections with Christ and one another. For more information and/or to apply, contact Dr. Matt Rich - mrich@unityfortmill.org

LUNCH BUNCH - APRIL 22ND



Dr. Josh Morris will be our speaker this month on **Wednesday, April 22nd, at 12:00 noon**. His topic of discussion will be his experience, working with people with moral injury and trauma. Dr. Morris is an ordained minister with the United Church of Christ and a Board-Certified Chaplain through the Association of Board-Certified Chaplains. He has served as Assistant Director of Spiritual Services at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City. Currently, Dr. Morris serves as the Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Charlotte. He also has 15 years of experience as an Army chaplain in the United States Army Reserves. Please join us

for this insightful presentation. Don't forget your sandwich or salad! As always, drinks, chips, and desserts are provided. See you there!

HOSPITALITY AND EVANGELISM

CONNECTIONS CLASS- If you are curious about membership or have decided this is the time to join Unity, please join us for a Connections Class **continuing Sunday, April 26th**. Members of the H&E team will welcome you to the **Fellowship Hall at 10:00 a.m.** The class will give you a brief overview of the many opportunities to participate in the life of Unity, a little introduction to our history, an opportunity to meet a few staff members, and ask any questions you may have about the church and our beliefs.



CAMPUS TOUR: Regardless of how long you've been attending Unity, members of the H&E team will be guiding a tour of the church buildings, on **Sunday, May 3rd**. The tour will start in the **Fellowship Hall at 10:00 a.m.**

GRANDMOTHER'S PRAYER GROUP - A CIRCLE OF GRACE

The Grandmothers' Prayer Group meets at 10:00 a.m. on the last Thursday of each month. Our next meeting is **April 30th, at 10:00 a.m. in the Heritage Room**. All grandmothers are warmly welcome to join us as we set aside a special time of prayer for our grandchildren.

PARENTS ARE INVITED TO CIW OPEN HOUSE MAY 3RD OR MAY 17TH



Parents of Rising 4K children or parents new to Unity with children in going into 4K, Kindergarten, or 1st grade are invited to attend "Children in Worship" Open House for Parents **during either service on May 3rd or May 17th**. Your children can begin attending CIW on June 7th. Parent Orientation is your opportunity to come see what CIW is all about before your children begin attending.

Questions? Contact Kathryn McGregor at KMcGregor@UnityFortMill.org.

HEALTH CORNER:

What if you could lower your blood pressure, reduce stress, increase your immune response, improve your quality of sleep, strengthen your lungs, improve your focus, and increase your energy by just breathing quietly for eight minutes a day! Athletes and the military have recognized this fact for years. Deep breathing 5.5 seconds in and 5.5 seconds out stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system creating all these benefits. You can do this quietly when you wake up first thing in the morning, either lying down or waiting for your morning coffee to brew.

James Nestor's book "Breath" is an interesting read if you are interested in finding out more.



SAVE THE DATE FOR HEARTSAVER CPR!

The spring class will be held on **Saturday, May 2nd**. Taught by instructors from Innovative Solutions, this American Heart Association class covers hands-on compressions, use of the AEDs on our campus, and choking in infants, children and adults. We will **begin at 9:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall**, and finish around noon. Cost for the class is \$50.00 (cash) at the door per Innovative Solutions. Come join us for this life-saving class.

A FEW MORE ADULTS AND YOUTH ARE NEEDED TO SERVE AT VBS

Vacation Bible School will be held Monday, June 15th - Thursday, June 18th from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. We are in need of a few more adults: 2 more Adult Shepherds and a few adult substitutes, and 10 more youth: 4 Shepherds, 1 Art Assistant and 5 Recreation Assistants. This is a great opportunity for our Middle Schoolers, but High Schoolers are also welcome, if available. **Sign up now to serve** and help us make this summer the best VBS ever: [https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E4AA9AF22A4FE3-62333984-vbs2026#/.](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E4AA9AF22A4FE3-62333984-vbs2026#/)



REGISTER FOR GRANDS CAMP!

YOU'RE INVITED TO A WAX MUSEUM

GRANDS
camp
2026



JULY 21 - 23

crafts
Legos
games
mission projects
stories

Grandparents
and
grandchildren
ages 4 - 5th
grade

Register on
Realm by May 1st



Register at: <https://bit.ly/3OyAjsA>

**JOIN US FOR A
WAX MUSEUM**



Sunday, May 10th at 10:00 am
in the Fellowship Hall

Our annual Wax Museum will be performed by our
3rd-5th grade Faith Formation class.

The whole congregation is invited! 

UNITY YOUTH PIZZA AND PAINT PARTY

Unity's middle and high school youth were led in a watercolor painting class by youth advisor, Maggie Zerkus. We are so grateful for the opportunity to learn how to paint one of our favorite places, the Montreat gate, and for the chance to connect with God through art!



MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH LOCK-IN

ALL CURRENT 5TH-8TH GRADERS



Middle School Youth LOCK-IN

KICK-OFF
THE SUMMER

GAMES
FOOD

UNFORGETTABLE
MEMORIES

FRIDAY, MAY 29TH

MEET AT THE FELLOWSHIP HALL AT 7PM.
PICK-UP FROM THE YOUTH WING BY 9AM ON SATURDAY.
BRING AN AIR MATTRESS, PILLOW, AND SLEEPING BAG!
REGISTRATION CLOSING ON FRIDAY, MAY 22ND.

Register at: <https://bit.ly/4sGnuKL>

UNITY YOUTH END-OF-YEAR PARTY!

2025 - 26
UNITY YOUTH
END-OF-YEAR PARTY
Sunday, May 3rd - 4-5:30pm
Front Lawn



Kona Ice, games,
& a waterslide!

Current 5th graders are also invited.
We can't wait to welcome you to Unity Youth!
No registration needed.



The United States will celebrate its 250th birthday on July 4, 2026.

Faith@250 Small Groups

A five-week series led by Dr. Matt Rich discussing the common core and values that undergird our life as people of faith in this moment of national celebration.

Two class options:

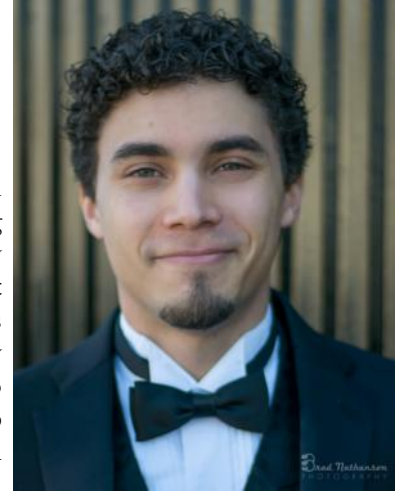
1. Mondays, June 1 - 29, 6:30 - 8:00 pm
2. Tuesdays, June 2 - 30, 2:30 - 4:00 pm

Open to members of our congregation and community

Learn more and register on Realm. Registration closes May 25.

Register at <https://bit.ly/4t426zD>

"Sing to God a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts."
Psalm 33:3



Please join us for a special dedicatory concert celebrating our beautiful new sanctuary piano on **Sunday, May 3rd at 2:00 p.m.** This free concert is open to all. The gift of our new Steinway Model B grand piano has already enriched our worship services and music ministry in meaningful ways. We invite you to gather with us as we dedicate this instrument to the glory of God through a concert by pianist Lawrence Quinnett.

Dr. Lawrence Quinnett is an active concert pianist who has performed recitals, conducted master classes, and adjudicated competitions in the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Quinnett has several competition successes to his credit, including first prize in the 2013 Doctoral Concerto Competition at Florida State University, the 2011 FSU Chapman Competition, the 2008 South Carolina Music Teachers' Association Young Artist Piano Competition, and the 2006 Southeastern College Piano Competition.

Quinnett presently teaches as Department Chair and Associate Professor of Piano and Music Theory at Livingstone College, where he maintains a small studio of select students. His students have received various awards and recognition in competitions, MTNA piano festivals, and Royal Conservatory of Music assessments. Quinnett was voted a "Top Piano Teacher" by Steinway & Sons in 2023.

2026 SANCTUARY FLOWERS SIGN UP

Would you like to honor a family member, friend, or a special group of people? Placing fresh flowers in the sanctuary to the glory of God is a perfect way to remember and celebrate a special person/s or occasion in your life.

Dates for 2026 are available on Sign-Up Genius for reserving a Sunday to place flowers in the sanctuary. You may visit <https://bit.ly/2026-Flower-Calendar> and complete the steps for selecting your choice of Sunday(s). All instructions are included. If you have questions, please contact Michaela Braswell at mbraswell@UnityFortMill.org or 803-547-5543 ext. 130).

Early sign-up is recommended to ensure the Sunday of your choice.

"We are all flowers in God's Garden." - Karen Sweeney-Ryall

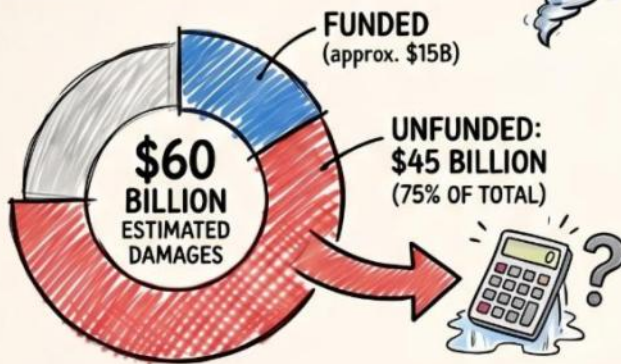


AN OPPORTUNITY TO AID IN ONGOING RECOVERY EFFORTS IN WESTERN NC

Western North Carolina continues to face unmet needs nearly two years after Hurricane Helene. Nearly \$45 billion of \$60 billion in damages remain unfunded, leaving critical gaps in housing, infrastructure, and small business stability. Oakland Avenue Presbyterian Church invites you to join in helping with long-term recovery efforts in Asheville, NC, May 3–9. This is hosted by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) at New Hope Presbyterian Church. Those unable to attend the full week are still encouraged to reach out. An informational meeting will be held soon, either in person or via Zoom. For questions or to sign up, please contact Sue Williams at Sewilliams919@gmail.com or 803.981.3450.

HELENE 18 MONTHS LATER: THE \$45 BILLION GAP

THE RECOVERY SHORTFALL



Context Summary: Nearly \$45 billion of \$60 billion in damages remains unfunded, leaving critical gaps in housing, infrastructure, and small business stability.

THE HOUSING & BUSINESS CRISIS



0% RENTAL VACANCY RATE

In 8 hardest-hit counties, stalling temporary relocation.



\$1.3 BILLION WATER INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICIT



84% OF BUSINESSES REPORT REVENUE LOSS

35% estimate losses at \$100,000 or more.

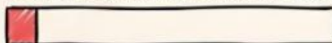


10% FEDERAL COVERAGE

HISTORICAL COVERAGE: 32–78%

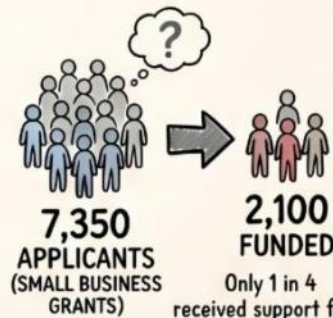


HELENE COVERAGE: UNDER 10%



RENEW NC HOUSING RECOVERY PROGRESS

CATEGORY	METRIC	VISUAL
TOTAL APPLICATIONS RECEIVED	7,924	
ACTIVE APPLICATIONS PENDING	3,704	
TOTAL HOMES COMPLETED	30	



Only 1 in 4 received support from Dogwood Health Trust.

“LEBANON: THE CURRENT CRISIS AND WAYS TO RESPOND” BY EDGAR MCCALL

On March 2, renewed and escalated hostilities broke out in Lebanon between the Hezbollah militia and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Lebanon has become the second front of this tragic war in the Middle East. Although Hezbollah operates inside Lebanon, *Hezbollah does not represent Lebanon*. The Lebanese government has condemned Hezbollah for its strikes on northern Israel.

In response to Hezbollah’s strikes, the IDF has responded with massive and very destructive bombardments in southern Lebanon, the eastern part of the country, in the southern suburbs of Beirut, and even in central Beirut itself. The IDF has also begun an invasion of southern Lebanon. The result of this new war is the suffering of millions of Lebanese civilians, who are so weary of war.

Over one million Lebanese are now displaced from their homes. Some are sleeping on the streets of Beirut and some are in schools that have been converted to shelters. Using the public schools as shelters means that students will be unable to go to school indefinitely. This displacement of a million Lebanese happened *just a year and a half ago*, in the fall of 2024, in that war between Hezbollah and the Israeli Defense Forces. Besides the loss of homes, schools, and jobs, the psychological toll is enormous.

As of this writing, 1,200 Lebanese have been killed by IDF shelling, including 120 children. Although the IDF claims only to be striking Hezbollah individuals and infrastructure, a Catholic priest in a southern village was killed by an Israeli bomb. Another bomb fell thirty yards from a Presbyterian pastor’s home, forcing him to evacuate. (During the 2024 war, another Presbyterian pastor’s home was bombed and severely damaged.)

In the midst of this heartache, the Presbyterian church and many other NGOs are working to provide shelter and relief for the multitude of displaced persons. Our sister Presbytery in Lebanon, the Presbyterian Synod of Syria and Lebanon, is converting space in its churches to shelter those who have lost their homes. NGOs are struggling to provide meals for some of the displaced, including World Central Kitchen.

Students and faculty at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut are visiting displaced persons in a shelter near them, bringing games for children who have nothing to do and no place to go.

Please pray for an end to this senseless war and for the softening of hearts filled with hate. Please see the link for a Call to Prayer for Lebanon. There is also a link for an appeal, Lebanon Humanitarian Response, which aids one of the Presbyterian partners working in Lebanon, the Compassion Protestant Society.

The Lebanese people, and the whole world, are weary of war.

Pray for peace.

Reverend Edgar McCall
Moderator, Syria-Lebanon Partnership Network of the PC(USA)

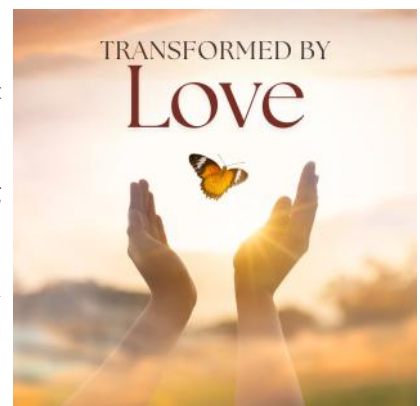
Links: <https://www.syrialebanonpn.org/>

STEWARDSHIP 2026—THANK YOU!

Thank You to everyone who returned their Pledges of Time, Talents, and Treasures on Commitment Sunday, March 22nd! It was truly a wonderful Sunday of joy, gratitude, generosity, and celebration. Over the next few weeks we will be reconciling the proposed 2026 – 2027 budget against projected giving for the period. We will also be sharing your time & talent interests with ministry team leaders to finalize our program plans for the next year. We have received 231 commitments of time and talent and 222 financial pledges from adults, children, and youth totaling \$1,153,557, which is 63% of our projected 2026-2027 budget of \$1,840,904.

If you have not sent in your Stewardship information for the upcoming program year, you can mail it, drop it in the locked mailbox on the drive by the Historic Sanctuary, leave it in the offering plate next week, or log into REALM and choose “Serving” and “Giving” to submit your choices online.

Additional forms can be printed from the Stewardship tab on Unity’s website <https://unityfortmill.org/give/stewardship/> and are available in the cart located in the Narthex.



STEPHEN MINISTRY



What to say, or not say, to someone who is grieving.

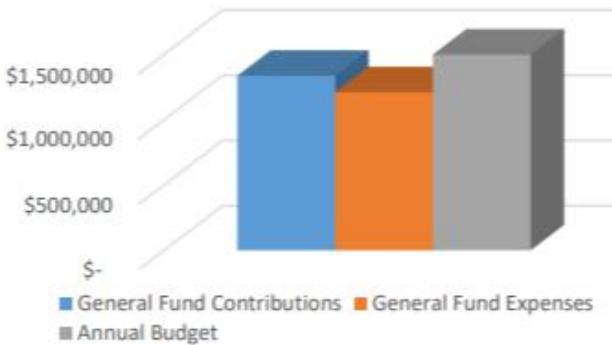
- 1) Simply express your sorrow, then follow the grieving person's lead.
- 2) Focus on the other person. The conversation should be strictly about the one who is suffering. Forget about yourself. You may be shifting the focus to yourself if you start a sentence with:
 - Well, I...
 - When I...
 - I remember...
 - My...
- 3) Platitudes and cliches hurt and do not heal. Examples not to say are:
 - I know how you feel....
 - It's for the best....
 - Keep a stiff upper lip...
 - At least....
 - God doesn't give you any more than you can handle....
 - It's God's will....

We are not perfect and may make mistakes but most importantly be sincere and let God's love shine through you. (From the book *Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart* by Dr. Kenneth C. Haugk, founder of Stephen Ministries, pastor and clinical psychologist.)

When you feel that you need a Stephen Minister or know someone who might, please contact one of our referral coordinators, Susan Mobley or Dave Johnson via email at Stephenministryreferrals@unityfortmill.org or call a Rev. Spangler at the church office - 803-547-5543.

YEAR TO DATE 2025-2026 BUDGET

Year to Date Contributions & Expenses Compared with the Annual Budget



	March 2026	July 2025 through Mar 2026	% of Annual Budget	5-Year Average
General Fund Contributions	\$ 138,184	\$ 1,336,831	78.4%	\$1,177,116
General Fund Expenses	122,420	1,211,069	71.0%	1,109,096
Annual Budget		1,705,640	100.0%	1,569,561

As you contemplate your legacy, please consider including Unity in your estate planning.

Unity Presbyterian Church
303 Tom Hall Street
PO Box 1267
Fort Mill, SC 29716-1267

www.UnityFortMill.org

JOIN US SUNDAY

8:45 a.m.
In-Person/Livestream
Worship

11:00 a.m.
In-Person/Livestream
Worship

**Share Your
Tithes and Offerings
Online**



Return Service Requested

Thank you for supporting God's ministry through Unity Presbyterian Church.