Life at Unity

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

A Message From The Pastor

Dear Friends,

We have some exciting news to share with you! Unity Presbyterian Church has been awarded a $59,000 Clergy Renewal Grant from the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program administered by Christian Theological Seminary! This competitive national program provides congregations the resources to support a transformative sabbatical leave for their pastor, designed to foster deep reflection, spiritual rejuvenation, and renewed energy for ministry. In addition, grant funds support significant opportunities for faithful engagement, growth, and reflection for the congregation while the pastor is away.

Lilly Endowment
Clergy Renewal Programs
at Christian Theological Seminary

It is hard to believe that I am in my seventh year as your Pastor and thus eligible for sabbatical leave. With the help of a Sabbatical Planning Team, the Human Resources Ministry Team, the Session, and the church staff, we prayed, planned, and submitted a grant application to the Lilly Endowment. It's a highly competitive program and we are thrilled that our proposal was one of 255 chosen by the Endowment to be funded.

My sabbatical will begin on April 26, 2027 for 13 weeks. Using the theme "Rooted and Grounded in Love" (Eph. 3:16-19), both I and our church will be invited to reconnect with the roots that sustain faith, life, and joy. For me that will be spending quality time with my family (including a trip together to Switzerland and Germany); exploring the roots of our Presbyterian faith, the roots of my ministry, and the roots of faithful civic engagement; reconnecting with mentors; reading well-told stories; and watching well-played baseball. As a congregation you will benefit from inspiring guest preachers and the chance to reconnect with pastors with "roots" at Unity, opportunities to participate in an all-church read of the book *Rooted: A Spiritual Memoir of Homecoming* by Christy Berghoef and then a visit in August by the Rev. Berghoef after I am back; some good meals together; and some time for collective rest.

There will be more details to share in January about my plans for rest and rejuvenation, pastoral leadership while I'm away, and the ways we hope to be rooted and grounded in love together. But for now, we give thanks to God for this gift and opportunity. It is a true testament to the faith and faithfulness of our congregation. Please know how grateful I am for all of you!

See you Sunday!
Matt

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Corinne and Louis Chiaia, and their children; Louis Jr., Victoria, and Theodore

Jon Ochsner

Mike and Cathy Whelan

STEWARDSHIP IS EVERYTHING

Stewardship is the responsible management of all God-given resources—time, talents, money, and creation—based on the truth that God owns everything and humans are managers (stewards) accountable to Him. Over the next several months the Stewardship Committee will share questions to consider corporately as a church as well as individually and maybe spark some conversation with one another.

Relationships
Do we provide intentional care and support to each other with love and truth?

LATE NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

16 -- Lucy Allen; Abby-Parker Coleman; Henry Cook
17 -- Sharon Cole; Kim Hughes; Tom Norton; Davis Padgett; Ryan Padgett
18 -- Shannon Blackwell; Ann Hudspeth; Abbey Whitworth
19 -- Elizabeth Bennett; Adelie Fike; Ernie Holler; Sue Johnstone; Elizabeth Kerwood; Grady Norman
20 -- Ray Carlton; Elizabeth Clumpner; Paul Diedrich; John Lee; Layla Newman
21 -- Molly Chmielinski; Don Dracon; Emelia Howell; Carla Litrenta; Jeffrey Poore; Rostan Shaftner; Bethany Thomas
22 -- Beau Reilly; Brenda Stowe
23 -- Heather Pecarro; Matt Rich; Virginia Sizemore; Akim Staats
24 -- Kevin Fulton; Sara-Kate Hollis; Kelly Kern; Tracy Little; Chris Wolfe
25 -- Amanda Cioni; Cara Crain; Laurel Grossoehme; Mary Hart; Cate Patterson; Kalisa Staats; J.T. Trueb; Pat Welker
26 -- Tom Ellison; Grant Luebbe; Alicia Reams; Chari Young
27 -- Jim Camann; Will Kellogg; Amy Pierson
28 -- Whitney Smith
30 -- Kevin Kern; Michael McDonald; Kim Mikulsky; Chuck Welfare



HOSPITALITY AND EVANGELISM (H&E)

WELCOME TO UNITY COFFEE

Anyone interested in learning more about Unity is invited to join us on Sunday November 15 at 10:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. This is an informal get-together during which we will share basic information about the congregation, our beliefs, answer any questions you may have and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea. Children are welcome to join their parents, or they may attend Sunday school.



LUNCH BUNCH

NOVEMBER 18

The next Lunch Bunch will be Wednesday, November 18 at Noon in the Fellowship Hall. Anna S. Miller, an Associate Judge with the York County Probate Court, will be our speaker for November. The Probate court has jurisdiction over estates, wills, marriages, adult guardianships, and conservatorships. She will be speaking about the role of the court in mental health and the importance of estate planning. She will answer questions that you may have along these lines. Bring your salad or sandwich and join us for this very interesting speaker. Chips, drinks, and desserts are provided.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY WOMEN'S BUILD

RESCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Unity will join Habitat for Humanity of York County Women's Build on Saturday, November 7, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. building a home for the Wilkins family in Clover. Lunch will be provided by the Men's Ministry. There is a job for all skills and abilities, 16 and older. While a Women's Build encourages women to join the Habitat mission, men are also welcome. Habitat homeowners take classes on financial literacy and home ownership, complete 250 hours of "sweat equity" by working on their own home and repay a 0% interest rate loan for the price of their home. Please contact Steve Hardy at stevehardy59@yahoo.com or 803.579.7341 to sign up.

2027-2028 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

GOING PAPERLESS



To reduce printing costs, Unity is offering a PAPERLESS option for receipt of Stewardship Materials for the 2027-2028 campaign. **If you would like to opt-in to receive your 2027-2028 Stewardship Materials via this paperless option, please register your preference here.** If you register to go paperless, you will receive an email in April 2027 with links to all Stewardship Materials and instructions on how you can submit your pledge and time & talent interests online. If you prefer to submit these items by paper, there is nothing you need to do. Traditional Stewardship Packets will be prepared for all members who do not register for the paperless option by February 1, 2027. Paper copies of all stewardship materials will also be available in the Narthex beginning April 2027.

THORNWELL DOCUMENTARY SCREENING

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22

Thornwell
BUILDING TOMORROW'S FAMILIES

On Sunday, November 22, at 12:15 p.m. the Outreach Ministry Team invites you to a screening of Thornwell's new documentary in the Fellowship Hall following the 11:00 a.m. worship service. Thornwell is one of our long-standing mission partners here in South Carolina, and November 22 is our annual Sunday when we share updates on the ministry they are doing and take up a special offering for them. The documentary will last about 30 minutes, with time for questions with their staff members as well. There will be door prizes and brunch food so plan to stay after worship as we spend time with our mission partners that day. All are invited and we hope to see you there.



For all information and to register on the Elias Tours website, click this link: https://www.eliastours.com/tours/journeys-of-paul-the-greek-islands-unity-presbyterian-church





HELP US DECK THE HALLS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Join us on Saturday, November 28th at 9:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary as we prepare our church for the Advent and Christmas seasons! We need many hands to make light work of setting up our beautiful decorations, trees, and wreaths. Families and children are especially invited to participate this year, and all participants will be fueled by yummy donuts and coffee! Come share your Christmas spirit and help us make our church shine! And go ahead and mark your calendar to help us UNDECORATE on Saturday, January 9th at 9:00 a.m. Let us know you are coming to both by signing up:

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0D45A4AD29A64-67090714-unity
or contacting David Grove at grovehaven@gmail.com

LOOKING AHEAD TO CHRISTMAS EVE

SERVICE TIMES AND DETAILS

Almost 1500 people attended Christmas Eve Services at Unity last year! What a gift!
There will be more information to come in the months ahead, but as you make plans with your family for Christmas, we hope that you will be able to attend one or more of these services as we celebrate Christ's birth and God's gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love that transform the world even now:

- 11 a.m. - Children and Family Service
- 2 p.m. - Service of scripture lessons and singing familiar carols, with communion
- 4 p.m. - Service with Chancel Choir, communion, and candlelight
- 6 p.m. - Service with special music, communion, and candlelight
- 11 p.m. - Service with scripture lesson, familiar carols, communion, and candlelight



FROM STEPHEN MINISTRY

SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO ASK FOR HELP

We're brought up to be strong, self-sufficient, independent people. We tend to think that if we ask for help, it is a sign of weakness. We try to keep our struggles hidden, stuffed deep inside.

However, that's not God's plan. Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." God wants us to care for others—and allow others to care for us in our time of need.

If you're sad or struggling inside, don't suffer alone. Ask for help. We've got a team of Stephen Ministers who are ready to listen, care, encourage, pray, and help you through a tough time. (It's confidential too!)

Find out more about Stephen Ministry by talking with our referral coordinators, Susan Mobley or Dave Johnson, via email at Stephenministryreferrals@unityfortmill.org or call Rev. Molly Spangler at 803.547.5543.

PRAYER SQUARE MINISTRY

PROVIDING CARE & COMFORT



Do you know we have numerous prayer squares available to take and give to someone who may be going through a difficult time? This could be a member of Unity, family member, or friend. Please feel free to take as many as you need. You will find them in a basket on the left side of the Narthex and near the church office.
Members of our group stay busy knitting and crocheting prayer squares. We welcome new people to join us. Directions are available. For more information contact Ann Spitzer 248.978.5324

HEALTH CORNER

EATING LESS SUGAR



Let's all challenge ourselves to consume a little less sugar each week. Easy ways to do this include:

- drinking more water and less soda, lemonade, sweet tea and juice
- diluting your usual portion of juice by half with water
- decreasing the sweetener in your coffee or tea, and
- starting a habit of reading labels. When you start looking, you'll realize all the places that added sugar is lurking.

Making just one of these changes can really make a difference. Try all of them and see the benefits.

SLPN
The Syria- Lebanon Partnership Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

REFLECTING ON THE SLPN 2026 ANNUAL GATHERING

Dave Reimer, Joyce Sullivan, Elizabeth Watson, and Molly Spangler had the privilege of attending the Syria-Lebanon annual gathering in September. Our Outreach Ministry Team here at Unity has had a long relationship with the SLPN, and we were grateful to get to spend time with some of those partners in person. We hope you will read this brief summary of that gathering and please reach out to Pastor Molly if you are interested in learning more: mspangler@unityfortmill.org

Inspiration. Energy. Empathy. These words reflect the spirit of the SLPN Annual Gathering, September 16-18 in Charlotte, North Carolina. During the meeting, the 32 in-person and 15 online participants strengthened vital partnerships with our brothers and sisters in Lebanon and Syria. The scripture theme for this year's Annual Gathering was 'Mutually Encouraged by One Another's Faith,' from Paul's letter to the Romans (Romans 1:12). This theme came to life in our sharing with God's faithful servants in Lebanon and Syria.

Our special guest was Dr. Martin Accad, President of the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut, who joined us in-person as he was visiting several partners in the United States. Through his interaction with participants and his three presentations with discussion, the group was deeply inspired by the mission of NEST not only as a theological school, but also as a servant ministry in the heart of Beirut.

The online discussions with Presbyterian pastors in Lebanon and Syria also inspired us as we heard stories of faithful endurance under trial and human suffering. The Lebanese struggle after economic collapse, the port explosion of 2020, and two Israeli-Hezbollah wars since 2024, with their destruction and mass displacement. Many Syrians face uncertainty and deep economic hardship. Yet our Presbyterian partners continue their faithful witness to children, youth, women and men. SLPN facilitates one-to-one partnerships between US church leaders, and Lebanese and Syrian church leaders. We witnessed the vitality of these relationships as several of the prayer partners shared the importance of ongoing mutual support and encouragement.

SLPN is built on vital personal relationships. These partnerships fuel all of our work in education, advocacy, and communication. At our meeting, new relationships were formed and partnerships were renewed in a spirit of shared empathy. You are invited to pray for our partners, and to discern ways in which you can become more involved in the vital work of SLPN. God is at work. How might we participate in that work together, both as a Network and with our Syrian and Lebanese partners? Through our mutual love for our siblings in both countries, we invite you to join us as we discern how to participate in what God is already doing among us.



MUSIC CAMP 2027

REGISTRATION IS OPEN!



Registration is now open for Music Camp, and spaces are filling up quickly! Children in Kindergarten through 5th grade are invited to join us, and children in 4K (having turned four by September 1, 2026) may register with director approval. Music Camp is February 15-19, 2027 from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., with the performance on Friday, February 19, at noon. **Registration is free, but space is limited to the first 40 registrants. Registration is now open and closes on November 30, or when registration is full.** Register on REALM.

UNITY CHILDREN'S CHOIRS



The next session of Children's Choir begins on November 8. Even if you couldn't participate in our first session, please join us this time around as we learn songs to sing for upcoming Advent worship services. Cherub Choir (children who turned 4 by September 1, 2026 through first grade) will meet from 2:30-3:15 and the Covenant Choir (grades 2-5) meets from 3:30-4:15. Parents, please register any children singing for the first time this school year on Realm (returning singers do not need to register again). Contact Margaret Monroe at mmonroe@UnityFortMill.org or 803.547.5543 with any questions. Come make a joyful noise!

CHILDREN AND YOUTH INSTRUMENTALISTS

Our young instrumentalists are invited to share their gifts in worship during the seasons of Advent and Christmas! Piano, band, and strings students are all invited to participate by playing a short sacred Christmas solo. Opportunities are available during Sunday morning worship at each service, or for one of our Christmas Eve services. Please contact Margaret Monroe at mmonroe@UnityFortMill.org if you are interested, have any questions, or need help finding a piece to learn.





JOIN FOR A PARENTS OF YOUTH DISCUSSION GROUP MONTHLY DURING YOUTH GROUP!

Have you ever had a difficult time communicating with your teenager?

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

All parents of 6th-12th graders are invited to gather monthly for connection and an informal book study on "Caring Assertiveness" from Stephen Ministries.

Led by retired psychiatrist and Unity Youth Advisor, Ted Benfield, we will explore strategies to relate in a more direct, honest, and respectful way and enjoy more fulfilling connections with your children.

Hospitality Room, 4:30-5:30pm (during Youth Group!)

NOVEMBER 8 - DECEMBER 13 - JANUARY 10
FEBRUARY 21 - MARCH 14 - APRIL 11
MAY 2

No registration needed!

UNITY YOUTH

REGISTER NOW FOR COLLEGE STUDENT & YOUNG ADULT HONDURAS MISSION TRIP

College Student & Young Adult

HONDURAS MISSION TRIP

MAY 24-31, 2027

Come along to visit our long-time partners in Honduras! The total cost for participants (including all flights, meals, activities, housing, etc) is $1,600* per person.

* Note that this total does not include the cost of a passport and necessary vaccines.

Register on Realm by December 1





Liz Corsig Finegan will help lead this trip. This will be a work trip, as participants will be split into work teams to build houses in the small villages of the Copan region of Honduras. More details and registration available on Realm.



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE UNITY YOUTH BBQ FUNDRAISER!

Thank you so much for helping to make the 2026 Unity Youth BBQ sale a huge success! Funds raised from this sale help to off-set the cost of Unity Youth trips & retreats and provide scholarships to ensure that these expeirences are accessible for all. We are so grateful for the countless ways our congregation supports our young people. We want to extend a special word of gratitude to Pitmaster Tim Whitsell and Chef Gretchen Whitesell for making this event possible.





NOVEMBER 15 IS PRESCHOOL SUNDAY

We look forward to welcoming the children and families of the Unity Preschool to worship next Sunday at the 11 a.m. Service. Please join us for this time to celebrate the ministry of the Preschool, pray with and for our teachers and staff, and extend the love of Christ with the families of our community.

BLOOD DRIVE ON NOVEMEMBER 10TH

Unity will host a blood drive on Nov. 10 in the Fellowship Hall from 2:30-7 p.m. To make an appointment or for more information please call 1-800-REDCROSS or visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter sponsor code Unity.
Give something that means something---GIVE BLOOD!

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

On Saturday, October 31st, Pastor Matt and Pastor Molly enjoyed sharing blessings with many wonderful pets. Creatures great and small showed up with their humans to receive blessings on a beautiful fall morning. We humans were also blessed by their presence as well as they shared wags and kisses, meows, and snuggles. It was an honor and a privilege to meet so many of your furry, feathered, and whiskered, family members! Thank you to everyone who shared such a special morning with us.















A PLACE AT THE TABLE

MINISTRY TEAM ANNUAL GOALS

As elders, deacons, and church staff members prayed, planned, and prepared for the 2026-2027 church program year, they have been guided by our Annual Vision for Ministry: "A Place at the Table" as well as the Strategic Mission Pathways adopted by the Session in December 2025 as ministry priorities for the next five years.

Each Ministry Team used these two guiding resources to set goals for the coming year. We will be sharing those goals over the next several newsletters, trying to group them around the Strategic Mission Pathways. The fourth and final pathway is:

4. Clarify and Deepen Community Engagement - Jesus came not to be served, but to serve—and we follow that example by loving our neighbors through mission, outreach, and relationship. Unity Presbyterian Church is called to be a visible and active presence in York County and beyond, sharing God's love through hands-on service, financial support, and partnerships. Guiding Question: As our congregation grows, where and with whom are we called to serve? And how can we more clearly tell our story in the larger community so that our neighbors might be inspired to join us in putting faith into action?

Adult Discipleship Ministry

- Reach out to the Community. Community Education Event. (Financial Planning, Medicare/Medicaid, Social Security, Tax Preparation)?

Children's Ministry

- Continue to offer mission projects for children through Mission Camp, GCs, and Grands Camp, adding a Veterans care kit project for GCs this Fall.
- Continue family events that invite the broader community into the life of the church such as the Fall Family Fun Night, Birthday Party for Jesus, and Sweetheart Dance.
- Congregational Care and Fellowship
- Explore opportunities to extend our support to the larger community

Outreach

- Align Outreach planning with Unity's "We Love" vision and use a visual ministry calendar to reduce offering overlap and improve communication.
- Use special-offerings data to improve communication for major offerings and recurring mission priorities.
- Maintain local hunger and basic-needs support through FMCC, PB&J Sundays, Sharing God's Bounty, Second Harvest, and Fort Mill School Foundation
- Discern funding strategy for emergency assistance, Syria/Lebanon, Habitat, Living Waters, Honduras, and other high-impact priorities.
- Continue Habitat engagement with emphasis on Faith Repairs, affordable-housing advocacy, and broad volunteer participation.
- Continue Honduras, Living Waters, and Lebanon/Syria support with stronger year-round storytelling and partner updates.
- Launch or formalize Earth Care Congregation work by recruiting a broader team and assessing current church practices.
- Use Freeing Congregational Mission criteria to review partners, clarify leads, and align commitments with Unity's values and capacity.
- Improve data capture so future reports show participation, pounds collected, dollars given, families served, pints donated, volunteer hours, and partner outcomes.

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Men's Ministry

- Continue to support our ongoing Unity programs and projects including Youth Activities, Angel Tree, Christmas Auction, MDSF Banquet, Thinking of You (TOY), Fort Mill Care Center logistics, Punch List Friday projects, Feature Event Breakfasts (e.g., Veterans Day), Live Nativity project.
- With the Session having accepted the donation of the cargo trailer, Men's Ministry will: complete all necessary documentation to make the trailer roadworthy for church sponsored projects, draft and gain Session approval on the Operations Manual for the cargo trailer, outfit the trailer for multiple use projects including Presbyterian Disaster Assistance if / when needed.
- Introduce Pickleball activities for the congregation and explore the possibility of inter church competition similar to the summer softball program.
- Introduce Golf activities for the congregation and explore the possibility of inter church competition similar to the summer softball program.
- Organize a team of experienced HAM radio operators and enthusiasts that would be available to the church / community, as needed, in times of emergency or crisis.

Women of Unity

- Emphasize the importance of serving our community in love and showing hospitality through various service projects.

Worship and Music

- Expand Community Celebration: Develop thoughtful ways to extend the table, making communion a visible, welcoming celebration of grace that connects directly with our broader community.

If you have any questions about these goals or would like to be a part of teams that are working together in ministry, please let Dr. Matt know.

MAKE A LASTING IMPACT THROUGH YOUR IRA WITH QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTIONS (QCDS)

Are you age 70½ or older?

You may be eligible to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) directly from your IRA to support the ministries of Unity Presbyterian Church.

If you are age 70½ or older and required to take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), a QCD can satisfy all or part of your RMD requirement while supporting the mission and ministry of our church.

Benefits of a QCD

✅ Supports the ministry and mission of our church
✅ May satisfy all or part of your annual RMD
✅ May reduce your taxable income
✅ Transfers funds directly from your IRA to the church
✅ Helps extend your legacy of faithful stewardship

Next steps

Contact your tax or legal advisor, then contact your IRA custodian and provide the requested charity information. The custodian must send the QCD directly to the charity.

Tax Disclaimer

This material is provided for informational and educational purposes only and should not be construed as tax, legal, or financial advice. Tax laws and IRS regulations are subject to change and individual circumstances vary. Eligibility for and tax treatment of a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) depend on your specific situation. Before making a QCD or relying on any information contained herein, consult your qualified tax advisor, attorney, or financial professional.

CONSIDER DONATING APPRECIATED STOCK

A Smart Way to Support Our Ministry

If you own stocks that have increased in value, you may be able to make a greater impact through a gift of appreciated stock rather than cash.

Benefits of Gifting Appreciated Stock

✅ **Avoid Capital Gains Tax** - You may avoid paying capital gains tax on the appreciation of the stock by donating the shares directly to the church instead of selling them first.

✅ **Receive a Charitable Deduction** - If you itemize deductions and meet IRS requirements, you may be eligible for a charitable income tax deduction based on the fair market value (subject to IRS rules and limitations).

✅ **Increase Your Kingdom Impact** - Because you avoid selling the stock yourself, more of your investment may go directly to support the church's ministries and mission.

Example

If you purchased stock for **$2,000** that is now worth **$10,000**, a direct gift of the stock may allow you to potentially:

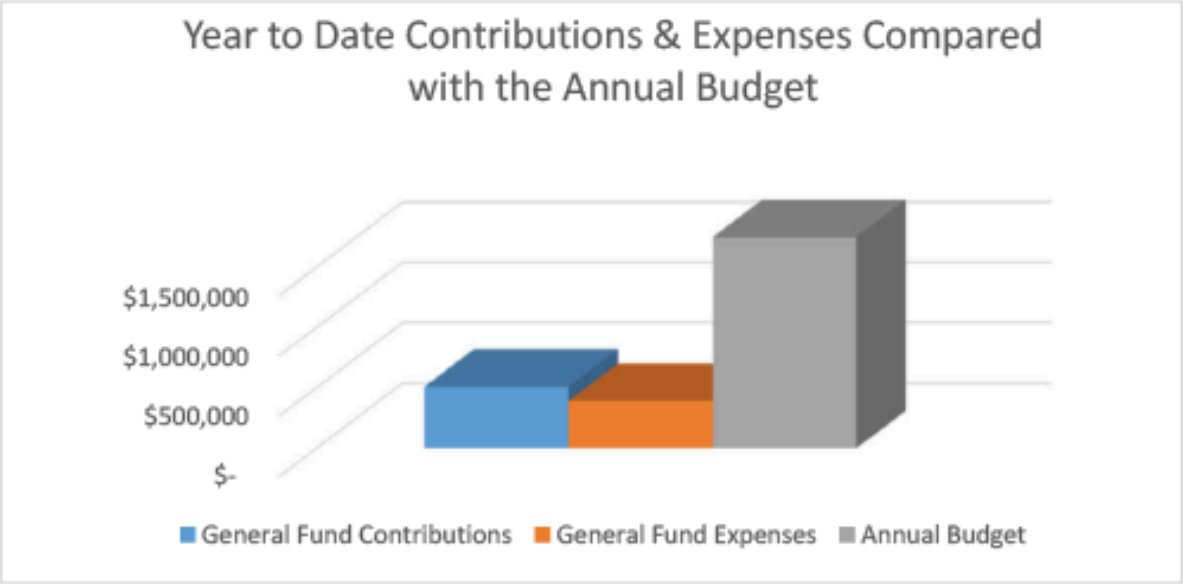
- Avoid capital gains tax on the $8,000 gain
- Claim a charitable deduction based on the stock's **fair market value**, subject to IRS rules and limitations

Your financial or tax advisor can help determine if this strategy fits your financial situation.

Tax Disclaimer

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended as legal, tax, or financial advice. Tax benefits from charitable gifts of appreciated stocks vary based on individual circumstances and current tax laws. Please consult your attorney, tax advisor, CPA, or financial professional before making any charitable gift to determine how these rules apply to your specific situation.

2026-2027 BUDGET UPDATE



	September 2026	July 1, 2026 through September 30, 2026	% of Annual Budget
General Fund Contributions	$ 133,395	$ 511,665	28.0%
General Fund Expenses	136,508	392,867	21.5%
Annual Budget		1,826,194	100.0%

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

Unity Presbyterian Church
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www.UnityFortMill.org

Share Your Tithes and Offerings Online

Return Service Requested

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