

UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church Of Christ



Loving God. Loving Neighbor. Building Community.

November 30, 2025 First Sunday of Advent
"One Christ, Many Cultures"

*Please rise in body or spirit.

You are invited to join in the liturgy **in bold type.**

*Childcare and Sunday School staff are
off today. Children are invited to stay
in worship.*

*Please wear a name tag so we can
greet one another by name
(There are blank name tags in the
back of the sanctuary).*

An Invocation to St. Lucy by Thomas Merton

Lucy, whose day is in our darkest season,
(Although your name is full of light,)
We walkers in the murk and rain and flesh and sense,
Lost in the midnight of our dead world's winter solstice
Look for the fogs to open on your friendly star.

We have long since cut down the summer of our history;
Our cheerful towns have all gone out like fireflies in October.
The fields are flooded and the vines are bare:
How have our long days dwindled, and now the world is frozen!

Locked in the cold jails of our stubborn will,
Oh, hear the shovels growling in the gravel.
This is the way they'll make our beds forever,
Ours, whose Decembers have put out the sun:
Doors of whose souls are shut against the summertime!

Martyr, whose short day sees our winter and our Calvary,
Show us some light, who seem forsaken by the sky:
We have so dwelt in darkness that our eyes are screened and dim,
And all but blinded by the weakest ray.

Hallow the vespers and December of our life, O martyred Lucy:
Console our solstice with your friendly day.

PRELUDE – Gläns över sjö och strand Swedish Carol, arr. Jeremy Carlisle
Annelie Fahlstedt, violin, & Jeremy Carlisle

WELCOME

Rev. Leah McCullough

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: On the darkest night,

All: We light a candle.

One: On the winter snow,

All: We lay an evergreen branch.

One: On our journey to the manger,

All: We take the first step.

***HYMN #107 – Awake! Awake and Greet the New Morn**

REJOICE

Words & Music: Marty Haugen

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Michele and Paul Sionas

PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION (unison)

Rev. Katrina Forman

Holy God, the shadows have gathered around us, and we struggle to find hope. We want to believe that your warmth can break through even the coldest winter, but we are traumatized. It is so easy to doubt your goodness when we are surrounded by injustice. Remind us that, just as St. Lucia shared your light with others, we too can embody your love. Amen.

MOMENT FOR SILENT REFLECTION

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

PASSING THE PEACE

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Sara Olson

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Luke 21:25-36

SPECIAL MUSIC – Blessings

arr. Heather Sorenson

*We pray for blessings, we pray for peace,
Comfort for family, protection while we sleep.
We pray for healing, for prosperity.
We pray for Your mighty hand to ease our suffering.
And all the while, You hear each spoken need,
Yet love us way too much to give us lesser things.*

*'Cause what if Your blessings come through raindrops?
What if Your healing comes through tears?*

*What if a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes to know You're near?
What if trials of this life are Your mercies in disguise?*

*We pray for wisdom, Your voice to hear,
And we cry in anger when we cannot feel You near.
We doubt Your goodness, we doubt Your love,
As if every promise from Your word is not enough.
And all the while, You hear each desperate plea,
And long that we'd have faith to believe.*

*When friends betray us,
When darkness seems to win, we know,
The pain reminds this heart that this is not,
This is not our home!*

*And what if trials of this life,
The rain, the storms, the hardest nights,
Are Your mercies in disguise?*

Kristine Hart & Jeremy Carlisle

MESSAGE FOR ALL AGES/SERMON

Rev. Katrina Forman

Gathering Music – Where Children Belong

Words: Jeremy Whitener & Leah McCullough

RITCHIE

Music: James Ritchie

***This, this is where children belong,
Welcomed as part of our worshipping song.
Gathered in love, God's stories we hear,
Growing in faith through the years.***

***HYMN #461 – Let Us Hope when Hope Seems Hopeless**

Words & Music: Emma Lou Diemer

LET US HOPE

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NURTURE

461

Let Us Hope when Hope Seems Hopeless

Ps. 126:5-6; Rom. 4:18; 1 Cor. 13

David Beebe, 1989

1 Let us hope when hope seems hope - less, when the
 2 Faith and hope in love's com - pas - sion will sur -
 3 Like a child out - grow - ing child - hood, set - ting

dreams we dreamed have died. When the morn - ing
 vive though knowl - edge cease, though the tongues of
 child - hood things a - way, we will learn to

breaks in bright - ness, hun - ger shall be sat - is - fied.
 joy fall si - lent, dull the words of proph - e - cies.
 live in free - dom, in the life of God's new day.

Emma Lou Diemer, organist since the age of thirteen, studied composition at Yale University and Eastman School of Music, and has published orchestra, chamber, choral, and organ works. David Beebe wrote this text while teaching a course on creative writing. A minister of the United Church of Christ, Beebe has served on the staff of the denomination's Stewardship Council.

Tune: LET US HOPE 8.7.8.7.D.
 Emma Lou Diemer, 1994
 Alternate tune: HYFRYDOL

One who sows the fields with weep - ing shall re - trace the
 Faith shall see and trust its ob - ject; hope shall set its
 Now we see as in a mir - ror. Then we shall see

sor-row - ing way and re - joice in har - vest
 an - chor sure; love shall bloom in Love e -
 face to face, un - der - stand how love's com -

boun - ty at the break - ing of the day.
 ter - nal. Faith and hope and love en - dure.
 pas - sion blos - soms through a - maz - ing Grace.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. Leah McCullough

Joys and Concerns

Josh Robeson

Leana Greene

Jonathan Grevatt

Joan and Bill Icklan

Musical Call to Prayer – Make of My Heart a Stable Amanda Udis-Kessler

*Make of my heart a stable, a house for the Holy,
A warm and sturdy place for hope to live and grow.*

Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer

Our {name for God}, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERTORY

Invitation

Music for Meditation

Jeremy Carlisle

***Response of Thanksgiving – Doxology for Advent**

VENI EMMANUEL

Words: Thomas Ken, adapt. William B. Abernathy

Music: Trad. French Tune

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God, all creatures here below.

Praise God for all that love has done.

Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

***Prayer of Dedication (unison)**

Rev. Leah McCullough

Gracious God, thank you for the gifts we receive when we need them most: green in a cold winter and hope in a time of trouble. Bless these gifts that we have shared, so that they may wrap the warmth of your hope around someone who needs it. Amen.

***HYMN #104 – We Hail You God's Anointed**

ELLACOMBE

Words: James Montgomery

Music: Anon

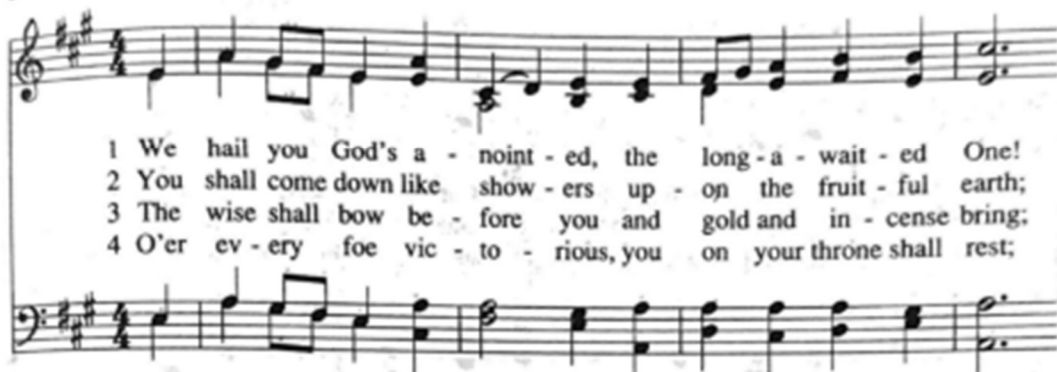
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We Hail You God's Anointed

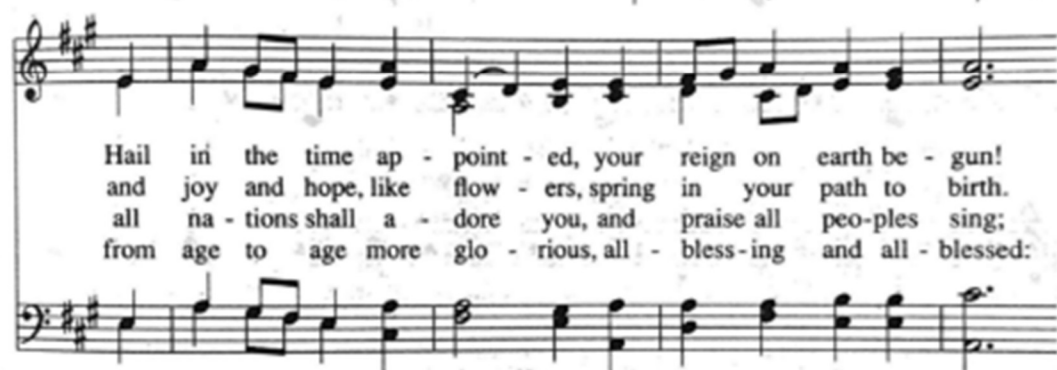
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James Montgomery, 1821; alt.

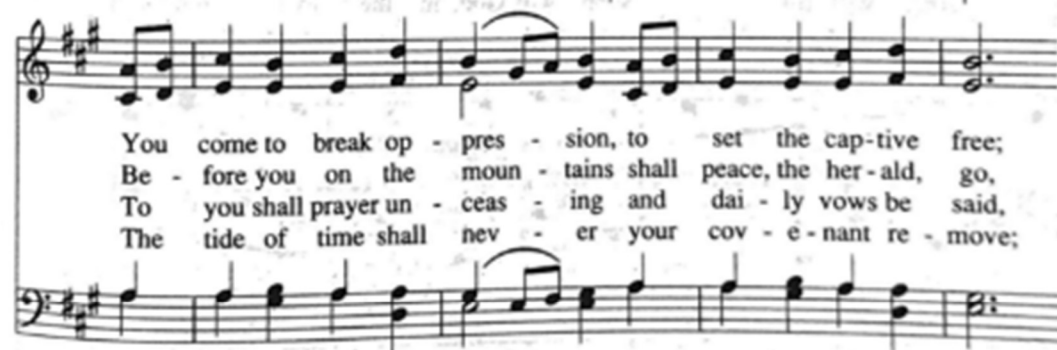
Ps. 72



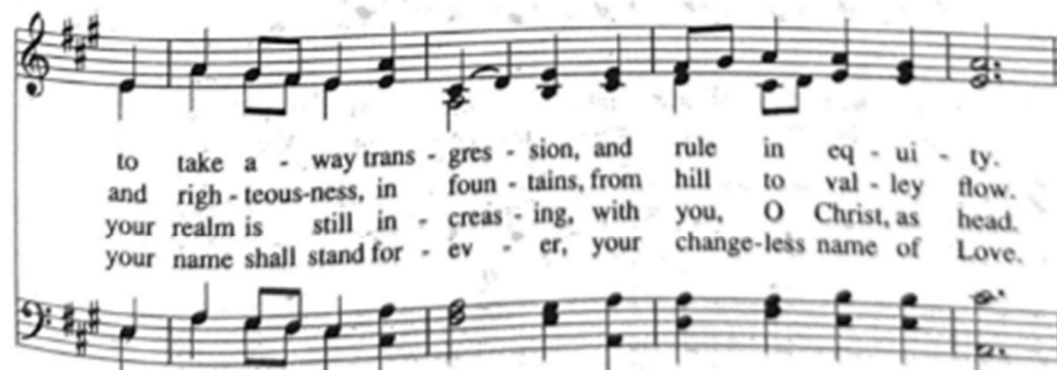
1 We hail you God's a - noint - ed, the long - a - wait - ed One!
 2 You shall come down like show - ers up - on the fruit - ful earth;
 3 The wise shall bow be - fore you and gold and in - cense bring;
 4 O'er ev - ery foe vic - to - rious, you on your throne shall rest;



Hail in the time ap - point - ed, your reign on earth be - gun!
 and joy and hope, like flow - ers, spring in your path to birth.
 all na - tions shall a - dore you, and praise all peo - ples sing;
 from age to age more glo - rious, all - bless - ing and all - blessed:



You come to break op - pres - sion, to set the cap - tive free;
 Be - fore you on the moun - tains shall peace, the her - ald, go,
 To you shall prayer un - ceas - ing and dai - ly vows be said,
 The tide of time shall nev - er your cov - e - nant re - move;



to take a - way trans - gres - sion, and rule in eq - ui - ty.
 and righ - teous - ness, in foun - tains, from hill to val - ley flow.
 your realm is still in - creas - ing, with you, O Christ, as head.
 your name shall stand for - ev - er, your change - less name of Love.

Written as a Christmas hymn for the Moravian settlement in Yorkshire, England, this hymn has enjoyed widespread popularity from the beginning. It is characteristic of Montgomery's deep faith and passion for social justice.

Tune: ELLACOMBE C.M.D.
 Gesangbuch der herzoglichen Württembergischen katholischen Hofkapelle, 1784

***BENEDICTION**

Rev. Katrina Forman

***CHORAL BENEDICTION - Go in Peace, Beloved**

CRANHAM

Words: Anon.

Music: Gustav Holst

***Go in peace, Beloved. God be with you all.
Wait for grace with patience, as for rains that fall.
Go and share God's blessing. Be a sign of hope:
Bear the love of Jesus, love to one and all.***

POSTLUDE - Vstávajte Pastieri

Slovak Carol, arr. Jeremy Carlisle

Annelie Fahlstedt, violin, & Jeremy Carlisle

This liturgy was written by Rev. Amber Henry Neuroth

THANK YOU for joining us this morning. Please complete a welcome card if you are visiting and put it in the offering plate, or scan the QR code on the back of the pew. Please join us in the Assembly Room after worship for fellowship.

TODAY AFTER WORSHIP - Inquirer's Session For Those Considering Membership (And The Curious) With Rev. Katrina

Are you interested in taking the next step in your spiritual journey at Union Congregational Church? We warmly invite you to today's Inquirer's Session hosted by Rev. Katrina. This is a wonderful, small group opportunity to learn more about becoming a member of the church, learn about Union Cong's history and mission, or seek a deeper connection within the church community.

THANK YOU to the Sunday Welcome Team, Kristine, Annelie, and Jeremy!

LIVESTREAM VIDEO: Nkenge Jones

SOUND OPERATOR: Joe Cristiani

For Your Advent Spiritual Practice: "Light from Afar" Advent Devotionals Are Available In The Back Of The Sanctuary And In The Church Office

Light from Afar is a daily Advent devotional that illuminates the season through the unforgettable stories and reflections of four writers from around the world. Authors Nadiyka Gerbish (Ukraine), Joel Bengbeng (Philippines), Cláudio Carvalhaes (Brazil), and Sidwell Mokgothu (South Africa) share cultural and religious traditions of the Advent season in their daily reflections. Each day's meditation includes a scripture reading, a prayer, an opportunity for reflection, and a link to a song from the author's home country. Cost to the church was \$13/book. We invite you to donate via the website what you are able, select "Advent devotional" as your purpose.

Tuesday, December 2

Daytime Bible Study is on Tuesday at 12:30pm in the Guild Room.

Wednesday, December 3

Chair Yoga is every Wednesday at 10:30am (Alternates Guild Room/Zoom)

Email Sara T. (sgtamargo@gmail.com) for location.

Union Sages will meet at noon on Wednesday, Dec. 3rd in the Guild Room.

Handbell Rehearsal takes place every Wednesday at 7pm in the Sanctuary.

This Saturday, Dec. 6 at 8am is the Men's Breakfast and Wreath Raising

Please join the Men of Union for a traditional Danish breakfast prepared by Torben Winther on Saturday morning, Dec. 6th at 8am in the Assembly Room. Torben is looking for 3 or 4 volunteers to arrive at 6:45am and help prepare the breakfast. After breakfast, around 10am, those gathered will help decorate the interior and exterior of the church for Christmas including the traditional raising of the wreath on the tower. Please RSVP to Torben if you can attend the Men's Breakfast at winther100@gmail.com. Also, let Torben know if you are able to come early to help.

This Saturday, December 6 at 10am

All Church "Deck The Halls" Decorating Event (Sanctuary/Assembly Room)

Everyone is invited to pitch in to decorate the Sanctuary and Assembly Room.

This Saturday, December 6 from 2pm-4:30pm

Essex Together "United In Finding Hope: Action on Affordable and Supportive Housing"

Essex Together – a citizen power organization of congregations and nonprofits dedicated to social justice – will convene at 345-357 South 10th Street, Newark, a site on which 42 affordable housing units will soon be built. Carpooling will be provided to additional sites in Montclair highlighting our commitment to work across Essex County. Testimonies and project overviews will be provided at each stop, which in Montclair will showcase two opportunities for housing on faith community properties. Essex Together has planned this action to declare that we will not be divided, but will strengthen the bonds between our diverse communities. Our shared commitment to equity in housing in our hope and our power. We are looking for at least ten members and friends from the church to attend this event. For more information, speak to Rev. Katrina or email RevAnya@uumontclair.org.

Next Sunday, December 7

11:30am Youth Group (Guild Room)

CHORUS NOTES



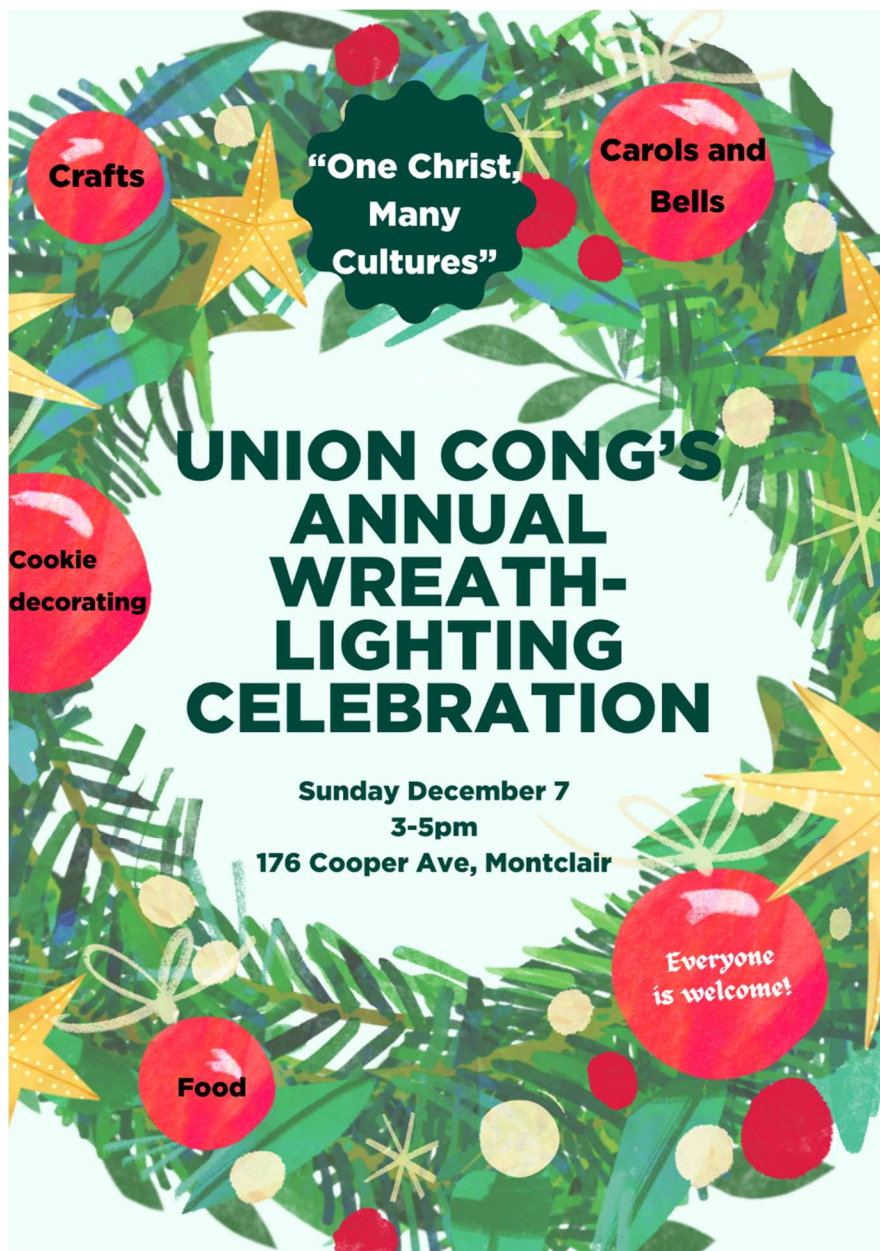
A Message Of Gratitude From The Generosity Team

Dear Members and Friends Of Union Cong,
What a Generosity Sunday! What spirit, what joy, what
heartfelt support! We truly are a Chorus Of Generosity.

From 26 pledges received before Sunday, November 23rd to 33 more pledges on Generosity Sunday, we have a total of 59 pledges so far. Your collective response has brought us to 64% of our \$500,000 goal. And, if you haven't pledged yet, there is still time to add your voice to the chorus! Please join us. You can pledge online at www.unioncong.org/pledge, drop your pledge envelope in the offering plate, or mail it to the church office. Every gift is truly appreciated and helps advance our mission and maintain our programs. But more importantly, you have carried us all the way to our deeper goal: fellowship, love for one another, and love for God.

With Gratitude,
Faith, Mike, Rob, Marcie, Jon, Kim, and Rev. Katrina





**Next Sunday, December 7
From 3pm-5pm**

**Union Cong's Annual
Wreath Lighting
Celebration (Assembly
Room and Church Lawn)**

Join us for a festive event to mark the Advent season. We will have crafts, cookie decorating and snacks from Christmas traditions around the world. Our handbell choir will lead us in carols and interactive music games, before we hear a Christmas story and head outside to light the wreath on the church tower. We will have snacks, but if you wish to order a slice or two of pizza to supplement, you can scan the QR code. Be sure to order pizza by noon on December 5.



SCAN ME

Coming Soon

The Union Film Group will gather on Friday, December 12 for a screening of "Red River" directed by Howard Hawks

6:15pm BYO Dinner/7pm Screening. Noted as John Wayne's greatest performance and film. It was ranked the 5th Greatest Western by the American Film Institute.

Saturday, December 13th at 10am: The Women's Breakfast will meet at the historic Crane House.

The house will be decorated for Christmas by members of the Montclair Garden Club. The Crane House and Historic YMCA is located at 110 Orange Road in Montclair. The group will gather at the back of the house. A gathering is planned after the tour for lunch at the Pilgrim Dinee, 82 Pompton Avenue in Cedar Grove. Please RSVP to Karen Ermler at karen.ermler@gmail.com.



On Saturday, December 13th at 7pm, the UCC Choir presents Forrest's "LUX: The Dawn From On High" in the Sanctuary.

Experience the light of the holidays with the choir and orchestra. The concert is free, but donations are graciously accepted.

**Sunday, December 14th after worship
Petting Zoo and Shared Coffee Hour with Grace Presbyterian Church.**

Women's Retreat Is January 16-18, 2026, At Trinity Retreat Center.

Go to
www.unioncong.org/christian-education to register.

CHURCH CONTACT INFO: Church Office: 973-744-7424

Rev. Katrina Forman, Lead Minister, 973-744-5802, kforman@unioncong.org

Rev. Leah McCullough, Minister of Pastoral Care and Faith Formation,
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Kim Crabtree, Member Engagement and Communications Manager, 973-233-4563,
kcrabtree@unioncong.org

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John David Whitener, Co-Director of Music, 973-707-3248, jwhitener@unioncong.org

Jeremy Whitener, Co-Director of Music, jeremy@unioncong.org

**Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
An LGBTQ+ Open and Affirming Congregation**

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