



December Newsletter

We are at the end of 2025 and we know that it's been a difficult year for all of us and yet in this roller-coaster ride we are here and expecting a new year of hopefulness and new beginnings.

Throughout this month we wrestle with knowing and not knowing. This means that there is something to expect in the future and also be alert, prepared and ready to deal with the uncertainty. Our sermon topics this month cover alertness, preparation, patience and God with Us.

Matthew 24:36-44 reminds us that Christ's coming requires constant vigilance. Like a homeowner guarding against thieves or Noah's generation ignoring warnings, we're called to spiritual alertness. Advent teaches us that waiting isn't passive but active—living each day with purpose, ready for God's unexpected interventions, transforming ordinary moments into opportunities for faithful witness and preparation.

John the Baptist's fierce preaching in Matthew 3:1-12 cuts through religious complacency. His call to "repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" challenges us to produce fruit worthy of repentance. Advent echoes this urgency: genuine transformation, not mere ritual, prepares our hearts. Like trees facing the axe, we're invited to align our lives with God's coming kingdom through confession and renewal.

And yet this great prophet, John the Baptist who is imprisoned has doubts and sends messengers to Jesus: "Are you the one?" Jesus points to healing, liberation, and good news for the poor—signs of God's kingdom breaking in. Advent mirrors John's tension: we await Christ's coming while living in the "already but not yet" of God's redemptive work.

And finally in Matthew 1:18-25 reveals God choosing human vulnerability to save us from death. Joseph's quiet obedience, choosing trust over shame, modeling Advent faith. When dreams shatter and circumstances confuse, we're called to listen in the stillness. Emmanuel means "God with us"—not God distant or detached but intimately present in our messiest realities. Advent celebrates God embracing our humanity completely.

As we experience this tension we live in, I pray that God's presence is with you all through this season and into the Christmas celebration of the birth of Christ our savior. Praise be to God who saves us from sin and death. Amen.

Pastor Sunil

Greetings!

As 2025 tumbles quickly to a close, I write this letter with a grateful and humble heart. I would like to thank every single member and friend of IUMC. You have given of your time, your talents, your tithes and monetary gifts. This historic “church-on-the-circle” remains because of each person who prays for and supports our mission.

Our Administrative board is a group of devoted members who often get phone calls and emails for emergency votes and meetings, in addition to our regular monthly meetings. Some of those meetings, regrettably, lasted over 2 hours. During these meetings we celebrate, we share news, brainstorm new ways of reaching people in need and hash out possible solutions to new or potential problems. Sometimes we make very hard decisions. This dedicated group of people love IUMC and want only the best for our future at 30 N. Audubon Road. I want to officially recognize and thank the current members: Debbie Gerhart, Kitty Stewart, Libby Glass, Lori Steuer, Micki Gowdy, Harry Smith, Jerry Cromer, Jim Rang and CK Williams. These individuals give their time and expel a lot of energy managing the business of our church.

In the office...I want to thank Kim Fulton, our Church Office Manager. She often goes above and beyond the scope of her expected job description. She knows who to call in a crisis and has the keys to more than just the building. She is the person scheduling groups and making sure that the building is ready for special events.

I also want to thank Micki Gowdy who has diligently worked on our financial status. She comes to the Admin Board meetings to explain new reports that she has created since taking over the Financial Secretary position. At the November meeting she informed us that we had not met the expected budget for the year but that we still have money in the bank to pay our bills...for now. If any of you are curious about how we can pay our bills when we don't bring in enough to meet our budget, there are several reasons.

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1. We qualified for a tax credit which awarded us about \$85,000. Don't get too excited because much of this money is already spent. Sad but true.
2. Our endowment offers a sense of security for the future. We have about \$391,000 in our endowment. This account distributes a dividend each year totaling around \$18,000. That money is normally used for general budget items and for the Admin Board fund. The Admin Board accepts requests from groups or individuals needing funds to support the mission of our church.
3. The preschool brings in consistent revenue which helps maintain a healthy combined bank account balance. We are grateful for the preschool mission and the financial stability it offers.

Finally, I want to give a special thank you to Pastor Sunil Kotian. He is our biggest encourager and an awesome spiritual leader. He loves large and prays hard. He has brought music and melody to our building. His smile shows his authentic love for every human he meets. I have truly enjoyed working side by side with such an open-hearted servant.

Beginning in January, I will be taking a step back from my leadership role. Dennis Shirar will be transitioning into the Chair of the Administrative Board. He is a long-time member who has graciously accepted this responsibility.

Peace and Love to you, my IUMC Family!

Lisa Hedges

Small Groups

Living Networks Forum: Science & Faith in Conversation Join Bill Karr Sundays 11:45am-1pm for a 9-week series exploring connections between cutting-edge science and Christian theology. We'll discuss language, physics, biology, economics, and technology through both scientific and biblical lenses, fostering thoughtful dialogue about faith in our rapidly changing world. Bring your lunch.

Cooking Class Start Again in January Thursday, January 8th @ 5:30 PM in fellowship hall. Please bring a \$10 cash donation to each class to help offset the food cost. Class will meet the second Thursday of each month. Reserve your spot by emailing the church office @ info@irvingtonumc.org or letting Kim know by phone or in person.

Miss Linda's Sewing Class will continue in January on the third Thursday of each month, next class is scheduled for Thursday, January 15th @ 5:30 PM. We will meet in the Choir Room on the second floor. Sign-up at the welcome center at the north end of the hallway or call Kim in the office.

Chair Exercise Class will also be back in January. Chair exercise class for age 50+ adults (although open to younger adults facing mobility problems). Wednesday evenings, from 5:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.

New Membership Classes

Pastor Sunil is scheduling three membership classes starting the 2nd week of January. After the three weeks we can schedule to receive you into membership at IUMC. Speak with Pastor or Kim in the office to sign up. Kim will have instructions for you about your previous church memberships.

Monday Bible Study

Pastor Sunil is offering a Bible Study on **Mondays** at 1 PM. The study will be in the parlor and on Zoom. We will be starting the book of Daniel this month. All are welcome to join!

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/6088142449?pwd=hw0WI58kaC6LjVbbnuxq0zrXL4bCjU.1>

Meeting ID: 608 814 2449 Passcode: 922133

If you have other ideas or would like to host a class meeting in your home, please contact pastor Sunil or the church office. We would like for people to gather during as many times they would like in the month in their own homes to build accountability and community.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Irvington Luminaria will take place on Sunday, December 21st. This year, in addition to lighting the candles, let's try to make this an outreach event with a community soup supper from 6:00-7:30pm. Volunteers are needed to help set up the Luminaria after church on the 21st. (Lunch will be provided.) You can also sign up to bring a soup to share. Sign-up sheets will be in the church hallway during December. If you have questions or would you would like more information please contact Amy Peddie at amypeddie75@gmail.com



*6 pm Family Service
Childcare available*

11 pm Traditional Candlelight Service

Spiritual Shopping?

Most of us find grocery-shopping a challenge – the traffic, the parking lot, the crowded aisles, the long check-out lines. Even electronic shopping has its own version of stress. It is easy to come home from a shopping trip with a cart full of fatigue, impatience, and (sometimes) disappointment. But what if grocery shopping could be different? What if it could be a spiritual experience, a time of prayer, a moment of thanksgiving?

Our church has joined in the mission of feeding our neighbors through the Big Red Box Project and the ICAN Food Pantry. It is a humble and at times overwhelming task, for there are so many who go hungry. Yet, God calls us to feed His sheep. He also calls us to draw nearer to Him, grow in His spirit. The act of grocery shopping can help with both.

- As you make your shopping list, pray to open your heart to those in need.
- In the parking lot, offer thanksgiving for the opportunity to share what you have.
- As you walk the aisles, pray without ceasing and let God guide you in finding just the right thing.
- When your eye is drawn to an item like a can of soup, a package of cheese crackers, a box of protein bars, pause: is it nourishing? Is it easy to open? Will it offer hope?
- Bless the item as you place it in your cart.
- At home, place your items in a special place so they are ready for the next trip to the church.

It takes practice to hardwire the act of spiritual shopping. It may help to create prompts: a key word at the bottom of your shopping list, a string around your finger, a special bag to take to the store. Ask God to help you become a spiritual shopper.

Your tangible gifts, like your spiritual gifts, are meant to be shared. Both the Big Red Box and the ICAN Food Pantry will share resources with those in need. It is up to us to help them with this great effort. Pick up at least one item every time you shop. It doesn't have to be expensive or extravagant; every piece donated makes a difference.

Need ideas about what to buy? Look for the list of helpful items on the Welcome Center.



WARM HEARTS, WARM CLOTHES

DONATE WINTER ITEMS TO HELP A NEIGHBOR IN NEED

Too many neighbors in our community are facing harsh weather without proper clothing & necessities. Your donation can provide warmth, comfort, and dignity to those in need.

WHAT ICAN NEEDS THIS SEASON:

- Adult sleeping bags
- Adult thermal clothing & underwear
- Adult warm socks & boots
- Adult hats, gloves, and scarves
- Hand & feet warmers
- Gently used blankets
- Gently used tents & tarps
- Towels & washcloths
- Slippers
- Flashlights with batteries

Please make sure all items are clean and in good condition.



DROP OFF LOCATION:

ICAN Assistance Center • 30 N Audubon Rd

LEARN MORE:

irvican.org



Honest Conversations About God, Jesus, and the Church

For some time, we have been thinking about launching some kind of non-traditional service on Thursday evenings here at IUMC. Part of the process has been wondering what might work best in Irvington and how to begin. Beginning is the hardest step!

Would you be willing to be part of a launch team with Pastor Sunil? This is new for him also, by the way!

This would mean being part of a discussion group, letting the pastor practice on you (that should be interesting!), and then committing to being at some of the evening services for a minimum of six months (while not giving up on Sunday mornings, FYI). You wouldn't be expected to commit to every Thursday night but we need a group of people to greet and sit with those who come from the community and perhaps offer a cup of coffee.

This is a work in progress, but the pastor can't do this alone. This service is going to require the assistance and commitment of around 10 people from the service for there to be a launch. Can you be a part? Will be a part? Pray about it and if so, hand in this form to Pastor Sunil or let him know. This could be exciting and fun ... and faith enriching!

Yes, count me in!

Name



Our Prayer Ministry: Prayer Wall

You've been praying the prayer ... we've been praying the prayer as a church when we meet in small groups and in the worship service:

Now what? We believe God answers prayer but accept that answers come in God's time and not our own. When will God answer? How will God answer? God's answer to our breakthrough prayer is not limited to the pastor and, in fact, may not come to the pastor. God's answer may come in a whisper, a thought, or a nudge to you.

If you have been praying and have felt something on your heart or in your mind, don't ignore it. Share it! In the hallway by the prayer wall, a small area has been set aside for breakthrough prayer. There are index cards and a suggestion box along with several reminders of the power of prayer. Write your thought on an index card and put it in the box. You can write your name on it or choose to remain anonymous. Either way, your idea can be shared and we can pray over it to see if that may be where God is leading us. Help us listen for God's answer to our prayer.



Now there are two ways to start your weekday off right with a short meditation including Scripture, reflections, a question to ponder, and/or a prayer for the day. It will take less than five minutes of your time but help you stay focused on your faith.

1. Daily Meditation our church Facebook page. Go on Facebook and look for Irvington United Methodist Church. Every weekday morning, Monday through Friday, a short meditation/devotional will post. The daily post takes just a few minutes to read. The post stays up on the Facebook page and can be read later in the day. Miss a day? The day before ... and the day before ... and the day before is still there.

Want to help us out? Share the IUMC Daily Meditation on your Facebook page. It's the Facebook way of telling your family and friends and inviting them to check it out. There's a share link to the bottom right of each daily mediation. Help us expand our reach!

2. Did you know our church also has a YouTube channel. Go to YouTube and look for "Shining the Light with IUMC." A picture of our rose window (see above) is with our name, so you'll know you're in the right place. In addition to sermons, you can listen to the daily meditation on your phone or computer. While you're there, hit the subscribe button ... it costs you nothing and will help us reach more people.

Make Daily Meditation a daily habit ... whether you join us at 8 am, noon, or 8 pm.

SUNDAYS

9:15 A.M. SUNDAY SCHOOL

10:30 A.M. WORSHIP

Irvington United Methodist Church

30 N Audubon Road

Indianapolis IN 46219

Our Staff

Sunil Kotian, **Senior Pastor**

Kim Fulton, **Office Manager**

Lori Steuer, **Preschool Director**

Micki Gowdy, **Church Financer Manager**

We are on the Web at:

www.irvingtonumc.org

Our email address and telephone number are:

info@irvingtonumc.org

(317) 356-7231

Visit us on Facebook

Small Group Study Sundays at 9:15 am

**The Bible is the best-selling book of all time
and yet many people who own a Bible have never read it.**

Many who start reading it soon stop.

They stopped when they felt it had no relevance to their lives.

They stopped when they didn't understand what it meant.

They stopped when they didn't like what it had to say.

The Bible is supposed to be hard and we are supposed to struggle with it.

Join us Sunday mornings at 9:15 am in the parlor as we look at the Bible.

**Whether you've never read it or read it 100 times, you will learn something new. The Bible
is like that.**

Bring your questions. All are welcome.

