

umstead park

UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

a thoughtful and progressive community of faith

December 2020

8208 Brownleigh Drive

Raleigh, NC 27617

www.upucc.org

FAITH IN ACTION

Our Virtual World Continues...

Due to the continuing spike in cases of Covid-19, the UPUCC Covid Task Force, in conjunction with the Coordinating Council, has postponed requests for building use. Neither inside nor outside requests will be considered through the remainder of 2020.

With indications for vaccines to be distributed in the new year, we all join in the hope of a safer time ahead.

John Coggin to preach December 6th

We are DELIGHTED that UPUCC Covenant Partner John Coggin will join our worship Zoom December 6 from merry, old England and provide what is sure to be rich spiritual sustenance for us all. Remarkably, through the convenience of the Internet made necessary by the threat of Covid-19, John has seamlessly continued his work with the NC Rural Center while also pursuing a PhD in Theology at Durham University (in England) John's sermon title for us? *Peace for our (Wibbly-Wobbly) Time.*

UPUCC humbly joins other sponsors to offer:

"Celebrating Christmas in a Time of Fear"

Noon, December 18

NC Poet Laureate Jaki Shelton Green

How do you celebrate Christmas when hope feels impossible? At the end of a year filled with fear and increasing violence, it can seem difficult to look forward ... with enthusiasm. For many among marginalized groups in the United States in particular, this year was a brutal reminder of how deeply rooted their fellow citizens' lack of empathy for them is, and many are justifiably concerned for their basic safety and well-being, which are anything but secure.

This could certainly be said at Christmas 2020, but those are the words of Marjorie Corbman written in 2016. Corbman's Christmas Day post references former years of great racial unrest when, again, the very same message was articulated at Christmas by James Baldwin and again by Martin Luther King, Jr.

The voices from our past are no less calmed in the present. Do we hear what they hear? Do we dare? Join NC Poet Laureate Jaki Shelton Green answering the recurring question with 2020 vision: *How do you celebrate Christmas when hope feels impossible?*

This is a free event, open to the public.

Watch for any additional information in the 12/10/20 weekly email from UPUCC.

wishing

Jaki Shelton Green

razor blades did not
slash rainbows
hands did not
steal light from the dawn
prayers spoken in tongues did not
dissolve into silk pocket linings
air could be bartered
for fire
war could reinvent itself
as a prayer of silence

(My monthly submission is a little longer than normal. Trust me, it could have been much, much more so... a full lifetime longer. Please read on...)

On Monday, November 23rd, Nancy Byard left this mortal life. She was an amazing woman who had been confined to the health center at Springmoor for the past decade. Seriously handicapped by polio as a young adult, Nancy hardly acknowledged her disability.

Because of her lack of mobility and declining health, most of you were deprived of the great gift of knowing her personally. I had the honor of saying a few words at Nancy's graveside service this week, and I want to share some of them with you. (Nancy, her daughter Jennifer informed me, carefully wrote out the outline of her memorial service. Every verse, every hymn, the liturgy... even specifying the translation of the Bible she wanted used.) You would have loved this fiercely faithful woman. I hope some of these words convey why I am sure of that.



Homily from the Graveside Service of Nancy Byard

Dec. 2, 2020

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? -Romans 8:35 (NIV)

Jennifer, you gave me permission to make some comments at this point. I'll spare you a full-blown sermon, but that's a challenge... See, sometimes a person in my position comes to such a time and place, which is to say minister at a memorial service, and wonders what they might say... the person now gone having left few stories, inroads, or even clues to consider. That is the opposite of where I find myself and I suspect each of you this afternoon. Nancy Byard didn't leave us guessing about what she found and what she lived as worthwhile.

I will do my best to be succinct.

-I want us to consider an intelligent woman of real faith, dedicated to family and principle, and more so to a God who will not be confined to country or conservatism... a God of liberal love and emphatic embrace.

-I want us to pause and give thanks for a woman who lived through tumultuous times with phases of economic scarcity and world war and raging pandemic, a woman who even in placid periods shouted out for the marginalized and scores unjustly held at the fringes of society.

-I want you to remember with me a mother who managed serious health issues, life-altering disabilities and managed to seem to almost always be directing everyone around her.

I mention her 'directing' in a most loving way... but honestly, I don't ever recall a conversation with Nancy in which I did not have the feeling that she was in charge. Seriously, even now, I have this sense that Nancy is listening... with an opinion as to how honestly I'm offering her spirit... how true I'm holding to her uncompromising faith. I don't know if you family thought of her as a matriarch, but I'm sure as heck she was a good, strong presence. Nancy Byard was a remarkable woman.

She was a Baptist who not only did not lose the historical Baptist tenets of non-creedalism, the freedom of the individual and the separation of church and state... she fought for those principles but understand not just herself, she fought for all. She was indefatigable... and honest.. and fiercely, faithfully persistent.

Details did not escape her ...which, by the way, has something to do, I'm pretty sure, with her choice of Biblical translations to be read today. Some of you notice that she began with Today's English Version (TEV). It's better known now as the Good News Version.

See, I think she chose that because, 1)... a Binkley friend of hers was the primary translator (Bob Bratcher) and she was forever loyal to her friends ...and 2) she chose it knowing that to stand with Dr. Bratcher was to stand for honesty, intellect and faith.

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...continued from page two

How so? Well, Bratcher very famously drew the ire of some Southern Baptists in the early 1980's when he publicly stated at a seminar in Dallas: "Only willful ignorance or intellectual dishonesty can account for the claim that the Bible is inerrant and infallible, ...To invest the Bible with [such] qualities ... is to idolatry it, to transform it into a false god."

That controversy hit the NY Times and Bratcher became a polarizing figure in the Baptist world. Yes, to stand with Bratcher was to stand for honesty, intellect and faith.

Nancy was all about being clear about the true God she affirmed. Letting Southern Baptists head down their ever more narrowing path, Nancy opted for a home 'allied' to dissident Baptists who kept opening their arms more widely. Because of their declining health, when she and Rod (her husband who died in 2010) could no longer reliably/safely travel from Wake Forest to their beloved community at Binkley in Chapel Hill, they came to our congregation, closer by. ...and what a gift, a beacon, of faith and resilience and persistence they both were.

Sometimes aided by a walker, sometimes in a chair, Nancy took her place, lifting her body and her voice in our choir. Eventually Nancy and Rod transitioned to Springmoor where they continued in faithful community ...and my connection continued as well (...even though, as progressive as Nancy was, it became clear she was not about to adopt the worldly ways of email.)

One final word, though... Hope.

Well, not just one word... one word 14 times.

That is how many times that word, hope, is found in the affirmation and scriptures and songs Nancy left for us to include this afternoon. 14 specific usages of hope.

A coincidence?... Hardly.

Deep hope was the bedrock of Nancy's lived faith.

Not just wishful thinking, not merely optimism... but real life-changing, life-orienting, hope.

A grounding, active, acting hope.

Nancy understood hope in the way R. Kirby Godsey speaks of it:

"Unlike naive optimism, hope faces the tragedy of all that is not right and fosters within us the courage and energy to work toward making things right. Hope rights the wrongs. Hope does not say, "Don't worry about it; God will take care of everything." Hope becomes the agent of God in making the world right ...Hope embraces the lonely. Hope carries coats to the elderly in winter. ... Hope feeds the hungry and clothes the naked. ...In very concrete, specific ways, hope is the eternity breaking into the time of our lives. ... The Christian's last word is about hope. To be Christian means being present in time with the power of hope."

Nancy's life was about joining the work of God.

That's the deep hope she embodied/she lived-

... convinced that neither death nor life, angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, nor anything else in all creation, [would] be able to separate [her] from the love of God that [was] in Christ Jesus her Lord. -Romans 8:35-39

Her hope was built on nothing less...

And there her spirit will be forever found.

Amen.



children & youth

Join us for the

UPUCC Innovative Christmas Pageant

Part of our Christmas Eve Worship

December 24 - 5 pm

Youth December Zoom Schedule

December 13 - 1 pm

No Youth Group December 27 - Happy Holidays!

UPUCC's Children's Covenant

Umstead Park United Church of Christ is a place where we are important

and it is a place that is important to us.

This is where we learn more about God:

that God loves us and cares for us;

and also the place where we learn what God wants us to do:

love each other and take care of other people.

Every single person is important to God.

We also believe God loves all of nature and we should too.

This means keeping the environment clean and not polluting,

and also that animals and trees and mountains are all other ways we can learn more about God.

We believe that Church is a place that should be fun, because fun is good.

And finally, we believe that questions are good, and that church is a great place to ask them...

And we have lots of questions.

So we will come to Umstead Park United Church of Christ to learn more, and love more, and have fun, and be with our friends, and share with others, and ask questions, and listen for answers.

These are the promises we make.



Curamericas Gathering After Worship December 13 - All are Welcome!

Grant based funding is coming to an end for the Curamericas Clinic in Calhuiz, Guatemala. UPUCC has developed a relationship with this clinic through two mission trips over the last several years. This session is to explore with Curamericas what the situation is and how UPUCC might be able to assist. Please come with your ideas and your enthusiasm for helping to sustain the gains in maternal health which Curamericas has been able to achieve.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2599916583>

Meeting ID: 259 991 6583



Learn more:

<https://www.facebook.com/curamericasglobal/>

<https://www.curamericas.org/our-work/guatemala/>



Growing Together Program *(with the Creation Care Collective)*

Growing Together is a free program, toolkit, and community building resource, designed for the church. Together, we engage congregations in faith-based conversations for practical applications of environmental healing and justice, in church and home contexts. Developed alongside advisors at Yale's Forum on Religion and Ecology and Oxford University's Laudato Si' Institute, the Growing Together Program connects the dots between faith, science, and creation care.

Who is this for? Church leaders and congregation members.

What is the time commitment?- 1 hour per month for 5 months. (Second Thursday of the month, 7pm, beginning January 2021.) Watch for more details as they emerge following a December 15 coordinating zoom (or go to <https://creationcarecollective.com/growingtogether/>).

faith in action continued...

Creative Custom Cards

We in the Creativity Group so miss showcasing our cards in person and providing you with the cards you need for various occasions. That's why we are now offering you the opportunity to order cards of any category, any quantity, specifically made for you. For example, you might want a Pet Sympathy card for a family who have recently lost a cat. You may need Birthday cards for an 8 year old boy, and a mother who loves to cook, or a few specific Get Well cards, Thinking of You cards, Sympathy cards, Graduation cards, or cards for an upcoming Anniversary. We would love to create these cards for specific orders!



We will contact anyone who orders and arrange details for getting the finished cards. Monetary donations (suggested minimum of \$5 per card) are due upon delivery of the completed order; they can be made online through the UPUCC website [HERE](#). For more information or to place your order, please contact any of us.

Alice adjermyn@rocketmail.com

Gail gailholden@gmail.com

Linda lnhebert1@gmail.com

Marcia homeofwelsh@gmail.com

Heifer Project Results



Honeybees, and chicks, and goats, oh my! Thank you to all who supported FIA's 2020 Heifer efforts. Thanks to your donations, UPUCC will be sending a check for \$1265 to Heifer International. Purchases ranged from a Flock of Chicks to a Biogas Stove, with support for Honeybees, Goats, Sheep, and more. In addition to specific donations, \$400 was contributed to go "Where Most Needed".

Thanks for helping with "Gifts that change the world!"

Healing Transitions Gift Drive

Many thanks to all who participated in our annual Healing Transitions Gift Drive. All 59 sign up slots were filled. Thanks to the generosity of UPUCC persons, residents of Healing Transitions will be able to choose gifts to give their children or grandchildren. What a meaningful way for us to help!



With our steps toward a mutual relationship with the wider world, we will:

- Share freely of our wealth and resources;
- Recognize our identity as global citizens, intimately tied to and partnered with all of God's children in every land;
- Demonstrate our concern for neighbor through service and prophetic voice;

adult education

Weekly Sessions

Sunday 9 am Forum - The group that has been studying/discussing/discerning for several months will continue to develop next steps in our racial reconciliation dialogue. Please join us each Sunday at 9 am.

Monday 7 pm Progressive Bible Study- Readings are provided each week for discussion, led by Anthony Neff.

Tuesday 6 pm Book Group - Contact Kathy Dobbs for current info kdobbs001@nc.rr.com.

Wednesday 7 pm Mid-Week Gathering- free-form discussion and sharing.

Twice Monthly Sessions

Thursday 7:30 pm Brew Theology (2nd & 4th Thursdays)

Monthly Sessions

Saturday 10 am Contemplative Group (1st Saturdays of each month) Contact Kathy Dobbs for info. kdobbs001@nc.rr.com

building and grounds

Building Maintenance Does Not Wait for a Vaccine to Arrive!

Over the past weeks, our Building and Grounds Committee chairperson, Rebecca van Dorsten, has overseen a number of projects which are in process or completed!

New batteries and bulbs for our emergency lights were installed (with the assistance of Eliseo Jimenez and Peter van Dorsten).

A major sewer line repair to the building was completed (pictured below).

The long-awaited upgrade to our worship space heating and air-conditioning system is underway!

Plans for a cleaning and sprucing up of both the interior and exterior will be forthcoming!

Many thanks to Rebecca for taking care of our building as we anticipate the time when we can be together again!



in our wider community



presents *the 10th Anniversary production of*

Black Nativity

on demand December 11, 2020 through January 30, 2021

By purchasing a video link now, be the first to receive the link to the show on December 11th. Show runs until January 30, 2021.

\$15 Individual, \$25 Household, \$50 Churches/Large Groups

Also offered- Two Watch Parties! December 11 or 19 at 7:30 p.m. providing the opportunity to make comments in the chat, ask questions directly to the creative Artistic Team!

<http://www.thejusticetheaterproject.org/>

Email: thejusticetheaterproject@gmail.com



More upcoming shows for JTP Virtually Together Season include:

February, 2021: The River Speaks of Thirst by NC Poet Laureate Jaki Shelton Green

April, 2021: Holocaust Survivor Interviews

June, 2021: Finding My Voice By Lee Galbreath