

umstead park

UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST
a thoughtful and progressive community of faith

December 2018
 8208 Brownleigh Drive
 Raleigh, NC 27617
www.upucc.org

This edition of our UPUCC newsletter is FULL of December highlights.

We hope you will read the offerings carefully. We especially hope you'll explore the possibility of attending one of the performances of The Justice Theater's production of "Black Nativity" this year. For the first time, some of the performances will occur at UPUCC (...and we celebrate Paul Foglia's debut!). See page six for details.

In the meantime, on this page, we will glance back to November and ahead to January!



On November 12th, several UPUCCers joined members of St. Francis and Cary First Christian for a pre-Thanksgiving Fellowship meal. The gathering was part of a larger on-going effort of community organizing across Wake County. At least 40 churches are involved. Wanna jump in? Listen out for the next meeting, probably in early December. (We'll let you know as soon as we get word!)

Put it on your new calendar!

J. Dana Trent to be with us Sunday, January 13!



The Rev. J Dana Trent is a graduate of Duke Divinity School and professor of World Religions and Critical Thinking at Wake Tech Community College. An ordained Baptist minister and former chaplain, her work has appeared on Time.com, Sojourners, Religion Dispatches, The Christian Century, and Religion News Service. Her third book, One Breath at a Time: A Skeptic's Guide to Christian Meditation, releases January 1, 2019. She is the award-winning author of For Sabbath's Sake: Embracing Your Need for Rest, Worship, and Community and Saffron Cross: The Unlikely Story of How a Christian Minister Married a Hindu Monk.

Occasionally, over the past two years, Dana and her husband have worshipped with us here at UPUCC. We are delighted that she will lead worship on January 13. The after church forum that day will feature Dana and her newest book- One Breath at a Time.

(From Dana's website) One Breath at a Time: A Skeptic's Guide to Christian Meditation reframes meditation for those who are skeptical because (1) they doubt their ability to be still and quiet and (2) they doubt the validity of meditation as a Christian spiritual practice. Using scripture, theology, and examples from the Early Church, Dana challenges prayer habits that leave little room for enough silence to experience and listen for God.

Using five approaches—breath meditation, lectio divina, centering meditation, loving-kindness meditation, and devotional meditation, One Breath at a Time provides a practical, 40-day guide to beginning and sustaining a Christian meditation practice in an often chaotic world.

(Would you like to check out chapter one free? Go here: <http://jdanatrent.com/>)

What Do We Do with The Story this year?



“Pittsburgh seems so long ago... the unimaginable horror of a mass shooting in a synagogue...
but wasn't there another shooting?”

“Oh... the Ventura County one... where they had the fire. The worst one in the history of the State.”

“No, no... that was the *other* one... the one that destroyed Paradise. The one still counting its dead.”
(-conversation overheard by a group in the church foyer last week)

There is more ‘Breaking News’ than we can keep up with.

Silent night... Holy night...

Nothing's calm. Nothing's right.

We could imagine no thing worse than children separated at the border- until we saw them tear-gassed.

“Give me your tired your poor”?

What hyper-hypocrisy, this land (now-being-made-great) for you and me.

And here we are... at the border of a new Holy Season.

What, in the name of God, do we do with The Christmas Story this year?

I would suggest we read and know as we do each year... with more experience, through the ever-expanding prism of the truth and honesty that grows within us.

This year, let us know more clearly than ever, that each part of the story is about us. The story IS us.

Listen again:

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. (Luke 2:1 RSV)

We are the seeking shepherds

...seeing and hearing glimpses of something Divine, teased by a reachable lodestar.

We... the innkeeper with no room

...no room in the Inn, then. No room at the border, now.

We... the crowds in Bethlehem

...following the decree of earth, oblivious to heaven shattering all around.

We... the bleating animals

...stupefied, like deer overwhelmed by the headlights of commercialism.

We are the frightened/fearful/focused mother

...(Oh Mary, we have overlooked your humanity. We would hold you, too, dear child.).

We are Joseph... central, but superfluous

...(Oh Joseph, was your love not holy, as well?).

We are the star-struck astrologers...

...following, but not too closely.

We are the powerfully-weak Herod

...the one(s) with so much power, and so little impact.

We are even The Child

...full of promise, still in need (“for as you did it to the least of these...”).

Mostly, we are the ones now hearing The Story again.

This year, may we find there the seeds of:

-solace, silence, safety and sanctuary

-meaning in the madness, worth in the waste, a respite from the crush of crowds and

-in place of cacophony, chaos and confusion--- candlelight, carols and communion.

I wish for you, I wish for us this year... true hope, real peace, deep joy and life-giving love.

Amen.

Doug

December Youth Calendar

December 2 - 11:30a-1:30p

All Youth Meet

December 9 - 11:30a-2p

All Youth Christmas Party

December 16 - 5:30p

Caroling at Healing Transitions



Costumes will await the children on Christmas Eve, as we prepare for our 5 p.m. service of Candles, Lessons, Carols & Children's Nativity Tableau.

Children's Church December Schedule

Classes will be held through December 23 as usual (Upper Elementary, grades four and five, remain in worship on the first Sunday of each month.) We will give our teachers a break and have children remain in worship on December 30. Activities will be provided via our worship cart. Nursery will be staffed for morning worship services. On Christmas Eve, the nursery will not be staffed but will be available to parents.

Children & Christmas Eve Worship

At 4:30 p.m. Christmas Eve, all interested shepherds, animals, angels, Magi, Marys and Josephs are welcome to don their attire of choice in the atrium and come to our Christmas Eve 5 p.m. worship. We will create a nativity scene, taken from the accounts of the birth of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Though Matthew's narrative tells of 'wise men' who follow a star to the house where Jesus dwelt and indicates that the Magi found Jesus some time later, less than two years after his birth, rather than on the exact day, we will welcome any 'Wise Ones' who chose to wear the garments attributed to such travelers on Christmas Eve.

(On January 6, Epiphany, we will celebrate the Three Kings, Los Reyes Magos, with a story during worship and a special treat during Children's Church!)

Thank You

... to our volunteer teachers and assistants (*one more needed!*) in classrooms and nursery, who continue to step up and nurture the youngest among us.

... to our parents and friends who support our children and youth as they work together on mission projects with Faith in Action. (*Please check out the results of last month's Heifer Project on page six of this newsletter.*)

Wishing you love and peace,

fellowship

UPUCC Feast of Friends 2019



Do you want some good food, friends and fellowship? Then this is the activity for you!

Feast of Friends groups, six to eight people, meet together monthly for meals in homes, restaurants or other establishments in order to get to know one another better.

It's "open enrollment" time for Feast of Friends! If you would like to join a Feast of Friends group, please register using the link below. Existing groups will carry on together. Or, if you are a member of an existing group and you want to meet new people, you can switch to another group. Please contact Nicki Norris with any questions.

Nnorris649@gmail.com

[CLICK THIS LINK TO REGISTER ONLINE](#)

Also- Save the Date!

Plans are in the works for a Gathering for Games Event at UPUCC on Saturday, January 12 from 3-5 p.m.

stewardship & finance

Catching Up and Planning Ahead

A couple points from Stewardship & Finance as we close out the year and look forward to 2019. Please review your latest giving statements sent via email for 2018 and catch-up any short pledges before the end of the year. We often have a strong tail end to the year and we are hoping that this year is no different, as our operating fund is getting a wee bit low. If you have any questions about where you stand, please reach out to Vickie Teal at Vickie@upucc.org.

And for 2019, we still have a gap of about \$50,000 that we would like to close for our target budget, so if you haven't pledged yet, now is your chance to play the role of the hero who swoops in at the last minute with a pledge. Visit <http://upucc.org/donate> to pledge online or pick-up a pledge card at the back of the sanctuary and drop it in the offering basket on Sunday.

-Mark Stevens, Chair of Stewardship & Finance

P.S. On a related topic, conversations about a Capital Campaign to fund both needed and desired projects continue. An 'Envisioning Walk-Around' after church forum on November 11 gave about a dozen folks a chance to take a closer look at some of the potential enhancements to our present building and grounds.

Task Forces to more explicitly explore: 1) the 'upfitting' of our 'back space' to include multipurpose rooms for youth, music and community gatherings, 2) our long-projected 'garden' space, 3) a family/all gender bathroom, 4) solar roofing, and 5) advantageous financing ... are all in process. These task forces anticipate reporting findings at the January 27th Congregational Meeting. (If you'd like to jump in on one of the groups, contact Mark Stevens or Doug Long.)

faith in action

Healing Transitions Toy Drive & Caroling

As we celebrate the Christmas season, we will once again be collaborating with [Healing Transitions](#) on two activities. Our Creativity Group is sponsoring a Christmas tree for 40 children ages one to 18. There is a tag on the tree for each child, and donated gifts will be collected so they can be delivered to Healing Transitions in time for Christmas. The request is for gifts to be given unwrapped, to offer the women the opportunity to pick out and wrap the gifts for their children.

On December 16, Bill Yoder will be leading the singing at Healing Transitions once the UPUCC group of carolers walk up the street to our neighbors at Healing Transitions again this year. We will gather at UPUCC at 5:30 p.m. All are welcome to join the party! Cookie donations welcome, too!

¡Feliz Navidad!

Creativity Group

We will have our cards out on December 2, 9, and 16, perfect times to pick up a special holiday card for a teacher, coach, hair dresser, piano teacher, etc. Donations continue to support Eliseo and his family, as well as our monthly visits to Healing Transitions. To date we have taken orders for over 580 specific Christmas cards with our bulk orders. Justice Theater has also graciously allowed us to have our cards available in the atrium during specific performances.

Our Healing Transitions friends enjoyed having Meredith Pope bring Mabel, her therapy dog, to visit during our November time there. The Creativity Group will return to Healing Transitions on December 12, gathering at church at 2:30 p.m. to be at Healing Transitions from 3–4 p.m. We welcome others to join us there. We would also appreciate donations of forever postage stamps for our times with the ladies. Gail Holden and Tricia Andrews will visit Abbottswood on December 5 to help residents make cards. They would be happy to have others join them to help hand out supplies.

As of this writing, we have tentative plans for a December special opportunity for all occasion cards. Normally we suggest a minimum donation of \$5 per individual card. This December we will offer the opportunity for you to Create Your Own Card Pack, with any 4 (not Christmas) cards for \$15. We suggest that this might make an excellent Christmas host gift or gift for someone who would appreciate having some special cards on hand, particularly if the giver stamped the envelopes first! Stay tuned for more information on our “Granny Packs.”

-Submitted by Marcia Welsh

faith in action continued...

Heifer Results Are In!

Many thanks to all who supported our Heifer Project, with your announcements, coins, checks, and baked goodies!

The order forms for specific items collected \$1,090.00 with items ranging from Women's Empowerment to flocks of chickens. Our online giving totaled \$153. The bake sale raised \$162. The animal banks raised \$201.89. The winning animal this year was the llama, with \$45.02, followed by the goat, with \$30.51, and the pig, with \$19.03. The bake sale money, combined with the animal bank money, totals \$363.89. See the table for specific animals/items donated!



1 flock of chickens	3 shares of rabbits
1 share of a sheep	1 share of a heifer
1 hive of honey bees	4 shares of a pig
1 share of fish	4 shares of a goat
1 share of tree seedlings	5 shares of a llama

adult education

December Forums

December 2 - 9:30 a.m. Faith Journey. Covenant Partner, Alice Jermyn, shares her personal faith journey. Childcare provided in the nursery.

December 9 - following worship. "The Virgin of the Americas: the Virgin of Guadalupe as a symbol of solidarity for the Western Hemisphere." David VandeVusse will tell the story of Juan Diego and how his story brings together indigenous and colonial spirituality.

December 16 - 9:30 a.m. "The Mythical Power of Christmas," a discussion of Alexander Shia's take on the roots of modern-day Christian traditions, its Celtic roots and their connection to the earth and the cosmos.

Come hear of a new but yet old way of looking at Christmas! Gina Kentopp leads the discussion.

Forums will not be held on December 23 or December 30, holiday weekends.

in our wider community

JTP *Black Nativity* at UPUCC

Tickets still available for December 14 (7:30 p.m.) performance in the worship space. (*Black Nativity* also plays at NCSU Dec. 16-18.) For tickets, email thejusticetheaterproject@gmail.com or call 919-264-7089.



all in the family



Thanksgiving Gatherings at UPUCC



sunday service volunteer calendar

Help Wanted!

New (and former) volunteers are welcome to step up and give a task or two a try! With our signup genius, it is simple to take a Sunday a month or on occasion to help make our Sunday worship flow smoothly! Link [here](#).

Also, our Clean Teams are looking for a few new members. Consider this an opportunity for a New Year's Resolution to schedule some exercise while cleaning the church! The restrooms are NOT part of the cleaning. Help save UPUC \$\$\$\$ by joining a team!

Contact Peg Arcari for complete details at peg@upucc.org

December 2

Altar: Eleanor Smith
Communion Prep: Elizabeth Altman
Coffee Set-Up: Leslie and Beth Heavey
Greeters: Ashley and Vanessa Montague
Ushers: Bill Yoder, Sue Hathaway
Sound System: TBD
Auditor: Gwen Vass
Asst. Treasurer: Lee Harrison
Clean-Team: Edward McFarland, Linda Hebert, Mark and Melanie Stevens, Jessica & Shawn Holmes

December 9

Altar: Leslie Heavey
Coffee Set-Up: Elaina & Robert Richardson
Greeters: TBD
Ushers: Sally Bean & Todd Smith
Sound System: Don Alderman
Auditor: Leslie Heavey
Asst Treasurer: Sue Hathaway
Clean-Team: Mary Pat Peters, Marcia Welsh, Eliseo Jimenez, Elaina & Robert Richardson

December 16

Altar: Eleanor Smith
Coffee Set-Up: Lori Del Negro, Roger Sommer
Greeters: Sally Bean & Todd Smith
Ushers: Gina & Nick Kentopp
Sound System: Peter van Dorsten
Auditor: Chris Ousley
Asst Treasurer: Dan Harrell
Clean-Team: Tim Champion & Dan Harrell, Ada & Colin McKerrell, Chris Ousley

December 23

Altar: Michael Lester
Coffee Set-Up: Roberta Ouellette & Dave McKenney
Greeters: TBD
Ushers: Leslie & Mike Heavey
Sound System: TBD
Auditor: Chris Ousley
Asst Treasurer: Sue Hathaway
Clean-Team: Carol & Nevin Fouts, Doug Long & Janice Odom, Vickie Teal

December 24-Christmas Eve

Sound System: TBD
Ushers: TBD
Auditor: TBD
Asst Treasurer: TBD

December 30

Altar: Laura Duval
Coffee Set-Up: TBD
Greeters: TBD
Ushers: Sue Hathaway & Laura Duval
Sound System: TBD
Auditor: Sue Hathaway
Asst. Treasurer: Dan Harrell
Clean-Team: Marcia Welsh, Mary Pat Peters, Eliseo Jimenez, Elaina & Robert Richardson

upucc december calendar

Sun.	Dec. 2	9:30 a.m. Forum: Faith Journey. See page six. 10:30 a.m. Worship & Communion: First Sunday of Advent. “A Real Second Coming,” Doug Long preaching. Following worship Newcomers & Inquirers Session in the library. Following worship UPUCC Advocacy Task Force in the large Conference Room. Following worship All Youth meet.
Tues.	Dec. 4	9:30 a.m. Creativity Group in the library. TBD IAF Meeting?
Wed.	Dec. 5	6:15 p.m. Music Literacy Group in the library. 7:00 p.m. UPUCC Choir rehearsal in the worship space.
Sat.	Dec. 8	10:00 a.m. Meditation Group meets in the library.
Sun.	Dec.9	9:30 a.m. Committee Meeting Time. Childcare provided in the nursery. 10:30 a.m. Worship: Second Sunday of Advent. “A Black Nativity of Peace,” Doug Long preaching. Following worship Forum: The Virgin of the Americas. See page six. Following worship All Youth Christmas Party
Mon.	Dec. 10	6:30 p.m. Evening Creativity Group meets in the library.
Wed.	Dec. 12	2:30 p.m. Creativity Group departs for Healing Transitions. 6:15 p.m. Music Literacy Group in the library. 7:00 p.m. UPUCC Choir rehearsal in the worship space.
Thurs.	Dec. 13	7:00 p.m. Coordinating Council meets in the library. Midnight Deadline for January Newsletter
Fri.	Dec. 14	7:30 p.m. JTP Black Nativity performance in the worship space.
Sat.	Dec. 15	9:30 a.m. Yoga with Ellen Beidler in the worship space. 2:00 p.m. JTP Black Nativity performance in the worship space.
Sun.	Dec. 16	9:30 a.m. Forum: The Mythical Power of Christmas. See page six. 10:30 a.m. Worship: Third Sunday of Advent. “An American Landscape of Joy,” Doug Long preaching. 12:00 p.m. Worship & Music Committee in the library. 5:30 p.m. Caroling at Healing Transitions.
Tues.	Dec. 18	9:30 a.m. Creativity Group meets in the library.
Wed.	Dec. 19	6:15 p.m. Music Literacy Group in the library. 7:00 p.m. UPUCC Choir rehearsal in the worship space.
Sun.	Dec. 23	10:30 a.m. Worship: Fourth Sunday of Advent. “An Extravagance of Love,” Doug Long preaching.
Mon.	Dec. 24	5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship: Carols, Candlelight and Communion.
Wed.	Dec. 26	7:00 p.m. UPUCC Choir rehearsal in the worship space.
Sun.	Dec. 30	10:30 a.m. Worship: “Ring the Bells,” Doug Long preaching.

Please note for your tax purposes:

Financial contributions must be received or postmarked by December 31 to be counted as a 2018 gift.