

# umstead park

UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

*a thoughtful and progressive community of faith*

March 2021

8208 Brownleigh Drive

Raleigh, NC 27617

[www.upucc.org](http://www.upucc.org)

FAITH IN ACTION

## March Brings Guest Speakers to Forum



**March 7, 9:00 a.m. Forum**  
*Dawn Blagrove, Executive Director  
Emancipate North Carolina*

Dawn Blagrove is an attorney and a proud graduate of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) and North Carolina Central School of Law. While in law school, she worked at Williams Mullen Law Firm, formerly Maupin Taylor, Wake County Public Defender's Office, and North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services. Following Law School, Ms. Blagrove worked for eight years as a post-conviction staff attorney with North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services.

Now as Executive Director of Emancipate NC, Attorney Blagrove and her staff address a myriad of issues related to mass incarceration and structural racism.

**Bail Reform** is among key foci of Emancipate NC's work. The present cash bail system often keeps black, brown, and working-class people locked up pre-trial - perhaps for months or years - while wealthier individuals stay free. Jailed defendants are more likely to lose their jobs and their home. Their children may be displaced from school settings. They are more likely to plead guilty just to secure freedom, regardless of the evidence against them. Emancipate NC is working on concrete bail reform and arrest reform policies to curb pre-trial detention.

...and Dawn is going to explain how we can help!! (To learn more, see [emancipatenc.org](http://emancipatenc.org))

**On March 14**, our own Anthony Neff lays the groundwork for Dr. Marcus, the March 21 speaker, during both the 9 am forum (by exploring some of the history and traditions of the rite of Baptism) and then by **preaching in worship** on John the Baptist.



**March 21, 9 am Forum**  
*Dr. Joel Marcus  
Professor Emeritus, Duke*

On March 21, Dr. Joel Marcus, retired professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at Duke Divinity School, will join us to discuss his recent book, *John the Baptist in History and Theology*. In this eye-opening book, he offers an in-depth analysis in which he argues that while the Christian tradition has subordinated John the Baptist to Jesus, John saw his own ministry as the center of God's saving action in history.

A Jewish Christian who specializes in the relationship between ancient Judaism and early Christianity, Marcus has written numerous books including a two-volume commentary on the Gospel of Mark in the Anchor Bible series. Dr. Marcus was recently honored by the publication of a volume of essays written by an internationally renowned group of scholars focusing on studies of the historical interactions and formations of Judaism and Christianity - *The Ways That Often Parted: Essays in Honor of Joel Marcus*.

*"It is high time for a new study of the historical John the Baptist, and Joel Marcus reviews the evidence with a fine eye for detail and sensitivity to issues of ancient polemic. This is a rich scholarly study that provides both historical and theological reflections, and much food for thought."* - Joan Taylor

*"No one can understand the historical Jesus without first coming to grips with John the Baptist. In a study that is massively researched, brimming with insights, and engagingly written, Joel Marcus has provided a compelling account that should be the definitive statement of our generation."* - Bart D. Ehrman

## Work for the light is coming...

I grew up with a hymn that sometimes still hums in the recesses of my old Baptist brain... "Work for the Night is Coming." I don't know if any of you other recovering fundamentalists remember it. It had a peppy little tune.

*Work, for the night is coming, Work thru the morning hours;  
Work while the dew is sparkling, Work 'mid springing flow'rs.  
Work when the day grows brighter, Work in the glowing sun;  
Work, for the night is coming, When man's work is done.*



I remember an old cartoon. Ziggy, of big head, big nose fame often climbed the mountain to seek guidance from the wise guru living in isolation at the top. In the first frame Ziggy poses his question: "O Wise One, what is the meaning of life?" "Life is doin' stuff." The wise one responds.

"That's it?! doin' stuff?" Ziggy retorts incredulously.

To which the meditative man replies "...as opposed to death, which is not doin' stuff."

The last frame shows Ziggy, pondering as he trudged down the mountain: "It's a more elementary theory that I expected, but one that's hard to argue with."

It's hard to argue with the sentiment of the old hymn in my head as well (even if you can argue with the language.).

"Work, for the night is coming, when man's work is done."

Come to think of it, I'd like to update the language a little more. How about "Work for the **LIGHT** is coming"?! I'm thinking of the light of this dying pandemic. I know it's not over and I'm not encouraging anyone to stop the precautions of mask wearing, social distancing, etc. ...but as more and more of us are vaccinated, we are beginning to see and feel the good light at the end of the tunnel!

What work do we need to do to prepare for this light? In addition to much physical preparation for the re-entry into our social world (Thanks Rebecca and Building and Grounds for organizing us March 27<sup>th</sup>!! See page 3) the annual work of the Nominating Committee is now in full swing.

Most all of the good work of our fine UPUCC folk gets done via committees and task forces aligned under the committees' umbrellas. Imagine what things we could accomplish if we were all involved? And don't just imagine... Just do it! Let us know where you best fit in!

Here's an added bonus provided **BY** the pandemic. We've learned much about the convenience and efficiency of holding meetings online. In the past, the extra travel and time to get to the church has understandably hampered many of you from committee participation. Be hampered no more!!

Without question, much of our deliberation and planning will take place virtually.

So what are you waiting for? Get to work! The light is coming!! Contact the UPUCC Nominations Committee as **they** work to assemble wonderful leadership for the coming committee year (Elected at our Spring Congregational Meeting at the end of April, new committees begin May 1. For a complete list of the committees, see page 9.)

And thanks!

...on behalf of the others on the Nominating Committee:

Bonnie Shook-Sa      [bonnie\\_shook@yahoo.com](mailto:bonnie_shook@yahoo.com)  
Rebecca van Dorsten      [rebeccavandorsten@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccavandorsten@gmail.com)  
Peg Arcari      [peg@upucc.org](mailto:peg@upucc.org)

## One more thing...

**Islamic Center (Virtual) Open House** Saturday March 20, 2021 from 12pm to 1:45pm.

Featuring a keynote address by Dr. Imam AbuTaleb. The Islamic Center invites us to join them learning how to navigate these challenging times with faith while observing Muslims at prayer.

This is a free event. Please refer to the link below for the detailed program, timings and registration:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-open-house-2021-navigating-difficult-time-tickets-142352609487>

## building & grounds



### Outside Work Day March 27

Buildings and Grounds Committee invites you  
to an Outside Work Day

Saturday, March 27, 9 am - 12pm

Please join us to weed, prune, trim & mulch our church grounds.

Bring your own masks, gloves, water bottles & garden tools!

Building will be accessible for restroom use only.

Participants will be limited. Covid protocols will be observed.

Click on the link to sign up! Thank you!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0848AEAA22AA8-outside>

## youth

### Youth March Schedule

March 7 - 2 pm

March 14 - 2 pm  
meet with Community UCC Youth

March 28 - 5 pm  
meet with United Church Chapel Hill and other  
area youth

## children



### Opportunities to Stay Connected

**Grab Bag Delivery - Week of March 8** (Please contact [peg@upucc.org](mailto:peg@upucc.org) to request a bag full of fun activities and crafts be delivered to your door ahead of our March 21 Gathering.

**Children's Church Gathering - March 21 following worship** - We will play Easter Bingo, share craft creations, and re-connect with our church friends!

**Palm Sunday Worship - March 28** - opportunities for children to participate in our Palm Sunday Worship.

# adult education

## Forums - 9 am Sunday

**March 7 - Bail Reform.** Dawn Blagrove, Executive Director of Emancipate, will lead the discussion. In North Carolina, rural counties are driving mass incarceration in their jails. Emancipate NC is working on concrete bail reform and arrest reform policies to curb pre-trial detention.

**March 14 - Let's Talk About Baptism** - Anthony Neff will lead a forum exploring some of the history and traditions involving the rite of baptism, as well as John the Baptist. We'd also like to hear what baptism means to you - and any experiences with this tradition that you'd like to share.

**March 21 - Dr. Joel Marcus**, retired professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at Duke Divinity School, will join us to discuss his recent book *John the Baptist in History and Theology*.

**March 28** - To be determined.

## Reading Between the Lines- Progressive Bible Study - Monday 7 pm

**March 1** - The transfiguration as described in Mark 9:2-9 will be our text. We'll also discuss readings from Steve Martin, Ched Myers and a New Yorker article on perceptions by Atul Gawande.

**March 8** - Who are the money changers in our own inner lives? The study is based on John 2:13-22.

**March 15** - An indirect route from Egypt to the Promised Land. Numbers 21: 4-9.

**March 22** - 'Penitential' Psalms concerned with confession and forgiveness. Specifically Psalm 51:1-12.

**March 29** - To be determined.

## Book Group Tuesdays 6 pm

The Tuesday Book Group will begin a new book at the end of March. Check upcoming UPUCC This Week emails for more details.

## Racial Justice Work(ing) Group 1st & 3rd Tuesdays 7 pm

All welcome to join as this group takes steps to:

- Continue educating ourselves and the congregation on racial justice issues
- Provide specific anti-racist actions for individuals and the congregation that will further racial justice
- Provide support and accountability as we journey more fully into racial justice actions
- Establish relationships with the Black community based on trust discerning how we can best be allies in dismantling structural racism.

## Brew Theology (second & fourth Thursdays of each month) 7:30 pm

Having conversations-virtually, for now. Come hang out! Email: [bmspears77@gmail.com](mailto:bmspears77@gmail.com) for details on joining. Facilitated by Brian Spears.

## Monthly Meditation Group— 1st Saturday of each month 10 am

Our time together provides for inward reflection as well as strengthening connections with others. No previous experience is necessary, and we meet virtually via Zoom. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Bridget Spears at [babspears@gmail.com](mailto:babspears@gmail.com). Our next time together is March 6 at 10:00 am.



## One Great Hour of Sharing Special Offering

This year's theme for One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is "Let Love Flow," and we will be accepting donations on the [UPUCC website](#) until **March 14th** for this worthy program. Your support enables the UCC to address advocacy, sustainable development, refugee and asylum, migration, and disaster relief on a worldwide basis. The ravages of the pandemic and climate change have created desperate need in many communities.



## New Worship Space HVAC!

*(photos by Eliseo Jimenez)*



*For current links to most zoom events, please check This Week emails, or follow this link to our website calendar [here](#).*

## stewardship & finance

### Financial update from January 2021

General offerings received: **\$37,977**  
(This includes \$13,306 in full-year prepaid pledges.)  
Total Income: **\$38,379**  
Includes \$400 JTP rent  
Total Expenses: **\$24,826**  
Net Income: **+\$13,553**

### Fees for online transactions

At the January Congregational Meeting, we discussed the Vanco fees. These are the fees we pay for each online transaction.

How much we pay depends on the type of charge:

- Electronic bank draft (checking/savings account): \$.25/transaction + .6% of amount
- Credit card: \$.395/transaction + 2.85% of amount

As you can see, the fee is significantly higher when we donate via credit card rather than via electronic bank draft.

What can you do to help?

- Option 1: If you currently donate using a credit card, consider switching to electronic bank draft (paying directly from your checking/savings account).
- Option 2: Consider increasing your giving to cover the amount of the fee.
- Option 3: Mail a check rather than using online giving, especially for one-time donations (Creativity Group Cards, Endowment fund, etc.).

To update your account information as a sustainer, complete the draft authorization form available [on the Giving page of our website](#).

If you need help switching your donation information, please contact Vickie Teal at [vickie@upucc.org](mailto:vickie@upucc.org).

## worship & music



### Easter Sunday April 4

The Worship & Music Committee Invites everyone to incorporate flowers into their Zoom squares for Easter Sunday.

*We come together as travelers on a journey,*

## all in the family

### New Babies!



*We welcome a new baby born January 10, 2021, to parents Alyssa and James Hill and big brother.*

*We welcome a new baby born four weeks ahead of schedule on February 19, 2021, to parents Beth and Scott Kermode and two brothers.*



*-Call forth and nurture our individual and collective creative gifts;  
-Delight in humor and, through joyous celebration, savor the  
goodness of life.*

## our wider community



The Justice Theater Project presents a filmed performance of NC Poet Laureate, Jaki Shelton Green's album of poetry -

### ***The River Speaks of Thirst***

#### ***Premieres March 5***

*...as ten individual stories told through music, dance, song, and dramatic interpretations. View the trailer [here](#).*

Ticketed streaming \$20 per household, \$10 individual viewing. Appropriate for high school students and adults.

Call 919-264-7089, email [thejusticetheaterproject@gmail.com](mailto:thejusticetheaterproject@gmail.com) or visit [www.thejusticetheaterproject.org](http://www.thejusticetheaterproject.org) for tickets.

#### **Community Events**

**Thursday March 4- 7 pm Community Discussion "What is the Role or Mission of Poet Laureates?"** Join NC Poet Laureate Jaki Shelton Green, Carrboro Poet Laureate Fred Joiner, and Chapel Hill Poet Laureate CJ Suitt for a public discussion led by Jameela Dallis FREE via Zoom and FB Live.

**Friday March 5- 7:30 pm Premiere & Watch Party: *The River Speaks of Thirst* with after-show discussion** with the cast and artistic team, led by Jameela Dallis. FREE discussion link for subscribers and sponsors 2 hours before the curtain. Links available for purchase.

**Sunday March 14- 3 pm Watch Party "The River Speaks of Thirst" and after-show discussion** with the cast and artistic team, led by Jameela Dallis. FREE discussion link for subscribers and sponsors 2 hours before the curtain. Links available for purchase.

This piece illustrates themes ranging from race, oppression, emancipation, religion, and grief. Director and Choreographer Kristi V. Johnson explains her vision, "As I listened to each poem, there wasn't one that did not connect with some aspect of my upbringing as an African American woman growing up in Baton Rouge, La. Additionally, the poems about the young black men who died from police brutality reminded me of the anger, fear, and pain I feel as a mother of a young, brown boy.

*After speaking with Jaki, there were so many commonalities in our backgrounds, these stories became personal for me as well. Once I was able to draw connections between the material and my personal life, I intended to create a symbiotic relationship between the music, text, and movement that clearly illustrates the various themes within the work to enhance its accessibility for all audience members."*



the **justice theater**  
project

art inspiring change since 2004

Jaki Shelton Green is the first African American and third woman to be appointed as the North Carolina Poet Laureate. When appointed in 2018, Governor Cooper stated that, "Jaki Shelton Green brings a deep appreciation of our state's diverse communities to her role as an ambassador of North Carolina literature. Jaki's appointment is a wonderful new chapter in North Carolina's rich literary history."

## upucc committee information

*At UPUCC, most of our volunteer efforts are channeled through our committees. The UPUCC Nominating Committee invites Covenant Partners to consider serving on one of the following committees:*

**Adult Education:** coordinates Sunday forums, book studies, evening discussion groups, and other activities that enhance educational opportunities for our adult members. In conjunction with the Fellowship Committee and other groups, they sponsor film outings and retreats, and publicize opportunities offered in the wider community.

**Building & Grounds:** plans for maintenance and use of our building, grounds and furnishings. Upcoming planned projects include an outdoor gathering space with deck and garden, and future playground.

**Children's Committee:** organizes educational and social opportunities for infants through fifth graders. Working closely with the Children's Director, this committee assists with the Children's Church program, teacher training and scheduling of teachers and nursery volunteers. Special events for children also fall under this committee.

**Congregational Care:** offers congregational care and spiritual support by focusing on individual needs and caring for personal relationships. They prepare the weekly e-prayer list, send birthday cards and notes of encouragement to members and friends, coordinate meals for those with special circumstances, coordinate the church's Care Teams and provide assistance and compassion in a variety of ways.

**Faith in Action:** encourages members to be actively involved in social justice issues. Through the leadership of this committee, UPUCC supports national and international organizations like Heifer International, UCC special offerings, and also commits support to local initiatives such as Oxford House and Urban Ministries. UPUCC Advocacy Task Force, Creativity Group, and Sanctuary Task Force are part of our Faith in Action.

**Fellowship:** provides opportunities for UPUCers to know each other better through special events such as Feast of Friends, barbecue luncheons, Fat Tuesday and Christmas Caroling. (just to name a few!) Besides coordinating Sunday morning coffee and goodies, this committee also plans various meals on a regular basis.

**Membership & Publicity:** publicizes the UPUCC community through print and internet advertising, website, promotional items, brochures and other media. They provide welcome packets and help new Covenant Partners make connections with each other. They are responsible for the Sunday morning welcome table setup, name badges and recruiting greeters and provide the monthly Newcomers & Inquirers sessions.

**Stewardship & Finance:** is responsible for the supervision of the finances of the church. As part of this, the committee plans and implements the annual pledge campaign and works with other committees in the Church to formulate a proposed annual budget. Those recommendations are then presented to the Coordinating Council and Congregation. They also manage many other financial-related tasks including: insurance programs, weekly contribution deposits, financial reports, and analyzing contribution data.

**Worship & Music:** is in charge of the music program of the church including supporting the choir director and pianist, selection, acquisition and maintenance of musical instruments and materials. They are responsible for volunteers for communion preparation, ushering and sound system set up. They also coordinate with the pastor in planning worship services.

**Youth:** works with the Youth Director to provide middle and high school students the opportunity to establish and nurture a relationship with God, themselves and with their community. Special ministries throughout the year are designed to be fun and promote spiritual growth. Retreats, summer camp outs, lock-ins, local service projects, mission trips, special fellowships, fund raisers and worship are all part of the mix. Youth Committee also assists with selection of curricula, coordinating programs, identifying program leaders and leader training.

**Personnel:** responsible for personnel policies, including salary recommendations and benefits. This committee maintains written job descriptions for all paid positions. It also provides both accountability and support to paid staff by working with staff to create goals for the year. The committee screens applicants for employment with the church.

**Nominating Committee (Year-Round):** to be in charge of preparing a slate of candidates for all outgoing officers and committee chairs, as well as populating committees throughout the year.

*Officers and committees are elected at our Spring Congregational Meeting at the end of April, and terms begin in May. Many committees meet the second Sunday of each month. For further information, please contact Moderator-Elect, Bonnie Shook-Sa at [Bonnie.Shook@yahoo.com](mailto:Bonnie.Shook@yahoo.com)*

***we yearn to further embody this holy love,  
shaping the future as partners with God,  
who dances and weeps with us along the way.***