At our Congregational Meeting following worship on July 25th we enthusiastically affirmed the presentation by the Youth Search Task Force, Coordinating Council and Personnel Committee to hire Rev. Tyler Ung as Minister with Youth. (Tyler is slated to begin September 1.)

Tyler leaves his present position as Associate Pastor at Circular Congregational (UCC) in Charleston S.C. in order to follow his partner to the Triangle where she will continue her medical training at Duke. We are more than delighted that this enabled Tyler to candidate for our open youth position. (His responsibilities at Circular include Children and Youth programming).

References secured by Personnel Committee Chair, Kathy Dobbs, all confirmed that our Youth Search Committee was completely correct in their immediate assessment that Tyler was an exceptional candidate. (The Task Force was quite experienced by this point. They began the search in September of last year and had received numerous inquiries and conducted multiple interviews along the way.)

A graduate of Messiah College (Magna Cum Laude) and the Yale Divinity School, Tyler has also completed units of Clinical Pastoral Education (Prior to his full time position at Circular, Tyler was a Resident Chaplain at Roper Hospital in Charleston). Suffice it to say, he is gifted and multi-talented and, in addition to accepting our part time youth position, is seeking other employment to secure his life here.

**Happy News Flash since last Sunday’s Congregational Meeting:** Tyler has just been offered and accepted a full time position as Assistant to the Chaplain of the Duke Divinity School! (This will not change his acceptance of the part time position with our youth, but it will enable him to more easily pay his bills! ...and thrive and grow in his professional ministry career.)

Tyler is eager to acclimate soon into the UPUCC Youth programming and wider community as well. As his move to the Raleigh-Durham area progresses over the next month we will keep you updated.

Importantly, also at the Congregational Meeting, the Youth Committee and Church as a whole expressed their utmost thanks to Jonathan McLean for serving in interim leadership of our youth programming since the spring of this year and until Tyler arrives in September.
The Lens of Love

“If we continue to see the world through the lens of love, justice is possible.” -Traci Blackmon

Is it possible to meaningfully address seemingly insurmountable problems? Is there legitimate hope?

In my sermon last week, I mentioned that at the close of the UCC National Meeting in 2019 (The UCC General Synod meets every two years), Rev. Traci Blackmon, our Associate General Minister for Justice and Local Church Ministries, announced a campaign to forgive medical debts affecting so many marginalized and even middle-class Americans. (One hospitalization can be enough to put persons already living on the edge over the edge.) Medical debt is often sold by health care providers to collection agencies for pennies on the dollar. ‘What if,’ two conscientious business fellows who were middle folk in this process asked themselves... What if, instead of selling the pennies on the dollar debt to “for-their-own-profit arm-twisters” they could find NOT for profit forgivers of debt? ...people willing to buy the debt from the health providers at the same pennies on the dollar cost, but rather than attempting to collect that debt, to cancel it. They formed a company- “R.I.P. Medical Debt” - ...and in July 2019, the UCC announced it would team up with them.

Since the summer of 2019 nine UCC Conferences, five UCC partner organizations and at least 195 local congregations joined in and, consequently, the debt of 51,720 families around the country has been forgiven. In the process, more than $67 million in medical debt was abolished. As challenging and debilitating as medical debt can be, it does NOT have to be insurmountable.

My favorite Mark Twain story (OK, most have you have heard it) involves the time he was confronted about a current hot issue of his day when he was asked... “Mr. Twain, do you believe in infant baptism?” I LOVE his response! “Believe it?!“ exclaimed Twain, “Hell, I’ve SEEN it!”

Is it possible to meaningfully address seemingly insurmountable problems? Believe it! Heck, we’ve seen it!! R.I.P. Medical Debt is proof!

A different seemingly insurmountable issue was center stage at the recent 2021 UCC National Gathering. The first resolution considered, voted upon and approved (on Day One) of the 2021 Synod declared racism as a public health crisis. In conjunction, the UCC’s Council for Health and Human Services Ministries has created an online course to help local churches and their members determine their local response to racism in health care. The course, “Reason to Have Hope: A Public Health Response to Racism,” provides tools for discussion and guides for action.

Additionally, Traci Blackmon announced a second campaign addressing systemic racism. Building on the UCC’s history of racial justice work, churches are encouraged to ‘Join the Movement.’ “Together,” said Blackmon, “we commit to developing practices that are grounded in justice within our congregations, communities, legislation, relationships and beyond.” (A new ‘Join the Movement’ Website launches in October of this year. ..and you can join here for regular updates in the meantime.)

“If we continue to see the world through the lens of love, justice is possible.” (Traci Blackmon)

Don’t stop believing!
upucc children

Sunday, August 8
Children, Youth & Family Gathering
2-4 pm UPUCC Grounds

Come one, come all, for games, arts, crafts, and the blessing of our new playground area!
Children of all ages, bring your refillable water bottles, lawn chairs and enjoy a time of fellowship and fun as we enjoy the beautiful setting of our UPUCC grounds.

Children’s Church 2.0 - Plan for September

Dear Families,
Over the past 17 months we have carefully ridden the Covid waves, sharing Children’s Moments in worship and occasional Children’s Church Gatherings on zoom. We delivered grab bags of activities to families as we remained at home.
As the 2021-22 traditional school year begins, we recognize each family has their own comfort level with returning to in-person events. We continue to mask and offer physical distance options in our worship space. Margo Schaffer, our nursery director, is ready to receive any visitors who may attend with infants and toddlers. After Labor Day, we hope to start up Children’s Church 2.0, as with all things, pending any need for changes in health and safety precautions.

What will Children’s Church 2.0 look like? Beginning September 12, children ages preschool through grade 5 will be welcome to come to worship (in masks) with their families as always. Following the Children’s Moment in worship, they will have the option of time together, continuing with safety protocols in place (provided we have two adult volunteers* to accompany them). We will continue to assess as conditions change.

*adults previously serving in Children’s Church. Newcomers are welcome to contact peg@upucc.org for information on volunteer (safe church) orientation.

Have you tried out the new slides yet?

upucc youth

In addition to the momentous news on page one...

August Youth Schedule

Sunday August 8- 2-4 pm
Youth are invited to assist with the event (listed above in upucc children) as the children play games, create art and craft projects and come together prior to the beginning of the school year.

Sunday August 22- 2-4 pm
End of the Summer Pool Party
We’ll be ending summer with a SPLASH!
We are excited to have a joint pool party with Community UCC at Lake Park Pool, 6333 Lakeland Dr, Raleigh, NC 27612
Forums - Sunday 9 am (Beginning August 1, Forums held in library and also on zoom)

August 1st – Racial Justice: Where Can We Go from Here? Please join the Racial Justice Work(ing) Group to learn about what we’ve been up to and where we want to go... book studies, personal growth, partnering with Poplar Springs Christian Church, activism, education, and more. We would especially welcome folks who have not been a part of this group to share your thoughts and brainstorm on what is important to us as a community in the racial justice realm.

August 8th – Guest Speaker, Venkat Mandavilli on Vedanta / Hinduism We are pleased to welcome Venkat Mandavilli to discuss Vedanta, the philosophical foundation of Hinduism, with us. A board member and moderator of adult study groups at the ChinmayA Mission Center in Raleigh, Venkat was born and raised in India and moved to the United States as an adult. Studying under his Guru, Swami ChinmayA nandA, Venkat will discuss how he sees religion as a means to attain the end goal of living harmoniously with the environment in which he lives. In addition to sharing his experiences, Venkat is looking forward to answering questions we may have about Vedanta Hinduism and its relationship to other spiritual paths.

August 15th - How the Bible Actually Works, Session 2 In this session of the How the Bible Actually Works video series, we’ll hear Pete Enns talk about the ancient nature of the Bible. If you’ve ever wondered why the Bible seems so out of step with our modern (or post-modern, but let’s not open that can of worms!) sensibilities, hopefully this session will help answer some of your questions. Join Brian Spears on August 15 at 9:00 am for the video and discussion.

August 22nd – Songs of the Spirit What makes a song “sacred”? What makes a song “spiritual”? Is there a difference? Join Anthony Neff as we discuss these topics, and talk about our favorite hymns and secular songs that have spiritual meaning to us.

August 29th – UPUCC Poets Share Wall Poems What is a wall poem? Our poetry group realized during one of our weekly meetings that some poems hit us in different ways than others. Sometimes we hear a poem, or a verse from a poem, that is so meaningful, inspirational, and motivational that we want to paint it on our walls! Come join us at the forum on August 29 as we share the origin story of what makes a wall poem and to hear some of them read. We will share poems that we’ve written ourselves, as well as poems from the others in our group, that made an impact on us and made us want to put them up on our walls!

Progressive Bible Study Monday 7 pm (These studies will be zoom only.)

Using materials and the approach outlined in the History in the Bible podcast from Garry Stevens (https://www.historyinthebible.com/), we’ll look at some of the latest research into the Biblical texts and the archaeology behind them. In addition to considering historical and archaeological evidence and critical research from biblical and literary scholars, we’ll take the time to discuss how we can make scripture meaningful to us in our own lives today (and which parts of scripture are NOT meaningful to us personally). Our Monday night sessions offer the opportunity to explore the Bible with open minds and open discussions. We’d love for you to join us!

Descriptions of individual progressive Bible sessions continue on page 5...
**August 2nd – Genesis Part 6: Joseph & the Land of Egypt** We conclude the story of the patriarchs with the story of Joseph, the missing son of Jacob who became an important minister in the Egyptian government. His family moves to Egypt for a few centuries, a passage of time that passes in the blink of an eye before the story continues in Exodus.

As we explore how this topic is relevant to us today, we’ll discuss, among other things:

- Do you think there is a “Divine Plan?”
- How do you see the evolving role of God’s participation in the lives of the patriarchs?
- What are your concluding thoughts on the book of Genesis, and what meaning can we find in its stories today?

**August 9th – Exodus Part 1: Meet Moses** We move on to the book of Exodus, and introduce the great hero of the Hebrews, Moses. We’ll review some of the differences between Genesis and Exodus, in style and themes. We’ll also talk about the first example of civil disobedience recorded in the Bible, and miraculous birth narratives.

As we explore how this topic is relevant to us today, we’ll discuss, among other things:

- We don’t get the name of Pharaoh, but we have the names of Shiphrah and Puah. What could that be telling us?
- After Genesis spent so much time talking about family, why do you think we don’t have more stories of the family of Moses?

**August 16th – No session**

**August 23rd – Exodus Part 2: Leaving Egypt** Moses hears the voice of God in a burning bush, and then returns to Egypt to confront Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

As we explore how this topic is relevant to us today, we’ll discuss, among other things:

- When you think of something that burns, but isn’t consumed by the fire – what does that signify for you?
- Has there been a time in your life when you didn’t feel you could do what God was leading you towards? That you didn’t have the ability?

**August 30th – No session**

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*embrace our common life, overflowing with compassion and liberal in love*
Connecting on Social Media

If you’re active on social media, you may know that UPUCC has a presence on Instagram ([https://www.instagram.com/umsteadparkucc/](https://www.instagram.com/umsteadparkucc/)) and three Facebook pages - Friends of UPUCC, UPUCC Children & Families, and Umstead Park United Church of Christ.

Both **Friends of UPUCC** and **UPUCC Children & Families** are closed groups where members and friends of UPUCC can post events and pertinent information. Anyone interested in becoming a member of either of these groups, search within Facebook and click the Join Group button in the lower right corner of the banner photo. You will be notified as soon as your membership is approved by one of the administrators.

The Umstead Park United Church of Christ Facebook page ([https://www.facebook.com/UmsteadParkUCC/](https://www.facebook.com/UmsteadParkUCC/)) is the official Facebook page of the church. All posts and events are posted by someone in the church office. The Membership and Publicity Committee has been working with Peg Arcari to use this page more as a way of publicizing UPUCC. To that end, if you are on Facebook and haven't already 'liked' the page, please take a moment to do so. In addition, if you see a post or event from the Umstead Park United Church of Christ page and it resonates with you, please consider sharing it. The more our posts are shared, the more exposure for the church!

UPUCC Commits to Purchase from Black Farmers Community Shares Agriculture

UPUCC is one of 3 area churches joining a CSA for the summer season (in addition to the 8 churches already involved). Eleven UPUCC families signed a membership agreement to purchase shares for an 8-week season.

Food is delivered to the church weekly with recipients setting up a table for sorting the produce into respective shares for each family to pick up.

Through efforts such as these farm-to-church connections, churches are able to participate in the building of thriving local food systems and economies while also engaging in relational ministries with farmers of color in their communities.

Share freely of our wealth and resources
New Covenant Partners

Watch for additional info about our new Covenant Partners in upcoming newsletters!

An Interactive Play That Shines A Light On All Things Worth Living For

(from the JTP website): Drawing on warmth, hope, and gentle humor, the play addresses the effects of depression and suicide, as experienced by son and playwright Duncan Macmillan, who was inspired to brighten his mother’s days by writing post-it notes with the brilliant things that make life worth living, such as, ice cream or water fights. Never speaking directly about his lists, he knows she reads it because she corrected his spelling. Macmillan revisits the list years later as a young man in love, a man growing up and experiencing life. The audience travels with him, as they interact and sometimes become key players in this retelling. Macmillan’s message in “Every Brilliant Thing” is that no matter how dark life may be, it may not be brilliant but it will get better.

Scheduled October 8-24 at Umstead Park UCC
For tickets: 919-264-7089 thejusticetheaterproject@gmail.com http://www.thejusticetheaterproject.org/
### UUCC August Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Worship: Life comes at us fast. Are we “Chasing the Wind or Running a Race”?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Following worship Advocacy Task Force, Jubilation Chorus rehearsal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td>August 2</td>
<td>7 pm</td>
<td>Progressive Bible Study. See page 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues.</td>
<td>August 3</td>
<td>6 pm</td>
<td>Book Group. Contact <a href="mailto:kdobbs001@nc.rr.com">kdobbs001@nc.rr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat.</td>
<td>August 7</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>Meditation Group. Contact <a href="mailto:babspears@gmail.com">babspears@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9:15 am</td>
<td>Stewardship &amp; Finance Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Worship: Bill Yoder and the Jubilation Chorus! Doug riffs off one of their offerings with “We’re All Part Time Angels Now and Then”</td>
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<td>Following worship Fellowship, Personnel Committees</td>
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<td>12:30 pm</td>
<td>Adult Ed Committee</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 pm</td>
<td>Children &amp; Youth Family Gathering. See page 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td>August 9</td>
<td>7 pm</td>
<td>Progressive Bible Study. See page 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues.</td>
<td>August 10</td>
<td>6 pm</td>
<td>Book Group. Contact <a href="mailto:kdobbs001@nc.rr.com">kdobbs001@nc.rr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs.</td>
<td>August 12</td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Brew Theology. Contact <a href="mailto:raleighdurhambrewtheology@gmail.com">raleighdurhambrewtheology@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Worship: Doug focuses on Psalm 19 as Anthony Neff debuts his newest song - “Underneath the Stars.”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Following worship Music &amp; Worship Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues.</td>
<td>August 17</td>
<td>6 pm</td>
<td>Book Group. Contact <a href="mailto:kdobbs001@nc.rr.com">kdobbs001@nc.rr.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs.</td>
<td>August 19</td>
<td>5 pm</td>
<td>Covid Response Task Force</td>
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<td>6 pm</td>
<td>Coordinating Council</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Worship: An Opportunity to ‘Right’ History</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2-4 pm</td>
<td>Youth: Back to School Celebration with Community UCC Youth. See page 3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td>August 23</td>
<td>7 pm</td>
<td>Progressive Bible Study. See page 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues.</td>
<td>August 24</td>
<td>6 pm</td>
<td>Book Study. Contact <a href="mailto:kdobbs001@nc.rr.com">kdobbs001@nc.rr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs.</td>
<td>August 26</td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Brew Theology. Contact <a href="mailto:raleighdurhambrewtheology@gmail.com">raleighdurhambrewtheology@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Worship: Poems, Prayers and Promises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues.</td>
<td>August 31</td>
<td>6 pm</td>
<td>Book Group. Contact <a href="mailto:kdobbs001@nc.rr.com">kdobbs001@nc.rr.com</a></td>
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</tbody>
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**We come together as travelers on a journey,**
**each bringing our unique histories, traditions, and stories of faith,**
**and we prayerfully establish this covenant, seeking:**

* A closer communion with God,
* A more intimate community with one another, and
* A committed, mutual relationship with the wider world.*