

umstead park

UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

a thoughtful and progressive community of faith

January 2023

8208 Brownleigh Drive

Raleigh, NC 27617

www.upucc.org

(The New Year includes some Real Work Ahead of Us)
 Important Update and Information from
 the Strategic Visioning Committee and Coordinating Council

Dear UPUCC Covenant Partners and Friends,

2023 promises to be a year of important transitions for us in several ways. None are more obvious than transitions in pastoral and administrative leadership as both Doug Long and Peg Arcari anticipate retiring mid-way through this calendar year.

To fully engage the Congregation in the opportunity for continuing to live into our aspirational covenant, as well as glean an unbiased third-party assessment of our current life and future desires, the Strategic Visioning Committee and Coordinating Council have hired professional consultants* for crucial data collection and coaching. All current Covenant Partners and many friends will be asked to submit answers to a brief survey that will assist us in next steps toward establishing our collective vision going forward. Expect to receive a link to this survey in the next week or so. (Paper copies will also be available if you prefer.) **Please complete this before January 22 so our consultants can return their assessments allowing us to plan a Congregation-wide Visioning event in March. This 'visioning event' will help us complete a church profile to submit to UCC National, allowing us to move forward in our ministerial search.)**

(FAQ: Is this a 'one per household' survey or is a response requested from every member and friend? Every member and friend!)

Anticipate an update from Strategic Visioning at our **scheduled Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 29**. The members of the Task Force are happy to assist with any questions in the meantime: Edward McFarland, David Frink, Renate Andrews, Nicki Norris, David Wilson, Tyler Ung, Meredith Pope, Doug Long, Andrew Crisman-Kleczeck, Bridget Blinn-Spears, and Sara Acosta.

Many thanks for your needed and necessary participation in advance!

*What consultants are we engaging with? Named "Convergence," they are formerly "The Center for Progressive Renewal." In their words, Convergence "supports the reshaping of organizations, congregations and leaders engaged in an age of movement from "organized religion" to "organizing religion" driven by the values of an inclusive, progressive theological vision for a more just world for all." You can learn more at <https://convergenceus.org/>

from doug.....via Doug

The end of one year and the beginning of another always offers time to reflect on what has been and what might be. I find myself, this New Year, even more reflective than normal. Add to that poignancy the birthday of Doug Jones (Jan. 5th) and I find myself with more to process than I can contain to a brief column.

Pardon the length of this entry, but Doug was an important part of my life for so long, I have forgotten as much about his influence as I remember. While preparing to dedicate the memorial pergola last month, I came across notes of one of those forgotten (to me) events that embody so much that made Doug so very special. He was, by profession, a florist. He was, by nature, one of the finest ministers I've ever known.



Almost 20 years ago, one of Doug's friends suffered a tragedy when her 37-year-old son took his own life. She wasn't connected to a community of faith and was lost as how to proceed so Doug, in his let-me-handle-this compassionate manner, stepped in to care for her and asked me to officiate the graveside service.

As it turned out, also present at the cemetery was her son's father, whom the mother had not seen since she fled, with her son, from what she described as an abusive relationship 25 years earlier.

With the father was his present wife... and two daughters. They had all traveled from another state ... to bury their son, stepson, half-brother.



Some of those gathered for the pergola dedication in memory of Doug Jones. December 18, 2022

These two groups... the father and his support... the mother and her friends... had not seen each other until they arrived at the grave. From my outsider's view, they each looked pretty normal. There were no apparent monsters among them... just folks like us... with the personal pain we sometimes hide now on public display.

It was a gripping situation, made all the more complex because the most vocal person present, the person whose grief was audibly loudest, was the estranged wife of the deceased... whom neither the father nor the mother wanted much to do with. By all accounts, her treatment of their son, though not criminal, was certainly not kind. Said the father to me just prior to her arrival at the graveside- "I think her leaving him was the

final straw."

She sobbed without end.

There we were together on that cold December afternoon.

...A mother whose only child was gone.

...A father who had lost his only son... for the second time.

...An estranged wife who, seemingly for the first time, began to comprehend the pain she would carry for years.

Each of these persons supported by their own community... colleagues, family members, and friends who each had their *own* set of silent circumstances.

No one was immune. No one perfect.

We stood there, eyes on the casket or the ground.

Ears tuned to the weeping.

Hearts acknowledging that we often have more questions than answers.

-continued on next page...

from doug *continued...*

Because she had no desire to interact with her former husband, Doug had arranged that, at the end of the service, the mother, his friend, could leave before the others. I pronounced the benediction, spoke a brief personal word to the mom, and Doug escorted her to the waiting car.

I then spoke briefly to the grieving father, his wife, his adult daughters, the estranged wife ...and stepped back to allow time for them to place roses on the casket.

It was, as you would imagine, a highly emotional time. The estranged wife was not to be consoled ...but something else, quite amazing actually, suddenly caught my attention. The mother, 30 yards away by the vehicle she would leave in, remained there to greet her friends.

And for what exact reason I could not say save perhaps he sensed an opportunity that would change lives, but the next thing I knew, Doug Jones had walked back over to the graveside to invite the *father* to speak with the mother.

There, for the first time in decades, they did speak to one another... with great care and compassion. The death of a son is far too high a cost to consider but I have to tell you, barriers were shattered.

Then, though these two had never before acknowledged the existence of the other, I watched as the mother received an embrace from her former husband's wife. It wasn't just politeness I saw. It was a real embrace that acknowledged pain beyond articulation... all manner of pain borne through the years.

I wish I could tell you that the estranged wife of the deceased joined in the embraces... but that was not the case. She remained, by the coffin, weeping.

I'm pretty sure I saw Doug Jones return to hug her.

All this happened years ago and, if I had not saved notes of it in my files, I would have lost all memory of it. It makes me wonder how much I have truly forgotten ...and all the more thankful of what I do recall.

We come, like those gathered at the graveside in the story just told, perhaps not as dramatically, but if truth be known, with all of our own reality silent beneath the surface ... each unique, each yearning in some way for deeper connections.

I tell this story to you not only to remember Doug, but also to acknowledge that he embodied you, the community of Umstead Park UCC, at its best.

Here, on the cusp of a year that promises new transitions, I am truly, deeply thankful for you all.

May we be more connected than ever.

-The Other Doug

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

children

Children



The highlight of the past month was, of course, the pageant! (see photos) A huge thank you to all of the parents and the children especially for helping to organize, write, and breathe new life into the Christmas stories.



The highlight of the coming month is that we are going to start breaking into two classes - one for younger and one for older kids. I'm really looking forward to providing the best experience for our kids as possible!



youth

JANUARY YOUTH SCHEDULE

JAN 1 - YOUTH GROUP
@ UPUCC

JAN 8 - YOUTH GROUP
@ UPUCC

JAN 13-16
WINTER YOUTH RETREAT

JAN 22 - YOUTH GROUP
@ UPUCC

JAN 29 - YOUTH GROUP
@ UPUCC



Youth

We had a blast this past month, especially with our Pilgrim UCC friends at a joint Christmas party. This coming month we will be at the church most Sundays for Youth Group (see schedule below). The one exception is MLK weekend, when we'll be in Blowing Rock for the annual Winter Youth Retreat! It is delightful to be able to resume these sorts of trips, which are truly memorable for everyone involved.

If you have any questions about our Children or Youth programing, or if you'd like to help make these programs possible with your time or talents, please don't hesitate to reach out to me (tyler@upucc.org)

*In peace,
Tyler*

adult education

Sunday 9 am Forum

Though January will be a 'light' month for Forums, due to January 1 holiday, the Crossan visit on January 22, plus the Congregational Meeting on January 29... all are welcome to join in person or online at **9 am on the following Sundays**: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83482803068?pwd=TFF2eXdCd2JQdGdNOHdMOGFiTmdKUT09>

January 8th – One Word for 2023 – A new year is upon us. What will it bring? Often, we use this start of the year to come up with a resolution, but it's often hard to keep those. A Forbes article from 2019 reported that 64% of these resolutions are abandoned after one month. An alternative is the One Word concept. The idea is to pick one word a year that you can focus on throughout the year. One word that sums up who you want to be or how you want to live – and may help shape your year (and your spirit). Join us to discuss and share what word you want to focus on in 2023. (For more about One Word, see this link: <https://asymphonyofpraise.com/blog/how-one-word-replaced-every-new-year-resolution>)

January 15th – The Message and The Psalms – Shortly before the passing of Eugene Peterson, theologian and author behind the Message, Bono (from the band U2) met with him at his home to discuss the impact of the Message and their shared love of the Psalms. Join us as we watch this short video produced by Fuller Theological Seminary, and discuss topics such as: What is the relationship of the arts (songs, poetry, visual arts) to our view of the divine? The hurt, disappointment and difficulty of being a human being is explored in the symbols and poetry of the Psalms – how can we have similar honesty in our approach to God?

John Dominic Crossan Comes to UPUCC January 22

For decades, Americans have been divided on how Christians should relate to government and lawmakers, a dispute that has impacted every area of society and grown more rancorous over the past forty years. But as John Dominic Crossan makes clear in his recent book, this debate isn't new; it can be found in the New Testament itself, most notably in the tensions between Luke-Acts and Revelation.



In the texts of Luke-Acts, Rome is considered favorably. In the book of Revelation, Rome is seen as the embodiment of evil in the world. Yet there is an alternative to these two extremes, Crossan explains. The historical Jesus and Paul, the earliest Christian teachers, were both strongly opposed to Rome, yet neither demonized the Empire.

Following the final book study session on *Render Unto Caesar: The Struggle Over Christ and Culture in the New Testament*, taking place on Monday, January 9th (at 7 pm via Zoom) ...

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89965139605?pwd=a1dPS21MMk9ZTDI3NjZMZlIGand6QT09>

... the (virtual) visit of John Dominic Crossan (renowned New Testament scholar, author and prominent member of the Jesus Seminar) will begin with his lecture during our January 22, 10:30 am worship service, followed by a quick break at 11:30 am, with more presentation and a Q&A session to follow.

Tuesday Book Group 6 pm online (start date TBD)

The group will be reading *South to America* by Imani Perry. Ms. Perry shows that the meaning of American is inextricably linked with the South, and that our understanding of its history and culture is the key to understanding the nation as a whole. Contact Kathy kdcorgi56@gmail.com.

Meditation Group

Meeting first Saturdays at 10 am online, contact Joanne jkennedyfraser@aol.com for more information.

stewardship & finance

2023 Pledge Campaign Update

Dear Covenant Partners & Friends,

We're still about \$40,000 short of our pledge campaign goal to balance the budget for 2023.

We don't have much "wiggle room" in our budget; most of our expenses are fixed, like the mortgage, utilities, and insurance. That means that we are going to have some hard conversations about making cuts to committees or other areas of our budget.

If you haven't pledged yet for 2023, please [submit your pledge online](#) or using one of the paper forms found in the back of the worship space. If you have already submitted your pledge, thank you!

Please consider if you are able to make an additional [one-time donation](#) or increase your pledge to help us close the deficit.

Thank you for your support of UPUCC!

Pledges and Sustainers: 87% of \$305,000 goal



fellowship

Journey Through the Chakras - An 8 Week Series Tuesdays, 9:30-11 am beginning January 3

The seven chakras are each a collection of energy that contain physical, mental, emotional and spiritual elements. When any of these energy centers are blocked, dormant or imbalanced, our body and mind reacts by succumbing to dis-ease in any given layer of our being: physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually.

This 8 week series will provide you with the information and tools to harmonize the healthy free flow of energy through and around your chakras. You'll find benefits in your body, mind and heart and soul.

Each week, we'll target a specific chakra in a combination of movement, breath and various meditations. No experience necessary. \$160 (UPUCC receive a 50% discount). <https://www.cyndipowers.com/yoga>



faith in action

Keep Medicaid expansion in the spotlight--

"Love Thy Neighbor" Postcard & Advocacy Day Campaign

In 2022, North Carolina lawmakers came closer than ever to closing our state's coverage gap and providing healthcare to over half a million North Carolinians. Our friends at NC Justice Center are asking for our help once again to ensure that 2023 will be the year our lawmakers finally expand Medicaid.

Help is requested to mail postcards to members of the NC General Assembly showing widespread support for Medicaid expansion.

In addition to the postcard campaign, the Justice Center will host a "Love Thy Neighbor" Valentine's Day advocacy event at the General Assembly on February 14, 2023, which will include hand-delivering Valentine's Day cards to all NC Senate and House members. If you can't make it to Raleigh in person, the Justice Center can help you schedule virtual visits with your legislators!

There will also be a "call your legislators" action hour option the week before Valentine's Day. If you'd like to participate in any of these options, further information is available at

<https://ncjustice.salsalabs.org/haplovethyneighborpostcardsignupform/index.html>

Creativity Group Contributes!

Now that we are past the busy holiday season, we would like to thank all who have enabled us to continue with our card ministry – by ordering our cards and bags, picking out special cards when our table is on display, and expressing appreciation for our cards. This Christmas season we were especially delighted to receive three orders from people who are not associated with UPUCC—two of whom had seen our cards and wanted to order them, and one who saw our gift bags and immediately ordered ten. Justice Theater Project continues to support us by mentioning our cards and allowing us to have them on display during their productions at UPUCC. This all has enabled us to contribute the following, up to Dec. 1, 2022 :

Curamericas \$300

UPUCC General Operating Fund \$850

UCC Ukraine Emergency Relief Fund \$1150

Contributions were also made during December to the latter two funds; those figures will be available at a later date.

Now the elves are turning into Cupids as we start to think about February 14th! Please keep visiting our table, where our display continues to evolve. We are always happy to discuss any special-order card you might want.

Alice Jermyn adjermyn@rocketmail.com
Linda Hebert lnhebert1@gmail.com

Gail Holden gailwholden@gmail.com
Marcia Welsh homeofwelsh@gmail.com

all in the family



New Covenant Partner

Joining UPUCC in November, Courtney shares about coming to UPUCC.

For many years now, I have had an ideal in my head of what I would love for church to look like. I didn't think it actually existed, but when it came time to return to church after the pandemic, and I had children who were now old enough to understand what they were told at church, I knew I had to at least look for a church that was closer to my ideal than the church I had been going to. I Googled "liberal churches in Raleigh" and UPUCC came up. After my first visit to UPUCC, I knew that this church was very special and was as close to my ideal as I was possibly going to find. I am so excited to now be a member of this wonderful church.

Courtney Haynes

I majored in English at NC State, and am lucky enough to have found a great job as a content writer/editor for a company that specializes in water, electric, and gas metering. I am also starting to do some content writing/editing on the side as well, which I am very excited about! I love reading, writing, and putting other's thoughts into words.

I love to read, especially classic British literature. I read *Pride and Prejudice* at least once every year. I also love doing crafts, especially with my kids.

My husband Will and I have two children, Oliver (5) and Natalia (4). We welcomed Natalia into our family in 2021 from Colombia. Will is a high school history teacher and soccer coach, and is originally from England, so soccer is very important in our household! We have felt very welcomed at UPUCC and are excited to connect and get to know everyone further.

Some Volunteer Opportunities at UPUCC!

Sunday Tasks (all explained at the sign up- help once in awhile or regularly):



Greeters <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090544aaab2ba6fe3-20181#/>

Ushers <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090544aaab2ba6fe3-upucc#/>

A/V Techs <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090544aaab2ba6fe3-upucc13#/>

*if you'd like to help make our **Children & Youth Programs** possible with your time or talents, please don't hesitate to reach out to me (tyler@upucc.org)*

Are you aware? UPUCC is lovingly cleaned by our own volunteers? (saving the UPUCC budget thousands of dollars each year). Several teams of volunteers do a light cleaning (vacuum/dusting) of our space on a monthly schedule. You can choose your team and the day of the week (once/month) you wish to work. Tasks are clearly outlined and teams decide together which tasks each person will do. If you can donate 1-2 hours/month to this effort, please contact Mike Heavey for more details at mike.heavey@twc.com

upucc january calendar

Sun.	Jan. 1	10:30 am	Worship: "How to Begin (Again)," Tyler Ung preaching.
		2 pm	Ring in the New Year with Yoga in the worship space.
Tues.	Jan. 3	9 am	Yoga in the worship space. See page 6.
Wed.	Jan. 4	7 pm	UPUCC Choir rehearsal in the worship space.
Thurs.	Jan. 5	6 pm	Game Night in the library. Contact Scott Pope scottpope11@gmail.com
Sat.	Jan. 7	10 am	Meditation Group online. See page 5.
Sun.	Jan. 8	9 am	Forum: One Word for 2023. See page 5.
		9:15 am	Stewardship & Finance Committee
		10:30 am	Worship: "Matthew and the Magi," Doug Long preaching.
		12 pm	Youth Group
Mon.	Jan. 9	7 pm	Crossan Book Study online. See page 5.
Tues.	Jan. 10	9 am	Yoga in the worship space. See page 6.
		9:30 am	Creativity Group in the library.
		6 pm	Tuesday Book Group. See page 5.
		7 pm	Peer Support Group. Contact nevinworld@gmail.com for information.
Wed.	Jan. 11	7 pm	UPUCC Choir rehearsal in the worship space.
Thurs.	Jan. 12	5:30 pm	Strategic Visioning Task Force online.
Fri.-Mon.	Jan. 13-16		Winter Youth Retreat in Blowing Rock, NC. See page 4.
Sun.	Jan. 15	9 am	Forum: The Message and The Psalms. See page 5.
		10:30 am	Worship: MLK Commemoration: Violence Cannot Bring Peace.
		12:30 pm	Adult Ed Committee online.
Tues.	Jan. 17	9 am	Yoga in the worship space. See page 6.
		9:30 am	Creativity Group in the library.
		6 pm	Book Group online. See page 5.
Wed.	Jan. 18	7 pm	UPUCC Choir rehearsal in the worship space.
Thurs.	Jan. 19	6 pm	Coordinating Council online.
Sat.	Jan. 21	6 pm	Game Night in the library. Contact Scott Pope scottpope11@gmail.com
Sun.	Jan. 22	10:30 am	Worship: John Dominic Crossan "The Struggle Over Christ and Culture in the New Testament," See p.5
		12 pm	Youth Group
Tues.	Jan. 24	9 am	Yoga in the worship space. See page 6.
		6 pm	Book Group online. See page 5.
		7 pm	Peer Support Group. Contact nfouts@nc.com for information.
Wed.	Jan. 25	5:30 pm	Fellowship Committee at Lone Rider Brewing.
		7 pm	UPUCC Choir rehearsal in the worship space.
Thurs.	Jan. 26	5:30 pm	Strategic Visioning Task Force online.
Sun.	Jan. 29	10:30 am	Worship: "To a Journey God Has Called Us"
		Following worship	UPUCC Congregational Meeting
		12 pm	Youth Group. See page 4.
Tues.	Jan. 31	9 am	Yoga in the worship space. See page 6.
		6 pm	Book Group online. See page 5.

the justice theater project

***Coming to UPUCC
February 10-26***

THE BEST OF ENEMIES by Osha Gray Davidson is a true story of the unlikely relationship between two low-income community activists, Ann Atwater, an outspoken civil rights activist, and C.P. Ellis, a local Ku Klux Klan leader.

The story takes place in Durham, North Carolina, during the turbulent 1960s and 70's when the Civil Rights Movement was at its peak. After having several public racially-charged confrontations and developing an intense disdain for each other, in the racially charged summer of 1971, Atwater and Ellis came together to co-chair a community summit on the desegregation of public schools in Durham, N.C.

The ensuing debate and battle soon lead to surprising revelations forever changing both of their lives. In Durham and throughout the United States, Ellis and Atwater exemplify how blacks and whites can overcome centuries of racial barriers by focusing on their commonalities and humanity. Through this process, they gradually learn to see this in each other and develop an understanding of the class structure in the South that oppresses both of them as they move from *THE BEST OF ENEMIES* to friends.

<http://www.thejusticetheaterproject.org/best-of-enemies>



- Demonstrate our concern for neighbor through service and prophetic voice;***
- Claim our inescapable connection with the sacred earth and all of creation;***
- Live justice as the social expression of love, and peace as the present manifestation of the world to come.***