

# Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

November 23rd, 2025 at 10:30am (Onsite & Online)



## GATHERING

### Welcome and a Time of Greeting

Rev. Paula Womack

*For this series, our Time of Greeting will be extended so you can enjoy coffee and tea, and so you can use the conversation cards to ask, share, and listen.*

### Invocation

Gwen Vass

### Meditation

"We have not yet arrived. God continues to beckon. We seek no destination. The sacred journey is our home."

-UPUCC Covenant

### Prelude

David Wilson

### \*Call to Worship

Gwen Vass

One: Beckoned to this place of belonging, we, of Umstead Park United Church of Christ, with body, mind, and spirit, gather to worship, serve, and proclaim God, unknowable mystery whose center is love, and Jesus the Christ, who makes this loving mystery known.

Many: **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.**



"Flow of Humanity"  
by Hannah Garrity

A Sanctified Art LLC  
sanctifiedart.org

### Choir Anthem

"Crowded Table" (see insert)

UPUCC Choir

## HEARING AND RESPONDING

### A Time with Children

Christy Tucker

Strong, gen-tle chil-dren, God made you beau-ti-ful, gave you the wis-dom and pow-er you need;  
speak in the still-ness all you are long-ing for; live out your call-ing to love and to lead.

### Reading of Scripture

Ruth 1:1-2 (see insert)

Gwen Vass

### Sermon

"Where Do We Go From Here?"

Rev. Tyler Ung

### \*Responsive Hymn

#309, "We Are Your People"  
(verses 1 and 5)

Congregation

### Prayers of the People

Rev. Paula Womack



You are invited to share names or brief joys and concerns. To submit written prayer requests for the weekly email, visit [tinyurl.com/upuccprayers](https://tinyurl.com/upuccprayers), or scan the QR code to the left.

SENDING INTO THE WORLD

\*Sending Hymn

#575, "O For a World"

Congregation

Announcements

\*Affirmation of Community

Gwen Vass

One: We believe that all people are God’s people, that every child is holy, that every person is a part of the sacred family.

Many: **We believe that God’s love embraces all, and that to exclude any person would be contrary to the message of Jesus.**

One: We proclaim that this community of faith, Umstead Park UCC, will strive to be as open as the radical realm of God, and as liberating as the love of Christ.

Many: **And so we journey into our hopeful future with joy, pledging to offer each other welcome, compassion and care. May God grant us wisdom, grace, and guidance in our life together.**

\*Benediction

Rev. Paula Womack

Postlude

David Wilson

umstead park  
UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

Church Staff

Lindsay Cooper, she/her  
Nursery Director

Rev. Tyler Ung, they/them  
Senior Pastor

Gwen Vass, she/her  
Financial Administrator

Cody Walter Welch, he/him/they/them  
Teaching Intern

David Wilson, he/him  
Director of Music

Rev. Paula Womack, she/her  
Associate Pastor

Volunteers

A special "Thank You" to this week's volunteers!

Don Alderman, AV Team  
Bill Yoder (he/him), AV Team  
Lee Harrison (he/him), Asst. Treasurer  
Bob Martin (he/him), Auditor/Usher  
Ashley Montague (she/her), Greeter  
Gwen Vass (she/her), Lay Leader  
Alice Jermyn (she/her), Usher  
Christy Tucker (she/her), Lay Leader  
Gary Sanders (he/him), Online Greeter  
Nina Nalle Robinson (she/her), Lay Leader

We at  
Umstead Park  
United Church of Christ  
welcome and affirm all  
as we journey to seek  
the divine, to embody loving  
community, and to strive for  
justice as a progressive  
community of  
faith.

 **Giving**

Scan the QR code to make a one-time or recurring donation!

 **Visiting?**

You are invited to fill out the online visitor form so that we can get to know you!

 **Realm**

Access your Realm account

\* Please rise in body or in spirit.

# Supplemental Texts and Hymns

## Choir Anthem

“Crowded Table”

Written by Brandi Carlile,  
Natali Hemby, and Lori McKenna

You can hold my hand  
When you need to let go  
I can be your mountain  
When you're feeling valley-low  
I can be your streetlight  
Showing you the way home  
You can hold my hand  
When you need to let go

I want a house with a crowded table  
And a place by the fire for everyone  
Let us take on the world while we're young and able  
And bring us back together when the day is done

If we want a garden  
We're gonna have to sow the seed  
Plant a little happiness  
Let the roots run deep

If it's love that we give  
Then it's love that we reap  
If we want a garden  
We're gonna have to sow the seed

Yeah I want a house with a crowded table  
And a place by the fire for everyone  
Let us take on the world while we're young and able  
And bring us back together when the day is done

The door is always open  
Your picture's on my wall  
Everyone's a little broken  
And everyone belongs  
Yeah, everyone belongs

I want a house with a crowded table  
And a place by the fire for everyone  
Let us take on the world while we're young and able  
And bring us back together when the day is done

## Reading of Scripture

Ruth 1:1-2, *The Inclusive Bible*

Gwen Vass

<sup>1</sup> Long ago, when judges governed Israel, a famine swept over the land. So a family from the town of Bethlehem in Judah, a woman and man and their two children, emigrated to the region of Moab. <sup>2</sup> The man was named Elimelech, the woman's name was Naomi, and their two sons were named Mahlon and Chilon. They were Ephrathites, that is, from Bethlehem of Judah. They arrived in the land of Moab and settled there...

*Note: This artist statement was written in 2021, yet is still relevant to us in 2025.*

In his sermon on June 14, 2020, at Montreat Conference Center, North Carolina, Rev. Matt Gaventa explored the situation at the US-Mexico border in relation to the travels of Ruth and Naomi. At that time, I drew an image for the worship service inspired by news images from the border. A woman stands with a plastic grocery bag in her hand. Another woman embraces her. They are exhausted, yet determined. One faces the viewer, the other looks away. A low fence delineates the border along the side of the road. In the figures pictured here in the wall, I reimagined that idea. *Where do we go from here?*



In this art piece, the border fencing that is located along miles of the US southern border takes center stage. Through it the viewer sees mountains in the distance and the figures supporting one another. Their feet step through, breaking into the border of the image. In my research for this image, I watched a documentary put together by the BBC in 2018. The reporter traveled along the entire span of the border, interviewing people that he met and seeking out comments by residents, officials, and immigrants on both sides of the line. In parallel, the current circumstance along the US-Mexico Border is incredibly complex and has unfolded over the last month on the news. A comment that recently stood out to me was a quote from the U.S. Congresswoman, Representative Veronica Escobar from El Paso, Texas:

“. . . we saw that the . . . administration essentially tried to shut every door to America, even asylum, which is legal, and it dismantled the asylum system. And so, what happened was immigration and the migration, the flow of humanity from Central America never stopped. It just—it’s right outside our front door and the misery became even worse.”

She commented on the flow of humanity, naming the concept as a normal event over the course of history. The flow of humanity. That is why the story of Ruth and Naomi speaks so poignantly to me at this time, at any time. *Where do we go from here?*

Ruth and Naomi are hungry; they are traveling to connect with their family, their security. They are risking their lives and safety to strive for their best chance to thrive. They are currently in motion, striving to settle down. As I contemplated this image, the other motifs that wove their way in were barley and blade wire. Barley is the sustenance that meets Ruth at the end of her journey. Blade wire represents the lacerating spirals that are installed along the top of the fencing of the US-Mexico border. The stark clarity of interdependence and desperate need for humanizing becomes juxtaposed with the pain of scarcity of resources. The barley woven into the blade wires in the border of the artwork represent the tension between scarcity and abundance in this narrative. *Where do we go from here?*

Here, Ruth and Naomi are flowing through the wall; they are on both sides. As we have all become more aware of the number of people in the world and the humanity of each one as a precious child of God, we find it both easier and harder to answer the question, “Where do we go from here?” Easier because we know the teachings of our faith: to love God and to love one another, as my daddy has always reminded me. As I daily expand my mind to see reality as abundance, my quest continues to lead me back to providing all I can for those whose presence in my life demands it. There is perpetually enough to share, every day. Where do we go from here? To whom can we extend abundance? Whose presence is demanding us to share?

# UPUCC Updates

---



**Pledge Goal**

\$265,000

**Current Pledges**

\$172,275

**65% of Goal**

Our 2026 Pledge Campaign is underway as we enter this new season of our church's life. Your pledge will help us live into our vision of "Connecting with Courage and Care." The accompanying tree image will fill with color as we progress toward our goal! Thank you for your support in the year ahead!

---

The 2026 Pledge Campaign is underway and runs until November 29. This is a very special year for UPUCC as we begin our "life after transition". Your support of the 2026 Ministry Plan will help us live into our vision of "Connecting with Courage and Care".

One of the areas of focus in our Ministry Plan is Community Engagement and Visibility. Our goal in this area is to be more present with each other, increase visibility in the community, and draw attention to what our community is all about. We can do this work through consistent volunteer work, building relationships with diverse groups, and actively promoting our mission and values. This would include a financial commitment to Guns to Gardens, Out Raleigh, Drag Story Hour, and publicity.

To live into the vision of our Ministry Plan, please consider increasing your pledge by 13% over last year. To date, we have received pledges from about 62% of this year's expected giving units and have raised about 65% of our overall goal; 100% of our overall goal would fully fund our ministry plan for 2026. We want to celebrate that we have received pledge increases from about 2/3 of pledges received to date. Thank you to all who have committed to bringing our vision into reality. And we also recognize that this is a difficult and thin moment for many—individual circumstances change from year to year impacting our ability to give. We are also grateful for you who continue to give, especially in the midst of difficult circumstances. At this point in our campaign, pledge decreases have slightly outpaced pledge increases. As a community committed to helping each other, we are asking those who are capable of increasing their pledges to consider doing so, and for those who have yet to pledge, please consider pledging in the next several days. The tree trunk above will fill with color as we approach our goal, and the leaves will turn green as the total of year over year pledge amounts make it possible for us to accomplish our goals for 2026.

Direct questions or requests for assistance to **Gwen Vass** at [finance@upucc.org](mailto:finance@upucc.org) or **Vickie Teal** at [treasurer@upucc.org](mailto:treasurer@upucc.org).

Thank you for supporting the exciting year ahead for UPUCC!

Visit [upucc.org/giving](https://upucc.org/giving) to make your pledge!

### **We're Hiring!**

Explore two part-time opportunities—Youth Director and Teaching Intern—in our vibrant, progressive faith community. We are thrilled to have Cody Walter Welch on staff as one teaching intern, and are looking to add to our team!

### **Food Assistance Update | November**

Food donations are needed—and so are volunteers to deliver them! Bring meal-focused items on Sundays and let Jane Weidig know at womweid@gmail.com if you can help.

### **Hanging of the Greens and Cookie Swap | After Worship**

Yum—cookies! You are invited to stay after worship today as we do our traditional hanging of the greens, and enjoy the cookies made by some covenant partners!

### **Creativity Group Holiday Cards | Today is the last day to order!**

Send a little holiday cheer this season with handmade Christmas cards—personalized, heartfelt, and made by our own UPUCC Creativity Group!

### **Thanksgiving In Community | November 27; RSVP by Today!**

If any UPUCC folks would like to be in community on Thanksgiving Day, Paula Womack and Jane Weidig welcome you to their home in Garner. Come share a traditional Thanksgiving meal. RSVP by November 23 by emailing paula@upucc.org, or calling at 919-259-6840.

### **UCC Virtual Event | November 24 at 3:30pm**

Step into Advent with hope—join the UCC on Nov. 24 at 3:30 p.m. to hear contributors to the UCC Abolition Advent Calendar share wisdom for these challenging times.

### **Mom-a-Thon Fundraiser**

Kathy Austin invites you to join her in supporting Impact Global Health Alliance's life-saving work for mothers and babies around the world.

### **Help Host Healing Transitions on 1st Sundays**

We host our friends from Healing Transitions on the first Sunday of every month. If you would like to get to know our neighbors through food, drink, and fellowship, check the [upucc.org/news](http://upucc.org/news) page to sign up!

### **Advent Devotionals | Season of Advent**

Would you like to receive emailed devotionals during the season of advent? If so, you may find details for how to sign up on the "News" page of the website.

### **Ornament Making! | December 7 at Noon**

Come join the fun and fellowship as we make warm holiday memories – and a few simple ornaments. No special skills needed! Great both for families and solo acts!

### **Longest Night Service | December 21**

When the holidays feel heavy, join us for our Longest Night service—a gentle space for the grieving, the lonely, and the blue—Sunday, December 21 at 5:30pm.

### **Christmas Eve Service | December 24**

We will hold our Christmas Eve service on Wednesday, December 24th at 6:00pm.

Learn more at [upucc.org/news](http://upucc.org/news)!