

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
July 26th, 2026 at 10:30am (Onsite & Online)



GATHERING

Welcome and Time of Greeting Rev. Paula Womack

Invocation Nicki Norris

Meditation

“‘Wilderness’ is often depicted theologically as a place of danger. Western cultures have understood wilderness as something chaotic, a thing to be mastered, and that which must be ordered and overcome. You go through the wilderness.

But it is also a refuge where you can hide from your enemies and the evils of the ‘civilized’ world. Mostly, it is a raw and unknowable place of encounter where we come face-to-face with ourselves, our environment, and our horrors, hallucinations, hungers, and hopes. We find ourselves — and God — in the wilderness. And everything is far more and far different than we imagined.”

-Diana Butler Ross

Prelude David Wilson

*Call to Worship Rev. Tyler Ung

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.**

-from the UPUCC Covenant

*Gathering Hymn “Come and Find the Quiet Center” Congregation
(see insert)

HEARING AND RESPONDING

Time with Children Rev. Tyler Ung

Musical notation for a children's song in 4/4 time, G major. The melody is simple and repetitive, using quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are: "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." The notation is spread across two staves, with the lyrics written below the notes.

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 Matthew 4:1-11, *The Inclusive Bible* Nicki Norris
(see insert)

Sermon Rev. Tyler Ung

*Responsive Hymn #521, “In Solitude” Congregation
(verses 1-4)

* Please rise in body or in spirit.



*You are invited to share your joys and concerns. People onsite can raise a hand and a microphone will be brought to them. People online can type their requests in the chat. We ask that you share carefully, knowing that we do not know what traumas people carry with them into this gathering and striving to not trigger or harm our neighbors. After each person shares, we will respond with: **"This is our prayer."** To submit prayer requests for the weekly email, visit tinyurl.com/upuccprayers, or scan the QR code.*

Celebration of Gifts

Rev. Paula Womack



In addition to placing gifts into the offering basket, you may also visit upucc.org/giving or scan the QR code here to make an online contribution.

SENDING INTO THE WORLD

*Sending Hymn

#459, "Come, O Fount of Every Blessing"

Congregation

Announcements

*Affirmation of Community

Nicki Norris

- 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. Tyler Ung

Postlude

David Wilson

umstead park

UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

Church Staff

- Lindsay Cooper, she/her
Nursery Director
- Ellen Fiedler, she/her
Youth 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

A special "thank you" to this week’s volunteers:

Nevin Fouts, AV Team

Ada McKerrell, Coffee Set Up/Greeter

Dan Harrell, Assistant Treasurer

Tim Champion, Auditor

Colin McKerrell, Greeter

Nicki Norris (she/her), Lay Leader

Alice Jermyn (she/her), Usher

 Visiting?

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

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

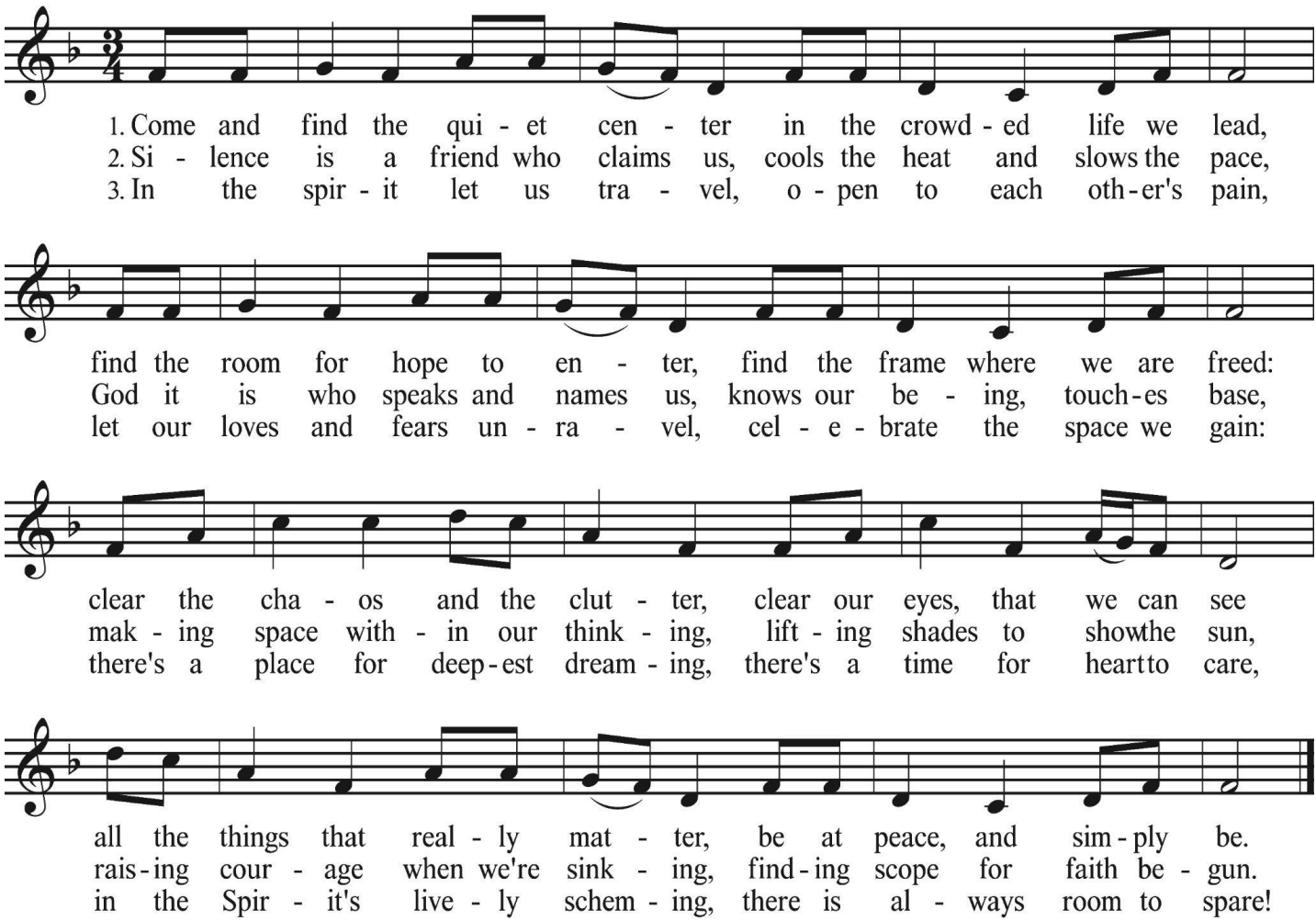
Scan the QR code to make a one-time or recurring donation!

Supplemental Hymns and Texts

*Gathering Hymn

"Come and Find the Quiet Center"

Congregation



1. Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,
2. Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,
3. In the spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain,

find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, touches base,
let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain:

clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we can see
making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
there's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care,

all the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.
raising courage when we're sinking, finding scope for faith begun.
in the Spirit's lively scheming, there is always room to spare!

Reading of Scripture

Matthew 4:1-11, The Inclusive Bible

Nicki Norris

¹ Then Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit, to be tempted by the Devil. ² After fasting for forty days and forty nights, Jesus was hungry. ³ Then the tempter approached and said, "If you are the Only Begotten, command these stones to turn into bread."

⁴ Jesus replied, "Scripture has it,
'We live not on bread alone
but on every utterance that comes
from the mouth of God.' "

⁵ Next the Devil took Jesus to the Holy City, set him on the parapet of the Temple ⁶ and said, "If you are the Only Begotten, throw yourself down. Scripture has it,
'God will tell the angels to take care of you;
with their hands they will support you
that you may never stumble on a stone.' "

⁷ Jesus answered, "Scripture also says, 'Do not put God to the test.' "

⁸ The Devil then took Jesus up a very high mountain and displayed all the dominions of the world in their magnificence, ⁹ promising, "All these I will give you if you fall down and worship me."

¹⁰ At this, Jesus said to the Devil, "Away with you, Satan! Scripture says, 'You will worship the Most High God; God alone will you adore.' "

¹¹ At that the Devil left, and angels came and attended Jesus.

* Please rise in body or in spirit.

Announcements

Learn about Cash Bail Reform with Peter van Dorsten | July 27 at 10am

Join UPUCC's own Peter van Dorsten on Monday, July 27 from 10:00 AM-12:00 PM at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church (82 Kimberly Dr, Durham) for a seminar on Cash Bail and the NC Judicial System. The presentation is a partnership between NC Interfaith Cash Bail Reform, St. Stephen's and the North Carolina Council of Churches, which writes, "There is a dividing line in America that less than 40% of the population see. It oppresses those of low wealth and it is hiding in plain sight. Join us for a session to learn about the injustices that the for-profit Cash Bail system in NC perpetuates for poor people. As new government policies put further burdens on people of low wealth, it is important to understand the mechanisms of oppression, what can be done in response, and to work together on a plan of action." Peter works with NC Interfaith Cash Bail Reform to enlist the support of religious and civic minded groups from across the state to advocate for replacing for profit cash bail with fair, just, safe, effective and less costly alternatives to pretrial detention. Scan the QR code to register.



Cook Out - Aug. 30th (Save the Date!) | Sign-Up to come August 1st

Your Fellowship Lead Team is cooking up some end of summer fun – literally! On Sunday, August 30th following service, your Fellowship Lead Team is hosting an end of summer cookout. We will provide burgers and dogs – and vegetarian options of each – which will be cooked on UPUCC's very own grill. Any volunteer griller masters are more than welcome!! Be on the lookout for the signup genius for sides and desserts. If you have any safe yard games you would like to bring, we would welcome that! There might even be prizes! So, be sure to save the date, August 30th for fun and fellowship! The sign-up Genius for the August 30th cookout will come out on August 1st. Be thinking about what dish or dessert you want to show off, then sign up early so no one gets to beat you to it! Also, if you sign up promptly, it will help us determine how many burgers and dogs to have on hand. Thank you!

UPUCC Celebrates Volunteers

Saturday, July 25th, the UPUCC Staff provided a BBQ luncheon for all of the volunteers who gave their time during the 2025-2026 program year. UPUCC is a beloved community, and only works because of all the volunteers who offer crucial support. Thank you for everything you do!

Welcome Ellen Fiedler to the UPUCC Staff!

We are pleased to welcome Ellen Fiedler (she/her) to the UPUCC staff! She is our new Youth Director, and has already been busy planning opportunities for the youth to gather and share in community! Ellen is a lifelong North Carolinian with a passion for creating spaces where people feel welcomed, valued, and empowered. She earned her BA in Human Service Studies from Elon University and her MSW with a concentration in Community, Management, and Policy Practice from UNC-Chapel Hill. Ellen's interest in religious programming began during her first year at Elon when she started working at the Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life. Her experience engaging with students and staff of diverse religious, spiritual, and secular identities sparked a passion for meaningful interfaith engagement.



In addition to her work at UPUCC, Ellen is a health educator and works with youth to design and implement public health projects in their communities. Through this work, she has developed a deep appreciation for the creativity, insight, and leadership that young people bring to the table when they are given the opportunity to do so. She strongly believes that helping youth discover their capacity to lead and create positive change is one of the most meaningful things adults can do.

Help Host Healing Transitions on First Sundays

We host our friends from Healing Transitions on the first Sunday of every month. If you would like to help with food, drink, and fellowship, sign up via the link on the website, or at the QR code. Get to know our neighbors!



Hiring Teaching Intern



The Teaching Intern role is a valuable opportunity to gain hands-on experience in curriculum development, classroom management, and faith-based teaching within a supportive and progressive community environment. This includes teaching Sunday School classes and preparing lessons and materials.

Sunday Volunteer Opportunities

Please consider joining us to provide an extravagant Sunday Welcome to all-volunteer below to be a Greeter, Usher, Lay Leader, or Barista (Coffee Set Up and Clean Up). Scan the QR code to access the Sign-Up Genius.



UCC Connections



Be Prophetic, Not Partisan: Election Engagement 101 for Congregations. The United Church of Christ’s mission calls us to welcome all, love all and seek justice for all. Living out that call means speaking boldly in the public square through public policy advocacy and election engagement that shape our common life together. But are you confused about what your church can and can’t do this election season? You’re not alone. Many congregations avoid political engagement altogether, unsure of the rules, while others charge in without knowing the risks. As we head into the 2026 election, now is the time to get clear. A UCC webinar on August 11 at 4:00 p.m. ET, “Be Prophetic, Not Partisan: Election Engagement 101 for Congregations,” cuts through the confusion around 501(c)(3) status and IRS guidelines, giving you practical, actionable guidance on how your congregation can engage boldly and legally in the public square this election season. This webinar will feature Heather Kimmel (United Church of Christ’s General Counsel) and Rev. Michael Neuroth (Director of the UCC Office of Public Policy & Advocacy), and Rushad Thomas (Domestic Policy Advocate of the UCC Office of Public Policy & Advocacy).Scan the QR code to register.

Want to Submit an Announcement?

To submit an announcement for publication on the website and the bulletin, simply scan this QR code and fill out the online form! To submit an announcement in time for the Friday email, the deadline is the preceding Tuesday by 11:59pm.

Submit Photos and Videos of UPUCC Happenings

Did you know that we have an online Google Photos album? It’s chock-full of moments from UPUCC past and present, and you are invited to add your own! Simply scan the QR code, click the “Add Photos” button pictured here, and select which photos you would like to submit to the album. Alternatively, you may email photos or videos to umsteadparkucc@gmail.com!



Visiting With Us Today?

We’re so glad that you spent your Sunday with us—we would love to get to know you better! You are invited to fill out the visitor form by scanning the QR code so that we can connect with you about our church and add you to our email list!



Mutual Care Network

The UPUCC Mutual Care Network was designed to build a culture of helping one another, to foster genuine connections, and to ensure that no one feels alone. There are 2 parts: (1) Identifying volunteers who are willing to help out when covenant partners have needs. We want to emphasize that signing up and letting us know how you can help DOES NOT mean that you must respond to every request, but rather helps us know who might have the needed skills and/or desire to assist with a particular request; (2) Providing a way for covenant partners to easily request care help when they need it. We’ve identified individuals who are willing to provide care in areas such as running errands, tech help, pet care and so on. Please let us know what you are needing and we will do our best to pair you up with someone ASAP. Join the Mutual Care Network by scanning the QR code included here.



Follow Us on Social Media!

Facebook: [UmsteadParkUCC](#) | Instagram: [UmsteadParkUCC](#) | BlueSky: [upucc.bsky.social](#)

* Please rise in body or in spirit.

Covenant Leadership Circle

The purpose of this section is to update you on the work of the Covenant Leadership Circle (CLC). We hope that this enables you to have a more thorough understanding of what happens behind the scenes at UPUCC, and to discover opportunities to join us in actualizing new ideas!

CLC Members:
Moderator: Gia Hafler
Moderator-Elect: Open Seat
Treasurer: Vickie Teal
Secretary: Sarah Bellak
Facilities Lead: Gary Sanders
At-Large: Elliot Acosta
At-Large: Laura Carter-Scheid
At-Large: David Frink
At-Large: Bob Martin

Financial Results				
	June	YTD	2026	Difference / Remaining
General Offerings	\$21,828	\$129,160	\$304,882	-\$175,722
Total Income	\$22,723	\$144,220	\$331,466	-\$187,246
Total Expenses	\$33,494	\$169,890	\$386,585	-\$220,696
Net Income	-\$10,771	-\$25,669	-\$55,119	\$29,450
*As a reminder, the 2026 Operating Budget projects a net income deficit of \$55,000 which will be offset by the Operating Fund Reserve				

Next Meeting: Sunday, August 9th at 12:00pm in the UPUCC Library and Online. All are welcome!

Our church's leadership met this month to review our ministry priorities, celebrate progress, and make several decisions that will help strengthen our ministry in the months ahead.

Financial Update

The financial outlook remains encouraging. Year-to-date giving is tracking close to expectations, and expenses continue to come in slightly under budget. Any monthly surplus helps strengthen our financial reserves. In addition, the June financial report reflects the first time our ministry plan has been directly aligned with our budget, making it easier to see how our financial resources support our shared mission. At this time, approximately \$17,471 remains available to be allocated toward ministry priorities.

Looking Ahead: Communications and Technology

A significant portion of the meeting focused on how we can better communicate our mission, both within the congregation and throughout the wider community.

It became clear that our current staffing capacity is not enough to support the vision we have for our website, digital communications, technology infrastructure, and online engagement. Much of this work continues to rely on volunteers, and several important needs have grown beyond what is sustainable.

To move this work forward thoughtfully, two new task forces will be formed:

- **Communications**, which will focus on messaging, publicity, community engagement, and helping people connect with our church.
- **Technology**, which will evaluate our digital platforms, technology infrastructure, website needs, technical support, and whether our current systems are the best fit for the future.

These groups will help shape recommendations for staffing, technology, and long-term strategy. Volunteers will be invited through the Friday email, and we encourage anyone with interest or experience in these areas to consider participating.

Racial Equity Workshop

The group also voted to continue exploring the possibility of hosting a racial equity workshop in partnership with Organize Against Racism (OAR). Tyler will gather additional information about costs and logistics before a final decision is made.

The hope is to offer this workshop not only to our congregation but also to educators, neighboring faith communities, and others in the wider Raleigh area. This opportunity aligns closely with our ministry priorities and offers another meaningful way for our church to serve the broader community.

* Please rise in body or in spirit.

Website Support

To ensure our website continues to function well while longer-term technology plans are being developed, approval was given for a month-to-month website support package. This temporary approach provides stability while the new technology task force evaluates future needs. Anyone who is able to help Christy move website content is encouraged to reach out.

Celebrating Our Volunteers

An initial budget of \$1,500 was approved to support volunteer appreciation efforts in 2026. This year's Volunteer Appreciation event continues to take shape, and we're grateful for everyone who gives their time, talents, and energy to the life of our church.

Ministry Updates

Several ministry teams shared updates:

- Our Out! Raleigh and Guns to Gardens teams reported strong community engagement, with more detailed reflections scheduled for next month's meeting.
- The Family, Youth, and Children team continues developing ministry opportunities for young adolescents and their caregivers. They also hope to bring in a guest speaker in the future to address topics affecting today's youth.

Looking Ahead

Be sure to mark your calendars for several upcoming opportunities to gather together:

- **August:** Home Group Networking
- **August 30:** Fellowship Cookout
- **September 13:** Kick-Off Sunday, centered around the theme, *"What do we still need to do in 2026?"*

As always, thank you for your continued support, prayers, and participation as we continue discerning how God is calling our congregation to serve both one another and our wider community.

* Please rise in body or in spirit.