

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

August 23rd, 2026 at 10:30am (Onsite & Online)



umstead park

UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

GATHERING

Welcome

Rev. Paula Womack

Invocation

Mark Schurtman

Meditation

What is a time that you acted in solidarity, with someone who was in need or from a position of power?

What are some of the community issues or possibilities that are especially important to you?

Prelude

David Wilson

Time of Greeting

***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

Song as Connection "Siyahamba (We Are Walking in the Light of God)"
(see insert)

Ada McKerrell,
Congregation

HEARING AND RESPONDING

Time with Children

Rev. Tyler Ung

Blessing for Students

One: The journey of learning is holy and sacred.

Many: **It is how we come to know and love ourselves, each other, and our world.**

One: As these students begin a new season of learning, bless the work that they will do this year,

Many: **that it will bear fruit and bring growth;**

One: Bless their minds,

Many: **that they may be filled with knowledge and wonder;**

One: Bless their bodies,

Many: **that they may be healthy and safe;**

One: And bless their spirits,

Many: **that they may grow to hold more compassion and love. Amen.**



* Please rise in body or in spirit.

Reading of Scripture

Esther 4, *The Inclusive Bible*
(see insert)

Mark Schurtman

Sermon

“Hope Is Action”

Rev. Tyler Ung

*Responsive Hymn

#396, “Where Charity and Love Prevail”

Congregation

Prayers of the People

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Rev. Tyler Ung

 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. Tyler Ung

 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

#588, “Let Justice Flow Like Streams”

Congregation

Announcements

*Affirmation of Community

Mark Schurtman

- 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 Minister
- 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:

Reed Altman, AV Team

Peter van Dorsten (he/him), AV Team

Kathy Austin (she/her), Coffee Set Up/Usher

Mike Boston (he/him), Asst. Treasurer/Usher

Ashley Montague (she/her), Greeter

Mark Schurtman, Lay Leader

Ada McKerrell, Lay Leader

 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!

* Please rise in body or in spirit.

Supplemental Hymns and Texts

Song as Connection “Siyahamba (We Are Walking in the Light of God)” Congregation

2 times

We are walk - ing in the light of God, we are walk-ing in the light of God! ____

2 times

We are walk-ing, we are walk-ing, oh! ____ we are walk-ing in the light of God! ____

Reading of Scripture Esther 4, *The Inclusive Bible* Mark Schurtman

¹ When Mordecai heard about the decree, he ripped his tunic and put on sackcloth and ashes. Then, he paraded through the city, sounding loud and bitter shrieks, ² until he arrived at the front door of the Sovereign’s Gate, though he was stopped there because no one was permitted to enter wearing sackcloth and ashes. ³ The same thing happened in every province—no sooner had the imperial decree been read than every Jewish person in the province began mourning, fasting, weeping and wailing, and many of them put on sackcloth and ashes.

⁴ When Esther’s attendants told her what was happening, she was overwhelmed with grief. She sent out clothes for Mordecai to wear instead of sackcloth, but he refused to wear them. ⁵ Then Esther called Hathach, a eunuch assigned by the sovereign to attend her. She ordered him to go to Mordecai and ask him why he was behaving in this manner.

⁶ Hathach went out to Mordecai, who was still in the public square in front of the Sovereign’s Gate. ⁷ Mordecai told him what happened to him, and about the bribe that Haman offered to the imperial treasury as payment for the destruction of the Jewish people. ⁸ Mordecai also gave the eunuch a copy of the decree of extermination which was proclaimed in Susa, and asked him to show it to Esther so that she might know everything that had happened. He also asked the eunuch to tell Esther to go to the sovereign and plead the case of their people before him. [“Remember your humbler origins,” he said, “when I provided you with all you needed. Since Haman, who holds the second place in the empire, has asked the sovereign to kill us, implore God to speak to the sovereign on our behalf and save us from destruction!”]

⁹ Hathach returned to Esther and told her what Mordecai had said. ¹⁰ She returned the following message to Mordecai: ¹¹ “All of the emperor’s attendants and people of the provinces know that anyone who approaches the sovereign in the inner court without being summoned faces one punishment—death—unless the sovereign spares her life by pointing the golden scepter toward her. I have not been summoned to the sovereign for the last thirty days.”

¹² When Mordecai heard Esther’s reply, he wrote back the following response: ¹³ “Don’t fool yourself into thinking that, just because you are in the imperial palace, you will be the only Jewish person to escape. ¹⁴ If you insist on remaining silent at this time, vindication and liberation will come to our people through another source, but both you and your family will surely die. Who’s to say?—you may have come into the royal court for just this moment.”

¹⁵ So Esther sent a message to Mordecai: ¹⁶ “Bring together all the Jewish people in Susa now and fast for me. Do not eat or drink, day and night, for three days. After that, I will go to the sovereign in defiance of the law. If I die, I die.”

* Please rise in body or in spirit.

Announcements

Next PeerSpace Rental | August 29th

Please be advised that our space will be rented for an event on the above date. If you're able to help prepare the worship space after service on the Sunday prior that would be much appreciated!

End of Summer Cook Out - Sign Up Now! | August 30th after Worship

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! 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! You may access the Sign Up Genius for sides and desserts by scanning the QR code.



2026 Congregational Feedback Survey | Respond by August 31

 As we grow into our hopeful future, we want to remain rooted in our identity as a community-led congregation. To that end, please take a few minutes to give some feedback about your experience of our church. Thank you for your time, and for your beloved part of our community!

Sign-Up for Fall Choir | Rehearsals begin Sept. 2nd!

The Fall choir runs from Sept. to Christmas, and we hope you'll give it a try! If you love music and want to be a part of a loving community, sign up via the QR code! This is a great opportunity to live into our Ministry Plan of Connecting with Courage & Care! Talk to David if you have any questions, or to schedule a vocal check-up!



Kick-Off Sunday | September 13th

Are you passionate about your group, task force, lead team, or any other part of our church community? We need you on September 13th for our Kick-Off Sunday! We're inviting a representative from each group to host a table in the worship space after service. This is a fantastic opportunity to meet new people, share what your group is all about, and help others find their place at UPUCC. Don't miss this chance to help make our Kick-Off Sunday a success! Please sign up to represent your group by September 6. You can sign up using the QR code or by emailing us at office@upucc.org.



Write UPUCC a 5-Star Review!

One easy way to spread the word about our wonderful community is to leave us an online a review! You are invited to take a minute or two this week to search "Umstead Park UCC" on Google and write us a 5-star review! Bonus points for adding a written comment in addition to the stars!

New Lay Leader Process

 We want our worship to offer a rich diversity of leadership, as well as help connect our congregants to the spiritual themes that resonate with them. If you are interested in being in our pool of lay leaders, please provide your contact via the QR code here! We will make sure that the people in the Lay Leader interest pool are regularly helping to lead worship. Thank you for helping to keep our church a community-led congregation!

Compost Now fund needs a refill!

The Compost Now fund is getting low, and we need to replenish it. In the 4 years that UPUCC has been composting, we've diverted >24,000 pounds of waste and created almost 8,000 pounds of compost. Compost Now costs ~\$130/month and is funded through donations from covenant partners who use the service or those who want to support the environmental impact we are making. Please submit your donation in the offering basket with a check designated to "Compost Now" or by scanning the QR code.



Covenant Leadership Circle Opening — We're calling you!

We have an opening on the CLC for a Covenant Partner to serve as a CLC member through April of 2028. We encourage anyone interested to contact either Tyler, Paula, Gia or any member of the CLC. We would like to identify anyone interested by August 21st. More information in the CLC section below!

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, or Barista (Coffee Set Up and Clean Up). Scan the QR code to access the Sign-Up Genius.



UCC Connections

Join the United Church of Christ’s “Nurture the Soul” webinar on Thursday, August 27 at 3:30 p.m. to look at “Who Pays the Price: Migrant Labor, Economic Justice and Our Faith.” We are all experiencing a rise in our food prices, but the people who harvest our food are often left out of the conversation. This webinar connects the cost-of-living crisis to migrant labor while exploring the roles of faith in this justice advocacy. Faith and community leaders will share actionable ways for viewers to participate in UCC’s Fill the JAR and Love Knows No Borders economic and immigration justice campaigns.



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.



* Please rise in body or in spirit.

Follow Us on Social Media!
Facebook: UmsteadParkUCC | Instagram: UmsteadParkUCC | BlueSky: upucc.bsky.social

Receive Email Updates!
Each week we send out an e-mail full of updates about upcoming events, Sunday services, as well as joys and concerns of our church family. If you would like to receive these emails, scan the QR code here and submit your email address!



Upcoming PeerSpace Rentals
September 4th, 12th, 19th | October 24th, 31st | November 20th, 21st | December 5th, 12th, 30th, 31st | January 1st (2027) | July 31st (2027) | August 1st (2027)

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				
	July	2026 YTD	2026 Budget	Difference / Remaining
General Offerings	\$20,948	\$150,109	\$304,882	-\$154,773
Total Income	\$26,601	\$170,821	\$331,466	-\$160,645
Total Expenses	\$26,609	\$196,642	\$386,585	-\$189,943
Net Income	-\$8	-\$25,981	-\$55,119	-\$29,442
*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, Sept. 20th at 12:00pm in the UPUCC Library and Online. All are welcome!

Looking Ahead Together: Building Ministry, Community, and Connection

This month’s meeting reflected a church community that is actively looking ahead —strengthening ministry, welcoming new people, supporting children and youth, deepening community partnerships, and preparing for the year ahead. Much of the conversation centered on how we can build on what is already working while creating more opportunities for people to connect, participate, and help shape our shared ministry.

Financial and Administrative Updates

The group approved the previous month’s minutes. A July financial update is still being finalized because of the early meeting date, and a summary will be shared once the reports are complete. The year-to-date financial picture and full financial report are available in the church’s financial materials. An audit report was also discussed. The review highlighted the unique nature of our online community and was encouraging in that it did not identify major gaps in the church’s operations. Follow-up materials from the audit conversation will be shared by email. There was also discussion about whether the audit can be shared with covenant partners.

Welcoming New Visitors

A significant part of the conversation focused on ways to make a first visit to our church more welcoming and memorable. The group explored creating small gift bags for new visitors that could include a postcard or brochure, branded pens, tissues, a snack or candy, a magnet, a small bottle of water, and other helpful items. There was also interest in including information about our social justice ministries and even notes from children, similar to the welcome materials shared at Out! Raleigh.

* Please rise in body or in spirit.

Preparing for Our Next Chapter of Ministry

The church is also preparing to develop its 2027 Ministry Plan. Home Group gatherings are taking place throughout August, with many being led by church members. The conversations and ideas shared through these groups will help shape the ministry plan, with a goal of completing the core plan before September 20. A broader church survey will also be distributed soon. Together, the Home Groups and survey will give the congregation meaningful opportunities to share hopes, ideas, and priorities for the future. Task force work is expected to move forward after August, with a visible presence planned for Kickoff Sunday on September 13.

Guns to Gardens: A Ministry With Momentum

The recent Guns to Gardens event was celebrated as an example of what can happen when thoughtful ministry planning, community partnerships, and financial support come together. The event grew beyond its initial expectations, attracted additional financial participation, and concluded with a surplus. The organizers also gathered survey responses that can help tell the story of the event and its impact. The group discussed ways to share those results more broadly—not only within religious communities, but throughout the wider community. Possibilities include updating the church website, making greater use of social media to tell ministry stories rather than simply announce events, and building on coverage already received through the UCC Southern Conference newsletter. There was also discussion of pursuing broader media coverage. Because the event was made possible in part through support from RAW Tools South, a motion was approved to give more than \$800 of the cash surplus to RAW Tools South as an expression of gratitude for their partnership and discounted 2025 rate. Gift cards from the surplus will be held for next year's event. Looking ahead, the hope is for Guns to Gardens to become an annual event, with different partner faith communities taking the lead from year to year. Our church may also offer its facility as a location, since the space and traffic flow worked particularly well. Perhaps most importantly, the conversation emphasized that the impact of Guns to Gardens cannot be measured only in attendance numbers or dollars. The stories, relationships, outreach, and social justice work generated through the event are an important part of its success.

PACE and Community Engagement

PACE is beginning to look toward the coming election season, with particular attention to education, voter registration, and early voting. There is also ongoing work with Healing Transitions. The group discussed how the church can amplify the work already being done by community organizations and make useful, reliable information accessible to people.

Building on the Energy of Out! Raleigh

The church's presence at Out! Raleigh was another encouraging example of community engagement. The booth generated good conversations, attracted interest through merchandise and signage, and resulted in new email connections. Most of those who shared their email addresses remain subscribed to the church's Friday email. The next challenge is helping people take a natural next step—from meeting us at a community event to exploring the church more fully. Online worship can be an especially welcoming entry point for those who are curious but not yet ready to attend in person. The team also discussed reusing the popular photo booth and signs at future church events, including the August fellowship cookout. There was strong interest in creating magnets or other materials based on the signs for future welcome bags. The group also hopes to build a stronger connection between major community events and upcoming church initiatives, and to plan an event soon after next year's Out! Raleigh to maintain that momentum.

Making Giving Easier

The possibility of accepting donations through services such as Venmo or PayPal was discussed. Having a simple way for people to give electronically could make it easier to receive donations at community events and during worship.

* Please rise in body or in spirit.

Supporting the Creativity Group

The Creativity Group is working to improve how its materials, cards, and donations are stored and displayed. Because some donated materials have gone missing or been damaged, the group is seeking a dedicated and secure space where its items can be stored and displayed safely. A tall rolling rack has been purchased as one possible solution. There was discussion about using lobby space rather than the worship area during the week, as well as creating a digital payment option.

Coordinating Building Use

The group discussed ways to make information about upcoming building rentals more accessible, including potentially adding rental information to the bulletin. Since the Friday email has limited space, other communication options may be needed. It is also important to clearly communicate that renters are not permitted to enter the church office area.

What's Coming Up

There are several opportunities for connection and participation in the coming weeks:

- **August:** Home Group networking and conversations shaping the 2027 Ministry Plan
- **August 30:** Fellowship cookout
- **September 13:** Kickoff Sunday, with task forces invited to have a presence
- **September:** Development of the draft 2027 Ministry Plan
- **September 20:** Next meeting and continued work on the ministry plan

There is also continuing work around racial equity training for our church and the wider community.

An Invitation to Be Part of What's Next

Across all of these conversations, one theme was clear: the future of our church is something we build together. Whether through a Home Group, a task force, a community event, welcoming a visitor, sharing an idea through the upcoming survey, or simply showing up and getting to know someone new, there are many ways to participate. The energy around Guns to Gardens, Out! Raleigh, Home Groups, and our upcoming ministry planning reminds us that ministry grows when people bring their gifts, ideas, time, and care. If you have been wondering where you might plug in, this is a great season to take that next step. There is a place for you in what we are building together.