

# Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 20th, 2026 at 10:30am (Onsite & Online)



umstead park

UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

## GATHERING

Welcome and a Time of Greeting

Rev. Paula Womack

Invocation

Gwen Reagan

Meditation

“Life is so beautiful, and life is so hard. ... Life will break your heart, and life may take everything you have and everything you hope for. But there is one kind of prosperity gospel that I believe in. I believe that in the harshness, even there, there will be beauty, and there will be love.” –Kate Bowler, Adapted from *Everything Happens for a Reason—And Other Lies I've Loved*

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

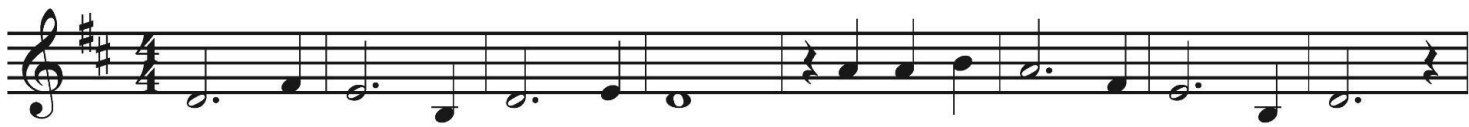
#8, “Praise to the Living God”

Congregation

## HEARING AND RESPONDING

Time with Children

Rev. Tyler Ung



Peave I leave with you, my friends. Sha-lom, my peace in all you do.



Peace I leave with you, my friends. I give to you so you can give to o - thers too. \_\_\_\_

Reading of Scripture

Psalm 145:1-8, from *The Inclusive Bible*  
(see insert)

Gwen Reagan

Sermon

“God’s Abundant Goodness”

Rev. Paula Womack

\*Responsive Hymn

“Love Divine, Keep Drawing Near Us”  
(see insert)

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](https://tinyurl.com/upuccprayers), or scan the QR code.

\* Please rise in body or in spirit.



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

SENDING INTO THE WORLD

\*Sending Hymn

#476, “My Life Flows On In Endless Song”

Congregation

Announcements

\*Affirmation of Community

Gwen Reagan

- 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
- 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:

Bill Yoder (he/him), AV Team  
Nevin Fouts, AV Team  
Amy Lewis (she/her), Coffee Set-Up  
Ashley Montague (she/her), Greeter  
Gwen Reagan (she/her), 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!

# Supplemental Hymns and Texts

Reading

Psalm 145:1-8, *The Inclusive Bible*

Gwen Reagan

- 1

I will extol you, my God, my ruler,  
and I will bless your name forever and ever!
- 2

Every day will I bless you,  
and I will praise your name forever and ever!
- 3

Great you are, God, and greatly to be praised;  
your greatness is unfathomable.
- 4

Generation after generation praises your works  
and proclaims your mighty deeds;
- 5

they'll speak of the splendor  
of your glorious majesty,  
and I will meditate on your wondrous acts.
- 6

They'll discourse of the power  
of your awesome deeds,  
and I will declare your greatness.
- 7

They'll celebrate the fame  
of your abundant goodness,  
and I will joyfully sing of your justice.
- 8

God, you are gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and rich in love.

\*Responsive Hymn

"Love Divine, Keep Drawing Near Us"

Congregation



1. When our pain hides all that's good, — Still your mer - cy meets the night;

2. You are grac - ious, God of — mer - cy, Slow to an - ger, rich in — love;

3. Sac - red Spi - rit, keep us — seek - ing, Keep our ques - tions o - pen wide;

4. Love di - vine, keep draw - ing near us, Not to make our sor - rows small,



Not a pro - mise life is — pain - less, But your love re - mains our — light.

Not re - moved from hu - man suffer - ing, But be - side us through it — all.

When we can - not name your pre - sence, Help us trust that love a - bides.

But to deep - en our com - pas - sion, And to help us bear it — all.



Not a shield from grief or — sor - row, Not a claim that all is — well,

Where the world is torn by — ha - tred, Make us a - gents of re - pair;

In the bonds that hold us — clos - er, In the stran - ger wel - comed here,

May our lives be - come a — wit - ness To the love that will not — cease;



But a love that holds us — stead - fast When the good is hard to — tell.

Where des - pair ob - scures our vi - sion, Make your good - ness known through care.

In each act of love and jus - tice, Let your good - ness re - ap - pear.

Through the night and toward to - mor - row, May we make a way for — peace.

\* Please rise in body or in spirit.

# Announcements

## Community Hour | After Worship

Every Sunday after worship, we have the chance to deepen our connections through Community Hour. Do you want to craft with other creatives? Share about your travel experiences? Learn about important topics? Eat lunch with friends from the church? All these and more are possible! Bring your ideas and invite others to join you each and every Sunday following worship.

For Community Hour this Sunday, you are invited to attend the Covenant Leadership Circle (CLC) for their monthly meeting after church onsite in the library or online via the QR code. You may bring a bag lunch, or partake in some of the snacks we often have on hand. All are welcome.



### *Upcoming Community Hour Opportunities*

- **October 4** – Learn how to play *Nertz!*, a fast-faced, competitive card game based on solitaire. David W. will be teaching how to play! If you enjoy it, you can even come to the next Nertz Night (October 12 at 6:30).
- **October 18** – Join us for a Book Discussion during Community Hour on October 18! We will discuss *For Such a Time as This: An Emergency Devotional*. This 2025 book by theologian Hanna Reichel offers spiritual guidance and historical perspective for Christians navigating political turmoil, social division, and rising authoritarianism. You can [click here](#) to purchase a copy, and all are welcome to join the conversation.
- **Yours goes here!**

## NW Raleigh Board Games MeetUp | September 24th at 6:30pm



In keeping with our Ministry Plan of "Connecting with Courage and Care," we are hosting a monthly game night that is open to those in our surrounding neighborhoods and the Triangle in general. To RSVP, scan the QR code to join the MeetUp group or by email David Wilson.

## Aesthetics Task Force Vote | Oct. 4

After listening to the congregation's feedback, the Aesthetics Task Force has drafted a proposed list of guiding values to guide our work with a professional designer. You can review these values by scanning the QR code and we will hold a brief congregational vote following worship on Oct 4 to approve them. If you have any comments or concerns, please reach out to Tyler!



## A Music and Mental Health Mini-Retreat | Oct. 24



All are welcome to join for 'A Song in My Heart: A Music and Mental Health Mini-Retreat' on October 24 from 9:00am–12:00pm. This mini-retreat is hosted by our friends at Good Shepherd UCC and facilitated by Lois Deloatch. For more information or to register, click below.

## Check Your Voter Registration

From the PACE group: Don't take your ability to vote for granted. Check your registration using the link. While you are at it, check for your whole family, and consider assisting 3 friends who would welcome your help. Let's vote our covenant into being. Scan the QR code or visit <https://vt.ncsbe.gov/RegLkup/> to check your registration!



## Interested in Serving Communion?

Have you ever served communion? Would you like to? Would you like to again? Here at UPUCC communion is usually served the first Sunday of each month. All information you need is provided prior to Communion Sunday, and we review everything with you on Sunday morning. So, if you have never served before and would like to, or if you would like to serve again sometime, please let Jane W. know!

**Garden Cistern in Need of Repair**

 Our beautiful garden is in need of some water. We have a cistern which is full of water but the pump is broken and needs to be replaced. We need to keep it watered to stay beautiful and we don't want to waste water. A new pump is around \$600. If you are able to contribute to garden fund so we can raise enough money to get the pump fixed the plants would be very grateful! To donate, scan the QR code, or go to [upucc.org/giving](http://upucc.org/giving), click "Make a Donation," and select "Garden Fund" from the dropdown menu. Thank you all so very much! -Debbie B.

**AV Team Volunteers Needed**

Have you ever found yourself worshiping online? Was it valuable to you? Is being able to worship online a valuable service for our community? Do you value hearing great speaker audio and piano sound during the worship service? Have you ever used computer software, such as PowerPoint that required active monitoring and changes? If you answered, Yes to some of these questions, the AV Team needs you! While AV work may sound highly technical, it is not as complex (or frightening!) as some might think. Responsibilities are currently split between audio and video jobs. Audio monitors sound levels onsite and online, making active adjustments. Video typically works with 2-3 software applications to do things such as aim the camera and transition between a service Welcome screen, onsite camera feed, and Celebration of Gifts screen, frequently with just the click of a button. Training is required. Perfection is not. With experience will come greater ability. But, experience can only come if you join us. So join us!! Reach out to Peter v.D. or Scott A. if you're interested!

**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**

 Vote With Love: Mobilizing Our Communities This Mid-Term Election. This midterm election, the stakes are higher than ever. Join the United Church of Christ and our partners for a webinar conversation on September 28 at 3:30 p.m. about why community mobilization matters right now, and what's on the line for a few of the issues closest to our hearts: climate change, immigration justice, and economic justice. We'll explore how these issues are showing up on ballots and in policy debates this election cycle, and why voting with love is a faith practice, not just a civic duty. Scan the QR code for more information.

**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.



**Lay Leading in Worship**

 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!

\* Please rise in body or in spirit.

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](mailto: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](#)

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

October 24th, 31st | November 20th, 21st | December 5th, 30th, 31st | January 1st (2027) | May 29th (2027) | July 3rd, 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

\* Please rise in body or in spirit.

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.

**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

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\* Please rise in body or in spirit.

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.

**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.

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\* Please rise in body or in spirit.