



COMEBACK The ^ Chimes

SUMMER 2021
EDITION

UNIVERSITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CHAPEL HILL



PHASES OF REGATHERING

Full timeline for a
gradual return | p. 5

WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY

In-person worship
resumes on Aug. 1st | p. 7

FALL PROGRAMMING

Small groups, children,
youth, and more! | p. 8-9

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Congrats, Grads!



UPC High
School
Graduates

PCM College
Graduates



Our Staff

Meg Peery McLaughlin, Co-Pastor

Jarrett McLaughlin, Co-Pastor

Kim McNeill, Staff Associate for Youth Ministries

Nancy Myer, Staff Associate for Children's
Ministries

Joey Fala, Director of Music Ministry

Kathleen Jasinskis, Director of Youth and
Children's Choirs

Berry French, Temporary Associate Pastor for
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Hadley Kifner, Temporary Parish Associate

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Ellen Parker, Director, UPPS

Jeanette Schmidt, Office Manager

Katharine Yager, Controller

Melani Willhite, Financial Assistant

Dennis Dallke, Property Manager

Rob Kurtz, Sexton

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vimeo.com/upcch

Pastor's Message



Meg Peery McLaughlin

Co-Pastor

meg@upcch.org

Dear Friends,

Last month, I was walking your deacons through a conversation about what it means to lead in a liminal season. The etymology of *liminality* is derived from the Latin word for threshold. Your deacons want to provide care for this congregation as we stand at this threshold moment:

between our pre-COVID and post-COVID church life,
betwixt the staff we knew just a few short years ago and the one that currently serves,
in the middle of the world as God would dream it to be, and the world we know today.

In many ways, UPC is experiencing multiple thresholds at the same time. Perhaps that makes us overachievers, but mostly I think it makes for a great deal of self-reflection. (For a helpful video on liminality, click here - steve-thomason.net/2020/04/30/48111 - it's worth your time). In the midst of that conversation, the deacons were focused on the grief work involved in liminality, for there is much to process about not having the normal we once knew. It was a fruitful discussion, and at one point, Shipley Jenkins piped up and asked, "but don't you think what we *also* need is some joy?"

Shipley is more than right! As the Psalmist says, *in God's presence there is fullness of joy*. And friends, have we not longed to share such joy with one another in 3D, to make a joyful noise to the Lord in the same room? I know I have.

Which is why this version of the (comeback) Chimes brings me so much delight. What you are about to read here is our plan—as best we know it—for coming back together in person this summer. There is a lot to digest here and thankfully good background on the *why* of UPC's decisions, so take your time reading. But know that at the heart of this whole issue is the joy we share in being the church together.

"...at the heart of this whole issue is the joy we share in being the church together."

Many thanks to the Together in Person Team (and the COVID Taskforce before them) who have been advising the Session and working with the Staff to make all these weighty decisions. *Many thanks* to all the UPC leaders who have been pivoting, adapting, adjusting, (pick your favorite COVID verb) to keep church going for the past year plus. And *many thanks* to you---dear UPC saints--for living into the truth that love is indeed never cancelled and for continuing the myriad of ways you steward that love in this world.

What joy!

Meg

A Letter from the Clergy of Chapel Hill

Dear neighbors and friends in Chapel Hill faith communities:

Our houses of worship have sought to walk together through the Covid-19 pandemic. Since March of last year, senior clergy leaders representing nearly two dozen congregations throughout the Chapel Hill area have met weekly to receive public health updates and discern how best to counsel our congregations. As we celebrate the high rates of vaccination that make more activities possible in the summer months, we want to offer an update on how we feel our communities may gather for worship and fellowship.

Our guiding image now is a dial rather than a light switch. We do not anticipate that in-person worship services will return to full-strength instantaneously. Rather we expect the summer will be a time for cautious and incremental steps toward more communal activity. All of this will take deliberate planning and assessment as we monitor public health conditions and reflect on the needs of different communities.

March and April of this year have been the most difficult months for those of us tasked with making decisions about how and when to call our communities together. Before vaccines were available, there was a clear consensus that gathering of any sort was inadvisable. Now that 35% of Americans and 33% of North Carolinians are vaccinated, we are often asked to interpret conflicting advice and contemplate the needs of communities with different levels of privilege and exposure. In Orange County, the vaccination numbers are particularly impressive. The vaccination rate locally is 49% and among those older than 65, it is 84%. That is such great news! And yet, at this midway point in the vaccination campaign, we are also faced with questions of equity and fairness. We want to lean into more life-giving communal activities even as we remember the many people in our community who are unable to participate in those activities.

Many of you are wondering if, in light of the recent change in guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and from Governor Cooper, we can resume our customary worship. Although all of us wish for a return to regular community gatherings, our ability to do so is tempered by pandemic realities. There are almost 2,000 cases of Covid-19 reported every day in North Carolina. Orange County is still considered a high risk place for transmission. Young children still cannot be vaccinated, and there is increasing evidence that vaccines are not protective to many people with compromised immune systems.

While we will not ever be at zero risk from the virus, we are moving toward an increasingly lower risk rate. Our resumption of activities needs to keep in step with that lowering risk in order to protect the vulnerable in our midst.

At this point in our life with the pandemic, we recognize that different faith communities may adopt different guidelines to meet the needs of their houses of worship. But all of our congregations are committed to risk-mitigation practices in indoor worship services, urging outdoor events when possible, and encouraging face masks when unvaccinated people are at risk of Covid-19 exposure. We hold a common set of values. We seek to be good neighbors and good custodians of public health. And we are striving together to be attentive to inequities in Covid exposure and vaccination.

We hope this update helps you to understand our concerns as we approach the summer and consider the future. We know that some may consider our approach too cautious at a time when the governor is loosening statewide restrictions. But we continue to feel it is right for our congregations to ensure that the worship of God does not contribute to the spread of illness. We hope that our congregations will continue to walk together as we “dial up” our religious assemblies and community activities through the summer.

Yours in faith,

Sarah Ball-Damberg, *Church of the Holy Family*; Will Rose, *Holy Trinity Lutheran and Lutheran Campus Ministry*; Cameron Barr, *United Church of Chapel Hill*; Justin Coleman, *University United Methodist Church*; Jen Feldman, *Kehillah Synagogue*; Damarcus Johnson, *Life Church*; Barry Jones, *University Baptist Church*; Jay Kennett, *Hillsborough United Church of Christ*; Michael Cousin, *St. Paul AME Church*; Curt Lowndes, *The Gathering Church*; Marcus McFaul, *Binkley Baptist Church*; Meg Peery McLaughlin and Jarrett McLaughlin, *University Presbyterian Church*; Elizabeth Marie Melchionna, *The Chapel of the Cross*; Adam Seate, *Orange United Methodist Church*; Ben Williams, *Christ United Methodist Church*; Dr. Rodney Coleman, *First Baptist Church Chapel Hill*; Lisa Fischbeck, *The Episcopal Church of the Advocate*; Isaac Villegas, *Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship*; Donnie L. Jones, *Amity United Methodist Church*

Giving Thanks for the Pentecost Picnic



On May 23, we held our Pentecost Picnic at Camp New Hope, and it was a huge success! Over 250 were in attendance as we spent time together listening to music, catching up, playing kickball, and enjoying ice cream. It was so nice to simply BE TOGETHER after such a long time apart! Special thanks to the Congregational Life Committee and Membership Committee and to the team that led their work: Berry French, Sarah Owen, Lyn Billings, Jackie Soderling, and Hannah Starr.

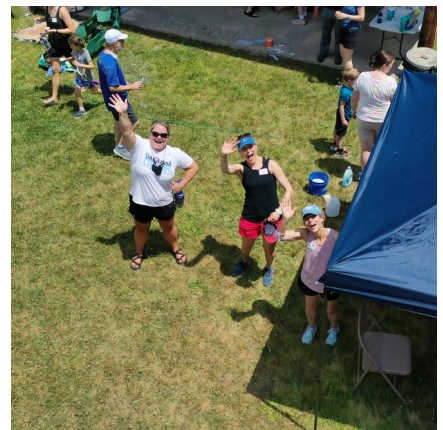


Photo Credits: Sarah Owen, Jeff Howard

UPC Phases of Regathering: An Overview

1

Phase 1: Preparing a Place - June 1

We are getting ready to worship together! On July 18 and 25, our worship leaders will live-stream from the sanctuary as we test out our technology. (p. 6).

2

Phase 2: People in the Pews - August 1

We will resume in-person worship in the sanctuary, starting with just one service at 10am, along with Punch on the Porch (p. 7).

3

Phase 3: Gathering in Groups - September 19

In this phase, we will resume small groups, two worship services, and Sunday afternoon & evening programming for children & youth (p. 8).

4

Phase 4: Sliding into Sunday School - October 3

Sunday morning educational programming returns! (p. 9).

5

Phase 5+: Navigating the New Normal - 2022

By 2022, we're hopeful that most restrictions can be lifted and we can resume things like Second Sunday Lunch (p. 9).

Our Core Values Guiding this Process

Safety

We want to keep our full congregation safe, particularly the most vulnerable (unvaccinated & immunocompromised).

Inclusion

Different people have different comfort levels with in-person gatherings, and we want to be sensitive to that. As much as we reasonably can, we will make accommodations for those who still need or desire additional precautions, including the continuation of worship online.

Hope

We will continue to take necessary precautions in the hope and faith that they will not be needed in the future.

Patience

It takes a lot of work to regather...and this will be new for all of us! We will need to be patient with our leadership, one another, and with ourselves as we figure out the shape of our life together post-COVID.

➔ What's Happening Now

Our TIP (Together In Person) Team is continuing to meet and work in concert with our program staff to prepare for regathering.

Our live-stream team is researching and installing technology to allow us to continue streaming worship online when we return to in-person gatherings.

➔ What's Coming Next

June 27: Outdoor worship at Camp New Hope at 10am (prerecorded worship will still be available online)

July 11: Final pre-recorded worship service

July 18: Live-streamed worship from the sanctuary at 10am with only worship leaders present (available on Facebook and upcch.org/live)

July 25: Live-streamed worship from the sanctuary at 10am with a **Church Work Day** to follow



Usher Volunteers Needed

Our biggest volunteer need as we *prepare a place* is for **ushers!** Ushers work together to greet worship participants, help monitor COVID protocols, and provide leadership during emergency situations. These volunteers will play a vital role in our safe return to worship in the sanctuary.

Training sessions will take place this summer to help both new and returning ushers learn all aspects of the job.

Would you be interested in serving in this way on a rotating basis? Visit tinyurl.com/UPCUshers to sign up today!



What will be different about live-streamed worship?

Moving to a live-stream format will result in a different feel to our worship videos. Rather than our worship leaders speaking up close to the camera, they will be leading from the chancel at the front of the sanctuary, and the cameras will record from farther away. You can still expect to experience thoughtful and meaningful worship, and we appreciate your patience with any technical glitches that may arise.

Also, rather than being available on demand, live-streamed worship will begin at 10am each Sunday. The recording will remain available on Facebook after the service is over and will be uploaded to Vimeo soon after.



Church Work Day (July 25)

Help us prepare our space for regathering! Participants will be able to attend the July 25 live-streamed service at 10am, then we'll get to work preparing the building together. Tasks might include cleaning up classrooms, placing signage, or other organizational work. Lunch from Mediterranean Deli will be provided.

(Bonus: you can come to church in your work day clothes...because the cameras will only be facing the worship leaders!)

To sign up, visit upcch.org/together.

Phase 2

People in the Pews

Anticipated Start: August 1

Beginning on August 1, in-person worship will be offered in our sanctuary at 10am. Worship will also be live streamed (upcch.org/live) for those who are unable to attend in person.

Punch on the Porch (an outdoor time of fellowship and light refreshments) will follow worship. Rather than a "grab and go" style, volunteers will serve refreshments using necessary precautions.



Protocols for In-Person Worship

To help protect our youngest members who are not yet eligible for vaccination and those who still need extra precautions, we will adhere to the following protocols:

- **Masks** will be required indoors at UPC, regardless of vaccination status.
- We will be **singing!** (The balcony will be reserved for those who prefer not to sing.)
- Sections of the sanctuary will be designated for those who wish to continue social distancing. If you sit in one of these sections, please abide by the signs and markings to maintain distance.
- **Nursery care** will be available. Children (and their wiggles and whispers) are welcome in worship as well!
- More detailed information about exact worship protocols will be communicated later this summer.



What if I'm not ready to come back to in-person gatherings?

We acknowledge that everyone has their own comfort levels when it comes to regathering. We want to gather safely and will be taking all necessary precautions to do so; we also know and respect that some will not feel ready to return at this time. Worship will be live-streamed for those who need to stay home. Please know that you are a beloved and cherished member of our church family, regardless of how you worship with us!

UPC CONGREGATIONAL RETREAT



Sunday, September 12, 2021

Camp New Hope, Chapel Hill

Registration is now open!

**For details and to register,
visit upcch.org/retreat**

Phase 3 *Gathering in Groups*

Anticipated Start: September 19

3

➔ Two Worship Services

8:30am - worship service

11:00am - worship service; Godly Play resumes for 4 year olds-K

In this phase, we will transition our live-stream from 10am to 11am. Live-streams will continue to be available on Facebook and upcch.org/live.

➔ Sunday Evenings Return

4:00-4:45pm - **Children's Choir & Junior Choir** (grades preK-1 and 2-5; both choirs will meet simultaneously), with childcare provided for younger siblings

5:00-6:00pm - **Youth Choir** (grades 6-12)

6:00-7:30pm - **Youth Group** (grades 6-12)

➔ Small Groups Return

Small groups will continue this fall! Curriculum will begin on September 19 (though groups are absolutely encouraged to resume meeting prior to that date; sermon manuscripts will be available if desired). Groups may meet at any time during the week other than Sunday mornings. Space will be available *by reservation only* on Sunday afternoons for those who wish to meet at UPC.

If you're already part of a small group and want to continue with the same group, please connect with your leader to let them know!

If you will be joining a small group for the first time or would like to switch to a new group, sign-ups will take place August 1-September 12.



Comeback Coffees

We want to provide intentional space for people to come together and visit and process everything that has happened since March 2020. What was the experience like? What did we learn about ourselves...our church...our world? What do we want to keep or remember from that time?

Comeback Coffees will be hosted on **September 19 and 26** at 10am and at the same time as evening children's/youth activities. These conversations will help the TIP team as they continue their work guiding us toward a new normal at UPC.



Do I have to wear a mask with my small group?

Face masks are required indoors when on the UPC campus. However, small groups of individuals who disclose their vaccination status in covenantal discussion with one another may elect to remove their face masks once they arrive in their meeting space.

4

Phase 4

Sliding Into Sunday School

Anticipated Start: October 3

Children's & Youth Classes

Children's & Youth classes will resume using their normal spaces, but with a mask requirement. Not sure which room your child will be in? We'll be happy to help you find the right location when you're here!



Adult Classes

We will have several classes available for adults - some that you know, and some that will be brand new! Look for more details and information about our fall class options in September.



Protocols for Education Programs

- Children's and youth classes will remain masked.
- Adult classes are asked to stay masked in communal spaces. Once they arrive in their meeting space, groups who disclose their vaccination status in covenantal discussion with one another may elect to remove their face masks.

5

Phase 5+

Navigating the New Normal

Anticipated Start: 2022

As we look to 2022, we are hopeful to resume Second Sunday Lunches, summer trips for all ages, and reduce our need for masks. However, we will continue to pay attention to guidance from medical professionals and consider factors such as vaccination availability for children. The safety of our entire congregation and our community will remain a priority.

We are grateful for the "Together In Person" team who will guide us through these phases:

*Sarah Bozyski, Anne Bryan, Greg Crawford, Jeff Howard, David Lane,
Amy McEntee (co-chair), Taylor Morris, Mary Ellen Olson (co-chair), Than Powell*

A Year Like No Other at UPPS



Ellen Parker
Director, UPPS
ellen@upcch.org

A year ago we at UPPS were wrestling with impossible questions about whether we would be able to have preschool this year, and if we did, how would we make it both a meaningful experience and safe for students, families, and staff members alike. We spent countless hours over the summer researching, consulting with local directors and health experts, meeting with staff, meeting with the UPPS Committee, planning, revising, and planning again. The plan that we settled on was definitely outside the box: we converted UPPS to be an outdoor learning center for as long as necessary.

It would be impossible to fully describe what went into making our year of outdoor learning successful. Every morning the UPPS staff carried tables, chairs, play equipment, tents, art materials, puzzles, games, building toys and so much more to the front yard, the Memorial garden, and the playground. And at the end of every day all of those items had to be carried back inside. The teachers and I have developed muscles we didn't know we had! Of course, outdoor learning is easiest on the beautiful, sunny days in the fall and spring. But there were a lot of days with more challenging weather that required blankets, portable heaters, and a lot of creativity to keep the children dry and moving.

In the end we were able to work with 54 children at preschool this year! 54 children who will have pandemic memories that include being snuggled under blankets in the Memorial Garden while their teacher read them a book. They'll remember riding cars up and down the sidewalk of the front yard. And that glorious magnolia tree that we all adore has been the center of so much joy all year, the memories that have been made there will remain for years to come.

I'm so very proud of the adaptations we made this year. I'm so proud of the teachers and their dedication to making sure we could offer young children the opportunity to laugh, learn, and make new friends all while balancing the needs of their own families. I'm proud of the parents of our preschoolers who took the screening questions very seriously and willingly kept their children out of school whenever there was any doubt. But the support for the preschool this year went far beyond our teachers and families. Rob and Dennis helped daily with our set up and clean up. Nancy Myer and Katharine Yager were constant advocates who figured out ways to make this year viable for the preschool. Meg and Jarrett enthusiastically helped with any problem solving as needed. The UPPS Committee, chaired by Claire Curran, have spent hours and hours on Zoom struggling through impossible questions.



Enormous gratitude is also due to you, the UPC congregation, for your understanding and tolerance this year as the preschool made a bigger footprint on the property than usual. Many thanks to you all for allowing the preschool to use our outdoor spaces as a refuge this year.

We will again be spending the summer monitoring recommendations and developments. One thing we know for sure is that we can be adaptable as we need to be in our commitment to providing quality early childhood education to children in our community. We also have been changed by the experiences of the past year, specifically by the incredible benefits of spending more time outside with our students. The connection with the soil, the trees, and the wildlife has been shown to have

increasing importance for mental health in a society that is becoming increasingly tied to technology and sedentary lifestyles. While our discovery of viable outdoor learning spaces emerged from necessity, we are hopeful to continue using these spaces in conjunction with our traditional classrooms. One last important note: UPPS will be celebrating our 50th anniversary next school year; we have much to be thankful for!

This Summer at UPC



Facing Racism

An Adult Education Virtual Summer Series

Presented by the UPC Racial Equity Team and the Adult Education Committee

Part 1: A Christian Perspective on Racial Justice

June 20, 11am - 12pm

Part 2: UPC Perspectives on Race and Racial Equity

July (exact date TBA)

Part 3: Where do we go from here?

August (exact date TBA)

All sessions will take place via Zoom. Log-in information will be included in the weekly worship email.



Nancy Myer to take Sabbatical this summer (July 2-Aug. 14, 2021)

Thank you, UPC, for the gift of sabbatical! I have requested a not-quite-traditional sabbatical in that I will take six weeks this summer (2021) and six weeks next summer (2022). This summer (July 2 - August 14), I plan to travel, rest, and reflect. I am planning to take a trip out west to Grand Teton, Yellowstone, and Glacier National Parks.



I have been spending a lot of time thinking about the last year, what we have learned from it, and what we may want to hold on to going forward. I intend to invite some UPC families into conversation in the weeks prior to going on sabbatical so that we can talk together about the last year and what families need from UPC going forward. After having these conversations with UPC families, I would like to carry their responses with me into my time away so I can reflect on and brainstorm about what children's ministry at UPC might look like in the future. I also want to continue thinking about how we can equip families to nurture faith at home, something we have been more intentional about during the last year.

I am so grateful for this faith community and the way you honor God's commandment for rest and renewal. To see pictures and read about my adventures this summer, you can follow my blog and learn where I go as I travel: anotherbannerday.blogspot.com



A PC(U.S.A.) Congregation



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