

Church Family,

Last fall, we embarked on a sermon series called “The Purple Church,” where we intentionally focused on the fact that we are a church made up of people of diverse voices and experiences in this life. We also remembered our greatest commandment from Jesus: to love God, to love one another, to love our neighbors, and to live in the peace that Christ gives us (Matt. 22: 37-38). We remembered the invitation by Jesus to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5: 44). We remembered that as a church the Apostle Paul invites us to be the One body of Jesus Christ, living in the world but not conformed or shaped by it (Rom. 12:2).

I grieve that our behaviors and rhetoric have led to the increasing collective belief that the only way to resolve a problem is by doing harm. We see it in our community, each day on the news as another shooting in Charlotte takes place. This week, Charlie Kirk and students at Evergreen High School in Denver. Two weeks ago, it was Anunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis. We hear it from the words of our leaders, who choose to stoke the fire of blame, fire of “us and them,” instead of inviting us to embody the peace and unity of Jesus. Maybe the harmful words that we hear are from our own mouths, the behaviors we see from our own bodies. Where is our collective ownership that we (and I do mean WE) are part of the problem?

One of you often says to me “I want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.” And we can be! Because Christians claim there is another way. There is a *better* way. It’s a way of holiness, the way of Jesus Christ. It is a way that is countercultural, and requires you and me and the rest of our one body of Christ to remember whose image it is that we bear in this world, both online, offline, and in the privacy of close family and friends. It is a way that often requires every fiber of our being to not give into temptation (Matt. 6:13). I encourage you to not lean into the flames that are being stoked. Do not give into celebration of death. Do not give into tribalism. Do not give into the “us vs. them” narrative that is oh, so enticing. Instead, pray for your heart to be softened. Pray for the grieving families and traumatized students. And while doing so, pray for someone who is different than you. Pray for them by name.

I invite you to also pray with me for our country, using these words adapted by Rev. Chuck Wilson, from the Book of Common Worship:

*God of ages, in whom we live and move and have our being, in your sight nations rise and fall and pass through times of peril. Now when our land is troubled, we commend our nation to your merciful care. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Make us who come from many nations with many different languages a united people. Defend our liberties and give those whom we have entrusted with the authority of government the wisdom and strength to know your will and to do it. Help them remember that they are called to serve the people as lovers of truth and justice. Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart, that the barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease, and that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace. Give us your light and your truth to guide us; through Jesus Christ who is Lord of this world, and our Savior. Amen.*

Praying for you and with you,  
Pastor Caitlin

## WEEKLY E-NEWS

### September Youth Lunch

Our next youth lunch meeting will take place on Sunday September 14 from 12:30pm-1:30pm in the Parlors. See Lori Kodikara if you have any questions. Hope to see you there!

### Contemporary Service Task Force

Pastor Caitlin is looking for partners in ministry to dream, offer input or feedback, and try new things for our 11am contemporary worship service. Is God calling you to serve our church in this way? Please reach out to Pastor Caitlin if you feel God's nudge!

### September Fall Festival Planning

Our next fall festival meeting will take place on Wednesday September 24th at 7pm in the Trinity Room. If you can't make it in person, let Pastor Caitlin know. A virtual option may be available to loop you in.



### Save the Date: Fall Festival!

Fall Festival is BACK! Mark your calendars for Saturday October 25th from 11am-3pm in the church parking lot. If it rains, no worries! We'll move it indoors to the FLC. Come for games, crafts, music, and ultimately...fellowship with God and one another!

### Fall Festival Candy Donations

To make the Fall Festival a success, candy donations are needed. Stores already have Halloween candy on sale and we are accepting donations via the bins located in the Sanctuary narthex and at the Family Worship Center entrance.

### New Giving Options

Text to Give - text HGUMCGIVE to 73256 or use the Online giving from HGUMC website. Go to [hickorygroveumc.com/give](http://hickorygroveumc.com/give) and complete the online giving form.

All transactions are secure.



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### WNCCUMC Equip & Connect Recordings available

The conference webinars for lay leadership are available on youtube. Please click [HERE](#) to access the recordings.

### Join Bishop Carter and Friends for a One-Year Journey Through Luke and Acts

Start off 2025 joining Bishop Carter and other leaders from our Conference and denomination on a transformative journey through two of the most impactful books of the New Testament—Luke and Acts. Click [here](#) to learn more and sign up to receive the weekly discussion guides via email.

### WECARE: Food Needs

Please help us restock the shelves at WeCare: peas, green beans, corn . Our WeCare Food Pantry and Clothing Closet will be open on Saturday September 13th from 10am-12pm.

### Snack Pack

School started August 25 and Snack Pack is gearing up for another school year. Your donations keep this ministry alive. Monetary or cans of kid friendly soup or pasta. If you have any questions, please call Jennifer Stribling at 704-617-2520.

### Ways to Help: WNCCUMC Disaster Response

For the latest update on how you can help respond to Hurricane Helene victims can be found on the WNCCUMC website [HERE](#).

**Beyond Conference Hospitality Volunteer!**

The WNCC Leadership Development Team is seeking hospitality volunteers to serve during the BEYOND conference being held at University City UMC on October 3rd and 4th. Volunteers can sign up for one or more of the three shifts each day. Volunteers will have the opportunity to attend one of two training sessions. An in-person training will be held at University City UMC on Sunday, September 14 at 2pm and an on-line training via Zoom on Tuesday, September 16 at 7pm. During the training, volunteers will receive assignments and instructions on their duties during their shift(s). Free childcare will be provided for volunteers during their service time. Please contact Kristi Miller at caklmiller90@gmail.com with questions or for more information. Here is the link to sign up:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0544A9AA2DA1FB6-57788237-beyond#/>

**BEYOND a Conference** is an opportunity for all to be inspired, educated, and motivated to move beyond the division, the despair, and the uncertainty TO a future where the Church is reclaiming and renewing its origins as a vibrant and compelling community that is for all people. This conference will train leaders to look beyond to a church full of revival, innovation, and passion for a strategy that is both deeply evangelical and unapologetically inclusive. The Gathering UMC in St. Louis is bringing the conference to University UMC in Charlotte on October 3-4, 2025. WNC leaders (laity and clergy) can attend both days (2 meals included) for \$99! Register for the early-bird rate and use the code WNCC. See details and register here: [BEYOND 2025](#)