

THE WORD

UNIVERSITY BAPTIST CHURCH

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Decline of Christianity & Growing Churches

ON WATCH

In a recent interview, Brian McLaren addressed the broad subject of declining participation in Christianity. More narrowly, he identified three common characteristics of growing churches. He said that the reason people leave Christianity is “churches are about many things beyond, or even instead of, the work of Jesus Christ.”

His assessment is an indictment of institutional church. He is especially critical when the institution supersedes the work of Jesus Christ. Every committee should begin with, “How does this connect with the work of Jesus Christ?”

The work of Jesus Christ should be the centerpiece of everything in church life. We have countless examples in the gospels of Jesus interacting with the world around him. Using these examples, we can form ideas about how he would approach questions in our world. Using prayer, the Holy Spirit can guide us. Listening to the wisdom of those who have gone before us can enlighten us.

In the face of declining faith, what do growing churches do differently? According to McLaren, there are three common characteristics:

1. The members treat each other well.
2. The members simply can't shut up about their church.
3. Visitors almost always come because of #2 – a friend who welcomes them.

There is no formula for doing church right. In the New Testament, different church had different flavors. Stephen talked about the church “in the wilderness” (Acts 7.38). There was the church at Jerusalem (Acts 8.1). The church in Acts 19.32 sounds like it was a mess. In the church, God works through people. Sometimes, God works in spite of people.

SERVICE OF HOLY WORSHIP

September 8, 2019

Sermon:

"Words of the Fragrant Portals"
Dr. Matthew Tennant

Scripture:

John 1:1-5

Anthem:

"Speak, O Lord"
arr. Ferguson

Deacons: Alan Hendricks, Alice Batten, Jennifer Wagoner, Johnny Ellen, Lynne Gardener, Jeannette May

Nursery Workers: Judy Gough, Suzanne Smith, Carter Groff

Children's Church:

Amanda Ohlms, Vito Pallini

Ushers for August: Ian Pallini, Ed Barker, Melvin Spricer, Mildred Spricer, Ron Tweel

McLaren's characteristics are a good starting point. Treat each other well. Make church so exciting that we can't stop talking about it. Welcome visitors and draw them into the life of the church. From this starting point, we can go deeper.

Healthy churches do not happen accidentally. Using the examples from Acts, we can learn how to treat each other better. By speaking a genuine word to our culture and loving people where they are, we can make church more exciting.

Even with the decline of Christianity in the U.S., I am optimistic about the future of University Baptist Church. I am excited about the future. I hope you are too.

Peace,
Matt

"Come to Your Senses"

How do we experience the divine? How do our senses deepen our relationship with God? During the month of September, our worship services will be designed to utilize all of our senses. Join us in worship as we sense God together!

Prayer Concern Updates

Sympathy to the family of Larry Coleman, who died August 27. (Larry and his wife Kim worshiped with us after Larry's lung transplant at UVA.)

This Wednesday Night

Dinner this Wednesday at 5:15 is begin catered by Pearl Island Catering. Look forward to delicious Caribbean-inspired cuisine! (Pearl Island catered the dinner event this summer with Paul Baxley of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.)

After dinner, we will begin our prayer and program around 5:45. This week we will be continuing our congregational discussion about our mission work in Haiti, and the relationships we continue to build with the people there. We hope you will come join us!

Greeters: Sue Sears,
Jackie Lockwood

CALENDAR

TUESDAY, SEPT. 3

9:00 UBC Work Team
7:00 Kittie Colvin Trail Circle

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 4

5:15 Church Dinner
5:45 Haiti Mission Report &
Conversation
6:30 Sanctuary Choir Practice

THURSDAY, SEPT. 5

6:00 Jubilate event

FRIDAY, SEPT. 6

6:30 Chinese Student
Fellowship

SUNDAY, SEPT. 8

9:30 Seekers Class
9:45 Sunday Bible Study
11:00 Worship Service
6:00 Jubilate Rehearsal
6:00 Youth Real Life

MONDAY, SEPT. 9

10:30 Rosewood Bible Study

TUESDAY, SEPT. 10

9:00 UBC Work Team
12:00 Annie Armstrong Circle
6:30 Prayer Shawl Group

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 11

5:15 Church Dinner
5:45 Mission Reports: Roy &
Jane Thomas, Kathy Wilson
6:30 Sanctuary Choir Practice

For our most up-to-date
calendar, [click here](#).

Coffee and Cookies

Join us on Sunday mornings after worship for coffee and cookies on the porch. Use this opportunity to greet visitors and better get to know your church family.

Youth Real Life

Our youth group will resume weekly meetings this Sunday, September 8, 6-8pm each week. Everyone in grades 6-12 is welcome!

Serving Dinner

Want to help Jubilate and our Youth? Sign up to re-heat and serve dinner (food provided), 5:30-6:30, on Sunday evenings. Please sign up [here](#). Thanks!

Recap of Church Conference

At our Church Conference on August 28, the church elected a talented group of lay leaders to lead the church during the 2019-2020 year. Thank you, Nominating Committee, for your hard work recruiting these leaders. The congregation then voted to empower Church Council to select judges for the UniBap Park Design Competition. The congregation also approved the creation and membership of a new Collegiate Ministry Task Force, which will bring recommendations to the November Church Conference about a renewed church focus on collegiate ministry, including the possibility of hiring a new staff member. Finally, the church approved the updated covenants for Rev. Alba Beasley and Rev. Will Brown, as presented by the Personnel Committee.

Wednesday Nights this Fall

Our fall Wednesday night programming resumes on August 28 with the potluck dinner and Church Conference (see above).

Each Wednesday night, dinner will be served beginning at 5:15. We will pray and begin the evening's program at 5:45. Dinner reservations are not required.

Please note that we will not meet for dinner every week, including a break for the month of October. Our hope is to keep the dinners fresh and exciting, without the burden of an unending commitment. Here is our Wednesday night schedule:

- 8/28 – Church Conference
- 9/4 – Haiti Conversation and Report
- 9/11 – Mission Reports: Roy & Jane Thomas and Kathy Wilson
- 9/18 – No Community Dinner. Lecture Series upstairs (reception to follow)
- 9/25 – Collegiate Ministry Town Hall

- October – Break - No Wednesday dinners

- 11/6 – Charlene Greene: History of Race in Charlottesville
- 11/13 – Mark Snipes, CBFVA & MLK Weekend
- 11/20 – Church Conference
- 11/27 – No Program (Thanksgiving)

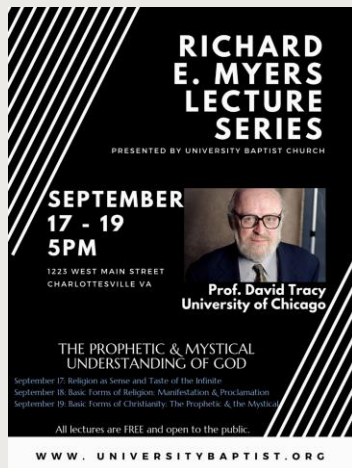
- December programming TBA

Flowers Bring Great Joy

If you would like to dedicate sanctuary flowers for a special remembrance or celebration, the 2019 Floral Calendar is posted in the first floor hallway. Sign up on the calendar AND email or call Sarah Buchanan to reserve your special date. There are several Sundays still available: Sept 29, Oct 6, 13, 20, 27, and Nov 3. I will order the flowers for \$45, unless you want to provide them yourself. You can drop a check earmarked "sanctuary flowers" in the offering plate, or send to the church office.



If you love flowers, enjoy arranging them, or want to learn how, please contact Sarah at 434-409-9064 or sarahbucha@gmail.com and join us on the Floral Team.



Lecture Series

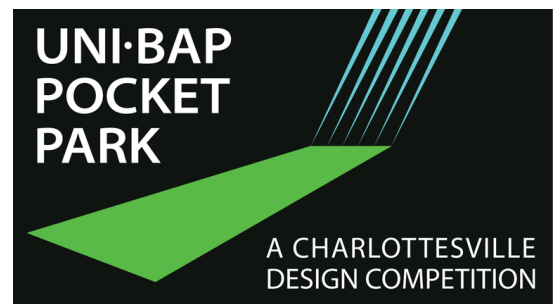
Save the date!
September 17-19, 5pm

Professor David Tracy will present a series of lectures entitled, "The Prophetic and Mystical Understanding of God"

More information available
at universitybaptist.org/lecture-series/

Competition underway!

The design competition to re-imagine the green space between our parking lot and West Main Street is now underway, with the first expressions of interest coming in. At the August 28 Church Conference, Church Council will recommend to the church a panel of judges, who will select the winning design. With congregational approval, we will build it, and the winner will receive a donation to the charity she or he chooses. If you have any questions or comments, contact the senior minister.



So far we have had architects and landscape architects express interest in our project from New York, North Carolina, South Africa, India and Pakistan. We are excited to see what designs our contestants come up with! If you know anyone who might wish to compete please share our link: universitybaptist.org/unibap-pocket-park

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Connect with us

