

A Moment for Stewardship
Don Hunter
Shared with University Presbyterian Church, Chapel Hill
October 19, 2014

Having joined University Presbyterian Church just this past March, my thoughts about the search for a new church home are still fresh in my mind.

After living 31 years in Chicago, moving to North Carolina was a daunting prospect when my partner, Lew, was offered a position at the UNC Dental School. Unlike Lew, who had served in the Army at Ft. Bragg, I had never even driven through the state! Equally daunting for me was the thought of searching for a new church home. You see, I had been an active member of my church in Chicago for over 20 years. And yet, I was also excited about the opportunity to make a fresh start with a new community of faith – sort of like the feeling I used to get as a kid at the beginning of a new school year. But being raised as a preacher's kid, there are just some things in my Presbyterian DNA that are non-negotiable when it comes to choosing a church, like: a meaningful liturgy, relevant preaching, inspiring music, a social justice orientation, mission outreach, and people who really care about and for one another. That's not too much to ask, right?

Once in North Carolina, Lew and I got right to the task at hand and started visiting congregations of various protestant denominations, as well as Greek Orthodox, the tradition in which Lew was raised and spent the majority of his adult life. We were seeking a family of faith that would welcome us and encourage us to fully participate in its congregational life and ministry. We finally, finally found University Church.

I loved the liturgy, the music, the preaching, the congregational singing (impressive even during a summer month), the kids, and the genuine welcome we received from several folks in the congregation. We continued to visit other congregations, but kept coming back to UPC. We met Anna Pinckney Straight for lunch one day to gain her perspective on if and how we would fit in. Her encouragement sealed the deal for me. And when the time came to meet with the Session, I was thrilled when Lew was also moved to join with me. This is the first congregation where we have belonged together.

I spoke earlier about the list of my expectations of any church I would want to join. But I find most of those things cannot be realized without a foundational recognition and demonstration of what it means to be good stewards of Christ's Church, and what each of us is willing to do, personally, to make it happen. Our mother and father taught my sister, brother, and I about tithing, which seemed a really onerous obligation at the time. And then there's that whole time and talent service expectation of stewardship in addition to the money. However, as I continue to grow, I experience what God's grace and abundance provides for me each and every day. And somehow those financial and service obligations I found so onerous as a kid have transformed into joyous privilege. I am deeply grateful that God has led Lew and me to University Church. As this family of faith embarks upon its 2015 Stewardship Campaign, Lew and I thank you for

your generous and gracious welcome. And we invite you to join us as we seek to Share God's Abundance, as we join you in ministry.