

UPPC 2026-27 LEADERSHIP NOMINEES



John Beering
Finance Elder



Julie Collins
C&C Elder



Carmen Murrell
Human Resource Elder



Kendra Paker
Outreach Elder



Hiroko Yaguchi
Outreach Elder



Val Chontofalsky
Deacon



Russell Hays
Deacon



Wendy Herforth
Deacon

Congregational Meeting | May 31, 2026

10:30am | UPPC Sanctuary

UPPC.org/leadership

Elder Nominees

Elders should be persons of faith, dedication and good judgment with experience in and/or a desire to be in a leadership role. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel, both within the church and in the world. It is the privilege of elders, individually and jointly, to strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the congregation. They are to be committed to the spiritual leadership of the church. Elders are also members of the Session, which is the governing body of UPPC for the ministerial, financial and physical management of the church.

John Beering

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FAITH: My faith is a central part of my life. I read the bible most days of the week to center myself. I believe Jesus is my Lord and Savior, who died for my sins and is the risen Christ. I also believe in his unrestricted acceptance and love for all people, and our responsibility as Christians to love and serve one another in his example.

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT: UPPC Involvement – just getting started.

2nd Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis, IN (1992 to 1997) - Usher (included collections tally)

Buckingham Congregational Church (United Church of Christ), Glastonbury, CT (1997 to 2006) - Long-Term Planning Committee, Senior Pastor Search Committee, Stewardship Chair, Adult Fellowship Group (Discussion group on books, Bible Study, and Faith Topics), Deacon. * Note that my wife, Heather was the Vice-Moderator, and then Moderator (President) of the Church for six years.

Portage United Church of Christ, Portage, MI (2007 to 2016) - Stewardship Chair, Deacon, Men's Bible Study. * Note that my wife, Heather was the Vice-Moderator, and then Moderator (President) of the Church for four plus years.

Manchester United Methodist church (2021 to 2024) - Endowment Committee

FAMILY & BACKGROUND: I grew up in a Christian home, the youngest son of a German immigrant father, and an artistically gifted mother. My father was lucky to have survived WWII as his mother was Jewish and his father was Catholic. My dad, his brother and his mother were separated from my grandfather during the allied bombings of Hamburg. He spent time in a work camp and avoided being sent to a concentration camp due to his father's high profile prior to the war. Following the war, his family immigrated to the US. He was 15 years old. He learned English, focused on his studies, and later became a physician, and served in the US Air Force as a flight surgeon and

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medical base commander. Following his time in the Air Force, he became Dean of the Indiana University School of Medicine, and subsequently the tenth President of Purdue University, where he served for 17 years until his retirement in 2000. My mother nearly pursued a career as a concert pianist but elected instead to work as an intelligence analyst for the CIA following college. She later stayed home to raise their three sons, serve a multitude of non-profit and faith-based organizations over a nearly 60-year span. My parents' world views were shaped by the depression, WWII, and an enduring faith in serving God through service to others.

As I reflect on the lives of my parents, they modeled servant leadership, the importance of sharing one's gifts, and were generous with time, talent and treasure to those organizations they were called to serve. While my parents were conservative in many respects of their theological and political ideologies, they stressed the importance of listening with an open heart, meeting people where they are, appreciating each person and their God-given gifts and the importance of working with all people no matter where they are in their respective journeys – and doing so with respect and humility. They challenged us to establish bold visions, and hard work around the details to achieve those visions.

My wife, Heather and I met in a 7:30AM engineering class at Purdue in 1989. We will celebrate our 34th wedding anniversary this November. We have been blessed with two beautiful children. Our son Andrew (27) graduated from Purdue with his degree in Industrial Engineering in December 2021. Our daughter Catherine (23) attended Creighton University and majored in Medical Anthropology and Biology, and participated in two honors programs (Global Scholars, and Pre-Dental). She graduated last Spring 2025. She is currently taking a gap year and is applying to Dental Schools while working part time in Omaha.

Heather and I moved to Gig Harbor, Summer of 2024, when I took a new role as CEO of RedDOT Corporation in Puyallup. We also moved Heather's almost 92 year-old father, Manny with us, as well as our Golden Retriever, Winston. We've since added a second Golden, named Leo. Heather and I like to golf and play pickleball. We also love to boat and are considering moving our boat to Gig Harbor from Northern Michigan where it currently lives. We are both foodies and enjoy collecting and sharing wine. We remain active Purdue fans and remain Purdue Football season ticket holders.

Julie Collins

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FAITH: My faith was formed in childhood and markedly deepened through times of transition in my life. My relationship with Jesus Christ is the foundation for the beliefs that guide me personally and professionally. Being involved over the years in several Presbyterian churches has influenced my deep appreciation for the unique way we live out our faith at UPPC.

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT: My husband Van and I, as the parents of young children, joined UPPC in the early 2000's. I have always been drawn to activities that build the faith of children (e.g. assisting with youth activities, organizing the 2019 Curtis High School Baccalaureate service) and serving our community (e.g. supporting the F.U.N. Food Bank and Community Christmas).

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Prior to moving to University Place and joining UPPC, we worshipped at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in the North End for 12 years where I taught Sunday School, led food collection efforts and served as an Elder in the late 1990's.

FAMILY & BACKGROUND: Van and I have been married 38 years and our two children Griffin (31) and Grace (25) were confirmed at UPPC and each served on a youth mission trip. My brother Garrett Lordahl, his wife Sandra and their daughters have also belonged to UPPC for several years. It was a joy to recently welcome Will and Deb Marshall, the parents of Griffin's wife Leah, as new members of UPPC!

Carmen Murrell

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FAITH: I was once asked, "Why do you believe in God?" My answer then remains the same today.

In a world that often feels fractured by pain, heartache, and division, I ground myself in the conviction that a greater truth exists. I choose to anchor my life in a God who embodies ultimate hope, grace, and unconditional love. For me, this isn't just an abstract concept; this deep reliance on God's character is the truest and most foundational reality I know.

In my daily life, this faith serves as a constant compass. It shapes how I interact with the world around me — guiding my words, tempering my reactions, and filtering how I view and extend grace to the actions of others.

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT: Over the past several years, my family and I have deeply connected with UPPC through fellowship, various courses, and most recently Intentional Season.

For the last two years, I have served on the Family Ministry Team, focusing on bridging the gap between our congregation and the local community. A key highlight of this role has been organizing monthly service days at the Families Unlimited Network (FUN).

Through these experiences, I've developed a passion for connecting people's unique gifts with the tangible needs of our neighbors, strengthening our church family in the process.

FAMILY & BACKGROUND: I am a University Place homegrown original! I grew up right here, doing the classic local trek through Chambers, Drum, and eventually graduating from Curtis High School. Even though I wasn't a member back then, my best friend attended UPPC, so I spent some of my youth tagging along to youth group nights and church camps.

After some time away for school in Las Vegas and living up in Shoreline, the gravitational pull of family brought us back to University Place in 2022. My wife, Eva, and I have been attending UPPC since December 2022, along with our two kids, Ana (14), who is currently keeping the family tradition alive at Curtis, and Kishi (8), who is holding down the fort at Chambers. It's been incredible to root our family in the same community that shaped me!

Kendra Paker

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FAITH: My faith is what drives me to know better and do better. I feel that we all have areas in which we can strive to make the world a little better for someone else, and areas in which we can speak truth within our culture. As we learn to see those who struggle and those on the margins, we can begin to understand the places in which we are called to take action. Jesus looked toward the overlooked and encouraged His followers to step out of their comfort and into challenges, and this is something I have come to appreciate. I have felt led into times of uncertainty and, although scary, know that this is how we grow and deepen our faith. My faith helps me approach tough decisions with calm, and is something I lean on when dealing with difficult or uncertain circumstances.

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT: I have been a member of UPPC for over 20 years, and have been active in various areas. I previously served as an Elder for Discipleship, and have both participated in and organized/helped lead adult-focused discipleship opportunities and was a co-leader for one of the Flourishing classes. Most recently, I have been serving as a member of the Outreach team, helping to support the great work UPPC does to support our mission partners and the various outreach opportunities within the church.

I helped with youth programs as a parent volunteer on occasion when our kids were younger, including helping in Sunday school. My family and I have participated in various types of service opportunities - off campus events, the Fun Fair, making food for Alpha classes, etc. We love to support both Community Christmas and the Back to School drive as well. I have really enjoyed being able to raise our kids at UPPC - knowing that there is a community of people who want to support them and help them grow has been such a blessing.

FAMILY BACKGROUND: My husband, Aaron, and I are the parents of two teenage girls - Rian (18) and Lucinda (15). We all attend UPPC together whenever we can - which has admittedly gotten more difficult as the girls get older. Aaron has served as a Stephen Minister in the past, and currently volunteers with the tech crew on Sundays. He is an attorney specializing in elder law. Rian is a senior at Bellarmine Prep and is heading off to WSU in the fall to study sports medicine. Lucinda is a freshman at Bellarmine and has recently started on the robotics team. Both girls took music lessons through MAI for years, and they are still playing with their school orchestra. I am a pediatric physical therapist and have worked for MultiCare/Mary Bridge Children's Hospital since 2002.

I grew up in Minneapolis, MN and moved to Tacoma for college (which is where Aaron and I met). My parents have since moved to Port Townsend, WA and my brother is in Seattle so we are all in Western WA now! My parents met in Germany, and my mother is from Ireland - a strong love of travel and exploring new cultures has been part of my life from the time I was small.

Hiroko Yaguchi

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FAITH: My faith in Jesus Christ is very important to me, as I try my best each day to live according to His teachings — loving others and putting others before myself. My faith became especially strong after my husband passed away. During that time, I experienced tremendous grace daily, and so many miraculous things happened one after another. This series of events convinced me that there was no way I — or anyone else in my life — could have orchestrated them apart from God. He carried me through the darkest valley and gave me a life I could never have imagined for myself. I truly believe God will continue to provide more than enough. My desire is simply to do my part as faithfully as I can when He opens new doors for me. My faith in Jesus motivates me to show His love to all people through my actions, which also helps me greatly in my work — especially when I encounter difficult situations or people. Faith in Jesus also eases my anxiety about the future, reminding me that I am not walking through life alone. He is with me always. I do not have to rely solely on my own strength or willpower, but can ask for His help, which brings me great comfort and relief when facing challenges.

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT: I have been volunteering with Campfire for several years, and my daughter now volunteers alongside me. I have also served as a volunteer at Day Camp for the past four years. I have participated in Alpha, Essentials, Rooted, and Flourishing and I have served as a leader for Rooted groups. Additionally, my daughter and I joined the Intergenerational Mexico Mission Trip to El Niño last year.

FAMILY & BACKGROUND: I attend UPPC with my 14-year-old daughter, Lulu. She is the reason we first began coming to UPPC. When she was in second grade, a friend invited her to Campfire. One day she told me, “Did you know I can go to Miss Julie’s group on Sunday too?” As I brought her to Sunday school, I thought to myself, “Why don’t I just go upstairs and attend the service?” That moment marked the beginning of our involvement at UPPC. Lulu has gone through Campfire and Foundation, and she now volunteers in Campfire with me. She enjoys Sunday school, though this is her final year participating.

I grew up in Japan, where Christianity is not a major religion. Because of this, I have seen how misguided evangelism can negatively impact non-Christians. My family used to visit a shrine every New Year’s Day, and there were often people identifying as Christians shouting frightening messages through megaphones. Those experiences shaped a false understanding of Christianity for me. As I later learned the truth about Jesus and the Bible, I had to completely reframe my beliefs.

I am very interested in learning how to serve in outreach ministry. If I can help someone change their understanding and come to trust the Lord through working together, it would be a truly life-altering opportunity for me.

Deacon Nominees

As set forth in Scripture, the office of deacon is one of sympathy, witness and service, after the example of Jesus Christ. Persons of spiritual character, exemplary lives, honesty, sympathy and good judgment should be chosen for this office. The primary work of deacons is to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, the bereaved and to anyone in distress.

Val Chontofalsky

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FAITH: My faith is very important in daily life. I try to live in a way that glorifies God even if I fall short at times. I rely on prayer and scripture to help guide me and I try to be of service to others in a way God would want.

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT: I have attended and facilitated a Rooted group, teach Sunday School once a month and my family participates in many church events. I have volunteered for Families Unlimited Network and Community Christmas. I like to help friends get to church and DayCamp by offering rides.

FAMILY & BACKGROUND: I am a wife to Tom and mother to Eliza (9). We discovered UPPC when she attended Sunset Christian Preschool. We regularly attend church and functions and enjoy the many friendships made. I am a licensed clinical social worker and counselor with 20+ years of experience serving others, often in their most difficult seasons.

Russell Hays

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FAITH: Faith is a constant in my life. It affects how I make decisions, how I view changes in my life and how I interact with others. A big theme in my family is that we cannot control our lives only our actions. We have to trust in God and listen for His guidance. He will lead us down the path we are meant to be on. We also need to give others grace. We do not know their story or path, we should treat them the way we would want to be treated on our worst day, because it might be theirs.

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT: I have been through all the Discipleship Core classes, except for one. I volunteer as an usher and my family and I volunteer for ministries and outreach opportunities often. I have participated in Day Camp, Community Christmas, back to school backpack packing and have volunteered at Families Unlimited Network.

FAMILY & BACKGROUND: My wife Stephanie and I grew up in Washington. Stephanie has been a member of UPPC since she was young. Her parents Byron and Kim Plan have been long time members. Steph and I met at WSU and were married at UPPC in December of 2000. We then moved to Louisiana where I became a hard hat diver in the Gulf of Mexico. We had our daughter, Bridget, in 2012 and brought her up to UPPC to be baptized. In 2014, we were able to move back to Washington to be closer to our families. We have been attending UPPC since we moved back to the area. I now work as a consultant for offshore survey. Stephanie is a dog trainer for Petsmart. Bridget is now 13 and loves archery, ice skating and reading. We love pets at our house. We have 2 horses, 3 dogs, 4 cats and 8 guinea pigs. In 2016 my family lost our unborn son Calvin. This was a turning point in my faith and started my journey from someone who went to church when I could to someone who had Jesus as a focal point in my life. Going through this loss with my family has also helped me be more empathetic to others suffering loss.

Wendy Herforth

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FAITH: My faith sustains me and gives me direction in both the joyful and difficult seasons of my life. My prayer to Jesus is that I am more like him, in the decisions I make and the way I love and care for family, friends, coworkers and the people I meet on a daily basis. I can look back over the years and see specific times in my life where God has faithfully been there for me, guiding me, giving me courage and strength. God also speaks to me through the amazing people he has placed in my life.

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT: My church involvement with UPPC started with participation in Sunday School as a young child, followed by confirmation and my friend Allison driving us to church for Chi Sigma youth group (called Solid Ground now). I also sang in the youth choir. Judy, our choir director, included all voices! I was an intern for one summer. During my years in college, I participated in the young adult group. After college I was on the leadership team for the Women's ministry which involved organizing a dinner and a guest speaker a couple of times a year. For a significant amount of time, I volunteered weekly as a youth leader with the Jr. High and then High School ministries. I attended mission trips as a student and a leader through UPPC. In more recent years, I have helped with Sunday school and have volunteered for UPPC's Day Camp.

FAMILY & BACKGROUND: I was born and raised in Fircrest, WA with my two siblings Lori and Rich. My parents were longtime members of UPPC. I grew up attending Tacoma schools and graduated from WWU with a bachelor's degree in psychology and then went on to PLU and received my teaching certificate. I married Dan Herforth who is also a lifelong resident in Tacoma, WA and attended First Lutheran with his family. Dan and I both work in education. I am a first-grade teacher at Fern Hill Elementary, and Dan is an associate administrator at Kapowsin Elementary. We have one daughter Maddy, who just completed her freshman year at WSU. She is interested in education and this summer she will be an intern at UPPC.

Elder and deacon nominees are asked to consider and submit their answers to the following prompts so we may get to know them better. If you have questions or want to learn more about the Leadership Nominees, please contact them directly.

FAITH: Please describe how your faith in Jesus Christ is important to you in your daily life.

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT: Please share your experience with UPPC ministries, activities, groups, and service outreach as well as any previous leadership roles.

FAMILY & BACKGROUND: Please share more about you and your unique makeup including names of family members also attending UPPC.

Members-At-Large | Nominating Committee

Members at large serve on the Nominating Committee working to prayerfully discern your recommendations and help select nominees for open elder and deacon roles at UPPC.



Doug Jorgensen
Deacon Representative
Nominating Committee



Maryann Kiburi-Njoroge
Member at Large
Nominating Committee

Doug Jorgensen

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FAITH: My faith shapes my life in everything I do. It keeps me humble, thoughtful, focused and connected to the world around me.

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT: I grew up in the church with participation in the youth programs, Sunday School and 9th grade Confirmation. I was actively involved in the sports ministry program for several years. I currently serve on the Deacon Board.

FAMILY & BACKGROUND: I have been attending UPPC since my birth in 1954. My parents (Harry and Phyllis Jorgensen) were active members and my dad served as an elder. My wife and I have attended since our marriage 44 years ago. We raised our kids (Mike and Nick) in the church. Currently, we have 3 generations in the church, as our grandchildren now attend as well as Mike's wife Jessica. My sister (Julie Panagiotu) is also a lifelong member.

Maryann Kiburi-Njoroge

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FAITH: My faith serves as the foundation of my daily life which guides me in making decisions in every aspect of my life's journey. I draw wisdom from my faith when making decisions about now and my future. I involve God in every aspect of life including family, relationships and work. My faith reminds me to live with kindness, humility and gratitude each day while striving to reflect the values and teachings of Jesus Christ. Acts 17:28

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT: I have been engaged with the Good Neighbor Team through World Relief where we helped a refugee family settle in America. This was the first of many other ministries that I have been a part of including Alpha, where I have made deep connections and found meaningful friendships in the UPPC community. I have also volunteered in children's Sunday School, Alpha prayer team, MomCo and Day Camp.

FAMILY & BACKGROUND: My husband Steven and I moved to the United States in 2019. Together we have been blessed with two children, Nathan (6 years) and Ava (3 years). Stephen and I have been married for 8 years and are so blessed to have found a church home here in UPPC. We are also blessed to have a strong community of friends, most of whom have now become family.



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