

CHRISTA

When the stewardship committee approached us about sharing our UPC story during worship, we were flattered that they wanted us to offer the perspective of the new young members, and maybe shed a little light on what UPC is like for us "thirty somethings" with small children.

Of course, the subsequent pause for reflection jolted us into reality, and we were forced to acknowledge the hard truth: Our thirties are now in the rear view mirror (at least for him). Our kids are quickly passing us in size. And our story at UPC has a few more chapters than we might have realized.

PATRICK

While it may feel like only yesterday, our UPC story began 12 years ago, in 2005, when we arrived in Austin with our 3-year old son, Brooks, and our 1-year old daughter, Charlotte. Shortly after getting settled in this "weird" Texas town, Christa took on the role of scout and headed out every Sunday searching for the perfect church home. She would report back to let us know if it was worthy of packing up the diaper bags to give it a "full family" test run.

Well, Christa was a tough critic, because out of the dozen or more churches she visited, only three or so made it through the first cut, and none of them felt quite like home. Not willing to settle, Christa expanded her search grid and soon stumbled into a downtown church that made her excitedly proclaim "This is the one".

CHRISTA

It was easy to fall in love with UPC, as it offered the perfect blend of a diverse congregation, a beautiful setting, and a strong sense of mission. But, as we have all come to realize, the real beauty of UPC lies in its people. It started with the sense of comfort we received as we nervously approached the nursery to hand off our little ones to the man they would all lovingly call "Mr. Bob", and then shifted to awe as we witnessed the perfectly calm demeanor of Paul Enos in Bridge to Worship

(something we definitely tried to draw upon later when we found ourselves serving in this role).

As our family grew, our appreciation of what UPC had to offer grew along with it. When San and Judy baptized Walker, and later Weslee, they talked of how this congregation would take on the responsibility of raising our children alongside us. Well, "**BOY HAVE THEY EVER**"!

We have reaped the benefits of having the amazing Winnie Gage, Rosemary Moore, Karen Miller and many others leading and teaching our kids in Sunday School each week; The legendary Mary Ann Parker providing priceless memories with each "Sound of Angels" performance; John Leedy masterfully shepherding our "tweens" through confirmation; and Craig Deets demonstrating that a spring break spent helping others in Mexico can be the greatest vacation ever.

PATRICK

Of course, the ways in which our family has been blessed by UPC go far beyond the examples cited, but it would be impossible to stay under our 3-minute allotment if we tried to list them all. However, reflecting on 12 years as a part of this congregation has made us appreciate that our UPC "short-story" is really more of a novel, with the past few years providing some significant plot twists - as we transitioned from San Williams to our interim pastors, [Bruce Lancaster and the selfless David Evans], and into our amazing current pastoral staff of Matt, John, and Crystal.

Standing here today (hopefully still somewhere closer to the start than the finish), it is wonderful to report that our past at UPC **has filled** us with love and support, the present **is filling** us with pride, and the thought of the future **fills** us with hope.

So, we invite you all to think of your own UPC story, and the hopes you have for its next chapters - and to give generously to ensure that the gifts of UPC remain in abundance for all in our congregation, our community, and beyond.

[Brooks to invite today's offering]