



Francesca Ugolini: DC Volunteer Lawyers Project/ Youth Ministry

How did you first connect with BUMC and what led you to become involved as a member?

Francesca: I joined BUMC in September 2013, after spending about a year looking for a new church. I was looking for someplace with greater community, spiritual depth, and a robust program for kids and teens. I was referred to BUMC by my sister, who had heard about the church from a co-worker (Petra Remson). When I first visited, I saw a bulletin announcement for an Isaiah bible study that would feature themed cupcakes, so I had to try that out! It was a great "window" into the church, and I was delighted to discover a place that encouraged open dialogue and a wide variety of viewpoints.

Tell us about how your professional life has been impacted by your faith, specifically the pro bono work you've been involved with.

Francesca: As a lawyer at the Department of Justice, I used to shy away from pro bono work because I viewed my job as "enough" public service. That mentality changed when I heard Rev. Ron give a sermon on the book 40 Chances by Howard Buffett, which is about the limited number of chances we get in life to make a true impact. It was clear to me what tools God had given me to make an impact: my skills and experience as a lawyer. In the last year, I have volunteered with D.C. Volunteer Lawyers Project to serve as a court-appointed guardian ad litem for children in custody disputes. I love it! I get to be the voice for those who cannot speak up for themselves.

One of the many ways you've gotten involved at BUMC is by working with our youth, both teaching Sunday School and also volunteering with youth special events and mission trips. What inspired to get involved in this way and what have you learned?

Francesca: Youth group and mission trips were a huge part of my teenage years and critical to my faith development. As life got more complicated, I would often refer back to lessons I learned in youth group (and I still do). So, I care deeply about helping teens understand and personalize their faith, and it's my hope that the seeds we plant in Sunday School will be kernels of wisdom that they remember down the road. I love talking through the tough and thoughtful questions that our youth ask during Sunday School! And as a mom of upcoming "tweens," it is great to learn what life is like for teenagers these days.

You've recently finished reading the Bible with our Bible Book Club. What insights did you take away from that experience?

Francesca: Reading the entire Bible was on my bucket list! There is so much I could say, but two things stand out. First, reading about all the political and spiritual ups and downs of the Israelites gave me a lot of peace about our current times. We may feel like these are unprecedented divisive times, but God has seen this for literally thousands of years! And he has faithfully carried his people through each time. He will do it again. Second, I was struck by how God never gives up on trying to connect with us. Some Old Testament books were very hard to read because of the constant themes of sin and people rejecting God, but God just kept sending his messengers to them anyway, hoping to win them back.

Our Dream Team has begun looking at how our church's ministries might grow in the future. What is your personal vision of the ways that we might be called to grow in ministry in the coming years?

Francesca: When a place has as much history and tradition as BUMC does, it can be hard to let go of the way things have always been done. I think an important part of growing into the future involves doing some things differently, letting some ministries come to their natural end, and letting new ideas take root. As both a parent and a youth leader, I am especially hopeful that we can reinvigorate the youth ministry with new methods and ideas, and I look forward to being a part of it!

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