

Worship Brainstorming

“Mission: Possible” and

“Building a Strong FAMILY of God”

Wed., August 18, 2021 at Pastor Mary & Ivan Ivanov’s home

6:00 p.m. Potluck Dinner

7:00-9:30 p.m. Brainstorming for Worship

September 5-October 31, 2021

The worship brainstorming for 2 series (3 weeks and 6 weeks) will be held at Ivanov’s. Members of all ages and backgrounds are invited to participate in the one evening commitment. The ideas generated at the brainstorming are used in worship.

We will have a picnic style potluck at 6:00 p.m. with “mixed grill” options. Please bring a dish to share. Suggestions: baked beans, potato salad, drinks, or your favorite summer picnic food. Brainstorming is from 7:00-9:30 p.m. We’ll gather in the basement. Please bring a sweater as it can be a bit cool. Safety protocols will be the same as at church (masks are recommended for those who are not fully vaccinated).

More information is available at church and on our website. Please pick up the brainstorming packet at church or find it online, read the Scripture and Pastor Mary’s message synopses, and preview videos when they become available. Please RSVP to Karen Booth, call the church office (231-798-2181), or sign-up at church.

2021 marks two important anniversaries for LHUMC:

1. 65 years since charter (April 22, 1956)
2. 5 years since merger with Lakeside UMC (June 2016)

As we’re making our way through this year of “Still Blessed,” we’re focusing on the fundamentals of our faith, including our mission to make disciples and our call to be good stewards of all of God’s gifts as we seek to build God’s Kingdom where we are. Both of these are included in the *five practices of fruitful congregations: risk-taking mission and service and extravagant generosity.*

Social Justice Issues:

- September: Childhood Hunger and Food Insecurity (Brad H.)
- October: Domestic Violence (Rose)

Charge Conference is Tues., Sept. 21

We’ll be presenting a policy for receiving undesignated gifts (gift from Community Foundation).

“Mission: Possible”

September 5-19, 2021 (3 weeks)

2021 theme connection: Mission is not a trip. Rather it is an opportunity to bless others as we've been blessed – and understand that we can be blessed by others.

Key words: Respond. React.

Alternate series title: Mission from God. On a Mission Every Day.



Synopsis: One of the five practices of fruitful living is **risk-taking mission and service.**

- *Definition:* All that we do to make a positive difference in the lives of others for the purposes of Christ, whether or not they will ever be part of the community of faith.
- Mission turns us outward.
- We serve God by serving others.
- Risk-taking mission and service takes us into ministries that push us out of our comfort zone, stretching us beyond the circle of relationships and practices that routinely define our faith commitments.
- Mission calls us to BE the church – not just GO to church.

Ideas for the series:

- Use our mission and vision statements
 - The mission of Lake Harbor United Methodist Church is **to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.**
 - The vision of Lake Harbor United Methodist Church is that all people may experience the love of Jesus. Our call then, is Love: **welcoming all, empowered by Christ, sent forth to serve.**
- Use mission statements from each organization – if we invite in guest speakers
 - **Possible presenters (new):** Forgotten Man Ministries (jail ministry), Every Woman's Place/Webster House, AgeWell Services/Meals on Wheels, Pathfinders, Supper House, Ross Park Elementary staff
 - Possible repeat presenters: Family Promise, Kids' Food Basket, Fresh Coast Alliance (70x7), Hope Project, MAP, Kids Belong
- Show the connection between personal and social holiness; you can't have one without the other. Wesley worked with those in poverty, schools, hospitals. He shared the gospel through acts of service.
- Encourage the congregation to read through the Book of James during this series.
- Would this be a time to introduce the Kingdom Assignment again – giving each person \$5 to use for good in our community?

Key scripture: Micah 6: 6-8 (What does the Lord require of you?), James 1:27 (help widows and orphans), 2: 14-26 (faith and works go together)

Resources: UM Social Principles and UM Social Creed: <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/our-social-creed>

From Discipleship Ministries:

The Epistle of James provides us the spark we need for this late summer series that gets us ready for the launch of fall programming. Many churches shift into a higher gear once the community's schools have started up again. James gives us a chance to reflect on the nature of Christian service and how we can continue our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by engaging with our wider community in acts of service.

One thing that is clear from current sociological research is that while there are many who question the institution of the church, getting involved in providing real help to better our neighborhoods and to lift up the individuals and families within them is an easy entry into the worship life of the church. James asks us to maintain an outward focus, even when we gather for worship.

Related video: "Book of James." Length: 0:48. Cost: \$20.00. Web license: Yes.

<https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/89495/book-of-james>

Music: Give Me Your Eyes, With Every Act of Love

Visuals:

Videos: These videos could be used at any time during the series.

- "Giving Your Best." Length: 1:46. Cost: \$15.00. Length: 1:46. Web license: Yes. Kelly is a 5th grade girl who decided to give away her birthday so that people she doesn't know can have access to clean water. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/43820/giving-your-best>
- "Here on Mission." Length: 2:40. Cost: \$20.00. Web license: Probably not. This short video shows how living on mission can be as simple as loving the person right next door. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/40239/here-on-mission>
- "Your City Waits." Length: 2:11. Cost: \$15.00. Web license. Probably not. This video shows the vision for reaching your community and people you interact with each and every day. You must be used. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/20417/your-city-waits>

Discussion points:

September 5, 2021: "Doers of the Word"

Labor Day weekend

Scripture: James 1: 22-27 (NRSV)

²² But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³ For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴ for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵ But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

²⁶ If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is

this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Synopsis: Faith in Jesus requires our engagement – and making the connection between hearing and doing. It’s not simply a call to do more or to be busy. This is a call to personal holiness and social holiness – loving God with heart and life.

Felt need: To be holy – cultivating personal holiness and social holiness

Visuals: Images of giving. Listening. Ministry to children, widows, elderly.

Hands-on item:

Activity: Holy Communion, re-write litany from Aug. 2014 <https://lakeharborumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Litany-for-Labor-Day-final.pdf>

Media possibilities: “Live Out Loud.” Length: 2:13. Cost: \$19.99. Web license: Yes. God asks each one of us to live out our faith, not just to listen to His Word, but put in into practice. Related song: “I Refuse” by Josh Wilson <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/39279/live-out-loud>

Music: Lord, I Want to Be a Christian; #399 “Take My Life and Let It Be”; #2176 “Make Me a Servant”; #2254 “In Remembrance of Me” (communion)

Worship Leader:

Discussion points:

September 12, 2021: “Faith that Works”

RETURN to TWO WORSHIP SERVICES

Scripture: James 2: 1-26 (NRSV - could be broken up)

“Warning against Partiality”

2 My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? 2 For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, 3 and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Have a seat here, please,” while to the one who is poor you say, “Stand there,” or, “Sit at my feet,” 4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? 7 Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

8 You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 9 But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. 11 For the one who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

“Faith without Works Is Dead”

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷ So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder. ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren? ²¹ Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. ²³ Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road? ²⁶ For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

Synopsis: The connections between our words and actions matter, especially in our walk with Christ. Ours is a practical – or practiced – faith. Faith is more than what we say we believe; faith is also about how we live what we believe.

Felt need: To seek to be fully inclusive of others – and to hear the call to faith that works and acts for the sake of the common good

Visuals: Rich/poor. Hands. Ministry with poor. Clothes/food/blanket.

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities:

Music: #2086 “Open Our Eyes, Lord”; #3149 “A Place at the Table”

Worship Leader:

Discussion points:

September 19, 2021: “Wise Faith”

Scripture: James 3: 1-18 (NRSV - could be broken up into 1-12 and 13-18)

“Taming the Tongue”

³ Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ² For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. ³ If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. ⁴ Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every species of beast and bird, of reptile

and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species,⁸ but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison.⁹ With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God.¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so.¹¹ Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water?¹² Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine yield figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

“Two Kinds of Wisdom”

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom.¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth.¹⁵ Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish.¹⁶ For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

Synopsis: Words can hurt and harm – whether we’re speaking directly, sending a message, or sharing a post. Words can also heal, and we’re called to pay closer attention to our own speech. What does it say about our hearts?

Felt need: To be wise in how we speak as a reflection of our faith in Jesus

Visuals: Sticks and stones. Teaching. Bridle. Ship rudder. Fire.

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities: “The Tongue.” Length: 2:23. Cost: \$15.00. Web license: Yes. The tongue can bring life or death. We use it to praise God and curse other. Used the wrong way, the tongue can ultimately enslave and destroy you. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/11018/the-tongue>

Music: Make Me a Channel of Your Peace; #408 “The Gift of Love”

Worship Leaders:

Discussion points:

“How to Build a Strong FAMILY of God”

September 26-October 31, 2021 (six weeks)

2021 theme connection: Stewardship grows out of our relationship with God. We’re given the charge to be faithful stewards (managers) of God’s gifts – and to display extravagant generosity. We do this as individuals, but we’re also called to be good stewards as the Body of Christ – to reflect God who blesses to the world.

Key words: Rebuild. Responsible. Relationship.



Synopsis: We describe our families in many ways: ‘happy’, ‘loving’, ‘supportive’, ‘strange’, ‘modern’, ‘dysfunctional’ and ‘broken’. Everyone is part of a family though it might not be traditional model (mom, dad, 2 kids - all of whom are related and happily living together under the same roof) – and that’s okay. Whatever our family looks like, God has a plan for making it stronger. This includes the “family” as a metaphor for the congregation and community of faith. How do we build a strong family of God, especially in the midst of so much change?



Key Scriptures: Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 (love the Lord/teach your children), I John 3: 1 (children of God)

Resources:

- “Strong Families” <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/3659/strong-families>
- “Families Called to LOVE” <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/gbod-assets/generic/ChristianHomeMonth2021.pdf>

From Bishop Robert Schnase:

People who practice extravagant generosity change their lives in order to become more generous. They become rich in giving. They do not wait to be asked. When they see a need, they step forward to meet it, offering resources as a means of help. They look at difficult financial times through the eyes of faith rather than of fear. They persist in doing good. They give in all seasons. They enjoy giving. They pray and hope and dream about the good they accomplish through their gifts. They consecrate their giving to God. They delight in generosity. They expect nothing in return.

People who practice extravagant generosity learn to enjoy things without possessing them, to moderate their acquisitiveness, and to find satisfaction in simpler things. They avoid personal debt as much as possible. They save. They avoid overindulgence and waste. Their possessions do not rule them. They aspire, like Paul, to know the secret of being content with what they have. They give thanks in all circumstances. Love is a gift, and life is grace. People who practice extravagant generosity change lives. Their giving knows no bounds. They are rich toward God.

Music: Go Light Your World

Visuals: This series is almost like a list of “family rules” that we might see in a home. Yard signs.



Series intro:

- “Sunday Morning.” Length: 3:19. Cost: \$20.00. Web license: Yes. Things aren’t always what they seem...even on Sunday morning. This video is a humorous way to help your audience make sure their perspective isn’t getting in the way of their relationships. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/32563/sunday-morning>
- “The Perfects.” Length: 2:52. Cost: \$18.00. Web license: Not sure. Use this 50’s sitcom style short as a lead-in when talking about family life or about avoiding the trap of thinking

everyone else has it all together. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/3422/the-perfects>

- “Parenting Is Hard.” Length: 1:16. Cost: Free. Web license: Yes. There is nothing like becoming a parent to give you perspective and appreciation for all of your parent’s sacrifices through the years. This is a comical, yet heartfelt, apology and expression of gratitude. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/54012/parenting-is-hard>

NOTES: Blessing of the Animals in October (?)

September 26, 2021: “Faith”

Scripture: Hebrews 11: 1 (CEV)

11 Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see.

Additional scripture: Examples from Hebrews 1; reference to mustard seed

Synopsis: We often talk about having a faith foundation, and faith matters as we celebrate and weather tough times. We also learn to rely on the faith of our spiritual friends to support us.

Felt need: To understand what faith is and isn’t as it relates to our personal relationship with God and our life together

Visuals: mustard seed

Hands-on item: Photo card with FAMILY (and each week’s theme on it)

Activity: Reaffirmation of Holy Baptism

Media possibilities:

- “Great in the Small.” Length: 1:59. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. We are inclined to seek large, spectacular signs and wonders, but God has always revealed Himself through small, seemingly insignificant things. Great in the Small is a poignant reminder that God does amazing things with the smallest of moments. Perfect for services with a focus on faith and humility. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/54349/great-in-the-small>
- “A Seed of Faith.” Length: 1:34. Cost: \$15.00. Web license: Yes. Like a seed, our faith is planted in us by God Himself (Matthew 13:31). This video illustrates that with time and care, our faith will grow and blossom. When we share this beautiful and everlasting faith with others, it will change the world. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/94687/a-seed-of-faith>

Music: Baptized in Water; #508 “Faith While the Trees Are Still in Blossom” (perhaps sung to the tune of “Greensleeves” without the refrain)

Worship Leader:

Discussion points:

October 3, 2021: “Ask for and Offer Forgiveness”

World Communion Sunday, CROP Walk

Scripture: Matthew 6: 5-15 (CEB)

“Showy prayer”

⁵ “When you pray, don’t be like hypocrites. They love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners so that people will see them. I assure you, that’s the only reward they’ll get. ⁶ But when you pray, go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.

“Proper prayer”

⁷ “When you pray, don’t pour out a flood of empty words, as the Gentiles do. They think that by saying many words they’ll be heard. ⁸ Don’t be like them, because your Father knows what you need before you ask. ⁹ Pray like this:

Our Father who is in heaven, uphold the holiness of your name.

¹⁰ Bring in your kingdom so that your will is done on earth as it’s done in heaven.

¹¹ Give us the bread we need for today.

¹² Forgive us for the ways we have wronged you,
just as we also forgive those who have wronged us.

¹³ And don’t lead us into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

¹⁴ “If you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you don’t forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your sins.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:25-5:2 (CEV)

“Rules for the New Life”

²⁵ We are part of the same body. Stop lying and start telling each other the truth. ²⁶ Don’t get so angry that you sin. Don’t go to bed angry ²⁷ and don’t give the devil a chance.

²⁸ If you are a thief, quit stealing. Be honest and work hard, so you will have something to give to people in need.

²⁹ Stop all your dirty talk. Say the right thing at the right time and help others by what you say.

³⁰ Don’t make God’s Spirit sad. The Spirit makes you sure that someday you will be free from your sins.

³¹ Stop being bitter and angry and mad at others. Don’t yell at one another or curse each other or ever be rude. ³² Instead, be kind and merciful, and forgive others, just as God forgave you because of Christ.

⁵ Do as God does. After all, you are his dear children. ² Let love be your guide. Christ loved us and offered his life for us as a sacrifice that pleases God.

Synopsis: Forgiveness isn’t easy for anyone, especially when we’re hurt by people we trust.

Forgiveness involves dealing honestly with anger, making a decision to forgive, working on forgiveness, and allowing ourselves to find release from the burden of un-forgiveness.

Felt need: To acknowledge the work of forgiveness in our personal lives and in the church

Visuals: Setting sun. Children. Sacrificial offering.

Hands-on item:

Activity: Holy Communion (prayer of confession acknowledges need for forgiveness of sins)

Media possibilities:

- "Forgiveness." Length: 2:17. Cost: \$15.00. Web license: yes. Forgiveness is such a powerful thing. We tend to focus on being forgiven (by God and by other people) - and that is an amazing gift. But what we must not forget is that Jesus wants us to forgive others as well. And the freedom we receive when we forgive those who have hurt us is a truly amazing gift. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/38820/forgiveness>
- "Clean Slate." Length: 1:28. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. The past can keep us trapped. This is a great way to start off any service dealing with letting go of the past and moving on toward what God has for you next. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/28128/clean-slate>

Music: #2171 "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace"; 2167 "More Like You"

Worship Leader:

Discussion points:

October 10, 2021: "Make Commitments"

Scripture: Psalm 37: 1-9 (CEV)

"Trust the Lord"

37 Don't be annoyed by anyone
who does wrong,
and don't envy them.

⁶ Then it will be as clear
as the noonday sun
that you were right.

² They will soon disappear
like grass without rain.

⁷ Be patient and trust the LORD.
Don't let it bother you
when all goes well for those
who do sinful things.

³ Trust the LORD and live right!
The land will be yours,
and you will be safe.

⁸ Don't be angry or furious.
Anger can lead to sin.

⁴ Do what the LORD wants,
and he will give you
your heart's desire.

⁹ All sinners will disappear,
but if you trust the LORD,
the land will be yours.

⁵ Let the LORD lead you
and trust him to help.

Scripture: Acts 2: 42-47 (CEB)

"Community of Believers"

⁴² The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. ⁴³ A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were united and shared everything. ⁴⁵ They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. ⁴⁶ Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. ⁴⁷ They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.

Synopsis: Relationships require commitment – and staying committed, and that’s true for our spiritual lives as well. We’re called to serve God wholeheartedly and cultivate true community with one another.

Felt need: To consider our faith commitment – prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness

Visuals: Teaching. Fellowship. Broken bread. Prayer. Meal.

Hands-on item:

Activity: Highlight each facet of faith commitment

Media possibilities:

- “Life is Better with Community.” Length: 1:18. Cost: \$19.99. Web license: Not sure. Imagine what life would be like without community! This humorous musical montage drives home our need for one another. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/33134/life-is-better-with-community>
- “Chairs.” Length: 2:15. Cost: \$20.00. Web license: Not sure. The chairs of the local church represent far more than places for spectators to sit. The chairs are full of a diverse group of people all on a journey and it’s our job as believers to love them and point them to Jesus. What’s in a chair? You are. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/17212/chairs>
- “Commitaphobia.” Length: 4:23. Cost: \$20.00. Web license: Probably not. Laugh if you want, but Sam is keeping all the doors open in his life, which is to say that he won’t commit to anything. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/10399/commitaphobia>

Music: Take My Life and Let It Be; #2224 “Make Us One”

Worship Leader:

Discussion points:

October 17, 2021: “Invest in Each Other”

Scripture: Hebrews 10: 19-25 (CEV) “Encouragement and Warning”

¹⁹ My friends, the blood of Jesus gives us courage to enter the most holy place ²⁰ by a new way that leads to life! And this way takes us through the curtain that is Christ himself.

²¹ We have a great high priest who is in charge of God’s house. ²² So let’s come near God with pure hearts and a confidence that comes from having faith. Let’s keep our hearts pure, our consciences free from evil, and our bodies washed with clean water. ²³ We must hold tightly to the hope that we say is ours. After all, we can trust the one who made the agreement with us. ²⁴ We should keep on encouraging each other to be thoughtful and to do helpful things. ²⁵ Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord’s coming is getting closer.

Reference to Proverbs 27: 17 – “Just as iron sharpens iron, friends sharpen the minds of each other.” (CEV)

Synopsis: Living out our faith requires us to be with each other – even when it’s difficult, uncomfortable, and convicting. When we invest in spiritual friendships, we help each other and build the Kingdom of God.

Felt need: To be vulnerable with one another in order to strengthen our spiritual lives

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity: Highlight small group opportunities

Media possibilities:

- “People.” Length: 2:33. Cost: \$15.00. Web license: Not sure. You aren’t meant to face this life alone. God has given us friends, mentors, and encouragers to lift us up and help us fight the good fight. It’s on us to accept their help and to invite them into our world.

<https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/33766/people>

Music: Bind Us Together

Worship Leader:

Discussion points:

October 24, 2021: “Listen to God and Each Other”

Scripture: James 1: 19-21 (NIV) “Listening and Doing”

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Scripture: John 10: 27-30

²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life. They will never die, and no one will snatch them from my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them from my Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”

Scripture: Psalm 46 (CEB - esp. v. 10)

46 God is our refuge and strength,
a help always near in times of great trouble.
² That’s why we won’t be afraid when the world falls apart,
when the mountains crumble into the center of the sea,
³ when its waters roar and rage,
when the mountains shake because of its surging waves.
Selah

⁴ There is a river whose streams gladden God's city,
the holiest dwelling of the Most High.

⁵ God is in that city. It will never crumble.
God will help it when morning dawns.

⁶ Nations roar; kingdoms crumble.
God utters his voice; the earth melts.

⁷ The LORD of heavenly forces is with us!
The God of Jacob is our place of safety.
Selah

⁸ Come, see the LORD's deeds,
what devastation he has imposed on the earth—
⁹ bringing wars to an end in every corner of the world,
breaking the bow and shattering the spear,
burning chariots with fire.

¹⁰ "That's enough! Now know that I am God!
I am exalted among all nations; I am exalted throughout the world!"

¹¹ The LORD of heavenly forces is with us!
The God of Jacob is our place of safety.
Selah

se·lah Pronunciation: /'sēlə/

exclamation

1. (in the Bible) occurring frequently at the end of a verse in Psalms and Habakkuk, probably as a musical direction.

Also, various Proverbs

Synopsis: Many times, we're invited to "listen" and "hear" in Scripture – whether it's opening ourselves to God or learning to get along with each other. Listening is more than an action; it's a way that we show we care about, respect, and honor God and each other.

Felt need: To remember that listening is a vital part of our relationship with God and each other

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity: "Be Still" exercise

Media possibilities:

- "God Speaks." Length: 1:49. Cost: \$18.98. Web license: Yes. We often wonder if God is speaking to us. But perhaps a more appropriate question would be, "Are we listening?" <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/11634/god-speaks>
- "I Like Listening." Length: 3:41. Cost: \$25.00. Web license: Probably not. The joy of a simple act of generosity changes the way a couple lives. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/57145/i-like-listening>

Music: #534 "Be Still, My Soul"

Worship Leader:

Discussion points:

October 31, 2021: "Yield in Love"

Scripture: Romans 12: 1-21

“A Living Sacrifice to God”

We could break up the chapter into chunks (1-2, 3-8, 9-13, 14-16, 17-21).

¹ And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. ² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

³ Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. ⁴ Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, ⁵ so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

⁶ In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. ⁷ If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. ⁸ If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

⁹ Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰ Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹ Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. ¹² Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. ¹³ When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. ¹⁵ Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

¹⁷ Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸ Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

¹⁹ Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

“I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the LORD.

²⁰ Instead,

“If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.”

²¹ Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

Scripture reference to Romans 8: 14-17 (For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God...) and Romans 8: 26-30 (the Spirit helps us in our weakness...).

Synopsis: Yielding to anyone or anything isn't always our chosen way of operating, but God's call on our lives is to let God lead us in love. As we remember our loved ones who have lived faithfully and now rest in God's love, we find strength and encouragement.

Felt need: To understand that our lives are an offering to God – and that those who live

faithfully encourage us

Visuals: Gifts. Images of love overcoming hate. Service to others.

Hands-on item:

Activity: Naming the Saints, Offer Faith Commitment for 2022

Media possibilities:

- “Living Sacrifice.” Length: 1:03. Cost: \$12.00. Web license: Yes. To live as a sacrifice requires us to allow Jesus to call the shots. Culture does not have the last word and the final say, Jesus Christ does. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/64995/living-sacrifice>

Music: For All the Saints; #399 “Take My Life, and Let It Be”

Worship Leader:

Discussion points: