**LHUMC Worship Planning Retreat**

**Meeting Preparation**

Friday, Sept. 10 from noon – 7:00 pm

Saturday, Sept. 11 from 8:30 am – 2:00 pm

Unity Reformed Church, 1521 Porter Road, Norton Shores

Last updated 8/31/21

**Yearlong Theme**

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

What do we need to focus on in worship for the next year to accomplish our mission?

How does the theme encourage spiritual formation and help us carry out our mission?

Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations/Living: radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity.

Previous themes:

* 2021: Still Blessed.
* 2020: 20/20 Vision. Seeking God’s Vision for Ourselves,
* Our Church, Our Community, and Our World.
* 2019: Love God and love neighbor.
* 2018: HOPE, PEACE, JOY, and LOVE are found in Jesus alone.

How do we make it known to our members? Hallway art? Hands-on item?

**Possible 2022 Themes:**

Picking Up the Pieces (puzzle metaphor – making a new picture)

Up from the Ashes, Hope Will Arise (lyrics from “Raise a Hallelujah” by Bethel Music)

Metamorphosis (don’t worry and stress that things aren’t the same)

Transformation

Fear Not

**Spoken Needs**

What are people saying that they need? As you think about the conversations you’ve had with people both within and outside of your church, remember the struggles, challenges, curiosities, and desires that both church members and neighbors have expressed.

* In conversations with traumatized clients, peers, and members of the LGBTQA+ community, I have heard much anger towards Jesus for what people do in his name. The misconceptions are thick and feeling judged by the church and others are common. I have to be gentle in my conversations as there is much church created trauma. To some, the church is the enemy of love and safety. I feel Lake Harbor United Methodist creates and safe and loving environment. Pastor Mary creates such an inviting message. I wish we could magnify that safety so everyone could come home to that harbor of loving belonging. Jesus is not a club to belong to, he is love! *Angela Thompson*
* While a woman was working the polls at the last election, a co-worker asked if she was a Christian. She said her parents are and have a very nice church. She would describe herself as a very caring person, but not a Christian. The woman continued to ask her about what will happen when she dies and she said she did not know. The woman was firm in her beliefs that she knows what will happen to her and those who don’t believe. How can we respond? The way we talk to each other, especially about faith, matters. Pastor Mary suggested that the label, “Christian,” is a pretty big umbrella and like any other descriptor is a mixed bag. Matthew 25: 31-46, the parable of the sheep and the goats would suggest that what you do (for the least of these) is actually what matters. *Monday worship team*
* Openness and understanding of their worldview and a compassionate community. *Anonymous*
* Since I’m an online attendee from out-of-state, I have limited conversations with our congregation. My responses will mostly be my own thoughts/needs. It is hard for me to know how to work for social justice beyond helping with offerings, both of money and products/goods. The discussion of voting rights, fair housing, access to medical care, etc. have become so politicized that it’s difficult to approach solutions together. I pray for solutions, and it would be great to work with others giving voice and thought to these struggles. I don’t know if this is possible. *Nancy Robertson*
* A need for peace in all the uncertainty. Justice for all! *Anonymous*
* The Olympics: Spiritual twisties. The need for community. Pulling together around a common cause. Passion and opinions around specific athletes.
* Church:Divisions within the church. Recognizing that faith is not simple; there are ups and downs. Change needed to revitalize the Methodist Church.
* A Time to just be- that it's ok to just do nothing other than listen to the birds and the wind for a while. *Anonymous*
* Back to Normal, or at least a new normal. Things are still just so unclear. I guess another way to say it would be more black and white and less grey. *Brad Hilleary*
* Loneliness - the loss of real connections with other people - not just from the pandemic, but also from relying on technology to communicate with each other rather than being face-to-face Reordering priorities: How has 18 months of work from home, school from home, limited travel, etc. changed our priorities? What are some good things that have come out of the pandemic? Closer relationship with neighbors? Stronger families? Slower lifestyle/pace? Increased gratitude? Finally getting around to live streaming worship? Greater personal resilience? *Karen Booth*
* At least one “old” hymn during each service. *Esther Block*
* Volunteers to work clothes pantry and supper house. If there are enough people, everyone can rotate. *Anonymous*

**Unspoken Needs**

Unspoken needs are the things people aren’t talking about, but they need. You are in the trenches doing ministry. You see needed growth areas before the average church member, and are building relationship with people far from God.

* Safety is always number one to me. We are constantly plagued with stigma and judgement in this world. There are so many false notions of who we should be. It is hard for people to show up for themselves when they have no safety inside of themselves. Living in fear of your own truth causes isolation. *Angela Thompson*
* Long term stress & other issues after COVID (that feel like PTSD). *Anonymous*
* Fear of aging, being required by family members to leave home/move away. On the other hand, caring for aging parents so they can age in place. There are emotional struggles on both sides of this coin. *Nancy Robertson*
* Lots of fear out there. Some rational and some not. Along with fear, so many people are very angry. Anger and Fear lead to the dark side of the force, (Star Wars reference) but also darkness of our souls. *Brad Hilleary*
* Feelings of isolation/loneliness post Covid –I truly believe that despite our best (and wonderful efforts) to keep us connected through our fantastic livestream worship, emails, calls, etc., we are finding many have lost the “rhythm of being in-person” in our Christian community. I feel it is so easy to fall away from the pattern of being involved and active at church. We now face a new variant that may make the disconnect ever last longer. It troubles me and I worry for my sisters and brothers in Christ. *Anonymous*
* Having names of people they can reach out to for some personal, private conversation. *Esther Block*
* To be seen, heard and accepted by others. *Anonymous*
* I came across this interesting and probably counter-intuitive note from Envato, a video/graphic design website: There's been a big increase in the amount of positive, inspirational and aspirational video content being created and consumed - suggesting people are looking for a strong dose of hope and optimism. "We're seeing a lot more videos highlighting connections between friends and families, traveling, and just making the most out of life," says Envato's Video Specialist, Mark Brodhuber. *Karen Booth*

**Useful Stuff**

**Responses:**

* Rob Bell speaks to me as does Richard Rohr, Mother Teresa, Deepak Chopra, Tich Naht Hanh, The Dalai Lama, Tara Brach, Mark Nepo, Maya Angelou and so many more. God finds me anywhere gentleness and belonging are spoken. I found my way back to Jesus through the messages of love from spiritual teachers outside of Christianity. I want to know why so many cultures have used Christianity in the name of hate and control. I want to understand why Hell is used as a way to push compliance and fear. I want to know why religious schools killed off natives. I want to know why explorers disregarded the sanctity of native peoples and exploited their wealth in the name of Manifest Destiny. *Angela Thompson*
* Our God Moments prepare us for this section, and teach us to notice God’s presence. They are unique in my many years of church experience, and I marvel at their great meaningfulness. I like the older book Your God is Too Small to explore God’s greatness, and to pull him out of the labeled boxes people put him in. I like to consider God’s/Christ’s sense of humor. I’d like to know more about the possibility of reaching a oneness of humanity (diverse in thought and perception but accepting of one another) instead of the warring nature of religion vs religion. I think it would be neat to use older and contemporary hymns as a study, to learn the circumstances of their authors’ experiences and what prompted their writing. I love a Psalm-singing resource by Pat McGeachy, who puts psalms to everyday folk tunes and makes them memorable and easy to sing. *Nancy Robertson*
* If anyone should be able to come together it is Christians. How do we join with other churches in town to share the simple message of Christian Love? *Brad Hilleary*
* Animated movie: "Luca" Animated movie: "The Mitchells vs the Machines" Television series: "Ted Lasso" Interesting article from the June 18, 2021 Wall Street Journal, "The Faith of an Autistic Man" by Jory Fleming *Karen Booth*

**Questions to explore:**

**Articles:** Visit <https://lakeharborumc.org/2020/08/september-11-12-2020-worship-planning-retreat/> for a list of interesting articles.

**Plays**:

**Comics:** "Pearls before Swine" from 7/22/21, “Spectickles” from 8/26/21- see them on the website

**Hand-out or hands-on items:**

**Video**:

**Movies:**

* “Luca” is a coming-of-age story about one young boy experiencing an unforgettable summer filled with gelato, pasta and endless scooter rides. Luca shares these adventures with his newfound best friend, but all the fun is threatened by a deeply-held secret: they are sea monsters from another world just below the water’s surface. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYfJxlgR2jw>
* “The Mitchells vs. The Machines.” A quirky, dysfunctional family’s road trip is upended when they find themselves in the middle of the robot apocalypse and suddenly become humanity’s unlikeliest last hope. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ak5dFt8Ar0>
* “Show Me the Father.” This documentary invites you to think differently about how you view your earthly father and also how you personally relate to God. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cSh1GXieFY>

**Television shows:**

* “Ted Lasso.” America's favorite football coach is crossing the pond.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3u7EIiohs6U>

**Stray stuff:**

* Vacation Bible School
* Inspirational images and articles
* Rethinking Church (Marica McFee webinar): Moving forward from the pandemic by exploring different possibilities, not returning to every pre-pandemic routine:
  + Sharing the sabbath is small groups
  + Having a Sunday work day
  + Church service in a different location
  + Asking ourselves: How are we a church in our neighborhood?

**Books:**

* Faith of a Mockingbird by Matt Rawle. Join the characters of Harper Lee’s classic, To Kill a Mockingbird, Scout Finch, Boo Radley, Atticus Finch, and Tom Robinson to explore Christian faith, theology, and ethics.
* Written by Adam Hamilton:
  + Faithful: Advent through the Eyes of Joseph <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUCU7zDKFGU>
  + The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life (used by the men’s group) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEjpOgGoEWs>
  + Half Truths: God Helps Those Who Help Themselves and Other Things the Bible Doesn’t Say<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q44KNpgbh8I&t=1s>
  + Words of Life: Jesus and the Promise of the Ten Commandments
  + Creed: What Christians Believe and Why <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pNrFUQ3W_Y>
* Dusk Night Dawn: On Revival and Courage by Anne Lamott. How can we recapture the confidence we once had I the world and, in the future, as we stumble through dark times?
* Looking for God in Messy Places: A Book about Hope by Jacob Owensby. A book for anyone who has ever been “frozen in place” by loss or regret, who has endured suffering, cruelty or rejection, and how love gives us an inextinguishable hope.
* The Unsaved Christian by Dean Inserra. A study of two basic groups of cultural Christians. One group believes in God and the Bible, does selective “church things,” but beliefs have a small role in everyday life. The other group is actively involved in church, but does not have a clear understanding of the gospel. It is difficult to reach either group. Neither thinks they need to be saved.
* Man’s Search for Meaning is one of my favorite books and has served a pivotal role in my understanding of humanity. I also really enjoy The Power of Now and The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Religion and Politics.

**Series Ideas**

Armed with a lot of perspective on spoken and unspoken needs, start to ask questions like: What Scriptures address these needs? What topical series could address these needs? From which book of the Bible could we teach? What creative series titles or “hooks” could we use?

* **Doors & windows** - (elaborating on the cliché about when one closes the other open): hallways through life as a series of known and unknown choices that open and close doors as we move along the hallways aka through life. *Anonymous*
* Challenges on how we can live and share God's positive message with the world. Actual action items given in the message and then feedback next week on what happened. *Brad Hilleary*
* I think that as a society we have drifted too far away from community and only valuing smaller and smaller sects that we align with, is a real issue. I think a series on **love without conditions** for the community as a whole, could be powerful. Putting one’s self or even own immediate family’s comfort over the greater good, is so common and so detrimental, in my humble opinion. *Anonymous*
* Matt Rawle's **"The Faith of a Mockingbird"** based on the bock and movie, "To Kill a Mockingbird. Focus: Reconciliation with God and Others "Love Never Ends" is a lectionary-based series for the season after Epiphany. The focus is seeing the light of Christ through the lens of love and is both a description and a promise. It invites us on a journey guided by Paul's letters to the Corinthians to let the light shine around us, in us, and through us as we seek to continue to become disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. *Karen Booth* <http://mattrawle.com/publications/the-faith-of-a-mockingbird/>
* **Joy Even Though**: How do we have joy in this crazy world that we are living in? In letters to the Philippians, Paul shows us how to walk as people of joy even though circumstance around us are not ideal… *Lynne Richmond from* <https://churchsermonseriesideas.com/>
* **Conquering Your Jericho**: What tensions and troubles stand in our way? Finances? Health? Work? Relationships? And how can we strive to overcome them through the power Jesus promises. *Lynne Richmond from* <https://churchsermonseriesideas.com/>
* **Messy Spirituality:** A series for imperfect Christians – examines the reality of our human weaknesses, the grace of God that meets us in these struggles, empower us to change. *Lynne Richmond from* <https://ministrypass.com/>
* **Secondhand Sins:** Explore the dysfunctional family dynamics in Genesis of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob’s families who carry forward traits of broken humanity across the generation. How can we apply/compare their stories to dysfunction in our own families, searching of hope in the midst of these dynamics? *Lynne Richmond from* <https://ministrypass.com/>
* **Love Never Ends: Being the Body of Christ:** I Corinthians is both a description and a promise. This lectionary-based series invites us to see the light of Christ through the lens of love. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/love-never-ends-being-the-body-of-christ/second-sunday-after-the-epiphany-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes>

**Studying specific books of the bible in depth:**

* **Singing the Psalms** is a good one. Tying particular psalms to what’s happening in everyday life would be a practical experience. Teaching on Micah 6:8 for social justice would be a start. I don’t know what scriptures correspond to the two sides of the aging puzzle, except perhaps the Golden Rule, the story of Ruth/Naomi, and the commandment to honor our father and our mother. *Nancy Robertson*
* **Revelations:** 1) Understanding the books as a whole, remembering the context rather than just snippets about “the mark of the best.” People tend to be intrigued by this book or just find it bizarre. It could be a way of addressing fear, i.e., standing strong and keeping the faith.2) Revealing the mysteries and misconceptions of the book of Revelations. *Lynne Richmond*
* I’m not sure. I really have enjoyed some of the books that never made it into the official cannon, but that may be beyond the scope of the Methodist church’s stance. I think it was the **book of Thomas** that took a more spiritual, somewhat naturalist approach that I connected with, but it’s been a while since I’ve read it, so I could be wrong. *Anonymous*

**Sex and the Bible**

**Old Testament series:**

* **The most bizarre stories of the bible:** Balaam’s donkey, Judith killing a general with a cheesecake, most of Genesis….
* **Old Testament Joseph** (and his amazing technicolor dream coat) or **Moses** (related book – Moses: In the Footsteps of the Reluctant Prophet by Adam Hamilton - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Or8VJeFNL-A&t=1s> ). They are the only two OT figures whose whole life story is recorded.
* **Plot Twists:**The story of Joseph. As followers of God, we must overcome our sinful attitudes, temptations, and forgive those who hurt us. *Lynne Richmond from* <https://ministrypass.com/>
* **Real Life, Real Faith:** The story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50) – Pastor Camp Anytime Sermon Series.
  + Childhood - Childhood Dreams
  + Adolescence – Great Temptations
  + Young Adult – Life in the Pits
  + Adult/Middle-Age – Adulting
  + Older Adult/Twilight – And in the End…

**Seasonal Series Ideas**

We also need to identify ideas for specific series that we do every year. For example, we know we will celebrate Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter every year. We also know that every fall we’ll have a Stewardship Campaign.

**ADVENT**

* Advent group study outside the regular Bible study groups
* For Advent, are there **contemporary vignettes/plays** that are available from the church at large? One for each of the Sundays and its theme…modern visions of waiting and watching that can be presented either by congregational members or on video from the UMC, then compared and contrasted with the biblical stories/scriptures? Short vignettes, easy to build a sermon series around? *Nancy Robertson*
* Marcia McFee's "**The Inn: Housing the Holy**." Synopsis: The pandemic has laid bare, and widened, economic disparity locally and globally. As we enter the Advent season, how can our churches become houses where the Holy will be born anew - offering respite, sustenance and care, opening the doors ever wider to those seeking shelter from the onslaught of life? No one church can do it all, but each can do something. As we study the biblical prophets that call us to care for our neighbors and "make room in the inn," the lonely and frightened spaces within us are filled with the light of Hope, peace, Joy, and Love. *Karen Booth and Lynne Richmond*
* “Making Room” Hope
* “A Place at the Table” Peace
* “How Much Is Enough?” Joy
* “A Room with a View” Love
* “The Inn” Christmas Eve
* “Dwelling” Sunday after Christmas
* UMC’ Discipleship Ministry’s **Come Home for Christmas:** Advent is an invitation. For many, it is the invitation to get into that Christmas spirit, to count down the days to the grand celebration, and let the holiday transform everything around us. We’re not all about Christmas, the holiday, about December 25 with all the jingle bells and tinsel. We are about Christmas, the Mass of Christ, the celebration of the Incarnate one who comes to remind us that we are not alone, and God is with us. We are about the longing for the coming kin-dom, where we will study war no more, where people will walk in the light, where joy will be found, and love with be the tie that binds us together. That’s the home for which we long. That’s the invitation this Advent season to your church and the world: “Come home for Christmas.” <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/come-home-for-christmas>
  + Time to God Home
  + The Fear of Home
  + The Joy of Home
  + The Blessing of Home
  + Welcome Home
  + Lost at Home
  + The Light of Home
  + **The stories behind Advent and Christmas hymns**
* A **Star Word** series with (manger?) words that reflect the season of preparation – come, prepare, rejoice, behold.
* The history of Christmas and how it has been observed in the church throughout history.
* **Away in a Manger** by the Skit Guys. Scripture: Isaiah and Luke. Uses five classic Christmas carols/hymns. <https://skitguys.com/videos/away-in-a-manger?utm_source=Skit+Guys+News&utm_campaign=742a0ad40d-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_08_21_01_59&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1f8e8a4026-742a0ad40d-26165634&mc_cid=742a0ad40d&mc_eid=c7d26fab5b>
* **What Child Is This?** by the Skit Guys <https://skitguys.com/videos/what-child-is-this>

**LENT**

* Fear- there is the common mention about how the angel said "fear not" at Christmas- what about Lent & Easter fear? COVID brought fear to the front of the line for a lot of people
* **Selah: Life in a Minor Key**. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/selah-life-in-a-minor-key>
* **A series about hunger** – nutritional (food), spiritual, emotional, connections – as it relates to the kinds of hungers the apostles were dealing with in their years traveling with Jesus and what we know is coming in Holy Week and Easter.
* Marcia McFee’s **Listen: Hearing that Still Small Voice and Finding Your Own** <https://ny163.infusionsoft.com/app/linkClick/35118/deede239b4cd4f1d/2150912/6363dd03155de88b>
* Twenty-four Hours that Changed the World by Adam Hamilton
* When God Becomes Small by Phil Needham
* “Reflections of Lent” series by the Skit Guys

**STEWARDSHIP**

**Exploring Stewardship with the Saints:** Tell the congregation some stories that they haven’t heard yet, drawn from the lives of Christians stretching back from the twentieth to the first centuries. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/exploring-stewardship-with-the-saints-a-sermon-series>

* Sarah Crosby – The Way of Necessity
* St. Luke the Evangelist – The Way of Generosity
* Francis of Assisi – The Way of Poverty
* Mary McLeod Bethune – The Way of Authority