**2023 Worship**

Jesus Is Our Past, Present, and Future Hope

Updated September 26, 2022

**Members at the planning retreat:** Jean Kelly, Vicki Zuker, Fred Woodworth, Jan Justus, Diane Thompson, Barb Gripton, Jim Post, Karen Post, Betty Kinney, David Booth, Rose Emmons (Saturday), Ed Baranowski (Saturday), Michael Boersma (Saturday), Pastor Mary Ivanov, Karen Booth

**Theme:**  Jesus is Our Past, Present, and Future Hope

**Key verse:** 38For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 8: 38-39 (NIV)*

**Major spoken/unspoken needs:**

* It is so easy to not attend church when I can watch it online. Worship is for God, not us. Convenience vs. sacrifice. Logistics vs. routine.
* Pastoral care, especially around losses: Grief. Family. Division. Addiction. Unrealized dreams. Financial woes. Abortion. Open marriages.
* Relationships. Reconciliation.
* Fear and regret

---------------------------------------------------------------------

**“The Redemption of Scrooge”**

Based on a book by Matt Rawles

November 27, 2022 – January 1, 2023

(4 weeks of Advent plus Blue Christmas,

Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day)

**Brainstorming:** Week of November 7, 2022

**Synopsis:** Ebenezer Scrooge is a man in dire need of a second chance. Is redemption possible for such a greedy, dark and sad character? Rawle shows us how the teachings of Jesus can be found in Dickens’ Christmas classic. From the ghosts of Christmas past, to the Life of the present, and the resurrection of Christmas future, this series will “bless us every one” and reinvigorate our spiritual journeys as we look at this familiar story through the lens of faith.

**2023 theme connection:** Hope comes from a higher power. God has been faithful in the past. We can rely on him today and in the future.

**Intro video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tzy_lrIVABE>

**Resources:**

* *The Redemption of Scrooge* by Matt Rawle <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tzy_lrIVABE> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czA4lI3Bb7Q>
* *A Christmas Story* by Charles Dickens
* [*God Bless Us Every One*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-OBWNXBHqk&t=1s) by Marcia McFee. This Advent season we will ring out the truth of God’s economy – where “making change” has nothing to do with monetary success and everything to do with transformation. Could you use a transformation for your life? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-OBWNXBHqk&t=95s>
	+ **Advent 1:** “Bah Humbug! Making Change.” The culture context in which Dickens placed his powerful Christmas story was 1800’s England – a time of great divide between rich and poor – something on which Dickens wanted to shed a light. His main character, Ebenezer Scrooge, is clear as the story begins that the only redeeming value in life was in getting more money. He lives in resentment, ear and the ice-cold frozen state of watching out only for himself. God’s economy, on the other hand, says that there is enough for all and all are worthy of the abundance of life and joy, freedom and sustenance. Will we “make change” and move toward the richness of peace for all or will we continue to be chained by the poverty of exclusion? *Scripture:* Isaiah 9: 6-7; Luke 1: 46-47, 52-55.
	+ **Advent 2:** “The Remembrance of Christmas Past: Hope from Heartbreak.” Anyone who has ever been in therapy knows that shining a light on our past requires courage… and hope. When the Ghost of Christmas Past makes a visit, Scrooge is immediately afraid of the light that emanates from it. But as he begins the terrifying journey, he sheds a tear for the disappointment of his own past and compassion slowly begins to make an appearance in his life. How will we be inspired to share hope in the midst of the world’s heartbreak? *Scripture:* Isaiah 9: 2, 6; Luke 2: 8-14.
	+ **Advent 3:** “The Life of Christmas Present: Look upon Me.” Ebenezer Scrooge has a prescription for humanity at the beginning of the story – the poor have only themselves to blame and would be better off dead. So, when he is visited by the spirit of the present, he is admonished to “look!” He must really see the truth of the suffering world and his own hand in it. Love is the center of the message this week. What if we modeled our Advent and Christmas comings and goings as if we actually believe that God has already blessed everyone and we are called to make visible and tangible those blessings? *Scripture:* Deuteronomy 15: 7-11; Matthew 2: 1-18.
	+ **Advent 4:** “The Hope of Christmas Future: Death-Defying Acts.” Fear of the future. We all have this to varying degrees, affecting our behavior, our relationships, our generosity and our ability to truly know the joy of life. The journey of Scrooge with the Ghost of Christmas yet to Come is harrowing. He tries to hide from it, run from I – to no avail. It is only when he realizes that he has the power to change the destructive course his is on that his fear is transformed to joy. Along with Scrooge, we can defy death-like attitudes and reawaken to life. No matter how far off course we might have gone, “we haven’t missed it!” *Scripture:* Revelation 1:4; Luke 4: 18-19; Romans 8: 4b-17.
	+ **Christmas Eve:** “The Redemption of Scrooge: Keeping Christmas Well.” “Keeping Christmas well” is not about signs of our own prosperity, but signs of our own redemption – getting our trues selves back so that we might give of ourselves with joy. In this story, Scrooge’s journey is not complete until he reconciles with his family. “Scrooge knocked at the door and asked to be welcomed, and with joy, he was. If Scrooge can be redeemed, then so can we!” *Scripture:* Matthew 2: 1-23. Luke 1: 26, Luke 2: 20; Matthew 2: 1-14.
	+ **Christmas Day:** “God Bless Us – Every One!” Christmas Day has arrived! The Christ Child is born and we, as the Body of Christ, are reborn with him. Our very essence is peace, hope, love and joy. How will we live this out? Ebenezer Scrooge could not contain his exuberance at being given the gift of living – truly living – another day. On this day of gift-giving, how will our lives continue to be a gift and a blessing for the sake of “everyone?” *Scripture:*  John 1: 1-14.

**Advent 1 – Nov. 27:** “Bah! Humbug!” Scrooge is “a sad, sad man.” But don’t worry—if Scrooge can be redeemed, so can we. In A Christmas Carol and in Jesus’ parable of the landowner, we learn that it’s not the wage that is our reward; it’s having a God who will never stop offering us an invitation to be in the Kingdom.

**Advent 2 – Dec. 4:** “The Remembrance of Christmas Past.” Scrooge remembers a happier time in his life, and Matt Rawles sees in it the possibility that Scrooge can change. Advent is all about change and redemption. It’s about joy entering the world – joy, the steadfast assurance that God is with us.

**Advent 3 –** **Dec. 11:** “The Life of Christmas Present.” The ghost of Christmas Past gives way to the ghost of Christmas present. Similarly, the Christmas story starts with “In those days,” but moves to, “To you is born on this day in the city of David, a savior who is the messiah, the Lord.”

**Advent 4 – Dec. 18:** “The Hope of Christmas Future.” We discover darkness in the life of Scrooge before he was redeemed, and darkness also plays a role in Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection. Christian faith is not about avoiding the darkness; we are called to shine in the midst of it.

**Christmas Eve – Dec. 24:**

**Christmas Day – Dec. 25:** Lessons and carols.

**New Year’s Day – Jan. 1:** Covenant renewal

---------------------------------------------------------------------

**“Faith in Films”**

January 8-29, 2023

(4 weeks)

**Brainstorming:** Week of December 12 or 19, 2022

**2023 theme connection:** Faith and pop culture already coexist in the lives of many Christians. We recognize that we sometimes see glimpses of God’s truth in unlikely places, even characters from four different films who are searching for hope and meaning in their perfectly messy lives.

**Encanto** (Nov. 2021) PG

Encanto tells the tale of the Madrigals, an extraordinary family who live in a wondrous, charmed place called an Encanto. Each child has been blessed with a magic gift unique to them—each child except Mirabel. But when the family’s home is threatened, Mirabel may be their only hope. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaimKeDcudo>

* Related article: [“Encanto’s Ode to Mental Health.”](https://thinkchristian.net/encantos-ode-to-mental-health?utm_campaign=TC_GeneralCampaign&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=202005695&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--5KTvVekhanG2RgNhzX69ssBPKjNokhZK8iCQR530fFtkl-4xwERz32fJZ2xB6qMNWsinvOYS5MPtH-sU4i3h2-o83TA&utm_content=202005695&utm_source=hs_email)

**Top Gun: Maverick** (2022) PG-13

After more than thirty years of service as one of the Navy’s top aviators, Pete Mitchell is where he belongs, pushing the envelope as a courageous test pilot and dodging the advancement in rank that would ground him. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSqVVswa420>

* Related article: [“Minister Maverick.”](https://thinkchristian.net/minister-maverick?utm_campaign=TC_GeneralCampaign&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=216749792&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8OMjl6eqi4FjOdDTJ7Ozus9__y05Si1XiX-WiMskggV9N-NvbS9R3_hhS-63jxFSbKqP_X2WMnqkb3MjEPMAMwsWa_lw&utm_content=216749792&utm_source=hs_email)

**A Marvel Universe movie**

* Show in church:

**CODA** (2022) PG-13 on Apple TV

As a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults) Ruby is the only hearing person in her deaf family. When the family’s fishing business is threatened, Ruby finds herself torn between pursuing her passion at Berklee College of Music and hear fear of abandoning her parents. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pmfrE1YL4I>

---------------------------------------------------------------------

**“Mountain Stories:**

**Where Heaven and Earth Meeting in the Bible”**

February 5-16, 2023

\*Based on a series by Pastor Mary’s colleague

(3 weeks)

**Brainstorming:** Week of January 9 or 16, 2023

**2023 theme connection:** Old and New Testament stories remind of God’s faithfulness. We can count on it today and in the future.

**\*Synopsis:** This was a fun one to trace a thread through the whole of Scripture using mountains and connecting them to real places on earth. I did Mt. Ararat (Noah), Mt. Moriah (Abraham), Mt. Sinai (Moses), Mt. of the Beatitudes (Sermon on the Mount), and Mt. Tabor (Transfiguration). I think I worked it to end on Transfiguration Sunday. Really fun to show pictures of the Traditional Sites today, what these spots mean to the local people today, and preach the message of the particular story. Really well received, and a good lead up to Lent and the Passion.

**Music:***All My Hope* by Crowder; *My Hope Is Built*

**February 5:**

**February 12:**

**February 19:** Transfiguration Sunday. *Scripture:* Matthew 17: 1-9

---------------------------------------------------------------------

**“Baptismal Calling through Death to Life”**

February 26 – April 9, 2023

A lectionary-based series from the UMC Discipleship Ministries

(5 weeks of Lent, Holy Week, Easter)

**Brainstorming:** Week of January 29 or February 4, 2023

**2023 theme connection:** Baptism is not the end of our faith journey, but one step in life long, Spirit led process meant to guide us every day.

**\*Synopsis:** *The primary purpose of Lent from the earliest church, was to prepare candidates for baptism at Easter. Lent was designed to help the church help these candidates become purged from sinful ways, and lie more fully into the way of Christ. Lent was and is the final stage of labor before new birth, a final incubation before “hatching” into new life. Lent is the time for the congregation to fulfill its role as “midwife to the Spirit” as fully as the Spirit may allow.*

*This works of midwifery is solemn, but no somber. It is also joyful, hopeful, challenging, and expectant. We fix our eye on the birth or growth to come in the lives of the candidates with whom we journey, and we do what it takes to facilitate not just their rebirth through baptism, but their thriving in new life from that day forward.*

**Resources:** This series is based on the lectionary, year A.

* \*Discipleship Ministries: [“Living Our Baptismal Calling”](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/planning-for-worship-during-lent-year-a-living-our-baptismal-calling) (2013)
* Discipleship Ministries: [“Living Our Baptismal Calling”](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/lent-living-our-baptismal-calling) (2017)
* [Come to the Waters: Baptism and Our Ministry of Welcoming Seekers and Making Disciple](https://www.christianbook.com/baptism-ministry-welcoming-seekers-making-disciples/daniel-benedict/9780881771794/pd/771791#CBD-PD-Publisher-Description)s by Daniel T Benedict Jr.
* Discipleship Ministries: [“I Will”: Living Our Baptismal Vows](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/i-will-living-our-baptismal-vows?mc_cid=c4aafa78e6&mc_eid=b090e4f745)
* GBOD’s “Living Out Our Baptismal Calling” ([used in 2017 for Lent and Easter](https://lakeharborumc.org/2017/02/2017-lent-easter-worship-brainstorming/))
* [Baptism: Help kids explore the mystery](https://www.umc.org/en/content/baptism-help-kids-explore-the-mystery?utm_source=umnow&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=members&utm_content=conversation09/12/2022&mkt_tok=MDc4LUpYUS02NDMAAAGG0FeeCPPbWnEUNlHT6ahxI8Y6mSLkkfgvQviQjEO5Vy2Tbtny2_nVURBYOwMhqJMu2xIuiEH0suABfOXJALNJbzAFfbL7IrYymUDMOOf-Tar7hViTU0VStEI)

**Ash Wednesday at Central UMC – Feb. 22, 2022**

**Lent 1 – February 26:** “Called to Renounce.” What does it mean for people to renounce Satan and all his works? Here at the start of Lent, we hear and claim God’s call to make the same renunciations and live as those who have done so. *Scripture:* Matthew 4: 1-11. The Temptation of Jesus.

**Lent 2 – March 5:** “Called to Be Born Again.” Baptism is the sign and ordinary means of rebirth. But the water and the ritual alone do not make rebirth happen. This is the Spirit’s work. *Scripture:* John 3: 1-17. Nicodemus ask Jesus what it means to be “born again.”

**Lent 3 – March 12:** “Called to Drink and Share Living Water.” Personal and cultural baggage prevent us from seeing and experiencing the saving power of God in Jesus Christ. What do we need to let go to enable us to walk faithfully with all who come seeking living water? *Scripture:* John 4: 5-42. Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman at the well.

**Lent 4 – March 19:** “Called to Be Healed of Blindness.” We are born with a blindness that only being born again correct. Healing, restoration, and new life await those who open their hearts and minds to Jesus. *Scripture:* John 9: 1-41. Jesus heals a man who was born blind.

**Lent 5 – March 26:** “Called to Come Forth and Enable Other Left for Dead to Do the Same.” Today’s story takes great pains to show us that Lazarus was really and truly dead. And, as Martha reminds us, there is already a stench around the tomb. We too are dead in our trespasses and sins. In Baptism, Jesus restores us calls the community to complete what he has begun. *Scripture:* John 11: 1-45. Raising Lazarus from the dead.

**Palm Sunday – April 2:**

**Holy Thursday – April 6:**

**Good Friday – April 7:**

**Easter Sunday – April 9:**

---------------------------------------------------------------------

**“Dare to Dance Again”**

April 16 – May 28, 2023

Based on a series by Marcia McFee

(8 weeks – we’ll only use 7)

**Brainstorming:** Week of March 27, 2023

**2023 theme connection:** It is easy to lose hope when times are difficult. Easter stories point to the hope of living in community.

**Synopsis:** *As Easter people, we are called to dance our dances of freedom for all the world to see – even and perhaps especially in times of great difficulty. Dances of hope. Dances of justice. Dances of love. During this season, post-resurrection stories point to the joy of living in the beloved community and extending that fellowship through our witness as we dare to dance again.*

**Resources:**

* <https://worship-design-studio.mn.co/courses/4501555/about>
* [Introductory video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8y5-AG3O5Y)
* Hallelujah Anyway: Rediscovering Mercy “Mercy is radical kindness,” Anne Lamott writes…. It’s the permission you give others – and yourself – to forgive a debt, to absolve the unabsolvable, to let go of the judgment and pain that make life so difficult.

**Anchor image:** Umbrellas

**Hands-on item:** Drink umbrellas

**Easter Sunday:** “For All Peoples a Feast – Dare to Dance Again.” On the morning when all seemed lost, a stone had rolled away to uncover the feast of all feasts, the joy of all joys. The shroud of death had become a vel for gladness, for celebration, for dancing. What if we stopped trying to out run one another in a race for things that do not matter in the end, and instead ran toward life and hope and all the joy we can accomplish together, daring to dance again? *Scripture:*  Isaiah 25: 6-9 (feast) and John 20: 1-18 (women at the tomb).

**Easter 2** – **April 16:** “With Great Power – Dancing Together.” Dancing requires that we pay attention to our dance partners. It requires finding rhythm together. The Sunday after Easter brings the story of Jesus appearing to the disciples and breathing the Holy Spirit on them. Other scripture this week point to the power of being together, of finding fellowship in the presence of Jesus and the presence of the community. What does it take to dance together? *Scripture:* John 20: 19-31 and 1 John 1:1 – 2:2.

**Easter 3 – April 23:** “While in Their Joy – Dancing Sure.” Sometimes we are unsure about our steps in this world. For the disciples, even “while in their joy” at seeing Jesus post-resurrection, they were still “disbelieving and wondering.” But 1 John reminds us that even though we may not know our next steps, we can be sure in them because we are “beloved” children of God and we will be like the one in whose steps we can surely follow – the resurrected Jesus. *Scripture:* Luke 24: 36b-48 and 1 John 3: 1-7.

**Easter 4 – April 30:** “By This We Will Know – The Dance of Love.” How do we know the rhythm and dance of our lives is faithful? Drummer of the Grateful Dead Mickey Hart, wrote: “To fall in love is to fall in rhythm.” It is love for each other by which we know we are followers of Jesus, the ever-attentive shepherd. In the face of societal rules and attitudes that strive to foster “everyone for themselves,” they will know we are Christians by our love. How can we listen to the music that draws us together, “falling in rhythm” with neighbor in order to build up the whole? *Scripture:* Luke 24: 36b-48 and 1 John 3: 1-7.

**Easter 5 – May 5:** “From You Comes My Praise: Guide My Steps.” The Ethiopian says, “How can I understand unless someone guides me?” So, Philip begins to proclaim the good news of Jesus and the eunuch commands his chariot to stop so that he can go down to the water and be baptized. How has the testimony of the people in our lives and through the generations guided our steps into dances of praise at the good news that we are loved and blessed? What transformation is possible as we abide with God, the vine from which we find our sustenance? *Scripture:* Acts 8: 26-40 and John 15: 1-8.

**Easter 6 – May 12:** “Who Can Withhold? Break Forth!” The Psalm for this Sunday describes everything in creation offering joyful nises to God. Our joy is complete because the joy of Christ resides within us. We cannot help but break forth. This joy is available to all, realized the community in the Acts scripture. The Holy Spirit finds its way even and especially in what feels like unlikely people and places. Where do we see the Spirit at work? And who can withhold the living water and our living praise? No one! *Scripture:* Psalm 98 and Acts 10: 44-48.

**Ascension Sunday – May 19:** As Jesus prepares to leave the disciples, he opens their minds and blesses them. The result after he ascends is their return to Jerusalem with great joy and a desire for “continually” worshiping and blessing God in the temple. What happens when the “eyes of our hearts are enlightened?” We know the hope to which we have been called. As we wait for the Spirit with hope, we celebrate with abandon because we have no other ruler than the One who reign with love and justice. *Scripture:* Psalm 47 and Luke 24: 44-53.

**Pentecost – May 26:** Ezekiel has a vision of a valley full of bones receiving life, breath, sinew, and flesh after encountering the word of God. When they arise, they receive Spirit and they dance! As Easter people, we celebrate the Spirit that continues to give life and breath to our dry bones. We dare to dance in the face of fear, in the face of cynicism, in the face of despair. We dare to dance “as long as we live” for we, like the early Christians, are the recipients of the Spirit of God which intercedes even when we thing we can’t make it to the dance floor. In hop we are saved! *Scripture:* Ezekiel 37: 1-14 and Acts 2: 1-12.

---------------------------------------------------------------------

**“The Ten Commandments for Today”**

June 11 – August 13, 2023

(10 weeks)

**Brainstorming:** Week of May 15 or 22, 2023

**2023 theme connection:** The Ten Commandments are one of the foundations of our faith and were the fundamental legal code of Western Civilization and our country. How do they guide today and in the future? Do they still offer hope for a broken world?

**Synopsis:** *Nearly everyone has heard of the Ten Commandments, the list of “thou-shalt-nots” found in the Bible. Jesus saw these commandments not as onerous burdens, but as guideposts to help us experience a good and beautiful life. These ancient “words” were given to us by a loving God who longed to set safe boundaries, create order out of chaos, help communities live peacefully, and protect us – often from ourselves.*

**Resources:**

* [*Words Of Life: Jesus and the Promise of the Ten Commandments Today*](https://www.adamhamilton.com/books/item/9781524760540/) by Adam Hamilton. Hamilton brings modern eyes to the most famous set of rules in history, recovering the Ten Commandments as more than just a set of onerous prohibitions. He considers the commandments in their historical context, unpacking the meaning of each commandment in Hebrew, how Jesus reinterpreted them, and how Jews and Christians have understood them over the millennia. He also explores how the latest research in science and psychology illuminates these commandments, rightly understood as a way of ordering one's life beautifully in the present day. In a culture marked by workaholism, materialism, and social media-driven envy, God has given us a time-tested path that leads to gratitude, confidence, and peace.
* Words of Life [promo video](https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon_series/the-ten-commandments-for-today-exodus-20/)
* The Ten Commandments for Today | Keep Believing – Message titles below, are from this source.

**June 4:** Pastor Mary will be at Annual Conference. Someone else will preach.

**June 11:** “No Other Gods.” You must have no other gods before me. *Scripture:* Exodus 20:3.

**June 18:** “No Graven Images.” Do not make an idol for yourself. *Scripture:* Exodus 20: 4-6.

**June 25:** “Taking God Seriously.” Do not use the Lord your God’s name as if it were of no significance. *Scripture:* Exodus 20:7.

**July 2:** “Take Time for God.” Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy.  *Scripture:* Exodus 20: 8-11.

**July 9:** “Forever Children.” Honor your father and your mother. *Scripture:* Exodus 20:12.

**July 16:** “Murder in My Mouth.” Do not kill. *Scripture:* Exodus 20:13.

**July 23:** “Adultery in My Heart.” Do not commit adultery. *Scripture:* Exodus 20:14.

**July 30:** “Stop, Thief!” Do not steal. *Scripture:* Exodus 20:15.

**August 6:** “Truth or Consequences.” Do not testify falsely against your neighbor. *Scripture:* Exodus 20:16.

**August 13:** “The Sin No One Will Admit.” Do not desire and try to take your neighbor’s house… or anything else that belongs to your neighbor. *Scripture:* Exodus 20:17.

---------------------------------------------------------------------

**“Discipleship: The United Methodist Ten”**

August 20 – October 29, 2023

(10 weeks)

**Brainstorming:** Week of July 24 or 31, 2023

**2023 theme connection:** Our faith has a history that should inform our present actions and what we believe about the future.

**Synopsis:** Too often, our only introduction to the specific beliefs of the United Methodist Church is in a “new member” class. Some folks seek membership and many seek clarity about the denomination’s distinctiveness and beliefs.

**Resources:**

* Hacking Christianity’s [The United Methodist 10](https://hackingchristianity.net/2022/07/the-united-methodist-10.html)
* Ministry Matters: [Ditching Our Stewardship Campaign – for Discipleship](https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/3252/ditching-our-stewardship-campaign-for-discipleship)
* Media: [The Faith We Grow – Celebrating Discipleship](http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_Properties/audio-video/video-umtv/the-faith-we-grow-celebrating-discipleship.mp4)

**August 20:** “One Mission.”

* Topic: To make (and nurture) disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
* Subjects: Missiology.
* Resource: [2008 General Conference.](https://www.umnews.org/en/news/united-methodist-mission-statement-revised#gsc.tab=0) Additional resource: Our own mission statement.

**August 27:** “Two Forms of Holiness.”

* Topic: Personal and social holiness.
* Subjects: Wesleyan Accountability.
* To Wesley, “social holiness” wasn’t social justice, but was being connected with others which leads to seeking social justice. Related article: [“No Holiness but Social Holiness.”](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/blog/no-holiness-but-social-holiness)

**September 3:** “Three Stages of Grace.”

* Topic: Prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace in Wesleyan theology.
* Subjects: Soteriology, Ordo Salutis (Order of Salvation)
* Related article: [“A Wesleyan Understanding of Grace.”](https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/a-wesleyan-understanding-of-grace)

**September 10:** “Four Sources of Authority.”

* Topic: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.
* Subjects: Quadrilateral, Interpretation, Our Theological Task
* Related articles: [“Chiming in on the Wesleyan Quadrilateral”](https://hackingchristianity.net/2016/07/chiming-in-on-the-wesleyan-quadrilateral.html) and [“Our Theological Task.”](https://www.umc.org/en/content/theological-guidelines)

**September 17:** “Five Vows by the People.”

* Topics: Prayers, presence, gifts, service, witness.
* Subjects: Discipleship
* Resources: Membership vows in the Book Of Worship and [“Our United Methodist Vows”](https://www.umc.org/en/content/our-united-methodist-vows)

**September 24:** “Six Works of Piety to Practice (Stay in Love with God)”

* Topics: Prayer, scripture study, holy communion, fasting, Christian community, healthy living.
* Subjects: Personal holiness, discipleship, “Three Simple Rules”

**October 1:** “Seven Deadly Sins to Avoid (Do No Harm)”

* Topics: Envy, gluttony, greed or avarice, lust, pride, sloth, wrath.
* Subjects: Wesleyan Accountability. Social Action. Three Simple Rules.

**October 8:** “Eight Works of Mercy to Do (Do Good)”

* Topics: 1. Doing good works. 2. Visiting the sick. 3. Visiting those in prison. 4. Feeding the hungry. 5. Giving generously to the needs of others. 6. Seeking justice. 7. Ending oppression and discrimination. 8. Addressing the needs of the poor.
* Topics: Social action. Three Simple Rules.

**October 15:** “Nine Fruits of the Spirit”

* Topics: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
* Subjects: Personal holiness.
* Resources: This is the fruits of the Christian life: to be beacons on a hill, lights in the windows. Galatians 5.

**October 22:** “Ten Layers of United Methodism (7 rings and 3 branches)”

Summary: The United Methodist Church structure is like a pebble dropped in still water with concentric rings embracing more and more churches and people.

1. Local Church (Charge Conference – held yearly)
2. City/Town/Cluster (common context)
3. Community network (District)
4. Regional network (Annual Conference – held yearly)
5. Multi-state network (Jurisdictional Conference) or multi-country network (Central Conference – every 4 years)
6. Affiliation network ([Reconciling Ministries Network](http://rmnetwork.org), [Wesleyan Covenant Association](http://hackingchristianity.net/category/umc/wca), etc.)
7. Global network (collaborations across official and unofficial lines, such as [these programs](https://www.gbhem.org/global-leaders/methodist-global-and-regional-education-associations/) and many global initiatives by the General Agencies/Commissions)

PLUS our global connection has three branches, like the US Government:

1. **General Conference** serves as the Legislative Branch, creating doctrine and polity every four years.
2. The **Bishops and General Agencies/Commissions** serve as the executive branch, putting into action the will of General Conference.
3. The **Judicial Council** serves as the judicial branch, ensuring the constitutionality of General Conference’s doctrines and general church decisions.

---------------------------------------------------------------------

**“No Fear November”**

November 5-19, 2023

(3 weeks)

**Brainstorming:** Week of October 9 or 16, 2023

**2023 theme connection:** We have fears – it’s part of being human. In this series, we’ll shine a light on some of our greatest fears and see how our faith in Jesus can help us let go of the past, live in the present, and have hope for the future.

**Synopsis:** *Fear saturates our society. Everywhere we turn we’re faced with a new security threat, informed about a new health risk, or warned about some kind of impending doom. But does this overwhelming presence of fear help us purse the right path in life? Or does it pull us away from God’s purpose for us?*

**Resources:**

* “[No Fear November](https://creativepastors.com/product/no-fear-november/): Overcoming Phobias that Keep Us Paralyzed” by Ed Young
* “[No Fear November](http://www.fellowship301media.com/sermons/series/no-fear-november/)” by Mike Grover