**LHUMC Worship Planning Retreat**

**Meeting Preparation**

Friday, Sept. 9 from noon – 7:00 pm

Saturday, Sept. 10 from 8:30 am – 2:00 pm

Unity Reformed Church, 1521 Porter Road, Norton Shores

Last updated 8/30/22

**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:

* 2022: The Spiritual Journey Continues...
* 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 2023 Themes:**

Seasons (2017 song by Hillsong; 2020 song by NEEDTOBREATHE)

Get Together (1966 song by the Youngbloods)

Connect (songs about being there for each other: *Reach Out, I’ll Be There* – 1967 Four Tops; *You’ve Got a Friend* – James Taylor 1971; *With a Little Help from My Friends* – The Beatles 1967); *You’ll Never Walk Alone* – Josh Groban 2015)

**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.

* It’s so easy to not attend church when I can watch online. *Anonymous.*
* Are we becoming too complacent about watching services from home? How do we get people back to church? Masks should be voluntary only! *Lynne Richmond*
* Relationships
* Reconciliation with family/friends due to political difference. Aggressive disagreements. It seems like friends used to be able to have opposite views and maintain friendship. Have we forgotten to ask ourselves what it is like to walk in other’s people’s shoes?Discerning fact vs. conspiracy theory as presented by mainstream and social media sources. Extremist rhetoric and behavior influences on faith and mental well-being. Insecurities due to violence, pandemic, world unrest, artificial intelligence – privacy. *Jean Kelly*
* Families struggling with the disease of addiction and its far-reaching effects. Families grieving multiple losses – looking for hope amidst the pain. Caregivers trying to balance life with the demands of caring for their loved ones. *Rose Emmons*
* Mental health
* Human rights
* Anti-racism
* People need opportunities to have difficult conversations with one another and develop the ability to hear each other. Chat with someone with an opposing view, and find a way to empathize with one another. We are a very divided country right now, and are hurting. *Kim Gaver*
* Truth telling in these days of division. Hope in days of anger, violence, fear. *Anonymous*
* Fear. Weapons.

**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.

* Socialization. *Anonymous*
* The need for a deep spiritual connection that comes with living in Christian community. *Rose Emmons*
* I think the need is the person feels lost because they do not have God in their life. If they can feel his love and come closer to God, and to trust him they will feel less lost. I know this is what is happening in my life right now. I am coming so close and trusting in God, and it is changing me and my outlook on life. I am a better mom, wife, daughter, and friend. *Kim Gaver*
* Can we do what Jesus expects of us here on earth without antagonistic political disagreements?What are God’s truths about racism, abortion, gender identity, etc.
* Fear of the future.Fear of safety at school in general with increased gun violence. Fear of the loss of democracy. Concerns about the increased cost of food. *Anonymous*
* Change – life, relationships, societal, health, age related, worship, faith. Fear of dementia, mental decline, loss of independence, e.g., no longer able to drive, maintain home, care for self. End of life plans. *Jean Kelly*
* Could kids’ bells possible resume with utilizing part of some Sunday School half hours, plus time after dismissal until start of the 2nd service (practice)?Might there be another adult Sunday School class? Book study? *Lynne Richmond*
* Church:Divisions within the church. Recognizing that faith is not simple; there are ups and downs. Change needed to revitalize the Methodist Church.

**Useful Stuff**

**Questions to explore:**

* What are the differences between conservative and liberal Christianity? *Anonymous*
* What is your purpose? How can you change the world? *Kim Gaver*

Scan this code with your smartphone to go to the resources on our website.

* What is meant by “no other gods before me”? *Anonymous*

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

**Plays**:

**Comics:**

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

**Video**:

* “[The Shoe That Grows”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1ZAHhbY5m0)

**Movies:** See “Faith in Films” for more selections

* [“War Room”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIl-XY9t_Lw) (2015) made a HUGE impact on my life.  *Rose or Kim*
* [“Bella.”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjbiRBCsC7U) (2007 PG-13). Related article: [“Bella.”](https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/b/bella.html?utm_source=Christian+Bible+Studies+Newsletter&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=10531&utm_content=9301&utm_campaign=email)
* [“The Jesus Music.”](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14857602/) The 2021 documentary details the history of contemporary Christian music as a musical and cultural phenomenon.

**Television shows:**

* “Big Bang Theory”

**Music:**

* “God’s Not Done with You” by Tauren Wells

**Stray stuff:**

* Vacation Bible School
* [“Behind the Scenes.”](https://www.upperroom.org/devotionals/en-2022-06-15) June 15, 2022 Upper Room devotional
* [“What the Early Church Can Teach Us about Living in This Strange New World”](https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-the-early-church-can-teach-us-about-living-in-this-strange-new-world/?utm_source=Crossway+Marketing&utm_campaign=c7dcda90d7-20220815+Small+Groups+-+Early+Church+SNW&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0275bcaa4b-c7dcda90d7-308655738)

**Book recommendations** *Ana Ivanov*

* *The Giver, Gathering Blue, Son,* and *Messenger* by Lois Lowry – grades 6-8
* *The City of Ember* by Jeanne DuPrau – grades 3-7
* *Harry Potter* books by JK Rowling – grades 4+
* *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker – young adult
* *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin – young adult

**Notable children’s books and authors** *Think Christian*

* *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein. Related article: [“Shel Silverstein and Holy Moments.”](https://thinkchristian.net/shel-silverstein-and-holy-moments)
* *Ramona Quimby* by Beverly Cleary. Related article: [“Beverly Cleary, Ramona Quimby, and Growing Up as a Child of God.”](https://michiganumc.org/make-saving-grace-an-adult-study-choice/?utm_source=%2AMichigan+Conference+Communication+List&utm_campaign=f84a6e1ffb-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_08_01_02_55_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_98bd0b5296-f84a6e1ffb-411940188)
* *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. Related article: [“Why Maurice Sendak should be next to your kids’ story Bible.”](https://thinkchristian.net/why-maurice-sendak-should-be-next-to-your-kids-story-bible)
* *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L’Engle. Related articles: [“The Concrete Quest of A Wrinkle in Time”](https://thinkchristian.net/the-concrete-quest-of-a-wrinkle-in-time) and [“ A New Wrinkle in Time.”](https://thinkchristian.net/a-new-wrinkle-in-time)

**Mother Daughter book list** *Vicki Zuker and friends –* available on our website

**Books recommendations from the Worship Connections Team:**

* *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. Related article: [“Metaphors for Ministry.”](https://www.preachingtoday.com/your-soul/calling-to-preach/metaphors-for-ministry.html?utm_source=Preaching+Today+Newsletter&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=10531&utm_content=8150&utm_campaign=email)
* *The Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood
* *Hunger Game* series by Suzanne Collins
* *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou
* *Little House on the Prairies* series by Laura Ingalls Wilder
* *Are You There, God? It’s Me, Margaret* by Judy Blume
* Lois Lowry books (*The Giver, Number the Stars)*
* *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding
* *Animal Farm* by George Orwell
* *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
* *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens
* *Holes* by Louis Sachar
* *The Color of Water* by James McBride

**Books:**

* The Book of Longingsby Sue Monk Kidd. It tells the story of Jesus’ imagined wife, and made his life come even more alive in my eyes. *Rose or Kim*
* Written by Amy Jill Levine
  + The Difficult Words of Jesus
  + The Sermon on the Mount
* Jesus Revealed: The I Am Statements in the Gospel of John by Matt Rawle <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkvrG8gF1Fo> 6 weeks. Light. Bread. Shepherd. Life. The Gospel of John uses these and other rich symbols to paint a picture of who Jesus is. Through seven “I am” statements Jesus describes himself with these images, showing us that he is both fully human and fully divine and calling us as his followers.
* Written by Anne Lamott
  + Travelling Mercies tells in exuberant detail how Lamott learned to shine the light of faith on the darkest part of ordinary life, exposing surprising pocket of meaning and hope.
  + 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.
* Overwhelmed by God… and Not Your Troubles by Steve Mays. Regarding shifting one’s perspective away from very real troubles, and gazing into the overwhelming presence of a loving Lord!
* The Grace of Troublesome Questions by Richard Hughes. The author focuses his questions on three areas that defined the world of his youth: his early church, the one “true church,” outside of which there was no salvation; the U.S. was called to enlighten and redeem the world; and, the pervasive notion of white supremacy.
* A Dozen Things God Did with Your Sin by Sam Storms. What often may consume us is what we have done by sinning. What ought to consume us is grateful meditation on what God has done with our sins.
* Words of Life: Jesus and the Promise of the Ten Commandments Today <https://www.adamhamilton.com/books/words-of-life/> 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.
* Christians in a Cancel Culture by Joe Dallas. This book shows how Christians can discuss topics of cancel culture, e.g., racism and transgenderism, with compassion and the truth of God’s word.
* A Year of Living Biblically: One Man’s Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible by AJ Jacobs. Also available as a [TED Talk](https://www.ted.com/talks/a_j_jacobs_my_year_of_living_biblically?language=en).
* A Year of Biblical Womanhood: How a Liberated Woman Found Herself Sitting on Her Roof, Covering Her Head, and Calling Her Husband ‘Master’ by Rachel Held Evans. Hear her speak on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ed-Wv43sXXU).

**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?

* **“Open Arms”**inspired by the Michael W. Smith song of the same name. *Jean Kelly*
* **Faith in Films:** [Top Gun Maverick](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSqVVswa420), [Jurassic World: Dominion](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtQycgMD4HQ), [Encanto](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaimKeDcudo), [Lightyear](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHBBoUtJHhA), [Elvis](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBDLRvjHVOY), [Marcel the Shell with Shoes On](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k98Afd7Nf3Y)
* **Magic School Bus** *Anonymous*
* **The Twelve Disciples** *Anonymous*. Possible resource:Twelve Ordinary Men by John McArthur. Uneducated fishermen, political outsiders, religious outcasts, and a despised tax collector. The disciples weren’t heroic trailblazer *before* Jesus call them…. This book shows how God delights in using imperfect people to accomplish his perfect will, and helps you discover God’s extraordinary plans for *you!*
* Resources from Adam Hamilton
* **“Jesus at the Lake”** was a great way to start an appointment in a community with five lakes. *Pastor Mary’s colleague*
* *From Pastor Mary’s colleague:* Each week we would take a fairly familiar hymn which had a somewhat curious line in it - one which we probably have all sung without really understanding. So, we sang the song and then used that line as a sermon springboard. Some examples:
  + "Be of sin the double cure" (Rock of Ages)
  + "The music of the spheres" (This Is My Father's World)
  + "O what a foretaste of glory divine" (Blessed Assurance)
  + "I dare not trust the sweetest frame" (My Hope Is Built)
  + "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see" (Hark the Herald Angels Sing)
  + "Let thy goodness like a fetter" (Come Thou Fount)"
  + "Not a mite would I withhold" (Take My Life, and Let It Be")
  + "Trampling out the vintage" (Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory)
  + "The consummation of peace forevermore" (The Church's One Foundation)
* **“Secrets of Greatness”** *from Pastor Mary’s colleague:*
* Great Blessing - Genesis 12:1-2. “I will bless you…so that you will be a blessing.”
* Great Commandment 1- Mark 12:28-34. Love God
* Great Commandment 2 - Luke 10:25-37. Love Neighbor
* Great Commission - Matthew 28:16-20. Go and Make Disciples
* Great Requirement – Micah 6:8. Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.
* Great Kingdom – Matthew 6:33. Strive first for the kingdom of God.
* Great Mission – Acts 1:8. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
* Great Redemption – John 3:16. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”
* Great Judgment – Matthew 25:31-40. Sheep/Goats. I was hungry, thirsty, stranger…
* Great Reconciliation - 2 Corinthians 5:17-20. New Creatures. We are ambassadors for Christ.
* Great Fruit – Galatians 5:22-23. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
* From *Lynne Richmond*:
  + “Feels: Thriving in the Valleys.” Sometimes our spiritual lives feel like a series of peaks and valleys. This is a series about when we do and don’t feel God’s presence. We examine the faith journeys of Elijah, Paul, Moses, Daniel, Joseph, and Peter. Along the way, we’ll talk about God’s provision, contentment, doubt and trust, gratitude, God’s sovereignty, and the mission of Jesus. <https://ministrypass.com/resource/feels-thriving-in-the-valleys/>
  + “Getting Over It: Letting Go of the Baggage We Carry.” Our baggage might be from emotions that we might be unaware of (anger, bitterness, fear, pride…). There is a need to release theses burden and trust God to restore our brokenness and to experience the freedom He offers. <https://ministrypass.com/resource/getting-over-it-letting-god-of-the-baggage-we-carry/>.
  + “What If God Says, ‘Today You Are My Ambassador?’” Are you ready? What do you need? <https://ccsouthbay.org/blog/ambassador-for-god>. Related book: Overwhelmed by God.
  + “Loving Like Jesus in a Fractured World.” How can we be like Jesus in the face of so much pain/hate in our damaged communities? This series will demonstrate how to love like Jesus, to bring hope and healing to wounded people, fractured relationships, and divided communities. <https://saddleback.com/watch/loving-like-jesus-in-a-fractured-world>
  + “Gray Matters.” How do we discern what is best when we face issues that are not black and white? How can the Holy Spirit help us develop our faith, and promote unity among those in disagreement? <https://ministrypass.com/resource/gray-matters-wisdom-in-the-unknown/>
  + “Compassion and Conviction.**”** As morality keeps shifting, convictions are changing – marriage, sanctity of life, sexual preferences, etc., are being redefined. How is a Christian to respond? How can we be people of conviction and compassion in a world of so many who think differently?
* “Tell Me a Story,” “Once Upon a Time,” or “Faith in Literature.” *Karen Booth.* Stories have the power to open up the world of possibilities and speak God’s truths to people of all ages. Pair Scripture readings with popular children’s books. Related resource: [2016 sermon series](https://browndowntown.org/news/sermon-series-pairs-scripture-childrens-books/) from Brown Memorial Church in Maryland.
* “Theology for God’s People” by Dr. Chris Momany, Adrian, MI. This series will take crucial theological topics and teachings and illustrate why they matter for everyday life. Instead of being something for ivory towers, theology is the grammar of our practical faith. The series outline is posted on our website. *Pastor Mary*

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

* Book of James, Judges, Colossians
* Major Prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah

**Weird stories of the bible:** Balaam’s donkey, Judith killing a general with a cheesecake, most of Genesis….

**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**

* How to keep your intention and focus on God during times of stress, both financial and emotional, during the holidays? *Rose or Kim*
* Jesus as an immigrant *Anonymous*
* [Prepare the Way of the Lord](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VOLi6oIgHw) by Adam Hamilton. For two thousand years, Christians have turned to the story and message of John the Baptist in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Four chapters: 1) A People Prepared for the Lord. 2) God Is Gracious. 3) The Fruit of Repentance. 4) Witnesses Testifying to the Light.
* [The Heart That Grew Three Sizes](https://my.amplifymedia.com/amplify/series/unitedmethodistpublishinghouse/51914-the-heart-that-grew-three-sizes?mkt_tok=MDc4LUpYUS02NDMAAAGAEyJP-TA00tnxb03mHfcIUtjOBljGsOQKNpfeWtiaDiRGA-WwmmoYB0SxChC1Riq9m-MhUvkN58-d8hE89NzA24VoTSLTCQmAtb_C7rBxTszboQ) by Matt Rawle. Rediscover the gift of Advent that comes without packages, ribbons, and bows looking at a familiar classic, “How the Grinch Stole Christmas,” through the lens of faith.
* [The Redemption of Scrooge](https://www.abingdonpress.com/product/9781501823077/) by Matt Rawle. Rawle dives deep into the dark, sad, greedy world of Scrooge and discovers a man in dire need of a second chance. Along with Scrooge, we meet the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future and in the process learn about living with and for others in a world blessed by Jesus.
* [Advent Conspiracy](https://adventconspiracy.org/) was founded on the radical idea that we can celebrate Christmas humbly, beautifully, and generously. Advent is the story of a wondrous moment when God entered our world to make things right. It is the greatest story ever told and changes everything – including the way we celebrate Christmas. Four weeks: Worship fully. Spend less. Give more. Love all.
  + **The stories behind Advent and Christmas hymns**
* A **Star Word** series with (manger?) words that reflect the season of preparation – come, prepare, rejoice, behold.

**LENT**

* Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws by Adam Hamilton is a Lenten series based on the Gospel of Luke
* “[Good Enough](https://www.facebook.com/WorshipDesignStudio/videos/1319970445170229/)” from Marcia McFee. Embracing the imperfection of life and faith. [40-ish Devotionals](https://79zxlgad.pages.infusionsoft.net/) by Kate Bowler is available too.
* “[Busy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9W-IJJbBGgY)” from Marcia McFee. Reconnecting with an unhurried God.
* “[Listen”](https://ny163.infusionsoft.com/app/linkClick/35118/deede239b4cd4f1d/2150912/6363dd03155de88b) from Marcia McFee. Hearing that still small voice and finding your own.
* Easter Season: “[Dare to Dance Again](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8y5-AG3O5Y)” from Marcia McFee. Dances of Hope, Justice, and Love.
* **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.
* Twenty-four Hours that Changed the World by Adam Hamilton
* When God Becomes Small by Phil Needham

**STEWARDSHIP**

* Enough by Adam Hamilton
* A particular church (from an online article) decided to skip stewardship one year and have a discipleship series instead. Article: “Ditching Our Stewardship Campaign – for Discipleship.”
  + Related resource: “[Building a Culture of Discipleship](https://www.bclstore.com/products/building-culture-discipleship?_pos=1&_sid=2e20196b3&_ss=r&utm_source=Building+Church+Leaders+Newsletter&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=10531&utm_content=10541&utm_campaign=email).”
  + Related resource: “[The United Methodist 10](https://hackingchristianity.net/2022/07/the-united-methodist-10.html).” Some folds seek membership, whereas others seek clarity about the church or denomination’s distinctiveness and beliefs.
* [“Saving Grace: A Guide to Financial Well-Being.”](https://michiganumc.org/make-saving-grace-an-adult-study-choice/?utm_source=%2AMichigan+Conference+Communication+List&utm_campaign=f84a6e1ffb-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_08_01_02_55_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_98bd0b5296-f84a6e1ffb-411940188) Michigan congregation should consider offering the six-session course which connects faith and money through biblical teaching, Wesleyan insight, and basic financial practices. Resource: [“Saving Grace.”](https://abingdonpress.lpages.co/saving-grace/)
* [“Make Space.”](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1MVlVgyaLEBToauYhJjaOyWq4SFXk8f5h) Let’s face it, talking about money in church is weird at best. This series helps you talk about money in a way that will help your congregations make space for what really matters.