**LHUMC Worship Planning Retreat**

**Meeting Preparation**

Friday, Sept. 8 from noon – 7:00 pm

Saturday, Sept. 9 from 8:30 am – 2:00 pm

The Corner (Central UMC), 280 W Muskegon Ave, Muskegon 49440

Last updated: 8/27/23

**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:

* 2023: Jesus Is Our Past, Present, and Future Hope. Key verse: Romans 8: 38-39
* 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 2024 Themes:**

Good Dirt – Matthew 13 – Parable of the Sower

Presence – What does it look like to be fully present?

**Spoken Needs**

As you think about the conversations you’ve had with people, remember the struggles, challenges, curiosities, and desires that people have expressed. What are people saying that they need?

* Aging gracefully. Getting old is not for the faint of heart.
* Authentic faith
* Caregiving
* Celebrations: Good stuff still happens. Let’s celebrate.
* Community
* Examples of churches and church leaders gone wrong:
	+ Seattle’s Mars Hill Church
	+ Hillsong
	+ “Shiny Happy People” – Duggars
	+ Effects of power, spiritual/sexual abuse/manipulation.
* The future of the United Methodist Church
	+ What will the church look like in the coming years?
	+ Churches leaving the denomination
	+ Turning point – schisms/troubles can be a catalyst for change.
	+ Social issues are personal issues: How do we treat each other?
		- Women in leadership
		- Sexuality
		- Poverty
		- Caregiving
	+ Related resources by Michael Beck: [*A Field Guide to Methodist Fresh Expressions*](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1501899090/?_encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_w=CTV71&content-id=amzn1.sym.579192ca-1482-4409-abe7-9e14f17ac827&pf_rd_p=579192ca-1482-4409-abe7-9e14f17ac827&pf_rd_r=146-9239985-2538558&pd_rd_wg=at9VB&pd_rd_r=0c8c9e9f-488f-424f-8878-c2639a28d941&ref_=aufs_ap_sc_dsk)*,* [“What’s Your Congregations’ Personality Type?”](https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/11585/whats-your-congregations-personality-type), [*Painting with Ashes*](https://www.inviteresources.com/contributors/michael-adam-beck/)
* Manners/lack thereof – amplified by social media and political divisions
* Moving out of a global pandemic: How will kids and young adults adjust to the “new normal”?
* Nostalgia: Looking at the past – usually through distorted lenses.
* Technology: Where did human technology come from? What does God think of human technology? What role does the church play? Definition from *God, Technology, and the Christian Life:* Technology is something that amplifies human energy and power.

**Unspoken Needs**

Unspoken needs are the things aren’t talking about. When someone is unhappy or feeling lost and can’t truly articulate why, you might be able to perceive his/her real, unspoken needs. What are those needs?

* Life is hard. We are all just trying.
* Jesus’ perspective: The Law put us in relationship with each other.
* Pastoral perspective: I feel like they preach the same message over and over again. Congregant’s perspective: I hear things differently at different stages in my life.
* Youth are exposed to a greater diversity of people than previous generations. Will that actually change things for the better down the road?

**Potentially Useful Stuff**

Josh Larsen, editor/host/producer of Think Christian, says “glimpses of God’s truth can be found in unlikely places. There’s no such thing as secular, so let’s consider Christianity and pop culture together.” Author/pastor Rob Bell says that everything is spiritual. People want to understand their purpose here on earth. What books, articles, films, TED Talks, podcasts, and comics are memorable because they speak to spiritual needs? What questions would you like to have answered?

**Questions to explore:**

* Differences in Christian denominations. Denominations vs. nondenominational churches.
* Taylor Swift: Why are her fans (“Swifties”) so dedicated? She is both a singer and song writer? Authenticity. In many ways, she is the “Bono” of the younger generation.
	+ [Little Golden Books](https://www.amazon.com/Taylor-Swift-Little-Golden-Biography/dp/0593566718) released a biography aimed at children ages 4-8. Many adults have snatched it up. See the June 18, 2023 Wall Street Journal article for more information.
* Chat GPT/AI
	+ Jason Moore has AI (Artificial Intelligence) resources for church leaders. Check out the [“Beyond Belief” movie bumper](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iv7-iQi1sQM) he created for a June 26 AI church leaders conference.

**Articles:** Links to these articles and more are on our website (<https://lakeharborumc.org/2023/06/2023-worship-planning-retreat/>)

* “AI Might Teach, but It Can’t Preach”
* Experts Concerned about Chatbots Making Stuff Up | Preaching Today
* “Misreading Scripture with Artificial Eyes”
* “Pastors Lead Not Your Church into Fear of AI” | Christianity Today
* Dialogical Preaching
* Preaching after a Mass Shooting | Preaching Today
* Preaching as Storytelling
* Empty Pew Are an America Public Health Crisis | Christianity Today
* Finding Faith through Listening | Journal of the American Medical Association
* I Left the Church – and Long for a Church for the ‘Nones’ | Washington Post
* The Rise of the ‘Umms’ | Christianity Today
* Welcome, Visitors! There’s Our Churches Take on Sex | Christianity Today
* Why Middle-Aged Americans Are Not Going Back to Church
* 50 Atheists found Christ. This Researcher Found Out Why | Christianity Today
* What Does a Good Man Need? | CT Studio
* Why Children Need Nurturing Father

**Plays:**

**Comics:**

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

**Videos:**

**Movies:** See Faith in Film 2024 – Movie Possibilities for more details.

* [Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzRzojHC3iE)
	+ *Related article:* Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret: Listening for God’s Still Small Voice by Isabel Bishop, Think Christian
* [Back to the Outback](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDNhtB7L8Lk)
* [Barbie](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBk4NYhWNMM)
	+ *Related article:* Barbie and Our Reason for Being by Roslyn Hernández, Think Christian
* [Elemental](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXzcyx9V0xw)
* [Mitchell and the Machines](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ak5dFt8Ar0)
* [Ordinary Angels](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgHhLSL_U6w)
* [White Bird](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4b5G9lBW_Y)
* [Wish](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQuXo6K9SU4)

**Television shows:**

* Ted Lasso

**Music:**

**Stray stuff:**

* Apple's upcoming iOS 17 iPhone software will stop autocorrecting swear words

**Books:**

* [Questions Jesus Asked](https://www.amazon.com/Questions-Jesus-Asked-Magrey-deVega/dp/1791026885) by Magrey deVega
* [Overcoming Apathy: Gospel Hope for Those Who Struggle to Care](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1433578808/ref%3Dppx_od_dt_b_asin_title_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1) by Uche Anizor. Examines the nature and experience of apathy, drawing insights from Scripture, theology, popular culture, and more. Identifies 7 causes as well as healthy habits to fight against indifference. A great guide for high school and college students and those who counsel them; youth and young adult pastors; teachers; and anyone struggling with apathy or who knows someone who is.
* [God, Technology, and the Christian Life](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1433578271/ref%3Dppx_od_dt_b_asin_title_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1) by Tony Reinke. By turning to 9 key passages and engaging with several theologians and thinkers, Reinke seeks to dismantle 12 common myths Christians often hold about technology, helping them understand the story of where human innovation came from and to embrace the church’s essential role in it.

**Authors:**

* Kate Bowler
* Matt Rawle
	+ [Marks of Hope: Where the Spirit Is Moving in a Wounded Church](https://mattrawle.com/publications/the-marks-of-hope/) by Matt Rawle and two others (Cokesbury) The church can be a hopeful model for the world in emerging areas of culture and ministry. Topics in this book include gender, technology, justice, mission, story, and social entrepreneurship. Each chapter is written by one of the three authors. Each chapter concludes with a jointly written “communion” section that has ideas for working together as leaders, lay people, and congregations with practical steps to pave the way.
	+ The Heart that Grew Three Sizes (see Advent)
* Adam Hamilton
	+ [Revival: Faith as Wesley Lived It](https://www.adamhamilton.com/books/item/9781426778841) Join Adam Hamilton for a six-week journey as he travels to England, following the life of John Wesley and exploring his defining characteristics of a Wesleyan Christian. Wesley’s story is our story. It defines our faith and it challenges us to rediscover our spiritual passion.
	+ [Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith](https://www.abingdonpress.com/product/9781791029982/) Everyone had doubts. Where is God when bad things happen? Does God hear our prayers? Is there a heaven? How can we know? Often, we treat such questions as the enemy of faith. But uncertainty doesn’t mean our belief is lacking. Doubt can be a path to a deeper, richer encounter with God.
* Magrey de Vega
	+ [Questions Jesus Asked](https://www.amazon.com/Questions-Jesus-Asked-Magrey-deVega/dp/1791026885) Jesus was fond of asking questions, many of which cut right to the heart of what it means to be human. Why are you terrified? What do you live for? Who do you say that I am? In Questions Jesus Asked, author Magrey deVega explores six of the most provocative questions Jesus posed to others and guides us in answering them for ourselves.
* Steve Harper
	+ [Five Marks of a Methodist](https://www.amazon.com/Five-Marks-Methodist-Living-Discipleship/dp/1501800590/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=34TEZ6XFTMWJG&keywords=five+marks+of+a+methodist+by+steve+harper&qid=1689001476&s=books&sprefix=five+marks+of+a+met%2Cstripbooks%2C99&sr=1-1) Five marks confirm our identity as genuine and fruitful followers of Christ: 1. A Methodist Loves God 2. A Methodist Rejoices in God 3. A Methodist Gives Thanks 4. A Methodist Prays Constantly 5. A Methodist Loves Others This brief book, suitable for sharing with others, provides a meditation on each of these characteristics. Prayerfully apply them to your journey with Jesus. If you are part of the worldwide Methodist or Wesleyan family, these five marks will grant a greater knowledge and appreciation for why and how you follow Jesus. If you are located in another part of the body of Christ, you can emerge with a solid foundation to keep your spiritual house standing strong. Christians marked by these five habits, when taken together have character. Each chapter ends with questions for reflection or discussion.

**VBS** (Cokesbury) – [Camp Firelight](https://www.christianbook.com/firelight-ultimate-starter-cokesbury-vbs-2024/9781791029418/pd/029418?utm_source=google&kw=21440761692&mt=&dv=c&event=PPCSRC&p=1186432&gclid=CjwKCAjw2K6lBhBXEiwA5RjtCe4I9JdCH21gLrROmE9wBx5daKYW4GrVIxBLzxLpu7ja5yHoqLykLxoCX_EQAvD_BwE#CBD-PD-Description)

Camp Callout (Theme Verse): "Whenever I'm afraid, I put my trust in you." (Psalm 56:3)

Bible Stories
Session 1: God Goes with Jacob (Genesis 28:10-22)
Session 2: Ruth Chooses to Go (Ruth 1)
Session 3: Young Jesus Shares Wisdom (Luke 2:41-52)
Session 4: Jesus Calms the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
Session 5: The Good News Sparks Joy (Acts 8:26-40)

**Foundations of Our Faith**

Nearly everyone, including non-Christians, has heard of the Lord’s Prayer and Ten Commandments. They are foundations of our faith. What other foundational beliefs would you like to explore in worship?

* Series we have done:
	+ United Methodist Ten (summer/fall 2023)
	+ Ten Commandments (summer 2023)
	+ Lord’s Prayer (summer 2022)
	+ Psalms (summer 2018, Lent/Easter 2022)
	+ Beatitudes (Lent 2014)
	+ Sermon on the Mount (after Easter 2020)
	+ Seven Deadly Sins (summer 2015)
	+ Gospel of Mark (Good News for the New Year 2021)
	+ Revelation (May 2022)
	+ Genesis (In the Beginning – summer 2017)
	+ The Trinity (September 2018)
	+ Minor Prophets (summer 2020)
* **Gospel of Luke** – [Luke: Jesus and Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws](https://www.adamhamilton.com/books/item/9781791025045) by Adam Hamilton. Through Luke’s stores we find Jesus’ care and compassion for all as he welcomes sinners and outcastes. As we study Luke and see Jesus’ concern for those who were considered unimportant, we hear a hopeful and inspiring word for our lives today.
* **Beatitudes**
* **The Passion Story**
* **Real Life, Real Faith:** The story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50) – Pastor Camp Anytime Sermon Series.
	+ Childhood Dreams
	+ Adolescence – Great Temptations
	+ Young Adult – Life in the Pits
	+ Adult/Middle-Age – Adulting
	+ Older Adult/Twilight – And in the End…

**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?

* Marcia McFee
	+ [**Spiritual Affective Disorder**](https://712i6shd.pages.infusionsoft.net/) (SAD): A worship series to help us shine a light on the “blahs.” (Epiphany)
	+ [**Emerge**:](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaSzOfQcK8Q) The butterfly is a symbol of resurrection, as well as our own resurrection as we emerge from the power of fear and death. Metamorphosis is used to examine our own transformations to the beauty of all God calls us to be.
	+ **Drawn In**: Living the Creative Life with God. Finding the intersection of creativity and spirituality.
	+ **Sacred Earth, Sacred Work**: This series explores the six essential ideas that deepen our reverence for life, and develops passion for justice and human transformation.
	+ **Holy Vessels**: This series focuses on healing and finding wholeness after heartache.
* The Power of a Praying Parent
* Troublesome Passages of the Bible
* Proverbs
* Prophets – especially major prophets (election year)

**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**

**The Gift of Being Present** (Marcia McFee): **Advent can be filled with worry about finding the perfect Christmas gifts. Deep down we want people in our lives to know they are special and that we love them. But sometimes we overlook the greatest gift of all… our very presence. Our spiritual ancestors were also worried–often about survival in the midst of political occupation. And the response of the scriptures is “the Holy Living One is with you.” Like a shepherd who never leaves the flock, we are held close. This season, we are invited to be the gift of presence for our loved ones, for our communities, for those who need it most.**

[**The Heart that Grew Three Sizes**](https://www.cokesbury.com/The-Heart-That-Grew-Three-Sizes) by Matt Rawle (Cokesbury): We don’t know why the Grinch hated Christmas. We just know he did. In this new Advent study, Matt Rawle explores the faith themes in the Christmas classic, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* including, how did the Grinch’s heart grow three sizes come Christmas morning? How did Christmas save the Grinch? Could it be that the very thing we think we hate is the one thing that changes our lives? This Advent and Christmas season, look at a familiar classic through the lens of faith and see how Christ speaks to us through our culture.

[**Reflecting the Sacred**](https://60lb84bw.pages.infusionsoft.net/?affiliate=0) (Marcia McFee): Sometimes the Christmas season is blurred between sacred and secular. In this series you are invited to a spiritual journey of seeing all things “pregnant with the Holy.”

**LENT**

[**Lookin’ for Love in All the Wrong Places**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6lwiEMrwXI) (Marcia McFee): Exploring where love and live-giving connection can really be found.

**Entering the Passion of Jesus** (Marcia McFee): Through this series, our congregation can be touched by the power of love, grace, forgiveness, and heartache that is part of Jesus’ story… and ours. Based on a book by Amy-Jill Levine. Includes resources for Ash Wednesday and Holy Thursday.

[**Good Enough**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2ZH8VmoNeE) (Marcia McFee): We live in a culture bent on definitions of a good life as continuous upward mobility–climbing ladders of prosperity with increasingly fabulous experiences that we can post to ever-more-likable social media accounts. We may comb the shelves of the self-help section in search of just the right formula to gain success. Perhaps we even gravitate towards spiritual leaders who promise great rewards if we only do “the right thing.” But life happens, right? Most times we are not moving upward but trying to repair the rung we’ve just slipped from.  So what if we stopped climbing and started fertilizing, watering, and blooming right where we find ourselves? Welcome to a Lent of affirming a faith in which we are blessed, regardless, and where we can lean into embracing our “good enough” lives.

[**Holy Vessels**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnH-A7du7mM) (Marcia McFee): Each of us is created a precious and holy vessel of embodied love. We have been through a harrowing time since last Lent that has shattered our sense of wholeness–body, mind, and spirit–like a glass vessel fractured into pieces. In this Lenten “season of recovery” for our physical, communal, mental, intellectual, and environmental health, we will explore the healing narratives of Jesus that tell of divine solidarity with human suffering and remind us that we can begin a journey toward making something beautiful from that which is seemingly broken. Beach glass offers us a multifaceted symbol of this transformative process.

[**24 Hours that Changed the World**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIY2NLszbdU) (Adam Hamilton): No single event in human history has received more attention than the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. In this Lenten journey, Adam Hamilton guides us through the last twenty-four hours of Jesus' life. Each chapter is designed to help the reader experience and understand the significance of Jesus' suffering and death in a way you have never done before. Whether readers are long-time Christians or simply curious about the story of Christ's crucifixion, they are invited to join the author in retracing the last 24 hours of Jesus' life.

[**Final Words from the Cross**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSzcsktqQFU) (Adam Hamilton): In life and in death, Jesus’ words were powerful and meaningful. Despite the serious effort and increased pain required for Jesus to speak as he hung on the cross, Jesus spoke seven “final words”—statements that have much to teach us about Jesus, his Father, and ourselves:

Father Forgive Them
Behold Your Son…Behold Your Mother
My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?
Today You Will Be with Me in Paradise
I Thirst
It Is Finished
Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit

**STEWARDSHIP**