

February 2020

the Epistle

Melcher-Dallas New Hope UMC &
Pleasantville St. Paul's UMC

A Note from Pastor Jess

One of the goals for St. Paul's UMC this year is to *"spend time as a church focusing upon rest and renewal."* A full calendar keeps us busy, productive, and gives structure to our lives. A full calendar is also a great way to keep us from dealing with life and faith. A full calendar can be a defense mechanism that keeps us from meaningful relationships with God and one another, it can keep us from noticing problem areas in life. A completely full calendar does not allow time for rest, reflection, or renewal.

While the goal was set by St. Paul's, I think both churches can benefit from being more intentional about rest and renewal. This allows space for the Spirit to direct us and time for our souls to experience peace.

Rest and renewal have not been a strength of mine as of late. I would like to change that and so I am taking a renewal leave to sort of reset things. During this renewal time I am going to be focusing upon sacred space. This is going to involve going to churches which are set apart as sacred space, walking in nature which is God's very own creation, spending time with a clergy friend which allows for sacred conversations to take place, reading books which help me see the sacred through another person's eyes, and sitting in silence which allows any space to be sacred so long as God can be heard. Because my time throughout the year is pretty structured with weekly ministries, monthly meetings, and district/conference events, I have intentionally let my renewal be unstructured. It's sort of the opposite of normal. Aside from knowing where I am going to be at different times, my calendar is blank. I am excited to see what God can do with all those open spaces.

I invite you to join me in making rest and renewal a priority!

*Check out the
calendar on
the back page!*

Turn the page for the following:

- ⇒ Spiritual Practice of the Month
- ⇒ Discipleship
- ⇒ Basket of Thanks
- ⇒ Scripture & Themes for Worship
- ⇒ Spring Laity Day with Bishop Laurie
- ⇒ General Conference 2020

Spiritual Practice— Sabbath, Rest & Renewal

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus implies that being with him is a form of sabbath. Our life in Christ is a gift of profound rest and refreshment! The essence of sabbath is rest and renewal for the soul.

Marjorie J. Thompson
“Soul Feast: An Invitation
to the Christian Spiritual Life”

Keeping the sabbath holy, a command given to us numerous times in scripture, requires us to be intentional about the way we spend our time. Instead of filling our calendars and making to-do lists, this month we are going to focus upon the rest and renewal that comes from sabbath keeping.

Suggestions for rest and renewal this month:

- ◆ Pause. Take a holy pause each day where you do nothing but breathe deeply. Allow God to breathe life and spirit into your body.
- ◆ Make no plans on Sunday (or another day if Sunday doesn't work). Let the Spirit guide your unstructured time.
- ◆ Find what connects you to God, the things that feed your soul and give you a sense of renewed spirit. If it is nature— spend time outside. If it is reading— pick up a book. If you are not sure what consistently gives you a sense of rest, spend time exploring this.

Discipleship

*Following and Living
like Jesus everyday.*



In his book “Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations,” Phil Maynard lists basic characteristics of a disciple. These characters look different as we grow in faith: **Worship, Community, Spiritual Practices, Generosity & Service**, and being **Christ-like**.

Let's see how we are doing in the area of Generosity & Service!

If you were going to describe your feelings/ participation in generosity and service, would it be:

- ◆ Wonder if there is more to life than making money and selfish gain
- ◆ Begin to give occasionally in worship and try a service project at church. See other people making a difference in the lives of others and seek to be a part of that.
- ◆ Begin to give regularly of money, time, and talents; understand Christ's invitation to serve others and discover how God has gifted you to do this.
- ◆ Try tithing my resources, time, and talents to God through the ministries of the church, exploring ways to use one's gifts, talents, and passions.
- ◆ Tithe and occasionally give beyond when led by God; begin to restructure life and resources to join Jesus in mission to others.

We never stop growing in our faith and practices. We are always being drawn closer to God and to one another.

Basket of Thanks

Both good and bad things happen every day and so often we focus only on the bad things. In order to keep the blessings of God that are all around us fresh in our minds, each week you are invited to write down something for which you are thankful. We'll collect these thankful notes in a basket at the church and at the end of the year we'll be able to look back on a year full of blessings.

Scripture & Themes for Worship

Feb 2	Rev. Moody Colorado preaching	<i>Freed to be the Servant of the Lord</i>
Feb 9	Matthew 5:13-20	<i>Salt & Light</i>
Feb 16	Deuteronomy 30:15-20	<i>Life or Death</i>
Feb 23	Matthew 17:1-9	<i>Transfiguration</i>



New Hope UMC Prayer Service

Wednesdays 7:15 p.m.

Beginning March 4th

The past few years Lenten Studies have been offered at the church. We have explored spiritual disciplines, colored and discussed the Lenten Psalms as well as the 7 Last Words of Jesus. These studies have not been well attended and maybe they are not what we need right now.

The topic of needing more prayer time has come up in conversation, instead of doing a study this Lent we will be having a short prayer service on Wednesday evenings.

The services will follow the pattern of an evening prayer service as found in The United Methodist Hymnal (pages 878– 879), this prayer service pattern is shared among various Christian traditions.

The service will vary in length from week to week depending upon the prayers of the people but it will generally last 15-20 minutes. There is no sermon nor spoken reflection during evening prayer, it is a time to speak and listen to our holy God. If prayer is a spiritual discipline that speaks to your heart please consider joining us or if you feel called to it– help lead the service.

General Conference 2020

May 5-15 Minneapolis, Minnesota

Every 4 years the global United Methodist Church meets at General Conference. It is the top decision making group in the church and it alone can change structure and teachings as outlined in The Book of Discipline. Delegates, an equal number of clergy and laity, are elected from each annual and central conference.

These delegates attend meetings in advance of General Conference to familiarize themselves with the legislation that will come before the global body.

This year numerous petitions have been submitted that seek to move the church beyond our impasse. The majority of these petitions involve splitting the church into two or more denominations., one of the petitions seeks to keep the denomination together by changing the nature of the U.S. conference (it would become a regional conference to be more inline with the status of the conferences outside the U.S.).

Laity Day with Bishop Laurie

April 4, 2020

9 a.m.– 4 p.m.

at Ames First UMC

First UMC in Ames will be the host church for this year's Laity Day with Bishop Laurie.

The full day of activity will include Bishop Laurie's presentations, worship, missional topics, lunch and closing communion.

There will also be displays helpful to local church leaders. Registration is free, but important in planning for meals and materials. Register on-line in February.

St. Paul's UMC
104 S Columbus
Box 187
Pleasantville, Iowa 50225



New Hope UMC
203 W Center St
Box 697
Melcher-Dallas, Iowa 50163

The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Mark Your Calendar

Pastor Jess is on renewal leave from Jan 20– Feb 16.

- Feb 6 St. Paul's Admin Council at 7 p.m.
 - Feb 9 Scouting Ministries Sunday at St. Paul's UMC
 - Feb 26 Ash Wednesday Service at St. Paul's UMC 7 p.m.
- Lent Begins
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Coming Up

- Mar 1-3 Pastor Jess is in Ames Sunday afternoon thru Tuesday
 - Mar 5 St. Paul's Admin Council at 7 p.m.
 - Mar 6 World Day of Prayer Service at St. Paul's UMC
 - Mar 12 New Hope's Admin Council at 7 p.m.
 - Mar 22 UMCOR Sunday (special offering)
 - Mar 24-25 Pastor Jess will be at the Spring Orders Event in Ankeny
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Planning Ahead

- Apr 2 St. Paul's UMC moving things back into sanctuary 6 pm
St. Paul's Admin Council at 7 p.m.
- Apr 4 Laity Day with Bishop Laurie at 9 a.m.
- Apr 5 Palm Sunday (beginning of Holy Week)
- Apr 9 Holy Thursday Service at New Hope UMC
- Apr 10 Good Friday Service at St. Paul's UMC
- April 12 Easter Sunrise Service at New Hope UMC

Pastor Jessica Rockhold Gaul
515-480-4611
jessrockhold@gmail.com

*“Nothing has ever been said about God
that hasn't already been said better
by the wind in the pine trees.*

–Thomas Merton