**What is 40 Days of Prayer?**

Where are we going with this 40 Days of Prayer experience? We are seeking God and desiring to go in the direction that God’s Holy Spirit is leading us as individuals and as a congregation. This is a unique time, and we are in a unique place to be the salt and light of the gospel, and we don’t want to miss out. We will seek God as God’s people have always sought God – through prayer.

But the question remains, where are we going? The perennial question of destination is asked the moment our feet hit the doorstep. Children ask it when leaving the house in tow, and church members ask it when embarking on a new initiative. The answer for our congregation is that we are going where God leads us.

That’s not satisfactory, of course. We want clearer answers. It’s like a parent telling a child, “We’re going where I take you, and that’s all you need to know.” But it isn’t all we need to know, not really. We want to know the destination. Where is God leading us?

The early Christians struggled with the same question. They asked Jesus where they were going and He answered them, “I am the way.” But the answer wasn’t enough. They didn’t just want to know *how* *to get there*; they wanted to know *where* *they were going*.

We too question Jesus, asking for guidance, direction, and a plan of action. This questioning is prayer. And the initial answer will be the same. Jesus is the way. If we love the way Jesus loved, live the way He lived, and serve the way He served, we will remain on the pathway where God is leading us.

But the nagging question remains: on the way to where? Simply saying “the kingdom of God” isn’t enough. The kingdom of God seems far distant from the world we live in, and we want answers for the here and now. We want to live in the kingdom of God that has drawn near to us.

Prayer enables us to discern our mission and vision; to discern where God is leading us. When rooted in contemplation, the fruits of Christian action grow healthy and strong. Immersed in prayer, we are able to live, love, and serve with Jesus wherever God leads us. Whenever God demands great things of the faithful, God calls them first to pray. Prayer connects us with the abundant life available in Jesus. Prayer connects us with each other. When we gather in a small prayer group and pray aloud for one another, we realize true community by listening together for God’s voice.

Through prayer we are able to dialogue about our stories of faith and life, frustration and sadness, hope and possibility. By sharing our experiences of life and prayer, our vision of Jesus will be clearer, as will our understanding of where God is leading us and what God expects of us along the journey.

Are we there yet? No. Not completely. But in Jesus the kingdom is already here. Will we know everything we need to know about our calling at the end of these 40 days? No. But by the end of our time together, we will have a clearer sense of God’s mission and vision for our congregation.



**Mission and Vision for Eureka United Methodist Church**

**to Consider During the 40 Days of Prayer**

**Mission**

*Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the*

*transformation of the world.*

**Vision**

*\*To be discerned during the 40 days of prayer*

**Goal for the 40 Days of Prayer**

*To involve at least one half of our congregational participants in*

*creating a culture of prayer and discernment within*

*Eureka United Methodist Church.*

7 Congregational Issues for Prayer and Discernment

1. **God’s Vision for Our Congregation:** Focus on the proposed mission and purpose of the “church” and why Eureka United Methodist Church exists. Why this church?
2. **God’s Vision for Each Disciple:** Focus on the reality that God has a vision for each disciple. What is a disciple?
3. **God’s Process for Discipling:** Focus on the disciple making process and the role of the church in that process. What should EUREKA UMC’s discipleship process look like?
4. **God’s Action in Our Midst:** Focus on our community context and what we are doing and need to do to share the unconditional love of God through Jesus Christ. Who is my neighbor?
5. **God’s Vision of Living in Community with Each Other:** Focus on the importance and role of community groups, corporate worship, serving, and encouraging one another. How do we live better together?
6. **God’s Values For Our Life Together:** Focus on what God values and God’s picture of how we interact with each other. What are the values that make up the culture of EUREKA UMC?
7. **God’s Plan for Calling Us to a Deeper Relationship:** Focus on our pastoral, staff, and lay leadership and their spiritual development and what God is calling us to do next in our life together. What’s my response to all of this? What’s my role in it?

**40 Days of Prayer Covenant**

(Each prayer triplet will work out its own covenant. This is simply a suggested beginning point.)

**MY TRIPLET** (Name, Telephone Number, and E-mail Address)

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**OUR COVENANT**

Our Dialogue and Prayer Triplet goals are:

* To gather 7 times for 60- 90 minutes each time over the course of 40 days.
* To faithfully attend each gathering.
* To study and dialogue about the selected scripture.
* To study and dialogue about the congregational issues.
* To imagine what the full kingdom potential future of our congregation would be if we effectively live into God’s vision for us.
* To brainstorm about transitions and changes we may need to make in the life and ministry of our congregation to innovatively live into God’s future.
* To pray daily for one another, the other triplets, our congregation, our pastors/staff, and our lay leaders.
* To pray for clarity regarding God’s call to us as individuals and to our congregation as we discern the next steps for our strategic spiritual journey.
* Other:

**Ground Rules** (such as confidentiality):

I will try, with God’s help, to be a regular, faithful, involved, caring member of this Dialogue and Prayer Triplet.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date

**Dialogue and Prayer Gathering**

General Format Guidelines

Each Triplet will work out its own pattern. This is simply a suggested beginning point.

**Gathering, Welcoming, and Centering** - **10 minutes**

Begin by sharing what has happened in the last week and how God has been active in it.

Perhaps light a candle to remind everyone of Christ’s continued presence when two or three (in this case three) are gathered. You might begin by singing a chorus or hymn together, or if you don’t want to sing, by reading the text of a song or poem about prayer. Appoint a different person each week to offer a gathering prayer of their own or to lead you together in the Lord’s Prayer or one of the suggested prayers in this booklet.

**Scripture Reading - 13-15 minutes**

This guide will offer scripture passages for your group to consider. Sample questions for dialogue follow.

**Dialogue - 20-30 minutes**

Spend time developing your Christian relationship with each other. Go beyond the superficial and dialogue your dreams and concerns. Each week this guide will suggest topics for discussion drawn from the Congregational Issues for Prayer and Discernment. These conversation starters should help generate healthy dialogue and stimulate creative thinking. Record some of your insights for future sharing and continued prayer and discernment.

**Prayer - 15-30 minutes**

Consider keeping a list of prayer concerns. Include personal requests as well as wishes for our congregation. Include thanksgiving for blessings and celebrations of answered prayers. Pray out loud. Take turns then take turns again. Allow the Spirit to pray in you. Rest in the silences. Take your time.

If praying aloud is new to you, consider using the A-C-T-S format:

* Begin with **adoration** by praising God for who God is.
* Move to **confession** by acknowledging failures and our selfish willfulness.
* Offer **thanks** for what God has done in your life and in the life of the church.
* Conclude with **supplications** by asking God for the things you need.

**Benediction - 2-5 minutes**

Benediction is a time for blessing each other with the grace of God and praying for God’s continued presence in each day to come. You might choose a different person to offer the Benediction each time you meet.

**Total Time: 60–90 minutes**

**Telling Our Stories**

Orientation Gathering

**Gathering, Welcoming, and Centering - 5 minutes**

“Grant that we may know what we ought to know, to love what we ought to love, to praise what delights you most, to value what is precious in your sight. Amen.” - Thomas á Kempis

**Scripture - 5-10 minutes**

*“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord.” Jeremiah 29:11-14 (NRSV)*

When your life seems pointless and hopeless, how do you feel when you hear that God’s plans for you includes a “future with hope”? Dialogue what it means to you to search for God with all your heart.

**Reflection / Discernment - 15-25 minutes**

Tell something about your spiritual journey. What was the place of prayer in your home as a child? How did you first encounter Jesus? How did you come to be part of our congregation? How are you learning to listen for God’s voice and discern God’s will in your life? Allow each person about 3-5 minutes.

**Prayer - 5-10 minutes**

(Prayer Psalm: Psalm 23)

**Benediction - 2-5 minutes**

**Total Time: 27-45 minutes**

**Insights from this Gathering:**

 **God’s Vision for Our Congregation**

First Gathering

**Focus:** the mission and vision for our congregation.

**Gathering, Welcoming, and Centering** **- 10 minutes**

What has happened in your life recently, and how is God at work in it?

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; naught be all else to me save that thou art,

Thou my best thought by day or by night, waking or sleeping, thy presence my light. Be thou my wisdom, O thou my true word; I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord; Thou my redeemer, my love thou hast won, thou in me dwelling and I with thee one.

Great God of heaven, my victory won, may I reach heaven’s joy, O bright heaven’s sun! Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, still be my vision, O Ruler of all. (Irish song, tr. Mary E. Byrne, 1905)

**Scripture - 13-15 minutes**

*“If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves.” Proverbs 29:18 (The Message)*

How is God “opening your eyes” toward the future? Is there some vision or dream from God that you are being called to help realize? How can you begin this week to live what you see?

*“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”* *Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)*

Read: 1 Corinthians 12

The Great Commission

*Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:16-20 (NIV)*

Tony Campolo said, “You dare not decide that you don’t need the church. Christ’s church is his bride . . . and his love for her makes him faithful to her even when she is not faithful to him.”

“The church is nothing but a section of humanity in which Christ has truly taken form.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Based on these scriptures and quotes, why do people need the church?

**Reflection / Discernment - 20-40 minutes**

Discuss the mission and vision statements for our church contained at the beginning of this manual. How do they reflect why people need the church? What do you affirm? What is missing? If someone were to ask you why do people need this church (EUREKA UMC), how would you answer them? What is your dream or vision for your future? What is your dream or vision for our congregation? What do you think is God’s vision for you and for our congregation?

**Prayer - 15-30 minutes**

(Prayer Scripture: Ephesians 3: 14-21)

**Benediction - 2-5 minutes**

**Insights from this gathering:**

God’s Vision for Each Disciple

Second Gathering

**Focus**: the reality that God has a vision for each disciple. What is a disciple?

Gathering, Welcoming, and Centering - 10 minutes

What has happened since we last met, and how is God at work in it?

About the early church in Jerusalem the Acts of the Apostles tells us, *“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles; And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42-47 (NASB)*

Spend three minutes just meditating on the above scripture and circle any words that your attention is drawn to. Keep these words on your mind as you journey together on this day.

Scripture - 15-20 minutes

What comes to your mind when you think of being a disciple of Jesus?

Shema (Deut. 6: 4-5) + the second greatest commandment:

*“One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”*

*“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”* *Mark 12: 28-31 (NIV)*

According to this passage, what are the scriptural marks of a disciple?

What are other scriptural marks of a disciple that come to your mind?

How would you describe a disciple?

Three other descriptions of a disciple are listed below. What aspects of these definitions do you agree or disagree with?

1. “Following Jesus to become like Jesus in order to invite others into His presence.”
2. “Every single aspect of the way we live out our lives needs to be re-aligned

 around the person of Jesus Christ and his lordship.” (Alan and Debra Hirsch,

 *Untamed God*)

1. “And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Matthew 4:19 (NRSV)

 According to Matthew, Jesus defines a disciple as someone who is:

* Committed to following Jesus;
* Committed to being transformed by Jesus;
* Committed to Jesus’s Mission.

What do you affirm in these statements?

Reflection / Discernment - 20-40 minutes

Where am I in relationship to Jesus? Searcher, Believer, Follower, Disciple, or Disciple Maker? Can I really be a believer without being a disciple and can I be a disciple without making disciples?

Circle One:

EUREKA UMC is fully committed / somewhat committed / not committed to making disciples. What do you base your decision on?

Circle One:

I am fully committed / somewhat committed / not committed to being and making disciples. What do you base your decision on?

What help do you need from EUREKA UMC to be a more active follower of Jesus?

PRAYER 15-30 minutes

## (Prayer Psalm: Psalm 24)

## Benediction - 2-5 minutes

**Insights from this gathering:**

God’s Process for Discipling

Third Gathering

**Focus**: the disciple making process and the role of the church in that process. What should EUREKA UMC’s discipleship process look like?

Gathering, Welcoming, and Centering - 10 minutes

What has happened since we last met, and how is God at work in it?

“Faith today is treated as something that should make us different, not that actually can or does make us different.” (Dallas Willard*, The Spirit of Disciplines*)

*“Since you became alive again, so to speak, when Christ arose from the dead, now set your sights on the rich treasures and joys of heaven where he sits beside God in the place of honor and power. Let heaven fill your thoughts; don’t spend your time worrying about things down here. You should have as little desire for this world as a dead person does. Your real life is in heaven with Christ and God. And when Christ who is our real life comes back again, you will shine with him and share in all his glories.*

*Away then with sinful, earthly things; deaden the evil desires lurking within you; have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires; don’t worship the good things of life, for that is idolatry. God’s terrible anger is upon those who do such things. You used to do them when your life was still part of this world; but now is the time to cast off and throw away all these rotten garments of anger, hatred, cursing, and dirty language.*

*Don’t tell lies to each other; it was your old life with all its wickedness that did that sort of thing; now it is dead and gone. You are living a brand new kind of life that is continually learning more and more of what is right, and trying constantly to be more and more like Christ who created this new life within you. In this new life one’s nationality or race or education or social position is unimportant; such things mean nothing. Whether a person has Christ is what matters, and he is equally available to all.*

*Since you have been chosen by God who has given you this new kind of life, and because of his deep love and concern for you, you should practice tenderhearted mercy and kindness to others. Don’t worry about making a good impression on them, but be ready to suffer quietly and patiently. Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.*

*Most of all, let love guide your life, for then the whole church will stay together in perfect harmony. Let the peace of heart that comes from Christ be always present in your hearts and lives, for this is your responsibility and privilege as members of his body. And always be thankful.*

*Remember what Christ taught, and let his words enrich your lives and make you wise; teach them to each other and sing them out in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing to the Lord with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, and come with him into the presence of God the Father to give him your thanks.” Col. 3:1-17 (TLB)*

Spend three minutes just meditating on the above scripture and circle any words that your attention is drawn to. Keep these words on your mind as you journey together this day.

Scripture - 13-15 minutes

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, he writes:

*“Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.” Phil. 4: 9 NRSV*

What is it that Paul has taught them or that they have seen and heard Paul do?

The invitation to be a disciple, is both the definition of a disciple and the process for becoming one.

*“And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Matthew 4: 19 (NRSV)*

“Follow me”: a disciple knows and follows Jesus.

* Knowing – changed at the head level.
* Obey – Jesus has authority in your life.
* Belonging comes before believing.
* This is what it means to begin.

“and I will make you”: a disciple is being transformed by Jesus.

* Jesus is going to teach us and transform us to be like Himself.
* This transformation is about our beliefs (head), attitudes (heart and character) and actions (hands)
* This is what it means to grow.

“fishers of people”: a disciple is committed to the mission of Jesus.

* The cause of Jesus is people.
* Our lives are for His service.
* This is what it means to serve and lead.

What does this look like to you?

Which of the above 3 phases of discipleship do you think most people at church would say they relate to?

Reflection / Discernment - 20-40 minutes

Every person has an invitation to be on a spiritual journey with Jesus.

* Come and See: do not yet know Him/searching for what is missing in their life
* Come and Follow: desire to know, trust, and follow Him, but need help to know how
* Come and Be: being a part of the Body of Christ in a meaningful and purposeful way
* Remain in Me: remaining faithful to Jesus who gives us His strength to make disciples by teaching and training others

At each of these points in our spiritual journey we each need different experiences, opportunities for learning, opportunities for serving and reflection. Discuss what is needed at each level and how EUREKA UMC might come alongside a person in this stage of their faith journey to help them move to the next stage. Identify things we are currently doing well or not doing well.

**Prayer - 15-30 minutes**

(Prayer Scripture: John 15: 1-17)

Benediction - 2-5 minutes

**Insights from this gathering:**

\*Before next week’s gathering or as an extended part of your gathering next week, you are encouraged to take a prayer walk individually or as a group. Your prayer walk can be around your neighborhood or the EUREKA UMC neighborhood. This may be done by walking, riding a bike, or driving. As you go through the neighborhood, be observant of what you see, the people you encounter, the condition of the neighborhood, the challenges that they might be dealing with, etc. As you become aware, stop and pray. Listen for what God is speaking.

God’s Action in Our Midst

Fourth Gathering

**Focus:** our community context and what we are doing and need to do to share the unconditional love of God through Jesus Christ. Who is my neighbor?

Gathering, Welcoming, and Centering - 10 minutes

What has happened since we last met, and how is God at work in it?

What did God show you on your prayer walk?

But if we are the body
Why aren't His arms reaching?
Why aren't His hands healing?
Why aren't His words teaching?
And if we are the body
Why aren't His feet going?
Why is His love not showing them there is a way?
There is a way, there is a way.

*- If We Are the Body* by Casting Crowns

Scripture - 13-15 minutes

*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

*“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”*

*He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”*

*“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”*

*But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”*

*In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.  He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii [and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’*

*“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”*

*The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” Matthew 25: 31-46 (NIV)*

What do these verses say to us about loving our neighbors? Who are our neighbors?

Reflection / Discernment - 20-40 minutes

“If we truly love God, we will express it by loving our neighbors, and when we truly love our neighbors, it expresses our love for God.” (Richard Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel)*

Based upon the scriptures and the above quotations, is it possible to serve our neighbors without being in relationship with them? Explain.

“It’s not what you believe that counts, it’s what you believe enough to do.” (Richard Stearns, *The Hole In Our Gospel)*

“The local church is the hope of the world, and its future rests primarily in the hands of its leaders.” Bill Hybels, Willow Creek Community Church

Morgan Chilulu, an African pastor of a small and humble church in the midst of the AIDS pandemic, once said, “A church that lives within its four walls is not a church at all.”

What are your thoughts from the scripture and the quotations about our responsibility throughout our neighborhood, the Greater St. Louis area, and the world? How should our congregation be involved in this portion of our ministry responsibility even beyond what we are already doing? Is giving money, praying, and sending food enough? What more should we do on an ongoing basis? What is God calling you as a disciple to do?

Prayer - 15-30 minutes

(Prayer Scripture: Matthew 25: 31-46)

Benediction - 2-5 minutes

**Insights from this gathering:**

God’s Vision of Living in Community With Each Other

Fifth Gathering

**Focus**: the importance and role of community groups, corporate worship, serving and encouraging one another. How do we live better together?

Gathering, Welcoming, and Centering - 10 minutes

What has happened since we last met, and how is God active in it?

“Community describes the relationships we form to help us live out our beliefs. God never intended us to follow Christ and engage in the disciplines of this life alone. God knows – and oh, so do we – that we do better when others help us. In community, others hold us accountable for our heart’s intentions, they test our words and sentiments, and they rescue us from a life of waste and self-indulgence.” (Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship)*

Scripture -13-15 minutes

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.  Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.  All the believers were together and had everything in common.  They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2: 42-47 (NIV)*

*“If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you’ve made a friend. If he won’t listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again. If he still won’t listen, tell the church. If he won’t listen to the church, you’ll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God’s forgiving love. Take this most seriously: A yes on earth is yes in heaven; a no on earth is no in heaven. What you say to one another is eternal. I mean this. When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action. And when two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I’ll be there.” Matthew 18: 15-20 (MSG)*

How do these passages inform the way we live in community with each other?

Reflection / Discernment - 20-40 minutes

What role have community groups played in your spiritual formation? What could we do better to involve more persons in community group life here at EUREKA UMC?

What is the difference between private worship and corporate worship? Who is corporate worship for? How does corporate worship connect us to God? To each other? In what ways does worship at EUREKA UMC enable you to grow as a follower of Jesus?

How does EUREKA UMC help you to identify and serve using your gifts and talents? Are there things that prevent you from serving?

How does our faith life encourage you and others to follow Jesus? In what ways could we do this better?

Being in community means living with each other even in moments of disagreement. Are there conflicts among us that need our attention?

**Prayer - 15-30 minutes**

(Prayer Psalm: Psalm 134)

**Benediction - 2-5 minutes**

**Insights from this gathering:**

\*Look ahead to next week’s gathering and read through the value examples. Keep them in your prayers as you pray for what EUREKA UMC should lift up as we glorify God and work for Jesus’ mission.

God’s Values For Our Life Together

Sixth Gathering

**Focus**: what God values and God’s picture of how we interact with each other. What are the values that make up the culture of EUREKA UMC?

Gathering, Welcoming, and Centering - 10 minutes

What has happened since we last met, and how has God been at work in it?

God be in my head and in my understanding; God be in my eyes and in my looking;

God be in my mouth and in my speaking; God be in my heart and in my thinking; God be at my end and at my departing. (*Sarum Primer*, 1514)

Scripture - 13-15 minutes

*“In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.” Acts 6: 1-7 (NIV)*

A crisis has arisen in the early church and the early leaders have to choose between equally important things to do. What are the values that are at stake? What do the disciples decide are the core values they must uphold and what can be delegated?

Reflection / Discernment - 20-40 minutes

This session focuses on the role values play within a congregation. This is of importance to us because of what core values do for us.

Core values:

* Embrace positive change.
* Influence overall behavior.
* Inspire people to action.
* Enhance credible leadership.
* Shape ministry character.
* Affect strategic planning and vision.
* Answer the question of why we do what we do. They supply the reason behind the vision.
* Drive the ministry.
* Define our distinctiveness.
* Communicate what is important.

Samples of other church’s value statements for reflection are listed below. Which of these values reflect what God is calling EUREKA UMC to? What other values would you or your group add? Record your top 10.

Carroll Community Church - Westminster, Maryland

1. **Love Jesus Christ**

 No one can love God for us. We must individually stay connected to Christ through an abiding relationship (John 15). Through the Word of God, prayer, personal worship, and obedience, we can love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength.

1. **Be Connected through a Community Group**

 Community groups help us develop caring relationships with one another. In this small-group context we can get to know people, hold each other accountable, and offer newcomers a place to belong.

1. **Build Friendships with Non-Christians**

 We can always be on the lookout for ways to reach out with the love of Christ to those who are teetering on the edge of a Christless eternity. By building relationships with non-Christians we may eventually be able to communicate the life-changing message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

1. **Participate on Sunday Mornings**

 Weekly we gather to celebrate God’s goodness, be exposed to the Word of God, and catch up on family news. Our contemporary worship services provide ministry to believers and an open door to visitors and non-Christians in the community.

1. **Pray Regularly**

 When we pray we participate in the unseen spiritual world. Ministry is a battleground that needs to be constantly reinforced through prayer.

1. **Give Generously**

 Ministry takes money. Giving may be one of the most tangible expressions of our faith. Believers are encouraged to give generously and sacrificially to the ministry of Carroll Community Church.

1. **Serve Faithfully**

 Christianity is not a spectator sport. Service is love in action. Through our God-given gifts and talents we find fulfillment and participate in the work of God in the world.

Grace Community Bible Church - Richmond, Texas

1. **A Dedication to Purpose**

 Our purpose is to lead people to salvation in Christ and growth in Christ-likeness.

1. **A Dedication to People**

 God works through people, and each person is unique and vital to God’s plan.

1. **A Dedication to Relationships**

 Building relationships is indispensable to spiritual birth and spiritual growth.

1. **A Dedication to Innovation**

 While our message is timeless, our methods adapt to those we are here to serve.

1. **A Dedication to Quality**

 In everything we do, we give God only our best.

Grand Blanc Community Church - Grand Blanc (Detroit), Michigan

To help keep us on track with our mission:

1. **We deeply value** the people of Grand Blanc.
2. **We deeply value** the truth and applicability of the Bible, God’s Word to humankind.
3. **We deeply value** cultural relevance and involvement.
4. **We deeply value** personal authenticity an integrity.
5. **We deeply value** excellence at every level.
6. **We deeply value** the importance of healthy relationships, both with God and with one another.

Northwood Community Church - Dallas, Texas

The following presents both the actual and aspirational values of Northwood Community Church. The following define and drive our ministry in the context of a warm and caring environment.

1. **We Value Christ’s Headship**

 We acknowledge Christ as head of our church and submit ourselves and all our activities to His will and good pleasure (Eph. 1: 22-23).

1. **We Value Biblical Teaching**

 We strive to teach God’s Word with integrity and authority so that seekers find Christ and believers mature in Him (2 Tim. 3: 16)

1. **We Value Authentic Worship**

 We desire to acknowledge God’s supreme value and worth in our personal lives and in the corporate, contemporary worship of our church (Romans 12: 1-2).

1. **We Value Prayer**

 We rely on private and corporate prayer in the conception, planning and execution of all the ministries and activities of this church (Matt. 7: 7-11).

1. **We Value Community**

 We ask all our people to commit to and fully participate in biblically functioning small groups where they may reach the lost, exercise their gifts, be shepherded, and thus grow in Christ-likeness (Acts 2: 44-46).

1. **We Value Family**

 We support the spiritual nurture of the family as one of God’s dynamic means to perpetuate the Christian faith (2 Tim 1: 5).

As a church community, we at Northwood aspire to the following values:

1. **We Value a Mobilized Congregation**

 We seek to equip all our uniquely designed and gifted people to effectively accomplish the work of our ministry (Eph. 4: 11-13).

1. **We Value Lost People**

 We value unchurched, lost people and will use every available Christ honoring means to pursue, win and grow them to maturity in the faith (Luke 19:10).

Willow Creek Community Church - South Barrington, Illinois

1. We believe that anointed teaching is the catalyst for transformation in individuals’ lives and in the church.
2. We believe that lost people matter to God, and, therefore, ought to matter to the church.
3. We believe that the church should be culturally relevant while remaining doctrinally pure.
4. We believe that Christ’s followers should manifest authenticity and yearn for continuous growth.
5. We believe that a church should operate as a unified community of servants stewarding their spiritual gifts.
6. We believe that loving relationships should permeate every aspect of church life.
7. We believe that life-change happens best in small groups.
8. We believe that excellence honors God and inspires people.
9. We believe that churches should be led by those with leadership gifts.
10. We believe that full devotion to Christ and his cause is normal for every believer.

The United Methodist Church - Missouri Annual Conference

The mission of the Missouri Annual Conference is: *Leading congregations to lead people to actively follow Jesus Christ.*

The Conference’s vision is: *Growing, fruitful, vibrant congregations changing lives through Jesus Christ.*

**Five Expectations We Have Five Practices of Fruitful**

**of Each Other: Congregations:**

Christ-centered Radical Hospitality

Fruitfulness Passionate Worship

Excellence Intentional Faith Development

Accountability Risk-taking Mission and Service

Collaboration Extravagant Generosity

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

Top 10 Values for EUREKA UMC:

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

10)

## Prayer - 15-30 minutes

## (Prayer Psalm: Psalm 121)

## Benediction 2-5 minutes

**Insights from this gathering:**

God’s Plan for Calling Us to a Deeper Relationship

Seventh Gathering

**Focus**: our pastoral, staff, and lay leadership and their spiritual development and what God is calling us to next in our life together. What’s my response to all of this? What’s my role in it?

**Gathering, Welcoming, and Centering - 10 minutes**

What has happened since we last met, and how is God active in it?

The Bible teaches that each believer has been gifted by God with a particular spiritual ability that God uses to build up and equip the church for its ministry. We celebrate the unique blend of gifts in this congregation and recognize that God works through a variety of persons without respect to race, gender, cultural background, etc.

“Almighty God, in every age you have called out men and women to be your faithful servants. We believe you have now called us to join that great company who seek to follow you. Grant unto us today and always a clear vision of your call and strength to fulfill the ministry assigned to us. We pray in the name of Christ. Amen.” (*A Guide to Prayer*, p. 65)

Scripture - 13-15 minutes

*“So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.*

*Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord’s work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance.  Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other.”*

*1 Thess. 5: 11-13 (NLT)*

What does this passage say to us about how we should treat those who lead among us?

How does this passage reflect how leadership is valued and encouraged at ST. PAUL UMC?

**Reflection / Discernment - 20-40 minutes**

Does Jesus expect too much of the apostles? Of us? Has Jesus asked you to go anywhere or do anything? How did you respond?

What should be our commitment to our local church as the base camp for our faith? Is church our third place after home and work, or have we relegated it to fourth or fifth place? What is the importance of being connected, even weekly, with our community of faith?

How do our staff, lay leadership and pastors enable you to respond to God’s call in your life? How can we be part of a team culture together?

Prayer - 15-30 minutes

(Prayer Psalm: Psalm 51: 1-17)

Benediction - 2-5 minutes

Insights from this gathering:

\*Following this week’s discussion, please answer the follow up questions in the back of this packet regarding your 40 Days of Prayer experience.

The concepts for the 40 Days of Prayer were developed from George Bullard, "Pursuing the Full Kingdom Potential of Your Congregation" (Chalice Press, 2005) and were adapted by Rev. Jon Spalding for St. Paul United Methodist Church 2017.

**Triplet Prayer List**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1**  |  For EUREKA UMC to live into the vision that God is providing. |
| **2**  |   |
| **3**  |   |
| **4**  |   |
| **5**  |   |
| **6**  |   |
| **7**  |   |
| **8**  |   |
| **9**  |   |
| **10**  |   |
| **11**  |   |
| **12**  |   |
| **13**  |   |
| **14**  |   |
| **15**  |   |
| **16**  |   |
| **17**  |   |
| **18**  |   |
| **19**  |   |
| **20**  |   |

***This page is for you to record any personal or Triplet prayer requests.***

**As a result of your 40 Days of Prayer experience, what are three positive actions you plan to take as an individual to contribute to the mission, vision, and future vitality of our congregation?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1**  |   |
| **2**  |   |
| **3**  |   |

***This page is for your personal reflection and, if you desire, sharing with your prayer triplet.***

***[Keep it for your personal use.]***

**What are five to seven insights or discernments about God’s future for our congregation would your prayer triplet like to share?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1**  |  |
| **2**  |  |
| **3**  |  |
| **4**  |  |
| **5**  |  |
| **6**  |  |
| **7**  |  |

***To be completed by the Triplet and turned in to church office by noon, Thursday, September 28.***

**Based on your 40 Days of Prayer experience, do you have any thoughts about God’s vision for our congregation? This question is optional.**

 (Consult the vision statement at the beginning of this manual as your starting point.)

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|                     |

***To be completed by individuals. If you desire to share it, please turn it into the church office by***

***Noon, Thursday, September 28th***