

September 1, 2026

Volume 23: Issue 9

Pastoral Letter September 2026

Dear Siblings in Christ,

September brings so many changes—the start of school with early mornings, bookbags full of homework (or other surprises), and fall sports; cooler weather and the promise of fall colors; and in our church, fall conference season. Our conference is set for October 4 at 6 pm, and I hope you will all plan to be there!

As my daughter gets on the bus each morning, I wonder how long the morning light will last. At some point in the fall, we will be waking up to moonlight and stars, and the sun won't rise until her bus is long gone. The days grow shorter, the light compressed into a smaller space...and yet as Christians, this is the season we lean toward the light. After all, Advent is coming.

As you move through these glorious September days, enjoying the abundance of harvest and family and sunshine, spend some time contemplating the light. We all carry that light for one another, in service to God's kin-dom. Each tiny candle adds up to the glorious whole. Each word we choose to speak or not speak, each habit or compulsion we elect to follow, each decision we make to be present with one another in healing ways, makes a difference in the lives of our loved ones, our church, our community, and our world. May you know the light of Christ shining on you and in you, that you might reflect that light.

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Michelle



Prayer (Psalm 43:3-4, NLT)

Send out your light and your truth;
let them guide me.

Let them lead me to your holy
mountain,

to the place where you live.

There I will go to the altar of God,
to God—the source of all my joy.

I will praise you with my harp,
O God, my God!

How to get ahold of Pastor Michelle:

Meetings by appointment—in person Monday/Tuesday, via zoom or phone other days.

Please plan with me, and plan ahead! Sometimes it makes sense for me to sit in the office and wait for things to happen, but more often, that is the least effective use of my time. Scheduling meetings assures that each person gets the time they need, without having to wait.

Email is always appreciated: pastormvallier@outlook.com.

Text and phone 9 am – 9 pm Thursday – Tuesday

(If it's hard to remember the exact time, shoot for middle of the day!)

Pastor's Sabbath is Wednesday, please do not call or text.

*****In the case of pastoral care emergencies, please call or text 24/7*****

(What is a "pastoral care emergency?" *A life-threatening situation for you or an immediate family member, especially one in which you need immediate prayers or presence.*)

W.W.Y.D (What Would You Do?).

I heard a soft knock at my door. When I reached the door, opened, I saw Jesus standing on my doorstep with his hand stretched out to me. I returned the Welcome & said, "Welcome, Jesus to my home, Won't you come in and sit at my table? As I poured Him a fresh drink of water & served my daily meal, I said my table prayer, giving Him thanks for all the blessings of the day/weeks. Thanking Him for the meal about to receive, Asking for safety and love for all. After the meal, Jesus leaned back & listened to my words. I thanked Him for giving me Eternal Life(some day) for having forgiveness (I Am A Sinner) and loving me, staying by my side. My heart felt so Happy & Free! So Grateful, I Am A Believer, Jesus came to see me!

He spoke to me as only a Savior would, God Bless You My Child. You are worthy to my Heavenly Home, I will return again and take you Home. Then Jesus rose, turned to the door, stepped out walking down the path of my road, turned with a smile, a wave of His hand & said "Till We Meet Again, Child of Mine" & disappeared.

Beautiful Savior

King of Kings

King of Nations

Truly I Love You

Truly I Need You.

What Would You Do?

Peace, Love, and Joy,
Gloria



September Missions



Conference Special Sunday

- Rural Life Sunday – September 6, 2026 Monies given for the Rural Life Sunday offering go to strengthen the work of ministries in towns and rural areas of concern in the Michigan Conference.

Cedar Springs Community Food Pantry

- Saturday, June 20 was the big day!
- We are still collecting egg cartons.
- **Exciting news for our food pantry!** Thanks to your generosity, the Cedar Springs Community Food Pantry received \$32,570.00 through the Meijer Spring “Simply Give” campaign! A huge, heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to this effort. Your support makes a direct impact on our neighbors in need!



Soles4Souls

- At last count over 500 pairs of shoes have been collected for Souls4Souls. If you or someone you know still has not dropped off the new or gently used shoes and they plan to donate, now is the time to do so. Thank you.

Sleep In Heavenly Peace

- Just a couple of weeks away - **Saturday 9/12** – Bed Build here in the parking lot. There is a box by the mission table for the new bedding. twin sheets set, blankets and pillows to go on the beds.



NO KID SLEEPS
ON THE FLOOR
IN OUR TOWN!

Hand2Hand

- Now that school is back in session so is Hand2Hand. They expect over 150 children will need the weekend food that they provide. A complete list of the foods needed for the backpacks is on the wall by the mission table. Besides the food this year they are also looking for volunteer help to pack the bags and transport the packed bags to the school. If you have a small amount of time to donate and are looking for something to do this might just be the opportunity you are looking for. Contact Craig Owens at 616-667-7773 if you are interested in any of the volunteer opportunities.

Covenant Community Support

- As we get busy with all our summer plans please don't forget about the families that are torn apart and unable to be together. The Covenant Community UM Church is asking for our prayers as they support ICE detainees when they are released from the North Lake Processing Center in Lake County to go back home. But, before they get released, they really could use notes of encouragement – The detainees do not get to see the original card, just a copy of the words so just a note on a plain piece of paper with words of encouragement can mean so much to someone far away from home.

- Sarah Zachow, Mission Chairperson

Missions Continued



Labor Day Mission Opportunity for Gardens of Hope

- September 7th at 8am. The Bike Ride for Haiti fundraiser is part of the ongoing Gardens of Hope campaign. They are in need of volunteers for the Cedar Springs ride.

Here is a link with more information: [Bike Ride for Haiti - The Michigan Conference](#)

- The ride takes place on White Pine Trail on Labor Day, starting at 8 am, and the organizers are looking for folks who could sit for a few hours under canopy offering water and snacks to riders along the route (Cedar Springs to Howard City). Riders are also welcome to register! If you are interested in this opportunity, please let me know, or reach out directly to Pastor Rob Nestrom at 989-415-3830 or RevRDN@gmail.com.

- Pastor Michelle

District News



Lay Servant Ministries Classes & Learning Session

Registration is now open for a fall Lay Servant Classes, retreat-style! The retreat will be held September 25-26 at White Lake UMC in Montague, MI. There is a registration fee of \$30 per person to cover the cost of meals. Participants need to make their own lodging arrangements and order their own book.

Course Offerings:

- Introduction to Lay Ministry: The Basic Course
- Advanced Course: Worship Design
- Advanced Course: Fresh Expressions
- [Register now](#) through September 14. Contact [Sara Wolfson](#) if you have any questions about the retreat.

Scripture that sticks with us shapes our faith

By Laquaan Malachi Article link: www.umc.org

I was born and raised in the Bible Belt, a region of the U.S. known to have higher church attendance. Like most people in my context, I grew up going to church most of the Sundays of my childhood. Each Sunday, like most churches, a Scripture verse or two was read, and our pastor preached about the passage. As a kid I often left the service confused about how these pieces of Scripture fit together as a broader story. While we should understand that one or a few verses can never adequately represent the Bible as a whole, there is still value in holding tightly to specific verses as they relate to our walk of faith.

Consider what “sticks”

Unless one is particularly studious, many of us grew up reading only the Bible verses that are read in worship services. People have full, busy lives. They must juggle school, work, parenting, and various other responsibilities. It is easy to see why people don't always have the time to devote to biblical study.

Yet despite our busy schedules, it's important that we create space to study the Bible in its entirety to grasp the full story of God's love for us. The Scriptures are intended to be read in the context of the whole story, not one isolated piece at a time. But even in doing so, many of us cling tightly to a handful of verses and we find great solace in them.

I believe that certain books, passages or verses stick with us for a reason. The Scripture that you hold most often in your mind can really make a difference in how you see the world and how you live out your faith. What we hold dear has the power to shape our lives.

Scripture shapes and guides us

A foundational Bible verse for me is [Galatians 6:9](#). It came to me in a dream when I was a young teenager. It was as if it was seared into my brain. I even decided to get it tattooed on my forearm when I was nineteen so that I would never forget it.

“So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.”
—[Galatians 6:9](#)

This verse reminds us to be patient and to be good even if nothing good comes in return. It is a lesson of perseverance that has come in handy so many times throughout my life. In many ways it is central to the way I practice my faith. I learned a long time ago that faith is more of a marathon than a sprint.

Remembering to be good because God has called me to be so has kept me from burning out on extending kindness to a world that sometimes refuses to do the same. If I were simply focused on potential personal gain, I would have worn myself down long ago.

This Galatians passage is a reminder of the long game. Our journey will not end in a day, it will end in a lifetime; and if you intend to make it that far, perseverance and patience will serve you well.

Your connection point

There may be a different passage that resonates with you. In fact, I am almost certain there is, given the length and depth of the Bible. Maybe those verses are how God is giving you a nudge, or maybe it is your spirit responding to something that will bring you strength, guidance, and purpose.

If you can't think of any specific passages or verses that guide you, perhaps today is the day to open your Bible and to hear what God has to say.

Laquaan Malachi is a licensed local pastor in the Minnesota Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. He has a passion for people and justice, and is also an author, poet and spoken word artist whose work often includes themes surrounding justice and/or mental health.

This commentary was published on July 6, 2026. The contact is [Laura Buchanan](#).

Word Search



10 HOLY THINGS

The word **holy** in the Bible may indicate righteousness, but more often it carries the idea of separation from the common and profane. That which is holy is consecrated to God. Hidden in this puzzle is a list of holy persons and things mentioned in the Bible.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| holy ground (Exod. 3:5) | holy brethren (Heb. 3:1) |
| holy sabbath (Exod. 16:23) | holy priesthood (I Peter 2:5) |
| holy nation (Exod. 19:6) | holy men (II Peter 1:21) |
| holy convocation (Lev. 23:7) | holy conversation (I Peter 1:15) |
| holy tithe (Lev. 27:30) | holy faith (Jude 20) |
| holy people (Deut. 7:6) | holy city (Rev. 21:2) |
| holy God (Josh. 24:19) | holy Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10) |
| holy vessels (I Kings 8:4) | |
| holy name (Ps. 103:1) | |
| holy mount (Isa. 27:13) | |
| holy flock (Ezek. 36:38) | |
| holy covenant (Dan. 11:28) | |
| holy angels (Matt. 25:31) | |
| holy prophets (Luke 1:70) | |
| holy child (Acts 4:30) | |
| holy scriptures (Rom. 1:2) | |
| holy lump (Rom. 11:16) | |
| holy root (Rom. 11:16) | |
| holy children (I Cor. 7:14) | |
| holy temple (Eph. 2:21) | |
| holy apostles (Eph. 3:5) | |
| holy calling (II Tim. 1:9) | |

10 HOLY THINGS



(*Answer key on last page*)

SEPTEMBER						
MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU
	1 Jay & Lori Jones Anniversary	2	3	4 Jody Surdam Birthday	5 Sheryl Sharp Birthday	6 Sandra Samsel Birthday
7	8	9	10	11 Judy Gage Birthday		13
14 Dale Lubahn Birthday Lynne Zank Birthday	15	16 Arlene Schoff Birthday	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 Jean Benjamin Birthday	25 Sherry McNee Birthday	26 Keith & Dixie Pope Anniversary	27
28	29	30				

BIRTHDAYS

9/4 : Jody Surdam
 9/5 : Sheryl Sharp
 9/6 : Sandra Samsel
 9/12 : Judy Gage
 9/15 : Dale Lubahn
 & Lynne Zank
 9/17 : Arlene Schoff
 9/25 : Jean Benjamin
 9/26 : Sherry McNee



9/1 : Jay and Lori Jones

9/26 : Keith and Dixie Pope

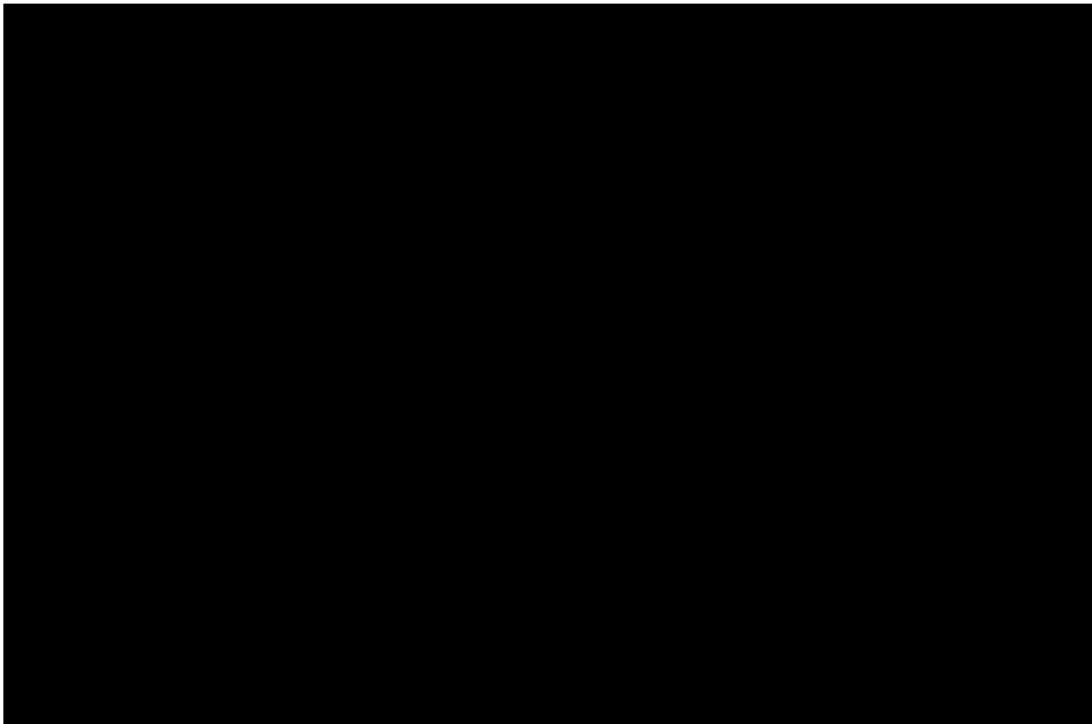
Weekly Activities



Praise Team Practice
Wednesdays at 4:30pm
Unless otherwise announced



(AA)
Saturdays at 10:00am
All are welcome



*Names will remain on the prayer list for 1 month unless notified. Prayer chain contact Caroline Bartlette at deadend7501@sbcglobal.net



Kae-Leigh is here every Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9:00am – 2:00pm

Phone: 616-799-0738

Email: eastnelsonumc@gmail.com

Website: eastnelsonumc.org

YouTube: [@eastnelsonumc8554](https://www.youtube.com/@eastnelsonumc8554)

Facebook: [eastnelsonumc](https://www.facebook.com/eastnelsonumc)

10
HOLY THINGS

