

October 1, 2026

Volume 23: Issue 10

Pastoral Letter October 2026

Dear Siblings in Christ,



As October approaches, my mind is on fruit. Apples, to be specific. I drive by many apple orchards on my way to and from church, especially with the road construction on 46 that continues to send me out into the surrounding farmland. Most of the apple orchards are young trees, tightly pressed together, maximizing space and efficiency of picking for massive loads of apples. One older orchard, along 37, always catches my eye...trees are spaced more naturally, branches allowed to stretch. Here the apples have breathing room, plenty of space between them. Many of you will read this prior to Church Conference, where we will be talking about fruits of discipleship in our Connexion Zone. It's a wonderful time for each of us to look back at the previous year and ask, not only about fruit, but about all the steps that lead to a bountiful harvest. What changes took place, where did we find soil in need of tilling? What seeds were planted, and where did they land? Are they well-nurtured? Are they growing? What about seeds planted in previous years? Do we now have young trees and the promise of fruit?

The same questions can be asked for the coming church year, from now until the next Church Conference. How will we build on our life in ministry to increase our discipleship yield?

Transformation can be gauged in many ways—numbers of people involved, depth of learning, and redirection of our hearts' focus, from inward to outward. I'm sure you all can think of more.

Whether our orchard is small or large, our baskets few or many, know that God is with us as we journey onward, seeking always to be fruitful.

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Michelle

PRAYER

God of twisting branches
And gnarled old trees,
Of replenished soil
Softened by rain
And warmed by sun,
Grow in us
The fruit of faith, hope, and love.
Amen.

Pastor Michelle, 9/24/2026

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*

Words From Gloria Cole

We are a master piece made from God. A creation to be proud of and celebrate life.

Know who you are and hold yourself up.

Be a Queen or King, proud to show your character, not arrogant, but kind, loving and giving to all.

Stand firm with others, but let love flow through.

Keep kindness reaching out, smiles shining on, heart remaining true.

God is watching, make Him proud!

Peace, Love, and Joy,

Gloria



October Missions



October's Special Sunday is World Communion Sunday 10/04

Cedar Springs Community Food Pantry

- The pantry received \$32,570 from the Simply Give campaign.
- Accepting commercially packaged venison.
- Accepting egg cartons.



Soles4Souls

- Over 800 pairs of the 1000 pairs of shoes have been collected.

**SOLES4
SOULS**

Sleep In Heavenly Peace

We will be doing something special for them in December.



Hand2Hand

- Please remember Hand2Hand as you do your grocery shopping. They are sending food to about 150 students' homes on each Friday for weekend meals. We will be having our 3rd "Fill The Altar," Sunday before Thanksgiving.



- **Sarah Zachow, Mission Chairperson**

Thoughts On Renewal Start With Prayer

By Bishop David Alan Bard Article link: michiganumc.org

As I return from my summer renewal leave, I have been reflecting on the renewal of the Church. The mission of the Church, as articulated by The United Methodist Church, is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Our [new vision statement](#) helps describe who disciples of Jesus Christ are — people who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. Forming disciples who transform the world is at the heart of who we are. How might we engage this task more deeply and invite more people to join the adventure of discipleship?

I have no easy answers or a quick, guaranteed formula, only a few thoughts to share. Beginning with prayer is always a good idea. Pray for your own discipleship. Pray for the renewal of your church's ministry. Pray for renewal in The United Methodist Church.

I have been thinking about another prayer, one I pray frequently, that moved me to reflect on the renewal of the church and its ministry in new ways. Most days, I pray this prayer: *New every morning is your love, Great God of light, and all day long you are working for good in the world. Stir up in us a desire to serve you, to live peacefully with our neighbors, and to devote each day to your Son, our*

Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

Allow me a brief detour. I understand that some don't find printed prayers and liturgies particularly meaningful. While such resources can become rote, I would ask us to consider the distinction between spontaneity and authenticity. Simply because something is not spontaneous does not make it any less authentic to our souls. Often, the words others offer in prayers or poems capture something deep in my soul that I might not otherwise have been able to put into words, or they help me articulate something important in my heart and soul.

New every morning is your love, great God of light. New every morning. The heart of the message of our Christian faith is God's love for the world. "For God so loved the world" (John 3:16). God's love is constant, persistent, steadfast, and new every morning. How might we, in our lives and in our churches, keep the message of God's love new and fresh? Sometimes that means changing how we worship, how we read the Bible together, and how we help people discover and use their gifts. Sometimes it means building on our strengths, making even better what we do well. Fresh appreciation for God's love in our lives and in the world requires both.

All day long you are working for good in the world. God desires the transformation of the world in the direction of kindness, justice, peace, reconciliation, and love. God's Spirit is constantly and consistently moving us to be part of the work of God's goodness in the world. In what ways are you participating in this work of God? How is your church working for good in the world, particularly in your community? Here is a challenge. There is more good to be done in the world than any one of us, or any one of our churches, can do alone. We have to make difficult decisions about how we will work for good in the world, based on who we are as people and as congregations. It is always important to ask how God is inviting us to work for good in the world. Where should we focus our time, energy, and resources?

Stir up in us desire to serve you. The Christian life is not meant to be a constant gritting of the teeth to do difficult things because we think we should. To be sure, spiritual growth sometimes requires that: doing what needs to be done even when it is not exciting or when we might rather do something else. That said, growing in Christian love means opening our lives to God's Spirit so that our very desires are transformed. John Wesley once defined Christian perfection as "the humble, gentle patient love of God and our neighbor ruling our habits, attitudes, word and actions." How are we opening ourselves to the transforming power of God's Spirit, and how are we joining with others in this adventuresome journey?

To live peacefully with our neighbors. The language of neighbor reminds me of the recent work of Gil Rendle, a perceptive analyst of church life. In his book, "Countercultural," Rendle offers what he considers crucial foundations for the ministry of the church in the twenty-first century. "The need is greater than ever for the church to be a neighbor, a good neighbor — and speak clearly about what it sees, what it knows, and what it believes. The church must speak publicly in its own neighborhoods with a conviction that what it says is important" (xiii). "The story that the congregation holds is its true treasure, primarily because it describes a world of love and interdependence" (67). Rendle argues that we need to tell our story with beautiful simplicity, "the simplicity on the other side of complexity" (77). We don't deny the complexity of the world we live in, but we need to tell a beautifully simple story that makes some sense of the complexity. Here are the crucial elements of the church's simple story, the beautiful simplicity of the Christian story, according to Rendle (85): love God, that is, trust in the God who loves you and the world wildly; love your neighbor; include everyone.

Love God. Love others. Include all. This is our beautifully simple story on the other side of complexity. If we are to be in ministry in this day and time in ways that genuinely heal, free, and contribute to the creation of the common good, we need to find and share that story with clarity, humility, and gentleness. In a world that is better at drawing lines and excluding, we have a better story of inclusion. In a world that often diminishes the other to elevate the self, we have a better story about all being loved and about love as a resource that flows freely and wildly. In a world that encourages narrow self-regard, we have a better story about the benefits of a rich commons for all.

We have a beautifully simple story that does not neglect the complexities of the world we live in and,

in fact, leads back to them. Gil Rendle says, "The simple, powerful, life-giving narrative of faith can never thrive if the simple is allowed to become simplistic The simple must be mined deeply for the full depth of truth that it holds" (91-92). He goes on: "At the lived level, a life of intentional faith is a complex project" (93).

Devote each day to your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord. Renewal for Christians is always centered on Jesus Christ. In Jesus, we know God's wide and wild love for the world and can appreciate it afresh each day. In Jesus, we understand the centrality of loving God and neighbor. It is the spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, who shapes and forms us in love, inspiring us to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. The renewal of the church and of our lives is a deeper connection to Jesus.

I invite you to pray the morning prayer often, letting its words and images move you to reflect on the renewal of the church



Word Search

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ANOINTINGS

During Old Testament times when something was to be set aside for special use in the worship of God, it was often anointed with oil to show its special purpose. Persons who were to be God's special servants were also often anointed. Here is a list of things and persons that were anointed in this way. Can you find them in the puzzle?

THINGS

Altar (Exod. 29:36)
Ark (Exod. 30:26)
Tabernacle (Exod. 30:26)
Vessels (Num. 7:1)

PERSONS

Aaron (Exod. 28:41)
David (I Sam. 16:12-13)
Elisha (I Kings 19:16, 19)
Hazeal (I Kings 19:15)
Jehoahaz (II Kings 23:30)
Jehoash (II Kings 11:12, 21)
Jehu (I Kings 19:16)
Saul (I Sam. 10:1)
Solomon (I Kings 1:34, 39)

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ANOINTINGS

J	N	G	A	B	H	I	B	C	P	H	I	T
E	E	B	W	C	F	D	N	O	R	A	A	E
H	M	H	I	X	A	U	C	D	A	B	L	C
O	P	C	O	L	D	V	Z	G	E	C	T	B
A	E	M	X	A	B	F	J	R	O	F	A	X
S	G	S	V	G	H	T	N	V	P	L	R	G
H	N	I	O	C	J	A	C	T	A	H	L	K
A	D	V	H	F	C	C	Z	Y	W	I	R	D
X	S	A	U	L	A	B	D	A	C	S	H	J
L	B	D	E	G	V	S	K	R	E	O	P	V
A	W	H	O	L	N	A	Y	K	T	L	D	C
L	J	M	G	H	I	F	U	G	Y	O	A	J
V	E	S	S	E	L	S	N	R	K	M	J	Q
B	H	L	V	M	O	R	H	I	K	O	T	U
S	U	P	Z	T	J	B	U	A	V	N	H	I
R	I	G	D	A	L	E	Q	N	U	S	A	D

(*Answer key on last page*)

October 2026 Birthdays and Calendar

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

1 Dave & Caroline Bartlette Anniversary

2 Linda Hardenburgh
Doug Sherd

7 Caroline Bartlette
Rick & Jody Surdam Anniversary

8 Doran & Sharon Myers Anniversary

21 Linda Bradley
Chuck & Arlene Smith Anniversary

22 Laura Witvoet

24 Trunk or Treat at East Nelson

30 Bill Witvoet



October 2: Linda Hardenburgh and Doug Sherd

October 7: Caroline Bartlette

October 21: Linda Bradley

October 22: Laura Witvoet

October 30: Bill Witvoet

Happy Anniversary

10/1 : Dave and Caroline Bartlette

10/7 : Rick and Jody Surdam

10/8 : Doran and Sharon Myers

10/21 : Chuck and Arlene Smith



Trunk or Treat

October 24th 5:00pm-6:30pm
East Nelson United Methodist Church
9024 18 Mile Rd NE
Cedar Springs, MI 49319



**Praise Team Practice
Wednesdays at 4:30pm**

Unless otherwise announced

(AA)

Saturdays at 10:00am

All are welcome



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ANQINTINGS

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

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