



**ANNANDALE UNITED  
METHODIST CHURCH**

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**The Grapevine  
October - 2021**

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## October 2021 Grapevine

### John: The Gospel of Light and Life

Have you ever thought that God, God is a verb? Not a noun, but a verb. Well, we are focusing on how the gospel of John tells the story of Jesus, and how John wants us to believe Jesus at the very core of who we are. You may remember that God told Abraham, “I am what I am.” So, God, when asked about God’s nature, God’s essence, said simply, “I am,” and in the Hebrew, that also meant I was and I will be. A little confusing, isn’t it. OK, it can be a lot confusing. It really is at the heart of what I like to call the mystery of God. God is more than we will ever understand as humans, and as humans, we are called to first and foremost, trust.

As John tells the story of Jesus’ life, we see that Jesus himself, when asked about his nature, said in John 8:58, “before Abraham was, I am.” This must be one of God’s favorite ways of describing himself, but, it can leave us humans just sort of hanging there, can’t it. It is a good thing that Jesus goes on to explain it a bit more, with what we call the seven “I am sayings” in John. Each one of them shares a little different spin on the nature of God, and I know that one of these images will speak to you today. Here is what he said about himself, scattered through the gospel of John. I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am the gate of the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth and the life. I am the true vine.

Let’s just look quickly at two of those powerful images. First, “**I am the bread of life**.” This image, bread of life, would have caused the believers of his time to think back to their own history, and specifically when God used Moses to call the people out of slavery in Egypt, and back to their own homeland. However, the people didn’t celebrate their deliverance, they took it for granted, and in fact, complained about it. They were hungry as they

traveled through the desert and they were ready to give up and go back to slavery in Egypt. However, God used Moses to provide them with a mysterious substance, manna, which they referred to as “bread from heaven.” So, when Jesus is referring to himself as the bread of heaven, he is reminding us of two things. First, God will provide our essential needs, through Jesus Christ. Maybe not in the way we expect or can understand, but God does provide. Second, that our lives will be full, not just with bread, but through the presence of God with us, in Jesus. Stay tuned for more about that, but that is the essence of what I can share in this short article.

The second image, is “**I am the light of the world.**” “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me won’t walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” I don’t know that this needs much explanation. You know what it feels like to live in darkness. And we are promised that we have a light that the darkness will never extinguish. Christ gives us hope to keep on hoping.

And, back to the “God as a verb” thing. God will continue to act in your life, and to light up your life, so that you can live the most joyful life you possibly can. Know that God acts, always, in ways that we may not notice, but God is working in you, and through you right now. God said, “I am, and I will always be.” Yes, God is a verb, and that verb is love.

And may you feel the love that God has for you always, every moment of every day.

May God’s Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pastor Paul". The script is cursive and fluid.

Pastor Paul D. Baker

## Annandale UMC Giving and Attendance

Giving –Sept. 2021      Attendance –Sept. 2021

Sept. 5, 2021	\$2,275.00	29 – in-person 22 – online
Sept. 12, 2021	\$919.00	23 – in-person 46 – online
	\$86.00 August Mission March – Apportionments	
Sept. 19, 2021	\$1,494.00	20 – in-person 37 – online
Sept. 26, 2021	\$1,352.17	19 – in-person 33 – online

General funds needed each week:      \$2,519.00

September income as of 9/16/21: \$3,280.00

September expense as of 9/16/21: \$4,487.98

2021 apportionments = \$14,020.00

Monthly apportionments = \$1,170.00

Apportionments paid June, July, August 50% = \$586.71

Apportionments paid YTD = \$7,627.23



Our October Mission March on Sunday, October 10, 2021 will go to the United Methodist Committee of Relief (UMCOR). This offering allows them to reach out and ease pain and suffering by providing humanitarian aid after disasters.



Phased Re-Gathering Plan for Churches  
The suggestions in the phased plan below are driven by our Three Simple Rules:

- **We are a people that do no harm.** We practice physical distancing to minimize harm to others, especially the vulnerable.
- **We are a people that do all the good we can.** We care for the spiritual and physical needs of our neighbors, providing food, emotional support, and supporting our health care system.
- **We are a people that stay in love with God.** When we love God through prayer, praise, and worship, we grow in love of our neighbor. Love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable.

We are currently in the **YELLOW Phase**. For more info on the various phases, go to our Minnesota Conference webpage <https://www.minnesotaumc.org/regatheringplan>

### For Our Specific County

We have been asked to make safe decisions based on the positive test rate for our county. If the positive test rate is over 5% then we are asked to consider whether we need to initiate more precautions. At this point Wright County is consistently hovering around the 10% level. Some churches in Wright County have gone back to wearing masks indoors, however at the time of this writing, our churches have opted to continue with the precautions we have in place. Please check in from time to time to see if things have changed to be either more lenient, or more restrictive.

The following is the Bishop's pastoral letter dated August 11, 2021 concerning COVID precautions amid surge in cases.

Dear Friends in Christ in the United Methodist Churches of Minnesota, I greet you in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the peace and power of the Holy Spirit.

I hope the summer has afforded you opportunities for rest, refreshment, and renewal. I hope you have been able to enjoy the

beauty of our state. I hope you have been able to connect with family and friends, perhaps after a long absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The summer began with deep hope that we were putting this pandemic in the rear-view mirror. People were being vaccinated at rapid rates. Case rates, test positivity rates, hospitalizations and deaths were all declining. Yet this pandemic has been filled with unpredictability, and we are once again entering a new phase. Vaccination rates have slowed considerably and a new variant of the coronavirus, the Delta variant, has been spreading rapidly. The Delta variant is more easily transmitted, and there have been breakthrough cases among those who have been vaccinated. The latest research indicates that vaccinated people, though remarkably protected from being infected with COVID, are still able to become infected. When they are infected, they are less likely to suffer severe illness or be hospitalized, yet appear able to spread the virus to others. The result of the slowing of vaccinations and the spread of the Delta variant is that test positivity rates are up—now surpassing 5 percent in Minnesota (with some counties substantially higher), case rates are up, and hospitalizations and deaths are increasing, particularly in those places where fewer people have been vaccinated.

I know that, in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ, you want to do all you can to promote public health, further the common good, and care for the well-being of others. How might we do that in this new phase of the pandemic?

First and foremost, if you have not been vaccinated and are eligible to receive a vaccine, do it. It is the single most important thing you can do to care for yourself and for others. Those currently suffering the most serious illness right now are the unvaccinated. Of those who are currently hospitalized with COVID, well over 90 percent are people who have not been vaccinated. Please get vaccinated. Encourage your fellow-church members to get vaccinated.

Because the positivity rate has exceeded 5 percent for the state as a whole, which means there is substantial community transmission, we are moving the dial back to yellow in our [Phased Re-Gathering Plan for Churches](#). We understand there is great variation across our state in terms of community transmission and vaccination levels among your congregants, but please use caution. **When**

**your county surpasses a 5 percent positivity rate, we ask that you reinstate the **yellow phase guidelines** of social distancing, indoor masking, and no congregational singing.** After vaccinations, masking and social distancing are the next best tools we have for slowing the spread of the coronavirus, and slowing the spread also prevents the virus from developing into new variants. And of course, outdoor gatherings are considerably safer than indoor gatherings, so that is a great option as weather permits.

Friends, we are not where we had hoped to be at this point in the summer. We had hoped vaccination rates would have outpaced virus variations. We had hoped that our masks could be put in the bottom of our drawers or in the back of our closets. Yet I believe that by God's grace we can muster the resilience, the kindness, and the determination to do what needs to be done to get past this pandemic. As followers of Jesus, we can lead in promoting public health, furthering the common good, and caring for the well-being of others. Thank you.



### Fall Worship Themes

#### *John: The Gospel of Light and Life*

October 3, 2021 Communion Sunday

“The Word Made Flesh” Scripture Reading John 1:1-3a

October 10, 2021 “Miraculous Signs of Jesus”

Scripture Readings: John 2:1-5; John 9:1-3

October 17, 2021 “The ‘I AM’ Sayings of Jesus”

Scripture Readings: Exodus 3:13-14; John 8:56-58

October 24, 2021 “The Farewell Discourse”

Scripture Reading: John 15:8-10

October 31, 2021 “The Arrest, Trial and Crucifixion of the King”

Scripture Reading: John 19:14b-20

November 7, 2021 Communion Sunday “Eternal Life”

Scripture Readings: Matthew.21:8-11; John 20:11-18

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