

Call to Worship

Come together! Listen together! Understand God's Word together! Praise together! Pray together!
Serve together!

May God's Word, sown among us by those who teach, those who sing and those who lead, bear fruit a hundredfold. May we take root and grow richly, sheltering each other, nurturing each other, safe against every storm. God is known by all who will hear, and blesses our time of worship today.

Prayer of Invocation

O God, we stand in wonder and amazement with the crowds who witnessed the authority and power of your teaching, preaching, and healing ministry in Jesus.

We believe that your Spirit moves among us today, still demonstrating in amazing ways in order to accomplish what you intend on earth. We acknowledge our need and the need of our society, for peace, freedom and the new life only you can give. Open our eyes to see the signs of your presence and our ears to hear the words of your guidance. Amen.

The Word Mark 4:1-9

The Parable of the soils: Jesus began to teach beside the lake again. Such a large crowd gathered that he climbed into a boat there on the lake.

He sat in the boat while the whole crowd was nearby on the shore. He said many things to them in parables.

While teaching them, he said, "Listen to this! A farmer went out to scatter seed. As he was scattering seed, some fell on the path; and the birds came and ate it. Other seed fell on rocky ground where the soil was shallow.

They sprouted immediately because the soil wasn't deep. When the sun came up, it scorched the plants; and they dried up because they had no roots.

Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorny plants grew and choked the seeds, and they produced nothing. Other seed fell into good soil and bore fruit.

Upon growing and increasing, the seed produced in one case a yield of thirty to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of one hundred to one."

He said, "Whoever has ears to listen should pay attention!"

Living the Word

"The Ministries of Education"

From an article written by Timothy Larsen found in the Christian History Magazine entitled: When did Sunday Schools start? *For a long time, they were the only way working-class families could receive an education.*

Sunday Schools were established in 1780s for the people, especially children who worked Monday through Saturday in the factories of Britain and had no time or money for school educations. Sunday School for many was their only school, the only place they could learn to read. Generous Christian humanitarians helped establish the schools.

In 1802 the first modest legislative restrictions for child labor resulted in limiting the number of hours a child could work per day to 12! This limit was not lowered again until 1844. Moreover, Saturday was part of the regular work week. Sunday, therefore, was the only available time for these children to gain some education.

Working-class families were grateful for this opportunity to receive an education. They also looked forward to annual highlights such as prize days, parades, and picnics, which came to mark the calendars of their lives as much or more than traditional seasonal holidays.

Religious education was, of course, always included as a core component. The Bible was the textbook used for learning to read. Likewise, many children learned to write by copying out passages from the Scriptures. A basic catechism was also taught, as were spiritual practices such as prayer and hymn-singing.

In both Britain and America, universal, compulsory state education was established by the 1870s. After that, reading and writing were learned on weekdays at school and the Sunday school curriculum was limited to religious education. Nevertheless, many parents continued to believe that regular Sunday school attendance was an essential component of childhood.

When I grew up we went every week to Sunday School, week to week the lessons built from one story to the next, so we didn't want to miss. The lessons were taught out of a book and we all received a 'Sunday School Paper' to take home. Most of the teachers were parents and grandparents of the children. Some things have changed...some have not.

At Hayward United Methodist Church teachers are recruited, as needed from those who are willing to teach, which currently includes former school teachers who also serve on the churches Education Ministry Team. Together they worked through who would take a month of Sundays to teach, from September through May.

The materials are prepared ahead, currently with the theme of Building Christian Character. A weekly topic could be: Love, Truth, Patience, Caring, Sharing, Self-Control, Obedience, Forgiveness or Responsibility. As you might have noticed...on any given week we may or may not have children present for a class, but the teachers are ready.

We try to always have a Children's message during worship, which might be flexible enough to include just adults when 'younger' children of God aren't present. Actually, I most often use the Children's Message to give another shot at teaching the theme of the worship service; a different way to grasp the point of the day.

If you would like to work with the children or share a Children's Message, there is room for more to join in. Now every teacher is screened through the 'Safe Sanctuary Policy' of the church to make things as safe as possible as we work with the children, and youth.

This time last year we were just getting started with Confirmation classes. The program that I used is one that I have developed out of 25 years of teaching confirmation classes. It begins with a week on God, a week on Jesus, a week on The Holy Spirit. Of course, they can never all be taught in 3 weeks or one year, but it is a good place to start. During our 8 months of classes we covered many topics about what it means to be a Christian in today's world, beginning with broadening our understanding of the Trinity of God.

Then we explored some of the lesser known, but equally interesting Old Testament Characters (they are characters, you know!) like Shiphrah and Puah, Rahab, and Shadrack. The next week we moved into the New Testament characters. Each of the Confirmands had mentors to discuss their faith with, outside of class and Prayer Mentors who prayed for them every day through last year.

We currently do not have a confirmation class, but I have always taught that we continue to confirm our faith through all of our life. Confirming your faith with God is just the beginning of the journey as to who you should become as a Christian.

The reason Jesus used the Passover Meal just before he died to institute Holy Communion with the disciples was that God knew they would forget everything they had been taught, very quickly and would need a regular reminder of Christ's presence with them. Jesus told them that he would be with them – and us- always, but

we were created as forgetful people. That is why there is such a big market toward the end of each year for calendars and planners, and why we serve Holy communion on a regular basis.

As Christians, we need to be confirming our faith with God over and over again. You have heard the statement "We grow or die!" It can be true, some grow through reading, some keep their minds stimulated through word puzzles, and some grow by listening and discussing topics with others. The church wants you to grow! Through growing in God, we find new ways to experience God's love and presence in every moment of our lives.

Sunday mornings at 8:30am we have Adult Study before Choir practice. This past year they discussed Nooma videos, inviting them to re-thing who the church is; also several good book studies by Adam Hamilton: Half Truths of Christianity and Making Sense of the Bible. Copies of these with videos are available if you want to use them.

Currently we are agreeing and wrestling with the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church. These Social Principles have been brought forth from lay people and clergy as reminders of how we as United Methodists uphold our traditions of being a 'justice' church. It gives a statement that has been formed and reformed by the people of this church denomination concerning the topics and issues of the day.

As a class we don't all agree with the statements of each other, but we can share our understandings and still be a part of this church, which we claim as having open minds, open hearts and open doors. Not agreeing does not exclude you from the church, nor does it cause pressure for you to change, yet it gives you a way to understand others around you and to be able to sometimes agree to disagree.

What I naïvely thought would take us six weeks to get through, now looks like a year-long discussion. That is good and OK! There is even room for us as an individual or a group to write and submit a revision to the General Conference in 2019, proposing changes to the Social Principles.

If this class doesn't interest you, might I suggest that you consider the church Book Club. Titles are always listed months ahead in the Good Newsletter, giving you time to read them or listen to them on audio before the discussion. I, personally don't always get through the book before the discussion time, but I enjoy going to have lunch with the group and hear their discussion, and have then, even gone back and read the book later.

Fiction, non-fiction, I read one about the Underground Railroad just before the Civil War; though I have read about German during World War II, I have now read a couple about Poland, that gave me other insights into Europe and Russia during and after that war. Also on the list are old favorites to be re-read: next month is The Long Winter by Laura Ingalls Wilder, which I remember reading to my boys when they were just old enough to understand what it meant to get just a pair of red mittens and one peppermint stick as their Christmas gift from their parents. The book club meets the 4th Friday of every month at Flat Creek Eatery at 11:15am. Anyone is welcome (and we even have a 1st Lutheran member that joins us).

Last Fall we had a forum by member, Duey Cady: Three Christian Perspectives on War; in March we had Barbara Certa-Werner come and share about homelessness in Northern Wisconsin and her ministry at Harbor House in Superior (she will come again next February); The new Sheriff, former police officer and School Board Member, Doug Mrotek came in June to tell about the situations and needs within our Community.

In September, we had the area Dementia Specialist come and share about how to be Dementia Friendly and October 1, four of you, the church family, shared what you are doing in the community to make a difference. Take these opportunities to learn about each other and the community that you live in. Some of these events were requested by you...what else do you want to know? Who else do you want to hear from?

This past year we showed two very poignant movies to stimulate your Christian thoughts: In August we offered the movie 'The Shack' to help you take a look at forgiveness, death, eternal life and God's ever presence in your life.

Last November we showed the movie 'The Nativity Story'. It is good to tell the Christmas story every year, it can be fun and sometimes even powerful to put yourself in one of the parts for the Christmas pageant, which we will do again on Dec 3 this year, but to watch the story happening in it's actual location and setting, sharing the different locations in the order as life occurred, reenacted by professionals with emotions that warn you or move you, is an extraordinary beginning as you look toward the manger through December.

This year we will be showing it at 1pm on November 26. That morning: worship, time to catch a bite to eat and then come back and settle into a sanctuary chair wherever you want to view from and lets share the beginning of Advent. If you already have seen it, come and see it again, it has so many nuances that I know you missed the first time. If that date doesn't work for you there are extra copies of these movies and more that you an borrow to watch at home.

Educational oppotunities abound here at HUMC. Often, there will be a something you can learn or be challenged by during worship, the part we call 'Living the Word'. Even so, you have to have your mind and heart open to receive them. The book exchange that we had this summer and fall in the Fellowship Hall brought new titles to you. In addition, the shelves at the back of the Fellowship Hall have many more books you can borrow, including lots of children books if you want to take something home when you are expecting younger company!

If you are one of those people who would like to do some research about the Holy Land before a trip, as Sandy Blumenberg did before she left last Tuesday; or find a prayer or speaking ideas for a special program, like Cathie Erickson is doing before she leaves for Zimbabwe, so she can share her faith there, I have a plethora of good books and resources in my library.

Who thought that Christian Education could be so fun and for all ages! Our monthly 'Good News Letter', gives information on these opportunities, or as Chuck Knows Church always says: "If you want to know more, ask your pastor..."

We have a lot to celebrate in our ministry of Education, yet we need more 'think greater' ideas. More small groups who pray together, study together, share their lives and when needed, support each other. There are many study books that bring us together; the greatest of which is the Bible. Have you ever read the 'Prequel to Jesus?' Some call it the Old Testament...God was forming the faith long before the birth of Christ and Christ was formed as well through teachings and worship found in the Old Testament.

I would love to do a study on the Bible, nothing too heavy, but to remind you and me of the stories we learned and loved and the stories we've never heard. The hardest part is to set a time and date. When will you come? I will join you and we can learn together. Even pastors have to continue to learn!

Several years ago, while visiting with a mother from another community. She told me she was raised in a church, had learned the stories there, but had decided that she would let her children choose what they believed for themselves when they grew up. My question to her and to any who think that is a good answer is "How will they know what to choose from if they don't know about the choices?"

Each of **You** are teachers and mentors if you want to be or not. Everyone younger than you, especially the children and youth, not just here but in every part of your life, watch you as an example of who they want to be...or not be. If they see you coming to worship, going to group studies, sharing your faith with others through prayer and care, they take note. So, this isn't all just for you, it is a way for you to 'love one another.'

Rather than grumbling about the things that are wrong with the world, the community, the youth...do something about it by being a growing disciple of Christ. We can't and won't force anyone into Christian Education, but we need to have a viable and valuable program that **all** would want to be a part of. Without Christian Education programming offered and supported for all of us and by all of us...How will they know?