

# NORTH EAST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## *OUR MISSION* *OUR MEMBERSHIP VOWS*



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The  
North East United Methodist Church,  
through  
our personal **COMMIT**ment  
to Jesus Christ,  
is striving to be a **GROW**ing  
and vital congregation,  
actively **SERV**ing God,  
the community, and one another.



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When Julius Caesar landed on the shores of Britain with his Roman legions, he took a bold and decisive step to ensure the success of his military venture. Ordering his men to march to the edge of the Cliffs of Dover, he commanded them to look down at the water below. To their amazement, they saw every ship in which they had crossed the channel engulfed in flames. Caesar had deliberately cut off any possibility of retreat. Now that his soldiers were unable to return to the continent, there was nothing left for them to do but to advance and conquer! And that is exactly what they did.

Not everyone has to be forced to **COMMIT** to the task, the mission ahead.

On August 2, 1776, in Philadelphia, fifty-six men signed the Declaration of Independence. They chose to **COMMIT** their lives for the principles of liberty and freedom. Their conviction resulted in untold sufferings for themselves and their families.

- Of the 56 men, five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned.
- Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army.
- Another had two sons captured.
- Nine of the fifty-six fought and died from wounds or hardships of the war.

- Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships sunk by the British navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts and died in poverty.
- At the battle of Yorktown, the British General Cornwallis had taken over Thomas Nelson's home for his headquarters. Nelson quietly ordered General George Washington to open fire on the Nelson home. The home was destroyed and Nelson died bankrupt.
- John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their thirteen children fled for their lives. His fields and mill were destroyed. For over a year, he lived in forest and caves, returning home only to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later, he died from exhaustion.

**COMMIT**ment. Christ calls us to **COMMIT**ment. Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24).

Michael Slaughter, *Renegade Gospel*, writes, “*We claim that all you have to do is believe in Jesus and you will be saved. But even the demons believe!...True faith calls for a response.*” He continues, “*Our works do not save us, but the fruit of our faith should be obedience to what Jesus taught...Jesus' mandate was not simply to believe in Him but to follow Him.*”

Our **COMMIT**ment to Christ is not simply words, it is an active response. We don't just believe, we choose to follow.

Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken," reminds us of the choice set before us.

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

Jesus tells us that the path, the road that God lays before us, is the "one less traveled by." Jesus teaches, "*But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it*" (Matthew 7:14).

In the book of Deuteronomy, written over 1400 years before Jesus' words recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, God spoke through Moses the same message. Moses shares with the Israelites that there are two roads, two paths before each one of us. In Deuteronomy 30:15, we read God's words spoken through Moses, "*See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity...*"

The Israelites are at the Jordan River about to enter the Promised Land. Moses reminds the people of all they have been through, all God has done, leading them out of slavery in Egypt, parting the Red Sea and destroying the encroaching army, feeding them manna in the wilderness, releasing water from the rock. Then Moses lays out two paths. Israel

must decide which one they will embrace. Each of us have a choice which road to take, which path to follow.

Moses lays out the road to life and prosperity, to peace and well-being. Deuteronomy 30:16 reads, “...*in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the Lord your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it.*”

Moses explains that in order to follow the road to life, not the road to death and adversity, we must, “*love the Lord your God.*” When we profess our faith in Christ, when we join the church, this is the road we **COMMIT** to traveling.

First, we show our love, our **COMMIT**ment to God, to Jesus Christ, by “*walking in His ways.*”

What does it mean to “*walk in His ways.*” Theologian, Brett Younger, offers some examples:

- \*Be patient with your own imperfections as well as the imperfections in others;
- \*Invite a stranger to dinner;
- \*Do something so someone else will not have to;
- \*Give money with a generous heart;
- \*Stop arguing;
- \*Apologize to someone even if it was mostly his fault;
- \*Forgive someone even if she does not deserve it;
- \*Have patience;
- \*Worship with all your heart;
- \*Pray genuinely;
- \*Love your church;
- \*Believe that God loves you;
- \*See Christ in the people around you;
- \*Share God's love with someone who has forgotten it;
- \*See that all of life is holy;

- \*Open your heart to the Spirit;
- \*Search for something deeper and better than your own comfort;
- \*Fight for justice;
- \*Care for the hurting;
- \*Share food with the hungry;
- \*Treat others fairly

To "*walk in his ways*" means to ask, everyday, "*What would please God?*" These things lead to life. This is the "*road less traveled.*" This is our **COMMIT**ment.

Secondly, in order to follow the road to life, to show God, to show Jesus Christ, our love and **COMMIT**ment, we must "*keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments.*"

In order to "*keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments*" we must know His Word. We must understand what the Lord requires?

Moses shared with the Israelites that day many commands and expectations God had for His people. These were not simply the Ten Commandments...don't lie, don't steal, don't murder, don't commit adultery, honor your father and mother, honor the Sabbath. Traveling the path that leads to life is about doing that which pleases God, not simply following a set of rules.

According to Moses this also included things like canceling the debts of the poor, pushing government to guard against excessive wealth, limiting punishment to protect human dignity, restricting those who can be drafted, offering hospitality to runaway slaves, paying employees fairly, leaving part of the harvest for those who need it.

Once again, asking, "*What would please God?*"

Lastly, reflected in God's commandments, we show our love, our **COMMIT**ment, for God, to Jesus Christ, by loving others.

As I often counsel young couples, love is not a noun, it is not an emotion. It is an action. Love is a verb. Love is expressed by a person through demonstrative actions of kindness, compassion, generosity, graciousness and helpfulness, to name a few. Love is the activity, the action. It goes beyond physical attraction and emotional affinity. It can be shown toward someone we like or someone we dislike. We have to be intentional, remembering how much God loves us, and when we are intentional, when we love another, especially one who is difficult to love, we show God how much we care for His children, how much we care for Him.

*I read a story recently about a Pentecostal pastor who stepped up into the pulpit after a powerful time of worship. During the week the pastor had prepared a sermon to remind people of the importance of loving one another. He had spent a great deal of time praying over the message, studying and carefully recording his thoughts. He believed that God had truly guided him as he prepared each point and carefully selected each illustration, so he approached the pulpit with confidence and a certain boldness. But something happened about halfway from his seat to the pulpit. He heard a voice.*

*"Juan"*

*"Yes, Lord"*

*"How, many times have you preached on this passage in this church?"*

*"I don't know, maybe a dozen."*

*"Did any of those sermons do any good?"*

*The pastor stood frozen. He looked over the congregation and saw people who had heard the Christian message taught over and over again, in SS lessons, small group Bible studies and his own sermons. They knew the words but still struggled to live out the message. All thoughts evaporated from his mind. He*

*stood frozen in time as the congregation waited to hear his words of inspiration. Finally, he said, "Love one another." Then he walked back to his seat and he sat down.*

*The people sat in motionless silence. That Pentecostal congregation could handle fiery preaching but they did not know what to do with utter stillness. Then the pastor stood up and walked to the pulpit one more time and again said, "Love one another." And one more time he returned to his seat. This time heads began to turn from side to side. People looked at one another with a questioned look in their eyes. They appeared to be silently asking one another, "What should we do now?" Shoulders were shrugged. Eyebrows were raised. Bewilderment was on everyone's face. After waiting a few minutes the pastor once again walked to the pulpit. He positioned himself and very deliberately said, "Love one another." And once again returned to his chair.*

*After a few moments a man stood up and said, "Brothers and sisters, I think that I understand what the pastor is taking about. He is asking me to love you." As he said this he pointed to a family seated next to him. "But how can I love you when I do not even know your name?" The man proceeded to introduce himself and then asked the family next to him questions in hopes of discovering ways in which he could express his love. Another man stood up and said, "I also understand what the pastor is saying. He wants me to love Carlos (who was seating three pews in front of him) but how can I love Carlos when I still hold a grudge against him." The first man left his pew and approached Carlos to apologize and the two were reconciled.*

*With this the flood gates were opened. People got out of their pews and began to circulate. They began to ask each other what they could do for one*

*another. That Sunday incredible things happened. A husband and wife had come to the city seeking medical treatment for their little girl. They did not have enough money to return home. Someone purchased a bus ticket for them. Another young man who was looking for a job was introduced to a man who owned a business and needed an extra person.*

Those who stood, who acted, who forgave, who reached out, who loved those around them, loved God that morning in their actions.

We must remember that when we come to Christ, we become part of God's own family and we "*belong in God's household with every other Christian*" whether we officially join the church or not (Ephesians 2:19). The Bible tell us as followers of Christ we are put together, joined together, built together, members together, fitted together, held together, and one day we will be caught up together. When we invite Christ into our lives and decide to follow Him we are no longer on our own.

God's Word tells us that the church, you and I, are the "*bride of Christ*" and that Christ gave up His life for His bride. One day Jesus will return for her, for us. I love how Rick Warren describes those who say they don't like the church. He explains that they are basically telling Jesus, "*I don't like your bride. I think she's ugly. I despise what you came and died for.*" Our **COMMIT**ment to the church, the vows we take when we join and become part of a church family, can be compared to our wedding vows. If we are **COMMIT**ted to loving Christ, we must be **COMMIT**ted to loving His bride as well.

As Christians, followers of Christ, and as members of North East United Methodist Church, as part of this body, this congregation, we make a **COMMIT**ment. We have vowed to renounce all that is evil and **COMMIT** our lives to Jesus Christ. Many of you responded "I do" when you were asked, "*Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace and promise to serve him as your Lord, in*

***union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations and races?”***

This is our “personal **COMMIT**ment to Jesus Christ,” the first of three actions declared in the North East United Methodist Church Mission Statement:

The North East United Methodist Church,  
through our personal **COMMIT**ment to Jesus Christ,  
is striving to be a **GROW**ing and vital  
congregation,  
actively **SERV**ing God, the community, and one  
another.

As Christians and as members of North East United Methodist Church, we “*confess Jesus Christ as [our] Savior, put [our] whole trust in His grace and promise to serve Him as [our] Lord.* This **COMMIT**ment is lived out by walking in the ways of God and obeying His commands, choosing the road less traveled. This **COMMIT**ment is also lived out by loving one another for this is what Christ, the one we have promised to trust and serve, has modeled and has commanded.

Jesus tells us, “***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 12:30-31).

God wants us to understand that we have a choice, just like we have a choice for our church’s mission statement to be a piece of paper stuck in a manilla file folder and packed away or for it to be a living, breathing, statement of faith held up before us, guiding us and pushing us in our walk with God.

God calls us to choose Life, to make a “*personal COMMITment to Jesus Christ.*” This COMMITment, this vow we make as Christians and as members of North East United Methodist Church, entails loving God through our actions. We love God by walking in His ways, keeping His commandments, and by loving one another.

Holding to our COMMITment, choosing Christ, is the road “*less traveled by.*” Living out this COMMITment...”*that* [will be what makes] *all the difference.*”

**Sunday**

**Read Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 16:24; James 4:7;  
& Deuteronomy 10:12-13.**

As the body of Christ at North East United Methodist Church, we **COMMIT** ourselves to Jesus Christ, and in turn, to one another. God calls us to **COMMIT**ment and at times, because of the craziness of this world and its many distractions and tribulations, we must, lest we forget, remind ourselves of the **COMMITMENT** we made in faith, a **COMMIT**ment to God's commandments, God's church, God's children, and, most importantly, God's Son.

Michael Slaughter, *Renegade Gospel*, writes, "*We claim that all you have to do is believe in Jesus and you will be saved. But even the demons believe!...True faith calls for a response.*" He continues, "*Our works do not save us, but the fruit of our faith should be obedience to what Jesus taught...Jesus' mandate was not simply to believe in Him but to follow Him.*"

Jesus said, "*If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me*" (Matthew 16:24). What does it mean to follow Jesus, to **COMMIT** ourselves to Christ, His teachings, and His Church? Are we faithfully living out our **COMMIT**ment as individuals? Are we faithfully living out our **COMMIT**ment as North East United Methodist Church, the body of Christ?

Many of us reading these words have made a **COMMIT**ment to Christ and to His Church. It is important that we understand the **COMMIT**ment we have made, evaluate whether or not we are holding to our vows, and re**COMMIT** to following Jesus.

When one joins the church, they are asked to declare their faith in Jesus, their **COMMIT**ment to follow Christ. The first question asked reads, "*On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you: Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?*" In this question, we are rejecting all that is evil in the spiritual realm (*the demonic*), the world (*prejudice, injustice, hatred, violence*), and in ourselves (*pride, lust, greed, selfishness*).

Following Jesus means taking a stand against the sin, that which is evil within ourselves, and repenting. Following Jesus, committing our

lives to God, means taking a stand against that which is evil in the world, and to have our lives bear fruit, standing for justice and loving our neighbor. James writes, “*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*” (4:7). We must not simply repent with words; we must take action.

How are you living out your **COMMIT**ment? Are you going to God in prayer, repenting of your sin, asking God to help you stand against your selfishness, your pride, your greed, the many things that get in the way of your relationship with Him? Are you looking for ways you can fight temptation, stand against the “*wiles of the devil*” when he tries to divide, discourage, and lead you and our church in the wrong direction? Are you actively involved in fighting against injustice and hatred in our world and community?

Ask God to help you in living out your **COMMIT**ment to Him, taking a stand against that which is ungodly. Take time tonight in prayer.

### **Monday**

**Read Hebrews 11:24-26; Deuteronomy 30:15-20;  
Joshua 24:15; & Proverbs 16:3.**

The second question many of you **COMMIT**ted to when you joined the church or were baptized/confirmed read, “***Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?***”

This question reminds us that God has given us another gift that is often overlooked. We have been given the “*freedom*” to choose. This means that we have the “*freedom*” to choose the right path in every situation.

Not only do we have the “*freedom*” but we have the “*power*” through God’s Holy Spirit to make the right choice and live Godly lives. We cannot make excuses; we cannot say, “*The devil made me do it*” or “*That’s just the way I am*” or “*That’s how I was brought up.*” God has given us “*freedom*” and “*power*” to keep our **COMMIT**ment, to walk the path of faith, to live Godly lives for Him. We are not victims in this life (*unless we choose to be*). We are victorious in Him!

Moses made a choice and called on the people to make a choice to “walk in God’s ways.” As Peter Wade writes, “*There is always a choice. The freedom of choice is a tremendous power. In all of life’s situations I can make a choice. ‘Do I choose to experience peace of mind, or do I choose to experience conflict? Do I choose to experience love or fear? Do I choose to be a love-finder or a fault-finder? Do I choose to be a love-giver or a love-taker?’ We always have a choice. When life gets difficult, say to yourself, ‘I could choose peace instead of this.’*”

Proverbs 16:3 tells us, “**COMMIT** to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” When we choose Him, when we **COMMIT** our lives, our actions, to God, God walks with us. When we choose to go outside His protection and love, when we break our **COMMIT**ment, our vows, we must face the consequences.

Do your daily choices reflect your **COMMIT**ment, your faith, your relationship with Christ? Do you make excuses for your behavior instead of accepting the “*freedom and power*” you have to change your situation, to hold to your **COMMIT**ment, to grow in your relationship with God and others, to make a difference?

Choose everyday to allow Christ to guide you and accept the Holy Spirit’s power to help you on your journey, to help you keep your **COMMIT**ment to God and His Church.

## **Tuesday**

**Read The Roman Road to Salvation: Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:13; 10: 9-10; & Revelation 3:20.**

The third question many of you **COMMIT**ted to when you joined the church or were baptized/confirmed read, “***Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations and races?***”

The second part of this questions deals with the fact that prejudice, racism, sexism, ageism, etc... has no place in God’s Church...for “*there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all One in Christ Jesus.*”

The first part of the question deals with inviting Christ into our hearts, **COMMIT**ting our lives to Him and to what He holds dear. It is a **COMMIT**ment to allow Christ to be the director of our lives.

Have we recognized that yes, as Jesus speaks of in Luke 13:1-9, we are all sinners? Have we recognized our need for God, for a relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ? Have we confessed our sin, professed that Jesus is who the Bible claims He is, that He died for us and was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven, and have we asked Christ to direct our lives, to be our Lord?

If we have done these things, if we have opened the door, Christ promises that He will enter and come to us. When we answer “yes” to this question, we are accepting who the scriptures claim Christ to be...the Son of God. We are accepting the relationship God is offering through His Son, opening the door of our hearts to Him, and we are **COMMIT**ting to trust and serve Him as the Lord of our lives.

Take time tonight to be in prayer. Thank God for His Son, Jesus Christ and the relationship that is offered to you. Ask God to show you how you might trust Him more and how you might serve Him. Re**COMMIT** your life, your actions to Him!

### Wednesday

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:20; I Peter 2:9; Galatians 5:13;  
Matthew 22:37-39; & John 13:34-35**

When one joins the church, after answering the three previous questions which deal with one’s **COMMIT**ment to Christ, one is asked three more questions, asking them about their **COMMIT**ment to the church.

If you are a member of North East United Methodist Church, you were asked, “*According to the grace given to you, will you remain faithful members of Christ’s holy church and serve as Christ’s representatives in the world.*”

There is a story told about Alexander the Great, who one night during a campaign could not sleep and left his tent to walk among his soldiers. He came across a soldier asleep on guard duty, a serious offense. “*Do you know what the penalty is for falling asleep on guard duty?*” Alexander the Great asked the soldier. “*What’s your name?*” The

soldier responded, “*Alexander, sir.*” Three times Alexander the Great had the soldier repeat his name and then, turning away, said with great intensity, “*either change your name or change your conduct.*”

Paul urges believers to “*walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called*” (Ephesians 4:1), and the Bible tells us we are “called” to be “*imitators of God,*” “*ambassadors for Christ,*” “*the light of the world.*” People are watching us. They are watching to see if we live out what we profess to believe, if the Gospel of Jesus Christ truly does mean something, truly does have power.

Our love for Christ and Christ’s love for us, compels us to not only **COMMIT** our lives to Christ, but to **COMMIT** our lives to one another. Jesus said, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matthew 22:37-39).

When people see you, watch you, walk alongside you, do they see someone who is representing Jesus, by loving God with all their heart, walking in obedience and faithfulness? Do they see someone who is loving their neighbor, reaching out to all of God’s children, loving as Christ loved? Do they see Christ in you?

### **Thursday**

**Read Galatians 6:9; Ephesians 2:20-22; Acts 20:28;  
Hebrews 10: 24-25; & Acts 2:42-47.**

Secondly, if you are a member of North East United Methodist Church, you were asked, “***As members of Christ’s universal church, will you be loyal to Jesus Christ, through The United Methodist Church, and do all in your power to strengthen its ministries?***”

Michael Slaughter writes, “*We have turned church into a noun, a stationary building that we visit once a week, instead of a living, functioning, working community of Jesus-following believers*” ...many have “*redefined faithfulness as simply showing up for worship.*” We are called, by God, to move from a faith that is simply “*believe-ism*” to a faith that is filled with obedience, action, change, and walking with Christ...to a faith that includes stepping out of the pew, fulfilling the

purpose for which one was created, and making a difference for God in this world.

Are you doing “*all in your power*” to “*strengthen* [the church’s] *ministries*”? How might you “*step out of the pew*” and “*make a difference*”? How are you being “*loyal to Jesus Christ*,” following Him in faith and obedience, living out your **COMMIT**ment to Jesus Christ, through the church?

### **Friday**

**Read Psalm 17:6; Hebrews 10: 24-25; I Peter 4:10-11;  
I Corinthians 12:7; Luke 12:33; Romans 12:1;  
Matthew 23:11; Acts 1:8; & Matthew 28:19.**

Lastly, if you are a member of North East United Methodist Church, you were asked, “*As members of this congregation, North East United Methodist Church, will you faithfully participate in its ministries by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness?*”

The vows, the **COMMIT**ment, we make when we join the church must be remembered. More importantly, we must remember that when we come to Christ, we become part of God's own family and we “*belong in God's household with every other Christian*” whether we officially join the church or not (Ephesians 2:19). The Bible tell us as followers of Christ we are *put together, joined together, built together, members together, fitted together, held together*, and one day we will be *caught up together*. When we invite Christ into our lives and decide to follow Him we are no longer on our own.

As Michael Slaughter explains in his book, Renegade Gospel, “*Salvation, of course, is personal, but it's also social....If we make it privatized, or only personal, the church fails to rebuild, restore, and renew.*” In other words, the church “*will not live into the full potential of all that Jesus has designed and called us to be.*” Slaughter goes on to write, “*We are designed to live our lives together within a shared, Missional community that will bring the kingdom of God to Planet Earth.*”

When we come to Christ we cannot forget we become part of something much bigger. When we verbalize this by joining the church, declaring our **COMMIT**ment, we cannot fail to live up to the vows we have declared before God and His people. If we fail to live up to our vows the church loses its strength, fails to live up to its potential, and you and I miss out on the blessings that come with our lives interacting one with the other.

Take time tonight to reflect on how you are participating in the ministries at North East United Methodist Church “*by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness.*” Ask God to show you where you can step up and out, **COMMIT**ting to help North East United Methodist Church to “*rebuild, restore, and renew.*”

## **Saturday**

### **Read Ephesians 5:25-27.**

God’s Word tells us that the church, you and I, are the “*bride of Christ*” and that Christ gave up His life for His bride. One day Jesus will return for her, for us.

I love how Rick Warren describes those who say they don’t like the church. He explains that they are basically telling Jesus, “*I don’t like your bride. I think she’s ugly. I despise what you came and died for.*”

Our **COMMIT**ment to the church, the vows we take when we join and become part of a church family, can be compared to our wedding vows. If we are **COMMIT**ted to loving Christ, we must be **COMMIT**ted to loving His bride as well.

How are you loving the church, loving your brothers & sisters in Christ? Ask God to fill your heart with love for His church and His children.



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Last week, we spoke about the first action word in the North East United Methodist Church Mission Statement...COMMIT. We spoke about how God calls us to choose Life, to make a “*personal commitment to Jesus Christ.*” Many of us have made this choice. This commitment, this vow we make as Christians and as members of North East United Methodist Church, entails loving God through our actions. We love God by walking in His ways, keeping His commandments, and by loving one another.

This morning we take another step in understanding and living out our mission statement.

*“The North East United Methodist Church, through our personal COMMITment to Jesus Christ, is striving to be a **GROW**ing and vital congregation...”*

As individuals and as a congregation, we make a commitment to Jesus Christ. Part of that commitment is to “*strive to **GROW.***”

How do we **GROW** in Christ?

First, we must know Him. We must have a personal relationship with Jesus. We cannot **GROW** in a relationship that doesn't exist. Henry Blackaby, in Experiencing God, writes, *“One of our church members was always having difficulty in his personal life, with his family, at work, and in the church. In a church meeting he became extremely angry and stormed out of the room. It was obvious his life was filled with anger. Soon after, I met with him and asked, ‘Can you describe your relationship with God by sincerely saying, ‘I love You with all my heart’?’ The strangest look came over his face. He said, ‘Nobody has ever asked me that. No, I could not describe my relationship with God that way. I could say I obey Him, I serve Him, I worship Him, and I fear Him. But I cannot say I love Him.’ Everything in this man’s life was out of order because God’s basic purpose for his life was missing. God created us for a love relationship with Him. If you cannot describe your relationship with God by saying that you love Him with all your being, you need to ask the Holy Spirit to bring you into that kind of relationship.”*

Have you given God your heart? Do you have a personal relationship with Him or are you simply going through the motions? Is it more about church than a personal relationship with God for you? Do you long for God? Are you in love with Him?

God knows if we are simply going through the motions on Sunday morning or if, like the psalmist we cry out, *“As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1)*. God wants us to KNOW Him, to love Him with all our hearts, minds and souls. A real, deep, vibrant, loving relationship.

This is the first step. Without this step, there is no life. There is no purpose. Without this step there is no relationship to **GROW**

in. *"Can you describe your relationship with God by sincerely saying, 'I love You with all my heart'?"*

Fall to your knees. Confess your sin. Cry out to God for forgiveness. Lay your life at His feet, all the secrets, all the hurts, all the fears. Accept Christ as your Savior and the leader of your life. And then, begin to fulfill the Mission Statement driving our church and **GROW** in Him.

The next step, in order to **GROW** in Him, in our relationship with Christ, we must know where we are going.

God sets before us a staircase and His Son, Jesus Christ, is at the top. That is our goal. Our goal is to live like Jesus, to think like Jesus, to, as Paul writes in Ephesians 4:15, "**GROW** up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ."

God's goal is for us to mature and develop the characteristics of Jesus Christ. Millions of Christians **GROW** older but never **GROW** up. Spiritual growth is not automatic. It takes an intentional commitment. You must want to **GROW**, decide to **GROW**, and make a continual effort in **GROWing**. We do this through the scriptures, God's Holy Word, and through self-examination.

*"The North East United Methodist Church, through our personal COMMITment to Jesus Christ, is striving to be a **GROWing** and vital congregation..."*

First, *many* of our troubles, our failure to **GROW**, occur because we base our choices on unreliable authorities:

Culture (“everyone is doing it”)

Tradition (“we’ve always done it”)

Reason (“it seemed logical”)

Emotion (“it just felt right”)

All four of these are flawed by the Fall, by sin. What we need is a perfect standard that will never lead us in the wrong direction. Only God's Word meets that need.

*2 Timothy 3:16-17 - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."*

Evangelist D.L. Moody put it this way, *"The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives."*

Many of you have probably heard of the Gideons International. You have probably come across one of their Bibles placed in your hotel room. This group, started in 1908, have given out more than 2 billion Bibles, in more than 95 languages, to over 200 countries. I want to share a few of their stories, testimonies, received from those who read those scriptures. These are TRUE stories with you that show the power of scripture, the power of God's Word, to transform lives.

*Asha was a lovely 12-year-old girl at a public school in Kerala, India. She was an avid reader and was thrilled when she was offered a Gideon New Testament during a school distribution. She devoured the Testament in just a few days, and through it she came to a saving knowledge of Jesus.*

*Her father, a devout Hindu, was quite upset by her new faith and he wanted nothing to do with her Jesus. So Asha prayed that, even if she had to give up her life so that her father and mother would come to faith in Jesus, she would be willing to do so.*

*Some years later while on a picnic along a river with some of her friends where they were celebrating their acceptance into a dental training program, a sudden storm and flash flood swept Asha and four of her friends away. When her father received word that she was missing, he sought intervention from his Hindu gods and offered sacrifices and gifts to his Guru so that Asha would be found alive. Her body was found a few days later.*

*When Asha's father went through her personal belongings, he discovered her diary. In it he found several entries about her prayers for her father and mother and her willingness to be martyred if it provided the way of their salvation. He then began to read Asha's New Testament because he knew that it had been so precious to her. Through that same New Testament, both he and her mother came to accept the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour.*

*Now this man has produced a tract about Asha and her Lord. He and this tract have been instrumental in possibly leading*

*thousands to the Lord in India—all because of one New Testament that was placed in the hands of one little Hindu girl in India.*

Another story...

*There was a drug lab hidden in the jungle in Colombia. In it were many chemicals, guns, and dangerous men. But this lab was different because it also contained a Gideon New Testament.*

*The Testament was so popular with the 40 people who were in the lab that they would argue about who would get to read it. To prevent these fights, they had to draw lots so each would have time to read it.*

*This drug lab no longer exists, but you can find the individuals who used to work there. All 40 people were saved from that single copy of Scripture and 12 of them are now pastors.*

One More Story...

*One night, I sat in my hotel room, totally defeated by self and sin. Through my excesses, my health was deteriorated my family was rupturing and my business was ruined. In my loneliness and desperation, I picked up a Gideon Bible and began to read.*

*The Spirit of God used the Word of God to bring me to repentance and faith. I had entered that hotel room totally defeated. I left it the next morning wholly delivered. God's grace in Christ had conquered my life and I went on to become a Bible teacher and then God called me into the ministry.*

There are millions of stories just like this. God's Word has the power to produce the same transformations, the same blessings, the same miracles, in your life!

God's Word, time with Him, has certainly changed my life. I have **GROW**n closer to God over the years, had my eyes opened to the sin in my life and my heart more grateful to Christ for His sacrifice for me. I pray I have **GROW**n, becoming more like Christ in my thoughts and actions.

We must always remember that knowledge of God's Word is only part of the picture. We must take it a step further if we want to fulfill our commitment to **GROW** in Him.

Secondly, we must allow God's Word to convict us, causing us to examine our lives. 2 Corinthians 13:5 - "*Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you— unless indeed you fail the test?*"

Paul challenges the Corinthians, in preparation for his visit, to examine themselves to see whether they are in the faith. The kind of testing Paul envisions is that which proves the worth or genuineness of something. The Corinthians have professed a belief in Christ, but does their life match their profession? True

profession should result in a life characterized by *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"* (Gal 5:22). Remember, James writes that one should not be like one who looks *"at your face in a mirror but [does] nothing to improve your appearance."*

We examine ourselves, test ourselves, by opening the Bible and allowing God's Word to speak to us, comparing our thoughts and actions to His Word, making decisions based on His Word, changing our lives to reflect His Word.

Remember, we are trying to get to the top of the ladder, to be just like Jesus.

Pastor Rick Warren writes, *"Receiving, reading, researching, remembering, and reflecting on the Word are all useless if we fail to put them into practice. We must become "doers of the word." This is the hardest step of all, because Satan fights it so intensely...we avoid personal application [because] it can be difficult or even painful. The truth will set you free, but first it may make you miserable! God's Word exposes our motives, points out our faults, rebukes our sin, and expects us to change."*

How many times I have opened the Bible and prayed for guidance only to be struck across the forehead with a word that applied directly to my actions the previous day or hour, God speaking to me, convicting me.

I was looking through my Bible and found a note in the margins of I Corinthians 3:3 (NLT) – *"Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your own desires?"* Paul is writing to the church in Corinth, asking them why they are jealous of one another and quarrel with one another. Paul is asking why they are *"acting like people who don't belong to the Lord."*

In the margin, I've written, *"Am I controlled by my own desires? I would have to say, 'yes' – as I write this Deb and I are upset with each other because I wanted to go to the lodge early to sit...when she didn't want me to go, I got upset...my desire to go controlled my reaction to her...not my desire for Christ..."*

In another spot, Mark 13: 33 & 36 (NLT) – *"And since you don't know when they will happen, stay alert and keep watch... Don't let Him find you sleeping when He arrives without warning."*

In the margin I wrote, *"Don't let Him find you sleeping' - How often, if Christ had returned, would He have found me sleeping? Not practicing my faith? Focused on worldly things? Worrying about tomorrow? Self-centered rather than God-centered, other-centered? Please forgive me, Lord – Teach me how to stay awake so I am ready when you return."*

John Wesley's relationship with Christ and his study of God's Word led Him to come up with twenty-one self-examination questions that he would constantly ask himself.

- (1) Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
- (2) Do I confidentially pass on to others what has been said to me in confidence?
- (3) Can I be trusted?
- (4) Am I a slave to dress, friends, work or habits?
- (5) Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
- (6) Did the Bible live in me today?
- (7) Do I give the Bible time to speak to me every day?
- (8) Am I enjoying prayer?
- (9) When did I last speak to someone else of my faith?

- (10) Do I pray about the money I spend?
- (11) Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
- (12) Do I disobey God in anything?
- (13) Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
- (14) Am I defeated in any part of my life?
- (15) Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
- (16) How do I spend my spare time?
- (17) Am I proud?
- (18) Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?
- (19) Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
- (20) Do I grumble or complain constantly?
- (21) Is Christ real to me?

My relationship with Jesus, my diving into God's Word, has convicted me over the years. It has caused me to examine myself, my motives, my goals. Studying God's Word led to my calling, touching my heart, causing me to examine my relationship with Him, my willingness to follow Him, to serve Him. I was led to leave my job, sell my house, enter ministry, go back to school, change my entire direction, all I knew.

Over the years God's Word has caused me to look in the mirror, convicting me of pride, selfishness, greed, jealousy, and focusing on worldly things. It has assured me of God's forgiveness, mercy, strength and love. God's Word has confronted my anger and bitterness, pushing me to forgive those who had wronged me, challenged me to not give up when the ministry was difficult, and encouraged me when I was struggling.

God's Word will do the same for and to each of you.

When you look at your life today compared to this time last year, are you more or less like Christ in your thoughts, words and actions? How have you **GROW**n in your faith over the last year? Are you being intentional about **GROW**ing in your faith, about becoming more like Christ? How often are you in prayer? In God's Word? When you examine your life, your thoughts, your actions...does your life reflect the "*fruits of the Spirit*"?

*"The North East United Methodist Church, through our personal COMMITment to Jesus Christ, is striving to be a **GROW**ing and vital congregation..."*

How do we **GROW** in Him? We **GROW** in Him through the scriptures and self-examination. We **GROW** in Him by not only reading but by putting into practice God's Word, by loving, serving, forgiving. We **GROW** in Him by allowing God's Word to convict us, challenge us, and change us. We **GROW** by allowing God's Word to transform our thoughts, words, and actions, making them more and more Christ-like.

2 Corinthians 3:18, *"And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."*

But we can never forget...to **GROW** in Him all starts with a relationship. The first step is to ask, "*Can you describe your relationship with God by sincerely saying, 'I love You with all my heart'?*" If you cannot answer "yes" to that question, start there. Pray. Talk to God. Reflect on what He has done for you. Cry out to Him to fill your heart with love for Him.

And then, through the scriptures and self-examination, get ready for an amazing, difficult, beautiful journey...**GROW**ing more deeply in Him.

## **Sunday**

### **Read Romans 8:29-30.**

Last week we dealt with the first action word in our church's Mission Statement, COMMIT. This week we take a deeper look at the second action word in North East United Methodist Church's Mission Statement, **GROW**.

When we make a commitment to God and His Church, we commit to love God and love our neighbor. We also commit to **GROW** in our relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, and with the help of the Holy Spirit. How can we “*remain faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world*” if we are not **GROW**ing deeper in our relationship with God? How can we be “*loyal to Jesus Christ*” if we are not **GROW**ing in our understanding of what that means, what God requires, what Christ commands of us? How can we fulfill our purpose in the body of Christ if we are not **GROW**ing in our relationship, listening to God, and allowing Him to lead us, use us, work through us to touch a hurting world?

God chose us to become like His Son, Jesus Christ. Wow! What a thought! We were created to become like Christ. As Max Lucado puts it, “*God loves you just the way you are, but He refuses to leave you that way...He wants you to be just like Jesus.*” Just like Jesus. Romans 8:29 in The Message reads, “*God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of His Son. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him.*” Rick Warren, in The Purpose Driven Life, writes, “*The Bible says that all people, not just believers, possess part of the image of God...But the image is incomplete and has been damaged and distorted by sin. So God sent Jesus on a mission to restore the full image that we have lost. What does the full ‘image and likeness’ of God look like? It looks like Jesus Christ!*”

When we look at how we are living our lives, where our priorities are, how we handle our anger, how we deal with others, how we love our families, it is Jesus Christ himself we should look at for our model, our inspiration. Certainly, in the light of Christ, who loved

God first, loved even His enemies, and was willing to die for not only the righteous, but also the ungodly, we all fall short; we all have room to **GROW**.

But there is Good News. On our journey to **GROW**, to become like Christ, we don't do it alone. As Warren writes, *"You cannot reproduce the character of Jesus on your own strength. New Year's resolutions, willpower, and best intentions are not enough. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to make the changes God wants to make in our lives."*

**Read Philippians 2:12-13.** God gives us the power. What areas of your life do you need to focus on, change, and **GROW** in to become more like Jesus? How does knowing God wants you to **GROW** into nothing less than the image of His Son make you view your priorities, habits, and everyday actions? Pray that God will give you the power of His Holy Spirit to begin changing you from one degree of glory into the next into the likeness of His Son. Pray for daily strength to become more like Jesus.

## **Monday**

### **Read Ephesians 4:20-32.**

Verse 22, in The Message, reads, *Take on an entirely new way of life – a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you.* Warren writes, *"God's ultimate goal for your life on earth is not comfort, but character development. He wants you to **GROW** up spiritually and become like Christ."*

He goes on to talk about three responsibilities in becoming like Christ. First, we must realize that the Holy Spirit is living within us and is constantly moving us closer and closer to becoming like Jesus. In order for us to connect and listen to the Spirit, we must be willing to step out in faith. We are called to *make every effort* in our **GROW**th toward becoming like Jesus, and we cannot simply wait for God to act first. In fact, God expects us to act, to step out in faith, to risk, to move forward when we don't feel powerful and confident. We are told that it is in our weakness that God shows His power through us.

Secondly, we must change the way we think. **Read Romans 12:2.** We must allow God to direct our thoughts. In all decisions, thoughts, and goals, we must allow God to direct us through prayer, the Bible, and other Christians.

Thirdly, Warren says, *“We must put on the character of Christ by developing new, godly habits.”* We must pray for strength to change those habits that are detrimental to **GROW**ing in our relationship with God and build Godly habits and disciplines that will lead us to become more like His Son. Remember, this is a progressive development, a gradual change, which will take the rest of your life. Don’t expect to rid yourself of all ungodly fears, thoughts, and habits overnight. It is a process, a journey.

Is God calling you to step out on faith in an area of your life? To act while still weak? Are there decisions in your life that you need to back up on and allow God to direct your thinking? Are there ungodly habits in your life that you need to break and new habits you need to begin to become more like Jesus? Pray that God shows you the next step, help you **GROW** in how you are living out your relationship with God. Talk to another Christian friend about the steps you feel God calling you to take and ask them to hold you accountable.

## **Tuesday**

### **Read Ephesians 4:12-15.**

God wants us to grow up into mature Christians. As Warren writes, *“Sadly, millions of Christians **GROW** older but never **GROW** up...It takes an intentional commitment. You must want to **GROW**, decide to **GROW**, make an effort to **GROW**, and persist in **GROW**ing. Discipleship – the process of becoming like Christ – always begins with a decision. Jesus calls us, and we respond: ‘Come, be my disciple,’ Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him.”*

Warren goes on to mention three **GROW**th ingredients. First, we must study and apply God’s Word. Secondly, we must regularly connect with other believers. And lastly, we must learn to trust God in difficult situations, understanding that God uses our darkest moments to draw us closer to Him.

Are you being intentional in your walk with Christ? Are you making an effort in **GROW**ing, changing, becoming more like Jesus? Are you going to God's Word for guidance, studying and meditating on what God has to say to you? Are you connecting with other believers beyond Sunday morning? Are you seeking what God has to teach you in the midst of a difficult situation? Pray for strength and guidance, and for God to connect you more with His Word and fellow believers. Pray that God will help you be more intentional about **GROW**ing into the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ.

### **Wednesday**

#### **Read Philippians 2:1-11.**

When we decide to accept Christ in our lives, to become a Christian, to live for God, we are making a counter-culture decision. Instead of thinking like the world, we are to begin to **GROW** and think the same way that Christ thought.

The first step to thinking like Christ is to stop thinking "immature" thoughts that are self-centered and self-seeking. The second step is to begin thinking maturely, focusing on others and not yourself. **Read John 13:14-15.** Max Lucado, in *Just Like Jesus*, writes, "*The mercy of Christ preceded our mistakes; our mercy must precede the mistakes of others. Those in the circle of Christ had no doubt of his love; those in our circles should have no doubts about ours. What does it mean to have a heart like his? It means to kneel as Jesus knelt, touching the grimy parts of the people we are stuck with and washing away their unkindnesses with kindness.*"

Right now, in your life, whom do you need to forgive, drop the grudge you've held against them for some time? What name is God bringing to the forefront of your mind as you read this that you need to show kindness to? Pray that God will give you an opportunity this week to show kindness and love to that person. Pray that God will help you **GROW** beyond a life that is self-centered to a life that is centered on others.

## **Thursday**

### **Read Luke 8:18 and James 1:21-25.**

We must have an open attitude to God's Word. Warren writes, *"Anytime you feel you are not learning anything from a sermon or a Bible teacher, you should check your attitude, especially pride, because God can speak through even the most boring teacher when you are humble and receptive."* We must be constantly reading God's Word and listening to God's Word and as the scriptures says we must *consider carefully how we listen.*

Are you approaching God's Word and the sermons you hear, looking for support for the way you already live and believe, or are you open to God's challenge to become more and more like Jesus? Are you open to recognizing that Christ is calling you to a higher standard, to change, to **GROW**?

Pray that your heart will be softened to hear the message this Sunday and tonight when you read your Bible. Pray that your Spirit would be open to the changes and challenges God calls you to.

## **Friday**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Romans 8:29.**

Max Lucado writes, *"No doubt about it: God has ambitious plans for us. The same one who saved your soul longs to remake your heart. His plan is nothing short of a total transformation."* Don't be afraid of the change. Sometimes it will hurt for we will be asked to take a very honest look at our lives, but the blessings will be awesome.

Pastor Rick Warren writes, *"Receiving, reading, researching, remembering, and reflecting on the Word are all useless if we fail to put them into practice. We must become "doers of the word." This is the hardest step of all, because Satan fights it so intensely...we avoid personal application [because] it can be difficult or even painful. The truth will set you free, but first it may make you miserable! God's Word exposes our motives, points out our faults, rebukes our sin, and expects us to change."*

When you look at your life today compared to this time last year, are you more or less like Christ in your thoughts, words and actions?

How have you **GROW**n in your faith over the last year? Are you being intentional about **GROW**ing in your faith, about becoming more like Christ? How often are you in prayer? In God's Word? When you examine your life, your thoughts, your actions, does your life reflect the "*fruits of the Spirit*"?

Pray that you will have the strength to honestly see yourself in light of Jesus Christ and that God will help you to rely on the Holy Spirit for transformation, help you **GROW**, not only in knowledge, but in attitude, character, and heart.

### **Saturday**

How do we **GROW** in Him? We **GROW** in Him through the scriptures and self-examination. We **GROW** in Him by not only reading but by putting into practice God's Word...by loving, serving, forgiving. We **GROW** in Him by allowing God's Word to convict us, challenge us, and change us...allowing God's Word to transform our thoughts, words, and actions...making them more and more Christ-like.

But we can never forget...to **GROW** in Him all starts with a relationship...the first step is to ask, "*Can you describe your relationship with God by sincerely saying, 'I love You with all my heart'?*" If you cannot answer "yes" to that question, start there. Pray. Talk to God. Reflect on what He has done for you.

Take time with God today! Curl up in His lap and share your heart. And remember, invite someone to church tomorrow.



The  
North East United Methodist Church,  
through our personal COMMITment to  
Jesus Christ,  
is striving to be a GROWing  
and vital congregation,  
actively SERVing God,  
the community, and one another.

Two weeks ago, we spoke about the first action word in the North East United Methodist Church Mission Statement...COMMIT. We spoke about how God calls us to choose Life, to make a *“personal commitment to Jesus Christ.”* Many of us have made this choice. This commitment, this vow we make as Christians and as members of North East United Methodist Church, entails loving God through our actions. We love God by walking in His ways, keeping His commandments, and by loving one another.

Last Sunday, we spoke about the second action word in the North East United Methodist Church Mission Statement...GROW. When we make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, part of that commitment is to *“strive to grow”* in that relationship. We grow in Him through the scriptures and self-examination. We grow in Him by not only reading but by putting into practice God's Word, by loving, serving, forgiving. We grow in Him by allowing God's Word to convict us, challenge us, and change us. But we can never forget...to grow in Him all starts with a relationship. The first step is to ask, *“Can you describe your relationship with God by sincerely saying, ‘I love You with all my heart’?”*

Today, we look at the third and final action word in our church’s Mission Statement...SERVE.

The North East United Methodist Church, through our personal COMMITment to Jesus Christ, is striving to be a GROWing and vital congregation, actively SERVing God, the community, and one another.

When we make a commitment to Christ and His Church, we make a commitment to follow Christ, obey His commands, love one another, grow in our relationship with Him through the Bible and self-examination, and we make a commitment to **SERVE**.

Many of you once stood up here and answered “I will” to the question, *“As members of this congregation, North East United Methodist Church, will you do all in your power to strengthen its ministries...will you faithfully participate in its ministries by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness?”*

Why do we **SERVE**? We **SERVE** because, as Paul writes, *“Christ’s love compels us.”*

Christ died, out of love for us, in order to save us, redeem us, reconcile us, and to bring us into a relationship with our Creator. Once we fully understand and believe this, we love Him for it. Once we really believe this completely in our hearts, this love propels us, upholds us, allows us to no longer live for ourselves. It is this love that leads us to **SERVE**.

There are many people in our church who **SERVE** sacrificially, who work in ministries and on committees. There are many who share Christ in their workplace, who reach out to the hurting and needy in our community. They do this because *“Christ’s love compels [them]...”* Many of them are *“convinced”* that Christ died for them and therefore they owe Christ their lives.

Rick Warren writes, *“It cost Jesus his own life to purchase your salvation. The Bible reminds us, I Corinthians 6:20 (CEV), ‘God paid a great price for you. So use your body to honor God.’ We don’t **SERVE** God out of guilt or fear or even duty, but out of joy, and deep gratitude for what he’s done for us. We owe Him our lives.”*

God told Jeremiah, *“Before I made you in your mother’s womb, I chose you. Before you were born, I set you apart for a special work.”*

2 Timothy 1:9 tells us, *“It is He who saved us and chose us for His holy work, not because we deserved it but because that was His plan.”*

God chose each of us for a very special task. God gave us the talents, gifts and resources to complete this task. It is up to us to make the decision to use the talents we have been given or to bury them.

Jesus tells the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30 (NIV)...

*Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.*

*After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. “Master,” he said, “you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.”*

*His master replied, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!”*

*The man with the two talents also came. “Master,” he said, “you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.”*

*His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"*

*Then the man who had received the one talent came. "Master," he said, "I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you."*

*His master replied, "You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest."*

*"Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

This parable is both about money and about what we are good at doing. Just as God commands the church and each of us to not hoard money, making it clear that God gives us resources that we might bless others, God also commands the church and each of us not to hoard our talents, our time, our love. We are to be involved in our church, in the ministries and missions here at North East United Methodist Church, and through our church impact our neighbors in our community and throughout the world.

Matthew Henry writes, “*Christ keeps no **SERV**ants to be idle; they have received their all from him, and having nothing they can call their own but sin. Our receiving from Christ is in order to our working for him. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. The day of account comes at last. We must all be reckoned with as to what good we have got to our own souls, and have done to others, by the advantages we have enjoyed...*”

Are we burying our talents, our gifts, our resources? Or are we investing them in the kingdom of God, building up the church and ministries, touching lives for Jesus Christ? Are we using our talents in our workplace, in our family, within whatever platform we have been given, to help someone else know Christ and His love? There is no work more important.

This is the work each person who claims the name of Jesus, and commits themselves to this body of Christ, is to be about. We were saved to **SERVE**.

Pastor Rick Warren writes, “*Have you ever wondered why God doesn't just immediately take us to heaven the moment we accept his grace? Why does he leave us in a fallen world? He leaves us here to fulfill his purposes...God has a ministry for you in His church and a mission for you in the world...the Bible says every Christian is called to **SERV**ice...A non-**SERV**ing Christian is a contradiction in terms.*”

Warren writes, “*For Christians, **SERV**ice is not optional, something to be tacked on to our schedules if we can spare the time. It is the heart of the Christian life. Jesus came ‘to **SERVE**’ and ‘to give’ and those two verbs should define your life on earth, too...Most of the time we’re more interested in ‘**SERVE** us’ than **SERV**ice. We say, ‘I’m*

*looking for a church that meets my needs and blesses me,' not 'I'm looking for a place to **SERVE** and be a blessing.' The mature follower of Jesus stops asking, 'Who's going to meet my needs?' and starts asking, 'Whose needs can I meet?'*

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 6:1, “...we are God's fellow workers.”

Every Christian is called to **SERV**ice. Rick Warren, in Purpose-Driven Life, writes, “Regardless of your job or career, you are called to full-time Christian **SERV**ice...anytime you use your God-given abilities to help others, you are fulfilling your calling. The Bible says, in Romans 7:4, ‘Now you belong to him...in order that we might be useful in the **SERV**ice of God.’ How much of the time are you being useful in the **SERV**ice of God? In some churches in China, they welcome new believers by saying ‘Jesus now has a new pair of eyes to see with, new ears to listen with, new hands to help with, and a new heart to love others with.’”

North East United Methodist Church is filled with opportunities to **SERVE**, to invest the gifts and talents God has given each of you.

One of our greatest needs is with Youth and Children's Ministry. I have shared with you in the newsletter and from the pulpit the desire, a desire all of us have, to see North East United Methodist Church sitting on this corner, alive and vibrant, a century from now. We want to be a part of something that is going to last and impact families that we will never meet, helping them discover and experience the love of God and a church family that we have experienced, that has helped us through difficult seasons and brought us great joy in other seasons.

No church will continue to exist, to move into the future, without reaching and caring for the next generation.

We need volunteers for the Nursery at 8:30, 9:30, and 10:30, every Sunday morning, to care for our littlest ones. We need Sunday school teachers for Pre-K-1st, 2nd-5th, and Middle-High School, to instruct our children in the faith, how to live a life walking with God. We need volunteers for Children's Church, to teach our children God's Word while their parents digest and reflect on the morning's message. These needs are vital to our church impacting future generations. These opportunities to **SERVE** are investments in the future, in the Kingdom of God, and bring joy to our Creator's heart.

I have also mentioned that visitors decide if they will come back to a church within the first few minutes of arriving; therefore, hospitality is vitally important. We need greeters at the doors, in the parking lots, showing new families up to the Sunday school rooms, **SERV**ing refreshments, working welcome center with visitor packets, books for sale, and sign-ups for upcoming events. We need individuals who **SERVE** with hospitality but also play a dual-role in being part of our Safety Team, making sure those who come to our church from the littlest to the oldest feel safe and are cared for.

My hope in the next couple years is to split the Missions Team into two teams: Mission and Outreach. Missions focuses on caring for those outside our church, in our community and throughout our world, meeting their needs, expecting nothing in return...simply being the "hands and feet" of Christ. The Outreach Team will focus on looking for ways to connect to our community and bring people into our church, building relationships with them and welcoming them into "the body of Christ" at North East United Methodist Church. This will include things like participating in community events like the Spooktakular and the Christmas Parade, Family Movie Nights, and Block Parties. In order to

make this happen, we will need volunteers to **SERVE**. We will need leaders.

One more example. I hope to build a Congregational Care Team in the future. Members of this team will work with me to visit shut-ins, hospitalized, the grieving and hurting. They will help us take care of those in our congregation when they are going through a difficult time. Only together can this be accomplished.

Is your mind still filled with excuses why you can't volunteer, why you can't **SERVE**? Why you can't help? Don't think you're qualified? Perhaps you feel you have no gifts to offer? Unsure of yourself? Would you rather just sit in the pew and be left alone? Don't know how to get involved, what you might help with?

If you're not **SERV**ing, if you're not stepping up to help here at North East United Methodist Church, what excuse have you been using?

- Moses stuttered.
- David's armor didn't fit.
- John Mark was undependable.
- Hosea married a prostitute.
- Amos only had experience as a fig tree pruner.
- Jacob was a liar.
- David had an affair.
- Solomon had too much money.
- Abraham was too old.
- Timothy had ulcers.
- Joseph was a nuisance.
- Paul was ugly.

- Peter was a coward.
- Lazarus was dead.
- John was self-righteous.
- Jesus was homeless.
- Naomi was a widow.
- Jonah was disobedient.
- Miriam was a gossip.
- Gideon and Thomas were doubters.
- Jeremiah was suicidal.
- Elijah suffered from depression.
- Paul was a murderer.
- So was Moses.
- Not to mention David.
- John the Baptist dressed funny.
- Martha was a worrywart.
- Samson needed a haircut.
- Noah had a drinking problem.
- Moses had a short fuse.
- Zacchaeus was very short.
- David was only a teenager.
- So was Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- So was Daniel.
- So were many others who were used by God.

All of us, as imperfect as we are, have been given gifts, resources, talents, personalities, and a heart to help people establish an eternal relationship with God, to reach out to God's children, to build up God's family, to **SERVE**.

The fact is, no one is qualified to **SERVE** God. If you think you're qualified, you'll likely fail. God calls unqualified people because the only way they can be successful in their ministry is to depend completely on him. As someone once said, "*God does not call the equipped, God equips the called.*"

And God does not call you to be successful; God simply calls you to be faithful. Any success falls squarely on God's shoulders. Yet, without a doubt, when we are faithful, sparks will fly, God's fire catches, lives are changed, and the kingdom grows.

Remember, Jesus will say to those who **SERVE** Him, who **SERVE** others, "*...to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.*" Ray Boltz, in his song, *Thank You*, describes that moment like this:

*I dreamed I went to heaven  
And you were there with me  
We walked upon the streets of gold  
Beside the crystal sea  
We heard the angels singing  
Then someone called your name  
You turned and saw this young man  
And he was smiling as he came  
And he said friend you may not know me now  
And then he said but wait  
You used to teach my Sunday School  
When I was only eight  
And every week you would say a prayer  
Before the class would start  
And one day when you said that prayer  
I asked Jesus in my heart*

*One by one they came  
Far as the eyes could see  
Each life somehow touched  
By your generosity  
Little things that you had done  
Sacrifices made  
Unnoticed on the earth  
In heaven now proclaimed*

Don't know how to **SERVE**? Take the initiative and talk to a ministry leader. Talk to me about how you might get involved. Pray about how God might use you in your church, how you might **SERVE** Him here at North East United Methodist Church.

Let us not bury our talents. Let us invest our talents in God's kingdom, in people's lives through the ministries and missions at North East UMC. Let us live out our Mission Statement as individuals and as a congregation, and let us do this because like Paul, it is "...*Christ's love [that] compels us, because we are convinced that [Christ] died for all...*"

## **Sunday**

### **Read Jeremiah 1:4-10.**

Two weeks ago, we spoke about the first action word in the North East United Methodist Church Mission Statement...COMMIT. We spoke about how God calls us to make a “*personal commitment to Jesus Christ,*” by walking in His ways, keeping His commandments, and by loving one another.

Last week, we spoke about the second action word in the North East United Methodist Church Mission Statement...GROW. When we make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, part of that commitment is to “*strive to grow*” in that relationship. We grow in Him through the scriptures and self-examination. We ask ourselves, “*Can I describe my relationship with God by sincerely saying, ‘I love Him with all my heart’?*”

This week, we look at the third and final action word in our church’s Mission Statement...**SERVE**.

The prophet Jeremiah is called by God to speak to the people of Israel, to share God’s truth, to **SERVE**. Notice Jeremiah’s reluctance to accept his calling to speak for God, to **SERVE**, to fulfill the task God wanted him to take on. Jeremiah responds to God speaking to him by saying, “*Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.*”

Don’t we do the same. God calls on us to **SERVE**, to speak, to give. Immediately the excuses start flowing. Yet God responds to Jeremiah, “*Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you...*” God simply doesn’t accept excuses. “*You shall speak...*” God goes on to tell Jeremiah that God will go with him and will give him the words.

Rick Warren writes, “*If you're not involved in any **SERV**ice or ministry, what excuse have you been using? Abraham was old, Jacob was insecure, Leah was unattractive, Joseph was abused, Moses stuttered, Gideon was poor, Samson was codependent, Rahab was immoral, David had an affair and all kinds of family problems. Elijah was suicidal, Jeremiah was depressed, Jonah was reluctant, Naomi was a widow, John the Baptist was eccentric to say the least, Peter was impulsive and hot tempered, Martha worried a lot, the Samaritan*

*woman had several failed marriages, Zacchaeus was unpopular, Thomas had doubts, Paul had poor health, and Timothy was timid. That is quite a variety of misfits, But God used all of them in his service. He will use you, too, if you stop making excuses.”*

Has God asked you to do something, to **SERVE** in the church in some capacity, to help with hospitality, to lead a small group, to help out in the nursery or with the youth group? Are you making excuses? What’s holding you back from being used by God? Ask God to help you “step out” and **SERVE**, trusting Him to help you along the way.

## **Monday**

**Read Jeremiah 17:5; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; & Psalm 20:7-8.**

Jeremiah is hesitant to accept the call on his life to do ministry, to **SERVE**, to speak and share the love of God. He feels inadequate for the task saying, *“Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.”* Many times, throughout scripture, individuals fought their calling, questioned God. Moses questioned God multiple times, Jonah ran away, Isaiah felt himself *“unclean.”* Yet God uses the weakest, the youngest, the messed-up to complete His purpose, providing the strength needed for the task given. God told Paul, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”*

Patrick D. Miller writes, *“If there is not some hesitation at being the spokesperson for the divine word, at directing the light of God’s word in all its brightness – and sometimes that light is harsh – on the human scene, on the affairs of God’s people, then maybe the spokesperson is not truly the messenger of God’s word.”* Miller goes on to say, *“confidence in one’s ability to proclaim God’s Word to the people does not seem to have been part of the prophetic credentials...on the contrary, a sense of ineptness, of inability to do such an awesome task seems to have been a part of the claim that was set forth to persuade hearers and readers that what they confront is truly the word of God.”*

I have often said that the day I get up in the pulpit and do not feel nervous, overwhelmed by the great responsibility of preaching God’s Word...the day I awake and feel confident that I can do my job as pastor...is the day I need to quit because I

am no longer relying on God's strength for the task at hand and instead am relying on self.

Many people ask me how you know it is God calling you to do something. One answer is, "*Do you feel inadequate for the task?*" God is going to call you to a ministry, ask you to **SERVE**, where He will be glorified as people watch Him work through your weakness, your inadequacies, your faults, to do great things.

What is it that God is calling you to do, where is God calling you to **SERVE**, what role is God asking you to play in the church? Do you feel inadequate, hesitant, unconfident, overwhelmed at the thought? If you do, welcome to a long list of saints including Moses, Jonah, Isaiah, and the prophet Jeremiah. Don't allow these feelings to stop you from taking the "next step," from **SERVING** God through North East United Methodist Church. Simply trust in God, not "*flesh,*" not "*chariots and horses;*" trust in God and He will provide the strength you need for the task He gives you to do.

## **Tuesday**

**Read Luke 9:23, Ephesians 2:10, and Jeremiah 29:11.**

We are called to **SERVE**. We are called to live out our faith. We are called to follow God where He leads us. In Luke 9:23 Jesus says, "*Then he said to them all: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.'*"

We have a purpose that is greater than us, greater than our happiness, our security, our desires. God tells Jeremiah, "*For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'*" Ephesians 2:10 tells us, "*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.'*"

Isn't this what God tells Jeremiah? Jeremiah 1: 4-5, "*The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.'*"

Rick Warren, in The Purpose Driven Life, writes,

***“It’s not about you.** The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It’s far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose. The search for the purpose of life has puzzled people for thousands of years. That’s because we typically begin at the wrong starting point—ourselves. We ask self-centered questions like, “What do I want to be? What should I do with my life? What are my goals, my ambitions, my dreams for my future?” But focusing on ourselves will never reveal our life’s purpose...Contrary to what many popular books, movies, and seminars tell you, **you won’t discover your life’s meaning by looking within yourself.** You’ve probably tried that already. You didn’t create yourself, so there is no way you can tell yourself what you were created for! If I handed you an invention you had never seen before, you wouldn’t know its purpose, and the invention itself wouldn’t be able to tell you either. Only the creator or the owner’s manual could reveal its purpose...In the same way, you cannot arrive at your life’s purpose by starting with a focus on yourself. You must begin with God, your Creator... **You were made by God and for God**—and until you understand that, life will never make sense. It is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny. Every other path leads to a dead end. Many people try to use God for their own self-actualization. They want God to be a personal “genie” who serves their self-centered desires. But that is a reversal of nature and is doomed to failure. You were made for God, not vice versa, and **life is about letting God use you for his purposes, not your using him for your own purposes.**”*

God has a “*call*” on each of our lives. God created us for a purpose. God has given us special gifts, talents, passions for **SERV**ing others. God is ready to use us to build His kingdom, to speak His Word, to touch lives for Jesus Christ, to **SERVE**. We were created for a purpose. We were saved to **SERVE**.

How are you allowing God to use you for His purposes rather than attempting to use Him for your purposes? How can you allow Him to work through you to **SERVE** others through His church?

### **Wednesday**

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Matthew 25:14-30.**

Paul writes, “*We are convinced that One has died for all.*” We not only believe, we are convinced. We have made up our mind and taken this fact as an absolute truth – “*that One person died for all.*” Out of all the people in the world, one of them died for everyone. He died to bring some benefit to everyone else. Once we really believe this completely in our hearts, “*The love of Christ urges us on.*” Christ died because He loved us, and once we fully understand and believe this, we love Him for it. Such strong love is a powerful force. This love propels us, upholds us; it puts wind in our sails and we walk with conviction and purpose. We no longer live for ourselves. Paul writes, “*And He died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died and was raised for them.*”

Matthew Henry writes the following concerning Jesus’ parable in Matthew 25. He writes, “*Christ keeps no servants to be idle: they have received their all from him, and have nothing they can call their own but sin. Our receiving from Christ is in order to our working for him. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. The day of account comes at last. We must all be reckoned with as to what good we have got to our own souls, and have done to others, by the advantages we have enjoyed. It is not meant that the improving of natural powers can entitle a man to Divine grace. It is the real Christian’s liberty and privilege to be employed as his Redeemer’s servant, in promoting his glory, and the good of his people: the love of*

*Christ constrains him to live no longer to himself, but to Him that died for him, and rose again.”*

As Rick Warren writes, “You were saved to **SERVE** God. The Bible says, ‘It is he who saved us and chose us for his holy work, not because we deserved it but because that was his plan.’ God redeemed you so you could do His ‘holy work.’ You’re **NOT** saved **BY SERVICE**, but you are saved **FOR SERVICE**. In God’s kingdom, you have a place, a purpose, a role, and a function to fulfill...It cost Jesus his own life to purchase your salvation. The Bible reminds us, ‘God paid a great price for you. So use your body to honor God.’ We don’t **SERVE** God out of guilt or fear or even duty, but out of joy, and deep gratitude for what he’s done for us. We owe Him our lives.”

Are you burying your talents? Or are you investing them in building up the kingdom of God, in building up North East United Methodist Church, in touching lives for Jesus Christ? How might you be in greater **SERVICE** for Him?

## **Thursday**

### **Read I Corinthians 12.**

There are many in the church that are walking around accomplishing very little; they claim to believe in Christ, to love Christ, yet they fail to **SERVE** Christ, they fail to make a difference. Many times, they feel they have nothing to offer or they feel afraid or unimportant.

Yet, look at what Paul says, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” Paul goes on to say that each of you have been given “the manifestation of the Spirit...for the common good.” In other words, each of you have been given gifts, talents, blessings, to be used for the “common good.” Paul continues and points out that each gift, though it may not be as public, as visible, as popular, is just as important; thus, praying is as vital to the body as preaching, teaching Sunday school as vital as **SERV**ing on a mission team, greeting people on Sunday morning as part of Hospitality as vital as singing in the praise band or leading a small group. The Message translation states, “You are Christ’s body – that’s who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your ‘part’ mean

*anything...Each person is given something to do that shows who God is...*"

God has given you unique gifts and passions, talents and resources, to share with our world and for **SERV**ing in the body of Christ, North East United Methodist Church. What is God calling you to do? Where is God calling you to **SERVE**?

Take time tonight in prayer and ask God to help you use your gifts for the "*common good*," to make a difference in the lives of others and in the life of the church, to show people through your **SERV**ice who God is.

## **Friday**

### **Read John 21:1-19 & Matthew 19:26.**

We can glean a great truth from the disciples' fishing trip that day in Galilee. Even though they were experienced fisherman and fished most of the night, they caught nothing. How often we forget that on our own strength and abilities we will often come up empty?

Yet, when the disciples are told by Jesus, "*Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some*," they obey. This obedience leads to a net full of fish, so many they were not able to haul the net in, and more importantly, this obedience leads to the recognition of Christ, Himself..."*It is the Lord!*" And they feast with Him, gaining support and sustenance from Christ.

Too often, we in the church, are still trying to build God's kingdom on our own strength. We are like the disciples, fishing all night and frustrated because our best efforts have produced nothing. But as soon as we listen to Christ's instruction and learn to depend on His strength, we will discover an abundant catch. As one writer states, "*A simple obedience to His Word brings results beyond all expectation.*"

I have experienced this in my ministry. Years ago, I saw the church I served in Seaford, Delaware begin to tithe 10% of each weekly offering to missions. What God did with that 10%, more importantly, with our obedience to His Word, was beyond

anything we had ever produced. Not only were we able to give tens-of-thousands away to missions, but God gave us an “*abundant catch*” of new people who came to know Jesus Christ. Each time God provided new people, blessed new ministries, or provided for our needs when there was only change in the bank account, we saw God...and we cried out, “*It is the Lord!*”

If we are obedient, if we are willing to follow God wherever He leads us, if we are willing to attempt nothing on our own strength but lean on God and His strength, God tells us that He will “*mount us up on wings like eagles,*” and that “*all things are possible.*”

Are you attempting to **SERVE** on your own strength? Are you being obedient to His Word, what you know God wants for your life? Are you trusting in God to provide the “catch”? Don’t be frustrated any longer; lean on God, depend on His strength, step out of the pew, out of your comfort zone, and **SERVE**.

## **Saturday**

### **Read John 21:1-19.**

The disciples have traveled to Galilee, perhaps remembering the words of Jesus, Matthew 26:31-32, “*Then Jesus said to them, ‘All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike them Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered’ But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.’*” And again, the angel told the women at the tomb in Matthew 28:7, “*And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.*” Thus, the disciples travel to Galilee and as they wait, they fish. And after fishing throughout the night, having caught nothing, they meet Jesus once more.

When Simon Peter recognizes that the man standing on shore is Jesus, he jumps out of the boat and swims to shore. As Peter, as well as the other disciples, sit with Jesus and break bread (I’m sure they could not help but remember their Last Supper together before Jesus’ arrest).

Jesus speaks with Peter, with the one who denied Him three times. Three times Peter denied Jesus. Three times Jesus asks Peter, “*Simon, Son of John, do you love me?*” Three times Peter replies, “*Yes,*

*Lord...You know that I love you.”* Jesus responds, *“Feed my sheep.”* Here there is forgiveness, redemption, a charge to lead and to show one’s love through actions, not just words. A call to **SERVE**.

Augustine wrote in 416 A.D. *“Let it be the office of love to feed the Lord’s flock...For what else means the words, ‘Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep,’ than if it were said, If thou lovest me, think not of feeding thyself, but feed my sheep as mine, and not as thine own; seek my glory in them, and not thine own; my dominion, and not thine; my gain and not thine....”*

Jesus speaks to us, *“Do you love me? Feed my sheep.”* Jesus says, *“Don’t just tell me you love me...show me...Show me by feeding, caring, and loving my ‘sheep,’ my children.”*

David Humpal writes, *“Let us not neglect our responsibility in caring for the family of God. We must be willing to minister to hurts, to encourage the disheartened, to pray for those who are sick, to help the needy, and to reach out to those who are drifting away. Let us never neglect the job that the Lord has given us to tend the sheep. We must not only care about them, but we must also take care of them.”* We are called to **SERVE**, to put our “love” for God into action by loving His people.

Who is God asking you to **SERVE**? How are you fulfilling your vow to support North East United Methodist Church through *“your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your **SERV**ice, and your witness”*? Who has God placed in your life to *“feed,”* to reach out to? The children? The youth? A neighbor? The grieving? A shut-in? The visitor? How is your **SERV**ice reflecting your love for God? And remember to invite someone to church tomorrow!

## **Our Membership Vows**

To renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of the world, and repent of their sin;

To accept the freedom and power God gives them to resist evil, injustice, and oppression;

To confess Jesus Christ as Savior, put their whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as their Lord;

To remain faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world;

To be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church and do all in their power to strengthen its ministries;

To faithfully participate in its ministries by their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service, and their witness;

To receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

# The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;  
the third day he rose from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth at the right hand  
of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come  
to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

# NOTES