



"In Touch" at Hazel Park First UMC

Newsletter for all those who worship at First United
Methodist Church of Hazel Park



Organized in 1924 • Incorporated in 1925 • Sanctuary Completed 1953

315 E. Nine Mile Rd. • Hazel Park, Michigan 48030 • 248-546-5955 • www.hpfirst.org



Pastor's Pen

Pastor Brian Steele



Inside the Pastor's Head

Devotional: Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Should I forgive as many as seven times?" Jesus said, "Not just seven times, but rather as many as seventy-seven times.--Matthew 18:21-22

Lent begins on February 14th. Most years, I focus on repentance in some way, and that is always appropriate. Repentance is a big part of lent. This year, as I prayerfully discerned where to take us, I was drawn elsewhere. This year, we're diving deep into forgiveness. Now, you can't fully dive into forgiveness without touching repentance. They are two sides of the same coin. Sometimes people ask for forgiveness without really repenting, and that can be problematic for reconciliation. And sometimes a lack of forgiveness eats away at us and can keep us stuck in a place that isn't healthy. Quite frankly, we can't call ourselves a Christian faith community if we don't value forgiveness. It's core to who we are. Now, forgiveness is a process. Sometimes that process is easy for some and much harder for others. Personally, I'm one of the ones it's not easy for. Trust me when I say I will be on this journey with you. But it's a good journey, and I think it will make resurrection day even more powerful.

In grace,
Brian

A Look Back:

1/7+14: Lay Leader Frank Cox gave a great word while I was on vacation (actually sick in bed) and guest speaker Ron Sandison came and shared with us about the gift of neurodivergence the next week.

1/21: The Religious False Self: As we begin an election year in our country and the United Methodist Church continues to deal with disaffiliation and news headlines (that may not tell the whole story), it is as crucial as ever that we do not find our identity in our tribe. We are not defined as democrat or republican, liberal or conservative, traditionalist or progressive. We are defined as God's child.

1/28: The Gospel in Star Wars: Who Shot First?: We blasted off to a galaxy far, far away and discover there are more options that retaliation and violence. Even though nerds like me have asked for decades if Han or Greedo shot first, that should never be the question we ask as people of faith. Instead we should be asking, "Why shoot at all?"

Top 3 Things I'm Working On

- 1) Planning worship series and classes for 2024.
- 2) Developing goals for our church for 2024.
- 3) Learning to slow down to care for myself physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. I hope you do the same.

What I'm reading and listening to:

For Spiritual Development: Forgiveness by Marjorie Thompson,
Revelation for Today by James Elfrid

Podcasts I try to listen to regularly: The Bible for Normal People,
Evolving Faith, Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership

If you're interested in seeing what else I read or
for recommendations at Goodreads: [goodreads.com/besteale2386](https://www.goodreads.com/besteale2386)

Upcoming Events



Saturday, February 3rd ~ Women's group meets in the fellowship hall at 1pm
Saturday, February 3rd ~ Men's group meets at Coney island at 10pm
Wednesday, February 14th ~ Ash Wednesday Service at 7pm
Thursday, February 15th ~ Church Council Meeting at 7pm

Things to Keep in Mind



Pastor Brian has new office hours. He will still be in the office on Monday mornings, but he will also be at Hazel Park Café (21403 John R) from 2pm – 4pm on Wednesdays.



YOUR birthday and anniversary is important to us! If you are unsure if your birthday or anniversary is on our list, please let us know! We want to celebrate YOU! Send an email to the office, or leave a note in the mailbox, so we can get you added!



We are still working on our plastic bag project where we are turning plastic shopping bags into sleeping mats for homeless people. It takes many bags to make each mat, and I'm continuing the project as long as I have bags. It's a great way to recycle at the same time as making life a little better for someone else. Please continue to save your unneeded clean bags for Sue Anderson. If you are interested in helping make these, please talk to Sue.



Health/Life Concerns: Amber Flint, Jack Hinton, Victoria Foerster Pastor Brian, Brian Bryazck, Darrel Jarvis, Lisa Johnson, Robert Narducci, Steve Allen, Lillian Bruder,

Comfort for the friends and families of: Brian Barczyk (He was a renowned reptile enthusiast and owner of The Reptile Emporium in Macomb County), Christian Anderson, Barry K. Higginbottom (Cousin of Lisa Johnson)

Serving in the Armed Forces: Emma Hardy, Sean Redd, Casey Allen, Brendan Schemers, Ronald Turner & Chris Collis

Gratitude's and Joys: The hospitality of our church, grandkids in church and grandparents.

Church Leaders: Pastor-Rev. Brian Steele, Al Holland-SPRC Chair, John Sarns-Ad Council Chair, Frank Cox-Lay Leader, Ashley Detoledo-Secretary, Lisa Johnson-Treasurer, Matt Sarns-Music Director, and Harriet Hardy-Organist.



Spiritually Healthy Ways to take a Break

Sometimes you need a break, and that's OK. Resting is not merely being unproductive and inactive--it is restoring our energy for the work that is still ahead of us. In the midst of a highly-anxious time, of a strenuous effort, of a stressful stretch, it is important to find moments of rest. We need moments to mentally and spiritually refresh.

Taking a break from the stressful to pay attention to our spiritual well-being helps us move outside of ourselves. A study through *Frontiers in Psychology* notes positive associations between religiosity and various dimensions of wellbeing, including physical health, mental health, life satisfaction, and happiness. In tending to our spiritual sides, we become a bit more aware of the reality of the world beyond our slice of it. We are reminded the world is bigger than us--that reminder is often refreshing. We also receive reminders that there is a greater power beyond ourselves that helps to influence our world for good. Through spiritual practices, we feel increased senses of purpose, connectedness and perspective. If you could use to connect with a deeper sense of purpose or connection, try one of these spiritually healthy ways to take a break and refresh.

Centering Prayer

Some may call this meditation. While centering prayer is meditative in practice, it ultimately moves our focus off of our internal states and onto God's presence. It becomes a prayer as we find ourselves falling into God's presence.

One simple way to practice centering prayer is to find a comfortable spot to sit for a bit, choose a word that reminds you of God, then mentally repeat that word to yourself as you sit. A variation of the practice involves using a holy symbol or picture of something spiritual. The image should represent God's presence, and offer us a place to visually focus while our minds contemplate God's presence.

Breath Prayer

Did you know our breath reminds us of God's presence? The ancient Hebrew name for God is "Yahweh"--which, when spoken, sounds quite similar to breathing.

Breath prayer is a means for centering ourselves in God. As we breathe in, we imagine pulling in God's refreshing presence. As we exhale, we let go of that which hinders us, or we speak out our request for God.

Practice Gratitude

What are you grateful for right now? Answering that question leads to a deep awareness of the good things around us--many of which we tend to take for granted. Take a moment to name the things you're thankful for. It's a rewarding practice.

Answering similar probing questions enlighten us to God's movement throughout our days. Ignatius of Loyola developed *The Examen* for prayerfully considering spiritual moments in our lives. Ignatian Examen involves five steps:

- Become aware of God's presence.
- Review the day with gratitude.
- Pay attention to your emotions.
- Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.
- Look toward tomorrow.
- For a deeper look, see this infographic.

Do something nice for someone else

Acts of kindness are great stress relievers--for both you and the person served! The moment you're feeling your grumpiest might be the right time to do something kind: send an encouraging note, bring a friend a cup of coffee, or sign up to volunteer with your favorite service agency.

Invest in connecting with ancient wisdom and spend a bit of time diving into a spiritual text. Of course, we believe the Bible is a great option. Other useful books include *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence and *Contemplative Prayer* by Thomas Merton.

Take a walk

The feeling of the sun on the back of our necks... the gentle pass of the breeze through our hair... the chirp of a bird in the distance... All serve as reminders of a world that holds goodness and beauty. That is refreshing. Additionally, movement and fresh air have therapeutic physiological effects.

Prayer walking is a refreshing practice inviting us to be mindful in our movement.



Valentine's Sun Catcher



Materials Needed:

- Black Sharpie
- Hole punch
- Stapler
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Red and pink construction paper
- Contact paper
- Red yarn

Instructions:

- 1) Trace a heart on red construction paper. After making the heart, put 2 pieces of red construction paper together and cut out the heart. Once the heart is cut out, fold the papers in half and cut out the center of the heart so that you have two heart outlines.
- 2) Then trace and make a heart on the contact paper. Fold the contact paper in half and staple all around the heart so that when you cut it out, the hearts will be even. Make sure to cut a little inside your line so that the contact paper will fit inside of the red hearts.
- 3) Next, take the red and pink construction paper and cut out little hearts.
- 4) Place the contact paper onto one red heart outline and flip over so sticky side is up. Start placing hearts on contact paper wherever looks good. Take the other contact paper heart and place it onto the other red heart outline. Then take your glue and put it on the red outline. Place the sticky sides together. Then write the verse. Punch hole in top and insert yarn tying it in a knot. Hang in window and enjoy!

Hazel Park First United Methodist Church
315 E. Nine Mile Rd.
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Sunday Morning Service: 11:15 am
Church Office: 248-546-5955
E-mail: Hazelparkfirst@wowway.com
Website: www.hpfirst.org

**Happy
BIRTHDAY**

February Birthdays

Rev. Brian Steele -3 Mike Bierbower - 4
Toni Robertson - 8 Renee Dusseau - 17
Lillie Smith - 18 Paul Holland -21
Pierre Cross - 25 Dorothy Canyock - 28