



# *"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](http://www.hpfirst.org)



## **Pastor's Pen**

*Pastor Brian Steele*



### **Inside the Pastor's Head**

Dear Friends,

There's a lot of understandable debate about different topics in the Christian faith. Predestination vs. free will. Human sexuality. Good Lord have we talked about that one a lot. There are lots of different interpretations that have been done thoughtfully and faithfully on a lot of different issues. People of faith can faithfully disagree. But for the life of me, I can't understand the hateful and dehumanizing rhetoric many Christians have taken in regards to refugees and immigrants. I rarely say, "Scripture is clear." But in the case of immigrants, refugees and strangers, the vast majority of Scripture is clear: We welcome the foreigner. "Cursed is anyone who obstructs the legal rights of immigrants, orphans, or widows."- Deuteronomy 27:19

"Don't mistreat or oppress an immigrant, because you were once immigrants in the land of Egypt."-Exodus 22:21

"I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me."-Matthew 25:35



Those are just three examples. If I included every verse about welcoming the stranger, you'd have a mini-dictionary in your hands instead of a church newsletter. I'm not advocating for open borders. I haven't seen anybody advocating for them in the public square either. Personally, I think that is an admirable goal, but I do think Scripture also calls us to use wisdom. A few weeks ago I listened to a short sermon by Bishop Robert Barron a Catholic prelate. There's no doubt that Bishop Barron and I disagree on multiple doctrines and social beliefs. He's a Catholic and I'm United Methodist. However, I really appreciated what he was saying in this message. His main point was that currently in our country we are calling for walls OR bridges. His point was that we need walls AND bridges. We need both. I agree with him. Sometimes we need walls. There are legitimate threats and we need boundaries. Other times, we need bridges. Bridges help bring people together and remind us of our common humanity.

For awhile now, I'm astonished to see how people of faith have forgotten about our need for bridges. Scripturally speaking, I just don't see how we have gotten here. The truth is, we have let our culture affect us. We have let fear infiltrate us. Xenophobia, fear of the foreigner and stranger, has become a virus in the church, and this is sinful. It is not reflective of the call God has given us in Scripture. A nationwide refugee ban is just not something that we should be quiet about. This is a policy that is not in line with Scripture and it is harming vulnerable people whom we are called to care about.

We are called to be people of compassion, mercy and hospitality. Those are basic concepts of the Christian faith. I'd encourage us to contact our elected officials and ask that, because of our faith, we welcome the foreigner as God has welcomed us. Let us use wisdom, absolutely. But we cannot be controlled by fear.

In grace,  
Brian

### A Look Back:

**1/5 Epiphany: Follow Your Star:** We received "Star Words" to remind us of how God is still at work in our lives. Even amidst all the chaos around us, God is still at work. Let your "Star Word" guide you and remind you of God's call on your life this year!

**1/12 Remember Your Baptism:** You Are Beloved And There's Nothing You Can Do About it. We remember our baptism to remember that we are God's beloved child and there's nothing we can do to keep God from loving us and seeking us. We praised God as we remembered our adoption as God's child.

**1/19 MLK Sunday: Rejecting Moderation:** MLK was clear in his, "Letter from the Birmingham Jail." The problem hindering beloved community and ending racism wasn't from the KKK. It was from the white moderate. White moderates believed in Dr. King's message, but thought he was too bold in his tactics. However, history has shown us that we need to be bold for change. Jesus calls us to be the salt of the world, and that means we need to be salty and stand out against racism.

**1/26 The Gospel in Children's Books: Making Boundaries with Mice:** We began our fun series on Children's Books with the classic, "If you Give a Mouse a Cookie." In this story, there was a boy who had really poor boundaries with a mouse. He did not let the mouse do anything for himself. We have to remember that each of us have the capacity to "work out our own salvation" and while we are called to serve others, we are not called to have others become dependent on us. Boundaries honor God and they help us build healthy relationships.

### Top 3 Things I'm Working On:

- 1) Preparing for our Lenten class
- 2) Various connectional work within the UMC
- 3) Deepening my own spiritual life...and raising a kid!

### What I'm reading and listening to:

- For Spiritual Development: Boundaries by Henry Cloud, NonViolent Communication by Marshall Rosenberg, People Pleasing Pastors by Charles Stone
- Podcasts I try to listen to regularly: The Bible for Normal People, Evolving Faith, Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership, The Emotionally Healthy Leader

# Upcoming Events



Wed. Feb. 12 at 4:00 PM ~ Zoom Bible Study 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM  
Wed. Feb. 19 at 4:00 PM ~ Zoom Bible Study 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM  
Wed. Feb. 26 at 4:00 PM ~ Final Zoom Bible Study 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM  
Sat. March 1, 2025 at 10:00 AM ~ Men's Breakfast at John R. Grill in Madison Heights.  
Saturday, March 1 ~ Women's Meeting @1pm

## Things to Keep in Mind



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 got a new email address. Please use the email address below when you need to send something to the church!

[hpfirstumc@gmail.com](mailto:hpfirstumc@gmail.com)

Pastor will be on vacation from Feb. 17th to March 2nd.



What Do **YOU** Want to See More of?

The church newsletter is for YOU! What do you want to see more of in the newsletter? Recap of events that the church did, bible quotes, devotionals, getting to know the members of the church, and/or activities. I need your help to make this what you need it to be! Send me an email with your ideas or what you would like to see



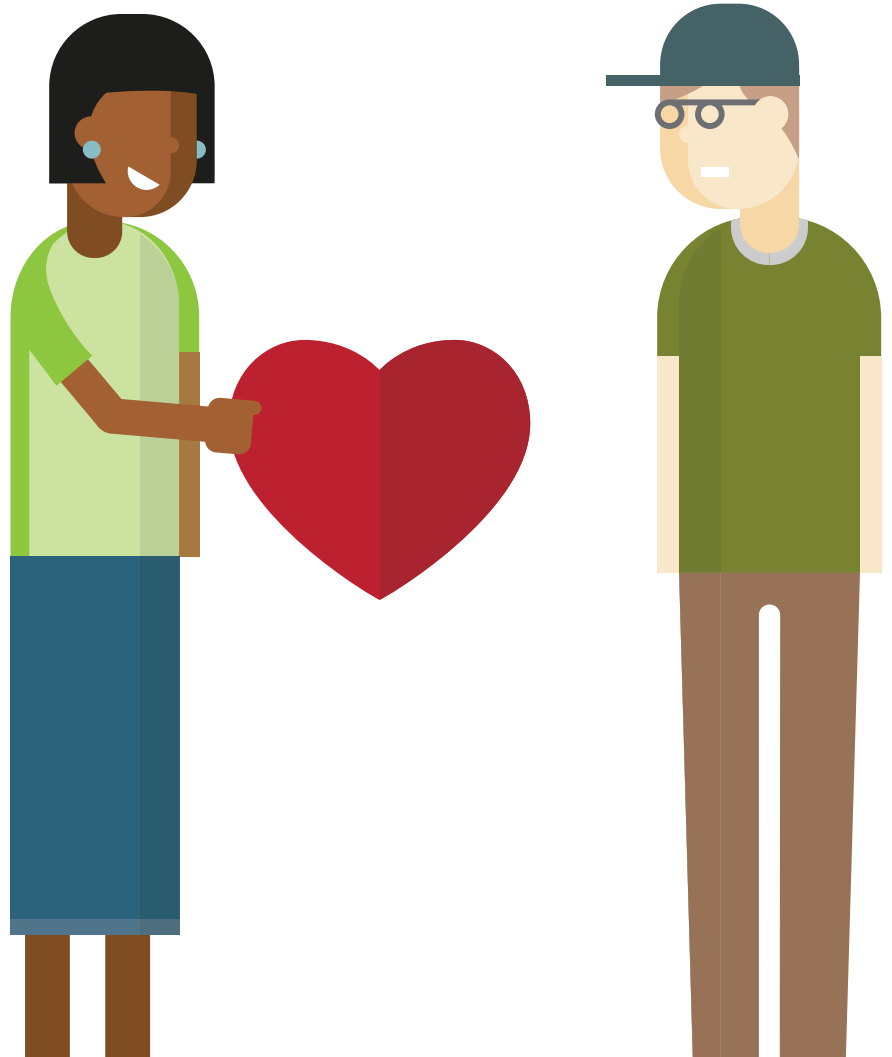
# When Your Body Has Become Still, Reach Out Your Heart

## AWAKE

Lynn Ungar, a Unitarian Universalist minister in California, was recently moved to compose the below poem as she contemplated the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. In the poem, she considers how we might approach social distancing as an intentional, even prayerful act.

So, before reading this poem, we invite you to breathe deeply as guided in this short [meditation](#) and prayerfully clear your mind and open yourself to receive God's grace in new ways.

Pandemic by Lynn Ungar  
 What if you thought of it  
 as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
 the most sacred of times?  
 Cease from travel.  
 Cease from buying and selling.  
 Give up, just for now,  
 on trying to make the world  
 different than it is.  
 Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
 to whom you commit your life.  
 Center down.  
 And when your body has become still,  
 reach out with your heart.  
 Know that we are connected  
 in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
 (You could hardly deny it now.)  
 Know that our lives  
 are in one another's hands.  
 (Surely, that has come clear.)  
 Do not reach out your hands.  
 Reach out your heart.  
 Reach out your words.  
 Reach out all the tendrils  
 of compassion that move, invisibly,  
 where we cannot touch.  
 Promise this world your love—  
 for better or for worse,  
 in sickness and in health,  
 so long as we all shall live.



\*You can read more of Lynn's poetry, and purchase her book, "Bread and Other Miracles," at [lynnungar.com](http://lynnungar.com).



# When Your Body Has Become Still, Reach Out Your Heart

## AWARE

Daily breathing exercises help our body and mind to become still. During this unique challenge, we can't reach out our hands, but we can reach out in loving ways with hearts that are calm and centered to encourage others to be the same. What challenges you to still your body and breath and reach out your heart?

## ALIVE

Use the poem above as a meditation on the meaning of Sabbath for your life this week. As thoughts, memories and sensations surface, observe them with a quiet mind and, if you like, write what is speaking to you in your journal or on this devotion by downloading the PDF and printing or writing in the fillable text field provided.

## ABIDE

The Apostle Paul reminds us, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it.... Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." (1 Corinthians 12:26-27, NRSV). Reach out remotely, but in real time, to a partner or group of friends. Reach out and bear witness to the body of Christ that is not constrained by distance.

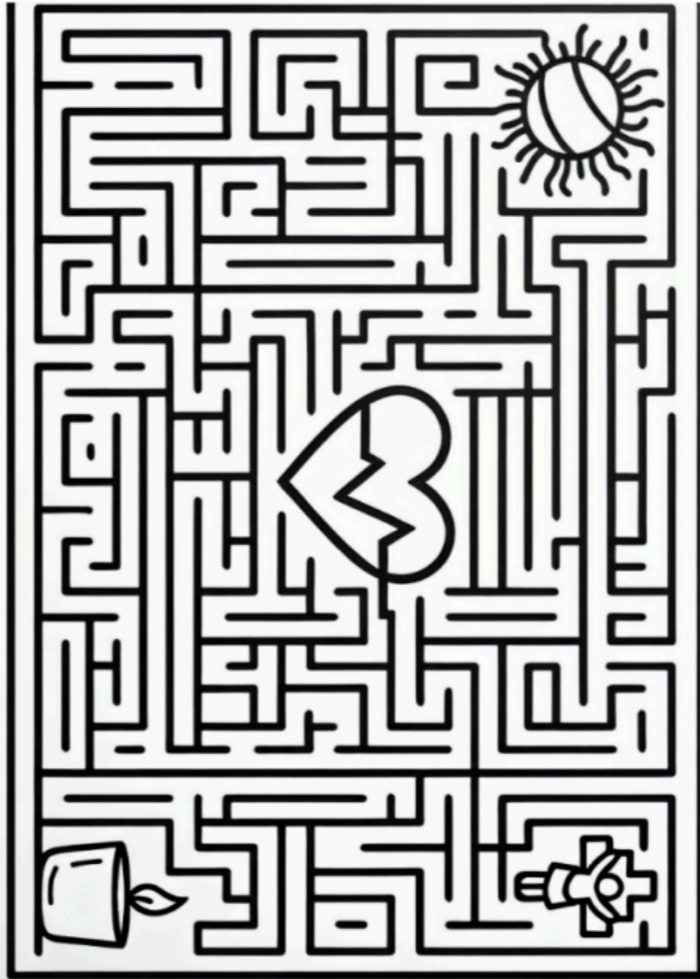
## ARISE

Today, the poet Lynn Ungar helped us view the forced cessation of our busy lives and routines as a time of Sabbath that holds potential for spiritual growth and equanimity.

- Read this poem daily.
- Awake by clearing your mind by listening to the breathing exercise meditation.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.



Write your reflections here



**How Much Are We Worth?**

1 John 4:10

**In God's Time**

Create the paragraph by filling in the blanks with the correct words from the word bank at the bottom of the story.



There is a \_\_\_\_\_ for everything, and a \_\_\_\_\_ for every activity under the \_\_\_\_\_. A time to be \_\_\_\_\_ and a time to \_\_\_\_\_, a time to \_\_\_\_\_ and a time to \_\_\_\_\_

**Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NIV)**

heavens    born    die    season    time    plant    uproot



Hazel Park First United Methodist Church  
315 E. Nine Mile Rd.  
Hazel Park, MI 48030

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



Sunday Morning Service: 11:15 am  
Church Office: 248-546-5955  
E-mail: [Hazelparkfirst@wowway.com](mailto:Hazelparkfirst@wowway.com)  
Website: [www.hpfirst.org](http://www.hpfirst.org)

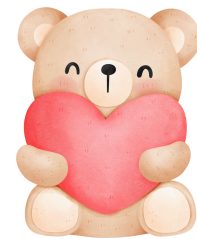
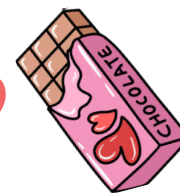


February Birthday's

Pastor Brian Steele - 3      Mike Bierbower - 4  
Renee Dusseau - 17      Lillie Smith Feb 18  
Paul Holland - 21      Pierre Cross - 25  
Kateri Rang - 25      Dorothy Canyock - 28



# February 2025



SUN

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

SAT

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1

Men's Breakfast at  
John R. Grill @10

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Worship Service  
w/communion  
@ 11:15

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

Worship Service  
@ 11:15

*Valentine day*

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

Worship Service  
@ 11:15

Church Council  
Meeting @7pm

23

24

25

26

27

28

Worship Service  
@ 11:15