

Parish News • October 15, 2021

Members and Friends of Ely United Methodist Church,

Greetings from Pastor Craig!

I traveled the same stretch of road between Jacobson and Park Rapids twice in three weeks recently. The change in the autumn color was noticeable.

During the first trip (September 19) the red and orange hardwoods were at peak color. I enjoyed seeing mile after mile of picture-postcard views along this mostly deserted stretch of road. But by October 9 the reds were looking pretty dull. What caught my attention this time was how on some trees the leaves were part yellow and part green, on others the leaves were still mostly green, and still others the leaves were already mostly yellow. It was an interesting variety.

If I were to travel down this stretch of road near the end of the month, I'm guessing the leaves will be almost completely yellow, except for the oaks that will be reddish-brown. By Thanksgiving the trees will be completely bare, again except for those stubborn oaks.

For many years it's seemed to me that autumn in Minnesota divides itself into three "sub seasons," with some overlap.

- Early autumn, which can almost feel like late summer, occupies most of September even in northern Minnesota. There is bright sunshine (most of the time), warm temperatures, school is just starting, flowers in outside pots still thrive, and only the early-bird maples have turned color. We may get a few nights with frost warnings. Farmers are checking fields and getting machinery ready for the upcoming harvest.
- Mid-autumn, is when leaves turn color with increasing speed and begin to fall. The first killing frost typically hits hard about this time. Harvest is in full swing and anyone traveling through farming country is treated to an enjoyable spectacle, but the trade-off is you have to allow extra time for your trip in case you end up behind farm equipment on the road. Up North, hunting shacks and deer stands are made ready by eager hunters.
- Deep-autumn is when there is no kidding ourselves any longer – winter is just around the corner. We are smack-dab in the middle of hunting season. Most early snowfalls melt off, but not always. Extended cold snaps aren't unusual. When I lived in farm country on days when the high temperatures were in the teens and accompanied by a bitter wind, and a countryside empty of crops felt somber and bleak.

I mention this because I've long been fascinated by the "many faces" of autumn, but will also make a further connection, tying this in with life and faith. Full disclosure: Pastors/preachers

are unable to not make connections between one thing and another. In other words what I see in any one dimension of life reminds sheds light on how I experience another part of life.

So, here's the connection. Life doesn't sit still, whether the seasons of the year, our health, how our children are doing in school, or the joys and challenges we are experiencing. Life is always on the move, as is our own self-understanding, and our capacity to respond to all that's going on.

I don't think I noticed this much at all when I was between 25 and 45 and helping to raise my two sons. There was so much going on in our family and as I charted my course as a pastor that the rest was a blur for me, despite my best attempts to pay attention.

It's almost the opposite now that I'm older, live alone, and with my family a long way away. There's too much time for pondering, for reflecting on life, family, and ministry.

As we watch Jesus interacting with people in the Gospels, he always meets them right where they are. Rich or poor, healthy or infirm, sinner or saint, coming to him in desperation or playing games in order to trap him, it's all the same. He embraces them and with compassion touches their deepest need in that moment. And Jesus does the same for each of us today who come to him with outstretched arms and an open heart.

Item #1: Several of our committees have been or will begin meeting in advance of our annual meeting, our Church Conference that will be held Wednesday, December 15 at 6:30 p.m.

The Nominating Committee will meet Sunday, October 24th following worship in the upstairs lounge. Nominating Committee members are Linda Hane, Patty Rusco, Tricia Scheffler, Laverne Lindholm, Pat Olson, Tootsie Loe, Donna Rusco, Cathy Aldrich, and Paula Mattila.

Speaking of committees, our Worship Committee will meet on Monday, October 25th. We'll be finalizing details for our Dedication of Memorials/All Saint's service on Sunday, November 7th and making preliminary plans for decorating the church for Advent/Christmas and for our Christmas Eve services. They are just around the corner, after all.....

Item #2: The UMW (United Methodist Women) will be meeting Wednesday, October 20 at 10 AM. Join us for coffee and a short business meeting, devotions and fellowship.

Item #3: As we prepare for winter, contact Marge Olson if you're able to sign up for one or more months of shoveling snow.

Item #4: There is an usher sign-up sheet on the bulletin board at the rear of the sanctuary. The November/December issue of the Upper Room arrived this week and is available for you to pick up at church.

Item #5: This week's Prayer is attached or included.

I'm including a few more verses of Scripture this week than I normally do. We humans have an innate desire to feel hopeful. God's promises in Scripture, in both Old and New Testaments, offer hope in many places. But there's the stubbornness of history to deliver the kinds of things we hope for, at least according to our timetable.

While these words from the Apostle Paul speak specifically to our Christian hope for God's overcoming sin, evil, and death in a cosmic sense, I think they also are bolstering for us as we hope for the smaller movements of God in our life.

18-21 That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.

22-25 All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

26-28 Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

Romans 8:18-28. (The Message)

God's blessings be with you and your family,

Pastor Craig

The Ely United Methodist Church

Prayer Wall

October 15, 2021

This is a guide for prayer this week. The *Prayer Wall* is a reminder of those needing prayers during devotional times. Thank you for dedicating some of your personal prayer time to lift up these requests.

Psalm 17: 6 (NIV)



“I call on you, O God, for you will answer me; give ear to me and hear my prayer.”

We lift up the following in prayer...

- **Tootsie Loe** – Pray for her strength and comfort as she has discontinued further treatments.
- **Diane** – Carol Linneman’s friend undergoing strenuous cancer treatments for a type of cancer that can not be cured, but can be limited. Pray for successful treatments in limiting the cancer.
- **Mike Haney** – After shrinking, his brain tumor is now growing again. Pray for new successful treatments.
- **Linda Gass’s mother, Pat** – Fell and broke her hip & is having surgery. Pray for comfort and healing healing.
- **Bob & Vicki Beech** – Prayers to not be overwhelmed by the many changes in their lives during the past few years.
- **Linda Williams** – Linda is starting a new experimental drug treatment since her current liver/kidney cancer treatments are not working. Pray for effectiveness and no side effects.
- **Patty Niskala** – Patty is having her scans this week, pray for clean scans.
- **Duane Johnson** – Dan’s youngest brother is having quadruple bypass surgery this week. **Update:** Duane’s bypass surgery went well , he receiving 5 bypasses. Pray for comfort and healing.
- **Dale** – Jer Niskala’s friend who contracted Covid last year and still has symptoms including requiring Oxygen.
- **All the Fire Fighters and their families fighting forest fires in Ely and elsewhere**
- **All essential health care workers exposed to the COVID-19 virus and the Delta variant**

We include all the United Methodist Churches and Pastors, both active and retired, in our MN UMC Annual Conference as we work in extraordinary ways to keep our congregations and communities free from infection by the COVID-19 virus.

Prayer requests are compiled from our church prayer chain, from our Sunday morning church congregation using the prayer request forms located in the pew welcome pads, and the North Star District Prayer List. Prayer requests will remain on the Prayer Wall through four weeks unless removed earlier because the prayer is known to be no longer necessary. People may ask that prayers be renewed on the list for subsequent 4-week periods. The Prayer Wall is finalized each Thursday for the Sunday morning service.