

Dear Member and Friends of College United Methodist Church,

May we each know by faith and experience God's loving presence in each moment of our lives.

I hope you will worship with us this Sunday. We're going to pray over the church's Vision, Mission and Strategy! It is an important step in our spiritual adventure forward!

I'm putting out the "pastoral call" that we will seek God for the Holy Spirit's leading and presence in our personal lives and in the life of our beloved church in 2026 (and beyond!). Thank you for remembering to regularly pray for our church.

The message will be based on The Vine Life of John 15. God has a refreshing, empowering, encouraging word for us as we are reminded of the strategy Christ gave us on how to be spiritually alive and fruitful!

There's a well-known institute in Zurich called Burgholzli. It's where the words "schizophrenia" and "complex" were born. An elderly, frail woman seated in a wheelchair was being interviewed by a psychoanalyst. She said that she was dead because she had lost her heart. The psychiatrist asked her to place her hand over her breast to feel her heart beating: it must still be there if she could feel its beat. "That," she said, "is not my real heart." She and the psychiatrist looked at each other. There was nothing more to say.

We lose heart, we lose our soul; our lives lose their meaning, purpose and motivational energy when we lose our loving connection with God and one another.

The Vine Life metaphor serves well in showing us a picture of the alive Church. We are called to be a place of relational connection:

1. LOVE GOD--our most important connection is to Christ *"I am the Vine, you are the branches."*

2. LOVE PEOPLE--connected to one another: *"This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you."*

The Beautiful Church is where people are discovering that:

- **Christ calls us for LOVE.** *"Love the Lord your God...and love your neighbor as yourself."* We are designed and created to love God and people.

- **Christ calls us for JOY!** (v. 11) *"I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."*

- **Christ calls us for FRIENDSHIP.** (v. 13) *"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."*

The church thrives spiritually when we are connected to the Vine, and God is very much alive in us! Three vital signs of an alive, healthy church are: LOVE, JOY and FRIENDSHIP.

- Let us continue to grow in our love for God and one another.

- Let's receive and lovingly share his joy!

- Let us live in friendship with God, and share that life-giving, healing friendship with one another!

In our personal lives, and in this church, Christ will be glorified!

Sincerely with love!

Pastor Duff