UNITED METHODISTS
OF SUSQUEHANNA & UPPER NEW YORK

PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

A Three-Month Prayer Guide for the Strategic Visioning Process
Gracefully created by the UNY Missional Excellence Team

AUGUST

Theme: Celebrate / Honor the Good
Scripture: *Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24*

Congregational Conversation

This reflection may be offered during worship, small groups, or leadership gatherings.

Leader: As our Conference enters this sacred journey of visioning and planning, let us begin with gratitude. When has our congregation felt weary or uncertain and yet witnessed God's powerful, renewing presence among us?

Communal Prayer

O Gracious God, we give thanks to you, for you are good, and your steadfast love endures forever! In seasons of uncertainty, you were our guiding light. When numbers were few and energy was low, you renewed our strength. When hope felt distant, you became our salvation. You have met us in our vulnerability and shown us that your grace is not bound by our limits. You are our strength and our song. You have become our salvation. So, today, with grateful hearts, we praise your wondrous deeds. Indeed, this is the day that the Lord has made; we rejoice and are glad in it! Amen.

Leader: What in our congregation's life is "marvelous in your eyes"—a witness to God's goodness that calls forth praise?

Communal Prayer

O Generous God, we come before you today dedicating all that is good and life-giving to your glory. We lift before you the milestones that mark your faithfulness, the ministries that have brought healing, the worship that has stirred hearts, the relationships that have grown in grace, and the

steps we've taken, despite uncertainty, to follow your call. These moments are marvelous in our eyes, not because of what we have done, but because of what you have made possible. We dedicate our joys, our labor, our dreams, and our future to you. May your Holy Spirit continue to empower us, that every act of love and every word of hope might be a testimony to your enduring love. Amen.

SEPTEMBER

Theme: Lament & Release
Scripture: *Psalm 121:1–2; Lamentations 3:40–41*

Guided Prayer Moment

Leader: We are entering a time of exploration—unlearning, reshaping, and remaking.
Today, we invite release so that our hands and hearts may be open to receive the joy and blessings God is already preparing for our Conference and congregations.

Scripture Reading:
"I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where my help will come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1–2)

Invitation to Embodied Prayer:
Place your hands over your heart space. Imagine them holding all the parts of our church—
the people and traditions, buildings and budgets, griefs and hopes, pain and praise.
Consider what God may be inviting you to let go.
Lift your hands upward, releasing what no longer serves His purpose.
You may find yourself releasing with one hand while holding on with the other.
That's okay. Let us notice—and pray.

Communal Prayer

Almighty God, Holy One, we admit we have held on too tightly to what we have known. We have desperately gripped to remember and honor the people and traditions of our past. We have clung for comfort, and out of fear. We have grasped so hard, for so long, we can barely imagine what might happen if we let go…And yet, You O God, are faithful. You invite us to let go. Not to take away our past from us, but to offer us a bright and radiant future- a future that is only available to us if our hands are open to receive your good gifts. And so, we ask for your grace and your blessings on this day, as we release those things which weigh us down and hold us back, that we might be ready to receive the abundant blessings you have in store for us. In fear and trepidation- In faith and daring… We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

OCTOBER

Theme: Listen Anew
Scripture: *1 Kings 19:11b–13*

Breath Prayer Practice: *Gently Hear*

As we conclude this season of prayerful preparation,
we call on the Holy Spirit to attune our spiritual senses to what God is unfolding among us.

Let us center ourselves with the phrase:
"My soul, go to where the Lord may pass by." (repeat 3x)

Scripture Reading:
"Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord."
Wind tore the mountain… but the Lord was not in the wind.
Earthquake shook the rocks… but the Lord was not in the earthquake.
Fire raged… but the Lord was not in the fire.
Then came a still, small voice.
Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle and stood at the entrance of the cave.
And the voice said, *"What are you doing here, Elijah?"* (1 Kings 19:11b–13)

Deep Breath Prayer

Leader: Let us breathe deeply for 1–3 minutes. Use the following breath cues:

- **IN:** Gently
- **OUT:** Hear

Communal Prayer

> Holy One,
> You speak in the whirlwind and in the whisper,
> in the rush of wind and in the silence of the soul.
> Open our ears to listen anew.
> What is stirring? What is rising
> within us, among us, around us?
> Help us sense what is emerging.
> As Elijah listened for Your voice on the mountaintop,
> as the disciples received the Spirit with fire and wind,
> may we be ready —
> for the gentle whisper or the mighty windstorm.
> Alight in Your Church again, O Spirit.
> Kindle boldness, compassion, and holy imagination.
> Come, Holy Spirit, come.
> We listen anew.
> Amen.