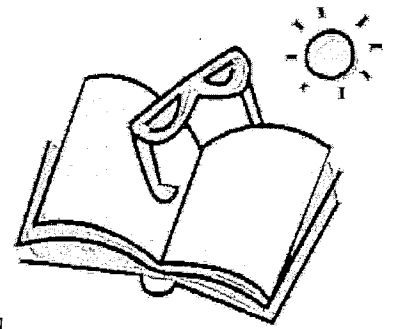
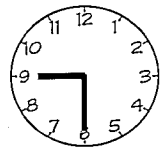


# Pastor's Page+



It's hard to believe, but summer is upon us. Perhaps what's hardest to believe is that all our end-of-school activities are happening, but we're not always sure we should have packed away our sweaters for the year!?! The warm sunshine of Easter morning was so beautiful, and yet six weeks later as the season of Easter now comes to a close, we seem to cycle back and forth between chilly, drizzly, March-like temperatures and the long-anticipated summer warmth as June arrives.



Sure as the sun rises though, our Minnesota summer will eventually settle in. Just a friendly reminder that starting on Pentecost Sunday (June 4), our worship services move an hour earlier—to 9:30 am—until after Labor Day. This is done specifically so that you can gather to joyfully worship God and still have most of Sunday available for all those additional summer activities. While I know that summer finds many of our members on the road “up north” or in a campground on weekends, I pray that you won't become strangers to our congregation in the next couple months. In fact, this summer we're going to offer a second chance to be in fellowship with each other on Sunday evenings. Some of our members are organizing an abbreviated service for those who may have been away for the weekend and still want to catch up on the message and activities of the morning worship service. Look for more information elsewhere in this newsletter as well as in special announcements coming soon.

If you are some distance out of town on some extended travels, I'd like to challenge you to seek out a UCC (or other) congregation in that area—and share your experiences of their worship ways with me when you return. On behalf of the Council and the Finance Board, I also ask that you continue to remember our congregation with your regular financial gifts. All too often tithe and offering numbers suffer as much as church attendance during the summer months, which can make it hard to keep up with even well-budgeted regular operating expenses.

A few years ago, I came across some thought-provoking concepts as part of an Army Chaplain class I was taking. They came from the book *Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders* by Reggie McNeal. One of the disciplines of which I was reminded during our busy Memorial Day weekend was that of self-management. As McNeal asserted, great leaders must be great managers—not only of processes and other people, but of their lives and selves. Part of that is being aware of one's own emotions and knowing the danger signs of pitfalls like depression, anger, grief, or fear. These are all very real emotions that are brought into a chaplain's or pastor's office on a regular basis, but before I can be of help I need to be sure that I am not handicapped by similar effects in my own personal life.

To keep ourselves prepared for helping others through the toughest times of their lives throughout the year, pastors and chaplains need to find ways to keep ourselves mentally and physically vibrant. Too often religious leaders of all backgrounds throw ourselves into helping others, and frequently sacrifice our personal or family lives and livelihoods to do so. Basics like regular time off, sleep, a balanced diet, and both physical and mental exercise are essential to our ability to offer effective religious leadership. Sometimes I have to remind myself that without these basics, I too become run down and prone to the very negative emotions with which I have been called to help others. Pastors and chaplains are people with busy lives and families just like the people they serve, so each of us in turn need to watch each other for signs of fatigue. We're in this journey together!

Speaking of relaxation, summertime in Minnesota brings with it a seemingly primordial need for campfires, doesn't it? Thousands of years ago, communities would gather around a campfire to cook food, be safe, have warmth, and have community. Our culture may seem a long way off from the cave and fire, but our brains haven't changed that much. A big part of human spirituality resides in the ancient flames of a campfire.

David Kinnamen, in his book *You Lost Me*, says that young people are leaving the church in droves because "they see the church as anti-intellectual, highly polarized, and irrelevant in matters of sex, faith, and life together." It's hard to argue with much of that. BUT, what if the first thoughts that came to their minds were safety, warmth, and community? In other words, what if church was like a campfire? Images like that are how our brains work.

So what better way to recharge ourselves this summer than to gather as a church family around a crackling fire? I've been tossing around the idea of sharing some campfire fellowship either at our home or in the large lot next to our church right on Downtown Plaza. I haven't developed a plan or schedule yet, considering that I'll be away for the first half of June participating in National Guard training and the UCC Annual Meeting, but if others are interested let's plan to restore our bodies, minds, souls, and spirits around a campfire on a semi-regular basis starting in mid-June. Watch the church website and Facebook page for an invite, then grab a lawn chair, your family, a friend, a grandparent, a grandchild, or someone you don't even know, and let's sit around a sacred fire telling stories, sharing faith, sharing wisdom, and just bonding as a community. I hope to see you there!

Peace and warm thoughts,  
*Rev. Cory Germain*

