



# Whatcoat United Methodist Church

16 North Main Street – Camden, Delaware 19934

January 10, 2018 – Season of Epiphany

Dear Alex,

In lieu of our monthly second Monday Administrative Council meeting, we will be gathering on Friday, January 19 (7-9:30 pm) and Saturday, January 20 (9-11:30) for our annual Winter Leadership Retreat (in the Fellowship Hall). I have already met with our Administrative Council Chair, Becky Caswell-Wade and our Lay Leader, Andy Davies, to prepare for this time together, and we are excited about the conversation God is leading us to have together for the sake of the mission and health of our congregation – and through us, our neighbors.

We have asked you to save this date on your calendar, and now I ask that you hold us all up in prayer as we prepare to discern God's will for our church and for our leadership tasks in 2018. To help focus your prayers, I have enclosed an agenda for both days of the retreat. Some of the items will be no surprise, and some will need some explanation. Feel free to speak with Becky Caswell-Wade, Andy Davies, or myself if you need clarification about the agenda.

On Saturday morning, we will be discussing and deciding whether or not to approve my request for three months of Renewal Leave this summer, which marks my 25<sup>th</sup> ordination anniversary. Our Staff Parish Relations Committee has discussed and approved this request, and now we turn to our Administrative Council to determine if this is God's will for Whatcoat and for me and if so, how we will go about it. I am requesting this time to pray and seek God's will on the mountaintop in order to better serve God, the Saints at Whatcoat, and our community. I look forward to examining and improving the plan with your wisdom.

The other new item on the agenda will be a presentation on the United Methodist Committee on a Way Forward. This group of 32 lay and clergy United Methodists from all over the world has been tasked by our Council of Bishops to discern "a way forward for profound unity on human sexuality and other matters." I have attached more information about this group, the work they have done so far, and the remaining timeline, to guide us in prayer.

This is truly a time of change, but I believe this conversation about unity, in particular, may be a light to our nation, in particular, in our current affliction with deep and intractable polarization. Christ, Paul celebrates, has broken down the dividing walls of hostility between us (Ephesians 2:14). May we realize that promise Christ secured for us with his life, death and resurrection.

Your Pastor and Partner in Christ,



Bo Gordy-Stith

Welcoming All to Passionately Pursue Jesus and Share God's Love