



First United Methodist Church
34 West Washington Street
Shelbyville, Indiana 46176
317.398.8854
shelbyvillefirst.org

Dear friend,

Grace and peace to you! I hope all is well in your mission and ministry. Forgive me this long letter, but I'm excited to write it.

We've spoken at cluster meetings and elsewhere about discipleship training and opportunities for congregational development. We now have in Shelby and Hancock counties a way to grow in faith together.

On Saturday, September 29, the *Crossroads* and the *Circuit Riders* clusters will begin a season of learning and growth. Our process will be similar to the IMPACT program, which all thirteen of our congregations learned about earlier this year. While IMPACT is valuable, our Superintendent, Rev. James Bushfield, is allowing us a more organic, regional alternative.

A broad outline of our program is: three gatherings between now and Thanksgiving, three gatherings between New Year's and Easter 2019, and three gatherings between Easter and mid-summer 2019. Each set of three would focus on one phase of movement from the inside out – from personal discipleship, to congregational health and practice, to missional engagement with our community and our world. Often, I've felt that church development workshops jump right to what I would call step two or even three. I would say that step one has to be built well for any healthy outreach or church development.

Our gatherings in 2018 will be conducted by Ann Handschu, who leads in discipleship for the West District, having served as staff at Ginghamburg UMC and at the Indiana Annual Conference. Thousands of persons have benefitted from her training. Ann will be teaching from the things she is most enthusiastic about – understanding who God has made us to be, learning how we can be more faithful, and growing confident enough in our faith so that we are able to share it well. Her expertise will encourage us as she walks with us along the way to deeper faith and discipleship.

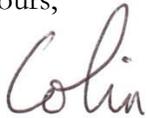
You may be wondering by now about finer details. The exact time and place will be Saturday, September 29, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at First UMC, in the fellowship hall. The parking and the building are accessible to all. For our first three sessions, the cost will be \$20 per person per session, which includes lunch, and childcare if needed. If you are not able to attend, please consider sponsoring someone from your congregation or underwriting the total cost. Grants are being pursued which could lower or eliminate the cost for 2019's training. The one downside to doing this as an alternative to IMPACT is that staff and programming for IMPACT are funded by our Conference tithes. Further information, hopefully good news, will be shared as soon as it is available.

Our second gathering will be on October 27, at West Street UMC. Our third gathering will be on November 17, location TBA, but hopefully in the *Crossroads* cluster? Unfortunately, none of these dates will perfectly allow everyone to attend – there’s always something else on the calendar – but everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend as much or as little as they are able. As we proceed, we will plan dates and places for 2019’s gatherings.

On any given Sunday, around 560 people are worshipping in our thirteen churches. For the 29th, I am praying that 10% of us – let’s round that to 60 people – will be present to learn and grow together. Join me in praying for 60 or more of us United Methodists to meet on the 29th, and pray that whatever we do, we may do well. They say that it takes 15-20% of a group to drive and sustain significant change. I hope you encourage your congregation to be a part of our effort. No other organization in this area has the number of mission outposts we do: not even the Post Office! The United Methodist Church could truly own this part of Indiana for Christ.

Information, including registration information and a video that you can use and share will be posted soon at shelbyvillefirst.org/clustertraining. In the meantime, and anytime, you can reach me by the phone or email listed below. Thank you for all you do for Christ and the church. I look forward to seeing you on the 29th!

Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Colin".

Rev. Colin C. Cress
812.219.5698
colin.cress@inumc.org