HOCKESSIN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Monday Meet-Up Recap

Sunday, Continued: The Temptation Towards Premature Certainty

SEPTEMBER 14, 2026 | MATTHEW 24:11-13, 23-28



Attendees: Pastor Vern Bryant, Janice Bowers, Val and Mike Budischak, Michele Godwin, Donna Manista, Joyce Schindler, and Kristen Shub

Eight participants gathered online for HUMC's first Monday Meet-Up, a new opportunity to continue reflecting on Sunday's message using the weekly Sunday, Continued. guide. After introductions - and a little birthday celebration for Pastor Vern - the group discussed how the sermon's themes connect with the uncertainties, worries, and decisions we face in everyday life.

The Message Revisited

Pastor Vern revisited Jesus' warning in Matthew 24 about false prophets, deception, and the importance of standing firm. Jesus did not give His followers an exact timeline or every detail they might want to know. Instead, He taught them how to live faithfully when the future remained uncertain.

The sermon's central image was a ship traveling through dense fog. A passenger, exhausted and eager for the journey to end, nearly mistook jagged rocks for solid land. The story illustrated the danger of premature certainty: when fear, discomfort, or exhaustion causes us to accept an answer simply because we desperately want one.

> **Faith does not require us to manufacture certainty. It asks us to trust God and remain faithful, even when the way ahead is hidden.**

Where the Message Met Us

The group spoke honestly about circumstances that create a strong desire for certainty, including family concerns, serious health challenges, anxiety, overthinking, and fear of being unprepared. Several participants acknowledged the temptation to control circumstances in hopes of preventing surprises or avoiding pain.

The conversation also explored how worry often intensifies when the day becomes quiet, particularly at night. Participants discussed prayer, Scripture, biblical meditation, and listening to recorded Scripture as ways to redirect anxious thoughts toward God. Jeremiah 29:11 and Proverbs 20:24 were among the biblical reminders shared:

> "The Lord directs our steps, so why try to understand everything along the way?"
>
> **PROVERBS 20:24**

Pastor Vern shared that concentrating only on reaching the end of a difficult season can prevent us from recognizing what God is doing during the journey. Faithful endurance does not mean that we will always understand the path. It means trusting that God remains present and continuing to take the next faithful step.

An Image of Hope

Pastor Vern described a recent time of silence following prayer in which he pictured a battered ship near the shore. The passengers were standing safely on land as the storm clouds began to break and sunlight appeared. They were preparing for a celebration.

The image connected powerfully with the evening's discussion. The ship had endured the storm, the people had reached safety, and the darkness was giving way to light. It offered a reminder that God's presence and hope remain with us even when we cannot yet see how the journey will end.

Practice for the Week

1. Stop before reacting.
2. Write three short statements:
    - What I know
    - What I do not know
    - What faithfulness asks of me today
3. Pray over what you have written.
4. Take only the next faithful step.

THE FOG PAUSE

When uncertainty rises, pause long enough to separate what is known from what is feared. Then ask what faithfulness requires today - not what will solve the entire journey at once.

Gratitude Shared

The gathering concluded with participants sharing reasons for gratitude. Those reflections included Christian parents and mentors, opportunities to study and grow, supportive spouses and families, Christian friendships, and the caring community found at HUMC.

Several participants expressed particular appreciation for the way members work side by side during events such as the Pumpkin Patch. Pastor Vern thanked everyone for serving as the "test pilots" for this new gathering and for helping create an honest, thoughtful conversation.

Looking Ahead

Pastor Vern's message for Sunday, September 20, will be "Salt Shortage," exploring Jesus' teaching that His followers are the salt of the earth and what happens when salt loses its flavor.

The Creed series, based on Adam Hamilton's study of the Apostles' Creed, is scheduled to begin Sunday, September 27. The series will explore what Christians mean when we say that we believe in God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

The next Monday Meet-Up will continue the conversation from Sunday's message. Participants who have already registered do not need to register again.

Follow-Up

- Continue making the weekly Sunday, Continued. guide available through the HUMC website and mobile app.
- Place approximately 25 printed copies in the narthex each Sunday.
- Practice the Fog Pause during moments of uncertainty this week.
- Join the next Monday Meet-Up to continue the conversation.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, we thank You for this day and for Your presence with us even when the way ahead is unclear. Lord, forgive us when our desire for answers leads us to claim certainty before You have revealed the path. Give us wisdom to recognize voices that deceive, patience to wait upon You, and faith to stand firm when the journey is difficult.

When we are tired, afraid, or tempted to abandon the course, remind us that Jesus is with us and will give us strength to endure. Help us trust You with what we cannot see and remain faithful in what You have asked us to do today. These things we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.