



Disciples of Jesus, Connecting Our Community to Christ

Greetings!

Welcome! Please visit our website to find our Sunday livestream, worship videos, Sunday bulletins, an audio bible, personal devotions, calendars and more.

Pastor's Ponderings



Community Transformation

"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." – Mother Teresa

As mentioned in the previous Crossroads, each month of 2025 we will look at the first part of our mission statement: **Disciples of Jesus**, Connecting our Community to Christ. A disciple of Jesus reflects God in the world. When Jesus talked about discipleship, it was an all-in kind of thing.

Community transformation begins with personal involvement—walking alongside others to encourage positive change where we live and beyond. True world transformation always starts within the faith community. It is the Holy Spirit who has already transformed us from death to life, and that same Spirit now works within us to redeem others, draw them into fellowship, and plant new communities of faith.

Jesus said in *Luke 13:20–21*, "What else is the Kingdom of God like? It is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough."

This is how God's Kingdom grows. Just as yeast spreads through the dough, so a few faithful communities—like St. Mark Lutheran Church—can influence and transform the broader community. We are not the goal; we are God's instruments. The Church is the means through which He brings transformation to the world. The book of Acts vividly shows how God used His people to change lives and communities.

Reflect on these Scriptures: Acts 13:38–49; Acts 4:32–35; Zephaniah 3:9.

Our society today is in great need of healing. Divided by race, class, ethnicity, and belief, we see the brokenness of sin that separates not only humanity from God but also people from one another. The world needs reconciliation and renewal.

When we view the world through the lens of healing, we often encounter our own limitations. We realize we are not strong enough, wealthy enough, or wise enough to fix what's broken. We are not God. That's why we must bring every need before Him in

prayer.

Remember—**prayer is never the least we can do; it is the best thing we can do.**In prayer, we entrust everything into the hands of our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. As we rely on Him and listen to His direction, we will see His power at work through us.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu reminds us:

“Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing. Superficial reconciliation can bring only superficial healing.”

Reconciliation begins with our relationship with God. We can forgive only to the extent that we ourselves have been forgiven. Reflect on the words and actions of Jesus in **Luke 15:11–32; Matthew 15:29–31; and Mark 9:28–29.**

Through reconciliation and redemption, transformation follows. Transformation happens when destructive patterns are replaced with healthy ones. If we only remove what is harmful without filling that space with what is good, we create a void that invites new destruction. The cycle is broken not when we stop tearing down—but when we begin to build up.

This is true for individuals and communities alike. Just as one person might replace gossip with active listening, a congregation can replace division with service, indifference with compassion, and fear with faith. When more people begin to make such changes, whole communities move toward health and wholeness.

So how can we, at St. Mark, help make this vision a reality? Let us pray, act, and trust that the same Spirit who transformed us will continue to work through us—until the yeast of God’s Kingdom has worked its way through the whole world.

As I write on each topic, I encourage you to meet with one, two, or three other people. Discipleship is not an individual endeavor. Use the articles for discussion, read and study the scripture together, and encourage each other in your walk. The result will be transformation – not of ourselves only – but of others and the whole community around us.

A fellow disciple of Jesus,

Pastor Brad Urlaub

Council News

“Gratitude is the inward feeling of kindness received. Thankfulness is the natural impulse to express that feeling. Thanksgiving is the following of that impulse.”— Henry Van Dyke

November has many days of recognition that inspire a myriad of thoughts and memories. Among the days of recognition or commemoration are All Saints Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, and Christ the King Sunday (or last Sunday of the church year). It is also a month that reminds us of time. We begin the month by changing our clocks to reflect our current time and we end the month in church talking about the end of time for all times.

Thanksgiving can encompass many of the thoughts we have on the other special days – memories of things for which, or people for whom, we are thankful. “Come ye thankful

people come...God our Maker does provide all our wants to be supplied..." This is from one of my favorite hymns; a hymn that describes how truly blessed we are. This year, with Thanksgiving arriving so late, the last verse is especially meaningful since the church year will end on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Like the last verse in the hymn, the last Sunday of the church year reminds us that life on this earth will also end when our Savior returns on the Last Day. But until that day, we should demonstrate our thankfulness in all that we do.

As we move through the month of November, let us take time to reflect and be thankful; unlike television and most stores which have already overshadowed Thanksgiving by concentrating on Halloween and Christmas. With praise and thanksgiving may you act and give out of the abundance that God has provided for you so richly and dearly each day of your life.

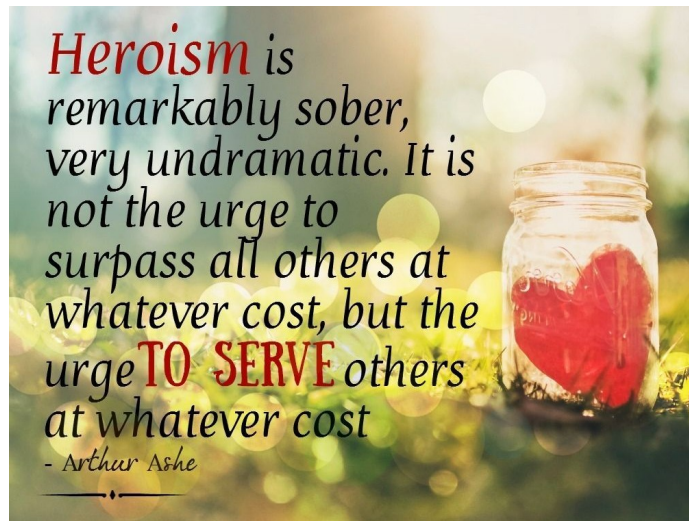
Last month Council spent most of its time reflecting on what God has provided as we reviewed the 5-year plan for the facilities, looked at the giving of the congregation, and then prayerfully prepared a budget and plan for the next year. We look forward to sharing all with the congregation at the December meeting of the Voters Assembly.

Happy Thanksgiving!

On behalf of council,
Kristen Waterstram-Rich

Thank You, Veterans!

*To all Veterans,
Your service to our
country is a debt
we can never fully
repay, but one for
which we will be
eternally thankful!*



November Celebrations

Lainey Blythe 11/2
John Lehning 11/12
Monica Smith 11/19
Amanda Hautmann 11/21
Dan Poppenburg 11/21
Taylor Blythe 11/27
Joyce Haag 11/27

WEDDING
Lee & Kirsten Hilpert 11/10

BAPTISMAL BIRTHDAYS
Nancy Connorton 11/24
Robert Haag 11/28

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!