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The Epistle

February 2019

How Do We Grow in Numbers?

One question that so many churches have been asking for many years now is, “how do we grow in numbers?” Many people expect me to know the answer to that or even to be **the person chiefly responsible to make our congregation grow in numbers. Well... I wish** there was an easy answer.

Some years ago I became convinced that a big part of the answer was that any congregation’s growth in numbers should naturally flow from its continual growth in faith. Our connection to God’s grace and acceptance overflows in love and joy to others, drawing them also into the family of God.

I remain convinced that this is the correct path forward for the church. Yes, when people are “church shopping” they look at all kinds of things like church size, programs, music, and preaching. But at the core, we want to stay focused on the main thing, right? We want to follow Jesus and invite others to follow, not just join our church.

What can we do to help our congregation grow? First, we strive to not just believe in Jesus but to truly follow Jesus. And what does that mean? We will hear from the gospel of Luke this month some stories of the beginning of Jesus ministry and teaching. These teachings are not always easy for us to hear because they mean change for how we live and especially how we relate to others. Is this law? No, the invitation to follow Jesus is always an invitation to live out grace daily, profoundly.

What can we do to help our congregation grow? Second, following Jesus may mean change for us, which all people seem a little allergic to, but it also brings a fullness of joy, meaning, and life. As I wrote in my annual report, it brings me

joy and gratitude to see everything our congregation has done over the last year. Consider all of the events, the opportunities to serve our community, the ways we have improved our property, and the existing and new groups that allow us to read, walk, study, pray, work, and serve together.

The new walking group and book club are examples of activities that can help us form new relationships and deepen existing ones. They give us ways to be deliberate about going into our wider community and **invite** our family, friends, and acquaintances. (Welcoming is good but insufficient.) Have you noticed how our culture has allowed people to become more isolated from each other? Have you noticed this in your own life?

So, here’s something to ask yourself: what do you enjoy that you could share with others? How can doing that be an expression of your faith? Or is there a problem or an issue that you are passionate about? Can you work with others on that? It is not that the purpose of the church is to be a social club, but that I think we have become too isolated as a culture, and we need more opportunities to mix, invite, and meet new people.

We can do this all the while we remember that our connection with God is primary; our ongoing growth in Christ and sharing that love is our goal.

What can we do to help our congregation grow? I continue to reflect on this question and I hope you will also share your thoughts over the next month and beyond.

In the grace and peace of Christ,
Pastor Clark

ST. TIMOTHY LUTHERAN CHURCH FINANCES



SERVICE COMMISSION

Feb. 3rd will be Souper Bowl Sunday.
Please be prepared to donate to
Thomas Carman Food Pantry, cash that is.

We raised over \$700 with our ELCA Good
Gifts ornaments. Thank you!

Next I-HELP dinners are Feb.6 and March 6.
Any help is appreciated.

Your Service Commission

December 2018	Actual	Budgeted	Diff
Income			
Offerings	\$18,478	\$10,002	\$8,476
Building Use	\$3,331	\$3,608	(\$277)
Faith Giving	\$1,350	\$708	\$642
Misc Income	\$559	\$500	\$59
Total Income	\$23,718	\$14,818	\$8,900
Expenses			
Loan Principal	\$637	\$637	\$0
December Net	\$6,587	(\$859)	\$7,446
YTD 2018			
YTD 2018	Actual	Budgeted	Diff
Income			
Offerings	\$129,104	\$120,050	\$9,054
Building Use	\$42,885	\$43,300	(\$415)
Faith Giving	\$7,822	\$8,500	(\$678)
Misc Income	\$10,090	\$9,000	\$1,090
Total Income	\$189,901	\$180,850	\$9,051
Expenses			
Loan Principal	\$6,803	\$6,803	\$0
YTD Net	(\$5,693)	(\$13,622)	\$7,929

REMINDERS AND UPDATES

St. Timothy Book club—Meeting at noon at Islands in Del Monte Shopping Center at noon on February 9. They are reading *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch. Randy Pausch is asked to consider his demise and to ruminate on what matters most to him little knowing he has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. His lecture wasn't about dying but about the importance of overcoming obstacles, of enabling the dreams of others, and seizing every moment.

Neighborhood Meal Planning

This group will gather again on **Sunday, February 10th after church service**. Please join us as we discuss plans to provide and invite our church neighbors to a once monthly meal in our Social Hall. We are anticipating that people will come for the music, relationships and food.

Men's Breakfast

This monthly event is held at the Crazy House Restaurant the date this month is **February 23 @ 8:30am**.

St Timothy WELCA Project—The WELCA women are making sturdy drawstring backpack-style cloth bags. We are requesting that the members of the congregation bring the following items to place in each School Kit: Four 70-sheet notebooks (280-300 sheets total) of wide-or college-ruled paper approximately 8"X10.5, no loose-leaf paper, One 30-centimeter ruler, or a ruler with centimeters on one side and inches on the other, One pencil sharper, One pair of blunt scissors (safety scissors with embedded steel blades work well), Five unsharpened #2 pencils with erasers; secure together with a rubber band, Five black or blue ballpoint pens (no gel ink); secure together with a rubber band, One box of 16 or 24 crayons, One 2 1/2" eraser. The Goal is to send off these filled backpack style bags in September 2019.

COMMUNITY NIGHTS



NEIGHBORHOOD MEALS UPDATE

The Serving a Community Meal Committee has met several times now and details are beginning to emerge.

The group has a purpose (“to develop relationships with our community neighbors while serving a meal”), a date (Wednesday 8 May), a venue Social Hall (weather permitting the lower parking lot), and lead volunteers to handle many of the challenges ahead.

They’ll meet again after church on 10 Feb to continue their efforts which include finding a better name!

Add the 8 May date to your calendar and consider helping if asked to do so.

Thanks,
Dave Fleishman

ST TIM WALKERS

This courageous bunch has meandered in November through magnificent Marina while petting a horse, walking part of the course of Women’s Collegiate disc Nation Champion and passed urban blight, shooting targets and Target and passed the site of the former military club and a homeless encampment which lead to much discussion on this challenging social issue. December’s theme was the Monterey Mosey were we peered at three piers, gazed upon the patron saint of Italian fisherman, walked past the place where the first religious service was held in California and visited some of the oldest stone building in our state. In January the walkers plodded through Pacific Grove and saw Lover’s Point, the John Denver Memorial plaque and cruised by Carolyn’s reserved plot in the PG Cemetery.. Cookies were provided.



Saturday 16 Feb at 1030 am

Meet at the corner of Parker Flat Cutoff and Normandy near the cemetery on the Old Ft. Ord. We will be on pavement.



PRAYER VENTURES February 2019

- 1** *Black History Month* Give thanks for our sisters and brothers of African descent, who have both suffered much and contributed much to our nation and the ongoing work of building a multicultural church and restoring and reconciling communities in the name of Jesus Christ throughout the world.
- 2** Give thanks for children and youth in our lives and congregations, for the gifts they bring to the body of Christ and for the leaders, teachers and members who nurture and encourage them.
- 3** The good news of Jesus Christ, God's love and the promise of eternal life bring us joy, but we sometimes find ourselves troubled and irritated by God's desire for us to exercise justice and peace and immerse ourselves in serving our neighbors in need – without hesitation or prejudice. Pray the Holy Spirit will work in our hearts to change our attitudes, bias and self-centeredness, setting us free to be willing, committed disciples and servants in the world.
- 4** Remember in prayer regions of the world embroiled in conflict and turmoil, that leaders of nations and people involved and impacted will work together for peaceful, just and lasting resolution and reconciliation; pray especially for the safety and well-being of people who have and continue to suffer loss, disrupted lives and displacement from their homes, communities or nations as a result of violence, persecution or economic collapse in these areas.
- 5** Remember in prayer ELCA missionaries serving in collaboration with the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, especially in ministries of evangelism and education. Give thanks and pray for the 18 international leaders who have received ELCA educational scholarships to further develop their skills for service in the church in Japan.
- 6** What is love? Where is it scarce or misguided in our relationships and how we live out our faith? Ask God to deepen and mature our understanding of love and center us in the love we, as baptized children of God, are called to share generously with others.
- 7** Thank God for the special relationship we have with the Episcopal Church, a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1999; pray for the church, its members and leaders, and that together we find strength and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.
- 8** The Lord is our refuge, rock, protection, hope and trust throughout life. Give thanks and praise!
- 9** Give thanks for the work and impact of ELCA World Hunger. Pray we all seek ways of being working, generous partners in breaking the cycle of hunger and poverty, providing immediate and long-term assistance, and bringing hope to individuals, communities and regions of the world that suffer from hunger and poverty.
- 10** Consider what stirred you to follow Jesus and grow in faith. Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill you with courage and confidence to invite others to believe and follow.
- 11** Pray for our seven ELCA seminaries, that their faculty and staff are strengthened, inspired and sustained in their work of preparing men and women for public ministry in a multitude of contexts and communities here and around the world.
- 12** Give thanks for entrepreneurs of all ages in our congregations, and pray we value their energy, ideas, skills, curiosity and creative perspectives as assets that can be used for ministry and serving our neighbor.
- 13** Called by God to serve as a prophet, Isaiah felt ill-equipped, reluctant and that he was a poor choice for the task – until God's spirit moved him to reply, "Here I am; send me!" Pray we are open to the work God is calling us to do in our congregations, communities and the world, and, in spite of our hesitations and insecurities, are able to trust God's forgiveness and empowering love by responding, "Here I am; send me!"
- 14** ELCA gifts and offerings support leadership development, education and collaboration in China. We partner

with the local church and organizations to respond to health, hunger and leadership development needs; 10 international leaders have received scholarships to further develop their skills for service in the church in China. Give thanks to God for what we are able to accomplish through working together.

15 Give thanks for the good news of Jesus Christ that we have received through faith, and pray we eagerly and unashamedly work to proclaim the gospel in the world with all who will listen – with friends and strangers alike.

16 Continue to pray for and support parents, families, friends and communities that have suffered the tragic loss of loved ones as a result of gun violence. Pray we are filled with empathy and care for the long and difficult healing they may go through, and that the Holy Spirit will help us be bold, wise agents and advocates of change to prevent and end the violence across our nation.

17 Jesus compels us to serve our neighbor and be a blessing to others – friends, strangers, enemies, outcasts, hungry and poor alike. Thank God for inviting us to join in God’s work in the world and ask for the Holy Spirit’s guidance and help with the service and challenges to which we have been called.

18 *Martin Luther, died 1546* Give thanks for the life, faith and teachings of Martin Luther, who worked with tenacity and courage to serve Christ while also confessing his personal struggles, questions and human weaknesses; pray we, too, are faithful in our baptismal journeys and not easily discouraged by the complexities of life, risks and our self-doubts.

19 Lift up thanks and praise for our life with God, a life filled with promise, hope and blessings that nourish us each and every day; a life and relationship that God desires for all people.

20 Pray members and leaders of our congregations are bold yet humble servants of Christ who embrace ongoing self-reflection, study of Scripture, evaluation, prayerful conversation and creative planning for the purpose of doing God’s work in the world and growing the church.

21 Pray we find joy, wisdom and nourishment in following the word and paths of God in the midst of everything else competing for attention and influence in our lives.

22 Praise God for revealing to the world the risen Christ who is not bound by the consequences of human sin and death, but instead gifts us – through faith – with the truth and certainty of God’s love, forgiveness and eternal life.

23 Give thanks for the energetic participation in “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday each fall and for the resulting partnerships and community service that stretch throughout the year.

24 Ask God to help us listen to and wrap our lives around the straightforward teachings of Jesus that implore us to be merciful, generous, love our enemies, do good to those who hate us and not judge others – attitudes and actions that may not come easily to us.

25 Give thanks for the Deaconess Community, a Christ-centered community of women who devote their lives to proclaiming the gospel through ministries of mercy and servant leadership in diverse community and ministry contexts.

26 Remember God’s love and forgiveness, and pray we are moved to demonstrate the same grace and forgiveness – as Joseph did with his brothers who sold him into slavery – with people with whom we have experienced offense, conflict or broken relationships.

27 Give thanks for the Research and Evaluation services of our church, which assist congregations and synods in exploring their communities, demographics and trends, ministry opportunities and challenges, and provide resources and insights for planning and renewing ministries.

28 What have you been worrying about lately? Share your concerns with God; trust in the Lord, be still, don’t fret and go about doing good in the world.

February 2019

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

					1	2
3 Worship Service 10:00am	4	5	6 I-Help 5:30pm	7 Christ in Our Home Noon	8	9 Book club Meeting Noon @ Islands
10 Worship Service 10:00am Neighborhood Meal Planning After Service	11	12	13	14 Property Committee 9:30am Christ in Our Home Noon	15	16 St. Tim Walkers 10:30am Fort Ord
17 Worship Service 10:00am	18	19 Food Bank 4-7pm	20 Council 1:00pm	21 Christ in Our Home Noon	22	23 Men's Breakfast 8:30am Workday 9:30am
24 Worship Service 10:00am	25	26 Dagny Circle 1:00pm	27	28 Christ in Our Home Noon		



Gloria Llenaresas

2/7

Charlotte Nelson

2/10