

Words from Pastor Tom:

The Freedom of Giving

Giving frees us from the familiar territory of our own needs by opening our mind to the unexplained worlds occupied by the needs of others.

—Barbara Bush

The quote above reminds me that giving is a mind-opening experience. It frees us from self-centeredness, widens our social aperture, and enables us to see the needs of others around us.

Giving in all its forms is also a freeing experience from the bondage that our financial and physical possessions can create. The Advent devotional I shared this past Sunday by Blair Gilmer Meeks alludes to this trap. That spiritual reality exists because, as C.S. Lewis reminds his readers in *Mere Christianity* and *The Screwtape Letters*, we live in enemy territory on this earth. By that, he means that the earthly domain is where Satan fights his insurrection against God, and he is constantly on the prowl to find new recruits to his rebellion. One subtle tool that Satan uses—one of many—is to convince the body of Christ that it doesn't really need our prayers, our presence, our gifts, or our service. The lie then gets exaggerated and encouraged by messages that it's okay to think of oneself before others in "you deserve it" messages in the form of overt advertising and covert temptations. It is a trap we all fall into, including me, especially in this stressful holiday season with COVID-19 lurking in dark corners.

Last week or early this week you will receive a letter from our Administrative Council chairperson Lee Fuerst. We have also included a copy in this newsletter for those of you who may have missed it via mail. He and I want you to prayerfully consider your year-end giving and your anticipated giving for 2021.

Here's why. I truly believe that good things await us. Despite appearances, God IS on the move at Lake Lotawana. Given that spiritual reality, will we catch God's Holy Spirit on an individual, and then congregational, basis? Will we be on fire for Jesus and make things happen in and through our church? Or, will we be content to sit back and receive God's grace but not give it to others? The ministry of this, and every, congregation needs our prayers for others, our presence online and in-person, our financial gifts, and, most importantly, our service to our Lord and Savior in loving behavior. It is the last one—our service—that I continually stress.

As your pastor, I'm eager to lead you into a rebirth of God's presence at LLCUMC in 2021, but I need each of you to believe that God has good things in store for us, then act upon that belief in conjunction with others, to make our faith in God real for three particular groups of people in our community.

The "**Nones**." In 2012, this is how the Pew Research Center described those who do not have any religious affiliation. Reasons vary as to why, and their intensity can range from simple awareness to atheism. The only way they will know Jesus Christ, and thus who we are as a congregation, is for you to treat them with integrity and respect. Let them know by deed as well as word that faith in Jesus Christ isn't about judgment or moral superiority; it's about love and acceptance of them. That is how C.S. Lewis converted to Christianity from atheism, and it can happen in our homes and workplaces.

The “**Dones**.” The Pew Research Center described them as knowing all about religion well into adulthood. They know the practices and the language of the church, but then something hurtful, traumatic, or judgmental happened, and they walk away not only from that congregation but from religious affiliation as well. As those who are “done” with religion as they have experienced it, they are the hardest group to reach. Your consistent faith, honesty, and witness of Christ may be one of many means of grace available to break down the wall they’ve built.

The third group, the “**Un-dones**,” is a more recent category, and I’m not sure of its origin. They are folks who may or may not have some religious affiliation but are so overwhelmed by life’s circumstances (work, parenting, caring for others, illnesses, etc.) that they can’t seem to find their way back to church (or the schedule will not allow it). They need someone to guide them toward a more fulfilling and eternal life, and that someone maybe you.

The Nones, Dones, or Un-dones are all around you. Think about these folks in your prayers, your presence, your gifts, and your service for the rest of this year and into 2021. When you find them, love them as Christ our Lord loves us. Show them that you trust in Something that is far greater than our present circumstances, and that hope does exist. That is how we make disciples for Jesus Christ, and our church programming, in whatever form it may take, will simply reflect who we already are as a people called United Methodists.

Yours in Christ our Lord,

Pastor Tom



WE GIVE *because*
GOD GAVE FIRST

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
John 3:16*

Dear Friends in Christ,

What a challenging year this has been! I pray for health and safety for you and your family. During this pandemic it is especially important to remember that God blesses each of us every day, and everything we have is a gift from Him. He has given us talents, health, property, relationships, the gospel, and the environment we live in. As a Christian steward, I serve God out of love and gratitude for these gifts.

Even during a pandemic, we are called to continue Christ's work in our community, and to show God's love and grace to all people. Our monetary giving to the church is a way of furthering the mission and vision of the church; enabling the church to continue Christ's work in the local community and around the world. Our contributions go toward the basic maintenance and repair of our church building; a facility that houses our own Heart & Soul Children's Christian Learning Center, providing quality education and child care for many local families, and also space for numerous organizations in our community to meet, such as Boy and Girl Scouts. Through our offerings we provide pastoral care, discipleship opportunities, and other ministries in our church. In addition, our offerings provide funding for missions outside the walls of our church, and are used to fund apportionments to the Missouri Conference of the United Methodist Church, which supports local, regional, and church-wide activities. Through the church, our resources are used to spread the gospel in word and deed.

John Wesley once said, "Do all the good you can, in all the places you can, to all the people you can". I believe the actions of our congregation show us following in Wesley's footsteps, routinely supporting one another and helping God's children whenever and wherever we can. Your generosity is what makes ministry at LLCUMC possible. Unfortunately, giving is down significantly this calendar year and I'm asking for your help in providing the church with the monetary resources to continue doing good.

I know that the pandemic has left some individuals unemployed or financially struggling, which has impacted their ability to give at the same level as they did last year. Thus, as you consider your end-of-year giving and your personal annual commitment to next year's giving, I'm hoping that those of you whose income is stable would consider taking a step forward in generosity and increasing your giving from the past. In the midst of doing this I believe you will find your own life blessed even as you invest in the ministry of the church.

Author Lynn Miller once said that "Stewardship is the act of organizing your life so God can spend you". As you consider your giving commitment to the church, I pray that we all organize our lives so that God can help us make the most of our short time on this wonderful earth.

Sincerely,

Lee Fuerst

Church Council Chair



"The mission of Lazarus Ministries KC is to offer unlimited compassion while providing for the unmet needs of Kansas City's urban core. We bring hope and opportunity to those in need and work toward solutions for homelessness and food insecurity."

While we at LLCUMC have not been able to volunteer at Lazarus Ministries in 2020, Lazarus Table and Lazarus Boutique have continued to be operational. Hot lunches have continued to be served, but in to-go containers, to about 100 people every weekend. People have still been able to get clothing and other needed supplies from the Boutique. LLCUMC has provided support by donating many sleeping mats and many bags of used clothing and shoes this year to the Boutique.

To continue our mission to Lazarus Ministries, this year's Giving Tree donations will be dedicated to this mission. The Mission/ Outreach Committee asks that you donate new socks and underwear, gently used (or new) winter coats, and/or a cash donation to help support this mission. Items for women, men, and children are needed. The cash donations will be used by Lazarus for food purchases. You may drop these items at the church office throughout December on Monday – Thursday mornings (816-578-4544) or mail a check payable to LLCUMC to the church. Please note "Lazarus Ministries" in the memo line.

Thank you for continuing to help LLCUMC support this mission.

2020 Missions Giving Tree to benefit Lazarus Ministries

We are collecting for men, women, and children:

- New socks and new underwear



- Gently used (or new) warm winter coats



- Monetary donations to fund the Lazarus meal program

DONATED ITEMS may be dropped off at the church office on Monday - Thursday mornings throughout December (816-578-4544).

Checks may be mailed to the church. Please make payable to LLCUMC with "Lazarus Ministries" notated in the memo. **THANK YOU!**



Hi, Tonia,

I wanted to tell you thank you for the Thanksgiving meals the church donated to our families. They were very appreciative. I also want to thank you for continuing to support our families out at Tarsney Lake. We appreciate the work you are doing in our community!

Sincerely,


Kristi Mann
Counselor
Mason School Elementary

Looking for a place to volunteer this December?

Lee's Summit Social Services (LLSS) needs help with their Christmas gift distribution program. There are thirty 2 ½ hours volunteer shifts remaining to be filled. LLSS clients have filled out wish lists for gifts for their children and have a designated time to pick up their packages. Four volunteers are need for each shift to fill the requests (2 people to select the items from the shelves, 1 person to pack the boxes, and 1 person to hand the packages to the clients). It is all well organized and socially distanced to protect everyone's health. See the LLSS website to more information and to sign up.

Christmas Program | Lee's Summit Social Services

Issocialservices.com



Prayer &
worship
brings great
refreshment
to weary
souls!

On Going: Les Case, Wade Davis, Roger Grable, Richard Fuerst, Winnie Fuerst, Harvey Geary, Michael Hatfield, Linda Koleiny, Shane Miley, Nancy Rowe

Depression and Mental Health: Robby Sherrod

Strength and Healing: Gene Crist, Graves family, Mike McMillin, Kirk Morehead and family, DJ Petty, Dennis Rogers, Andrew White, Luke, Emma, Leih

Missions: Kenyan G-Marc Project, Chics for Chicks, Hillcrest Transitional Housing, Harvester's Food Bank, Lazarus Ministries, Tarsney Lake Families, Congregation de Mellier, Heart and Soul Children's Learning Center

Please contact the office to update or add prayer requests

December 2020

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
29 Online Services 10:00 am	30	1	2	3	4	5
6 Online Services 10:00 am	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 Online Services 10:00 am	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 Online Services 10:00 am	21	22	23	24 <i>Christmas Eve</i>	25 <i>Merry Christmas</i>	26
27 Online Services 10:00 am	28	29	30	31		