

BUILDING A CULTURE OF GENEROSITY

Dear Friends at St. Stephen Lutheran Church:

Two years ago, as the world was shutting down, there were serious concerns about what effect that would have on the church. Look now as we re-emerge from the pandemic. Many of us feared a scarcity world would take over, but that is not what happened. God has been abundantly present.

It is in times of difficulty that the world sees the importance of the church and our message of grace more clearly. God is up to something here and it is exciting to be part of God's mission.

First, let me say thank you for the ways in which you stepped up to continue to worship, to care for one another, and to look for opportunities to share the Gospel when our community so clearly needed the Gospel during the pandemic.

You also demonstrated significant generosity to make certain that this ministry remained strong.

Now, let me encourage you that I believe what God has shown us through this crisis is our need to walk together, continue to innovate, and step up the ways in which we share God's love to a world that still so desperately needs to recognize God's presence.

We are looking forward. God is calling us to great new adventures and your generosity will help us accomplish so much.

As we enter our stewardship drive this year, let's think about all the ways that we see generosity and abundance.

Peace, Pastor Beth

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RECOGNIZE YOUR NEED TO GIVE

It is a fundamental spiritual and psychological principle that life and its gifts are to be used and shared. Life cannot be hoarded, or it turns in upon itself and you lose it. "Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (*Matthew 16:25*) We each have a deep inherent need to give. To give is to live!

But unfortunately, instead of focusing on our own need to give, all too often we center on the need of the church to receive. The church does seek our support, but we must remember it is God's Church and it will prosper and flourish in God's own good time whether we give to it or not. The wonder of it all is what God invites us to be a part of--God's church and to experience the joy and blessing of generously supporting and extending its mission.

Just as a coin, Christian giving has two sides. For too long, we centered mostly on the side entitled "The Need of the Church". We need to begin concentrating on the side headed "My Need to Give" for giving is an integral part of spiritual life and growth.

