

Being the Church

I have had the opportunity to talk with a number of our boards and chairs over this last month, as we prepare for the school year and for the work of our congregation this year.

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

This year in devotions for our meetings we are working through the book of Ephesians (where Paul asks, what is the Church?). (Last year we studied Colossians where Paul answers the question, who is Christ?) I invite all our members to study Ephesians this year. It guides us in learning who we are and how we are to live as Christians.

By the way from the end of July to the beginning of September one of the lessons each Sunday is from Ephesians. Expect some sermons on Ephesians.

Our Sunday morning Bible Study hour will also go through Ephesians.

Al Barry's Vision Statement

As we talk about a vision for our congregation I remember the 5-fold vision statement our Synod President set before the Church.

They are important because they are a vision of what God is making His Church to be -- and they fit very well with the themes of Ephesians.

1. Be in the Word
2. Care for One Another
3. Tell the Good News
4. Remain Faithful
5. Live in Peace

As we go through this year I will time after time seek to remind us of how the many parts of our life at St. John fit into this vision of the Church.

Some different parts

1. Be in the Word
Ephesians!

Plus, some years ago we printed a plan for reading through the Bible. Beginning in September we will start an 18 month plan for Bible reading among us.

2. Care for One Another

There are so many ways: Stephen Ministry; the LWML ladies visit the shut-ins; we have a prayer chain that shares daily prayers; and more.

Plus, the Stewardship Committee has started to focus a lot of our stewardship on how we can use our time and talents to care for each other. You will be hearing much more about that this year.

Plus (you should know about this) when our elders meet each month, we don't only talk about business things. We take time during our meetings for each elder to pray

for the people in their zones, especially those who have health needs or other needs. This is important because it helps to bind our congregation together as "A Caring Community."

3. Tell the Good News

One of the most remarkable things happening among us lately is the large number of baptisms; frequent adult baptisms; and Adult Information Classes for new members. One is beginning at 7:00 Thursday evenings in August (starting August 3) -- we have 9 signed up who are planning to become members.

Plus, our congregation has an amazing number of links to the mission field, too many to name on this page, both in our own country and overseas. Our youth group has visited the Chinese Lutheran congregation in Carbondale.

Plus, after our Sunday morning Bible Class finishes studying Ephesians we will have a study on Evangelism, called "The Master's Plan," how God works through your daily network of friendships to spread the Gospel.

4. Remain Faithful

We have an annual confirmation reunion, and year after year we faithfully teach our children in Church, in confirmation classes, and in our School.

5. Live in Peace

So as we follow our God who has loved us we seek to love one another. We live as the "forgiven and forgiving" people of God. When we know who we serve, and how He has loved us through the cross, our hearts really are warmed toward each other.

As we go through this next year I urge you: hold to the vision of what God is doing among us; how He is forming His Church. Treasure the gifts of God and live for Him.

Pastor Mark