



MONONA MESSENGER

FEBRUARY 2025

+ Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ +

Dear friends in Jesus Christ. A member of our church recently came across a good explanation of our Christ faith by Dr. Charles Stanlet of Touch Ministeries which I found very apropos and he shared it with me. There are some of the good points for us to consider:

“You've probably that-church life can be comforting and refreshing, or uncomfortable, puzzling, difficult, and all-absorbing—in other words, it's a lot like a family. A healthy, Bible believing fellowship is made of life-giving connections. Churches aren't perfect, but you could call them one of our "essential blessings." And why is that? Here are some thought provoking words offered on the value of participating the body of Christ:

First of all we are to "encourage one another and build one another up" (1 Thessa. 5:11). Fellowship in the church isn't just greeting each other or sharing potluck meals. It means investing ourselves in people's lives and helping them grow spiritually. There are a variety of ways this can be done—praying for them, sharing biblical principles that apply to their situations in life, or reminding them of God's faithfulness and promises. Later in this chapter, Paul added these "Admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone" (v. 14).

Second, we should "be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor" (Rom. 12:10). The church is not a place to claim personal rights or seek self-advancement. Instead, we serve each other by seeking the other person's good. Think how many church conflicts would dissolve if we all considered others as more important than ourselves.

Third, we are to treat others "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love" (Eph. 4:2). Verse 32 adds similar characteristics of kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. Think about the opposites of these qualities—pride, harshness, impatience, intolerance, rudeness, indifference, and unforgiveness.

We all want the first list to characterize us, not the second. But living in close relationship with other people sometimes reveals qualities we need to develop, doesn't it? Perhaps that's why some people no longer attend church. Maybe they've been hurt in the past or have developed animosity toward some fellow believers. Yet these conflicts are the very reason we need to stay involved. God uses these hurts and disagreements make us more like Christ and produce godly faith in us. If we give up on the church, we lose out on this sanctifying influence.

Church life, even in healthy congregations, can be challenging, but, at least in part, that's God's design. We hope this encourages you to take a step toward local fellowship, or bring your current participation to a new level. Let God surprise you with all He can do through the presence of His people. This moment just might be the start of something new.”

For His glory!

Pastor Nowak

Steward Builders

A newsletter to help you grow as a steward.

The purpose of this newsletter is to share God's Word so that our members will better understand who we are to be and what we are to do in the light of the Scriptures. It is our hope that this monthly publication will help you grow in your relationship with the Lord and as a Christian steward.



Stewardship is a Matter of the Heart

God gives us the privilege and opportunity to be His stewards. Even though God gives us all things, He still allows us the freedom to choose whom or what we will serve. Whether we are stewards for the Lord, for ourselves, or for some other master depends on what controls our hearts. What or whom we love, serve, and follow is dictated by what our hearts value as most important. The choices we make reflect what is in our hearts. Satan is doing everything possible to take the love, compassion, and peace from our hearts that only Jesus offers.

In Matthew 6:21 Jesus said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* We can paraphrase this by saying, "Show me your treasure and I will show you your heart." What we treasure the most receives our time, energy, money, and heart. Each of us

determines where his treasures lie. What do you love and treasure the most? Unfortunately, some of us may find treasures in our homes, careers, cars, hobbies, or investments. God continually invites us to make Him our treasure. If our hearts are right, our treasures will be right.

Jesus spoke about the relationship between the condition of a tree and the fruit that it bears. *"Make a tree good and the fruit will be good or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit"* (Matthew 12:33). In the same way that the condition of the tree determines its fruit, so will the thoughts of our hearts dictate our words and actions (Matthew 12:34-35). When our hearts are filled with God's presence, we reflect God's love, goodness, and kindness. When our hearts are right with God, our eyes are opened to the opportunities to serve and help others. When God controls our hearts, we willingly use our time, talents, and money in ways that glorify Him. Good hearts produce good fruit. Through time spent in God's Word and through participation in the Sacraments, God changes our hearts, making us faithful disciples and stewards for Christ. As Solomon wrote, *"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life"* (Proverbs 4:23).

Say It!

Many of us admire the strong, silent type of person for whom Vermont has become famous. But I think it was rather too long a silence which the Vermont farmer broke,

when he said to his wife as he sat whittling on the porch, “Do you know, Sarah, you have meant so much to me that sometimes it’s almost more than I can stand not to tell you about it.” Most of us go too long without telling those nearest to us how much they mean to us. Silence is golden, but it can become leaden. So is it in our relationship with God. We become more responsive to God’s goodness by expressing our response.

(Ralph W. Sockman)

Loving All People

Jesus said, “*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you*” (John 15:12). Jesus showed His tremendous love for us by going to the cross to suffer and die for us so that we can be reconciled with our heavenly Father. Christ’s love is in us, and He asks us to reflect His love to others. As Christ loved all people, we are called to love all people whether or not they like us.

Former President Abraham Lincoln exemplified the ability to reach out in love to an enemy. His staff often criticized him for his positive treatment of his sworn enemies. One of the president’s enemies once stated in print that he thought Lincoln was obviously incompetent in the White House. The nature of the critic’s attack on Lincoln even degenerated to the level that Lincoln’s physical features were compared to those of a gorilla. Later, when war broke out between the States, Lincoln asked that critic to serve as his secretary of war.

Lincoln’s advisers were appalled by the President’s actions. When they asked him why he would choose his critic for such an important post, he responded that he thought Stanton was the best person for the job. When they advised him that he should seek to destroy his enemies rather than treat them like friends, he reminded them he was destroying his enemies when he made them his friends. When Lincoln died some years later, Stanton was standing by the president’s bedside. As he watched Lincoln breathe his last breath, he uttered the words, “There dies the greatest ruler of mankind the world has ever seen.”

We show our spiritual maturity by how we respond to those who have treated us wrongfully. It is easy to show kindness to friends or people who treat us with kindness. God’s love is most evident when we show our love to those who dislike us or mistreat us. It is by God’s grace that we are enabled to show Christian kindness to all people.

“Poor Jesus”

A woman tried to teach her daughter the meaning of proportionate giving. She took ten pennies from her daughter’s bank and laid them in a row. The mother said, “These nine pennies are yours.” She then put one penny aside and said, “This is for Jesus.”

The young girl looked at the nine pennies, then at the one. She looked up at her mother, and glancing at the one lonely penny, said, “Poor Jesus.”

Prayer Chain

Life presents challenges to all of us, but sometimes those challenges can feel like it’s just too much. If you are experiencing situations, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual, call our Prayer chain. You may give your prayer requests to Angie TerMaat or call the church office at 608-222-7071 or if you would like to become a part of our Prayer chain.

***“Hear my prayer, O Lord;
Listen to my cry for mercy.”***



Sign Language Class:

Class meets every Wednesday at St. Paul beginning at 7 p.m. New and returning students are always welcomed to the class.

Loving and Losing:

We continue meeting on the second Monday of each month with a Bible study at 10:00 am for those that have lost a loved one—especially widows and widowers. We are discussing the last chapter of Kenneth C. Haugk’s book “*Rebuilding & Remembering*”. In March we will be discussing “Welcome to the Grief Club” We will meet again on Monday, February 10th with Pastor Nowak leading the group.

Any Changes??

Please let the church office know of any changes you may have in your phone number/s; email address/s; change of household dynamics; changed your name; or any information we need for the church directory. We would like to put out an updated directory.

Volunteers Needed:

Ushers, readers, communion assistants, and setting up the altar are needed every Sunday to make our worship special. Please consider helping in one or more ways to make others feel welcome at Monona Ev. Lutheran Church. Please contact the church office to volunteer. We Need You!



Voters’ meeting

Sunday

February 23rd, 2025

Please note: The *Quilters* meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month. If you can tie a knot, you would be qualified to help us. The quilts we make are sent to Orphan Grain Train which they then distribute where there is a need around the world and also locally. Please consider joining us for quilting and for the fellowship we share.



Ronald McDonald House Charities:

We received the following from RMH:

“At RMHC-Madison, we are surrounded by families whose lives are out of balance because they have traveled miles from home in search of hope for their sick or injured child.



Each aluminum pull tab you save is recycled and the proceeds help give families a place to stay during one of the most difficult times of their lives.

Thank you for pulling for RMHC-Madison!

Sincerely, RMHC-Madison Staff & Volunteers”

Also, many thanks to *Durwood Meyer* for taking the pull tabs you have brought in and delivering them to RHMC.

Thrivent Choice Dollars: It’s that time to direct your 2024 Choice Dollars. You must do this every year before March 31, 2025. Visit: thrivent.com or call 1- 800-847-4836. Log in....and choose: Membership Overview/Thrivent Choice/Direct/Monona Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Portals of Prayer is a great little devotional book that you can use for daily reading. The booklets can be found on the tables in the Narthex and Welcoming Area. Feel free to take one home and/or share with a friend.



MONONA MESSENGER
Monona Ev. Lutheran Church, LC—MS
4411 Monona Dr.
Monona, WI 53716
Address Service Requested



Divine Worship

Sunday 9:00 a.m.

Communion Services

1st and 3rd Sunday of each month.

Midweek Lenten & Advent

Vespers 6:00 p.m.

Sunday Christian Education Hour

Sunday School 10:15 am Sept. - May

Pastor: Rev. Thomas Nowak

Office Phone: 608.222.7071

E-mail: mlc-ms@hotmail.com

Website: www.mononalutheran.org

Stewardship Thought

Have a Heart

February: the month devoted to love. Stores are filled with heart-shaped boxes of candy and heart-shaped cards and vases of flowers with heart-shaped gift tags. All this is available for the consumer so that he can find the appropriate expression of his devotion to his loved one. If that expression of love has been preceded by a year of thoughtful and loving words and deeds, it is welcomed and cherished by the recipient. If not, it is just an empty ritual, done out of duty rather than true devotion.

Our relationship with the Lord is similar. He, too, desires our sincere devotion, not empty lip service. *“The Lord says: ‘These people come near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me’”* (Isaiah 29:13).

Stewardship is serving, helping, giving, but love is the basis for stewardship. Without love, our good deeds are empty and without merit.

Prayer: *Lord, thank You for Your unconditional love for me. Let Your love within me overflow to others. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.*



Blessings on your journey as a steward!

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

“Loving Christ, Serving Others through Preaching, Teaching, Reaching”