



## OUR STORIES

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF GOOD SHEPHERD

MAY 2024

### **Stewardship Team**

**Christina Kling-Garrett**

### **The Power of Our Stories**

Storytelling has been one of the most powerful means of communication throughout history. Stories have the ability to touch so many people – as a teenager, you may have had an instant connection with a character in a novel that shaped your viewpoints, or as a parent or grandparent, you may have fond memories of reading bedtime stories to a child and watching their eyes grow wide with wonder. Stories are a truly unique way to learn about the world and those in it.

As part of the 30 Day Easter challenge, Pastor Josh encouraged us to introduce ourselves to someone new at church. He asked us to do more than just say “Hi, my name is Christina” and ask about their afternoon plans. He asked us to dig a little deeper beneath the surface and learn more about our brothers and sisters in Christ. Along this vein, the Stewardship Team is starting a new mission called “Our Stories.” These stories are from members within our congregation revealing how God has worked in their lives and how Good Shepherd has played a part in that journey. Starting May 2, we will share one story a month collected from a cross-section of our members. A new story will be published on the first Thursday of each month and will be shared via email, on our social networking channels, and on our website.

Good Shepherd is blessed with a diverse community. Despite being nestled in suburban St. Louis, we welcome members from across the country and globe, those who came to us from different faiths, and we span all ages, genders, and orientations. Through “Our Stories” we will learn more about our brothers and sisters at Good Shepherd which will not only bring us closer as a community, but help each of us reflect on our own faith journey.

The Stewardship Team hopes that “Our Stories” will inspire each of you to reach out to those down the pew from you and share your story with them as we continue to grow in faith as a community and share stories from those nearest to us.



**Josh Brecht**  
**Lead Pastor**

In a recent sermon I mentioned a book called, “The Nones” by Ryan Burge, a social scientist (and part time pastor) who is essentially the preeminent researcher on trends in religious participation in the United States. The data is clear. Participation in faith communities is in decline across the board. (Yes, even in those bigger, shinier churches. But yes, most markedly in mainline Protestantism.) The fastest growing religious demographic in the nation is those who espouse, “nothing in particular.” Council has been reading Burge’s latest book together and I recently attended a community faith-leaders gathering hosted by the Mayor of Manchester, Mike Clement. We talked about how civic engagement is mirroring the same trend of decline. I was very impressed with the creative work Manchester is doing to build community. Check it out here:

### Building Community in Manchester

When we look at these daunting numbers it would be easy to just get discouraged. While many aspects of our ministry at Good Shepherd are thriving, we are not immune to power of this societal trend. Many people who were once very actively engaged in ministry here have drifted away, or only come on rare occasions now. (If that’s you, let’s have coffee soon and catch up! Seriously.) Yet, I see signs of growth and hope around us. Despite the upstream effort of doing ministry in a de-churching world, I am grateful to see our music ministry growing and our Wednesday youth ministry thriving!

How is Good Shepherd continuing to grow (even if slowly) against the forceful tide of decline?

The firm foundations that were built long ago,  
continue enabling ministry today.

Wise decisions were made about buildings and finances year ago, that allow us to be debt-free with a fantastic facility today. Faithful leaders created a culture of risk-taking, stepping out in faith to try new ministries and ideas (Feed the Need, Mission Trips, etc.). Prayerful disciples formed a mission-minded culture of hospitality that has blossomed into one of the most welcoming and generous congregations I have ever seen! Thanks be to God for the Spirit-led leadership of those who came before us. Inspired by their example, we now ask:

### What’s next?

Council has formed team to explore how we can build and sustain a thriving church far into the future. We are just beginning this process of prayerful listening and I hope you will share your heart with us in one of the many listening sessions in the coming weeks. (May 19 at 10 am is our general session in the gym)

When you think about the future of Good Shepherd what excites you? What worries you? What are our unique gifts as a church, and where is God calling us?

How is God calling us to steward the gifts we have been given so we can build a thriving church for our children, grandchildren, and the people who will be here 50 years from now?

Yes, there is much to be concerned about for the future of the Church in our world,

but I find hope in these words of Jesus:

*You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. –*

**John 15:16**

Let us continue to pray for Good Shepherd and God's leadership in our ministry. May we continue to follow Christ, grow spiritually, and share God's love. I can't wait to hear from you soon as we discern what's next together.

## **Feed the Need STL 2024 Mobile Pack A Huge Success!**

When this ministry began in the gym of Good Shepherd back in 2007, who could imagine how much it would expand over the next 18 years! It has been amazing to see the movement of the Holy Spirit awakening hearts and mobilizing God's people to give, serve, and save lives. By the end of this year's pack, we surpassed **10.7 million meals** provided through the STL mobile pack since it began all those years ago.



Thank you for your time, prayers, and financial support to make this possible. Because of this 2024 pack, **1.2 million meals** will go out to feed kids in need globally, and **56 barrels** of food items for Operation Food Search will be provided locally. This food will provide a brighter future for kids and transform the communities in which they live.

**5000 volunteers** gave of their time to make this possible. The opportunity to be a part of this incredible ministry also transforms the hearts and minds of those who serve, sparking generosity and compassion, making the world look a bit more like the kingdom of God.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do to make this possible!



*Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

**– Ephesians 3:20-21**

FTN KSDK News

FTN KMOV News

## **A "Wink" From The Welcome Team Elliott Haugen**

Happy May! This means you are probably thinking about summer, the



end of school, picnics, vacations, gardening, or how to honor mothers. Years ago, May Day (May 1st) was considered the start of summer and many countries and cultures celebrated this with dancing, singing and food. In the United States, May baskets were filled with flowers or treats and left secretly at someone's front door. May Day celebrations have faded over time, but sharing kindness is still relevant.

Good Shepherd is filled with welcoming, kind and caring people who were originally invited, as strangers, into our community of believers. Data and new members' comments indicate that people come to a church because of a personal invitation and they return because they are welcomed and asked to come back. So, please consider asking a friend, neighbor or colleague to attend a worship service this month and to take advantage of our programs, activities and special events this summer.

The Welcome Ministry started these "wink" messages ten years ago to share thoughts and information about our church-wide welcoming ministry. During that time, 620 people joined Good Shepherd as new members or through baptism. However, an equal number left us due to relocations, inactivity, church changes or deaths. So, it is important that we continue to reach out and share what Jesus gave us – his message of love, grace and forgiveness. And, like a wink, it only takes a moment to invite, welcome or show kindness to others.

As we read in Matthew 25:35 "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." We end by praying: "Heavenly Father, we gather, not as strangers, but as members of your family. We are blessed to have been welcomed by those who reflect your teachings, love and caring. Continue to lead us, awaken us, and bless us so Good Shepherd continues as a welcoming and inclusive place of people, passion, and prayer. Amen."

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**Good Shepherd Connect Mobile App Login**

**Weekly Services Saturday 5pm (casual) and  
Sunday 9am (traditional) and 11am (contemporary)**  
**[goodshepherdlutheran.com](http://goodshepherdlutheran.com) | 636-391-6685 | [Calendar](#)**