

My sermon series, which began on Ash Wednesday and will end on March 26, is on discipleship. And I not talking about the same old type of discipleship you might be used to; I am talking about radical discipleship. I know that the word radical has mostly negative connotations these days. These days, “radical” has mostly political undertones, and to be labeled a “radical” is usually not a good thing. With it, we associate words such as revolutionary, extremist, insurgent, rebellious, and militant. In this sense, few of us see being a radical as a good thing.

But radical has another meaning: relating to the fundamental nature of something; far-reaching or thorough. Synonyms include complete, total, entire, absolute, comprehensive, essential, and foundational. It’s in this second sense that we’re called to be radical in our Christian discipleship.

The uncomfortable truth is, Jesus made an absolute demand. When he said, “Follow me,” he meant leaving something or someone or some place behind. When Jesus called Peter and Andrew, we read that they “immediately left their nets and followed him.” James and John also “immediately left their boat and their father and followed him” when called by Jesus to be his disciples. Matthew, also known as Levi, left behind a lucrative living as a tax collector when he agreed to follow Jesus. Later on, Jesus warned a prospective disciple that he would often be sleeping on the ground. The Gospel writers include a number of instances where Jesus invited persons to follow him, but due to the high cost of doing so, they chose not to.

In Christ a new life has begun!

To choose to follow Jesus is to choose a path which, by design, inherently puts us at odds with the norm. And that’s because there’s nothing normal—from the standpoint of the world and popular culture—about the way of Jesus Christ. It may be that the most challenging aspect of following Jesus is fighting against our tendency to order our lives in ways that feel ‘natural,’ or according to our nature. But that’s the thing—when we profess faith in Christ, we’re given a new nature. The old nature has been crucified with Christ and we’re made new. 2 Corinthians puts it this way: “Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” However, because we still have one foot firmly planted in this world, so to speak, we still feel the pull towards our human, sinful nature. It’s the work of the Holy Spirit to empower us to live for Jesus instead.

So, what’s so radical about living for Jesus? Well, consider the following commands Jesus makes of his followers, all found in Matthew: speak only the truth (and I’ll add, even when doing so goes in someone else’s favor or even puts us in a bad light); do not lust for anything or anyone even if it’s only in your heart; root out anger and rage from your emotions; forgive without measure; love your enemies (and I’ll add, this includes those whom we deem evil); give without getting recognition (and I’ll add, learn to be perfectly fine with not getting recognized); work for peace. If you do any of these things completely, you’ll quickly discover how difficult it is to do! Sure, it’s relatively easy to do any of them half-way, but thoroughly?

How about the “greatest commandment”? Is that something any of us can say we do thoroughly and without reservation? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. AND love your neighbor. It’s been said that it’s impossible to truly love God apart from loving our neighbor. Put another way, loving our neighbor is how we show our love for God. If you take the command to love your neighbor to its fullest application, you’ll quickly discover how difficult it is to do. And yet, that’s our call. My hope, desire, and what I’ll be intentionally leading us toward, is that our church might become “radicalized” in our congregational discipleship in 2023. I’m praying that we’ll discover new ways to share Jesus’ radical, live-altering love with the neighbors in our communities. Are you willing to follow me in this pursuit?

Pastor Leslie

The Compass



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Lenten Project Blessing

March 26 is the day we will bless the collection of items for the Special Lenten Project. There is still time to collect your items, and if you need a bag (or two) contact Jenny Daby or the church office.

Celebration Bash

Our next Celebration Bash will be held on Sunday, March 5 following worship. We will have cake and coffee available in the fellowship hall to celebrate those in our congregation who have birthdays and anniversaries during the month of March. Be sure to stay and join us after worship!



Coffee Corner



Our next Coffee Corner is scheduled for Wednesday, March 8, at 9:00 am. Please join us for some good coffee and great conversation!

Admin Board Meeting

The Admin Board will be meeting on Wed. March 8 at 6:30pm in church library. An online link will be made available for those who cannot attend in-person.

Finance Corner

The sermon series on Stewardship highlighted being grateful for the abundance God has provided us. This abundance will look different for each of us and we are called by Jesus to respond according to our ability and gratitude.

2023 will be a year of financial challenges for Cross Roads because our budget (\$154,043.00) has a projected shortfall of \$10,996.00 based on the average giving in the past years. This year's budget represents \$10,058.00 less than the 2022 budget. Any "fluff" has been squeezed out.

Historically, Cross Roads has expenses which have averaged \$152,000.00 each year. As you can see, our 2023 budget will just cover this year's expenses.

Here is where we are at:

Monthly amount needed	\$12,836.92
January giving	\$7,151.20
January expenses	\$11,557.92
(the staff managed our expenses well)	
The result is a deficit of	- \$4,406.72

You will note that our giving is falling short. Please look deeply into your heart and see what God is doing in your life and the lives of your family and make an offering of thanks to God.

If you have not completed your stewardship commitment card, please do so. Our ability to accurately budget for the needs of Cross Roads depends on it.

Duane Daby, Admin.Team, Finance

Admin Team Notes

First and foremost, congratulations to Pastor Leslie for her hard work in her Practical Church Leadership program, which has helped us the Admin Team to realize there is much work to be done in terms of our church's policies and procedures. Admittedly, over the last many years at Cross Roads we haven't been that good about establishing and maintaining written policies on a number of different subjects. Also, we want to congratulate her on her acceptance as a fully ordained minister in the United Methodist church! This journey has entailed a lot of blood, sweat, and probably even a few tears! There will be an ordination ceremony on May 31 at 7:00 p.m. during Annual Conference. More details will follow, but, but mark your calendars if you wish to attend! It will also be live-streamed.

Over the past few months, the Administrative Team has been working hard to get formal policies on a number of subjects reviewed and finalized. We are very close to getting our Facility Use Policy finalized (we expect to approve it at our March meeting). Two key aspects of the policy are the development of a form that must be completed if tables and chairs are borrowed from the church by a member, and the rates to be charged for using the church for events, weddings, etc. The policy will be available for review when it is finalized. Our next priority is to review and approve a Finance Policy for the church, and then we'll move on to the Personnel Policy. It's not a glamorous activity but it's certainly a necessary one!

As a security improvement measure, Jim Solheid (our Facilities Team Leader) and Pastor Leslie had the alarm company come in and wipe out all the codes in the system. They will be re-entered for those who need to have access to the building. It was easier to build a new "database" in the system than it was to audit and ensure that codes weren't assigned to anyone no longer authorized to have them. Thanks to Jim and Pastor Leslie for working on this.

Spring is definitely NOT in the air yet, but the Lenten season has begun! It wouldn't surprise me if Easter outfits will include knitted hats instead of bonnets (which are passe, I know). In Job 37:10, the scripture says "From the breath of God ice is made, and the expanse of the waters is frozen." Take heart, however! Let the Lenten and Easter seasons warm your hearts even if your "outsides" are frozen! Easter brings a season of hope for all of us.

Pat Solheid, Chair, Administrative Team

The Cross Roads Mission

To help everyone find joy in their journey by:

Inviting everyone to walk with Jesus,
Growing together as His disciples?
Serving others we meet along the way
And Joyfully Celebrating the Journey

March Missions

The month of March is MN Food Share month. Words from a recent hymn we sang during worship says, "When people share a task, and strength and skills unite in projects old or new, to make or do with shared delight, our Friend and Partner's will is better understood, that all should share, create, and care, and know that life is good."



During the month of March, all excess White Bucket Funds will be sent to The Link. During the month of March they are able to obtain MUCH more food than normal. Our donations will provide DOUBLE during this month. If you wish to write a check, make sure you put MN Food Share in the memo portion of your check so it gets applied properly. We will, of course, accept actual food donations for the month as well; however, cash is more powerful during this month.

Fall Boutique Kickoff Meeting

It's time to start planning the Fall Boutique again. A kick off meeting will be held on Sunday, March 12th right after worship, in the Library. A zoom link will be available if you want to join but are out of town.



March Birthdays

Terry Albers 8th
Diane Duke 13th
Don Zeek 17th
Jim Solheid 19th
Donna Gertgen 21st
Alan Zaske 22nd
Donna Smith 24th
Natalie Denz 26th

March Anniversaries

Warren & Barb Gerdes 20th



If we have missed your special day, please let the office know.

The Link Updates

Volunteer Opportunities: If you or someone you know would like to be a part of The Link's mission and volunteer at the **Community Revival Boutique and Thrift**, we are looking for extra help on-call and on a consistent basis (mostly Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays). Our store hours are 10-3 Wednesday-Friday and 10-2 Saturdays. Our current volunteers are amazing and have a great time together building friendships. If you'd like to join the fun, call Shawna at 320-347-1047 or Ashley at 320-354-5465.

In January, The Link was able to serve 8 families with common household needs with our **Household Exchange Program**. The Household Exchange program takes in donations such as smaller furniture, bedding, towels, kitchen utensils, pots and pans etc. to provide families when they are getting back on their feet.

The Food Pantry served 75 households in January (including: 124 adults, 72 children and 25 seniors) and distributed a total of 3858.5 pounds of food. The need of food has increased significantly the past couple months, requiring The Link to increase their food budget to meet the needs of the people served.

The Wildcat Backpack Program is currently serving 86 children. Each week, students from the NL-S High School pack bags including: 2 juices, 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 snacks, 1 fruit and 1 treat, and deliver them to each school to ensure our students nutritional needs are met on the weekends when they are not in school. If you know a family that could benefit from this program, please have them call Ashley at 320-354-5555 or Vicki Mickelson at NLS schools at 320-354-2252 ext. 2607.

The Link's **Client Outreach** program served 10 families in February by helping with medical bills, utility bills and rental payments. This program also connected families with financial resources outside of The Link to help with bigger bills and necessities, including housing for homeless families.

Tuesday's Table's schedule is as follows: 1st Tuesday of the month: Our Lady of the Lakes (Spicer), 2nd Tuesday: Evangelical Covenant (New London), 3rd Tuesday: Faith Lutheran (Spicer), 4th Tuesday: Peace Lutheran (New London), 5th Tuesday: Rotating (call 320-354-5555 for more information).

As always, a HUGE THANK YOU to those who have donated food and/or monetarily and to those who have prayed for and with us here at The Link! With the increased need for food and in client outreach, we are asking for your continued support- financially and prayerfully.

Monthly Giving Opportunities: The Link makes monthly giving a convenient option for our donors. You can set up online giving through The Link's website at www.youarethelink.org or directly through your bank. If you would like to make a one time donation, you can send a check to P.O. Box 823, New London, MN 56273 or via Venmo @The-Link-1. Please contact Ashley at 320-354-5555 or email her at ashley@youarethelink.org for more information.





**Cross Roads Community
United Methodist Church**

3400 113th Ave NE
Spicer, MN 56288

320-796-2339
www.crossroadsspicer.com

March 2023

Christian radio stations in the area:

K-Love 90.9

KTIS 92.7 & 98.5

Spirit 92.9

March Blood Drive

Cross Roads is hosting another Red Cross Blood Drive! On Friday, March 10, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

What do we need from the congregation and the community? Two things:

- 1) If you are able to give blood, go to the Red Cross website and put in your zip code to find our blood drive. Then sign up! You can also call 1-800-RED-CROSS to sign up. We need to have at least 30 people registered to give blood in order for the Red Cross to hold the blood drive.
- 2) We need volunteers (2-3 per shift) for two hour shifts to work the check-in desk and possibly help pass out refreshments.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact Jenny Daby at (320) 470-0518 or jennydaby5@gmail.com, or you can contact the church office or Pastor Leslie.

