



In the Hands of the Refiner

"What Makes a Church Grow?"

Spring has sprung! It's spring time! It's cold still! Hey, we live in Minnesota. Wait 5 minutes and the weather will change!

Spring brings flowers and plants back to life. What makes flowers and plants grow? Water and Nutrients. Like humans and animals, plants need both water and nutrients (food) to survive. Air and Soil. What helps plants grow besides water and nutrients? Fresh, clean air, rich and healthy soil. Light and Temperature. Plants also need sunlight to grow. Too little light can make plants weak and stringy looking. They will also have fewer flowers. Temperature is important too. Most plants prefer cooler nighttime temps and warmer daytime temperatures. Lastly, space and time. Space is yet another factor to consider when growing plants. Both the roots and leaves need room to grow. Without enough room, plants can become stunted or too small. Overcrowded plants are also more likely to suffer from diseases since airflow may be limited. Time. Plants and flowers require time. They do not grow overnight. It takes time and patience to grow plants, some more so than others. Most plants require a particular number of days, months, or even years to produce flowers.

What makes the church grow? The Water and Meat of the Word of God. The Light of the Word of God, in which the Holy Spirit sparks the flames of desire and zeal. The Holy Spirit during our lives, grows us, feeds us, and nurtures us, through the Word of God, inspired prayer, and the Sacraments. The following are some thoughts which have come from the burden and concern I have for Christ Lutheran Church and its growth in these trying times.

"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all the believers were together and had all things in common; and they would sell their property and possessions and share them with all, to the extent that anyone had need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

~ Acts 2:42-47

A recent study has determined that Church attendance has declined by 50% in the United States since January 2020. It is imperative to understand and implement what will make a church grow. I will explain what can be done to prevent further decline and make the church grow.

1. Teaching:

The Challenge

Continue to be a church that teaches and preaches apostolic truth. The apostles' teaching, which would have included Jesus' earthly teaching plus what He taught the apostles during His 40 days of resurrection appearances.

Declaration

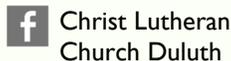
We must be a church devoted to God's Word through Sunday Worship services, prayer, catechesis, Bible study classes, and groups.

Christ Lutheran Church

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Website: clcduluth.org
President: Ouitdee Carson
V.P.: Carolyn Lofald
Treasurer: Sandy Carlson

Every Month:

Wednesdays:
4 PM Confirmation
5 PM Youth Bible Study
6:30 PM Adult Bible Study

Mary Circle
First Thursday of each month
at 9:30 AM (Postponed until
further notice)

Esther Circle
First Thursday of each month
at 10:00 AM

Dorcas Circle
Second Tuesday of each
month at 1:00 PM (Postponed
until further notice)

Lutherans for Life
Second Sunday of each month
at 6:30 PM (Postponed until
further notice)

Council Meeting
Second Thursday of each
month at 6:30 PM

2. Fellowship:

The Challenge

Continue to be a church that loves one another as God in Christ has loved us. The breaking of bread, covered both the Lord's Supper and larger fellowship meals.

Declaration

We must be a church devoted to togetherness through groups, through missional communities, and serving one another and others in the community.

3. Hospitality:

The Challenge

Continue to be a church that cares for one another's needs. The first believers were visitors from other countries who had not come to Jerusalem prepared to take up life there, an immediate need arose for those with local property and resources to use them to care for their new brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. These verses certainly teach unselfishness, sharing and hospitality as traits to be cultivated everywhere and always.

Declaration

We must be a church devoted to serving one another, through acts of kindness, the CLC food share, missions and local projects.

4. Prayer:

The Challenge

Strive to be a church that worships through prayer. We must pray! The church was continually united in prayer. **The prayers**, the Jewish believers participated in the three prayer services are called ("morning"), ("afternoon"; the word means "gift, offering") and ("evening") prayer. These were the public prayers of the church, and they observed **all** opportunities of this kind, and gladly embraced them.

Declaration

We must be a church devoted to prayer for each other, on behalf of others, our country, and our community through worship services and groups.

5. Generosity:

The Challenge

Continue to be a church that shares with one another and with the community. This is a voluntary generosity in sharing possessions and is seen as honoring God and is commendable.

Declaration

We must be a church devoted to giving back to God and our community through finances, gifts, resources and time.

6. Repentance:

The Challenge

Continue to be a church that desires to spend much time in worship. One of the characteristics of true church growth is a desire to spend much time in worship. *"The Lord added to their number"* is again an affirmation of God's sovereignty in salvation, since He alone can change the human heart to enable true repentance and faith.

Declaration

We must be a church devoted to being a people constantly pursuing a penitent life following God's design and purpose.

(Continued on page 3)

7. Faith:

The Challenge

Become a church which understands that there will be times when crises will come in our lives, like a pandemic, like when we lose our employment, lose a loved one, or experience illness. In addition, there will come a time when we have to contest for the Faith once delivered unto the saints. There is the challenge of believing God and His Word, self-mastery, dealing with our passions, our sins, our fragile nature, fear, and self-understanding. There is the challenge of accepting sin, sickness, old age, and death. Each of these life challenges must be met with faith.

Declaration:

We must be a church where faith acknowledges as reality what is not made plain to the senses – to what we taste, touch, see, hear, and smell. Faith is based upon that fact, acts on it, and is supported by it even when everything we experience seems to deny it.

We must be a church where faith actualizes what we see. This is how the unseen virtues of hope can be visualized. Faith gives what we are hoping for reality. In times of weakness, it brings us strength. In times of sadness, it brings us joy. Even in the times when we do not feel strong or feel joy, we have the inner conviction we will be strengthened, and we will become happy. Faith helps us get an impermeable grasp on what is happening!

Concluding thoughts:

How do we grow Christ Lutheran Church? We must ask how do we “make disciples?” Jesus tells us to do it through the means of baptizing and teaching these new disciples all that Jesus had taught them. We as a Church have been given this responsibility. The responsibility to accept and act upon the commission of God is enormous. It is no small deal. So, what does God tell us?

“Therefore, go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you and behold! I am with you, even till the end of the age.”

Beloved, let's do it! May God bless your April to His glory!



Pastor Gary DeSha

April Maintenance Report

Other than needing to replace the shredder for the church office, all is good!!! Gary, our custodian, continues to clean and disinfect. We have been blessed that we are able to continue attending services and continue to abide by state guidelines. Please look for the green tape at the end of the pew to indicate where to sit. This will keep us properly spaced. We are very thankful and give thanks to God! A blessed Easter!

Carolyn Lofald, Vice-President

REMAIN + WORDS + LOVE + OBEY = JOY!

The joy of the Lord is our strength, and God helps us get there from where ever we are; to the place of confident, refreshing joy in Him. John 15:1-17 lights the pathway to joy. Read slowly and thoughtfully, then read once more, and then pray as the Holy Spirit leads.

A Word Picture from Jesus

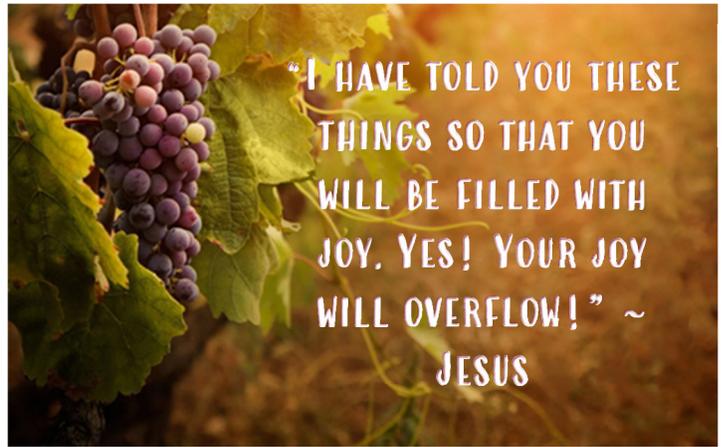
15 *"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.*

Jesus Explains What the Picture Means

5 *"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. 7 But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! 8 When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.*

9 *"I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love.*

11 *I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!*



12 *This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. 13 There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. 16 You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other. (John 15:1-17 NLT)*

Remember to go back and read this kind instruction from our heavenly Father again and pray.

Love and blessings, Sue

CLC FOOD SHARE APRIL 21

April Food Packing is Tuesday, April 20. Each bag includes two meals for a family of four and a Gospel message plus:

 Birthday Cake Kits prepared by Esther Circle
 Mini VBS-in-a-Bag gifts from the Evangelism Committee

CLC YOUTH TRIP!

The AALC Youth Conference is July 12-16 2021 and we are traveling to the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park CO by God's grace!

This is a life-changing time for youth and adults. Please pray for us! Adopt a student or a sponsor – a list is posted on the sanctuary doors with fundraising envelopes.

CLC YOUTH BIBLE STUDY

All youth grades 7-12 are invited to join me every Wednesday at the parsonage to dig into God's word. We are currently in a challenging study of Romans.

BELOVED APPRENTICE

All women are invited to grow with us in faith and friendship as we learn how to pray the Scriptures and become a House of Prayer!

Tuesdays at 6:30 pm on Google Meet
Wednesdays at 10:00 am at Church

CLC Women 
a ministry of christ lutheran church ~ duluth mn

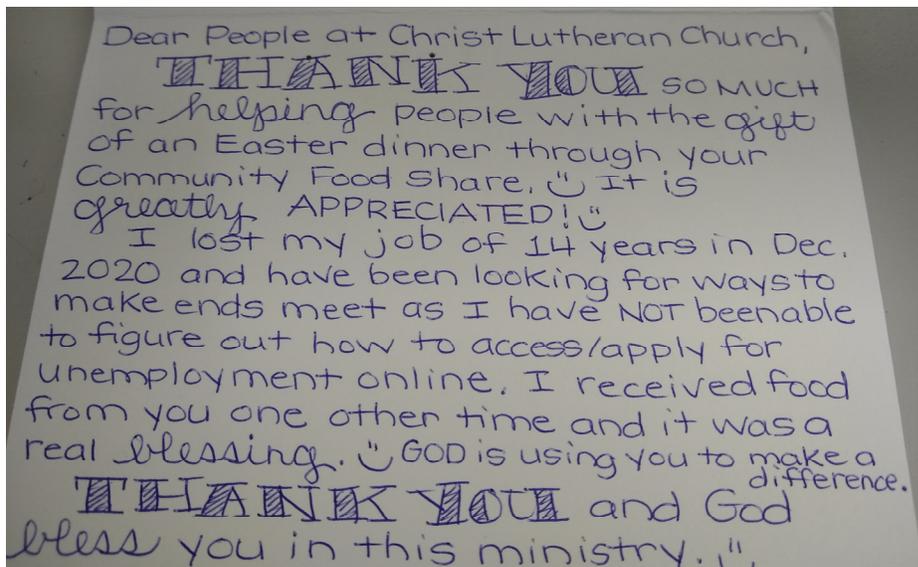
CLC FOOD SHARE

Our March Food Share bags included items for Easter dinner - a canned ham, a box of scalloped potatoes, corn, spaghetti sauce and noodles, fruit cocktail, peanut butter and jelly, and bread.



Special thanks to the Esther Circle and Evangelism Committee for adding a special treat for any child with a birthday in March. The birthday kit included a cake mix and a can of pop for making a special soda pop cake, frosting, candles, and birthday

We recently received this thank you note for the food share!



Dear People at Christ Lutheran Church,
THANK YOU so much for helping people with the gift of an Easter dinner through your Community Food Share. ☺ It is greatly APPRECIATED! ☺
I lost my job of 14 years in Dec. 2020 and have been looking for ways to make ends meet as I have NOT been able to figure out how to access/apply for unemployment online. I received food from you one other time and it was a real blessing. ☺ GOD is using you to make a difference.
THANK YOU and God bless you in this ministry. ☺

APRIL MISSION OF THE MONTH The AALC Youth Conference

July 12-16, 2021

YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park CO

Theme: LIVING ON THE EDGE

*Finally, be strong in the Lord
and in the strength of his might.*

Ephesians 6:10

Join us for an amazing week of Bible Study, prayer,
adventure, fun, fellowship and more!

Bible Study Leader: Dean Swenson

Speaker: The Rev. Bill Yonker

Worship: The Conference Band

Dynamic Song Leader Duo: Swen & Dean

Improv Comedy: Happy Fun Time



LIVING ON THE EDGE

Sunday services are livestreamed on our Facebook page:

Christ Lutheran Church Duluth at 9:30 AM

You can also log onto our website clduluth.org



Christ Lutheran Church Duluth

You Tube

Christ Lutheran Church Duluth

Financial Update

February Income \$8,722

February Expenses \$10,604.64

Monthly income was under expenses by \$1,818.20

YTD Income \$19,337.24

YTD Expenses \$22,665.11

YTD income was under expenses by \$3,327.87

February Mission: Father/Daughter Ball \$190.50

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:21

PLEASE PRAY FOR....

*Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
James 5:14*

Our Pastor & the Leadership of the Church
All of our students from pre-school to college
Our Country, Military & Police
The teachers and students at all schools
Mission of the Month:
The AALC Youth Conference

Persecuted Christians throughout the world
The steadfastness of our faith
Lutheran Vicar Mwavu Ronald and his 2 churches:
St. John's Lutheran Church,
Nankandulo, Kamuli, Uganda
St. Paul's Lutheran Church,

THOSE WITH HEALTH NEEDS:

Ruth Dahl	Barb Hanson	Mary Jenny
Carol Johnson	Evelyn Johnson	Susan Johnson
Florence Kubiak	Katie Lund	Diane Malander
Brian McDonald	Carol Ziemer	Eli Miletich
Dennis Peterson	Ruth Peterson	Darlene Saaf
Del Sandberg	Carol Sogard	Jane McLean
Kathy Stevens	Donna Swanson	Steve Petrowske

Linda Anthony (Dick McLean's Daughter)
Tom & Marlene Stauber

If there are any people who have been accidently overlooked, please contact the church office. We apologize for any oversights.

Happy Birthday!

<i>Gary Lofald</i>	<i>April 5</i>
<i>Carol Schneeberger</i>	<i>April 6</i>
<i>Jim Maruska</i>	<i>April 10</i>
<i>Jillian Brula</i>	<i>April 10</i>
<i>Ethan Wiita</i>	<i>April 17</i>
<i>Richard Johnson</i>	<i>April 18</i>
<i>Don Olson</i>	<i>April 20</i>
<i>Priscilla Olson</i>	<i>April 27</i>
<i>Grace Wells</i>	<i>April 29</i>