

THANK YOU MAIN STREET
Psalm 100

Today is my last Sunday to preach at Main Street. Next Sunday is Annual Conference Sunday, and Bob Langlais, a member of Main Street and a Certified Lay Speaker, will be your preacher. Then we'll have two transition Sundays to put some space between the two Senior Pastors. And then, on July 15, your new Senior Pastor, Mike Gehring, will preach his first sermon at Main Street United Methodist Church. And I hope you will come out in droves to show Mike your love and support—just like you did for me four years ago!

Now, my sermon today is called, "Thank You, Main Street!" My Scripture is Psalm 100, the Psalm of Thanksgiving. The Psalms are meant to be read out loud. So, please stand with me, and let's read this Psalm responsively:

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;

We are his people,

the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving

and his courts with praise;

give thanks to him

and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;

his faithfulness continues through all generations.

--Psalm 100, NIV

LET'S PRAY: Lord, there's so much sorrow and sadness in this world. And even in this room there are people going through hardships and difficulties that seem unbearable at times. But at least for the next few moments, make us grateful. Help us to focus on the good things you have done. Fill our hearts with a spirit of thanksgiving and joy. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Main Street United Methodist Church: You are a great church.

God has used you to change the world. God has used you to change *me*. And today I just want to say, "Thank you."

THANK YOU, MAIN STREET...

For being positive!

The Apostle Paul says, “*Do everything without complaining and arguing...*” (Philippians 2:14). Thank you, Main Street that I’ve not heard a lot of complaining and arguing around here. You’re just positive people! You treat each other with courtesy and respect. You don’t allow setbacks to destroy your spirit. When problems arise, you face them with optimism and hope. You’re willing to try new things. You’re willing to listen to new ideas. And you’re just fun to be around!

So, thank you for being positive. And—

THANK YOU, MAIN STREET...

For being supportive!

1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, “*...encourage each other and build each other up...*” And that’s exactly what you’ve done for me over the past four years!

3 years ago, my first grandchild was born –

- And you all celebrated with me
- And you asked me about him
- And you looked at all my pictures!

2 years ago, my father was in hospice care –

- As it turned out, he got better
- But through all of that, you were supportive and caring and encouraging.

1 year ago, I decided to ride my bike across the state

- And instead of saying, “Why are you doing something like that?” you all were cheering me on, you were asking me about it, you were encouraging me, and when I got done, you congratulated me.

And then two-and-a-half months ago, I announced that I was stepping down from pastoral ministry for a year to do some mission work and to study and to spend time with family. And again, I’ve experienced nothing but support and encouragement from the people of Main Street. The comment I’ve heard over and over again is, “Sad for us, but happy for you.”

So, thank you for being supportive.

THANK YOU, MAIN STREET...

For being a “Both-And” church!

Jesus said, “...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Notice that it's not *either* Jerusalem *or* the ends of the earth. It's not *either* Judea *or* Samaria.

It's not either/or—it's Both/And.

And that's how it is at Main Street:

- Both traditional AND contemporary
- Both care for each other AND reach out to the world
- Both local outreach AND global missions
- Both personal faith AND social action
- Both care for the people we have AND reach out to people who are new
- Both adults and seniors AND children and youth.

Thank you, Main Street, for not drawing battle lines between the different groups in the church.

Thank you for not embracing a scarcity mentality that says, “If we care for the others we won't have enough for ourselves.”

Thank you for being a Both/And church. And—

THANK YOU, MAIN STREET...

For living the Jesus Creed!

Let's say it together:

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul,

with all your mind,

and with all your strength.”

The second is this, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

There is no other commandment greater than these.

--Mark 12:30-31

The Jesus Creed is very simple: Love God, Love Others.

I have seen you Love God:

- By attending worship
- By studying the Bible
- By honoring the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism.

I have seen you Love Others:

- By rallying around church members who are hurting
- By bringing food when there's a funeral
- By knitting prayer shawls
- By welcoming new people
- By giving generously to the Helping Hands fund, every time we have communion.

And that leads me to my next thing...

THANK YOU, MAIN STREET...

For making a difference in the world!

I think Jesus might say to you:

"I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

--Matthew 25:35-36

Last fall you packed almost 400 cleaning buckets to be sent to the flood zones. And on top of that you gave something like \$20,000 for flood relief.

You support missionaries around the world, and I love the fact that their names are mentioned in worship every Sunday.

You feed people through Bethany Café and the Community Picnic.

You tutor children through Kids First.

You're involved at

- New Story Church
- Bethesda Center
- Shepherd's Center
- Crisis Control
- Next Step Ministries
- Open Arms Community

- Kairos Prison Ministry.

One of the happiest days of my life was the weekend of Martin Luther King Day, when we got together in the fellowship hall and packed 32,000 meals for the hungry through “Stop Hunger Now.”

But it wasn’t just the meals: It was the fact that we did this project with several other churches across denominational and racial lines. There we were—black, white, Asian, Hispanic—Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic—standing shoulder-to-shoulder wearing those goofy hairnets, feeding the hungry and getting to know each other.

And then after the service project we came into the sanctuary and had a service of worship. At a time of huge division in our society, we came together in a show of Christian Unity. It was a great day. Thank you for making that day happen.

Thank you for making a difference in the world!

The theme today has been Giving Thanks. And the Greek word for Giving Thanks is “Eucharist” —which is another name for Holy Communion.

That’s why I wanted us to celebrate communion on my last Sunday—because communion is a time of Giving Thanks to God for all God has done.

And today, Main Street, I give thanks, to God, for you!