

SURVEY

This Sunday there will be a survey in the bulletin with the following questions. You can also email Jessica your responses.

**Are you interested in having a worship service during the week?
If yes, what day and time would you prefer?**

**Are you interested in book studies with Pastor Juancho?
If you, what topics or books would you like to study?
(Note: They do not have to be Bible based)**

UPCOMING TRAININGS

Pastor Juancho will have two separate trainings this month.

On Sunday September 20th immediately following worship service there will be a training for acolytes. Acolytes assist in ceremonial duties including lighting candles. Acolytes can be children or adults.

On Sunday September 27th immediately following worship service there will be a training for liturgists and Bible readers.

**Please help us welcome new members
Rogene Kugler & Sarwat Khan to the
Trinity Church Family!**

NEW MEMBERS



BOOK CLUB

**Next meeting
Tuesday September 29th
at 7:00pm**



**Vera
Wong's
Unsolicited
Advice for
Murderers
by Jesse Q.
Sutanto**

WOMEN OF FAITH

**Thursday, September 10th
at 6:30pm**

**This is a planning meeting
for our Invitational
Reunion Salad Luncheon
that will take place on
October 12th at 12pm**

From the Pastor's Heart

Dearest Trinity Church Family and Friends,
Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "³⁰ He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade" (Mark 4:30-32). Some of the common interpretations of this parable of Jesus is that faith is powerful, big things starts with little things, take one day at a time, live simply, etc. I also learned that one of the characteristics of a mustard plant is that when it begins to grow, it is hard to eradicate it. The kingdom of God, like salvation, is past, present and future. The kingdom of God inaugurated by Jesus is already here even if we do not visibly see, touch or feel. Human beings are created in the image of God therefore nothing and no one can separate us from God. The image of God in us may lie dormant and invisible but it's there. When we submit our lives and yield to God's will, the hidden kingdom of God, will begin to germinate, grow and blossom. Of course, the fullness of the Kingdom of God will be fully revealed in the future when the will of God "will be done here on earth as it is in heaven." That's why even though the power of evil seems to be dominating the world and winning, God has the last word. That's what we saw on Holy Week. Evil seemed winning the days before Easter especially on Friday, when Jesus died. Friday and Saturday, Evil seemed to have won. Death seemed to have the last word. Then Easter came. Death is no more. Evil has been defeated forever more. God has the last say. God has the last laugh.

Possibly, Dandelion can be likened to a mustard seed. Two years ago during spring my grandchildren visited us and while we were playing in our yard they picked up dandelion flowers and gave them to me. It was so sweet. It made my day. I found out also that many in my Spirituality groups that I pioneered in the Behavioral health of the hospitals where I have been serving, love the story of the Dandelion. The name dandelion is taken from the French word "*dent de lion*" meaning "*lion's tooth*", referring to the coarsely-toothed leaves. If you know dandelions, they'll grow shorter stalks to spite you. I also learned that they were used to be called "*honey (or gold) of the poor*" because the flowers are so sweet and were used to make jam or sauce or salad dressing. Every part of the dandelion is useful: root, leaves, flower. It can be used for food, medicine, wine, and dye for coloring. Up until the 1800s, people would pull grass out of their lawns to make room for dandelions and other useful "weeds" like chickweed, malva and

chamomile. Dandelions shifted from a plant so valued that people crossed oceans with a stash to the most-hated weed when lawns became a popular and "necessary" home feature in the US. Suddenly the ubiquity we formerly cherished became the dandelion's worst trait. Dandelions survive mowing, pesticides, or harsh winters. Dandelions grow tremendously and many people do not like them. Dandelions did not care what people think. They just grow. They are masters of survival worldwide. Dandelions have one of the longest flowering seasons of any plant. Dandelion seeds are often transported away by a gust of wind and they travel like tiny parachutes. Seeds are often carried as many as five miles from their origin! Birds, insects, and butterflies consume nectar or seeds of dandelion. Honey from bees pollinating dandelions is quite delicious. Dandelion flowers do not need to be pollinated to form seeds. They said Dandelions are the only flowers that might represent the three celestial bodies of the sun, moon, and stars: The yellow flower resembles the sun, the puff ball resembles the moons, and the dispersing seeds resemble the stars. The dandelion flower opens to greet the morning and closes in the evening to go to sleep. We can learn many things from the Dandelion: Resilience and survival, color and beauty, generosity and utility to the environment and to other living things, don't care what people think, just keep on living. It is my prayer that each one of us, be always faithful in living out the values of the Kingdom of God in season and out of season. May we be like a Mustard Seed or a Dandelion "weed" we live, love and serve others in the name and glory of Jesus Christ, our Lord. This is the secret of a happy, healthy, fuller and better life.

Soon we will be in the season of Fall when the trees begin to shed their beautiful leaves and flowers and become totally dead. But they are not dead. In the dead of winter, the roots are being strengthened, feeding and nourishing the tree to be ready to come alive and bloom come spring. Every season is beautiful. The rhythm of season teaches us that life is wonderful because in every season there is beauty, life, and love to behold. Along with winter rest, we embrace the budding of spring, the majesty and heat of summer, as well as the colorful falling leaves of fall. In life, we have to accept the painful and pleasurable, the beautiful and the ugly, the peaceful and the challenging. After all, God is always with us. And if God is with us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31).

With all my love and prayers,
Pastor Juancho



Worship and Preaching Plan – September 2026

September 6, 2026 – Color: Green – 15th Sunday After Pentecost

Lectionary Readings – Exodus 12:1-14, Psalm 149 or Psalm 148;
Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 18:15-20

Rev. Dr. Brian Gilbert, DS of South Prairie District, UMCNIC

September 13, 2026 – Color: Green – 16th Sunday After Pentecost,
Grandparents Sunday and Christian Education Sunday

Lectionary Readings – Exodus 14:19-31; 15:1-11, 20-21 (UMH
135); Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35

Sermon: "Passing the Baton of Life"

September 20, 2026 – Color: Green – 17th Sunday After Pentecost and
International Day of Peace Sunday

Lectionary Readings – Exodus 16:2-15; Psalm 10:1-6, 37-45 or
Psalm 78; Philippians 1:21-30; Matthew 20:1-16

Sermon – "Living in Peace Now (Not Rest in Peace)"

September 27, 2026 – Color: Green – 18th Sunday After Pentecost

Lectionary Readings – Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16;
Philippians 2:1-13; Matthew 21:23-32

Sermon: "Have the Mind of Christ"

This is from the pen of Rev. Elle Dowd of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) Evangelism Network.

EVANGELISM AFTER HARM

How to Share the Good News When the Church Has Been Bad News

For many people, the church has not been good news. Church hurt, spiritual abuse, and religious trauma have left deep wounds. Others have watched the church sanctify white supremacy, patriarchy, anti-LGBTQIA+ discrimination, abuse, or hypocrisy and understandably wonder whether the church has anything life-giving left to offer. If evangelism is sharing the good news of God's liberating love in Jesus Christ, then how can congregations share the good news when the church has been bad news?

The answer is not necessarily to evangelize less. It's to evangelize differently.

Here are five practices that can help congregations bear more faithful, trustworthy witness to Christ:

Start With Self-Awareness and Self-Reflection

We begin by asking ourselves a simple question: Why do I want to share the good news?

It is important to answer this question honestly. If our motivation is driven primarily by desperation or anxiety about the future of a declining church, it is no longer really about sharing God's love. Instead, it centers our own needs or fears rather than a genuine desire to build relationships and bear witness to God's love. It treats people as a means to an end, objectifying them instead of honoring them as beloved children of God.

If we hope people will come to our church, we need to be honest about the kind of community we are inviting them into. That begins with taking an honest audit of our congregation. Where has our community caused harm? Where are we still learning and growing? Being clear is kind. We should not overpromise and risk inviting someone into a space where they may be mistreated. If we say, "All are welcome," we should ask whether our congregation is truly prepared to embody that promise. If some people are likely to encounter exclusion, microaggressions, theological violence, or hostility, honesty is more loving than making promises our community cannot yet keep.

Finally, authentic welcome is not one-size-fits-all. Consider whether your congregation has the education, awareness, and practices needed to genuinely welcome people with different identities, experiences, and needs.

No congregation gets this right all the time. The goal is not perfection but honesty. In my experience, the communities most equipped to welcome others are not the ones that believe they have arrived. They are the ones humble enough to acknowledge where they are still growing and committed enough to keep learning.

Avoid Defensiveness

People who have experienced spiritual abuse or religious trauma often carry deep grief that can manifest as righteous anger. It can be tempting to defend the church, explain away someone's experience, or insist that your particular congregation is different. Resist that impulse. Instead, lead with humility. Practice courageous listening with openness and empathy. Listen to understand rather than to formulate a response. Reflect back what you hear, making space for grief, anger, and lament. When appropriate, apologize for the harm the church has caused, even if you were not personally responsible for it. Don't rush to make yourself the exception, and don't pressure someone toward forgiveness before they are ready.

Participate in truth-telling about the ways the church has perpetuated systems of oppression. We cannot proclaim good news while denying the church's bad news. Evangelism begins not with marketing but with the church's repentance.

Public Witness and Community Involvement

While it is important to be clear and vocal about God's love for all people, remember that actions speak louder than words. Many people have experienced so much hypocrisy from the church that they understandably want to see whether our actions reflect our message. One of the church's biggest mistakes has been feeling entitled to trust before becoming trustworthy. Let love be recognizable before belief.

Show up for your neighbors in tangible ways.

Participate in mutual aid efforts, follow the leadership of community organizations, organize for justice, and work alongside others to build toward our collective flourishing.

Do this without expectation or strings attached. If someone senses that your care for them depends on whether they eventually join your church, they won't experience your invitation as good news. Christian love is not transactional. We serve our neighbors because they are beloved children of God, not because we hope they will become members of our congregation.

Remember That Good News Is Incarnational

The gospel is always good news, but not everyone needs to hear the same aspect of that good news first. A message of healing must speak to the wound. Faithful evangelism requires us to listen before we speak.

Someone harmed by purity culture may first need to hear:

"Your body was never your enemy."

Someone harmed by spiritual abuse may first need to hear:

"God is not threatened by your questions."

Someone harmed by exclusion may first need to hear:

"You were never outside God's love."

Someone harmed by high-control religion may first need to hear:

"Grace doesn't have fine print."

This is what it means for good news to be incarnational. God meets people where they are, especially those who have been pushed to the margins. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus responds to real people with real stories, real wounds, and real needs. Faithful evangelism follows that same pattern. It listens deeply enough to proclaim the particular good news someone needs to hear while remaining rooted in the same unchanging gospel of God's love revealed in Jesus Christ.

Re-Think Your Metrics

In the past, we have often measured successful evangelism through numbers. How many people are in attendance? How much money was put into the offering plate? How many baptisms or new members did we add this year? Numbers can be helpful in noting trends, but they are not the most complete picture when it comes to successful evangelism.

Instead, consider measuring success by the answers to questions of relationship building and transformation. Did someone experience the love of Christ? Was dignity restored? Did someone feel safe enough to ask honest questions? Did trust grow? Did hope increase? Were people set more free? Where is the Spirit moving? How is God present in all of this?

These questions may not fit as neatly into a spreadsheet or an annual report, but they tell us far more about whether we have faithfully borne witness to Christ. After all, the goal of evangelism is not simply to grow the church. It is to participate in God's work of healing, reconciliation, and liberation.

The church cannot undo the harm that has already been done. We cannot erase histories of colonization, white supremacy, cis-hetero patriarchy, spiritual abuse, or the ways Christianity has too often been wielded as a tool of fear and control. But we can choose what kind of witness we will bear today. We can become communities that tell the truth instead of protecting our image, practice repentance instead of defensiveness, build relationships instead of seeking recruits, and join God's work already unfolding in our neighborhoods. We can proclaim a gospel that restores dignity, honors people's agency, refuses to objectify them as projects or numbers, and reminds them they have always been beloved by God.

We join God's work of dismantling systems of domination while helping build communities where everyone can thrive.

This kind of evangelism is an invitation into the ongoing work of justice, restoration, and abundant life. It is good news because it sets people free rather than demanding their conformity. The church does not exist to preserve itself. It exists to participate in God's liberation of the world.

When the church has been bad news, our calling is not to defend it. Our calling is to so faithfully embody the love of Christ that the gospel finally sounds like good news.