

Summerland United Church
Oct 19, 2025
Changemakers: Compassion

Threshold and Christ Candle

Over the next few weeks, we will be exploring Jesus' identity, and our own, as "changemakers." This is our 1-year anniversary here at the Stone Church and it is time to answer the question: *What is God calling us to be as a church in Summerland?*

The problems in the world can be so overwhelming that we stop believing we can make a difference. But we can, we can make a difference. We know this to be true because we've already done it. With our school kits, with Monday Supper, with selling the building on Henry St, with supporting the Food Bank.

This series – Changemakers is designed to help us focus on our next adventures in ministry. We'll engage with the topics of Compassion, Collaboration, Creativity and Empowerment as we discern our call to be a church.

As people of faith who want to make a difference, we must start with compassion: with connection, with seeing and "suffering with." And we must remember the source of this deep compassion, and the source of strength we can draw on is God's love.

Scripture Readings: Leviticus 19:18, Luke 10: 25-28, & Matthew 5:43-47

Leviticus 19:18: ¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Luke 10:25- 28

²⁵ An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" ²⁷ He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸ And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

Matthew 5:43-47

⁴³ "You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵ In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. ⁴⁶ If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷ If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else?"

Reader: May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection

Next Saturday we will be gathering for a discernment retreat about the future of our ministry here in Summerland. Rev. David Boyd will be joining us to lead us through conversations about what's next in the life of our church. We wrote a ministry plan before we sold the Henry St. property and moved into this building. We will use this plan as a guide for our conversations on Saturday.

Earlier in the year members of the congregation were invited to dream big. After a series on Abundances people were invited to write down their answer to the question – if there were no obstacles in place what do you think we're called to do and be as a church in Summerland?

We documented the responses as – Transforming Abundances. The purpose of next weekends retreat is to start narrowing down the possibilities. Discernment is about answering these questions:

What are we most passionate about? Where do we see a need for more compassion and mercy in our community? Are we the people to do something about it?

As I've said before, one church can't do everything, but we can do something.

After a year of massive change and adjustment, and then rest and rejuvenation, it's time answer these questions in concrete manner. And rather than get overwhelmed with all the possibilities – because they are endless – the discernment retreat will help us figure out where we want to focus our ministry work and take an honest look at what we're capable of.

The 3 passages of scripture we heard today all call on the faithful to love their neighbour and love their enemy. Jesus draws on his own Jewish upbringing to remind his followers that taking vengeance and bearing a grudge is not Godly. Rather, we're to find compassion and mercy for all beings.

Jesus calls on us to love our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our strength and all our minds – because that is the way God loves us.

Christians are regularly referred to as the 'hands and feet of Christ in the world'. We embody Christ's new life in the world through our actions and compassion for others.

Compassion is defined as the feeling of sympathy and sorrow for another person's suffering, accompanied by a desire to help alleviate it.

It involves recognizing someone's pain, feeling concern, and then taking action to provide support. The word itself comes from Latin, meaning "to suffer with," and can be understood as a more active form of empathy, where an understanding of another's pain motivates a desire to help.

I know we recognize and feel concern for those who suffer. We do not lack empathy and I also know we are motivated to help others. What catches us and stops us are (I think) 2 things. 1. We already do a lot and I expect we fear being stretched to thin. This is because of number 2. There is so much suffering in the world where do we begin? And where do we draw the line, so we don't exhaust ourselves?

These questions matter and necessary to keep in mind as we move towards our discernment retreat.

And here is the most important thing to keep in mind while we consider these questions: We are not alone. We are not alone. Next week, the Sunday after our discernment retreat the theme will be – collaboration.

We are not alone. We have each other, we have St. Stephen Anglican, we have other community groups and churches, and people who are passionate about the same things. And we have God. No matter what the future holds for our ministry in Summerland – we are not alone. Thanks be to God!

So, your homework for this coming week – read the Ministry Plan, it's in your weekly email. Consider the questions:

What are you most passionate about in regards to your faith life? Where do you see a need for more compassion and mercy in our community? And are we (Summerland United) the people to do something about it? What are we, as a community of faith, capable of?

Before we sing: the paper and pen you were given - On one side, write a word or phrase that represents a gift you receive in our church. And on the other, a word or phrase that represents something you see in the world that is calling us to compassion. What need in our community or our world is speaking most clearly to you in this moment? Writing it doesn't mean you have to stick to that. But naming something—one thing—is an important step toward claiming who you are as a Changemaker. You can leave them in the offering plate as you leave service today.