

Discover the New You:

A New Look at the Church

In this passage St. Paul gives five marks of a biblically functioning church. His central and core pillar: true faith in Jesus Christ.



Colossians 1:1-14 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints — the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit. For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Reflections

Remembering Marie Parker

There are so many areas of The Church that remind me of Marie Parker. Not just at St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, but the living breathing organism that is the body of believers.

Prayer Marie would pray and you knew that she believed her prayer would be answered. And it was. She prayed in good times and tough times, prayers of praise and prayers for healing. And her legacy? Many were on the receiving end of her prayers, and their faith was bolstered, lives improved, bodies and minds were healed. There are many whose prayer life has been blessed by

her example. Her example is what eventually resulted in the prayer ministry here at St. John.

Fruit of the Spirit Trees are known by their fruit, and Marie was the embodiment of that in her spiritual fruit. She was kind and patient, working with the food pantry in Howard County, and within the community and family to care for others. She led by example, and was never reluctant to roll up her sleeves and get dirty when necessary.

Investing in Eternity Bob and Marie Parker led rich, full lives. But they had modest possessions and did not spend their money frivolously. When they moved to the senior apartments, they cleaned out — boxes were brought to our

house for my mother to find homes for the contents: tapes by the score by Christian speakers. Those tapes were shared freely with others while Bob and Marie had them and they wanted them shared with others when they no longer had room to store them.

If she was still with us today, Marie would likely be helping with the Cold Weather Shelter, the Rt. 1 Day Resource Center, and quilts to send to the Good Samaritan Orphanage.

Marie Parker was an Epaphras to me — and to many. An example of how we should live and love within The Church.

—Wendy Woods

Readings

Sunday, April 11

Colossians 1:1-8

In this passage, Paul gives these trademarks of a biblically functioning community of Christ followers: faith in Jesus Christ, love for one another, spiritual growth and fruitfulness, prayer, and spiritual wisdom. Why is each one essential for a healthy church? Why is unwavering faith in Jesus at the top of this list? Assess how these characteristics are reflected in your church? In your life?

Monday, April 12

Colossians 1:10; Galatians 5:22-23; John 15:8

When fruit grows on a tree, it is out in the open for all to see. When you bear spiritual fruit, is it obvious to others? In what ways?

Tuesday, April 13

Colossians 1:7-8; Romans 1:11-12

Who has been like Epaphras to you — a faithful servant in Christ who has had an impact on your life?

Wednesday, April 14

Colossians 1:5; Matthew 19:14

How would you describe your faith to others — is it a simple belief in Christ or a complicated belief system? Why?

Thursday, April 15

Colossians 1:4-5; 1 John 3:11-24

What message do we send to seekers when the members of our church truly show love for one another? What message do we send to God? What is one practical and tangible way you can show love to others at St. John?

Friday, April 16

Colossians 1:10-12; Ephesians 6:18

How do you pray for those in the church? How is your prayer like Paul's? How is it different?

Saturday, April 17

Colossians 1:13-14

In what ways have you been inspired to invest in the eternal rather than the temporary? How has that affected the things you consider important (to have, to do, to be)?

Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at biblegateway.com.