



Foundation for Tomorrow
PILGRIM LUTHERAN CHURCH
A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Stories of Generosity

Campaign Prayer

Gracious God,

From generation to generation, you have been faithful, and we are witnesses to this here at Pilgrim! We thank you for those who came before us – for their vision, courage, and trust in you as they built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Your Spirit is stirring us, drawing people to the font and the altar, making your love known here and around the world.

As we look ahead, fill us with courage and guide us in this Foundation for Tomorrow campaign, that what we do now might serve your mission for years to come. Keep us faithful, building on the foundation of Jesus Christ, our hope for today and for tomorrow.
Amen.

Introduction from Pastor Mike Opfermann

What a blessing... From the very beginning my family felt it - the love of Jesus in this community. You may be thinking “well, shouldn’t every church be like that? At least for Pastor and his or her family?” The answer should be yes, but it isn’t always. “There is just something different about Pilgrim.”

This is the phrase I have been blessed to hear so many people say. New members talk about how they felt welcomed - that they truly belonged - when they walked into Pilgrim. With beautiful

emotion, snow birds have told me how good it is to be home, back at Pilgrim where worship is powerful and the joy palpable. I received a note this Easter about how a member’s kids and grand-kids found the Easter service to be full of life and meaningful for them all.

We can all feel it - the Spirit is undoubtedly at work in this community, and it has been for a long time. I invite you to turn the

page back to the front cover for a moment; take a look at the “Foundation for Tomorrow” logo. When we were developing the logo, a fellow Pilgrim recommended adding people in front of the church. I immediately loved it. It made me ask: who are they?

Maybe they are us, who gather at Pilgrim now, who experience the love of Jesus every week and strive to share that love with the world.

Maybe they are the saints who have gone before us - those who gathered in homes as Pilgrim was beginning. These could be the people who trusted Jesus was calling them to be His church in this place, even when they faced challenges.

Or maybe they are those who are not yet here. People who will grace our doors in a decade or so to experience for the first time that “there is just something different about Pilgrim.”

I think they are all of the above - the beloved people of Pilgrim throughout time. This is what our “Foundation for Tomorrow” campaign is really about. Yes, there are much needed repairs around the

There is just something different about Pilgrim...

building, but we also have incredible ministry taking place - ministry that Jesus is calling us to faithfully continue so that His love may be made known to people for years to come. This is an opportunity to share together in generosity, trusting that God is not done here, but really only just beginning.

The question this book asks is “**where have you learned about or experienced generosity?**” Generosity is powerful. I learned that from a young age, and that reality is palpable in these stories you are about to read. I pray you ponder this question too, as you discern and pray about how you might join in on the generosity, joy, and excitement of this campaign.

In Christ,


Pastor Mike Opfermann

Krystal Taylor – Generosity at Home



I remember my mother always helping family members, friends, and neighbors. She was always quiet about what she did, never boasted about what she was doing. There were times when she would recruit me to help carry something to a neighbor's home, or put something on a porch. When asked about what she was doing she might say, "she heard that someone had been sick", or "she saw

that they were home from work all week and thought maybe they had been laid off and might need a hot meal". My mother always kept in touch with all her family members and her friends, reaching out to make sure that they knew she was thinking about them. That was her way of saying that she was there for them.

I feel that in my family we learned our generosity at home. My sister always looked out for all the neighborhood kids. Helped with rides when needed and transported elderly neighbors to the grocery store or to their doctor. You don't have to be affluent to care for those around you, but just thoughtful, kind and willing.

I have been the recipient of kindness and generosity in several unexpected ways. My car broke down on an express way, in pouring rain. A family stopped and took my flat tire off, bought me another tire and put it on! They would not let me pay them back! Another time I ran out of gas, walked to the nearest house and asked to use their phone to call for help. They put gas in my tank and followed me to a gas station. They would not let me pay them for their help! While standing in line at the grocery store I found myself short of money to pay for my groceries and two people handed money to the cashier to help pay for my groceries. Generosity is not always just about money, but being generous with our time to help others. We all grow when we share and care for others. It's so important to be available when needed. My prayer for our church is that we continue

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to seek ways to strengthen our community by providing care and support, seeing God's Word in action.

Through the years my giving has gone through several changes. When my children were young and we had very little, I gave from what was left. As my children grew, I worked a little more and increased my giving. Now, I give first. I have always tried to give of my time, to Christian education, serving in worship as a member of the choir, Altar Guild, ushering, and wherever else I could.

My church gives me great opportunities to contribute to the welfare of others, working in both our community and beyond. I believe God has given me these opportunities so I can show my gratitude and thankfulness for all He has blessed me with.



Jean Russell – Surrounded by Deep Commitment

Did you ever have a child hand you a little something? It may have been a dandelion, a cracker, or a picture they drew. Whatever it was, it came from a pure and generous heart. It was something they had, and wanted to share with you while expecting nothing in return. That child gave freely and beautifully. What an example for us to follow.



I read recently about a gentleman who had accessed the services through the Blue Water Area Rescue Mission, and then with their assistance, moved into his own apartment. On a wintry day in Port Huron, he woke up early so he could go back to BWARM and shovel the snow there. He had a skill and he had a heart to give what he had to those who needed it most. Again, he gave freely and beautifully. I know we can all find examples of that type of generosity in our lives.

When I am asked to tell something about my parents, Marion and Ted Westfall, one way that I always describe them is as being generous. Generous with monetary gifts, generous with their time, and generous with their talents. If my Mom went to a new doctor, the next time she had an appointment she would bring every employee in the office a hand knit scarf. My Dad was always on the lookout for who needed some help, a bit of something to move forward in life. A young relative recently told me that she has never met anyone as kind and generous as my Dad. Do I ever feel blessed to have grown up surrounded by such a deep commitment to daily generosity. From this I learned that generosity is a way to live out each day. It must be a way of life.

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Fred and I have made kindness and generosity central to our lives. We work to give freely of our time, our talents, and our monetary resources. As we live our lives in this intentional manner, joy enters. As we live our lives in this unselfish manner, peace enters. As we live this life in this generous manner, blessings abound. As we see our community grow through the kindness of those around us, we are inspired to do more. As we see Pilgrim Lutheran Church reach out to those in need, we are filled with the knowledge that we are a congregation that actively shares their resources. We have a culture of giving and helping others. We are willing to share our resources with no expectations of a return. It is our orientation towards life. The Pilgrim family is central to our lives. We look forward to the future as Pilgrim continues to grow in so many ways. We look forward to a wonderful future filled with generosity and love.

“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” Hebrews 13:16



Peggy Yaek – A Fun Surprise

Generosity, as defined by Google, is the quality of being willing to unselfishly give time, money, resources, or kindness to others without expecting anything in return.

Several years ago, when my daughters were in Girl Scouts, they reached a point where, if they were interested, they could earn their Gold Award by completing a special service project. My youngest daughter decided to do a project we had read about in a local paper called Valentines for Veterans. She gathered all the paper items and got different groups she was in, including our church, to make handmade, decorated Valentines for the VA hospital in Detroit.

One day, I was in a meeting at church and they were looking for a project for February. I mentioned the above project my daughter had done, and they thought it was a great way to show kindness to veterans and let them know we were thinking of them. It started out as a project for our church to make Valentines, and my husband and I drove a few boxes of Valentines down to the John Dingell VA Hospital in Detroit for staff to pass out to patients.

It did not stop there. After a couple of years, it was decided we should collect items for the patients, things that they may need including socks, slippers, sweatpants, etc., along with prepackaged treats, drinks, word search books, sudoku books, and other items that veterans who were there for medical treatments might be able to use to make their time pass quickly. The outpouring from our church has been unbelievable. This past year, my husband and I delivered nine boxes of needed items and over 300 Valentines to the veterans. The thoughtful people of our Church had made what started



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out as Valentine cards into a fun surprise that the veterans had no idea they were going to receive.

Our church has undertaken many projects to help make the less fortunate in our community a little more comfortable. I love that my family is a part of this wonderful church that shows so much compassion for those in need. My husband works at the soup kitchen with other church members. We make hot meals for families in need. We collect loose change for our local food pantry and each month collect a "needed" item (pasta sauce, soup, cereal, etc.) to support the pantry. We take Thanksgiving dinners to many who would have none, and we have a giving tree that collects Christmas gifts for families that, otherwise, would have very little for Christmas. The generosity of our members astounds me that we are so willing to share what we have with others who are not as fortunate. It makes my heart happy to help wherever I can and to see so many at church who contribute and participate as they are able. We continually find others with needs, and we step up to help whenever we are able.

I have no worries that this kind of giving will be a continuous thing for years to come at Pilgrim. Our church members are always willing to lend a hand. I feel it makes our church a welcoming, safe place to attend service, worship God, be a part of our choir or Sunday School program, or any of the groups we have actively at work in the church.



Gale Smith - Generosity of the Faithful

Back in 1981, my son Christopher received a cancer diagnosis. He was not yet two years old and had a very rare tumor type on his spinal cord. The Oncology department at Children's Hospital of Detroit utilized a worldwide network of doctors seeking the best approach in treatment. The response resulted in a 6 week, 5 days per week, application of low dose cobalt radiation.



Many family members generously gave their time over the next 6 weeks to drive me and my son to Children's Hospital daily, and were continuously offering encouragement toward his recovery. My paternal grandmother left her home in Wyandotte to come to live with us during this period of time. She "kept the home" in many ways and cared for our 4 yr. old son, who had been attending a parent co-op preschool, hosted by the United Methodist Church in Marysville. The mothers from preschool got together and picked-up the days that I was scheduled to work at the preschool, and took care of snack supply as well! The preschool waived our monthly dues for the period Chris was in the hospital and during his treatments. It was a very stressful period in our lives. The generosity and love that was provided by family and parents of the pre-school coop made a very difficult road much easier to navigate and travel.

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The wonderful thread that tied together all of the support we received, was the Christian faith of all involved. From the prayers offered up at Pilgrim to the Christian families and preschool of the Methodist Church, from the deep faith of my Missouri Synod Lutheran grandmother to the healing prayer of a Christian gentleman offered up at the hospital following Chris's surgical procedure, we experienced generous loving people that only a Christian community could offer. We continue to experience that generosity and love at Pilgrim.

Jim Thornhill - Many Opportunities



Generosity is one of the most admirable human qualities. It is the willingness to give and share with others freely, without expecting anything in return. Generous people help those in need, they support their communities, and spread kindness wherever they go. Generosity is not just about giving money. It includes sharing one's time, knowledge, compassion, and support. In a world that often focuses on individual success, generosity reminds us of the importance in caring for others and building a better community together.

Pilgrim provides many opportunities to be generous. Besides tithing money, there is the SOS food pantry in Marysville, helping feeding people at Mid-City Nutrition, and working at Harbor Impact. At Thanksgiving we put together meals for needy families, and at Christmas we have the Giving Tree which helps families during the Christmas holiday season. We have many volunteers that have worked on projects within the church. These are just a few examples that strengthen my church in Marysville and the surrounding communities.

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For me generosity started very small and grew bit by bit, and it keeps growing. It reminds me when Jesus said to pick up your cross and follow me.

God, thank you for giving us the gifts and talents to use in service and sharing our love for others. Place in our hearts a desire to live faithfully and do the things you have prepared in advance for us to do. We pray that you will bless the work of our hands. May we be good stewards of your blessings and may many lives and hearts be touched. All honor and glory be yours. Amen.

Steve Kennedy - Generosity Above and Beyond



I have been asked to write about generosity. Someone thought, me being a former teacher, I should be able to do this. I can tell a good story, but write I am not too sure. But here it goes.

I'm not sure where I learned about generosity, I guess it must have been from my parents. We were not always in the circumstance to be generous.

But we were always given some coins to put in the offering plate at Sunday School. And Sunday School is where I must have learned about generosity. We were taught that all we had came from God, and that we were to give back to help others. I have carried that belief all my life. I always tried to tithe once I learned to multiply by percentages. Sometimes I made it happen, and others I did not. As I got older my goal became to give a greater amount. As God so generously blessed me, I was able to give more than 10%. Both at the Church and in the community. Praise be to God!

I have also been a recipient of generosity from others. Receiving from both members of Pilgrim and non-members. Mostly in doing for me when I could not do for myself. People have taken me to the hospital, they have provided transportation, in and out of town when I was unable, or not allowed to get there on my own. Friends have driven me places in my car, or brought me meals, or just to check up that I was doing okay.

One summer while I was visiting friends in Ely, Minnesota, which is 120 miles north of Duluth. While I was there, I required an unexpected surgery. The surgery had complications and could not be completed at that time. I had to return home. My friends got me to St. Paul to get the train home. I was only allowed to lift and carry 10

pounds!! Therefore, I had to leave my car and all my belongings in Ely. It was over a month before I was well enough to go Ely to and get my things. My friends kindly took two days to bring my things to me, saving me a trip I was not looking forward to attempting.

At this time in life, I am not able to be as generous as I once was. But I plan, with God's, to keep doing what I can.

And finally, thank you for reading my story.

- YBIC, Steve



Sheryl Vickers – Generosity of Grace

In October of 2022, after Hurricane Ian caused widespread damage across Fort Myers, Naples, and Marco Island, Bob and I were vacationing at our trailer in a 55-and-older community in Naples, Florida.



Right across the street from us was a Cuban community. I will admit, it made me uncomfortable at first. Most of the residents spoke Spanish, and I could not understand them. It felt unfamiliar, and I kept my distance. Bob, however, always saw people differently. As we rode our golf cart through the park, he greeted everyone, asking how they were doing. Even when there was a language barrier, we found ways to communicate—sometimes it felt like playing Pictionary—but Bob never saw it as a problem.

Bob has always valued every person he meets. He looks beyond the outer shell and sees the heart. He understands that people want to be acknowledged—that they matter and are important to someone. Someone once said to me, “When Bob says, ‘Hello, how are you doing today?’ you truly believe he wants to know.”

This is not new for Bob. Even when he was in the Navy on an aircraft carrier, he would bring fellow service members home with him—men who had not had a home-cooked meal in a long time.

I have watched this pattern of generosity throughout our entire 53 years of marriage. Looking back, I can see how God has been at work through him all along. After the hurricane, we met Gonzalo Paez, who lived directly across from us. His truck had been destroyed by floodwaters, and he needed one to get to work. Trucks in the area were nearly impossible to find. Without hesitation, Bob offered to take Gonzalo with us back to Michigan so he could find a

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vehicle there. I struggled with that decision. We barely knew him. It meant a three-day trip, sharing hotel rooms, and welcoming him into our home. At the time, it felt like Bob was going beyond what most people would consider reasonable.

But Bob trusted God—and he trusted people.

During that trip, something changed in me. We laughed, shared stories, and formed a connection I did not expect. The next day, the three of us went from dealership to dealership, searching for a reliable truck. Gonzalo found a truck within 24 hours, but when his money transfer was delayed, Bob once again stepped in and covered the difference so he could complete the purchase. That night, they worked side by side fixing an issue with the headlights, and the next morning Gonzalo began his drive back to Florida.

Looking back, I realize this experience was not just about helping Gonzalo. In many ways, he helped us. He reminded us how to enjoy the moment, how to laugh, and how to connect beyond our differences. I can see now how God was present in that journey, bringing us together in a way I never would have expected.

This year, just three weeks before we returned to Naples, Gonzalo passed away. When Bob heard, he said, “I feel like I lost a best friend.”

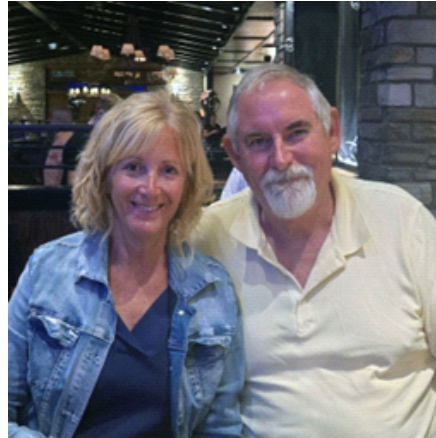
That moment stayed with me.

I have learned that generosity is not just about giving things. It is generosity of grace, of time, and of valuing someone else’s need above your own comfort. One of my favorite quotes is, “People won’t remember what you said or what you did, but they will always remember how you made them feel.”

That is the kind of life I now try to live each day—trusting that God has given us enough, and that it is enough to share.

Anita Varty – Trusting God with What We Have

Generosity was introduced into my life at a young age. Each week, part of my allowance went into a small jar that was set aside specifically for church. At the time, I didn't fully understand why, but I learned early that generosity was intentional—it was something you planned for.



That lesson took on deeper meaning during the recession in 2001. Work became scarce, and our family found ourselves on the edge of losing everything. The weight of uncertainty and fear was heavy, and hope felt fragile. During that season, generosity came to us in ways we never expected and could never

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forget. A friend quietly gave us her tickets to a spaghetti dinner, simply saying she “knew we could use them.” Someone paid for band camp when sending our son felt financially impossible. My parents made a house payment for us when we didn't know how we would make ends meet. The list of kindnesses went on, each one arriving at just the right moment.

Those acts of generosity became a turning point in our despair, and I saw God's love and hope.

It was always important to pass that lesson on to our children. Our boys learned generosity through action by taking a tag from the giving tree and using their own allowance to buy for someone in need. Last year one of the boys sent a box of new socks for the church, after I mentioned they were collecting socks. Watching them give with open hearts reminded me that generosity is learned best when it is lived.

Today, some of my greatest joy comes from quiet acts of giving—purchasing gifts for the giving tree, paying for someone's dinner

anonymously, or helping in ways that may never be known. I do these things not for recognition, but with the hope that a simple act of kindness might change someone's life the way ours was changed.

I love the outreach programs at Pilgrim and would love to see them continue to grow, reaching those who may be struggling quietly, just as we once did. I thank God every day for all that we have been given, and I continually ask Him to show me who I can help next. Generosity, to me, is trusting God with what we have and allowing His love to flow through us to others.



Bill Kauffman – In the Neighborhood and at Home



In the old'n days it was common for couples to marry right out of high school. My parents did just that and started their family soon after. They met in church, fell in love in church and raised our family in church.

Mom managed a household of ten. She ran a tight ship, kept our bellies full and did all she could to minimize the trouble any one of us might get into. Dad had a demanding full-time job but also worked at least one, sometimes two, part-time jobs.

Despite how busy they were, they made it a point to give back to church and instill Christian values in each of us. They taught Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, led Luther League (if you know what that is you've been around a while) and served on church council.

Outside of church Mom and Dad were adult leaders in Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, involved in our schools, had neighbors over for cards and play-dates for the kids. We knew our neighbors up and down the street. There were small families and large ones, young and old; there were single and multi-generational households.

Yet, because we are made in God's image, we have....

Neighbors who worked outside the home held jobs as laborers, tradesmen, executives, clerks, public servants and more. There were first generation Americans and very recent immigrants. Our neighborhood was a wonderful mix.

Despite the differences that existed, we shared with one another. We shared our time, our skills, knowledge, and all the gifts God had

blessed us with. You did what you could to be there for others and you knew they would be there for you too.

The example my parents and neighbors set taught me how important it is to share with others, give what you are able to, and to believe our heavenly father will always ensure your needs will be met. Our family saw the love of God on display in our home, in the lives of our neighbors and in the families of our church. The love we bestowed on one another blessed us over and over.

God's generosity is unfathomable to us. Yet, because we are made in God's image, we have the capacity to do amazing things.

I believe generosity comes naturally. It's a trait found in each of us, placed there by the Holy Spirit. Our blessings given generously will create a future in which Pilgrim's family can continue to support one another, our neighbors and our community. Together we can make incredible things happen allowing God's love and generosity to shine through each of us for generations to come.



