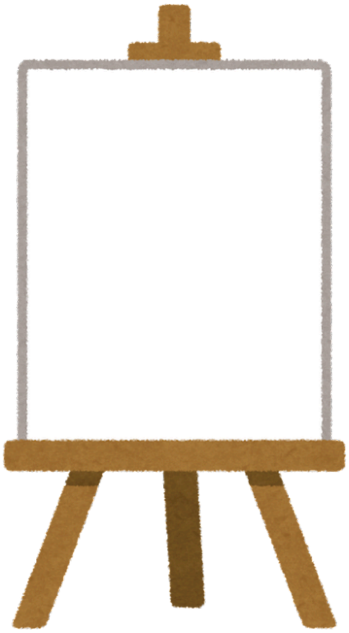
WELCOME TO THE

COMPASSION BEAT

we're so glad you're here!

A Blank Canvas of Compassion



Sometimes a blank piece of paper can feel intimidating and even a bit overwhelming. A little more than three and a half years ago, Lakes Area Presbyterian Church and Minnesota Valleys Presbytery extended me the opportunity to create a "blank canvas ministry." The commissioned piece had one simple objective: to reach out to those who were missing from the pews.

A theme for the work soon emerged—compassion. The ministry would extend compassion, with God's compassion serving as the foundation for every interaction.

Some elements of the painting quickly took shape. Reaching out to individuals experiencing homelessness and those struggling with addictions through recovery houses were among the first expressions of God's compassion. A splash of color brightened the painting, representing the children at Stoneybrook Mobile Home Park. The darker shadows of the painting reflect time spent with women who were incarcerated at Crow Wing County Jail.

The painting came into greater focus with the opportunity to serve older adults at Good Samaritan Society–Woodland. This opened the door to additional compassionate connections at Breath of Life and Good Samaritan Society–Bethany.

Like many masterpieces, this one is not complete. I suspect it will continue to evolve as new opportunities emerge and new relationships develop. Yet the lives that have been touched along the way will forever remain part of the picture that is The Compassionate Way.



Connection and Compassion Around the Table

We are thankful for the opportunity to provide more than twenty Connection and Compassion Gatherings for individuals in Baxter, Brainerd, and Little Falls. These gatherings have taken place at Lakes Area Presbyterian Church, Good Samaritan Society–Woodland, Stoneybrook Mobile Home Park, Lighthouse Beginnings, Agape Manor, and Creekside Community.

It has been a joy to witness connections being fostered as individuals gather around a delicious meal. In these shared moments, compassion is both extended and received as one person reaches out to another. What begins with a meal becomes an opportunity to build relationships, nurture a sense of belonging, and remind one another that we are not alone.

We are grateful that so many lives have been positively impacted through the generosity of the Initiative Foundation. These gatherings are a wonderful reminder that partnerships make a meaningful difference. When we work together, we create more opportunities for compassion to be experienced and shared.

Who might God want you to invite to table? We eat approximately 21 times a week. You could invite a neighbor, a friend who has been feeling lonely, a new acquaintance, or someone you would like to get to know better. You could open your home or meet at a local restaurant. The meal doesn't have to be elaborate, and the conversation doesn't have to be extraordinary. Sometimes, compassion begins with a simple invitation: “Would you like to join me for a meal?”

As the Seasons Change, God's Faithfulness Remains

As the leaves rapidly fall to the ground, I am reminded that there are times when I resist change. I don't always like to let go of things. I like to hold on. Yet I also know that when I hold on too tightly to what was, I may be unable to take hold of something new.

Life brings changes and seasons of uncertainty. Through it all, I am grateful to know that God is with us through every change. God is faithful. In Lamentations 3:22–23, we read, "The Lord's acts of mercy indeed do not end, for His compassions do not fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."

God is compassionate! Unfortunately, I encounter individuals who have been introduced to a God who is angry and wrathful. They live with the fear that God will condemn them. That is not the good news of God's compassion that I long for people to experience.

God is steadfast. The seasons change. Our circumstances change. We may struggle to let go of what is familiar as we face the uncertainty of what lies ahead. But God's compassion will not fail. Every morning brings a new reminder of God's faithfulness and the promise that we do not face change alone.

A Season of Gratitude

As we approach the season of giving, I am grateful for all those who make The Compassionate Way possible. Thank you for being part of this ministry and helping share God's compassion with others. Your prayers, encouragement, and generosity make a difference!

May you experience the joy of giving and the blessings of compassion this season. To contribute to The Compassionate Way, checks must be made payable to **Lakes Area Presbyterian Church** and sent to The Compassionate Way; 7761 Excelsior Rd.; Baxter, MN 56425.

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