



***I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.  
John 10:1-10***

There is no better way to describe this past year than “abundant new life”. In one of my recent sermons I described it this way; that it feels like we are about ready to blow the roof off the church with all the energy! You know what that feels like – maybe as a new parent, or buying your first home, or getting that job you wanted – there is hope and excitement, dreams of new possibilities, and curiosity about what is coming next.

While God offers us new life every single moment, as followers of Jesus we have a specific call to take this new life that we have been given and offer it to others. It isn't something we hang on to, as if it has a limited quantity, rather something we want to share because we are so happy and grateful. New life in Christ is a gift whose meaning can only be realized when we share it.

As your deacon I am especially grateful that St. Thomas' has shown a renewed commitment this past year to our neighborhood. I know that you are aware of the great need of the people living around this church. Economic and cultural forces, beyond people's control, are impacting children, families and individuals. Sioux City has seen a 100% increase in homelessness this past year. In addition, our brothers and sisters in Christ are experiencing foreclosure or substandard housing, unemployment or underemployment, a health care system beyond their reach, racism, and other factors that are barriers to the life God desires for us all.

While many of these people have developed keen survival skills, that most of us could not even imagine, they deserve so much more.

*Micah 6:8*

*And what does the LORD require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy,  
and to walk humbly with your God.*

Members of St. Thomas' are offering abundant new life to our neighbors through the Jubilee Ministry food pantry and increased participation in the Neighborhood Coalition. Yet, there is much more we can do. Each and every one of us has a specific God given skill that can contribute to our mission. If you already know what your gifts are, great! If you are unsure, or don't know, don't let that stop you. Take a risk and ask someone to help you discern your gifts. Speak with a member of the Vestry, or with Fr. Torey or me. Join one of the weekly Bible study sessions. Attend the theology classes that will begin in January. And pray, pray, pray. These are essential parts of a Christian life. They are ways to open yourself to God, to build a deeper relationship with Jesus, and to discover how God would have you share new life with others.

I have a hope that this spring we will have a prayer walk – a pilgrimage through our neighborhood streets. It would be a deliberate and humble act, giving us an opportunity to observe close hand the face of Christ living in our midst. It would be a chance to ask God's Spirit to reveal her plan for us. It would give us a chance to meet people on a personal level, to ask them about their lives, and their hopes and dreams. It would be an opportunity for our neighbors to see that St. Thomas' is more than an impressive, yet somewhat intimidating, structure but a place they could call home –a community that believes in mercy, compassion, and justice.

Faithfully,  
Deacon Pat