

“God so loved the world. . .” we can all finish the verse. You and I are in a love relationship with the creator of the universe, who has made himself known in Jesus Christ. After his resurrection, our Lord said to his disciples that all power in heaven and on earth had been given to him. He told them to go all people and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit so that they too would be part of this love relationship. He then told the disciples to teach these new Christians to obey everything he had taught them. This Great Commission is why each of us is here today; we are the result of the original disciples’ being sent out into the world. In fact, the Commission has been paraphrased in our own congregation’s Mission statement in 2004’s Strategic Plan.

Invite all people to the community of faith, grow in relationship with Jesus Christ and one another, and go share God’s love with the community and the world.

Now it's our turn. As fellow Christians, it is essential that we share God's love just as we ourselves have received it: to invite others to attend worship with us; to study the scriptures together; to invite others to Bible study, both here and in our homes; to eat together at Christ's table and, yes, even at good Lutheran potlucks like tonight's; to wash our children in the waters of baptism; to spend time together praising the one who loved us first; to share our own faith stories with others so that they, too, may become part of the love found in God's kingdom and family. As our Lord invited, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." We are called to follow Jesus—him alone.

Certainly this privilege of inviting others cannot be delegated solely to our clergy. All of us, in this congregation and in the world-wide body of Christ, are called by love to step out of our walls and comfort zones to help meet the spiritual, emotional, and relationship need of those who do not know Christ.

Believe me, standing here before you right now, I'm not exactly in my own comfort zone. But I do believe that being here is something I've been called to do by the Holy Spirit through this congregation. And so, I appeal to you as my brothers and sisters in Christ; love as you have been loved; reach out and build bridges so that others you meet or know may also be part of Jesus' family. When we invite and encourage others to join us in a love relationship with Jesus, attendance will cease to be a problem here. People in love just naturally want to be together; think back to those first days of love with someone special—you could hardly wait to get together again! The only attendance "problem" I can think of is having to remove the wall that divides the sanctuary! About that kind of problem, I say, "Bring it on, Lord!"