

Celebration of 50 Years of Ministry
November 4 and 5, 2006

This is a day to remember.

 This is a day to give thanks.

 We celebrate 50 years of ministry.

 Mt. Tabor.

 St. Luke's

 Then merged together--Good Shepherd.

For 50 years,

 God has been at work

 through the work of this congregation.

For 50 years,

 we have been blessed to be a blessing.

For 50 years,

 the good news of God in Christ Jesus
 has been shared and lived.

Thank you.

 Thank you.

 Thank you.

As I've been thinking about this day,
 I jotted down 3 lines:

Look back with thanks.

Look forward with hope.

Look around with joy.

We look back with.....thanks.

We look forward with.....hope.

We look around with.....joy.

I'm curious.

 Do we have anyone at this service

who was a charter member of Mt. Tabor?
Russell Lehr
Virginia Stemme
The Thiemans
And Bill and Jane Wagner came in within a month.

How about charter members of St. Lukes' ?
Roy and Lois Anderson
Randle and Virginia Dennison
Dave and Edith Egertson
The Ottos (Bill, Julie and Jan)
Judge and Louise Weyen

(Let's say thank you to these pioneers.)

And how many among you
were here when St. Luke's and Mt. Tabor merged
almost 20 years ago in 1987-88?
Would you please stand?
(I should really sit down.
I wasn't here until 1991.)

(Thanks to each of you
for your service and commitment
to the Gospel.)

So today we celebrate 50 years of ministry.
It was in the fall of 1956
that Mt. Tabor first began worshipping.
On October 7, 1956,

the building site at Manchester and Baxter was dedicated.
On October 11, 1956,
the first meeting of the congregation took place.
On November 25, 1956,
the congregation worshiped together for the first time.

We invited Pastor Milford Brelje,
first pastor of Mt. Tabor
and Pastor John Walker,
first pastor of St. Lukes
to be here today.

Neither was able to make it.
But both gave greetings.

Pastor Schoenherr
has talked on the phone several times with
Pastor Brelje and his wife
over the last weeks.
They really wish they could be here
and they send their greetings.
But they also ask for prayers,
because Pastor Brelje has begun radiation treatments
for cancer—a spot on his lung.

He shared memories
of a young and enthusiastic congregation.
He was here from 1958 until 1964.
One incident he recalled
was getting the organ to the balcony.
I guess they all worked together with ropes
to get it up there.
That would have been fun to see.
He remembered the strong Vacation Bible School.
Meeting outside in a tent.
He remembered the congregation working together,
doing the finish work on the building.
He remembered those days warmly.
And he sends greetings.

We look back with...thanks.
We look forward with....hope.
We look around with....joy.

I've often wondered
why it was called Mt. Tabor.
Mt. Tabor
is mentioned in the Old Testament,
but never in the New Testament.
Why was that name chosen?

As I looked at the reading from 2 Peter,
used at the first service of Mt. Tabor
and read on the internet
about the tradition of Mt. Tabor,
I think I have a good idea.

Although it never mentions it in the Bible,
tradition says that Mt. Tabor
was the location of the Transfiguration of Jesus.
And the reading from 2 Peter,
which we heard today
talks about—
—the Transfiguration of Jesus.

And then the reading says:

**You will do well to be attentive to this
as to a lamp shining in a dark place,
until the day dawns
and the morning star rises in your hearts.**

In that first service of Mt. Tabor,
we were being reminded
to keep our eyes turned to Jesus.
Jesus—revealed on the mountain.
According to tradition—Mt. Tabor.

And that is our message still today,
50 years later.
Keep your eyes turned to Jesus,
who is a lamp shining in a dark place,
who gives us hope for the future,

who gives us joy as we follow and serve.

We look back with....thanks.

We look forward with....hope.

We look around with....joy.

The site for St. Lukes

was purchased on June 19, 1962.

On August 9, 1963,

Pastor John Walker came as the first pastor of St. Lukes.

I was talking with John and his wife Kitty

a couple weeks ago.

We were at the Lake of the Ozarks

for the synod's Bishop's Convocation.

John and Kitty now live in Overland Park–

–Kansas City area.

His recollection was that they purchased the land here–

–about 2/3 of our present site–

–for \$10,000 an acre.

And they thought that was a lot.

I'm sure it was.

I said to him,

“You should have bought more.”

When we've bought land recently,

it's been about \$300-\$350,000 an acre.

He said,

at the time,

it seemed like they had way too much land.

I'm glad they had the foresight to buy as much as they did

even though they didn't know

how it would eventually be used.

Pastor Walker talked about

what a great place this was to live.

A great place to raise children.

And quite frankly,

I think if Pastor Brelje had been able to make it today,

Pastor Walker might have been here, too,
because he talked about how much he enjoyed Pastor Brelje
when they were both here.

Pastor Walker writes in greeting:

**I am grateful for having had the opportunity
to serve what was St. Luke's at the time before the merger.
I am thrilled to see the growth since I left
and am confident that preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ
will not only continue
but will add many more members
to the congregation there.
Blessings and all good wishes for your future ministry,
John Walker**

Reading from the history of St. Luke's:

**The first task of the new pastor
was to select a name for the new church.
Because of Pastor Walker's concern
that the gospel be related to all of people's ills,
both physical as well as spiritual,
the name St. Luke's was chosen
as being representative of both physical and spiritual healing,
since St. Luke was a physician
who through his Gospel reveals Jesus,
the Divine Physician.**

Again,
Christ is at the center.
Our Gospel reading for today
was used at St. Luke's building dedication in 1964,
when Peter proclaimed to Jesus:

You are the Messiah,

the son of the living God.

And Jesus says to Peter:

...on this rock I will build my church.

There's been a lot of debate through the last 2000 years
about what that means.

But one thing I hear clearly
is that the church is built
on the proclamation
that Jesus is the Messiah,
the Son of the Living God.

And the 50 years of ministry
has been built with Christ at the center.

I pray that the next 50 years,
and the 50 after that,
and the 50 after that,
will continue to hold Christ central
in all we do.

We look back with....thanks.

We look forward with....hope.

We look around with....joy.

This is All Saints' Sunday/weekend.

Today we give thanks for all saints—
—for all the people of God.

But we particularly give thanks
for those who have died.

The planning of this celebration all started

because of a conversation I had with Bill Wagner.
Bill was at home,
no longer able to get out.
No longer able to make it the church here
that he loved so dearly.

And he mentioned first
that a 20 year anniversary celebration
would be coming up for Good Shepherd.
That gets going next year.

And then,
as we talked,
we realized that the 50 years of ministry
was coming up, too.
And we started talking
about a celebration
that has become, appropriately I think,
not a celebration just of Mt. Tabor,
or just a celebration of St. Luke's,
but a celebration of 50 years of ministry for us—
—whatever we happened to be called at the time.

Of course,
since that conversation,
Bill has died.

We miss him around here.
Along with a lot of other folks
who have given so much
in the service of the Gospel.

That's one of the reasons
we chose All Saints' Sunday/weekend
for this celebration.
We remember those who are with us today.
Those who are living,
but not able to be here.
And those who have gone before us,
to be with Jesus eternally.

We give thanks
for all of those
who have meant so much to each of us personally
and have meant so much
to this congregation.
We give thanks to God for each and every one of them.

I think of Psalm 121:

**The Lord will keep your going out
and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.**

**We look back with...thanks.
We look forward with....hope.
We look around with....joy.**

And God isn't finished with us.
We have been blessed to be a blessing.
God is with us from this time on and forevermore.

That's why I'm so thankful
that next week,

we are gathering food for the Thanksgiving baskets
and Christmas Child boxes to send around the world
and our mite boxes for Shoes for Hope,
ministry to those with leprosy in India.

That emphasis on service and caring
has been a cornerstone of this congregation—
—of our ministry together.

Our mission continues.

God's mission continues.

God is busy among us.

And God's Spirit continues to move among us—

—calling us through the Gospel
—showing us the good news of Jesus Christ
—and sending us in service.

We look back with...thanks.

We look forward with....hope.

We look around with....joy.

In Jesus' name,
Amen