



*Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:1-2, NRSV*

Dear Annunciation Family,

In the nine months I've been with you at Annunciation, I've seen your generous spirit shine through in countless ways. From organizing meal trains to supporting community outreach programs, serving in the many ministries of the church, and most recently stepping up to help cover unexpected building expenses, your kindness and willingness to give have been inspiring.

Generosity is a journey and a practice that we learn and nurture within our hearts. And it's a journey we undertake together. After all, it's not always easy to part with what we've worked so hard to earn or to give up our time without expecting anything in return. But it's love—radical, transformative love—that compels us to share our time, talent, and treasure with others. This journey of giving is, at its heart, a Walk in Love.

Throughout this year, as we've walked with the Gospel of Mark, we've seen how Jesus turned the world upside down. Long-held laws and customs were challenged, and systems of power were questioned. It wasn't politics or force that brought change, but the simple, profound act of love.

Jesus caused a revolution, not by wielding power, but by reaching out to the outcast and teaching us to do the same. He walked in love with the marginalized, the poor, and the sick—and he invites us to join him on that journey.

The most miraculous thing about love is that it's been within us all along. Once we tap into it, we begin to grow it, and amazing things happen. We learn to share, to give, to volunteer, to care for others, to feed the hungry, to pray, to visit the lonely, and to strive for change. As we begin our Stewardship Campaign this year, we'll be sharing stories of how we Walk in Love as a congregation. I invite you to share your own stories of inspiration and connection, and to join us on this journey of love. I invite you to *Walk in Love*.

Please prayerfully consider the next step in your walk with Christ. If you are a pledger, thank you. If you have not pledged before, I hope you will prayerfully consider making a commitment this year. As you reflect on the year ahead, I encourage you to consider increasing your pledge. Your increase can make a significant impact in helping us not only continue but extend our ministries and serve more of God's people in new and meaningful ways. Every pledge, no matter the size, plays a vital role in building our budget and shaping what we can accomplish together in 2025.

May God bless you as we look forward to Walking in Love together and proclaiming Christ's love.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Carolyn Bartkus".

Rev. Carolyn Bartkus