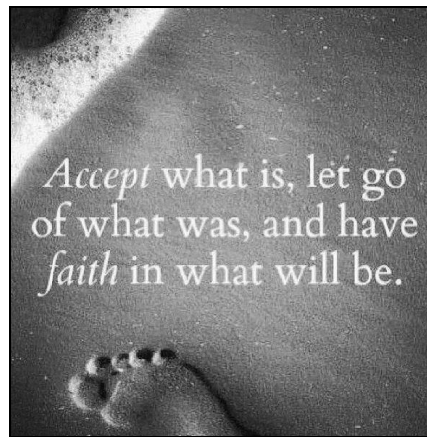


## NEED COMPASSION? ENTER HERE —>



### *Scripture:*

### **Psalm 23**

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. <sup>2</sup>He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; <sup>3</sup>he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

### **Mark 6:30-34, 53-56**

<sup>30</sup>The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup>And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. <sup>33</sup>Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. <sup>34</sup>As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

<sup>53</sup>When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. <sup>54</sup>When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, <sup>55</sup>and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. <sup>56</sup>And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

### **This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



Jesus had the best of intentions. He was going to reward the disciples (who had been working very hard) with a restful retreat away from the maddening crowds. They had earned it by teaching and healing many in his name. He knew they needed to rest and rejuvenate. Don't we all?

So what happened to his plan for rest and relaxation? Compassion; compassion won the day, as it should have. Compassion is powerful and revitalizing in itself. Compassion is actually strength giving, too!

When the people brought the sick to Jesus he had compassion on them. Jesus was “touched” by their needs and his compassionate heart could not ignore the needs of his children.

This shows us the character of God. The heart of God is love and compassion. There is no doubt, no matter how worn out, we are to let compassion lead us to do all we can to help others. Even at the expense of our own comforts and needs.

## **COMPASSION AND NEED**

Compassion and need go together. Our church is a sanctuary of compassion. But what do you really need? Take time for a minute and ponder what it is that you need to feel whole, to be happy, to lead fulfilling lives, to make a difference in the world, to feel like you belong and have a place to call your own?

Do you come to church out of a sense of duty? Or do you come out of a sense of delight, and desire, and anticipation? That can only happen if at least some of your needs are being met here. It is important to realize what our needs are, both as individuals and as a community. What do we need in order to flourish and be the people God has called us to be? When your needs are being met, you can meet the needs of others. Sometimes these two processes happen at the same time.

## **MEETING CONCRETE NEEDS**

Reverend David Lose reflects on today’s passage in Mark where the needs seem clear: people who are sick want to be healed. People who are hungry want to be fed. There are needs in abundance all around us. Sometimes those needs are right here in our congregations, and sometimes they are spread throughout our communities. In both cases, our faith communities can play an active role in meeting those concrete needs.

Interestingly, in a study of vibrancy in congregations two factors that characterized all the congregations identified as “vibrant” were:

#1: a substantial and sustained commitment to the community (such as a food bank, a meal program, Deacon ministries, helping homeless, etc.) and

#2: a willingness to experiment with other forms of worship to meet spiritual needs in a different way (like our Sacred Space and the Hour of Prayer services.)

Being compassionate and meeting the needs of others inspires our spirits and our church community to be vibrant and alive. We are growing, giving, caring and compassionate, all the qualities that God would want us to possess. We are not afraid to try new ways to reach out and we are aware that the whole community looks to us as a model of faith that has a positive affect on the community near and far.

## **WHAT IS COMPASSION?**

But what is compassion really?

The root of the Greek word for compassion means “guts,” like having a feeling in your guts, feeling that pit in your stomach. Compassion inspires a visceral feeling.

Thomas Merton believed: “Compassion is the keen awareness of the interdependence of all things.” (We are all connected. When people suffer in one part of the world, the suffering eventually affects us all in some way.)

Matthew Fox said: “Compassion is a flow and an overflow of the fullest human and divine energies.”

**And the Dalai Lama said:  
“The whole purpose of religion  
is to facilitate love and compassion,  
along with patience, tolerance,  
humility, and forgiveness.”**

When our church provided a shelter after the firestorm, it was a response of compassion to help meet the immediate needs of the people who turned to us for help. That is what we do. That is what being a church is all about, trying our best to meet the basic needs of the people on behalf of God. That meant we had to stay open for two weeks. But it was a fulfilling experience for all! And the blessings are still coming back to us in the form of some new members as a result of sheltering them during the fires.

I am somewhat fascinated by the concept of compassion. And I am not alone! There is a whole center on the study of compassion at Stanford! James R. Doty, M.D. is a neurologist and the founding director of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford

University. He often gives talks about the science of compassion.

## IT TAKES COURAGE

I am especially interested in what keeps people from showing compassion? Jesus had compassion for the people seeking him because it says, “They were like sheep without a shepherd.”

Jesus had a brain and heart full of compassion. So if we are made in God’s image then why doesn’t everybody have the same level of compassion as Jesus? Courage; it takes courage to show compassion.

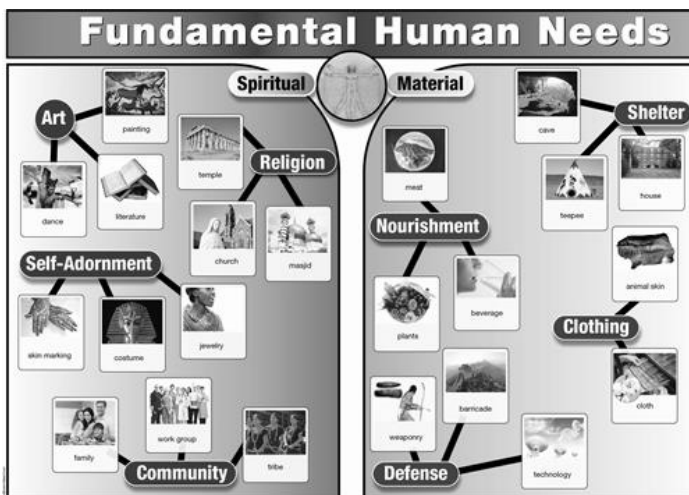
We all have an instinct to be compassionate. It is wired in our brains. But fear can present a huge obstacle in the way of acting out compassion. We worry about taking risks when we leave our comfort zones and get involved with the lives of others. Fear is what inhibits our natural compassionate way to connect with others. And fear can keep someone from accepting our compassion as well. It works both ways.

Motivational trainer Tim Dawes gives a Ted Talk that demonstrates the power of compassion to influence, lead, and create better outcomes in business and everyday life. He tells an amazing story about an attempted robbery stopped with compassion.

The congregation watched a YouTube presentation:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E\\_guy-i2BTE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_guy-i2BTE).

Basically, the way to show compassion is to ask the question, “What do you need?” Here is a table of basic needs we all have in common:



To be compassionate you have to be willing to assess what people need and understand what they are afraid of. What fear has created the foundation for their anger? Help people see they are not alone and they have options, that by accepting compassion they will better be able to give compassion in the future.

## A GREAT YEARNING

Even though we live in a society where people listen to Ted Talks more than they listen to sermons, there is still a great yearning for wisdom, truth, love, and faith. There is also a great need for diversity, acceptance, and creativity.

**Although the traditional way of “doing church” is comfortable to many of us, it is foreign and uncomfortable to many others.**

That is why I put this image on the bulletin cover (and it appears under the sermon title on page one of this printed copy of the sermon): It applies to our individual lives and to the life of the church, too.

The church needs to change if it is to grow. We are not the church we were twenty years ago, but we have faith that we are still becoming what God wants us to be in this time and place.

## LADIES WHO LUNCH

Think about accepting the state that you are in: what is and ponder what needs you have. Now realize that your own needs are common with the needs of others. Consider how our whole church family can help you and others live more abundant lives. For example, Ellen Marks pondered the need for a widow’s group. The group started out meeting the needs of widows talking about what it is like to be a widow today among other things. And now their needs have evolved. They don’t just talk about being widows anymore. The group realized their most important need right now was to have companionship and go to lunch together. So the Widow’s group evolved into Ladies Who Lunch group to meet their current needs.

## DEATH CAFE

Death Cafe is another example. It was started by a man in the United Kingdom who perceived a need to talk about all aspects of death. He wanted to create a space where there could be non-judgmental talk on the topic of death since death is something we all have in common. He felt a need (in his gut) and developed a program to meet that need within himself and to help others with a similar need. Bernard Crettaz didn't just sit around and complain that there was no group where he could talk about his worries and anticipations about death. He made it happen, first in the UK and now it has spread around the world to over fifty-nine-hundred being held in many countries.

## ABUNDANCE

Compassion often leads to abundance through the fulfillment of needs. Help one person and find yourself connected to many others who end up helping you meet your own needs. Living a life of abundance is not just happiness, or belonging, or a sense of purpose, but something bigger that includes all these things but also includes justice and peace and community. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus calls this the kingdom of God. In John, he often describes it as abundant life. No matter what you name it, however, we all want it. We all sense something more is out there for us, and we'd all desperately like some help in living into the kingdom world of more abundant life that Jesus offers.

Church of the Roses helps meet the needs of the people of God, not for self-centered reasons, but in order to meet the needs of this world that God loves so very much. Remember, God cares for the tiny sparrow and God cares for you and the vast universe all at the same time.

There is a common thread weaving us all together. We have common emotions and needs.

Mark Nepo in his *Book of Awakening* tells a story about our common compassion for each other.

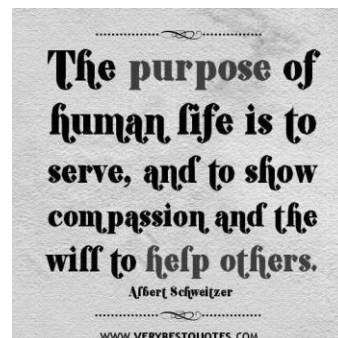
He said he was traveling with a small group and one morning he was feeling very tender (he called it). His friend Kim came upon him weeping and asked if he was okay. He told her "It was only the waters of life splashing up on the shore."

Later that day he happened to notice that Kim was in tears and he checked in with her. She said, "The river's now in me." They realized that we all

share the same river. It flows beneath us and through us from one heart to the next. They discovered that tears, the water from within, are common. "We may speak different languages and live different lives, but when that deep water swells to the surface, it pulls us to each other." We share the same river.

So I ask you now to turn to a neighbor sitting in the pew with you. Look into each others faces and just acknowledge briefly and silently the common river we share, the common blood, the common tears, the common heartbeats and heartbreaks, the basic needs of life.

May your compassion be set free without fear inhibiting it. May you trust that God will guide you to provide the needs for others as God provides for you. And may you reap the joy of knowing you are living up to the purpose you were born to be. As one of my favorite missionary physician theologians once said:



### **Benediction:**

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen**



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