

God's
grace transforming lives

NEW MEMBERS HANDBOOK

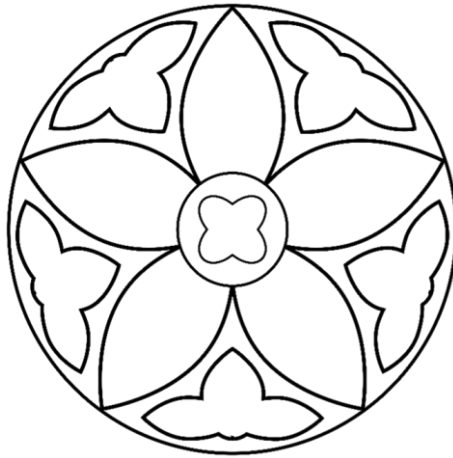


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- Vision
- Church History Chart
- United Methodists: A Connected Church
- About Saint Mark
- Grace
- Celebrating Grace
 - Worship
 - Devotion
 - Faith Sharing
 - Service
- Membership





VISION

Loving

Saint Mark strives to express love for all people in all that we do. We recognize the multiplicity of love - that love can be gentle, passionate, forceful, bold, and much more, and we aim to express that love through unambiguous statements and tangible action.

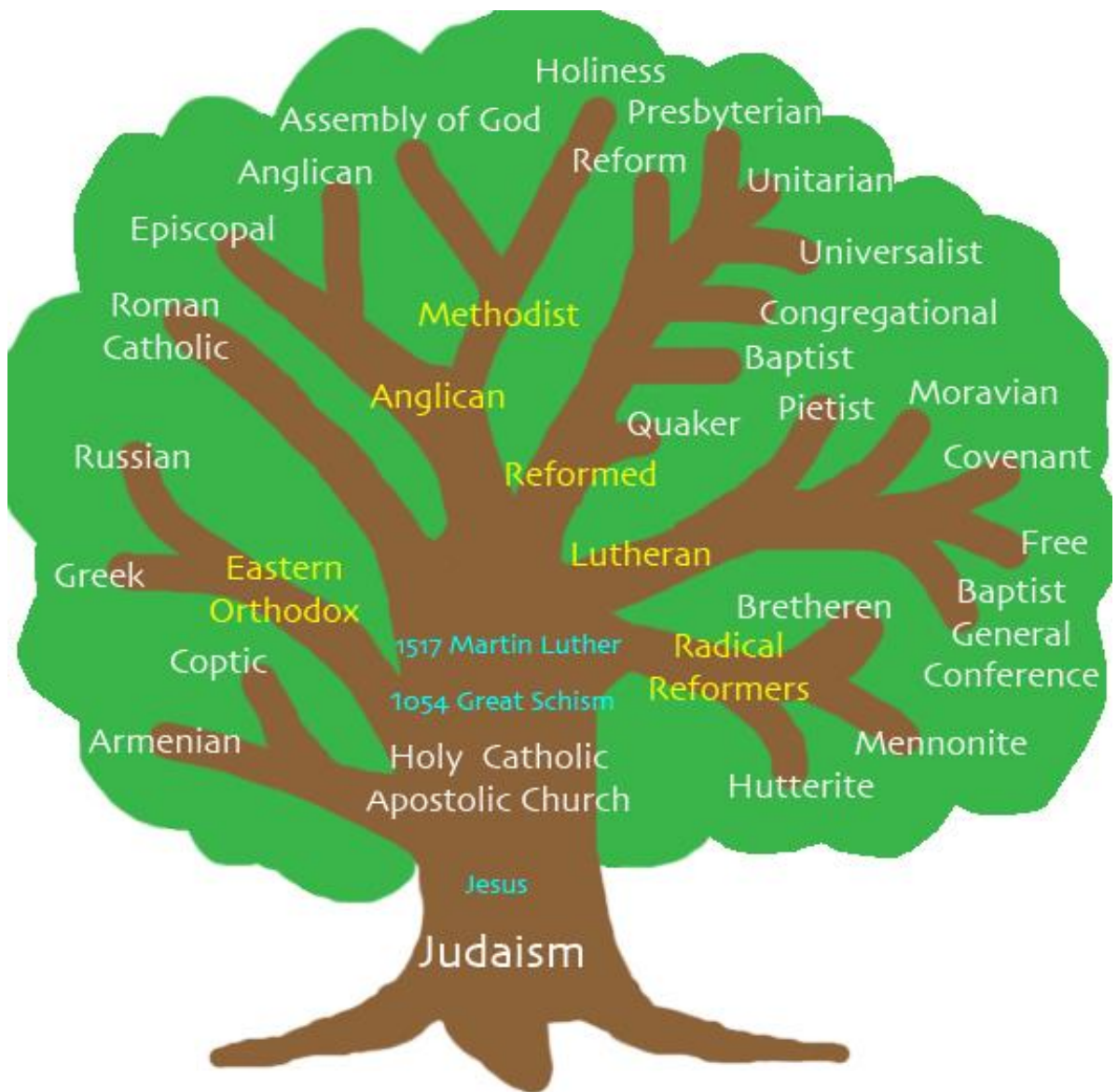
Accepting

Saint Mark accepts our members for who they are, without judgment or condemnation. We accept the changes in the world at large with grace and adaptability and accept our own necessary growth and education with understanding and humility.

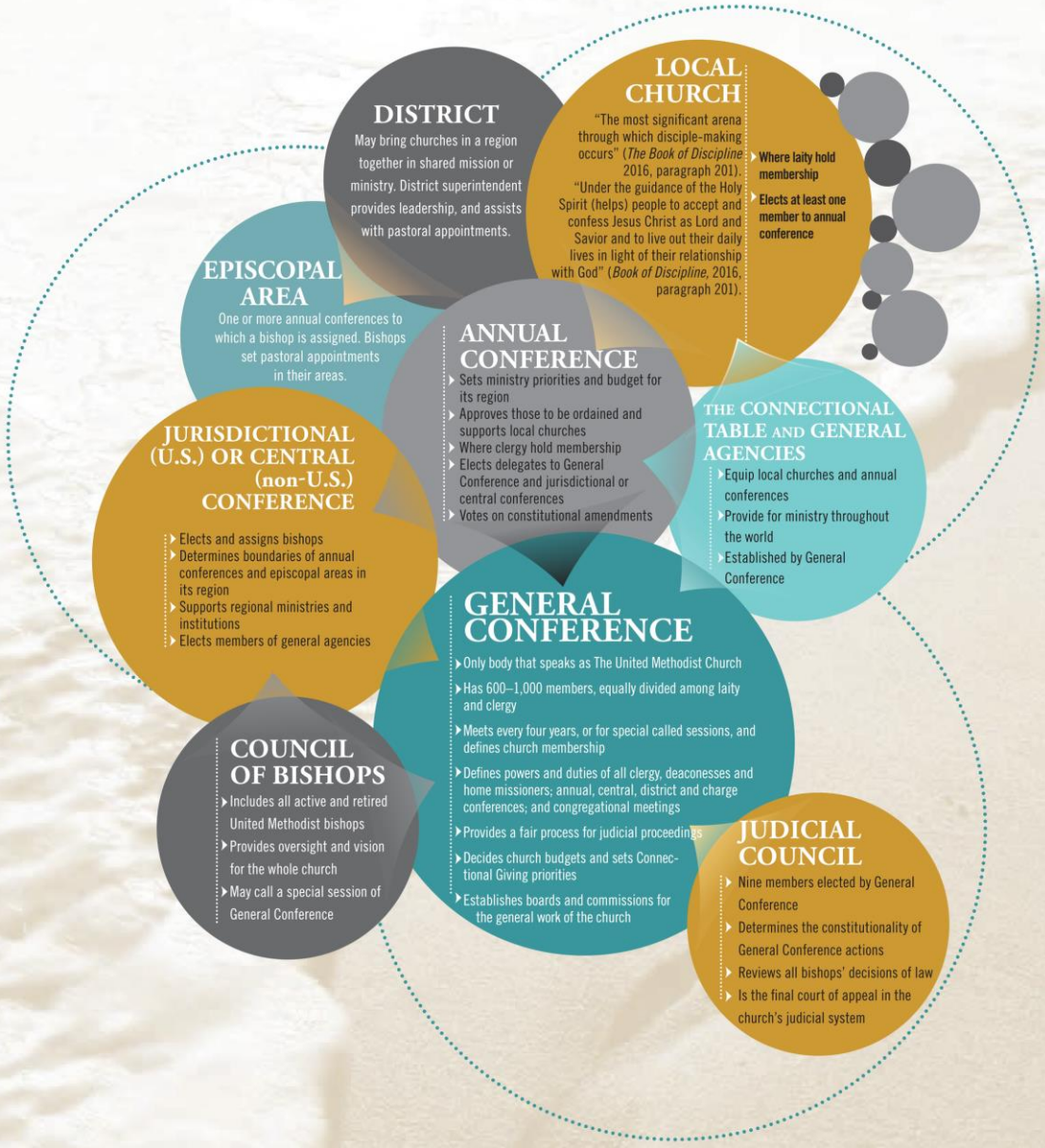
Serving

Saint Mark seeks to serve our community in a variety of ways through our various ministries, with a concentrated effort towards our neighbors who have been historically underserved. We consistently strive to demonstrate humility, understanding, and servant leadership.

Church History Chart



United Methodists: A Connected Church



GRACE

God's loving kindness and unmerited favor shown and given to everyone.

Wesley's Vision of the Christian Life

1. Image of God - we are made in the image of God.
2. Original Sin - people were given free will to make their own choices and sinned against God.
3. **Prevenient Grace** - God's way of drawing us into relationship. It illumines thoughts, awakens affections, and empowers will. It goes ahead of us and is always around us.
4. Repentance - turning away from sinfulness. Self knowledge (mind), conviction of sin (heart), desire for change (will).
5. **Justifying Grace** - by grace through faith, pardon, forgiveness of sin. Jesus Christ does "for us" through death on the cross. This is offered to all.
6. New Birth (Regeneration) - Holy Spirit gives us a new heart, transformation, renewal, a real change "in us"
7. **Sanctifying** - process of growth. Sin no longer reigns in heart and life.
8. Assurance - the witness of the Spirit that you are a child of God.
9. Christian Perfection - continued growth in love.
10. Restored Image of God--to reflect God's glory in the world.





**“Worship is the arena in which we encounter God
and are formed by God in and through the
practices in which the Spirit is present.”
(James K. Smith, 152)**

Worship is a time we set aside to be with God. Sometimes this is done in personal devotion. Other times we join together with a congregation of Christians to praise and thank God, sing, pray, confess our sins, give, listen to God’s Word, profess faith, and express our desire to do God’s will. Through worship, we are renewed in God’s grace, reminded that we are the people of God, and that God has a greater purpose for us. We are gathered to worship God, and to be sent out into the world to do the will of God.

United Methodist worship is based upon the observance of the Christian Church year which is divided into two cycles. Within these cycles are **Ordinary Time & Kingdomtide.**



The Easter Cycle

Lent

Celebration of the period of preparation (40 days, beginning Ash Wednesday, excluding Sundays) for those who will be baptized at Easter, and a time of renewal of the baptismal covenant for those who have already been baptized. Lent concludes at the end of Holy Week, which includes Palm/Passion Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday.

Easter

Celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Pentecost

Celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the church.

The Christmas Cycle

Advent

Celebration of the past, present, and future comings of Christ (begins on Sunday between November 27 and December 3).

Christmas

Celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Epiphany

Celebration of the manifestations of Christ. Epiphany means “manifestation” and focuses upon the manifestation of God in Jesus Christ as witnessed in the visit of the Wise Men, the baptism of the Lord, and the Transfiguration.



Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord:

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, he descended to hell; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic* church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*universal





The *Sacraments*

Sacraments are signs of God's love toward us and our love for God. They are outward signs of an inward grace. Two sacraments are ordained by Jesus Christ, Baptism and Communion.

Baptism celebrates the new birth in Jesus Christ, repentance and inner cleansing from sin, entrance into the community of faith (the church) and is a mark of discipleship.

United Methodists believe that infants/children are under the atonement of Christ and are also recipients for baptism. Following baptism, they should be nurtured by their parents and the church, and led to personal acceptance of Christ, and by profession of faith confirm their baptism.

The characteristics of United Methodist baptism are as follows:

1. It is a once and for all sacrament (UM recognize the baptism from other Christian denominations and do not re-baptize).
2. There are three methods of baptism: Immersion, Pouring and Effusion (sprinkling). We baptize by the mode of choice. As a practical matter, most members receive baptism by Effusion (sprinkling).

Holy Communion is a remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ, a representation of our redemption, and an expression of love which Christians have with Christ and one another.

The bread is symbolic of Christ's body which was broken for us.

The drink is symbolic of the blood he shed for us.

We celebrate Communion as a reminder of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us and to give thanks to God for all Jesus Christ has done in our lives. Christ is present by virtue of the Holy Spirit, who makes Christ present to the soul of the believer.

The characteristics of United Methodist Holy Communion are as follows:

1. It is a continual observance;
2. Communion is served in a variety of ways;
3. John Wesley believed that people could come to faith through receiving the sacrament and thus opened the table to all people regardless of age, de-nomination, or belief.



THE LORD'S PRAYER

In heaven
hallowed
be thy
Name thy
kingdom
come
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
as we
forgive
those
who
trespass
against
us And
lead us
not into
temptation
but deliver
us from
evil us
from evil
For thine
is the
kingdom
and the
power

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.



Devotion

An important way of growing in the Christian life is through devotion. The devotional life is composed of Prayer, Bible Study, Christian disciplines and fellowship with other Christians. For Christians these are means of grace.

Prayer

is simply talking to and listening to God. One guide that can help you in your prayer is represented by the acronym: **A.C.T.S.** Each letter stands for a particular element of prayer that you can include:

- **Adoration** focuses on God's character. Expressing our love for God and declaring how great God is.
- **Confession** helps us to acknowledge and to turn away from sin. Agreeing with God that you have sinned. Ask God to forgive you, God will!
- **Thanksgiving** shows God our appreciation for what God has done. Thanking God for what God means to you, and for what God has given to you.
- **Supplication** is asking for God's help. Humbly asking God to meet the needs of other people as well as expressing your own needs.

Bible Study

The Bible is the inspired word of God, filled with truth, and contains all we need to know for godly living. There are several key factors to getting the most from your Bible.

1. Get a version of the Bible that is comfortable to read.
2. Set aside a regular time each week to read the Bible and commit to it. Participating in a group Bible study can be great. You will learn from others in the group and will have others encouraging you to stay committed.
3. Use the "helps" provided by your Bible to help better understand the meaning of scripture.
4. Open up your mind and heart to hear what God is saying to you through the Bible!

Fellowship

God gives us fellowship with other believers for nurture and support, and to help us grow in responsibility, accountability, and love.





Why is giving important?

The Bible has much to say about wisdom and finances, with 2,300 verses that tell us to be generous and good stewards of our resources. Throughout the Old Testament, the people of God were commanded to come with their gifts and offerings and present them to the Lord. This was their thanksgiving to God for the blessings they received from God's hand.

"Three times a year every male among you must appear before the presence of the Lord your God in the location he will select: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks, and the Festival of Booths. They must not appear before the Lord's presence empty-handed. *Deuteronomy 16:16 NIV*

Jesus taught generosity and sacrifice. He demanded that his followers serve God and not wealth, and in the parable of the talents, he taught that God will hold us each accountable for what we do with our earthly possessions. *Jesus said where our treasure is, our heart will also be. Matthew 6:21*

What is expected of me?

The Bible teaches us to give a tithe, or the first 10 percent of what we earn, to God and the church's work. For some, giving one tenth is a difficult goal.

For others, it is the starting point, and their giving far exceeds 10 percent. The important thing is that:

- You start somewhere
- Your giving be in proportion to your income
- Your giving reflects an appropriate offering to your God-given means
- Your offerings express both your desire to serve the Lord and your investment in God's work.

Begin by determining what percentage of your income you are giving to God. If you are not yet tithing, consider taking a step toward tithing this year. For example, if you now give 3 percent of your income, consider increasing your gift to 4 percent, and add 1 percent each year until you reach the tithing goal. Our prayer is that everyone will grow in his or her faith through giving financially to the ministries of the church and experience the joy and blessings that come from financial generosity.



Celebrate Enough

This year we invite you to celebrate the joy of generosity as you offer your estimate of giving card for the coming year. We encourage you to find greater contentment and simplicity in your lives as you put God first in your giving and living and to experience the joy that comes from knowing our gifts honor God and change lives.

Our challenge as members is to find ways to grow deeper in our faith. One way to do this is to offer our financial blessings to God through our tithes and offerings. Through these gifts, we invest in God's vision and purpose and create an opportunity for God to work through us.

Our gifts to God each week are an act of worship; and our offerings are vitally necessary to change lives, transform communities, and share the good news of Jesus with the world.

What if financial hardship prohibits me from making a commitment this year?

Don't let your inability to give currently keep you from worship. Remember that God honors your faithfulness and that your acceptance at Saint Mark United Methodist Church is not based upon your capacity to give. We ask that everyone return an estimate of giving card even if it is a limited financial commitment at this time. You can always increase or decrease your commitment if your situation changes by calling the church office. Also, be sure to let our pastoral staff know of your situation so that they can pray for and support you during any difficulty.

Why do I need to turn in a new commitment card each year?

Financial situations change from year to year, and if we are growing in our faith, our annual commitment should likewise reflect that giving growth. Each year, our church budget is based upon the growing commitments of our congregation.

Why do I need to return an estimate of giving card?

There are two reasons why it is important that everyone in our church family return an estimate of giving card. First, the process of prayerfully asking God to guide your decision and then making a commitment to serve the Lord with your financial gifts is an act of worship, an expression of gratitude and praise to God. Second, one a more practical note, your commitment allows our church to budget and better plan for our ministries, key objectives, and mission outreach programs.

www.stmarkumc.org/give





“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” - Acts of the Apostles 1:8

At Saint Mark United Methodist Church, we offer several opportunities to learn to share your faith both as a Christian and as part of the outreach ministry of the church.

Faith Sharing

Faith sharing is a very important aspect of the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ. There are many ways to share our faith.

We can share our faith and the story of God in our lives with our friends. Or we can invite them to church so they can learn from others.

We can witness through the example we set. By living Christian lives, those around us will take notice and may follow our example or seek us out for guidance or help.

We can help spread God’s love by loving and serving others. John 13:35 says, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Personal

Learn to tell your story of what God is doing in your life.

Congregational

Join with other Christians in the congregation to be a witness in this community and beyond.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always, to the end of the age.

- Matthew 4:16-20



Service



Service

Service is a way of expressing our love for God, as we reach out in mission to the community and world. At Saint Mark United Methodist Church, there are numerous ways to serve. Those wishing to serve are encouraged to prayerfully consider their sense of call, passion, special skills, and spiritual gifts in selecting an area to serve.

Volunteer Ministry

There are many ways of serving in Ministry at Saint Mark.

Leadership

Leadership is recruited, nominated and elected annually from persons serving in ministry areas.

Commissioned Ministry

These ministries require special training and commissioning.

Spiritual Gifts

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

If you would like to take a spiritual gifts inventory to find your area of spiritual giftedness, go to the official United Methodist website:

www.umcdiscipleship.org/spiritual-gifts-inventory/en

Mission Work

Saint Mark is involved in the work and support of numerous local missions.

Then he will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” – Matthew 25:45





Discipleship

Why join the Church?

Through our experience and relationship with God are unique and personal, God doesn't expect us to do it all by ourselves. God also calls us to be the Body of Jesus Christ in the world, enlivened by the Spirit.

- The church is the place we join with other Christians to praise and worship God. The church provides opportunities for us to grow in faith and faithfulness.
- The church offers mutual support, encouragement and accountability.
- The church is where we discover our Spiritual gifts and put them to use in meaningful ways.
- The church is where we join with other Christians in common mission and vision to reach out to a community and world in need.

Profession of Faith

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races? *I do.*

Baptism

<Name>, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Confirmation

Children at the age of 12 (6th grade) are invited to be a part of Confirmation, a discipleship training program at the end of which they are invited to make a public profession of faith and join the church.

Reaffirmation of Faith

Persons who want to renew their faith commitment or who have been away from the Church for a while, may join by Reaffirmation of Faith. (The vow is the same as the Profession of Faith).

Reception into the Local Congregation

As a member of this congregation, will you faithfully participate in the ministries of the church by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness?





Worship Attendance

Why is attendance important?

At baptism or in confirmation/profession of faith, we make very important promises. We renounce evil, the spiritual forces of wickedness, and repent of our sin. We declare that we accept the freedom God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression. Then we declare we trust in Christ for salvation and promise to serve him in unity with his church.

In those promises we accept God's acceptance of us within the beloved community, we promise to serve WITH THE CHURCH, and the church welcomes us as members of Christ's royal priesthood

John Wesley taught and practiced accountable discipleship. He knew what we deep down know today--we can't keep on the path with Christ without the help and support of other Christians. Without hearing the Word read and preached, without gathering with other Christians around the table to share and feast upon Christ who is host and sacrifice for us, and without becoming part of the fire of the Spirit, we are like embers of a fire separated from the community of grace. We grow cold and the fire and flame of love grow cold, and we die spiritually. We may still believe, but we stand outside the covenant in our practice.

However, it is important to add God does not let us go or give up on us. What God promises, God does not revoke. We are still marked as Christ's disciple and still called to live in and with and for Christ.

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. - Hebrews 10:25

20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I'm there with them. - Matthew 18:20

16 The word of Christ must live in you richly. Teach and warn each other with all wisdom by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts. - Colossians 3:16

17 So, faith comes from listening, but it's listening by means of Christ's message. - Romans 10:17

42 The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. - Acts 2:42





