



Welcoming *the* Stranger



A FOUR-WEEK SUMMER SERIES
SUNDAYS IN JUNE 10:10

The Monthly Newsletter of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

June 2026



Josh Brecht
Lead Pastor

What Does the Bible say about Immigrants? **How is God Calling us to Respond to this Moment?**

I know. This is a challenging topic, especially in today's cultural climate. You might be thinking, "Why are we talking about this? Isn't it divisive? Isn't it political?" We can certainly frame it that way. The world certainly frames it that way. But at the core? This is biblical. This is faithful. It's about people. People that God loves. God has a dream for this world, and I believe that God is calling us, followers of Jesus, to create that world. I believe that God has brought the people of Good Shepherd together, for just such a time as this. I believe God is calling all of us to open our hearts and minds to listen, learn, and grow so that we can faithfully respond to this moment.

Here is the question that keeps me up in prayer at night.

What happens to those who are left behind?

When someone is detained or deported, what happens to the spouse and kids that are left behind? Loss of a parent, a spouse, a household income is devastating. And in that void of hurt, Jesus steps in with love. The question I challenge us to discern as a whole church is not, "how do we fix this nation's immigration system," but rather, **"how can we show up with the love of Jesus to those who are struggling?"**

Jesus does not teach us to ignore the problems around us no matter how complicated. Jesus teaches us to prayerfully discern God's will in every situation. Philippians 4:6 says, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."* We are the body of Christ. We are called to carry the love and presence of God to a hurting world. In complex situations people of faith are invited to do three things:

- 1. Study God's Word.** What does the Bible teach us about God's will for this situation?
- 2. Expand our understanding.** We are called to be humble, curious, and open as we learn.
- 3. Discern God's heart and our calling.** After study, learning, and prayerful discernment we believe God's heart will be revealed.

It is from this place that we can be obedient to what God is calling us to do in this moment. I choose to believe that deep in our hearts, we all want the same thing. We all want a more just and compassionate world that reflects the kingdom of God. We all want a world where families can thrive, and people can live in harmony with their neighbors.

This June we will have a four-week series to explore what the Bible teaches us, and how God is calling us to respond. Wherever you find yourself on this journey, I truly hope you will join us as we discern how to love our neighbors and one another with the same love God has poured into us.

With love,
Pastor Josh

Sundays – 10:10 – Good Shepherd Gym

June 14 – *What does the Bible teach about how to treat foreigners, sojourners?*

June 21 – *Special Presentation by Abide in Love STL*

June 28 – *How is God calling Good Shepherd to respond as a community of faith?*



Gary Klopff & Tim Sorensen
LifeWise STL Ministry Leaders

LifeWise StL Volunteer Opportunities

In serving age groups ranging from infants to seniors, our local service partner LifeWise StL offers a wide variety of engaging and impactful volunteer opportunities.

Special events like their annual Back-to-School drive and Holiday Market require many volunteers over multiple days. Over the past several years, we've had both individuals and groups from Good Shepherd who have helped with these events in preparing beforehand, working the events themselves, and packing-up afterwards.

If you have a group interested in helping, volunteer opportunities tailored to the group's interests can be arranged through coordination with LifeWise staff. As one example, our Men's Basecamp group painted the gym at LifeWise in late April. This was their second project at LifeWise, with expectations of more to come. As another example, Good Shepherd's ENliven small group has enjoyed several volunteer trips to LifeWise StL. They have been involved in watering outdoor planting areas as well as cleaning toys and play spaces in various childcare areas at LifeWise StL. Beyond helping on-site, there are service-to-go project ideas available that your group can complete wherever and whenever you meet. Our youth at church have done this as an activity, with 2nd – 5th graders packing items into kits that included water bottles, stickers, and a note of encouragement. Plus, one of the activities done by our VBS youth (ages 4 and up) involved packaging socks and underwear.

With their on-going programming as well as other special events and activities, LifeWise StL also welcomes those interested in individual volunteer opportunities. Based on your interests, skills, and availability, LifeWise StL can work with you to identify possibilities. There are several individuals from Good Shepherd who came together to help at a Valentine's Day/Friends party in February by chocolate-dipping strawberries to share with pre-school children and their families. Others have helped by providing audio/visual support for April's Spring Bling fundraiser. And, we have volunteers now getting involved with senior resiliency programming for adults, as well as math skills training for youth.

One current volunteer need is for individuals to help with the Summer Literacy Camp offered for elementary and middle school students. This valuable summer reading enrichment program is designed to counter summer learning loss and reduce achievement gaps. Volunteers are needed weekdays from June 8 – July 24 to help as "Literacy Leaders (i.e., Read Aloud guests)" and/or as "Mealtime Helpers." Those from Good Shepherd who have been involved in the past have found this to be an

enjoyable and rewarding experience. For more information or to sign-up, see the link to **Individual Volunteer Opportunities** on the **LifeWise StL website**.

So.....if you're looking for a new service opportunity for yourself or a small group, check out all the possibilities LifeWise StL provides. Reflections from a couple recent volunteers nicely capture what you too can experience!

"These projects are a wonderful way to keep our congregation connected to LifeWise StL. Perhaps the best part of this relationship is how each project opens doors for new people to get involved."

"We were all impressed with their many ways of supporting people, from infants to elderly. I highly recommend this activity to small groups looking to learn more about this wonderful organization and community!"



T4Hope Tidbits

As promised, we are sharing with you snippets about Tree 4 Hope, our long-term partner in mission outreach. But first...

Who Is Tree 4 Hope? Tree 4 Hope (T4H) is a U.S.-registered non-profit (501(c)(3)) committed to long-term hope for children, elders, and families in Guatemala—and beyond—through education, health, mental wellness, and community outreach. It began in 2019 by Pastor Jennifer Hope-Tringali.

Their flagship programs include:

- **Hope Academy Guatemala**: A STEAM-based, bilingual (Spanish / English), and indigenous language (Kaqchikel) inclusive school for girls (pre-K - Grade 6).
- **Hogar Miguel Magone Orphanage**: A home for vulnerable children, providing holistic care including psychological support, music, nutrition, and education.
- **Outreach Programs**: food security (daily meals for children and families), monthly elder community meals, psychological care, music education, and more.

Hope Academy and Hogar Miguel are more than buildings and programs. They are places of belonging, healing, growth, and hope! We are excited to continue our support with a small leader trip of 4 people this fall and a full service trip in 2027. If interested, please contact Pastor Josh.



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