



Church of  
St. Timothy

November 2025

# CORNERSTONE

## Sowing Peace, Harvesting Justice

### Swords Into Plowshares

*“They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.”* Micah 4:3

I never thought much about this Scripture verse, other than it was a nice sentiment and a hope for peace. For me, that changed on August 27. The unthinkable happened— *again*. A school shooting, in our state, our community, our neighboring parish of Annunciation. This time it was personal.

On the third day of the new school year, children, parents, teachers, staff, and

community gathered for an all-school Mass. “A Future Filled with Hope” - drawn from Jeremiah 29:11 - had been chosen as the year’s theme.

With new leadership in the parish and school with Father Dennis Zehren and Principal Matt DeBoer, it was time to celebrate a new



beginning. The joyful anticipation was shattered when a deliberate act of violence, cruel beyond

comprehension, took place.

It wasn’t long after I left 9 a.m. Mass at St. Tim’s that I received the call that my great-grandson David was one of the children who was shot. A bullet had lacerated his spleen.

David is an energetic, funny six year old, so excited to start first grade in the same school his older sister and brother attend. After life-saving surgery, David is slowly recovering, both emotionally and physically. We thank God for all who helped in the midst of chaos.

How do we begin to heal and find hope? Can we be anti-gun violence, not anti-gun? Is it possible to have

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restrictions on assault weapons and high capacity magazines? How do we uphold the second amendment responsibly? How do we provide necessary, essential mental health services? So many questions, with so many varied opinions.

I turn back to the Scripture with this question: how do we beat swords into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks? Call me an optimist, but I believe we can make a difference through advocating for change and working to sow seeds of justice, mercy, and reconciliation in our communities. Together, we can be people of peace rather than contributors to conflict. We can choose to resolve personal conflicts with kindness rather



*The Church of St. Timothy sanctuary featuring an icon of the Annunciation at the September 9 Prayer for Peace*

than aggression. We can invest our time and energy to help others.

On September 9, St. Tim's hosted a Prayer for Peace. I recently re-watched the prayer service and listened to Father Joe's

message. It reminded me how blessed I am to be part of this amazing prayerful community that advocates for justice and peace. I encourage you to watch or re-watch this uplifting time of solace and healing.

Join me in making the Peacemaker's Pledge, available on our parish website. Pope Leo XIV asks us to pray for the "pandemic of arms" to end.

Together, we can turn swords into plowshares, one step at a time.

- Carolyn Breitbach



## A Word From the Editor

**A**s a parish community, we have carefully and prayerfully discerned the mission that we believe God calls us to: The Church of St. Timothy is a supportive and vibrant Catholic community. We value God's presence in the Eucharist and we are committed to outreach and peace in order to bring Jesus' love to this diverse world.

In this issue of the Cornerstone, our writers particularly focus on the idea of peace that we lift up in our parish mission. From Matt Norris' reflections given his unique role as a state legislator to Tim Downey's memories of working for peace by addressing family conflict, our parishioners have rich and varied experiences to share. This issue of the Cornerstone invites each of us to consider how we live out a commitment to Christian peacemaking in a divided, violent world.

- Rhonda Miska, Communications Director

# Peacemaking in Political Dialogue

Never did I imagine I would find myself packed into the Basilica of St. Mary on a Saturday in June to mourn the loss of one of my fellow legislators. Speaker Emerita Melissa Hortman and her husband Mark were gunned down in their home by an assassin on the night of Saturday, June 13. But, sadly, maybe I should not have been so surprised. As someone who serves in elected office in the state legislature, I've witnessed firsthand the descent of our politics into vitriol and the coarsening of our public discourse. I see the overwhelming need for peace in our politics and civic life.

It hit home in the north metro area this summer when the Hortmans were assassinated. That same night, Senator John Hoffman and his wife Yvette were shot and wounded. But those are not the only recent instances of political violence. We have also witnessed the attempted assassination of President Donald Trump and the assassination of political activist Charlie Kirk.

This political violence should be a wake-up call for all of us. In our democracy, there is always room for robust debate. Indeed, the Minnesota Catholic Conference points out that "the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that it is every person's responsibility to participate in promoting the common good and, as far as possible, we should all take an active part in public

life."



At the same time, we have a moral responsibility as peacemakers to never forget the inherent human dignity of our political opponents. Those with whom we disagree are made in God's image and they possess infinite dignity. One of the tenets of Catholic Social Teaching is solidarity, which emphasizes that we are one human family regardless of national, racial, ethnic, economic, or—importantly, in today's world—ideological differences.

This is why I recently joined other Minnesota elected officials from both parties in signing the "Civic Pledge for a Stronger Minnesota." In doing so, we committed to engaging peacefully, working in good faith to resolve disputes, standing firmly against language that incites violence, and striving to find common ground.

While elected officials have a responsibility to model this behavior, everyone has a role to play. When we talk politics, whether online or in person, we should all aim to make our points clearly and without demonizing any particular person or group. If we succeed at doing this, we will be the peacemakers the Gospel calls us to be, witnessing to Christ, the Prince of Peace, to a world in need.

- Matt Norris



# Words on Peacemaking From Pope Leo XIV



“Peace be with you all! Beloved brothers and sisters, this is the first greeting of the Risen Christ, the Good Shepherd who has given his life for the flock of God. I, too, would like this greeting of peace to

enter your hearts, reach your families, to all people, wherever they may be, to all peoples, to all the earth. Peace be with you!” *Urbi et Orbi* address (May 8, 2025)

“Peace is not a spiritual utopia; it is a humble path made of daily gestures.”  
*Message for the Meeting for Friendship Among Peoples* (August 11, 2025)

“Peace is built in the heart and from the heart, by eliminating pride and vindictiveness and carefully choosing our words.” *Audience to members of the diplomatic corps* (May 16, 2025)

“If you want to cultivate peace, care for creation. There is a clear link between peacebuilding and the stewardship for creation: ‘The quest for peace by people of good will surely would become easier if all acknowledge the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the whole of creation.’” *Message at COP30* (November 7, 2025)

“The path to peace demands hearts and minds trained in concern for others and capable of perceiving the common good in today’s world. For the road to peace involves everyone and leads to the fostering of right relationships between all living beings. As John Paul II pointed out, peace is an indivisible good; it is either everyone’s or no one’s (cf. *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 26). It can truly be attained and enjoyed as a reality of life and integral development only if there exists in people’s consciences ‘a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.’”  
*Address to the Movements and Associations of the “Arena of Peace”* (May 30, 2025)

“In the midst of the many challenges facing our world at this time, including widespread armed conflict, division among peoples, and the challenges of forced migration, efforts to promote nonviolence are all the more necessary. We do well to remember that after the violence of the Crucifixion, the risen Christ’s first words to the Apostles offered peace, one ‘that is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering.’ Jesus continues to send his followers into the world to become creators of peace in their daily lives. In parishes, neighborhoods, and especially on the peripheries, it is all the more important for a Church capable of reconciliation to be present and visible.” *Message to the participants in the national assembly of Pax Christi USA* (July 20, 2025)

# Family Peacemaking

I have made a number of mistakes in my life, and the most serious mistakes have involved people I dearly love. When I read the Cornerstone call for submissions prompt about working through conflict leading to deeper relationships, it led me to reflect on forgiveness and reconciliation in my own life.

In my hometown of Butte, Montana, I belonged to a competitive sports family. The majority of my family members were on state championship teams and members of Butte's Athletic Hall of Fame. In high school I was on the team that won the first cross-country running championship, and I also had the school's half-mile record. As an adult, I encouraged our children to be competitive athletes—mostly in skiing, horseback riding and biking. Paul, my oldest child, was an accomplished skier, and he wanted to compete in the pedal bike race on his BMX bicycle.



This was in the early 1980's—helmets were not common and we went to the start of the race without a helmet. Upon arriving, we discovered that some kind of helmet was required for all racers. We did not have a bike helmet, but I thought there might be an old hockey helmet in Dad's garage. I called my parents' home to see if someone would look and bring the helmet out to the race course, about a 15 or 20 minute drive away.

My youngest sister Joan graciously agreed. I was waiting near the race start where I hoped Joan would turn her car.

Unfortunately, she drove a few blocks past me and turned at the traffic light before coming back. I was impatient and full of my competitive self, and perhaps living through my son's accomplishments. So I flipped Joan off, grabbed the helmet, and ran it over to Paul just before the race started.

After that things were pretty cold between Joan and me. The strained relationship affected the entire family, since we lived next door. Finally I decided that I needed to reconcile with her. I was teaching eighth grade and had a period free, so I invited her down to walk around the track and talk. I apologized profusely for what I had done. We discussed a lot of topics and grew closer. Joan was one of the "little kids" in the family. I was mostly at college when she was growing up. We were really raised in different families since 12 years separated us.

45 years later, I count Joan as one of my most cherished siblings. I believe that our relationship was deepened that day because of our willingness to address and work through a conflict.

- Tim Downey



# Ministry in the Spotlight: Prayer Shawls

She was in the hospital and things were not turning around. To make matters worse, my family had recently decided to leave our long-time parish and find a new spiritual home. We had only been going to our new parish for a few weeks but somehow, word got out about our desperately-ill family member and some very kind people from the community gifted my husband and me with handmade prayer shawls. Wrapped in this soft mantle, I could feel the warmth of the prayers. I felt cared for, seen, and included. In the midst of my difficulties, peace settled over me.

The Church of St. Timothy prayer shawl ministry strives to pass along that same experience to anyone who has need of prayers, companionship, or any kind of comfort. This ministry has a long history at St. Tim's but was slightly paused during the pandemic when parish groups did not meet in person. Some people

continued to knit and crochet on their own and occasionally bring prayer shawls to the parish office.



But this past summer we noticed that our inventory of prayer shawls was almost depleted. It looked like a good time to reintroduce this ministry to the parish. A few people have come forward to meet together, pray, and socialize while working on these beautiful shawls that will be gifted to others. Others still continue to work on them at home.

All parishioners who are interested in knitting or crocheting are invited to join this ministry. I have been assured by several of the members that they will help me (and I am someone who has not knitted in

about fifty years!) complete a prayer shawl. So no matter your ability level—or even if this is something you don't currently do but you would like to learn—come and be part of the prayer shawl ministry group. The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month in the evening from 7- 8:15 p.m. or on the third Wednesday during the day from 1-2:15 p.m. Whether you prefer a daytime or evening option, there is a meeting time for you!

Often our BeFriender Ministry team members give prayer shawls to the people they visit. Parishioners are welcome to stop by the parish office to pick one up for friends or family who could use it. Share this special gift of prayer and peace with people who are struggling. Let's wrap the world in prayerful peace and comfort!

- *Cindy Novak, Senior Pastoral Associate for Life and Learning*



# If You Want Peace, Work For Justice

“If you want peace, work for justice.”

This simple quotation by Pope Paul VI is one that my mind continues to return to, especially given my experience over the last nine weeks in a series entitled

“Making Moral Decisions in a Complex World.” Every

Thursday morning, a group has gathered in the parish center and on Zoom to pray, talk about the themes of Catholic Social

Teaching, and read together sections of Scripture and excerpts from papal and conciliar documents.

One recurring theme in all that we have read, listened to, and discussed together is our faith’s focus on justice. St. Thomas Aquinas defined justice as each person having his or her due. Every human person has inherent dignity and was created by God in love, and therefore every human person has inalienable rights and should receive his or her due. Catholic Social Teaching goes on to name some of these rights: life, food, water, freedom of religion, participation in society, education, and healthcare. Likewise, every human person has a responsibility to use their agency to contribute to peaceful society and work for the common good.

If justice can be understood as each person having his or her due, then peace can be understood as more than just the

mere absence of war. The Biblical understanding of peace (*shalom*, in Hebrew) has to do with the flourishing of all in the web of life. *Shalom* is marked by right relationship between God and humanity, human beings with one another, and human beings with the land.

The vision laid out by Catholic Social Teaching—the human dignity of all honored, workers being given

fair compensation and adequate rest, those who are poor and vulnerable being shown particular concern, the integrity of God’s good creation being respected—is beautiful, but it can seem overly idealistic. You only have to skim the daily headlines to see that this is so far from the world we live in!

However, I have found that nourishing myself with that vision, especially in community with other followers of Jesus, helps me navigate these challenging times. It has given me greater clarity and courage to work and pray for a more just and peaceful world.

- Rhonda Miska



# For Your Reflection

Carolyn Breitbach shared about how the shooting at Annunciation Catholic School impacted her and her family. She shared how her participation in the parish prayer for peace gathering and the peacemaker pledge gave her clarity in moving forward. How did the Annunciation tragedy impact you? What has supported you in moving forward as a peacemaker since that tragedy?

Tim Downey wrote about asking for forgiveness and working through a conflict with his younger sister. What has your experience been of addressing conflict in your family and close friendships? Where might God be inviting you to be a peacemaker?

Matt Norris reflected on the need for civility in debate and the challenge to honor the dignity of those with whom we disagree. How do you engage with others—in person and online—with whom you strongly disagree?

Peace has been a central theme of Pope Leo XIV's papacy thus far. Which of the quotations from Pope Leo XIV listed most resonated with you? What challenge or encouragement do those words offer you in your life, decisions, and relationships?

Rhonda Miska reflected on the connection between justice and peace as articulated in Catholic Social Teaching. How do you define the words *justice* and *peace*? How do you understand justice and peace to be related to one another?

Cindy Novak wrote about her experience of prayer shawl ministry—both as someone who received a prayer shawl during a challenging time and as one who makes prayer shawls. Is there someone in your life who is currently struggling for whom you can pray, and perhaps even offer a prayer shawl to?

## CORNERSTONE

Editor: Rhonda Miska

Editor Emeritus: Tim Downey

**Church of St. Timothy mission:** We are a progressive, welcoming Catholic community that values full participation in worship and community service. We commit to being a peace-loving, Eucharistic community providing integrated faith formation and applying gospel values to daily living.

*“You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone.” (Ephesians 2:20)*



**Church of St. Timothy**

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